

# An Olympian's Oral History

**AILEEN RIGGIN**

*1920 Olympic Games – Antwerp*  
*- Springboard Diving -*  
*Gold Medal*

*1924 Olympic Games – Paris*  
*- Springboard Diving -*  
*Silver Medal*  
*- 100-meter Backstroke -*  
*Bronze Medal*



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## AILEEN RIGGIN

*Today is Friday, November 11th, 1994, in Honolulu, Hawaii. This is Dr. Margaret Costa interviewing Aileen Riggan, gold medalist, springboard diving, 1920. Silver medal, springboard diving, 1924. Bronze medal, 100-meter backstroke, 1924.*

### **Q: Tell me about your childhood.**

A: It's difficult to pinpoint my childhood. Perhaps I should start when I was 11 because that's when I started swimming competition and we were living in New York City. I was of very delicate health. I went through the Spanish influenza epidemic that occurred during 1917 and '18. This was the greatest scourge that ever hit the world, but very few people know about it now. It killed more people than died in World War II, World War I and II, I think. My doctor suggested swimming, but this wasn't easy living in New York, except in the summer time.

So we found a small pool in a little hotel, it was in the Brooklyn Heights, where we were living at that time. It was just by chance that a club was forming. It was really a club of businesswomen who wanted a place to exercise and swim after they were finished with their work in the daytime.

Our club dues were three dollars a year – ridiculous now – and this was a hot, steamy little pool where we would meet once or twice a week and do laps. There was no diving board, of course. It was a shallow pool. It couldn't have been more than 30-feet long. It was tiny. It was like a sauna, it was so hot and steamy. But that was good because in the wintertime in New York it's cold. That was one thing I liked.

And by coincidence also there was a wonderful coach, Mr. [Louis] Handley, who volunteered his services. He was an amateur and he believed in being an amateur. He never received any remuneration for his work, but he had a hobby of swimming. He had been on the 1904 Olympic team in St. Louis. I think he played water polo. He wasn't a speed swimmer, but he was an analytical person and took his time.

At that time, everybody was doing the Australian crawl. That was the in thing. Mr. Handley had some theories about changing the kick and the arm stroke slightly, and started experimenting with the American crawl. We were his guinea pigs. He gave his time free.

### **Q: What was the Australian crawl?**

A: The Australian crawl had a scissors kick, three kicks, I believe, and a scissors kick. When you took a breath, it was at that time you did the scissors kicks and you were on your side. Mr. Handley thought that could be improved.

He practiced with us doing two beats, that's one kick to each arm, four beats is two kicks to each arm, six beats and eight beats. He settled down with the six-beat crawl, which is three kicks to each arm stroke. Then he modified the arm stroke a bit, and turning to breathe was just modified. Also you didn't turn on your side to breathe, you just turned the neck; turned your head and grabbed a gulp of air, and that was exhaled under water by blowing bubbles. That was how he changed the stroke.

Mr. Handley really developed the American crawl stroke and he's in the Hall of Fame, the Swimming Hall of Fame. He received credit for doing this. It was great for us. It was marvelously effective. All of the girls did this stroke, and we won everything. We were winning every race we went into and setting national records and world records. Later, we changed to a 50-meter pool, there weren't many in those days. We set lots of world records, and people were beginning to pay attention.

There were only two girls my age, 11, Helen Wainwright and myself. We had to compete against the adults. There were no age-group swimming events of any kind. And we were the only children who were swimming, and people thought it was quite remarkable that we were doing this new-fangled stroke. And we'd have to compete against ourselves, and then, as we got a little older, we competed against the older girls, and we did very well. We didn't win, but we weren't too far behind. In the summertime we had swimming meets. We weren't up to having anything in the winter: once in a while a YWCA or a YMCA meet, and that would be it.

When the summer came, we wanted to dive, but we didn't have a diving coach. There wasn't any board anyway. The boards in those days were like nothing that you see now. They were planks, they were just a piece of board, and sometimes they were covered, and sometimes they weren't, and it's very dangerous when it's wet, because it's slippery. We found later that some of the men divers always carried with them coconut matting, tacks, saws, and hammers. They really had to travel to be ready for any emergency when they found a board that didn't work. On occasion, they even changed the tilt of the board: you could move it forwards or backwards, to give it more resiliency. But I am digressing.

**Q: No, you are not. I want to know about this.**

A: The thing is that we didn't have any diving boards, and we didn't have anybody to coach us. Mr. Handley was strictly a swimming coach. He wasn't interested in diving, he said he didn't know anything about it, and that was it. So, once in a while one of his friends from the New York Athletic Club would come and coach us. We had a different pool then. We moved to one in New York called the Carol Club, and we rented it once a week for coaching. It had a board that was just about one foot off the water. It was flush with the side of the pool. And it didn't have much spring, but it had some. That was our diving board for the winter. That was all we had once a week.

Nowadays you can't find a board because of the insurance problems. In those days, you couldn't find a board because they just didn't exist. And in the summer we started going to the beach, and there it was a tidal pool, Manhattan Beach, New York, which is on Long Island. It was about an hour's commute on the subway and past Coney Island. And there, as I said, there was a tidal pool, so we'd try to hit the tide. It was a 3-meter board, which was about 10 feet, and also there was a diving tower. It was deep enough.

**Q: Did you have to wait for the tide to make it deep enough?**

A: No, in this case, I think we could dive, except it made a difference if it was very low tide: it would be 16 feet instead of 10 feet, which would throw the timing off. And we had a couple of volunteers who helped us. One was a Swedish man by the name of Freddy Spanberg. He was a businessman, but he had competed for Sweden at the 1912 Olympics. I am speaking now of 1917, '18, '19 and this era. He helped us. He would help us. I was better at springboard. Frankly, I was very chicken about the high diving. But some of the girls, my friend Helen Meany, from Greenwich, Connecticut, was a member of the same club. She was a high-diver because she learned to dive from a tower because there was no

springboard up where she lived in Greenwich, Connecticut. And another girl, Alice Lord Landon, she made the Olympic team. I am ahead of myself now. They both learned to dive from towers because they didn't have a springboard. So, they did dives that I was really afraid to do. But anyway, we worked, we had coaching from whoever would coach us. Sometimes the lifeguards were college athletes, swimmers, who would help us with our diving. With the swimming, we were fine: we had Mr. Handley, who coached better than anybody.

**Q: OK, I want to go back a little bit before this though. Tell me about your family, were they middle class?**

A: My father was in the Navy. He was stationed many places. But when I started to swim, it happened to be in New York. He was stationed at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

**Q: The reason that I ask that question is because of the attitudes towards women participating in sports in general.**

A: There weren't any sports for women that I can remember. There were no athletic scholarships for sports for women. None of the backups that they have now, the Women's Sports Foundation, for example, and this organization [the Amateur Athletic Foundation]. We had nothing, we started from the ground up. There was no competition. Helen and I competed against each other. It was considered quite remarkable that two girls could do this crawl stroke. We were the first: our group was the first to do it in this club. The Women's Swimming Association of New York.

**Q: The Women's Swimming Association of New York, very interesting.**

A: We had to compete against the older girls. When competition started, it just began around this time. We would go to different cities to compete, frequently in Philadelphia because it was very close and they had a good team named the Philadelphia Turngemeinde.

**Q: The Turners, that may be where a lot of women received their training, through the Turners.**

A: Yes, the Turners. Betty Becker, who won the Olympics later, was from that club. But we were great rivals because it was so close and we could just go down and come back in the same day. We used to compete in Buffalo and Chicago, Indianapolis every summer, and Detroit.

**Q: OK, you are talking about competing. What was the mode of transport?**

A: We went by train. And the trains were wonderful in those days. The sleeping cars were a big treat to us. There were a lot of meets around New York, Long Island, Connecticut, and often Massachusetts. There still weren't any other as young as we were, so we had to compete against the adults. But they weren't so old, they were 17, 18, the oldest would be about 25.

**Q: Tell me about your family and your early life before competitive swimming.**

A: My family consisted of a mother and father. It was a very loving family. They were very kind to me, but I was a very frail, fragile child. I was a premature baby, very small. I never seemed to be as strong as the other children that I played with later. So I was pampered a bit because of my health. My

parents, I think, spoiled me. I think I was a certified, card-carrying brat. I realize that now, of course. I didn't then because they were always watching and taking care of me. My father was in the Navy. He was an orphan. He was born in New York, where his parents both died young. He was raised by his grandmother, and I guess things were a little rough.

So the Spanish-American War came when he was just eligible to enter the service by age, I think he was 17. A lot of young men were volunteering, and my father was one. Being a New Yorker, he had grown up next to the sea. In those days they were sailing vessels. He was born in 1879, I think. He had a yen to go to sea, he loved the ocean and was interested in that. He was born up around Courtland Park, which is up near the Bronx in New York. It was all farmlands in those days, 100-and-something years ago. The bicycle was just coming in, and he used to take rides across the Brooklyn Bridge. This was a very exciting time.

My mother was born in Pennsylvania of a German family. My father was half German, too, so I am mostly German. She had a classical education and became a teacher. My uncle, her brother, also joined the Navy to fight in the Spanish-American War. This was a very popular thing to do then, and lots of young men, boys really, were joining up. Through him she wrote such amusing and interesting letters that my father wanted to meet her. So they did, and they were eventually married. They were married in 1905.

His first duty was in Newport, Rhode Island. My father, by this time, had loved the Navy, and he wanted to stay in. He was very good at math, and he had beautiful Spencerian handwriting, and that was important in those days. They were typing, but not as much as now. Typing was rather a new-fangled thing. He went into the paymasters corps and became a paymaster. He took his officer's training and became a warrant officer and then an officer. He loved to travel and he loved the Navy life. His first training, as a 17-year-old, was to go on a cruise to Europe on the old Constitution to learn how to man the sails, and that sort of thing. He was a good sailor. He was stationed in Cuba, before meeting my mother. This was when he first went in. My uncle was on the battleship *Maine* but was transferred before it was blown up. My father, being an orphan, volunteered to take a rowboat and go out and do a little spying for the intelligence. For that he was decorated for bravery. And later he was also decorated for bravery in the Philippines, in Corregidor. This is all 1898, you know, long ago and in a different world. But I think because he had no family, he volunteered for these duties and was evidently successful. He never spoke of it. I had the medals and I gave them to my daughter. She has them framed, but she doesn't live here, so I really can't check on it.

**Q: Where were you born?**

A: I was born in Newport, Rhode Island, which was his first duty after being married, and lived there for a year. Then he was sent to China. My mother was very upset because the tours of duty then were three years at sea and two years on shore, I believe. And here she was, a young woman with a baby, and a delicate child at that. So, she wrote to the War Department, and my father, of course, applied to have her and me sent out to the Philippines. That's where he was stationed at that time, Manila. It took so long, it took about a year. Finally, my mother went to Washington herself and she hounded them everyday at the War Department, the Navy Department. She'd go down everyday. I guess they got tired of her nagging.

These are my first glimmerings: Washington, DC, and the post office where my mother lived, as she was

always there writing letters to my father and to the Navy Department. Such things, that big, old post office, that is now restored, is full of restaurants and is a mall. But that was one of the first things that I can remember. That, and going up in the Washington monument, and a few other things. And the Pan American building, which my mother adored. It was a large patio. And it's still the Pan American building, the office of American Affairs still meets there, I believe. It had macaws in the patio, and tropical trees growing, and the patio was open-air. I loved that.

We didn't have a great deal of money, either, so my mother was anxious to get started. We had to get permission to go on a transport. And this was a big deal because they didn't run very frequently to the Orient. Once a month, I believe, a transport would arrive. I remember that I saw my first snow in Washington, so I was there in the winter.

Well, finally the big day came in the spring. And then we took the train across, which was an adventure in itself, the Southern Pacific Railway. I remember a few things about that, mainly New Orleans. We'd get off the train and eat at these Harvey houses. They've been made famous in the movies, I think, of the old days of the west. When we arrived at the border of Arizona and California, I remember that they stopped the train and the conductor said, "Well, everybody can get off the train and go out and pick wild flowers," because the fields were full of California poppies and lupine. As far as you could see it was blue and gold. It was simply glorious. I remember very well that we came back with arms full of these flowers, which lasted about ten minutes, and then they were gone. It was such a terrible thing to do, but then we didn't know any better, and neither did the people who were running the train.

**Q: Did you go to Los Angeles?**

A: Yes, Los Angeles. There was nothing there really. My mother asked what there was that would interest a child in Los Angeles. They said, "Well, there is an ostrich farm in Pasadena," so that was a little far. We didn't make that. But that's how it was. It was really a very small place.

We got to San Francisco, where the transport was to sail, and we had to wait there for a while. I think we are getting low on funds, I remember an awful lot of peanut butter sandwiches. But my mother persevered. She was a tiny woman. She weighed about 98 pounds, and was about 5 feet tall, and was very, very interested in things mythological and esoteric – poetry, and history, and music, and art – all of the classical things. She wasn't very good at math, as I remember, so I am not either. We would go to Fairmont Park and places like that. There wasn't much to do. I was three-and-a-half, or going on four. I remember very clearly that the whole train got on a ferryboat when we arrived in San Francisco, and transported the entire train over to the ferry building. That really impressed me. There was a Sherwin Williams sign of paint, and it was covering the globe, it was an electric sign, and that made a big impression, too! All of San Francisco – I loved it. And I think I saw horse cars there. I saw them somewhere, and I think it may have been there, or it may have been Washington or New Orleans, I am not sure. But I did see horse cars, which were going out pretty fast.

**Q: What do you remember about the transport?**

A: What I remember about the transport, when we finally got on it, was that it was the *Sheridan*, the USS *Sheridan*. It held a lot of people, troops and replacements going out to relieve those on duty in the Philippines, and some wives. I remember only one or two children. And the two things that stood out in my mind on that trip was that a flying fish came through the porthole window and that

was the most amazing thing that ever happened, and it flopped around the cabin for a while. I forgot whether we threw it back or we displayed it. I think we displayed it. Another no-no. We should have thrown it back.

The second was getting a vaccination. This was a terrible experience in those days. It wasn't a shot the way it is now. Small pox, I guess, and typhoid. But the small pox was a miserable experience. We all lined up, and the doctor scraped the skin off our arms. It was an inch or two across, circular place right up on the arm where it was very visible. Then they applied whatever it was. I don't think they had antibiotics in those days. Then they covered it with a celluloid cover and taped that on. And it took forever to heal. I remember putting on a terrible show. I screamed murder, and it took a couple of corpsman to hold me down. I was really, really a brat. And, of course, my mother was such a little mouse in public. She never spoke up or anything. But she just went up and put up her arm as an example to me. But it didn't take. Well, the vaccination took, that was the important thing. Those are the two memories that I have of the transport.

And we stopped at Honolulu. I remember that quite well. We took the street car to Waikiki. It may have been here that I saw the horse car, but I can't remember. There were a lot of horses and carriages. I loved Waikiki Beach. It was very pristine in those days. There was one hotel, the Luana, and the beginnings of the Holukalani, which was a boarding house. In those days, a very nice one, but still it wasn't a hotel. And we were here for several days in Honolulu, and here I am, back again after all this time.

Then we continued our journey across the Pacific. The whole trip took 30 days to cross the Pacific, with a couple of days out for re-coaling. They didn't use oil in my day, they used coal. And it was necessary for the Navy to have strategic coaling stations across the Pacific, and other places as well. But on this trip we stopped at the re-coaling stations to re-fuel. Honolulu being one, and the second one was Guam, where we had a coaling station. My mother was very amused. She had quite an amazing sense of humor, because as we approached the island of Guam, there was a big sign, a hand with a finger pointing, and it said, "Guam." And here it was, in the middle of the Pacific. I don't think there was much to remember about Guam, except that it was warm, and there were beaches, and we re-coaled there. The next stop was Manila. My father was on the dock and carried me ashore. And I believe that I might have had my 4th birthday while we were here in Honolulu. I am not sure, but I was four, just four barely, when I arrived there.

These were my first glimmerings. I remember everything, suddenly it all came to me. He had a house for us that he had found on the paseo, in Cavite, which is 17 miles from Manila. There was a ferry that ran, still goes, I guess, back and forth. It passed Corregidor on the way. Our house was facing the ocean, and was on Manila Bay. It was an old, Spanish colonial house. It was old then. It was two stories. The first floor was occupied by the horses and carriages that they had in those days. It was like a garage with large doors. That was the entrance. I think there was a small door carved out of it for people to go through. But that was where the Spanish people who had lived there kept their carriage. So, that was rather a wasted area. And so, the second floor was where we lived. And it faced right out on the paseo, this Spanish word means, I think, where people walk, and promenade, usually in the late afternoons in Spanish countries, and it's a social hour. The boys pass the girls and look at them. But they don't talk, and this was a very small village, Cavite. And it was also a walled city. There was a wall that extended from the sea back a few hundred feet. Then at the other end was a church. It was partly built into the sea wall, it was a fortress. The sea wall extended around, and it was in front of our house.

In between there was a park. There was a bandstand where they would have concerts occasionally. Pretty bad, mostly brass.

There was a huge poinciana tree right outside of our window, slightly to the right. It was just a beautiful sight when it was in bloom. They called it the fire trees. The Spanish called them flamboyant, I think. And we call them, well, poinciana. I think that is the correct name. But they are just a gorgeous sight when they are in bloom. So, that was beautiful. I learned my first lessons in plant in the Philippines and the Orient. So, I knew most of the trees. The bamboo is very popular. It's the most useful plant, I believe, in the Orient. It was prevalent everywhere.

And this was really a sleepy little town with one little theater called the Cavitina. There was nobody for me to play with there. There were no children at the other end of the paseo, which was probably a half mile. There were some children living on the Navy base, but that was a little far to go to see them. It was a family with three children. They had two boys who were worse brats than I was.

**Q: What else can you tell me about your house?**

A: It was, as I said, an old colonial house, and there were two large rooms with wooden floors, highly polished, light colored wood. The windows were made of kepis shells and they were sliding doors. The ceiling was very, very high and there were electric fans on the ceilings to cool us off. There was a sliding door between my room and my parents, which we mostly kept open because of the breeze from the sea, which swept through. Then there was my room and my bed was covered, as all beds were with mosquito netting. I slept under the mosquito netting and was always tucked in at night. First you have to kill all the mosquitoes that happen to be buzzing around inside.

We had a houseboy who would come every morning. He would make beds and mop the floors. When he polished, he used two feet. He put a cloth under each foot with some oil, and he would skate across the floors and polish them that way. My mother insisted on doing any cooking. We had to boil all the water, and she insisted on soaking all the vegetables, lettuce, especially, in formaldehyde solution and she did that. She wouldn't let anybody else do that because it was very important to have sterile vegetables. I can't remember too much of the food except all the wonderful vegetables and avocados and mangos. Oh, mangos were simply marvelous. And papayas, and lots, and lots of bananas. I think that was most of our staple diet. Most of our food came from the states and was brought in on the transports. And there weren't any really PXs in those days. Just a few people to use them, half-a-dozen families, perhaps and maybe less.

And the men lived in barracks, those that were stationed there. My father would come home with the newspapers and they were all very orderly. They were a month late, and he would keep them in a pile. And that was a no-no. I wasn't allowed near that pile because he read them very methodically, beginning with the beginning, and not backwards, but he'd work forwards. And I wasn't allowed to touch them, but I could read the funny papers.

I was beginning to read by the way, and my mother said it was in self-defense because I was always asking her to read to me. So, she taught me to read. I was reading pretty well when I was five and six. The books that she read were imaginative books. She heard "Hickory Dickery Dock" about three times and said that's enough of that. We went on to poetry and things that I could identify with. One of my favorites was Kipling's "Road to Mandalay." That really made sense. "The road to Mandalay where



the flying fishes play and the dawn comes up like China across the bay,” well that was just made for me. I thought that was just great. And “Riki Tiki Tavi,” the little mongoose, and “Alice in Wonderland,” of course, and all of these children’s stories. I learned a lot of little poems, too, like “The Road to Mandalay.” My mother bought schoolbooks for me, but they were, believe it or not, printed in Japan. They were Japanese fairy tales, a lot of them. The material they used was some kind of pulp, cloth pulp, and it was rather wavy, it’s hard to describe.

I don’t think they were universally known in those days except “The Little Peach Boy” was sort of like “Tom Thumb.” “The Tongue Cut Sparrow” was about a sparrow who could talk, and they were illustrated with Japanese prints. I loved those books and the reading books, the books they used in school. So I was reading, and my mother doted on mythology, and I knew all about the “Odyssey,” and the Olympic Games, and Ulysses journeys, and Anise, and Jason, and all of these stories that children don’t seem to learn now, but they are very stimulating, and I never forgot them. They made a very big impression on me. And to this day, I like anything archaeological, and anything to do with Greek art, or the Greek plays, or anything pertaining to Greece.

Some days, when my father was free, we would go out in the country with a carriage. There were two kinds: the caramata and the caratela. Caramatas were more for carrying fruits and vegetables to market and such things. The caratelas were for going to a party or social affair. We’d go out in the county. Sometimes I’d go swimming. My father would go swimming. He’d go swimming. He’d put on his suit. The beaches were absolutely deserted. I didn’t have a suit, so I’d just go in my pelt. He did the breaststroke, but everybody did the breaststroke and the sidestroke. They didn’t do anything else. This is 1910.

My mother didn’t swim. She’d been frightened as a child learning to swim and she never did learn. She was terrified of water, but loved the ocean, loved ships and cruises. I remember my mother lost her engagement ring right there at the beach. She was knee-deep in the water, and somehow it fell off. I wanted to try to go under and get it. She was so terrified of the water, that she wouldn’t let me. We watched the waves wash over the ring until it disappeared. I wanted to try, but she was afraid of the water, and she thought I was. But I wasn’t. But that’s one of the few times I remember her ever instilling any fear in me. She wanted me to be a free soul and not be afraid of anything. I could go on for hours about this, but I think it’s too much. I am talking too much about this and not getting to the swimming.

**Q: Tell me about how you were actually learning to swim.**

A: We were stationed for a while in Olongapo, which was a nice little town in those days. I hear terrible stories about it now in the recent days. But we had a cottage on the water, part of it was on stilts. The manai, or porch, extended out on the beach and water would lap up under it, at high tide it would come up under the house.

Every day at 4 o’clock a little boat would stop at the pier, which was right next to us. We’d all get in our bathing suits, and everybody would go for about a half mile, no about a half-an-hour, on the little boat. We would chug around to Half Moon Bay, which was a gorgeous beach. There was nobody, absolutely nobody on it. It was free of pollution. I guess that’s why they went. I never really asked. It was there that I learned to swim. First using a bamboo stick to hold on to and kicking. And I think I learned in just a few days, practically taught myself. My mother would wear a bathing suit, but she would just

wade in, and that was all. And there was a raft there, by this time I was six years old, and I could go from the raft to shore. I would do that quite a few times. I was so proud of myself and everybody made a big fuss about it too, because it was unusual in those days for a six year old, a very small child, to be swimming as well as I did. I didn't have any technique or form, but I just seemed to have a lot of strength in the water, and I loved it, and still do.

So we'd chug home, dry off, and have dinner. My father was stationed there at the Admiral Dewey dry dock where the ships would come for repair. It was a very small community in those days and I had my third or fourth Christmas there. My family had gone all out this time. The first Christmas was terrible exciting, but I didn't know any better. I didn't know how great Christmas could be. I had a bamboo tree my first Christmas, when I was four. It was trimmed with red and green paper flowers. My mother had cut them out of tissue paper and decorated the tree. I thought that was wonderful, a bamboo tree with paper flowers, nondescript flowers. But this Christmas they must have used a mail-order catalog and sent for these things, which would take some months. Thirty days each way, and then time to fill the order and such. I guess it came from California somewhere.

I had a glorious Christmas. I had a real Christmas tree this year and wonderful toys, and especially a doll which I called Susan. My mother said she looked French because she had blond hair and brown eyes, so Susan was her name. And I was absolutely, deliriously happy. And I got up early the next morning and rushed out to the lanai where the tree was, to see my toys, and there wasn't one left. During the night somebody had sneaked up, I don't know how they did it without us hearing them, and taken everything, including Susan. All of my toys that my parents had worked so hard to get and sent for and ordered. It just about broke my heart. It was just awful. Terrible thing to happen to a kid. But nothing, not even the ornaments on the tree, was left. They were very sly in the way they did it, climbing up noiselessly. But enough, of Olongapo.

**Q: Now we get to China.**

A: We went to China in the summers to avoid the rainy season. My father would be on a ship during that time, and we would follow the ship. Mostly Shanghai. He loved Shanghai. He loved China. He liked the Orient especially. He always requested it. In those days, you could request your duty. It wasn't always granted, but he'd always ask for the Orient. For one thing, our money went twice as far. They used Mexican dollars, whatever that is, but it was 50 cents. So, everything was half of what it would have been in the states.

The hotels were awfully good and things like that. While we lived in the Philippines, they started the Manila Hotel. I remember that being constructed in Manila where we went occasionally. But, being 17 miles away, we didn't go too often. I remember very well that we went around in rickshaws all of the time. My mother loved it because she could get clothes there, made over night. They had a system. They would come and they would take a dress that you wanted copies, they would take it home, and you would select the material. And by the next morning, they would have it for you, at least for a fitting and you would have the dress the next day. The whole family would go to work and build this dress. My mother was very fond of Canton silk, which is like a pongee. She had her dresses made, and of course, this was always handwork. This was very important in those days. The women wore a lot of embroideries and such things. Everything was embroidered, even her parasol was made of pongee, and it was lined with green silk and it cast a reflection on her face of green. I thought it was very pretty. My little dresses were embroidered. For a while there I was pretty well-dressed.

We were only there when it was warm, we never went through a spring or fall in China because when the rainy season was over in the Philippines, we'd return to Cavite, or Olongapo, which came later. My father always hated to leave. We were having dinner one night on a terrace at our hotel. We had friends in the next room, the lanai's joined. They had dinner served out on the lanai. The next morning the man was dead. He died of cholera overnight. So, my mother hit the panic button. She said, "We've got to do something. Got to put her somewhere safe." I don't know how it happened, but I do remember that they were in China with a friend who had just died, and his wife was there, too. They looked around and decided to put me in a boarding school. So, I went to a French convent in Shanghai for the duration. And the sisters there were wonderful. They were very patient with me. My mother also thought it might make a little lady out of me, the silly woman. But it didn't, it didn't, really.

**Q: Did they try to teach you French?**

A: Well, yes, but some. Mostly they spoke English. Most of girls were older than I. They were English whose parents were away for some reason in the summertime. They didn't have classes very much. We had some sewing. I was just dreadful at that. Oh! I mean, everything was always in knots and I couldn't seem to get the hand of it. I never did like it. But we'd play games and things because it was like summer vacation. It was more like putting kids there to keep them out of harm's way while their parents traveled.

Everybody had lots of servants in those days. We had a houseboy in the Philippines, but in China everybody had houseboys to help and such. They were very clean and very intelligent. But most of that summer I spent in the school and my parents would come on Thursday afternoon to take me out for an airing. Thursdays in Europe are always a maid's day off. But they don't have school on Thursdays. They would come in a big carriage and there would be two footmen, one driver and one footman, rather, and they wore special uniforms which were cone-shaped hats with tassels on them. They were called Mafu. And we'd go for our airing up Bubbling Well Road. It was always the same, I guess there weren't too many places to go inland. We would go along the Bund of course, which was always crowded with commerce, and sampans going in and out, and such thing. But we'd always stop at a hotel on Bubbling Well Road. Maybe it was called the Bubbling Well Hotel, I don't know, and we'd have lots of ice cream and that was a wonderful experience. I enjoyed that tremendously.

I'll get to swimming in a minute. During those times I didn't swim at all. We went through several parts of the rainy season when we got back. It wasn't always completed by the time we returned. I can remember my father standing in a dugout canoe going to work in the morning in a pure white uniform. Like Washington crossing the Delaware, he'd go off in the morning to his office, which was quite a ways. It was at least a mile, but distances seemed longer when you are small. He had to report to duty, so we'd wave to him from the upper windows when he departed.

**Q: How old were you when you got back to the United States?**

A: My health deteriorated and I developed an anemia. So, when fall came, we went up to Peking. Not my father, but my mother and I went all over Hong Kong. We were there for quite a while. I adored Hong Kong. It was quite different then. It was crowded, but not like it is now. There were colorful, colorful costumes that the Chinese wore. Not the blue denims that they wear today, and the Mao jackets, and all of that. This was really very colorful. The little old ladies being helped across the street because they had what they called the flower feet, where they bound their feet so they could get a husband. They couldn't walk, but they dressed beautifully. They were mostly carried, like a little doll. They'd

be very petite and delicate. But it was a horrifying thing to see them unable to walk. Their shoes were little pointed satin shoes and they squeezed their feet in them somehow. They looked like a doll's foot. I never saw one unbound.

We went up to Peking because my mother and I were visiting friends. He, the husband, had been a dentist in the service and he saw a need and filled it. This isn't a pun either. He went to Peking and started a practice and was fantastically successful. He even did the dowager empress' teeth. American dentists were adored. They were looked up to, revered is the word. They were something special. Everybody wanted to go to the American dentists. They had a beautiful apartment. It was somewhere within the Peking Wall, as I remember. We'd see the sunset over the wall. They had a small group of American Marines there. They'd raise the flag and lower it every day in the garrison.

The trains were wonderful in China. Their first-class trains were marvelous. It was on the way to Peking that I saw my first mainland fruit. It must have been autumn because there were grapes, and apples, and pears, especially. And they came to the trains and sold them in little baskets to the passengers. They were woven baskets, and you took the whole basket with the fruit arranged in it, and bought that. And, of course, my mother was frantic because she wanted to sterilize it, and peel it, and everything. Oh, and apples, I saw my first apples. I don't know if I said that. Apples, pears, grapes, a lot of things.

But while we were in Peking, I remember all of this very distinctly, we went to the Great Wall. There were very few people there. It wasn't as it is now, with busses and such things. My mother had a palanquin with two bearers to carry her. I had a little donkey, a little burro, and I rode this out to the Ming Tombs. There were a couple of other people with us. We got caught overnight and had to stay, and this was a very frightening experience. We had to seek refuge in a farmhouse. I don't know why it was that it was not planned well, but we had to take refuge in a stable, and we stayed there overnight. It had a clay floor, and we didn't have any covers, or anything, but were up with the dawn. We didn't sleep at all.

Then we went on our way. My burro was all right, and there were two or three others with us, as I said, and we continued on until we reached the Ming Tombs, which you could now probably reach in about an hour from Peking in a car. But my mother told me all the stories about it, and how the Emperor was always in the center. There were always two smaller lanes to the right and left of him for lesser mortals. There was a large green stone turtle holding up a covering, a little roof, over it. We passed enormous stone animals. They were in a row on each side of the road as we passed. Nobody really knows how they got there because they weigh so much. They were enormous beasts: camels, and elephants, and all sorts of exotic beasts.

Speaking of camels, we passed many caravans that were so colorful. These were the bactrian camels with the, what, two humps? I forget which is which. Dromedarius had thick, dark brown fur. They were silent because they were walking on sand and you could hear their bells approaching. But you wouldn't see them for a while until they caught up with you, or you caught up with them, or something. And you wouldn't hear their footsteps, they were very silent and just plodding their way along. But so colorful to see them on the road. It was a very exciting experience. I always remember the animals. I loved animals, still do.

So, my health was failing . . .

**Q: So what did you do?**

A: Well, I'll go back to that part. I developed an anemia and the doctors said that if I didn't get back to the mainland I might not survive. I felt all right. I didn't know that I had anemia, but it was time for my father to be transferred somewhere, anyway, so my mother and I finished our expedition by returning around the world.

We left Manila and sailed back all through the Orient and Singapore, and through the Suez Canal. We were on a German ship, the *Durflinger*. My mother would point out everything to me as we went ashore and went sightseeing. I remember a great deal of it. Of course, I've been back since, but I remember a great deal of it.

We went to Europe, Alexandria, Egypt, and Naples, Marseilles, and around Spain and up to Bremen, Germany. And it was just before Christmas. My first cold weather, and I felt the cold desperately. I was slim and my mother was very slender, also. She bought a coat in Algiers. I remember a white wool coat, and that was all the protection she had against the cold. I had sailor suits made before we left the Philippines, or before we left China, perhaps. They were serge, just like a sailor suit, with a little skirt. All the kids wore sailor suits in my days, but these were professionally made. They were very nice ones. That was all I had, except, oh, my lord, I had a white fur coat. I will never forget that white fur coat. People would ask what it was, and my mother would whisper, she didn't want me to hear it. But I heard it, and it was unborn baby lamb. And it was very, very fine curly little lamb – sad about that, but I didn't know any better. And I wore that. I looked ridiculous, a white fur coat and long johns, and white stockings, and white shoes in the middle of winter. I remember a white cap, a knitted cap, like a beret. But anyway, that was my first real Christmas with snow. It snowed in Germany. My first real snow. It was very exciting to see all the decorations and the trees and everything. I forgot to say that we also stopped in Amsterdam and Antwerp going up to Bremen. Then my mother and I changed to another ship and got back to New York. The George Washington, I think it was.

We'd been gone three-and-a-half years, four years, and there was a whole new world to learn about. All the plants that I had learned about were nonexistent. I had to begin at the beginning with plants, with animals, with clothing, with books, with language. All of the things were new to me.

**Q: And did swimming help with your health problems?**

A: Yes, it helped me greatly. I just didn't recover from that influenza. I nearly died with it, had a moment when they thought I was gone. I did recover slowly, very slowly. But I built up my shoulders. Up to that time, I had very small shoulders. I even wore a sort of a corset for my posture because I was so stoop-shouldered. It wasn't a brace, it was just a thing that I could wear if I wanted to, and I usually didn't want to. But it laced like a corset and it would hold my shoulders. But kids made fun of it if they knew about it. I didn't like to wear it. I was also dancing at this time and I was a very serious dancer.

**Q: When did you realize that you had a physical gift?**

A: I don't think I ever did realize it. Now I realize I probably was a pretty good backstroker, but I am so small you know. I weighed 65 pounds at the Olympics. I was like those little gymnasts that you see on television. I think I was 4' 10" or something like that. I wasn't skinny, I was just small.

**Q: What kind of dancing did you do?**

A: I was taking ballet every day. That was my major interest at the time. I was built for that. Later, with swimming, my figure changed and my shoulders got larger. My figure changed entirely. But I was just a very small, tiny child. I danced six days a week. I went to a professional children's school in New York. I graduated from eighth grade there when I was 13 or 14.

**Q: And that was because of the dance?**

A: Because of my dancing they were lenient with the hours. I could come late or leave early you know, as long as I did my homework and kept up with the class. They were all busy, all the other children in different fields, some were musicians. Some were actively engaged in Broadway shows. I went to the Metropolitan Opera School of Ballet. I went three days a week to a Russian ballet school which was just starting. It was a new fad. It was just beginning. This was very avant-garde. Sometimes I would even double up and go to both.

**Q: Were you learning English ballet?**

A: No, English ballet didn't really exist in those days. This is long ago.

**Q: Not the Royal Ballet?**

A: No, I may be wrong but I don't think they did. It was more Italian and French. Then the Russian Ballet came in and I went to a Russian Ballet dancer. It was much freer than the Metropolitan. The Metropolitan was so strict that you weren't allowed to kick above your waist. And now of course, they do splits in the air and everything.

**Q: Tell us about the bathing suits that you wore.**

A: There weren't any bathing suits for little girls so we wore boys bathing suits. In those days the boys had a one piece suit. They didn't go topless. So we had either cotton or wool suits. And the wool suits were more modest, so we used those. And we all had a little skirt over the front of our suit. The men also had a one-piece suit with a little skirt. And I must say, it looked very neat, very tidy.

I am sure we would have looked a lot better if we had the bathing suits that the girls have nowadays. Maybe not cut up too high on the thigh because I think that is a bad line, it's not aesthetic. That's my opinion. But just a more form-fitting suit would have been more attractive. Especially for diving, yes, because the line is important.

**Q: Did those wool suits get itchy at all?**

A: Well, actually they would get cold. Diving is such a cold sport because you are always waiting your turn you know, and if the wind is blowing and the water is cold, and you are standing there, and you get the breeze. But the wool suits were more modest because we were children. Because we were children, we escaped the era when they had to wear stockings and little shoes. You had to cover your legs, but because we were immature, we missed this, thank goodness. We didn't have to do this.

**Q: Did you ever run into Ethelda Bleibtrey?**

A: Yes, we were teammates. Oh yes, she won in 1920. She won three gold medals because that's all there were. There were only three events.

**Q: She won them all?**

A: She won them all. There was no backstroke, no breaststroke, the butterfly had not yet been invented. One of her medals was the relay. But she was so far ahead of everybody else that there was no comparison. Our club won the Olympics because she won.

**Q: All by yourselves?**

A: Yes, she won the 100, and for some reason they had a 300, which is a ridiculous. Three hundred meters is a nothing distance: it's not one eighth of a mile; it's not a quarter of a mile; it's just nothing. But they thought that men did the 400, and that was just about enough, and women couldn't do that, so the 300 would be adequate. So then a relay. So it was three freestyle races and that was it. And there were no other sports of any kind for women in the 1920 Olympiad.

**Q: Tell me about your early swimming races.**

A: I think my first big race was the national championship in Detroit. It was our first trip away from home for swimming.

We competed for our club, as well as ourselves. And we wanted to make points for our club. They needed four on a relay team. And it happened that the two best girls, Ethelda Bleibtrey and Charlotte Boyle, were on a tour of the West Coast, competing out there. So they sent the second team in, which was Helen Wainwright, Gertrude Ederle, and myself, and Helen Meany. Helen Meany was the oldest, she was 15. Gertrude Ederle was only 12 because she was a year behind me. Gertrude was the first girl to have swum the English Channel. Helen Wainwright and I were 13. This was in the spring, and we both have birthdays in March and May, but we were both 13.

This was a national championship, a relay. We competed and nobody could believe this, these little girls, we were really children, getting up on the mark and we won by about a lap. We won by a fantastic amount. We won the national championship. We beat the adult girls and we set a record. This was quite a sensation at that time and people were cheering, and standing up and applauding.

**Q: Were the *New York Times* there?**

A: Yes, we got an awful lot of publicity. I gave my books to the Hall of Fame, so I don't have the clippings. But it did start the interest.

While I was there, Barb Shackren, our chaperon and manager, said, "Why don't you enter the diving?" I said, "Oh, my goodness, no, we couldn't possibly do that." This is 1920 in the spring. She said, "Oh, go on, it's good experience. You won't win it, but you'll get the excitement of it." You need experience in contests. So, I did. Helen was a much better diver at that time. She either got third or fourth, and I got fifth. We were encouraged with it. And from then on, I paid more attention to diving because I was at a disadvantage, being so small in swimming. Yes, I was encouraged and then as soon as the ice

broke in Manhattan Beach, we started practicing. Helen was a much better diver at that time than I. But I was catching up due to some ballet training.

Up until this time I'd majored in swimming, freestyle and backstroke. I wasn't very good at the breaststroke, and the butterfly had not yet been invented. So, there were three strokes, really. I majored in backstroke. I was better at backstroke, I was fairly decent at that. There was only one girl, later on, who could beat me at that.

It's hard to do two entirely different sports, though, because diving takes a lot out of you with the concentration, and the cold, and the fear – getting psyched up. With swimming, you just get in and swim, and it's really a lot easier. There was nobody to follow, as we were the first ones. We decided that about a mile was a good training distance. And we'd swim, when we had an opportunity to find a pool, about a mile, 50 or 60 laps in the pool. Even our coach didn't know because it was new to him. We'd just do what we thought was right. We never got tired. We'd just build up. We'd feel exhilarated as we swam, once you got past the first few laps. You'd get your second wind. We didn't sprint. We just tried to maintain a steady pace, and mainly, always have something left for a sprint at the end. We were taught to always have a sprint left, and not to spend all our strength on the beginning.

But as our fame, I'd guess you'd call it, grew, we were invited to many more places. We loved to travel. Divers didn't get many trips, we found, because there weren't many contests for divers. So we majored in swimming. I always was the last one to make the relay team, but I made it all the time I was swimming for the six years in competition. I always made the relay team for the nationals. Not the Olympic team, but the club team, which was the same thing as winning the nationals because our club won everything. It was absolutely dominant. We'd win first, second, and third in the nationals. We would also take in any girl who wanted to compete. She could join the club, and Mr. Handley would coach her.

We had a lot of famous names who didn't belong to our club, or represent us. Like Martha Norelius, who later won the Olympics. They weren't even members of the club, but Mr. Handley would coach them. They could join the club for \$3 a year. And he would teach them. He was an amateur at heart, in spirit. He would never accept any money. There wasn't any money. He would not have accepted it if there had been. And we were all raised that way to be true amateurs. It sounds ridiculous now, I suppose when everybody's trying to win so they can cash in on the commercials and things. There weren't any commercials. There really was no opportunity at all. And the women sportspersons were still viewed skeptically. It wasn't until we returned victoriously from the first Olympiad that people realized that we were feminine, that we could be dainty or petite, not big jocks. We were powerful swimmers, but it was from applying our strength and skill well, not because we were overpoweringly strong. It was just a different idea entirely of women's sports. And the professionalism didn't creep in for five or six years later, but then it came.

**Q: Did anyone say to you, you shouldn't be doing that because you are a woman, or a girl, actually? Was there any discouragement?**

A: No, there wasn't an awful lot of encouragement, but there wasn't a lot of discouragement either. We were considered sort of weird, I guess, unique, doing what we were doing because we did it well and nobody else did, really. No, there wasn't a lot of encouragement or discouragement.

**Q: Were you still continuing with the dance, the ballet?**



A: Yes, I never danced in the summer. I concentrated on swimming.

**Q: So that kept you in shape though, the dance during the winter?**

A: The dancing, and it also gave me a certain control for diving.

**Q: Discipline and a cultured body, which you need.**

A: Discipline, yes. I never had to be told to point my toes, they just pointed automatically, and my fingers. I just had a feeling for both disciplines. But the dancing helped me a great deal.

**Q: Yes, you need the long line.**

A: Yes, dancing helped me greatly at the time. The springboard was better for me because, frankly, I was a little nervous about the high dives. I did compete in it, but that was the swan, that wasn't what they do now. Annette Kellerman, from Australia, was the only exception and she had no competition whatsoever. She didn't have anybody to compete with. I had one other person my age: Helen Meany was a wonderful diver, but she was better at high diving. She was fearless, she could do anything from a tower. And Alice Lord Landon as well. But Alice did not have the finesse and the ability that Helen Meany had. It's too bad that the contests didn't exist or those two girls would have won by a great deal.

**Q: Tell us about the 1920 Olympic tryouts.**

A: We heard about the Olympics and were elated. We heard that the girls, or women, were going to be admitted to the Olympic Games in swimming for the first time, and we heard the rumor, and then we pursued it. This is 1920, in the springtime. Helen Wainwright and I are still 13 years old, and we'd improved in our diving, and we just wanted to tryout for the diving, and hope to make the team.

There was nowhere where we could find out anything about the Olympics and no one seemed to know anything about it. So we wrote to the French Olympic Committee and asked information on what the rules were going to be. They took forever to arrive. But when they did come they were all in French and we had to have them translated. I was taking French at the time in school, but I wasn't up to translating the technicalities of the diving book of rules.

When we finally saw the rules we thought they were silly dives. I really can't remember many of them, but they had running and standing, which was silly to begin with. And standing on a springboard is ridiculous when it has any resiliency. But they were dives.

We got them about April and the tryouts were in June, so we had at least three months, but we still couldn't go in the water. It was icy. It was frustrating.

There was no place for us to dive because we were dependent on the outdoors. There was a lagoon at Manhattan Beach, New York, which was tidal. We tried to time our practice times on the 3-meter board with the tide. Of course, some time it was high tide at 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. and we were usually in between somewhere. There wasn't a very accurate way of practicing. The board was terrible, but it was there. It was a plank. It was rigid, quite rigid. It didn't give one inch – inflexible. But the lagoon had a muddy

bottom too, so the water was murky. None of this leads to interest in going off and practicing. And cold, that's always the foe of a diver, the cold. But we would commute.

It was about an hour's ride on the subway. It was past Coney Island, and out on Long Island. It was called Manhattan Beach, and it was a nice residential area in those days. Brighton Beach was right next to it, which was pretty good also. We'd practice whenever we could, and we didn't have a diving coach. But we had a man named Fred Spanberg who had been on the Swedish Olympic team in 1912. There were no Olympic Games held in 1916 because of World War I. He would give us time on weekends and coach us. He helped us greatly. And the lifeguards were mostly college swimmers, and they helped us with our diving. And there really wasn't anybody around to give us advice.

To get to the Olympics we had to get by the committees. They didn't think that women should go. And they were very vehement about this. They wanted the rules adhered to the way they were in ancient Greece when women were not allowed to even witness the games much less compete. And they said, "No, we don't think that's good." The previous Olympiad had been in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1912, and they had some kind of a diving contest there. But I am not sure that it was part of the Olympics, or just exhibition.

**Q: Exhibition?**

A: I think it was supposed to be an exhibition, but people had contested that, and I'm not going to contest anybody. As far as I am concerned, we were the first Olympiad sanctioned. But the Swedes were among the leading divers in high diving, but not in springboard. Nobody knew what a springboard was. We had this contest to ourselves. We got first, second, third and fourth.

**Q: This was in the trials?**

A: In the '20 Olympics. We first had the trials. Finally, the committee said they would accept a few women swimmers. Of course, they were thinking of somebody about 30 years old, I guess. When they had the tryouts, as it happened, Helen Wainwright won the tryouts, and I got second, or I got second in the high dive and third in the springboard. I forget who was second. Thelma Payne, I guess. So anyway, they finally said, "We agreed to take women, which was against our principles. We just didn't think women should be competing in such a strenuous sport, but we are not going to be responsible for taking two children to Europe." Helen Meany was only a year older, but she was more mature and she looked older than we did. She slipped under the wire. She would dive, but they didn't want to take us. "We just can't be responsible for taking you." So, we unpacked and went on like that for a while, a couple of days, anyway. Then our manager went down and she said, "Now about these two children? They won fairly. They deserve to go, and I will be personally responsible for them." She reminded us of this many, many times. She'd say, "Remember, I'm responsible." But we were law-abiding kids, we didn't get in any mischief.

**Q: Let's talk more about the opposition to your competing in the 1920 Games and to sportswomen in general.**

A: Yes, the opposition we had before we made the Olympic team. It wasn't from the general public. It was from the ruling body. They didn't want women to compete in any sport in the Olympic Games. They wanted it to remain as it had been in ancient Greece, with women forbidden to not only compete,

but they weren't allowed to be spectators. There was one instance of a woman who was about to be thrown off a cliff, but they pardoned her because she was watching her son compete. She gave herself away by screaming encouragement. But they pardoned her because he won, I guess. And I believe his father had also been a famous athlete. That got her off the hook.

But they wanted it to remain like that. And I guess they thought that women would be a nuisance. I don't know what they thought. They weren't for it. But we held out. I didn't personally. Our manager was very much for it. She went down and told them that this was silly, that other countries were going to compete. That sort of turned the tide. Australia, and England, and Canada, and all the northern European, and most of the U.S., and, well, anyway, they finally conceded.

Then the tryouts came along, and as fate could have it, Helen Wainwright won the springboard tryout, and I was second, I was third, I guess. In the high dive, Helen Meany from our club, the Women's Swimming Association of New York, won. She was 15 years old. I was second in the high diving. I had a solid second and third, so I figured I had a chance to make the team. They took three for each event and a substitute as well. So then the committee met again and made selections, and when it came to us, they said, "No way, we won't be responsible for taking two children to Europe." So, we were disappointed. We were heartbroken, and we went, and we cried and unpacked our footlocker. That's the way we traveled in those days, with a footlocker, which you pushed under the bunk. Finally our manager/chaperone got annoyed and went down and said, "Look, these kids won and they deserve to go." The older women, of course, were politicking also. They were getting to the selections committee and saying that we were just children. We'd lose our heads in competition, and all that sort of thing. Playing us down, I'm afraid. But the manager said that we deserved to go. So they finally relented. And then we had to scurry around and get our uniforms.

**Q: So they decided you could go?**

A: So then they said, "OK, yeah," very reluctantly. So then we had to re-pack, and we didn't have a uniform, and we didn't have our passports. We had to do all that in about two days, rushing around like crazy.

Finally, we got on the old *Princess Matoika*, which was a transport. The war had been over for only a year and a half, we still had an expeditionary force in Europe, 350,000 men, something like that. They were using any vessel available to take supplies to our expeditionary force in Europe. They needed the big transports that were fast to get supplies over to them. The war was over, but they still had this huge Army over there. And we got a vessel that was barely seaworthy.

It took us 13 days to get to Europe, so we had plenty of time to get adjusted to the ship. It happened to be a beautiful trip. I don't think we had one inch of rain on the whole trip.

We were without any training for two weeks. But, they put up a pool for us, which was a little canvas tank. It was just long enough for a tall man to stretch out with his arms outstretched. We had some tall swimmers, so it must have been about 7 or 8 feet long, and not quite as wide. It was held together with struts on each side of wood that was hammered together. There was a little hose from the Gulf Stream that came up and was running water, it changed the water, and also went out. It changed the water constantly. We wore a belt that was attached to each side of the little pool, tank, whatever you want to call it. Tank, I guess, is better. And we'd swim by the clock.

The real swimmers who were competing in real swimming events, got more time than we did. We got what was left over. It was usually five minutes at the very end. The divers didn't get as good a workout as the swimmers. And we were frantic for any exercise, because being on a ship is sort of restraining. We couldn't do very much.

There was one large dining room, and we all ate there. I think we all ate at one sitting. There were 400 men, 415 men I think, and 15 girl-athlete swimmers, and five chaperones. Some of the chaperones, I believe were older women who were members of different clubs. They paid their own way, I think. We were four in a stateroom. We had bunk beds. It was a very small stateroom, but at least it was better than what the men had.

They were down in the hold, and we never did see that. They used to call it the glory hole, and we never, never were allowed down there, and wouldn't have gone anyway, I guess. The men used to sleep on the deck, it was so hot going through Gulf Stream.

Of course, this had been a transport, our soldiers had been exposed to the same treatment going over to fight in World War I, so it was not unbearable, but it was summer time and it was hot. So, it was miserable down there. They used to bring their blankets and pillows up to the deck and sleep out overnight. And we weren't allowed to go out of our cabins after a certain hour, 9:30 or 10 o'clock. The fellows would be out there trying to get some fresh air.

There was quite a bit of trouble on that team. The men were really upset about it. They weren't getting any sleep. They weren't getting any practice. I guess the *Mauretania* held the record of four days across the Atlantic, so 13 days was a long, long time. We just chugged along, took our time.

**Q: How did the javelin throwers train?**

A: The javelin throwers had a rope attached to their javelin, and they'd aim out to sea. It was a little nerve wracking. We weren't sure just where that javelin was going to come down.

The other men set up places on the ship for their sports. They put down cork on the decks to make it possible to run without slipping. And they would jog around the decks to try and keep in form. They set up a boxing ring and the boxers would work out. The fencers had a strip where they could work out. The runners would run around, jog around the track. The shooting team, I don't know, what is the name of the shooting team? Anyway, they were in the modern pentathlon, some of these athletes were in the modern pentathlon. Shooting was one of the events in that contest, so they were fidgeting. They wanted to shoot at the seagulls which followed us for three days out to sea. But they restrained themselves. They were generally setting up exercises for everybody who wanted to take them.

There was no gym on this ship, the way they have nowadays. This was a transport that had just been busy transporting caskets back. On its return voyage, it would be loaded with caskets of Americans who would be buried in America. Very sad. On our return trip we experienced that. They loaded American bodies in caskets in all the French ports where we stopped, Cherbourg and Calais, probably in Antwerp, as well. I don't remember. But this was very sad. We practically cried watching it.

**Q: Were they worried about you gaining weight on the way over on the ship?**

A: I don't know. They had calisthenics for everybody, but we didn't do very much, just jumping in a stationary position. There wasn't much room.

At night we'd have entertainment. There were a great many talented athletes. And we'd have amateur night every night. Somebody was always doing some little thing. Doing some little act or something that was entertaining to us anyway. And, the Hawaiians would entertain us. We had about 11 Hawaiians. They weren't all full-blooded, but most were born here. They were awful good swimmers, actually. The second time I went we had just as many, maybe more. The leading one, Mr. Kahanamoku, who was quite famous, won the Olympics. He was a sprinter in swimming, and he had won in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1912. Of course, his name intrigued everybody. He wasn't really a duke, but I think the Duke of Edinburgh, or someone, had visited the islands when he was an infant and his family thought that was a nice name. He had six or seven brothers, and he was the eldest. He was a magnificent looking man, he had a marvelous build, and he was just as nice as he looked. They played at night, they all brought their ukuleles and guitars, and they all had beautiful voices. I think that was my first introduction to Hawaiian music. It was a big fad in about 1915 or '16, and I had all the records, the *Hilo March*, and records like that, on my gramophone. But it was a nice thing to do.

There were a lot of famous people on that team. We were very impressed. There was Jack Kelly, who later won the rowing, in both single and double sculls. He later became the father of Grace. In 1924 his bride came along. We had Margaret Majer, from Philadelphia, she was a beautiful woman.

In those days, sports cartooning was very big and there were some famous cartoonists on our trip. One was Ripley. He'd do pictures of all the athletes. We didn't have radio and we didn't have TV. We had movies, newsreels, things like that. But we didn't have much on sports in the news. So, these cartoonists would draw pictures of the athletes in action and perhaps a big head, or a blowup of the head in the center. And there would be a different one each day, and they would send them back by fast boat after we arrived in Belgium and they'd be published all over the U.S. They sent those home by a faster ship, and they used those for the news to keep up.

Of course, there was the wireless, when we were actually competing. They had the wireless. They used the wireless to report because there was no radio. It sounds primitive, but we didn't miss it because we didn't have it.

**Q: When you arrived, where did you stay?**

A: Of course, when we got off our transport, we went crazy because we hadn't walked more than around the deck for two weeks. The girls stayed at the YWCA Hostess House. We were on the fifth floor. I remember that because we were up and down about 20 times a day. We slept in a dormitory and there would be about six in a room with just bunk beds. I always traveled with a footlocker that I could just get under my bed. We all traveled with trunks in those days. We didn't carry suitcases for some reason. We all had footlockers because, when you travel by ship, you don't have to handle the luggage. Getting up five flights of stairs, I forget how we did that, but we did it.

And we also had our meals there which was good. It was American cooking, and it was what we were used to. We ate very well, but I can't remember anything we had that was unusual. But it was better than if we'd gone out to some fancy French restaurant and had our meals there because this was simple. And we restrained ourselves. The French and Belgium pastries are so wonderful. But afterwards we

made up for it. We were allowed ice cream, plain ice cream, but no sundaes, no malts, no shakes. That came later when we went to Austria after the Games. We found an American man who had opened a shop, and he could make banana splits. Oh, we had a wonderful time gorging ourselves.

**Q: Tell us about where you were to compete.**

A: The place? It was a canal. We were heartsick when we saw it. I don't know what we expected. A 50-meter pool perhaps was not asking too much, but of course the Belgium's did the very best they could. This was right after the war. They had lost a great many men in the war. Their villages were destroyed, but Antwerp was an open city. It was occupied by the Germans all during World War I. But everything was in good condition, except that they didn't build a pool.

Some people said that this was the city moat, and it may well have been because there was a large embankment behind it as a protection for the city. I believe that's where the benches were for the spectators. That's where the audience sat to watch the swimming.

And there was a tower, that was OK. But there was only one place to swim and dive. So, we always had to have a lookout handy to tell us if the swimmers were coming. There could be somebody underneath us and then we'd always take a look ourselves because we didn't trust everybody. They might miss somebody.

What they did is they just built a wooden platform around 50 meters where people could walk, and where the start was held. They put at 50 meters, 55 yards approximately, a board that reached way down so that swimmers could make a good turn against it. It was solid. In the middle of all this, on one side, was the diving pool, diving board and the platform. There wasn't a pool for diving, the way they have now, a separate place.

And the first one that dove in nearly died, it was so cold. It was so cold. My memory of Antwerp was cold, and it stayed that way all summer. When it rained, it was almost like icicles coming down. It rained a great deal.

**Q: Was the diving literally in the middle?**

A: Yes, not in the middle of the pool. It was on one side, but it is in the middle of the length. Yes, and of course, people don't realize how strenuous diving is because when you walk, you have to walk up those stairs. If you do, say 30 or 40 dives, you've climbed the Empire State Building. It's really a very tiring sport. But people only see you up on the board on television. They don't think about it. It was so cold, that many swimmers had to be rescued from hypothermia. They were unconscious, and some of them were really in a bad way, and had to be dragged out. So, the committee changed the rules in one sport, water polo, because the men just couldn't endure it. They were passing out from the cold, and they cut the time period by half. And that was better, but they were miserable. And the girl swimmers, some were supposed to stand the cold better than men do, with that subcutaneous layer of fat, but that doesn't always work. I didn't have an ounce to spare. So, I felt the cold terribly. I was always a delicate child, anyway. I didn't have a lot of strength. Wiry, wiry, but not a lot of strength.

There was a very poor diving board, and a tower, or a platform dive, which for the men was 10 meters, so that's 30 or 35 feet. It looked desperately high to me. I thought, I'm really a little bit chicken about

high diving. But the contest being so simple, four dives, I did it, although I didn't practice it very much. I didn't like it. I concentrated on the springboard because I thought I had a better chance there. It was those stairs, having to climb all those stairs every time. It is the same as a three-story building for the girls, and thinking all the way down about the cold water.

It was dreadful, and no hot showers. No way to get warm. We did have a masseuse, a huge Flemish woman who was very powerful. But there were 15 of us, and one of her. There just wasn't time to take care of all of the girls. The divers were always last for some reason. We never did get much of a rub down.

The men brought along trainers. One of them was a Hawaiian, David Kahanamoku, Duke's brother. The men had these advantages. The girls didn't have anything like that. We didn't have a trainer, we didn't have a coach. There was a swimming coach. I wasn't swimming at that time, but there was a swimming coach.

But there wasn't a diving coach. We didn't have a diving coach on the Olympic team. I noticed at the last Olympiads that everybody now has their own individual coach. I've seen that they all have their own coach, and they run over to talk to them after they dive. The men were terribly helpful. Most of the men were from California. They had the advantage of diving all-year-around in California. Our men didn't in New York. A couple of New Yorkers made the team, and they would help us in diving. They were very good. Take off is so important. They helped us with our takeoff and hurdle at the end of the board. They improved us greatly. I improved tremendously with just a little coaching, and, of course, with those nutty dives we did. They had some dives going in headfirst, with your hands by your sides, which was a ridiculous thing because you make a tremendous amount of splash. I can't remember all the events, but you could take dives from any category, which you can't do now. It was just crazy. It reminded me of playing follow the leader, thinking up crazy ways to go in the water

And then I had another mental block. It was about sticking in the mud at the bottom. This was just my own little phobia. I kept thinking, the water is black and nobody could find me if I really got stuck down there. And if I were coming down with force, I might go up to my elbows and I'd be stuck permanently, and nobody would miss me, and I'd die a horrible drowning death. Nobody ever hit bottom that I know. It must have been quite deep because the men would go down very deep from the 36 feet, or whatever it was. They would really go straight down.

On a good dive you aim for the bottom. You aim to enter straight. So many pools were only 6 feet deep in my day. From a 3-meter board, that's pretty dangerous. The way we'd have to remember to break with our elbows was when the palms of our hands touched the bottom. We'd have to break our fall with our elbows, or else we'd hit our heads. We had lots of accidents. It was really dangerous, and it also prevented us from doing more difficult dives where we couldn't control the entry as well.

When we had our indoors, there was one pool only. It was in Jersey City. It took three hours back and forth to get there from New York, with all the different changes and things on the conveyances. And that was 6 feet deep. If you were trying to do a good dive you'd go straight in as good as you could possible do, and aim for the bottom. It was just up to us to break our fall on a back dive for instance. This was really very dangerous. I had lots of accidents. I stuck my tooth through my lip. I stuck something through my eyelid, and I hit my nose numerous times on the bottom. But to get on with this, where were we?

**Q: You said something about the men having their water polo time shortened?**

A: Oh yes, it was so cold that, for the first and last time in Olympic history, they had to shorten the time for polo, the playing periods, by half because men were being carried out unconscious, suffering from hypothermia. It was that cold. There were no hot showers. We had one masseuse, a huge Flemish woman, strong and powerful, who massaged us, but there were 15 girls, and there wasn't time enough to go around. I think I had perhaps one 2-minute massage, and that was about it. The men had trainers. One of Duke's brother, David, was a trainer. They had masseurs, and trainers, and all kinds of things going for them. We didn't have any of that. And then we had our conveyance, which was always there at noontime to take us home for lunch.

**Q: How did they transport you?**

A: We were in a funny little thing. It was before jeeps. It was donated by the American Army of Occupation for the girl swimmers to get to the stadium and back. The men had a big bus because there were so many more of them, and we had our own little thing. It had seats that ran sideways across it, across the bus. It was like a jeep. The sides would roll up and down. If it was raining, you could roll down the sides, which was made of glass and canvas, I think. We usually had it up. When it rained, we'd put it down. It had a back seat that faced backwards. Helen and I used to run for that. We always won. The other girls were too dignified to compete with us, I guess, but we won. And we'd always get our favorite seat going backwards. We must have been little pains in the neck. You could sit outside and dangle your feet and we'd wave to people. You didn't know where you were going, but you could see where you'd been. We had the same driver everyday, who would take us to the stadium which was outside of the town, but we went all around Antwerp.

**Q: What about the Opening Ceremonies?**

A: Oh, well, that was very exciting. It happened to be a gorgeous day, and it was at a nearby stadium they had built. It was very spectacular. Of course, there were only about 23 countries entered in that Games, and now what are we up to 140 or something. A lot of countries that were in the war didn't enter at all. They were too badly hurt. I don't think Russia or Germany would have been able to compete. They were too decimated.

The Opening Ceremonies were very impressive, but they did not have Hollywood touches to it. I do remember lots of pigeons being released. Of course, we stood out because we were females. And there were very few women athletes at all – just a handful swimmers from other countries. Sweden probably had the largest, maybe England. When we were marching past the Turkish team – I think it was a Near-Eastern team – they were hissing at us. We thought they were booing us, and somebody said, that's their way of applauding. We were indignant, but we kept marching. They were very enthusiastic in a different manner.

**Q: Tell me about your uniform.**

A: The uniform was a long white flannel skirt, because the styles that year were skirts to the ankles, and a navy blue jersey blazer. It wasn't a bad uniform, as uniforms go. But Helen Wainwright and I were children, and we were very small, as I've said before. They had to design a little skirt for us because we would have looked so ridiculous, as if we were playing house, if we'd come out in these long



flannel skirts. So they designed two little pleated skirts for us. We walked separately, as I remember, in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.

**Q: And then what did you have?**

A: An insignia on our lapel.

**Q: You had a blouse and a jacket, a blazer?**

A: Yes, and then they didn't have any hats for the girls. We wore men's hats, straw hats.

**Q: And what kind of shoes?**

A: Just oxford type, white.

**Q: White? Did they hurt your feet?**

A: No, these were real oxfords for walking, all white, I think. I have to go look. I have a picture of it. I have to see what kind of shoes we wore. We did look rather silly in our hats. They were too big for us, and we had to stuff them with paper so they'd fit, you know. They were men's hats, the smallest size, and we had the USA insignia.

**Q: And the swimsuits?**

A: They gave us suits to wear that were the official uniform. We just died when we saw them. They were made of mercerized cotton, which is transparent of course. You can see right through that, and when it's wet, it clings. And it had sleeves. They had sleeves to the elbow. You could see through it, never mind that, but it was down to your elbow.

**Q: Sleeves to the elbow, and like a scooped neck?**

A: Yes, a scooped neck, it was pretty high. Then there were legs down to above the knee, thigh length. They were just awful looking. So, we got around that.

**Q: They were like a leotard?**

A: Oh, but nothing like a leotard. They didn't fit like a leotard to begin with. When they were wet they fit too well. But we wore our own suits. The girls used to wear black silk bathing suits for racing, only for racing, and they also are rather transparent. But we always had the little skirt. These suits that they gave us to wear over there didn't have skirts. They were just to the elbow, to the knee, and one piece. They clung, and the girls wore their black silk racing suits to compete. Helen and I did not compete in swimming that time. But the next time we did.

**Q: So, the divers were just given these funny outfits? But you all decided to wear your own.**

A: Not all of us, all of us swimmers. We wore our own because we looked so terrible in these suits. We

laughed when we tried them on. We just went into hysterics, it was so ridiculous. So, we wore our own suits. For diving, because of modesty, I guess, we wore wool suits.

**Q: Did you wear caps?**

A: Yes, yes most of the time. Most of us had short hair, but a lot of the girls in 1920 had long hair too. Alice Lord Landon had hair down to here. We wore caps. But they weren't as efficient as the ones they wear nowadays. They weren't latex, or whatever they wear now. They were just plain rubber caps. They deteriorated very rapidly.

I was going to tell you more about the pool. It had been a canal where they had canoe races, or sculling races, and there were wooden boards on each side. At one end they had just taken boards and put them across one end for 50 meters. And the diving was in the center of all this. It wasn't at the deep end, or one end, I guess it would be the same all over. I never found out. And I never wanted to because it was muddy. It was so black. The water was absolutely black. And, as I told you, it rained most of the summer. So, it was cold, and black, and very uninviting. We'd team up and help each other, the girls that would swim would rub down the divers and the divers would help with the swimmers. There were no hot showers. We couldn't get warmed up. That summer I don't think I ever warmed up, ever felt warm.

**Q: Did you go on any sightseeing trips?**

A: Yes, we went to the battlefields when the Games were over. That was out in Ypres. I forget the names of the other towns that were just completely destroyed. There was nothing left, absolutely nothing. That was absolutely devastating, nothing remaining, just rubble.

We were advised to buy wooden shoes, they were selling them everywhere. People were wearing them because there was so much rain, and it made thick, thick mud. And our shoes were tied on, I think, so that they wouldn't fall off and get stuck in the mud. We walked around the battlefields. Nobody told us not to pick up things, so we ended up with half-a-dozen German helmets. I finally got down to one that I brought home. I picked up lots of bullets. I don't know if they were exploded or not. We just picked up anything that was available. I looked in all the pill boxes. There was a thin vial of oil floating everywhere – on the water, everything was covered with water, and then floating on top of that was floating some oil. And I looked in one little place and I picked up a boot. There were lots of heavy German boots around. I picked up one that had a foot in it, so I dropped it in a hurry. A decomposed foot.

They restored Ypres. In particular, the guild halls are just as they were. They look marvelous. They had the plans and restored them beautifully

**Q: What kind of dives did you do in competition?**

A: Oh, I forgot. They were absolutely crazy. There were 10 dives, six compulsories and four optionals. But then they had a gimmick that's never been done before or since. It was called post dives. They pulled two dives from a hat before the contest. Nobody knew what they were going to be. And those two dives bothered us more than anything. It was an uncertainty of not knowing what you are going to be doing that upset us and confused us.

**Q: You had a running-swan and a standing-swan?**

A: That was what they called high diving. Theirs was called platform, and ours was the springboard diving. We could have done more with difficulty in the high dives, and the high divers would have profited. They would have walked away with it. They were so much better. In the springboard they had written the rules. The American divers had nothing to say about it. And of course, we had, by far, the best dives. The men were way ahead of the European men. And the women too. Although we weren't as good as the men. Men have more opportunities. They have clubs. They have the New York Athletic Club, and they have clubs where women couldn't swim. They didn't have any women's clubs to swim. Our club was a movable feast. We never knew where we would be, wherever we were at.

Yes, where am I? The dives, anyway, the two dives were very, very important, as it turned out, because Helen Wainwright was leading. By the way, there were no computers. When they judged the diving, it was all by hand. They had to total it all up after. There were seven or eight individual judges, and one master card that would hold all of the scores at the end. It took forever to find out who had won. But, I am back to my last two dives. Helen was ahead of me, which I had expected. She had won the tryouts. She'd been diving a long time. The first dive was some kind of a gainer, I think. What do they call a reverse dive now? And whatever it was, we got through that all right. But the last one sounds easy. But from three meters, 10 feet, it's not so easy. A running front somersault on a layout. That means that you go in feet first. It was almost in slow motion, except that I'd never heard that word before because we didn't have slow-motion cameras. I was the last diver, and I watched all of them go over on their faces. Helen really ruined her dive. She did a one-and-a-quarter dive, and the others missed it. I was the last one and I said no matter what happens I am going to just do it as slow as I can. So I did. I just went around like that. I was the only one who got that particular dive. So that did it, I didn't know it. We went home and had lunch, we didn't know who had won. We went back to the YWCA where we had our meals and had lunch.

**Q: And you had no idea?**

A: Didn't know. Finally a man came in, one of the officials, and he walked over to Helen Wainwright and put his arms around her. I thought, "Well, there goes the ball game!" And what he told her was, "Don't be sad, but you were second." And then he came to me and said congratulations. There was nobody there but our team. I missed all of the excitement that I see on television now. You know, running around the pool, getting your medals, and all of that. They didn't have that in those days at all.

The other thing was that in my contest, it was the last day.

**Q: The last day?**

A: Uh-huh. It was a Sunday, and it was a rainy morning. It rained almost every morning. But it was a rainy, miserable, cold day, and there was almost nobody in the stands. Nobody was going out on a Sunday morning to sit in the rain and see this. But then we went back to the stadium because we all wanted to see the scores. We all went over it ourselves, checking on each other, adding it up. You know, because a .10 of a point could be pretty important, so we were all there. I wasn't good at math. Our manager was good, she was very good, so she double checked it. So, that was my glorious Olympic achievement.

**Q: Let's get to how you were given the medals right now.**

A: Yes, they had a different system in those days of giving out the medals. We all gathered for the Closing Ceremony, the last day of the Olympiad, in the stadium. It was a gorgeous day, a parade of all nations came in carrying their flags. We lined up behind our flags in rows, and then our names were called in different sports to go and get our medals. Helen Wainwright, and, I think, the third girl was Thelma Payne from Portland, Oregon, and I went up to receive our medals from the king of Belgium, King Albert I, and his two sons Leopold and Charles. Leopold gave the second prize medals and Charles gave the third. It's lucky he just had two sons, isn't it? It worked out nicely. But he congratulated me, the king of Belgium, and asked how old I was. Unfortunately, I said, "What?" I could have jumped on my sword with embarrassment, but I didn't even say pardon me, I said, "What?" He spoke fluent English, but he did have a French accent. I wasn't used to it. So, that was the finish of our competition. We used to go everyday to watch the other sports. The only sports for women were in aquatics: swimming and diving. And it remained that way through the following Olympiad. It was not until 1928, in Amsterdam, that they had track and field for women for the first time. But that's another story.

We used to go out everyday and watch our teammates compete. We'd practice in the morning, and we'd go and watch them compete. The swimming followed the track and field and the other sports, which were at different venues, and not as easy for us to reach. The track and field was exciting, Charlie Paddock, who was in "Chariots of Fire," if you remember, was defeated by [Harold] Abrahams four years later, won in 1920. He was a good friend and we were very pleased that he won. And I think he set a world record. He was a very colorful athlete. Lots of personality.

We had our cheering section, the yell was rah, rah, ray, USA, A-M-E-R-I-C-A, rah, rah, rah. We were all very friendly and sociable with other countries. They'd do our cheers, and we'd do their cheers. The French cheer, I remember, was *un, deux, trois; un, deux, trois; un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq*. And they'd clap their hands when they did it. And the Swedish one was *hiya, fia, siscomus*, something like that. *Da ditz seissmur*. No Swede would recognize that, but it was like that. And then *hiya, hiya, hiya*. We were very fond of the Swedes. They were good swimmers, and they were friendly. They all spoke English and we got along beautifully. We'd do theirs and we'd do the English cheer, but I can't remember it. We'd cheer for each other, it was a very friendly atmosphere.

**Q: Did anyone interviewing you after you won your gold?**

A: Oh, yes. In Antwerp. Not so much in Antwerp, but we had a whole group of reporters with us. Of course, they had the wireless. They could use that.

**Q: What kind of questions would they ask you?**

A: They were pretty well versed in sports. They knew the right questions to ask. They were more impressed with the fact that we were the first girls to compete in the Olympics, and that we had won so easily. And that we would do a sport that was new. Lots of people dove off platforms, but not many did springboard. It was quite new to the Europeans. They didn't know about it.

**Q: How did your parents take all this, you were 14 years old?**

A: Well, they were back here at home.

**Q: Yes, I know, but were they enthusiastic?**

A: Oh yes, they thought it was great. They were used to thinking of me as a dancer because I concentrated on dancing, because I was built for it, and because I loved it, and because I may have even had a little talent for it. But, I must have had something because I got some of my lessons for half price, which was like a scholarship in those days. They always encouraged me, but they were more interested in my health, that my health improved. And my mother was way ahead of her time. She was a suffragette and she was active in getting the women's vote. She marched in a parade down 5th Avenue. You don't know what it was to be a suffragette in those days. They were subjected to ridicule. Men would laugh at them, and whistle at them, and make fun of them. She stuffed envelopes, and worked in the office, and did all these things while I was doing laps.

**Q: She must have been so proud.**

A: Yes, she got both of her things that summer. I think votes for women passed, and I won in Antwerp. So she got her wishes. She was into health. She had me eating graham bread, which was like graham crackers. Everybody else was eating white bread. This was a new thing. This was coming in then. And fruits and vegetables, mostly cereals. The others were eating a lot of junk food. They didn't know any better, and they'd eat a lot of fried things. People didn't know in those days. It wasn't as common. Health was not that much of a big deal in those days. They didn't realize how important it is. How important it was, as long as you were strong and husky. Well, I never was that. I had to win on skill more than strength. So, this was important. She always had me drinking milk. I was a picky little eater too. I didn't want to eat. But I got over that. I eventually grew out of it and grew up. But she used to read these things on training. She wasn't out there cheering for me. She was a mouse. She was very quiet. But she wasn't out there like some parents were. Not very many. They were well-behaved, but there was always rivalry.

**Q: What did you do after the Games? Did you come back home, or did they take you around?**

A: Oh, we came home by way of Robin's barn, as they say. We got on another slow boat. I forget the name.

**Q: There wasn't any thought of you staying over there?**

A: No, but it was getting to be September and the college athletes were getting very nervous because college was starting without them. There was no way for them to go home unless they paid their own way to go on a fast ship. So, I didn't care if we stayed forever. I was loving it. Oh, we went to Paris after the games.

**Q: That's what I wanted to know. What did you do?**

A: We competed in the Seine River. The Seine was also dark, and for some reason there was a lot of publicity about this. They had to get an angle, so one headline in the paper said, 'Revenge!,' with a big exclamation point after it. There was a French girl swimmer who was very good, but she was in no class with Ethelda Bliedtrey. She couldn't, she was nowhere near. And Ethelda was a nice girl. We all were

fairly good sports in those days. Nobody ever said an unkind word. And if you did, you were ostracized. But nobody ever gossiped or anything. We were a pretty decent bunch. What was I going to say about this French girl? Ethelda said, "How am I going to handle this," she said, "What am I going to do? I don't want to embarrass the girl in her own hometown, Paris." So, she swam without using her feet much. She slowed down so she didn't beat her too badly. She could have beaten her twice as much if she would. We all gave exhibitions, and they didn't have a springboard, so I was out of luck. Here's the great champion, just won the first Olympic-diving springboard championship, and there was no board!

They had built some kind of a contraption for the high divers. I don't know how they envisioned this, but it slanted upwards. And so, you were standing with your heels down and your toes up. I didn't do this. It was built on top of a derrick, and it was over 40 feet. I told you I was always a little chicken about heights. That's for posterity. But Helen Meany and Alice Lord Landon went up there, and they dove off. They didn't care how high anything was. They didn't have any fear at all. They did pretty well. People were quite impressed. And then to make up for it, Helen Wainwright did some little fancy synchronized swimming that they wouldn't recognize nowadays as such. But it was new to the French at least, and to most people.

We did a little act in the Seine River. I didn't realize, but by 1930 I was going to return there. I performed while I was there with Johnny Weissmuller. I was his partner. But that's way in the future.

We did a lot of tours and sightseeing, Reubens' paintings in the cathedral. In Paris, we did a lot of sightseeing. We were thrilled to be in Paris in the summer. The other girls, the older girls, went to the Follies Bergère. Helen and I were not allowed to go, and one of the chaperones stayed at home with us. We were very upset that we couldn't go to the theater. Actually, when I finally did go, it was really very tame, no more than the Zeigfeld Follies in New York would be. But we went to the Louvre and all those things.

**Q: And the Eiffel Tower and the Champs-Élysées.**

A: It was so wonderful in those days because there were so few cars and there was no parking on the Champs-Élysées at all. It was just a beautiful avenue, the way it was built, expected for it to be forever, but from the Arc de Triomphe to the Louvre it was just a clear, beautiful vision. Helen and I went up to the top. So did the other girls, but we were the ones who raced each other down the Eiffel Tower, all the way down. I guess Helen won, she was stronger, but we did it. The next day, our knees were sore.

**Q: Were you introduced to French food, did you have crepes, anything like that? What did you eat that you remember?**

A: Yes, yes, yes, well, we were pretty much always in training. Even, you know, in our thoughts, we didn't ever go over board too much. But one thing we missed in training were things like banana splits. Oh, and we were just at that age where we craved those things, you know. And so, we went to Austin one day to go sightseeing, and we found a man there who had stayed after the war and married a French woman, or a Belgium woman. He was running a little ice cream shop on the boardwalk, and we taught him how to make a banana split. Oh that was heaven. We went crazy, and, of course, the French pastry is pretty remarkable. In Belgium it's just as good as the French. It is French, of course. That was wonderful.

We couldn't have any when we were in training, and our meals were at the Hostess House. I suppose we could have sneaked out and had something, but we didn't. I don't think we did, maybe a bar of chocolate, or something, which is wonderful, too. Belgium chocolate, oh, it's marvelous! We were pretty good. We stayed in training until afterward and then banana splits and ice cream was wonderful, and cookies, and things. We had our sweet tooth then, it wouldn't appeal to me now, but at that time it was very important.

Coming home on the ship. . . A lot of the team quit and went home, I guess on their own money. They wanted to get back to college. A lot of the men needed to get back. Some of the girls, as well, but the whole team stayed together. We stopped at Cherbourg, and Calais. We were just dying to get home. This was all very interesting. The beaches in France are wonderful, as you know. There was a particular one near Calais, I think it was, that we liked so much. The whole team went out there and we went surfing, or at least body surfing. And all the Hawaiians were there, Duke and everybody. That was wonderful. We went a couple of days. And then in one harbor, all the swimmers dove overboard and swam around the harbor.

I can't remember which one, but one particular harbor was filled with jellyfish. There were so many that the water looked pale blue. Then when we looked closer, we could see that they were jellyfish swimming around. So, we didn't swim there. But we went in the ocean, and it was so wonderful after that experience with the canal. In Paris, the Seine wasn't too agreeable. We did see a lot of Belgium. We went to Autun, not only Autun, but to Gent, and to Brugge. People took their time in those days, it's about the same. I think Brugge has not changed very much, they keep it protected.

We came home on a ship. When we got in the harbor, there was a big to do, and a welcome home, and the fireboats were out, and bands playing, and great excitement. There was a bunch of publicity in the papers. The papers were great in those days. There weren't many tabloids, I don't remember any tabloids. There was great rivalry with newspapers around the world: *The Sun*, *The Tribune*, *The Times*. There was a parade down 5th Avenue, which was very exciting. Instead of going up the way as they do now with tickertapes and things, we started at Central Park South and 59th Street, and marched down the avenue to city hall. That's five miles. We wore our uniforms. That was a very exciting year.

**Q: It must have been just wonderful. Was it? And then what happened when you arrived at the end, at City Hall?**

A: At City Hall? At City Hall there were all the dignitaries. About 42nd Street my hat blew off, that stupid straw hat, and I went chasing after it, and it went cartwheeling down the street ahead of me, down 5th Avenue and I was running after it like crazy. Then I leaned over to pick it up and all the change fell out of my breast pocket. I had my subway fare home. We were all on the subways in those days, and nobody ever thought about it being dangerous. So, a lot of women grabbed me and they started hugging me and kissing me while I was trying to pick up my coins from the pavement. I had to run to catch my group in the parade. It was a crazy experience for me. It was the thing I remember out of it all. They were hugging me and kissing me and making a big to do.

So, we got to city hall and the mayor and vice mayor were there, I guess, and all the reporters were waiting for us. Then there was a banquet for us at the old Waldorf. The old Waldorf was at 34th Street and 5th Avenue. This new one is on Park Avenue now. But, they took down the old Waldorf and they put up the Empire State Building in its place. Anyway, there was a big banquet in that

wonderful, old ballroom there with the gilded boxes on the sides where people sat and looked down at what was going on below.

**Q: Did your parents get to witness all of this?**

A: Oh yes, yes. But they were never in the forefront. They never pushed themselves. My mother was very quiet. My mother was a teacher. She had a degree in teaching, but she didn't teach in New York. My father was in the Navy. He was reserved, quiet, I mean, not reserved. They enjoyed it. They didn't become obnoxious.

**Q: Did they get to go to the Waldorf?**

A: Oh yes, yes to the banquet. We saw all our friends that we had lost track of. One group on the team coming home was so attractive that none of the girls wanted to get off, it was the Annapolis crew. They had won in Antwerp. They went over on a battleship. The USS *Frederick*, it was a large cruiser. Large for those days at least. The Navy crew went in style, and I think maybe have joined up together with their Annapolis cruise in the summer, that they always take. And they gave a dance for us when we were in Antwerp. They had the 15 girls and a couple of hundred midshipmen. That was fun too. So, we knew them slightly from that. Then when they got on the ship, we thought, 'Oh, boy, this is great!' They came home separately. They stayed after for some event, competed somewhere else afterwards. So, we all got together coming home. So, when they transferred us, we didn't want to go.

There was not only the first crew, but there was the second crew, and all the groups that went with them, as well. So 15 girls, it just about came out right. There was a coxswain, too. The coxswain was bigger than I, but not much. His name was Cupee. Cupee they called him, Cupee Clark, because he was so small. Anyway, the trip home was not memorable because it was just perfect. Nothing happened to remember except that one night I had a lot of dessert. There were rum tarts. I loved rum tarts, I never had them before. I didn't realize how strong they were, at least for a little kid. So, I was stealing everybody's, nobody else liked them. I was eating all these rum tarts and got tipsy and had to go to my room. But I thought, you know, I was just eating dessert, I didn't know, I knew there was liquor in it, but I didn't think it was that powerful.

And we'd had champagne too. The city of Antwerp gave a party for us, it was held in a beautiful garden with a covering of some sort over the roof, and flowers, flowers everywhere, and plants. It was an enormous to do, and they served champagne. So all of the athletes were drinking champagne. So that was quite a treat. Children [there] always are raised to drink wine, so there wasn't any big deal. But it was for us. We thought it was very, very naughty. People didn't smoke in those day very much either.

**Q: I was going to ask you about that.**

A: None of the girls smoked, but I think it wasn't because of the training anymore than it was that it wasn't considered ladylike. Mata Hara smoked a cigarette. But the girls and women didn't smoke in public, especially. They never did. It wasn't de rigueur. You just didn't do it.

**Q: So when you came home, did you go back to school right away?**



A: What to do with me. Here I was 14, Olympic champion, had a tremendous amount of publicity, enormous, and my dancing had gone a little bit to the side. I didn't quite have the keen interest that I did before I went to the Olympics. Although in those days there were no professional sports and it was kind of . . . There was a stigma connected to professional sports. I can't think of, outside of Annette Kellerman, who was in a class by herself, anyone you'd call a professional. She was a professional, but she was unique. She wasn't competing or anything like that.

I did some dancing. I was awfully well-known around New York. This isn't conceit, it's just a fact. We had so much publicity. I was recognizable on the street. And I made appearances at lots of things. I didn't get paid for it. I was just a dedicated amateur. We all were. Even our, you know, our coach didn't take any money. None of us would dream of taking any money. We'd take presents if somebody gave us something. Amateurs in those days couldn't accept a prize of more than \$30 because that was what the gold medal cost, I think. It had to be about equal to the value of a medal. They gave prizes instead of medals – it couldn't be a Ford car.

**Q: Tell me about your schooling when you returned in 1920.**

A: Well, we got home in September. I stayed around because I was much in demand to appear at all sorts of charities and publicity things.

**Q: Did you learn to make a speech?**

A: No, I was always very self-conscious. I tried it a couple of times, but I wasn't pleased with my results. Anyway, my mother thought that perhaps I might go to boarding school and get away from all of the publicity and all of the turmoil. So, she sent me up to Greenwich, Connecticut. It's called Eli Court. It was a very nice school, about 100 girls, and there was no swimming pool. I was isolated from swimming for a school year. When I came back the next spring, everybody had improved, and I had gone backwards. So I had a lot of make-up to do. That summer I didn't do well at all. I got third in the nationals, I believe. I was just out too long. It's a good excuse.

**Q: Let's go back to the school. Were you a celebrity at the school?**

A: Well, they recognized me when I came in, yes. School had already started, but I came in. Yes, the girls recognized me. They said, "Oh, there's Aileen Riffin." But, I never really talked about swimming. I didn't rub it in or talk about it, discuss it.

**Q: Were you very disappointed that you had to go away?**

A: No, no, it was a new adventure. There wasn't much to do with swimming, or anything pertaining to swimming at that time. The fall is a dull season, anyway, in the sport. So, I went away, and I am not a bad student. I worked hard and made the honor roll the following June, which pleased me because my education had been interrupted so many times. I had private tutors, but that wouldn't make up. So, the following summer my mother said finishing school almost finished me, and I decided that I wanted to continue with my career, my non-existent career.

So, I continued. I did some dancing and things like that. It was private tutoring still, and I went in more seriously for swimming. And I am beginning to grow now. I am beginning to develop and become a

young lady. So, it was a transition period for me. I had lots of dates when I was getting older. I never felt left out. I have wonderful friends, life-long friends that I made then that I've kept forever, 'till death do us part. And I started going out a lot on dates when I was about 17, 16. In those days, of course, the young man always came to your home and was introduced to your parents. And they would say, "Be home by 10 o'clock." All of that, that I don't think people do nowadays as much. But Prohibition had come in and this was a whole new ballgame. It was the speakeasies. This was a whole transition in American history which changed it. I shouldn't get into that.

**Q: Yeah, yeah. I want to hear about it.**

A: It was a time when people stopped entertaining in their homes because they couldn't buy alcohol and they would go out to get it. There would be bootleg in a good speakeasy. It would be smuggled in from Canada, or Bermuda, or the West Indies, somewhere. Lots of people would go to Havana, if they could afford to, and just have a whirl. It was a very unpopular law, which of course, was repealed 12 years later. It really changed everybody's lives, because we met in speakeasies. You say that it sounds terrible, but there were very nice ones. There was the Stork Club, for instance. It was a speakeasy. They got their start during Prohibition. The 21 Club, which is still going, was a very fashionable place to go. We always wore evening clothes to go out when we went out on dates. Almost always evening dresses. The fellows would wear tuxedos, or else they'd wear a dark business suit. Much different from now. People are so casual.

And we'd go dancing on top of the roof gardens in the summer, and that was just wonderful. One of the things I remember well was Paul Whitman's orchestra, which was my favorite. And in the summer, he played on top of the Biltmore, I think. There were a lot of roof gardens. There was one on the St. Regis. Each one had a special orchestra. We'd choose the orchestra that we wanted to hear. Paul Whitman was famous not only because of his playing, but he had a great band of about 32 pieces. But "Rhapsody in Blue" was written for him and for his band. So, we heard it first. We'd go up there and listen to this. Everybody would stop dancing when he played that particular number. And later, when I turned professional, I was in Florida, and there was a big cocktail party for him, and a big buffet dinner for Paul Whitman and, who wrote "Rhapsody in Blue?" Gershwin. And they were both present. And then we went over to Boca Raton, I think, and there was an outdoor concert given by Paul Whiteman. Of course, the orchestras always dressed too. They were in evening clothes, and Mrs. Carl Fisher presented each one with a gold watch. But this was my introduction to jazz music.

There were lots and lots of trips. We went to Europe as guests of the Cunard Lines. That was the number one trip that I ever had. That was simply marvelous because they did everything in the world for us. All they required of us, and they didn't even say so, was to swim in their pool everyday, which we did by choice. The boats and ships in those days were so large and so luxurious, the service was so marvelous with the deck chairs and things. I think they've gotten away from that, at least with the cruises that I have been on. There is not quite the service that there used to be. We were in London for four or five days and gave exhibitions there. One was the Royal Automobile Club, but this has nothing to do with what I was doing. I was awfully busy. I still did fashion modeling.

**Q: What did they pay?**

A: \$3-\$4, that's all. But a dancing lesson would be a dollar or two in a class, so it would help to pay. I think the Metropolitan was \$30 a month, but that was three-times-a-week. Mostly for catalogs, and Sears, and things like that. But it brought in some money.

**Q: How did you get connected up with this?**

A: Oh, I went to the professional children's school. Half the kids in there were registered at agencies. They'd go through books with pictures, and select somebody, and they would call you, and you would go or you wouldn't go. I was even in some movies on the East Coast. There was a big studio over in Hoboken, New Jersey. I was in several pictures. They would come to school sometimes, and they would pick out kids for the movies. One I was in was "Way Down East," if that makes any sense. There were only two children in that. I was one of them; the other was a boy. That was up in Marmaroneck, New York. And that was fun because it was outdoors in the wintertime, and we had sleighs with sleigh bells, and all of the atmosphere. There was a lot of that because it was supposed to be about old New England.

I was always working at something. During the war, this is going back before the Olympics, I was in an act, raising funds for the Liberty Loan Drive. This was the way they raised money for the war. We played in all the theaters around New York. I even played the Palace. I can always say that I played the Palace because it was a famous theater. I felt very important going in the stage door with all the famous people who were playing, whose names I forget. The epitome of success was to appear at the Palace. It was a series of still pictures, life-size, when we were on the stage. It depicted posters that were billboards, magazine articles – all of them asking you to buy Liberty Bonds. So, we were life statues, sort of pictures on the stage. So, that's all I did. I just held the pose for about three minutes. That's all I did. I was in two or three of the pictures. One of the ones still being used is the one of Uncle Sam with his tall hat saying, "We want you," or "I want you." People think that was World War II, but it was a World War I picture. It goes back a long time, that particular poster. But I was doing things like that. I think I got \$25 dollars a week for that, and I thought I was in heaven.

**Q: Big bucks, huh?**

A: Well, they were. Especially when you were 12 years old. Even big bucks now for some unspoiled kid to get. But we played in all the theaters around New York, sort of honky-tonk theaters, and others like the Palace. New York, Brooklyn, New Jersey. That took some weeks, couple of months probably, two shows a day, in the small theaters, before and after the movie. I've done an awful lot of professional jobs.

**Q: So when did you graduate from high school?**

A: I never did. I just took courses on my own when I wanted too. I always wanted to learn. I had an inquiring mind. My mother was always an inspiration. I never saw her without a book in her hand. She always had books everywhere. And each one was always the finest, the best book I ever read. She read more philosophy books, and not as much fiction as people do now. She kept up with everything. She was way ahead. But for reading, we all read things like the "Forsyth Saga," which was made into a television show. We'd wait for the next calls for the supplement to come out with that because it ran through a whole family, several generations. James Joyce was popular. His writing, his books, had to be smuggled in. *Ulysses* was one. I sneaked it back for a friend of mine when I went to Europe. It's so silly. Now no one would think it was daring or anything. Let's see where am I. Oh, it was training. I was always swimming.

**Q: You continued training. Where did you train?**

A: That's it. There wasn't any place in New York. Mostly during the summer we'd go to public baths. We'd go anywhere we could find a pool, and there weren't many to find. We always had our Wednesday-night practice with Mr. Handley, the coach.

**Q: And did you practice swimming and diving, or just swimming?**

A: No, both. I really liked swimming because diving was so difficult, because there was no board, and there was no pool, and there was no coach. I don't know how we ever got where we did under such difficulties. But swimming, you could swim. And in the summers we'd swim a lot.

Then there were national championships, and we'd go to those. They'd come more in the spring. There would always be trips. We were always taking short trips. I think one year we went to Buffalo seven times and we said, enough already! Each time we went to see the Niagara Falls. On one of the trips, [for] Johnny Weissmuller and his partner Stubby Kruger [it] was the first time they'd seen snow. They were rolling around in the snow, and cavorting, and having a good time.

I never had the opportunity to train properly. The swimming went because there were no pools. There were pools, but they weren't for women. A few men's clubs had pools. They started building hotels with pools, but not in time for me to practice. There was one well-known one at the Shelton Hotel in New York, which was just behind the Waldorf Astoria now. The present Waldorf has a great pool. We used to swim there, but that was too late, that came later. There wasn't really anyplace except public baths. It was a frustrating experience. We were so anxious to practice, but there was no place to go. We did go on lots of trips. When we were on trips, we would practice, and train, and try to get fit because the other cities had pools. But New York – I guess the land is so valuable, they couldn't afford to build swimming pools. Finally, we are building up to the '24 Olympiad, and I was a much better swimmer then. I was probably the best diver at that time. We had our tryouts for the 1924 Olympiad in Paris. We had the tryouts at the Briercliff Lodge, which was a hotel on the Hudson River in New York. And that was a very good board and a very good area.

**Q: What were the new dives you were doing?**

A: Oh, the rules had improved greatly. The Americans had gotten in there and helped to write some of the rules. There were only 10 dives. They eliminated the post dives, and there were six compulsory, I think, and four optional dives. And in this Olympiad you had to choose, no that came later, you could do any six dives that you wanted to do. Did I say four? Four voluntary? Six compulsory and four voluntary, I forget. It was six optional dives. And it was the swan dive, the back dive, the traditional ones – backjack, but they were recognizable dives. They weren't like those crazy ones that we did at the first Olympics. These were really decent dives, but simple. Those were the compulsories. But the voluntary dives, again, they didn't have categories. One girl who competed and got third place did five of one type of dive for voluntary dives, which was not fair. She didn't win, but she placed doing this. She did five in one category – five gainers. She did a standing gainer – or a running standard – a somersault, a one-and-a-half – that's four – a pike, and I don't know. She did five of those, and one other dive from a different category, which is really not a fair contest. So, that was changed after that Olympiad. We are making progress, but we're not there yet.

**Q: How did you learn if you did not have a coach? Did you make them up?**

A: We made up dives as we went along.

**Q: Did you say, “I’m going to try another flip?”**

A: Well, we’d do like the way they do now. They would include a twist in their dive. They do the part of the somersault first – it’s still bewildering to me. I don’t know how they do it. They put one arm over their head, and twist, and they end up finishing their somersault. It’s a mixed-up dive. We’d do, say a one-and-a-half, and then we’d do a full twist after it. Two separate dives, but combined. Or a half twist, a one-and-a-half with a half twist, or something. We’d invent these as we went along. And we’d follow the men’s initiative when we had a chance to see the men. We were never in a meet with the men, very seldom. We’d go up to the New York Athletic Club – women weren’t allowed to swim there – but we’d go to the meets and we’d watch these men diving, and we’d get some pointers from that. That was by example. That was how we learned. We didn’t have anything. It was very, very frustrating because by the time the second Olympiad came, I was just 18, just barely, in ‘24, and very excited about going to Paris. I had already been there, but I was excited about going again. And being 18 and in Paris is enough to please anyone. This was the time of Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald. They were all living in Paris.

**Q: They were all living in Paris. Art Buchwald was living there, at one time, a little later.**

A: Yes, he lived there. He came later because I used to read his column in the *Tribune*, but that was after. Everybody wanted to go to Paris. And the place to go right then was the Lido Venice, which I eventually did later. But I am trying to think of the summer resorts people went to. The south of France was the in place. People weren’t traveling so much to Germany. That became popular after people had forgotten about World War I. I think that was one reason. The German language came back a little bit. During World War I, you know, nobody even ate frankfurters. They would kick little dachshunds, poor little dogs, because they were German, and the operas at the Metropolitan, the German operas, were canceled. People took it seriously. They didn’t even eat sauerkraut. So people didn’t go as much to Germany then as they are doing now. And France, Paris, was the place. All the art was from there, avant-garde art. I’ve always been interested in art through my mother. She’d take me to galleries when I was about 4, in Washington, DC, in the beginning, so I’d always go to the galleries too.

But to get back to the tryouts, I won the tryouts that time. A girl named Elizabeth Becker, I think, was second. She was from Philadelphia. I forget who was third. And Helen Meany, as usual, won the high dive. Although, again, she didn’t make the cut in the heats. Alice Lord Landon was married by this time. She married a man she met on the Olympic team, a big Olympic romance. He won the high jump. His name was Dick Langdon, and he went to Yale, and that was an Olympic romance. There were some more later. But, by the time the next Olympics came she was out, and Ethelda was out. Ethelda had turned professional. So there was a whole new crop, except in the diving. It takes longer to become a diver. Takes more years to learn to dive than it does to swim. So, we were just reaching our peak. That was the best, when I was at my best. My particular best was that summer, and we went over on a better ship. I can’t even remember which ship.

**Q: How did you do at the trials?**

A: At the Briercliff on the Hudson, I won the trials. I won the springboard diving. I didn’t enter the high dive this time because I also was in the backstroke. I didn’t try out in the backstroke because our

manager said, “You’ve already won the diving and your place is assured. If you don’t compete in the backstroke, you’ll give another girl a chance to go to Paris.” So, I didn’t tryout in the backstroke, but I said I wanted to compete, and he said, “Yeah, that’s fine, but you’ll just give another girl a chance.” So, I did that, stayed out of the tryouts.

Everything was wonderful in Paris. They had a new stadium. It was up past Montmartre, up in that vicinity. It was called La Tourelle, the tower. The trick was that we had only one hour to practice. Each country was allotted one hour. Because the American teams were the largest, we got the best hour, which was 11 to 12, because it was warmer, and we were more in the mood to swim than we would have been at five a.m. We had a long commute. I’ll tell you about that in a minute. We stayed at a wonderful place. We practiced an hour a day and then they’d blow a whistle. The next country would be lined up ready to dive in. So, they were precise, on time, and ready to go, and we had to get out. I would be diving all morning that hour, the men and women were diving together, and they were doing the same thing again – they had the diving tower in the pool with the swimmers. So, we always had to have that look out watching out to see that we didn’t dive on anybody. I was only in springboard this time because I swam the backstroke. I never got a chance to do the backstroke.

When they blew the whistle, I’d say, “Oh, I didn’t do my swim,” and I’d do a hundred yards. I’d cover the distance. I’d dive in and come back as fast as a bunny. As fast as I could. That would be about one minute, and that was my practice. Just covering the distance. If I had been seriously concentrating on the backstroke, I’d have done perhaps a mile or quarter of a mile, at least, or half mile, and some sprints, and some turns, and some starts, and all the things you did to get in training. All I did was two laps everyday. That’s all I had. I was almost certain to get second, because a girl named Sybil Bauer was four seconds ahead of me. She was from the Illinois Athletic Club, and she went to Northwestern University. She was the best backstroke swimmer by far, and she held all the records. But I was always the second best, and I was as far ahead of the third girls.

But when the day of the swim came to do the backstroke, I never saw the other countries compete, so I had no idea how they were doing. There was an English girl, and she beat me by a .10 of a second. But I didn’t even know she was alive. It wasn’t like Antwerp, where we all watched everybody. On this second Olympiad, we had to get out of the pool and out of the area. We always had our bus waiting, and we’d run to catch the bus to go to lunch. So, I never had a chance. That’s an excuse, but it’s a valid one. On the ship as well. We didn’t get any training, so it showed. I didn’t do as well in the hat as I hoped. I was so sure of being second. Not in a cocky way, but just by statistics. I was always the second best. I always competed in backstroke to get points for my club in the national championships, because getting second is getting a few points for the club, and I liked the backstroke. Buck Dawson down at the Hall of Fame said that I was a natural backstroke swimmer.

**Q: So how were the medals awarded after the backstroke?**

A: Again we went to the stadium.

**Q: Did you find out the results immediately this time?**

A: No. On the backstroke, yes. We knew that immediately because I don’t think they had the boards in those days, but we knew when we saw the times. And I knew and I was disappointed.

**Q: And what about the diving competition?**

A: We completed our dives on a lovely, beautiful sunny day. I thought that I'd won and I went down to change my clothes. I thought after a while, "This is strange, I am completely alone in the dressing room. If I had won, somebody would come and tell me." So I went up and I was prepared to be second. They said Betty Becker had won. It was very close. I did my best. I have no excuses. I won the tryouts, so I have no excuse. Betty was just better. She was a very versatile diver. She was also in the high dive, but not that year, I don't think. I think it was in '28 that she won the high diving, I guess. And Helen Meany finally came through in '28 after three Olympiads and won the springboard.

When we arrived in Paris, our residence was a place called Rocquencourt, and it belonged to a French nobleman who had been with Napoleon and his armies. Prince Murat was rewarded with this estate. It was out past Versailles, you know. Which is about an hour out of Paris. This time we had a bus. There were more events for women, so there were more girls. Included was backstroke and breaststroke. In the first Olympics there were only three events for women. Three freestyle events. So, we had a larger team. On the estate, which was gorgeous, the girls stayed in the gatehouse belonging to the gatekeeper. And it was fully equipped for a family to live there, but they weren't. We took that over. We leased it for the duration. There was a beautiful chateau there, just lovely, but the officials stayed in that. All the officials stayed at Rocquencourt. But they were close. The gatehouse was not far. There were winding paths and rose gardens. It was a heavenly place.

All the men stayed at the top of the hill. They built wooden, square houses, like barracks, and the men slept there. They served meals at one big dining room. And we all ate at once, 400 of us in the dining rooms. It was quite a commotion. We tried not to be late after the first time, because when you walked up the aisle to your seat – the girls were seated at the far end of the room – everybody would keep step with you. They would pound on the floor with their feet and you felt so self-conscious that you'd run for cover to your place. The food was adequate. It was American food with a French twist, but it was good for training, sensible food. When we came into this estate, the chaperones said, "Now, there are beautiful rose gardens here, so stay out of them!" And in Europe it stays daylight until 9 or 10 o'clock at night. So we would go for walks and stay together in groups and things. This was a very tiny village. Maybe six houses, maybe not that many.

The first night there we walked down to the village to investigate after dinner, and in broad daylight – it was still very light. A woman came screaming down the street and she had a baby over her head. She was holding it, and waving it, and screaming. She was saying, "Mon mari! Mon mari!" We didn't know what was the matter. It seems this woman's husband had seen a fire up on their electric wires on the outside of the building. He had gone up, and, with his bare hands, pulled them off. He was electrocuted. He was killed. His hands had almost disappeared. They were sort of a purpley color, what was left of them. They got boards to stand on, non-conductors, and they disentangled him – he was still hanging from the wires – and got him down. I think they had put too much electricity in the wires. There is a word for this, too much power. The wires weren't strong enough to support extra power because we were using a lot of power in the men's camp up at the top of the hill. And our little house, the gatehouse, we were using more than they were accustomed to. Overloading the wires, is what the word is, yes. But they knew just what to do, and they got him down. But not in time. But they saved the house, at least, and put out the fire and everything. But that was an awfully bad start the first night. I remember one of the heroes was Jack Kelly, the sculler, from Philadelphia, who later became Grace's father.

**Q: Did you know him well?**

A: Pretty well.

**Q: Was he a nice young man?**

A: Oh, yes, but there was a great age difference. He'd been in the war, I think. He must have been 10 years older. That's a lot. That's a lot of years at that stage.

Our accommodations were all right. The winners of the tryouts had to divide up the girls, and we got the better rooms. There were two gatehouses, one on each side of the gate. There were accommodations in both, but ours was a little nicer. The winners of the events in the tryouts got to stay in that house. So, we had a little better place. But, it made me nervous, because after this fire, I was ready for another one. Because I don't know the French mechanics, I didn't have too much faith in all of this, the electricians. And we had windows with bars. Of course, that was to keep intruders out, but we couldn't get out. We always left the door open. I think I insisted on leaving the entrance door open so that we could get out of there if we had to. It was kind of scary.

Oh, there were lots and lots of charming young men. We all had our eyes on certain ones. We always ate at a restaurant in Paris called Pocardies. It was still there the last time I was in Paris. We'd take over, all the swimmers that is, we'd take over a whole dining room, a long, long table, and we'd all have lunch there. But we couldn't get another practice in. We were dying to practice. We were so anxious to practice. We didn't have a chance.

Track always comes first, and then swimming. In those days, we made an arrangement to stay in Paris at a little hotel near the Madeleine. We'd get up at five, and about a half-a-dozen of us would go out to the swim stadium in a taxi, in the morning, just at dawn. It was always so cold and miserable and uninviting at that hour, to go up on a board, and the wind blowing. We would not have had breakfast, of course, we just were so anxious to get there before the first other nation came in for their practice. And they came about six, so we had to be there awfully early, when it was still dark. We were diving when it was dark, couldn't see the board. We tried. We were frantically trying to get in practice time.

**Q: Did you have a coach, for the second games?**

A: The second time we had a coach for diving. Our wonderful Mr. Handley was the coach for swimming.

**Q: Who was the diving coach?**

A: Oh, he was great! Ernie Brandsten was a Swedish diver who came to America. He was the coach at Stanford. But, because we were on the East Coast, and he was on the West Coast, I never had much opportunity to profit from his coaching. When we were in Paris, we'd do half a dozen dives perhaps, because that's all the time we had. We couldn't have the benefit of his coaching, really. It was too bad. I just loved his coaching, and I got along well, and I improved, I thought. We all thought he was just great. But it was so late, we didn't have him until we got to Paris, and there was only a couple of weeks before the start, maybe not that long.



The Opening Day Ceremony in Paris was very fascinating. The weather that summer was gorgeous, it was so different from Antwerp, where it rained all the time. This was sunny and warm, and a new stadium, and plenty of deep water. The boards were better. Our men always traveled, I think I told you this, with tools. They always carried a saw, and a hammer, and nails, and covering for the end of the board. That was their standard equipment. They always carried these things. And one of the divers was an engineer, Al White, he won the diving for men that year. He was an engineer and he was always tinkering with the board, the leverage was different. Of course, we had to have the permission of other countries to change the board. But they would sneak out at night and arrange it.

The Americans were so far ahead of the others. They won everything: first, second and third in diving. And this time we came back and we won the high dive. We had a girl, who was fantastic, doing a swan dive. She was so beautiful to look at. She was very tall and slender. Her name was Caroline Smith. She was just simply amazing. She got standing ovations – she kept getting 10s. The same contest, four dives. Helen Meany was gypped out of her championship again because they didn't have her event. Nobody else could do it, just the Americans. So, Caroline Smith won easily. I don't know how many 10s she got, but one time all the judges agreed with 10s. But she had one little problem, she could only do one dive. So, what she did was perfect, absolutely wonderful. But when we went to places later, they would introduce her as the Olympic high diving champion, and she'd do a swan, and then they'd say, "Well, do a few other dives," and she'd say, "I only do the swan dive." It was such a crazy situation. What she did, she did perfectly. But here's Helen Meany who did all the fancy dives, most of the ones that men did from the high tower, and they didn't even have her event.

They were so far behind us in diving. This was really an American sport. But anyway, Caroline came back and won after the Europeans had won that event. That was the only one they got in Antwerp, the high diving. They had a crazy way of doing it. Their high diving was different, they'd tear off the diving board. Some of the men even gave out a whoop in the air. They'd go, "Yeahhhhh," going down. You were supposed to put so much force in it that you'd go screaming off the end of the board just like the old Tarzan movies. But they won. They won the men's high dive.

**Q: Did you pick up any French?**

A: Yes, and I had studies. I had a couple of years of French.

**Q: Was that fun trying to use French?**

A: Oh, yes. But nobody really listens, they always try to speak English. You know how it is. They don't give you a chance. But I could read the signs, and knew where we were, and things like that. We went on dates a couple of times, to tea dances. This was very popular in those days, and it was in the daytime because we had to catch our bus back to our lodging outside of Paris at Prince Murat's estate. I love to say that. We were in the gatehouse, but never mind. We went shopping a few days. But we had some dates. We'd go tea dancing in the park, in the boise. I remember one day there were three of us, Helen Meany, and a girl named Eleanor Cohen, from Wisconsin who swam breaststroke, and myself. And our dates were from Yale, Harvard and Princeton. We had three young men from the Ivy League, and we all went dancing.

In those everybody was doing the tango in Paris. That was very popular. There was an orchestra, it was a fancy place called the Chateau Madrid, and it's probably still there. The six of us had a wonderful

time, and we were dancing away, and we didn't notice how late it was getting, and we missed our bus. So, we had to dig down deep in our pockets and get a taxi to go all the way past Versailles to Rocquencourt. And when we arrived, the chaperones were all seated in chairs in front of our rooms, ready to reprimand us and give us hell. They were going to put us off the team. They were going to send us home. This is, you know, daylight. It's 5 o'clock or 6 in the afternoon, maybe a little after. They really gave us a bad time over that. We were in disgrace for going tea dancing.

I always had to go to the Louvre. I've always gone, wherever I am, I have to go in the galleries. I had already seen it, but I always go again to the Louvre. We were busy in Paris. But we were trying not to get tired, too, because we had such a long commute. We were in a bus three or four hours a day. Oh, we went also to the races at Longchamps. We were told to dress well, because all of the models would be there displaying the fashions for women. And they were, and we did, and we enjoyed our time. It was different for us to go to the races in Paris. They were so different from the ones in New York, at least.

**Q: How about the Closing Ceremony, what happened then?**

A: The Closing Ceremony was about the same as the one in Antwerp. It wasn't spectacular. For that, we wore white flannel uniforms. Those were our dress uniforms. And cloche hats were popular then. That was the fashion. We had little, tight-fitting hats.

**Q: This is just past the flapper era, or the Gibson girls?**

A: Oh, no. The Gibson Girls were my mother's era. And the flappers were my era – the shirt-shirts and the John Held drawings that illustrated these.

**Q: And did you do the Charleston?**

A: Oh, yes, and had little short evening dresses with lots of fringe and beads.

**Q: And Zelda was the idol of the time, wasn't she?**

A: Oh, yes, yes. Everybody was talking about her, and Fitzgerald, and Hemingway. I forget if *The Sun Also Rises* had been written then, but it was that era anyway. We just loved the atmosphere of being in Paris. It was thrilling.

**Q: And they had the long cigarettes?**

A: Yes, oh, yes. We all bought canes. The girls bought canes, they were very delicate, dainty canes, and they came in different colors. I had a gray one with an ivory handle, and a rose colored one with an ivory handle. Short gloves were popular that summer with a little decoration at the top, a little flounce at the top. We all wore hats. We got Paris hats and bought some dresses there. I had one that I liked very much, black. And we wore high heels, medium high, and thought we were pretty fancy with our canes walking along the boulevard, wearing the cloche hats and our fancy little gloves.

Well, we went to the races. We did things like that because we were older. We finally got to Follies Bergère, which was not really as good as Ziegfeld Follies, but we didn't say so. We all played a game

called Beaver that was very popular that summer. I think it started in England, but I am not sure. If you saw a man with a beard you'd yell beaver. The first one would win so many points. And you'd get points if it was a gray beard, or a black beard, or a white beard, or a red beard. Oh boy, that was the jackpot. And we were playing that much to the French people's disgust. We'd say, "Beaver, beaver, beaver! I saw him first, I saw him first!" But at the Follies Bergère there was a scene where a little man was in bed for some reason, and he had a beard, and he had it under the covers. He didn't know whether to put it under the covers or over the covers. But anyway, when the lights went up on the stage, one of the girls said, "Beaver!" And the whole theater erupted because it was unexpected.

Paris was so wonderful in those days. You could sit for hours at a cafe and they would never bother you.

**Q: And drink a cup of coffee?**

A: A cup of coffee, or whatever you had. You could stay there all day and nobody would bother you. But now there is a cover charge just to sit down, I think, in any of the outdoor cafes.

**Q: And then what happened after the Games?**

A: I have to think, I don't remember much about that year, I would have been 18 or 19. I spent a lot of time going to proms. I went up to Yale every other weekend for a couple of years. I had a beau up there.

**Q: How did you meet him?**

A: On the Olympic team. Oh, you asked about our uniforms. I am thinking about what I wore the first time I went up. I wore my uniform without the patch on the breast pocket. For every day we had a navy blue uniform: skirt and a blazer. I can't remember what our hats were like. They weren't those silly straw hats. Yes, it was a cloche hat. I think it was white. And then for dress, for the parades and such things, we had a white flannel. So, we were coming up in the world. We had two uniforms. Well, I had not won, so I continued diving because I wanted to go out a winner and win the nationals, at least. So, I kept up swimming and diving. I wasn't ready to quite retire, and nothing had come along that I wanted to do. There was a big stigma connected with professionalism, and I really hated to turn professional. It was humiliating to be a professional. Not now. Are you listening Mary Lou Retton? But it was sort of, it wasn't done, it was just not proper. So I was trying to find something else to do. I was always modeling and posing and doing something like that. But I wasn't ready yet to support myself. Oh, my family moved to Puerto Rico. My father was stationed in Puerto Rico. So I went down there and stayed for quite a while.

**Q: How did you like it?**

A: Oh, I loved it. They had a lovely house, condado. They had a small station there. It was a radio station, and my father was stationed there. He was just about to retire, so we enjoyed it and belonged to clubs there. We had a great time. I took my car with me. I guess that was the second time. The first time I just went down, and I stayed there quite a while, and just enjoyed myself, just vacationed, took Spanish lessons. Did things like that, did things girls my age did. I was 19 then, 18 and a half.

**Q: So you had a great social life?**

A: Oh yes, yes. The carnival was on and people came through there so often. And my mother and I took a cruise. It was German American. It was a particular cruise around the West Indies, and then we came back on a transport. But that was the next time I went down there. I had turned professional, and I had a car, and I shipped that down. I stayed quite a while because I always had a good time down there. My friends would come to visit me because we had a big house, not a big house, but we had room. And that was just enjoying myself. I always wrote articles and things like that. I was always writing something. I didn't amount to much that year, but I did enter the nationals and won. I got a job in New York working, writing about women's sports.

**Q: For who?**

A: The *New York Evening Post*.

**Q: Interesting, what year is this now? 1925?**

A: I am trying to think. Yes, I think so. But I was also trying to train and practice diving because I did want to win the nationals. Even though Betty Becker had gotten married, and I think she may have been expecting a baby. I still wanted to win something, go out a winner. I did eventually. But I couldn't keep up. I think they wanted an article everyday.

**Q: That was pretty progressive.**

A: I was still an amateur, so I couldn't write about swimming. I couldn't write about the only thing I understood at all. I was allowed when I turned. I had great help because I had so many of my friends who were working on newspapers. One was named Quinton Reynolds. Does the name mean anything to you? He later became a war correspondent, World War II. He wrote some books, and he later became very well known. But at that time he was at Yale University, and he was writing sports on the side. He used to help me some. I'd write it. He'd look at it, and he'd change it, and then I'd read it, and change it again. I think it was every week. It was too often for the amount I had to cover. They would send me off to New Jersey to cover a golf tournament, or something. I didn't know much about it. I was to phone in the results. Well, anybody could have done that. And I didn't know enough about it. I was only 18. I was still 18 when I took this job because my birthday is in May. I loved it. I had a press card, and I'd go around following fires, and things just so I could go through with the press card. I used to stick the card in my hat, like the men in the press corps did. Of course, I looked ridiculously young. I never looked my age, ever. And I had this press card sticking out of my hat, and I get a pen out, and I'd be writing something or other, gibberish, but I had a good time doing it. Well, anyway, they had the nationals that year at Long Beach. I won the diving, and then I had to seriously think about it. That was August, getting on the end of the summer, and I had to think about what I was going to do.

**Q: With the rest of your life?**

A: Yes. It was time to start supporting myself because my family had given up some things to help me. I was always needing clothes to go to Europe, or to Palm Beach, or somewhere fancy, Bermuda. There are other expenses to being an amateur, not only your clothes, but there are tips and telegrams, and correspondence, and there's hostess gifts if you visit people.

I turned professional in January of 1926. And my first real job was at the Dolville Casino in Miami Beach. It was a casino at night. It became a gambling casino, but it was very, very exclusive. It was very elegant. There was a dining room that was open to the public. But most of that activity took place at night. It's located right in the middle of Miami Beach now. It was considered very far out in those days. It was up near Dolville. It was getting north of Miami Beach proper. Miami Beach was very small. It was very nice in those days. It was awfully nice, very small. You knew lots of people. It was not up to Palm Beach, but it was not far behind, either. Palm Beach was more social, but Miami wasn't bad. Now it's different. It isn't even safe.

**Q: So what was your job? How did you get that kind of a job? Did you have an agent?**

A: My job? No, just by word of mouth. Somebody spoke to somebody. This was just built, this casino. They wanted to start out well, and they had names, various names. Gertrude Ederle had not yet swum the channel, so she was not as well known. There were four of us. I forget who all we were. They put us up – we got our room and board. The dining room was very, very, very elegant, very nice. We were around a big swimming pool. It was enormous. It's still there, I think, and it's now called something like McFadden-Dolville, or something. It's really not very pleasant now, I guess. But in those days it was. I didn't have any transportation. So, we spent a lot of time there, except when I had lots of dates. I had dates all the time.

This pool was large enough to have a canoe in it. It was rounded, oval shape, I guess. There was a full band that would play everyday. This was during Prohibition, without the liquor, so it was not a huge success. But they had a full band there in uniform. They had lots of uniforms, and they changed frequently, so it must have been quite an expense to maintain them. They'd play, but not so many people came out. It was too far out in those days.

**Q: But what did you do?**

A: We were around the pool. We'd greet people. We'd swim. We'd put on little exhibitions and diving. There was a diving board. There was a pool deep enough for diving, and it was right on the beach. So it was in a lovely location. We'd go in the ocean and swim. Our duty was to be seen and give lessons, if anybody cared about it. People on vacation usually don't rush out and take swimming lessons. But we had an awfully good time there. Eleanor Cohen, who was a breaststroke swimmer, and I used to double date. They had little islands in the middle of Biscayne Bay where you could go by driving. But the island would be located off the driveway, and you'd go over a bridge, you know. But, that was sort of fun.

Then, from there, I took the boat up to New York. That was one way to go in those days, an overnight trip to go to New York from Miami. The Hippodrome, I had a wire from the Hippodrome in New York. At that time, this was the largest theater in New York. It seated 6,000 people. It was a very, very popular place. The 6,000 seats were always filled, and they had two shows a day. They were putting on something called Sports Week. They wanted to have different sports represented. So they had bought the tank from Annette Kellerman, the one that broke? She went through the glass tank. Well, they bought that, and had that up on the stage for us. They always had to reinforce the stage when they had this because the tank and water was so heavy. It was glass in front, but the back had wood staves that fit together. It didn't leak.

So we were there, and it was held over, and held over for weeks. They had sports representatives from all sports: golf and tennis, not only swimming and others. I guess ours was probably the hit of the show, along with ice skating. They had a little ice skating there with, not ice, but it was a kind of a wax substance that they used to skate on. We were there for quite a while. I loved that because it was in New York City, where I lived. And I was home and my friends would all come, and they would come backstage, and everything. We weren't really professionals.. We were sports who happened to be on the stage. You know there is a difference. We weren't really old pros yet. We hadn't started yet. Then, that summer, Gertrude tried her first attempt to swim the English Channel. She was in this act. The three of us were in this act: Helen Wainwright, Gertrude Ederle and myself. Always the three of us. And she failed the first time, but the following year she did make it. She did succeed and then everything happened.

I had a job at the Briercliff on the Hudson. I went up there ostensibly to teach swimming and to be around the pool to greet. Just like a golf pro – just be seen and meet people. But they always put us up at the hotel. We always had our room and board, which was very nice. Always in the main dining room. It was very pleasant. And then I had another hotel. Oh, yes, up in Maine. It was, I'll think of it in just a second. Wentworth By The Sea, this is a national historic place now because the Russian-Japanese Peace Treaty was signed there with President Theodore Roosevelt presiding. There is a little plaque there telling about it. So, I was there that summer, along the middle of August. I was having a wonderful time at this hotel. It was a very nice place. It was the kind of a place where people spent all summer. They would bring their families. Husbands would come weekends. There were golf courses, tennis courts, horseback riding and swimming. And I could do any of these things, if I chose to do so. So, I used to ride horseback a lot.

Gertrude was successful and swam the channel. This was second only to [Charles] Lindbergh. She was really a national heroine overnight. She was very, very famous immediately. But she made the mistake of going first to her grandmother's in Germany, or something, and the bloom was off the rose when she returned. She had waited two or three weeks to return. Everybody wanted to see her immediately. I think perhaps that was ill-advised. But she didn't know what she was getting into. It was like Lindbergh. You would have had to be there to believe it. No matter where she went, she had police escorts. She had a ticker tape parade on Broadway. So, she revived the act and she bought that tank that broke.

This tank made us very nervous. It was six feet deep, and just broad enough to do a swan, but you'd have to pull your arms in or you'd hit the sides, you know. And it was nerve wracking. It was illuminated from the bottom, like a fish bowl, and it was very pretty. A pretty setting because they had greenery and foliage hiding the diving board and the off-stage things. So all you saw was this globe, shining, illuminated. Gertrude couldn't carry an act alone, really, for 15 minutes, say, because she was a swimmer. And you can just watch that for so long, you know? This tank was about the size of this room, I guess. Much narrower. About as long, maybe, but narrow. Gertrude would be introduced, and then they would show a little bit of her channel swim on the screen, and then she'd go in for a swim. Then Helen and I would do two dives apiece. She would have changed her suit and come back again. She would give a little speech, and then we'd do two more dives. We did a few little fancy dolphins and a pinwheel, you know, underwater, where you go around like this? Oh, it was a pretty setting. It was illuminated, and it was near. People hadn't seen this, you know. Now it's old hat because they know about synchronized swimming, but they didn't then. We just filled in time for Gertrude, really. But the act went on.

We were in for 26 weeks, I think. We played everywhere: Toronto, Buffalo, Rochester, Chicago. Sometimes we'd stay for three weeks. We'd be held over. Wherever Gertrude went, we went along, too, just for the ride. We had a wonderful time. We would always have the mayors greet us. We'd get off the train. We'd go right to city hall, and then they'd have a luncheon. We met thousands of people on that trip because Gertrude was a national heroine. But she didn't go out and greet people. She was a very reticent, retiring person. And Helen Wainwright was not awfully outgoing. She wasn't ingoing either. She was just normal, I guess. But I just had the greatest time. I was out all the time. I had friends in every port, and I was always out tea dancing, or going to night clubs, or things. Sometimes we'd have three shows a day, and sometimes five on weekends. Then I didn't do much but just perform because there wasn't time to go between the acts. I was always nervous because of the shallow water. Always scared-stiff.

Once, in Toronto, in February, our carpenter – we had a union carpenter who traveled with us all the time – had to be up all night because the train was late getting our tank there. He got it filled, but with water from under the ice at Lake Eerie. It was freezing cold, but he didn't have time to heat the water. So, we had a press show at 12 o'clock noon. We could just hardly go on, it was just so cold. We just had a terrible time. Gertrude, of course, had to stay in longer than we did. She had to swim. We'd dive and get out! Another time there was a bad connection with the electricity, or something – I was climbing up the stairs and I got a shock on the iron stairs. I was frozen to it. We had to get that fixed. We should have had wooden stairs to begin with.

So anyway, we did that for 26 weeks and then I went off to Puerto Rico. By this time I could buy a car and I took it down. My family was still stationed there. I had my 21st birthday in Puerto Rico. I had a ball. I just had a marvelous time. And we went to all the other islands as well. We'd visit other places in the West Indies. It was so nice in those days. It was unspoiled. We just had a great time. We went on a cruise line. I forget the name of the boat, and I took my mother – I treated her to the trip. We had a wonderful experience. I forget where I went next. I always had a good time. I always managed to have a good time.

**Q: When did you meet your first husband? Was that much later?**

A: That was 1930.

**Q: You were an old person. You were like 23 years old.**

A: I was 23. I had my birthday on the ship, 24th year. When I say I went around the world, I bought a ticket to Egypt, but the long way around, by way of China, Japan. And I gave exhibitions in some cities. In Manila, for one, at the officer's club. In Singapore they were having a swimming meet and they asked me to give an exhibition, and I did. It was sort of fun to do that, and then my husband, being the doctor on the ship, had his own table. I didn't sit at his table. I sat at the purser's table. I had so many other dates on the ship.

I told you it was a question of getting from here to there on a ship, it wasn't a cruise. People in the military used it, people in business used it. Russian fur traders used it. Korean students used it. A motley group. Noel Coward had been on the ship before mine, and people were still talking about him. It was just a means of transportation. It wasn't a cruise ship, but it stopped at all the big ports around the world. Every two weeks you could get a new ship if you wanted to stay. So anyway, we started

going out to Singapore. I wanted to go swimming, and we'd always go to a beach. In Singapore, you had to go in a certain place that was protected from sharks. They called it a pagar. You'd have chicken wire all around to keep sharks out. It was quite a large pool, so you didn't see it, but it gave you a sense of safety, security.

And then we'd go to the hotels and have a drink, and go back to the ships for dinner. We had a good time because they had been around so much. I was at the purser's table, I sat next to the purser. It was his 13th trip, I think. They knew where to go, and how to go, and what to do, and where to do it. They knew all about it. I would have got along without them, but not as well. It was more fun to go with three officers, yeah. So, they adopted me. I was the only one of the passengers that they every admitted to their inner sanctum. They always had drinks together before they went out and faced their public. So, they finally started inviting me down every night, and I'd go there first. This was during Prohibition, no liquor sold, but you could bring your own with you. So, when we got to certain ports, we would load up with drinks. When I was here, my friends here gave me a farewell present. It was a demijohn of Old Kolihou, which is the native Hawaiian drink, as you know. It's made of fermented tea plant. It's very powerful, very powerful. So, I would treat people to that, and myself, too. I had learned in Cuba how to make a swizzle That was always a success – where you shake it and it fizzes over. I couldn't cook a thing, but I could make drinks.

**Q: So then when did you get married?**

A: I got off the ship to go to Egypt. I went up to Cairo. I had been to Alexandria before with my mother. I hadn't been to Cairo, so I went up and looked around Cairo. Then I decided I'd go on with the ship because I wanted to be with Dwight. We did Naples and Genoa and all the Italian cities. I forgot to say that the captain of the ship, the second ship that I was on, on the Dollar Line, knew my father well. And so he always invited me up to tea and such things. He was always inviting me to come up with other people. It was just a very nice thing to do. Later on, when my husband joined the Navy, he was also the captain. It makes you wonder, it's too much of a coincidence almost to have him know my father.

**Q: So when did you get married?**

A: Well, we had to get married secretly. We didn't get married until I returned to New York. In the mean time, I had commitments. I had to go to England. I had jobs outlined in England. That's one thing I forgot, I spent a year touring England. I had this miraculous new crawl stroke, and then the fancy diving, which was new to the English. They did a lot of work off towers, just plain dives. They didn't do much fancy diving. So, I had a whole new field. I didn't make much money, but I didn't care. I was in demand, I guess. I would go from Scotland, to the Isle of Jersey or Torquay. I'd stay a week in some places, like the Isle of Jersey. I think I stayed two weeks giving an exhibition every afternoon around tea time. I enjoyed it. People were nice to me and the English people were very pleasant. I stayed at the American Women's Club in London. I joined it to have an address and a place to stay. Although most of my time was spent traveling. They charged me student rates to stay there because I really didn't make a lot of money. I had a manager and he made nothing. But I gave exhibitions in all the famous places: Torquay, and Southport, and Glasgow. So I was very interested to be in London. I usually gave exhibitions at night, so I had my days. I'd practice in the mornings at St. George's Baths. They had more pools in London than they did in New York. St. George's Bath had been built by Queen Victoria, so you can imagine that it was not a very modern pool. It was across from Victoria Station. I tried to



keep in form by swimming every day. But I always went to galleries. In the summer my friends and I would go sightseeing together and go dancing at night.

There are lots and lots of pools, and every little town and hamlet in England seems to have a swimming pool and a team. Especially water polo. They are mad about water polo, and they always had a pool. They would have a gala, depending on which section of England it was. Their season was different from ours. Our swimming season would be spring here in America, but theirs was fall. So twice I was there for six months giving exhibitions.

Then my parents moved to Spain. I went down to see them and spend some time near Barcelona, at a seaside resort called Ceches. I went to visit them in Majorca. Barcelona was a little crowded and the seaside was getting chilly, so they moved to Majorca. I went over there and stayed with them for a little while, a month or so. This was a wonderful place then. It was not crowded. There was one hotel, one little hotel. There was an overnight boat that one took. There would be sheep walking around on the decks outside the cabins, bleating all night long. But that was just part of the atmosphere. It was only one night, so we took that in stride. Of course, everything was by ship, boats, or ferries, or something. I went up to the Stockholm exhibition and that was a wonderful experience. They are very sports minded. I toured all of Sweden that summer. I was up there for about a month, and I had a marvelous time. There was a great swimmer called Arnie Borg. Have you ever heard of him? He won the Olympics swimming in 1928 in Amsterdam. He was a national hero. Going with him to tour Sweden was like going down the main street here with Duke Kahanamoku. Everybody knew him, and he was famous, and he was homely as could be. Sort of a jolly person, all the children liked him. They would follow him like the Pied Piper. The 1920 exposition was going on in Stockholm, so we performed there everyday. That water was cold, too, very cold.

I left by ship from Göteborg on the west side back to England again. I went to one club frequently. It was called the Kit Kat Club on Picadilly Circus. It was a very nice place to go, and dance, and dine. When my friends came from America, I'd steer them there. They got to know me so well that they asked me to give an exhibition at their country place, which was up at Bray, near Oxford – it was on the Thames at least. A place called Bray, Maidenhead at Bray. We went punting, only I had an American punting for the first time. That wasn't romantic. He didn't know much about it. He was a very handsome, wonderful guy named Young Stribling. I don't know if you've heard of him, he was an American boxer. He was idolized in England. They didn't know me from Adam, but walking down the street with him, we also had little kids following us and everything. "Oh, Mr. Stribling, oh." He got up and dove. He was better than I was, which was very humiliating. He did it just for fun because he had gone to this club as often as I had, this Kit Kat Club. This was their summer place up in the country. And it was very nice. The young men all wore blazers to go up there, and they sipped cooling drinks and tea and such things. So, we just dove, we had an exhibition swimming in a stream, and it was so shallow. It didn't bother him, which amazed me because he was about 6'2" and he wasn't so good at punting. But he took a shot at it. I forget what happened next.

After I left my future husband, I got off the ship in Marseilles because I had a commitment also to be Johnny Weissmuller's partner in Paris. Johnny was there alone, and he needed somebody to sort of have some continuity to the act, to fill it out a little bit. So, this agent said, "Great, Johnny Weissmuller's in town and he needs a partner, and he's at a pool called the Molitor." So, Johnny and I had known each other for years. He'd been on the '24 Olympic team and we knew him from Chicago when he swam there and at other meets. We knew him quite well. We led different lives. I was engaged and I was very

much in love, and dreamy eyed, and thinking of getting back. Here I am in Paris and having a marvelous time. And Johnny was the opposite, he was out every night carousing and having a great time his way. But I had so many interests you know. I was always in the art galleries in the day when I was free. But we put on an act together where he swam, and then I swam, and then we did a few dives. We swam together in tandems and freestyle and backstroke, and then the combination freestyle and backstroke. Just what was current in those days.

**Q: So, after all this, when did you get married?**

A: Then I finally got back to New York and my husband was resident surgeon at the Woman's Hospital in New York. I think that was the oldest woman's hospital in the nation. It was the best known at any rate. He was very fortunate to get this position. One reason he was going around the world was he was waiting for this opening to occur, because he really wanted to be there. So, we couldn't be married, officially, because it was against the rules to have a married resident. I think they have changed that now. And all he got was a hundred dollars a month. He got his room and board and a hundred dollars a month. And this is during the Depression, the real, deep down Depression. I came back to find this Depression. When I left New York the year before, or early in the year – I guess I left about February. I had been traveling all the time. I don't think it had reached Europe yet. I didn't notice it as much, anyway. Everything seemed fairly reasonable. I came back to New York and I found bread lines, and soup kitchens, and people selling apples on corners. Oh, it was desperately depressing and frightening to see this happening. And I couldn't believe that my country had fallen into such a bad state.

Helen Meany and I were out on a double date. I introduced her to Dwight, and she said, "You two want to get married, but you can't." She said she had an idea – getting married up in upper New York state. She said her father had some position with the government. He was a well to do businessman, but he had an honorary position, like postmaster, or something, and she knew people in government. She said, "I will arrange to get the papers and have it kept from the press."

I wasn't a household word, but on the other hand, I was pretty well known in those days. So, he would have lost his job, but we did get married up there. Just the four of us: Helen and her husband and us, spent the night. She had a big old house in Greenwich, Connecticut. Helen was the oldest of 11 children. They had a huge old mansion in Greenwich. We went there after the ceremony. First we went out and had some wine – it's still prohibition. Then we went back to their home. And he reported for duty that day. He had to go back to the hospital. So, we made dates to see each other. Here we were married.

Then I had to support myself during the Depression. I wanted to be in New York because he was in New York, so I got all kinds of jobs. There was a new shop opening on 5th Avenue, in New York, and they made me a sports consultant. I knew people in all walks of life and I made it known that I needed a job, so things would begin to happen. Somebody else said, well you ought to write about all these things you've been doing. So, they got me an agent. That saved my life, because this agent could think of articles to write about that I never would have dreamed about – what they were wearing in Paris fashions for bathing, beach wear, or how to build a swimming pool, all sorts of different things – my selections for the Olympics, the coming Olympics.

*Colliers*, I had an in there. I knew the editor and I could sell them a lot of things. And I had help with these articles. I'd write them out myself, and then, I told you, somebody would go over it, like Quint

Reynolds. But he had a masculine style. It wasn't like my writing would be. He'd change it and then I would change it back. But finally eventually, we'd get it sorted. And then I had one article that I wrote every month. It was for Woolworth & Co., an official magazine just for F. W. Woolworth and Co. that was only sold in their stores. I think it had a name like *Love Mirror*. But I had a contract with them for an article every month for two years. That was good, but nerve wracking, to think about something to write about. They said start and I said, where do I begin? They said, "Well, start with walking." So, I'd write an article, and fill up a couple of pages, and try and make a snappy article about walking. A lot of things I had done have been tied in with writing and such. So, that kept up. I covered all sports, including archery and ping pong, and heaven knows what. I was at my wits end. I finally ended up interviewing people like Buster Crabbe in their home. And then the two years was up and that was enough. That paid the rent. That was a very good thing. It didn't pay much, but it paid the rent. And I found an apartment up on Riverside Drive, which was not too far from the hospital where he was.

I was living by my wits all this time. I went on a cruise. I was a hostess on a cruise. I didn't get paid for that, but I got a vacation. I was the sports director. When they never knew what to call me, they would call me sports director. I did that for a while, a couple of cruises. So, at least I got a vacation away from New York in the winter.

I spent my last money going down to Bermuda for our honeymoon. It had to be secret. It was supposed to be secret. But the press was all on the deck when we came back. I didn't say this to my husband. Well, I didn't say much. I just kept quiet. So, finally, it was in Walter Winchell's column, and the cat was out. He was such a good friend of mine, I can't think. Winchell's rival, he had a TV show, Eddie Sullivan. It's the "Ed Sullivan Show." He had that in his column, too. Because, as fate would have it, we were married in Port Chester, New York, which we thought was way out of the way and nobody would know about it. It was Eddie Sullivan's hometown. And he did hear about it. He had that in the newspaper. It finally got out. But they accepted it at the hospital because, I guess, Dwight was doing a good job. He'd been there for a year, and so they just let it go, and skipped over it.

I did a lot more things. Oh, yes. On the cruise I met a man who was developing Jones Beach. This is a huge beach in New York, on Long Island. You've heard of it? It had miles, and miles of white sand. Just a lovely place. So, he was in the construction business, and was building a causeway between Jones Beach and the main land, Long Island. They wanted somebody to be around their swimming pool, which was lovely, and to give lessons. Robert Moses was the head of the New York State something that covered this anyway. The parks department, I guess. We wore blazers and white skirts when we were off duty. When we were on duty, we wore bathing suits and gave lessons.

The concessionaires down there wanted people to stay after sunset because the beach would close. So, they got a show going in the evenings. And this was a lovely pool, it was illuminated, too. It was very nice to perform there. We'd give a show right around dinner time, so the people would stay, and have dinner, and watch the show. We'd put on a little act. We rented a house down there that summer, four girls. We rented it and we shared expenses. That was my last summer before we went to California, before he was finished with his residency.

**Q: So you came out to California, what year?**

A: 1932, but after the Olympics. We missed it because I was working at Jones Beach. However, they had the tryouts there, the girl's tryouts. I watched all the girl swimmers. I didn't have a particular urge to return.

**Q: So, where did you stay in California?**

A: Oh, we wanted to be in San Francisco because he had gone to Stanford, and because his family was in San Carlos. His father had retired. But there wasn't any opening. This was a terrible time to start a practice. It was during the Depression. So, we went to Los Angeles where there was an opening. We didn't want to go there, but we had to. And then my family also moved to California. They came back from Spain, after two years in Europe. They went all over, stayed in various places: Italy and Switzerland and various places. My mother could speak German, so they visited all the German speaking places as well, Zurich. They came back and they decided to go back to California, too. They had had enough of living in a foreign country. I never get enough of it. I love it. But, they had enough of it, so they came back. Maybe it was partly on account of me, because I am the only child. So, they were living in Los Angeles. We got a little apartment, and he opened his practice there. We were there for a few years. I worked in movies and things. Some of those pictures are here. These are some of the pictures that I worked in. This is called "Roman's Candles," and I am in the ballet somewhere up here. This is a Busby Berkeley picture, if you've ever heard of him?

**Q: He went into the Aquacades, didn't he?**

A: Yes, he put on these extravaganzas with Esther Williams and such. But this particular one was before Esther. This picture was before he came along, and one of the first swimming pictures, darned if I remember. I don't know. It was a sequel to 42nd Street with Ruby Keeler as the star. This was on the set of one of "Romans Candles." I first went into a swimming picture. Eleanor Holm was in Los Angeles and she was married to Arthur Jarrett, the bandleader. She told me about this picture coming up. And I applied for it and got the job. Dorothy Poynton Hill was in it, have you interviewed her?

**Q: Yes, yes, I know her. I haven't seen her since '84, actually.**

A: She has a different last name now, Dorothy Poynton. She was an awfully good diver. So, both of us were in this picture. We helped train the swimmers to swim in unison. Of course, it wasn't too hard because the water was so shallow that they would walk. Ruby Keeler's sister was in the ballet, or the swimming part of it. The water had to be up to Gertrude Keeler's chin, I think. She was small. She was smaller than I am. She was shorter, so the water was about this deep. Oh, and that went on for weeks. I was very glad, because we got a nice salary as a consultant. I got more than the rest, and so did Dorothy. We were both in this together. It was easy to get to. It was out on the Warner lot and it went on all summer – six or eight weeks of work. I was very glad to get it during the depression. Starting out cold is not easy in a bad time, you know. Oh, and then I asked Mr. Berkeley, I said, "I hear you are putting on another picture and it's going to be 'Romans Candles.'" I said, "I've had 4 or 5 years of ballet training and I'd like to try out for it." He said, "Sure, that's fine," and I made it. That went on for quite a while. It wasn't a great picture, but it was an amusing one with Eddie Cantor. I had to learn to do bumps and grinds. That was new and something different. I thought I never would learn it. One of my friends came home with me after one day's shooting. I wasn't getting it, and she stayed with me until I got it. Now I can do bumps and grinds. The third big picture that I was in was Sonja Henie's picture. That must have been in 1937. She won the Olympics in 1936, so it was probably the following spring, winter. The *L.A. Times* had an ad for tryouts for Sonja Henie's picture. So I went down and tried out and I made that. And that finishes my private life.

Eleanor Holm was a member of the Women's Swimming Association of New York, and she is 7 years

younger than I. She was full of pep. Scintillating. She had a sense of humor – good looking. She later became a beauty. But at the time, she was nice looking, and she was a heck of a swimmer, and a wonderful competitor. She'd fight to the last ounce of strength. She was a great, great swimmer. She won in 1932, and it was especially fortuitous for her to win there because of her being near the moving picture business. She immediately got a contract and did very well, quite well, in some movies. Not well enough to be a real star, but she was well known around Hollywood, and she made her mark. She had a talent for clothes. She dressed beautifully. She just knew exactly what to wear. She had a talent for this. She was always very well groomed. This doesn't mean much in this day, when people wear nothing but blue jeans. In our day we dressed, and she had the money to do it, the money that she made herself.

She had a house in Beverly Hills. For a while we shared her house when we were first getting started in Los Angeles, because Eleanor was working all the time, and I was working occasionally, and my husband was working all the time. So, we had a black maid named Dorothy who came in and took care of the house, and cooked meals. But I was the one who really ran the house, and I didn't know much about running a house, but I tried. In the mean time, Eleanor would tell me when there were some movies to be coming up, and some were swimming ones. I was in quite a few. And that was all thanks to Eleanor, because she had her ear to the ground, and knew all the producers, and was invited to so many Hollywood parties. We were invited to quite a few ourselves, my husband and I. We had some friends who were on the fringe, stars, and almost stars. Also, our athletic friends were around. There were a great many Olympians in California. So, we also got around.

Eleanor made the Olympic team in 1936. She was defending the title that she had won in Los Angeles in '32. Going over on the ship, this was the only time the Olympic team was divided between passengers and team members for some reason. There were a lot of press aboard. They liked Eleanor. She was full of merry quips, and she was a very fascinating person to be with. She had turned into a real beauty. She was stunning. She got in trouble one night, she had too much to drink, I guess. Brundage was onboard and he really, really severe with Eleanor. I think she should have been reprimanded, in my opinion, but not taken off the team, because eventually we lost that event. Her event. She might have won it, but she never had the opportunity to show that she could.

She tells funny stories about arriving in Berlin. She was so much in demand. Oh, it was a tremendous story, of course. Partly because she was so beautiful and personable, and partly just because of the experience of having too much champagne. She would have been in training, she would have been in shape. I am sure because she took her training very, very seriously. She would have been ready to compete, but just on the ship while going over she relaxed. She was with a lot of writers and people who didn't go to bed on time, and kept up with them for a while. She tells such funny stories.

Her husband Arthur went over to join her as soon as he could. They still traveled only by ship in those days. So, as soon as he could was probably 10 days, at the least. Four days to cross the country by train and four days on the ship if you got on one sailing immediately. But, when he arrived, he helped her. She was terribly disappointed, but she had all these offers. The press asked her to cover the games, to write about them and her experiences, and she did. She may have had help, I don't know. She tells about one time when Arthur answered the telephone and a man's voice said he wanted to speak to Eleanor Holm Jarrett. And Arthur said, "Well, may I ask who's calling?" And he said, "This is the crown prince of Germany." He asked her if she would like to go for a tour of Berlin in his car. And so she did. Arthur accepted for her, and she went tootling off with the crown prince of German and he

showed her Berlin. She had a lot of funny little stories like that. But, I believe underneath all of that, she was very, very hurt. She was very hurt. She won one gold medal. She was on the team in 1928, but she was only 13, I think. Douglas MacArthur was the head of the Olympic Committee that particular year. And going over on the ship, there was a picture of Eleanor. I think she was sitting on General MacArthur's lap, I am not sure. But anyway, she was a little girl, she was just a cute little thing. But it was her third Olympiad. She was a very serious competitor. She'd fight like hell. She'd fight until she dropped. She wouldn't give an inch, and I know she was hurt. But she never said she was hurt. She said, "Oh, this is the best thing that ever happened to me." Then she went in the Aquacade with Billy Rose.

**Q: Was that as soon as she came back?**

A: It was soon after, I think. It may have been the following spring, because I was in the first one that she was in. Billy Rose got her right away to appear. The first one, strangely enough, nobody's heard of it now, but it was in Cleveland in 1937. It was held in Lake Erie, and the backdrop was Canada, as Billy used to say, and it was right in the lake. We swam in the lake. There was a moveable stage that would come up close. People could go up and dance on this stage during intermission and after the show. Then it would go out, and there would be a large space for swimming. Eleanor told Billy about me and he sent for me.

I went east in March. It didn't open until Memorial Day, so I was there for about six or eight weeks to try to whip a chorus in ballet into shape. It's not a swimming town. It wasn't easy to find that many people to fill in this part – that could all keep time with their arms, and synchronize swimming with a ballet of 30 or more girls, maybe 15 or 16 boys. And there really was no pool to practice in big enough for that many girls. We would rent the grand ballroom of a hotel, and we would walk around doing the stroke and trying to keep in time with the music that they were going to play in the show, to get accustomed to the music.

Finally, we opened. But they had to cut the ice to let us go through. Then my job was done. Eleanor asked me to stay on. Billy said, "Well, you'll go in the diving act." They had one scene that was the Gay 90s. Johnny Weissmuller was in that. He and Eleanor did their thing. I had third billing in that. Johnny and Eleanor were, of course, tops, and I came down way below. But I did some dives. I did three or four dives from a 19-foot tower. I don't know why it was 19 feet, but it was just built about the orchestra. We had a big orchestra on one side. Every two weeks we'd change orchestras. We had name bands play all summer long in this show. Well-known names, the Royal Canadians is one I remember. But, Eleanor and I shared an apartment.

Then, when the show was over, I guess by that time she had her divorce, Billy also was getting a divorce, and they got married. Then they bought a house on Beekman Place in New York, which is a very fancy neighborhood. Very low-key, but very lovely. It's on the East River. They bought a brownstone mansion and decorated it beautifully. Eleanor has wonderful taste. She got herself a degree in interior decoration. She did little things like she'd have a miniature Christmas tree, and she'd decorate it with her jewels. Things like that, little things about her that I remember. She was always sought after because she was such good company. She was wonderful company. She was very good to me because I was 7 years older, and I wasn't as well known. Eleanor was very well known. I was on my way out, and she had been coming up all this time. She won the Olympics when she was only about 17 or 18. So, this all happened when she was young. She was about 21 or 22 when all this was happening.

During all this time in Hollywood and Los Angeles she'd get me in on things. Then I had a baby and all that was over. I was kind of a dedicated mother and my child came first. My husband came first. My child came second.

**Q: So when did you get into the age-group swimming?**

A: About six years ago. I think I was 80, 82. I just wondered one day what I would do because a big group here entered in the master's swim. And I thought, "Well, I'll swim. No, I won't." Since I've lived in Hawaii, I swim almost every day, and I try to keep in form. It's the only exercise that I do at my age. So about six years ago I went up to the University of Hawaii pool where they were having the masters swimming meet.

A: I was very nervous and self-conscious that I might make an old fool of myself. But I entered the 75 to 80, I guess, age group. And I did well. I made a state record. Then they looked in another book and said, "Oh, that's a national record for your age group." So, then I thought that's not bad, and then I continued and made local record, Hawaii state records and national records.

Then I entered the world masters and made world records there in my next age group, which was 80 to 84. So, now I am 88, I competed when I was 86, I guess. The group was 85 to 89, but they have it only every other year, which is what confused me. They don't have the world's championships every year. But they have had five now. They have been in different countries each year. My particular year was in Indianapolis. I did much better than I expected. There wasn't a great deal of competition, especially in the backstroke, which of course is my best stroke. And I made some good times in that. My backstroke time is about the same as my freestyle, which is rather silly. And not as many people do the backstroke. Most people do the breaststroke and crawl.

It was interesting to see. I met people that I had competed against, women that I had competed against in the '20s, and they are still swimming. So, that says something for swimming. Yeah, it's something that you can do all your life. I really believe in swimming because you can do it at your own ability. You can go fast or slow. You don't have to strain yourself. You are weightless. You are not pounding a pavement running or doing track or getting muscular because swimming makes long muscles, not hard muscles, which are very unattractive on a woman, I think. And this is my own thinking.

So, anyway, I won six events at the worlds, and I was very pleased. It's a big thing. There were 3,500 contestants, and it starts very early in the morning to get all the events in – there are no heats. You swim the final, that's it. If you make a false start, you stay in the water, you don't have a second chance to get up and get on the mark. You stay right in the water and swim, that's your penalty. They ran so efficiently that they'd have the following heat lined up right behind you when you were on your mark. It continued that way all day long. Very fast, ran just like clockwork. There was a warm-up pool. Diving was taking place at the same time, but in a separate pool. Sometimes it was water polo.

But there were so many countries represented, too. There were 35 countries, I believe. Some countries like Brazil seemed to be over represented. They had a tremendous amount of people. Germany had 19 divers, just divers. The rest of their team was large, too. But to have a team with 19 divers was fantastic. They were going all the time. The judges were very efficient, always dressed in white, and always on the mark and ready to go. The times were electronically recorded. Your name and your age group all went up on the screen at once on the board.

Because I was a woman, they always start with the courtesy of having the women go first. In this case it isn't so good because you have to be on your mark about 7 a.m., and they begin with the older ones, too. They tried it the other way around. They had old people swimming at 2 a.m., so they cut that out. I had to be on the mark for three different days at 7 o'clock in the morning. I had to be there and, of course, you get a warm-up first. You have to allow time, not only to get to the pool, but to warm up and to first have something to eat. I used to use half a Power Bar and half-a-glass of water, which sustained me until it was time to compete. Then I'd take the other half, and a half a glass of water. You must have the two together. I'd be on the mark at 7 or 7:30 every morning for three days. I had to go to bed so early. I can't always conform to the habits of going to sleep so early. But I went there seriously to compete. And to have fun as well, but to compete and see my friends. I really enjoyed it. I would have gone this year in Montreal, except that I am in the middle of my age group. I may hold out if I am able to swim in a year and a half. I will try and enter the next one, which will be in Sheffield, England. But I am very enthusiastic about age-group swimming. It keeps people trim. They work hard and keep fit, it really shows.

**Q: Now if you had something to say to young people who are just getting into sport, what would you say are the keys to success?**

A: Just getting started in swimming? Well I suppose perseverance, dedication and finding a sport that suits you. So many people are doing sports that don't suit them, and their body build, and their ability. They often choose the wrong sports according to their height and build. They have advice from counselors and everything. I never had this. It never happened to me because it didn't exist. It may have in some of the big men's colleges. I think it's important never to do too much, burn yourself out. Always save for the sprint, as they say. Always have a little left, and to do it at the same time everyday, perhaps, and to never quit. Sometimes, when one is traveling, you have to quit for a month or so, if you take a trip. I used to take a jump rope with me. You can use a jump rope in a small space. You can use it in your hotel room and jump the way the boxers do with fairly straight knees. Not rigid, but straight, and little, short jumps with your arms down by your sides. I believe that's very good. I quit jumping rope when I was 60 because I wasn't sure whether that was a good thing to be doing. It was too strenuous. I was still swimming, of course. I do believe that swimming is the best sport for women.



