

OK, I was asking you if there was any sort of special feeling or pride in being a Black American winning the gold medal in Berlin.

It was very definitely a special feeling in winning the gold medal and being a Black man, because here, I was doing something, and particularly, this particular event, had not been won by an American in 24 years. And that was won by a white man, not a Black man. So I was very proud of that fact, very proud of that achievement. And I was very happy for myself as an individual, for my race and for my country.

Now, you had started to mention something about auxiliaries. What's that about?

Well, after the Olympic games were over, I think it must have been published in the German publications, the German newspapers, that Hitler made the remark that if it wasn't for the Black auxiliary, the American would not have won the Olympics. That's what I heard, and I didn't read it, but I heard that that was a remark that he made.

How did that make you feel?

Well, it made me feel good, because what we did, we destroyed his master race theory. It made me feel very good, because you know, he had that master race theory that the superior race, only the pure Germans could do certain things in this world. That was what he was advocating, but we destroyed his theory. when we started winning those gold medals.

Tell me a little bit about your return home as an Olympic hero. How were you received? Where did you come first?

We came to New York, and they had a big parade for us.

Can you say it again? Say, after the Olympics.

After the Olympics, we came home. We came home on the SS Washington. Now, of course, Jesse Owens came home ahead of us because he didn't do any running after the Olympics outside of Dresden, Germany. One week after the Olympic Games, Jesse ran in Dresden, Germany, and of course he was defeated by Ralph Metcalfe, who took second to him in the Olympic Games in Berlin.

But he had some offers that was made, some professional offers, and of course, he came back on the Queen Mary to take advantage of those offers, because Jesse came from a poor family too. Most of the Blacks came from poor families, you see. None of us came from any wealthy homes or middle-class homes, most all from poor families.

But many of those offers didn't pan out for him At all. And of course, due to the fact-- see, he was scheduled to run in various countries. He didn't run. He came home, so they declared him a professional. So Jesse, his amateur days were over with after that scene. But I ran after the Olympic Games I ran in White City Stadium in London. Then from there, I ran up in Oslo, Norway before coming home.

But we all ended up in New York, and they had a big ticker tape parade for us in Manhattan up Fifth Avenue. And there was a lot of cheering, and of course, Mayor Laguardia, who was the mayor of the city at the time, gave us a medal from the City of New York. And then from there, we all departed New York City and we went to our various homes.

And of course, when I got back to Connellsville, Pennsylvania, they had a big parade for me in my hometown, which was the biggest parade that they ever turned out for anybody in that small town.

That must have felt fabulous.

It was. It was. It was a fabulous time, a fabulous occasion, and a happy time for me and for my family, and for all my friends back there in Connellsville.

How long did the euphoria last?

Well, it lasted for quite a long time, you know, because you know, I used to go out and do a lot of speaking to young kids after the Olympic Games. And of course, I was still in school, and I was still making records as an athlete because I won every major track meet in the country at that particular time, right up until I stopped running in 1940.

Did winning the Olympics open doors for you that wouldn't have been opened otherwise?

Some doors. Some doors, because you know, I never received any fabulous offers in terms of making any money, because you see, first of all, I was still in school. And I had three years to go to get my degree, and when I was graduated, right after I was graduated from University of Pittsburgh, then I went to New York University.

And while I was in graduate school, I got a job at John Wanamaker's running an elevator. And of course, you know, there was quite a lot of publicity that came out about an Olympic champion getting a job running an elevator. And the only thing that John Wanamaker wanted to do was give me a permanent job running an elevator. That was all.

Then I got a job as a social investigator for the City of New York, working with disadvantaged people who were on welfare. Then I got a job working for the Police Athletic League, director of one of the centers up in Harlem, New York, working with disadvantaged kids. And while I was working in that job, I took the examination for state parole officer for the state of New York, and I became a parole officer, supervising parolees who were released from the New York State reformatory state prisons.

Then from that, I worked for a short period of time with Schieffelin and Company advertising alcoholic beverages. I didn't particularly care for that because I couldn't see myself making a permanent job pushing booze. So I got out of that. Then I got a job as an insurance agent for the Prudential Insurance Company.

I worked a while in that job. Then I ended up my career with the Job Corps program. You know about the Job Corps program, again working with disadvantaged kids. I never made a lot of money, but I made a living. But the compensation that I got from the work that I did was helping people, and I helped a lot of people, a lot of people.

Did being an Olympic winner open doors in other ways?

Well, not from my experience. Not from my experience.

Get you access to places that you weren't able to go and do before?

I can't recall just looking back on my early career after winning the Olympics that it opened any particular doors, being a gold medal winner.

Did you expect it to?

Well, I expected and I had hoped, but nothing materialized in that regard. Now, I'm sure many of the white Olympians were made offers, very fine offers. But I can't recall any Black Olympians making any great offers. Now, Jesse did pretty well. He got in public relations work. But when he first came back from the Olympic Games, he found it very difficult to get any decent work.

He came back. He ran against racehorses. You may have heard of him running against a racehorse. He did a number of things in order to try to make a living for his family. But only in the later years, he started a public relations organization there in Chicago, and he was on a lot of speaking engagements. And he picked up quite a bit of money doing that, but he didn't have any big job. He never had any real big jobs, you know.

What I'm trying to get at here is, it seems that after all of the excitement of winning this medal, winning this race, coming back to all kinds of parades, how long did it kind of take to come back to Earth and realize that things hadn't changed much? Were there any moments that kind of showed you that clearly?

Yes. When I came back to the University of Pittsburgh, they didn't want to let me into the English class because I was a month late. And of course, I guess the chancellor straightened that matter out. Then one day, I went downtown Pittsburgh one evening to [? Chow's ?] Restaurant. They refused to serve me.

That was one incident. Then when I was graduated and they had the University Hall of Fame, here I'd brought international recognition to the school. The All-American football players like Marshall Goldberg, they brought national recognition to the school. They made the Hall of Fame, but I didn't make it, in spite of the gold medal that I'd won, and bringing the school international recognition.

So that let me know just what the situation was. Things hadn't changed. Things hadn't changed. But I was young, and of course, as the years went on, things got better. And to date, things have gotten much better for the Blacks, but we still have a long way to go.

Can I ask you a little bit about what was going on, what was unfolding in Germany and in Europe? When, after the Olympics, did you become more aware of what was going on, and how did you find out?

Well, I personally became aware of what was going on based on the publications, on what was printed in the various newspapers and magazines of what was happening in Germany. Of course, right after the Olympics, in 1939, Hitler started World War II when he marched on Czechoslovakia. That was the beginning of World War II. And of course, we all knew what happened after that.

How did you get that information? How did you start learning more? Was that the point at which you became more aware of the atrocities?

Yes. I became aware of those atrocities and things from what was printed in the newspapers throughout the United States.

After having this glorious week in Berlin, this is hard to believe.

Yes, it was very hard to believe. It was very hard to believe, but we knew what was going on based on the publicity prior to the Olympic Games, what Hitler was doing. And as I said, he declared a moratorium, opened up everything, made everything very pleasant, very accommodating for the visiting Olympic teams, the nations.

But after the Olympics, then he went right back to the things he had planned. And of course, all these things he had planned was laid out in his book, Mein Kampf.

So the Olympics were really a propaganda coup.

It was. He made it so. He made it so. He made it a propaganda coup to further his cause, or to further his program that he had set up.

When you started learning more about all of the horrible things that were happening, did you think about the Olympics in the context of politics at all? Or were you just still feeling the same way you did at age 21?

Well, I would think it was pretty much the latter, pretty much the latter, because we had some background on what was going on prior to the games. And of course, it was brought out more pointedly after the games. See, when after the Games were over, then Hitler continued with his program, you see, marching on Czechoslovakia and starting the war. And of course, it was something that we more or less expected. We more or less expected it.

You know, the world didn't think Hitler was doing what he was doing. You see, they should have known what he was doing. You know, Germany was part of the League of Nations, like all the nations were part of that league. And the reason that they set that league up, as you know, from history, was to more or less keep a tab on each nation in terms of them building up war armaments to start a war.

Now, Hitler withdrew from the League of Nations. They should have known then what he was going to do, but they didn't believe him. They didn't believe him. They didn't believe what he had printed in that book *Mein Kampf*. Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of England, called him the little corporal. They downplayed Hitler. They didn't believe what he was about to do.

So therefore, they didn't put a curb on him, see. They probably could have stopped World War II if they had done so at that time. When he withdrew from the League of Nations, if they had put a clamp on him at that particular time, there probably would have been no World War II, but they didn't do it.

Do you think if we had believed what was going to happen and had exercised a boycott, it would have made any difference?

You mean exercised a boycott of the Olympics?

Yeah.

I don't know that it would have made any difference or not. I really don't. I can't answer that question.

In retrospect, because I know how you felt at the time. Learning how bad things became, do you think we should have participated in the Olympics?

Well, in retrospect, based on all the training that the athletes had gone through in preparing for the Olympic Games, I felt that they should have gone on with the Olympics as they did, because I think that would have been a very bad thing to have taken place. It would have been very hurting for the athletes who made so much preparation, who trained so long over the years.

Fortunately for me, I didn't train like that. I was more or less a gifted athlete. I came up very fast, but there were other athletes who had trained for the Olympics, trained for years to prepare for the Games, and that would have been very, very bad if they could not have gone. That's my feeling personally for me. Now, I mean there might be others who would feel differently about it based on the question you posed to me, but that's my feeling.

That the Olympics and politics should stay separate.

That's right.

Let's take a break. I want to-- you're great.

There are a couple of specific questions I want to ask you. You had mentioned one incident where you had contact with a German athlete at the Olympic Village.

Mm-hmm.

Did you have other contact with German athletes?

That was the only one. That I remember this young man that came in. He was young like we were, and he came to visit with us, you see. And of course, we heard all this information about Hitler, and that's when we posed the question. What did he think, what did the German people think of Hitler? And he said they thought he was a very good man because of what he'd done for the country economically speaking, made it possible for all of them to work.

And of course, you know, all of them worked in these factories where they were making weapons. And that's why they felt, because after World War I, you know, the Germans, they really were beat down. They were in a bad way, and I guess they were looking for a savior. And that's when Hitler came into play. They were looking for somebody to pull them out of those doldrums that they were in, you see.

And of course, when he withdrew from the League of Nations, started building all this war armament, putting all these young people to work, he was a great guy as far as they were concerned. But they didn't know the whole story.

Did you encounter any other international athletes?

No, no, no.

Was there much of a bond or camaraderie that sort of lasted with the other athletes after the Olympics?

That lasted from other teams?

From here.

Yes, yeah. Quite a bond. You know, we became very, very close friends, and we--

Can we have you start, and instead of saying we, you can say, you know, the other athletes.

The other athletes on the team were very close. I was very close to them. I'm still very close to some of them that are still around. I still make contact with them, you see. But of course, many of them are gone. Many of them have passed, and as I said, I'm the only one who's left now, you see. Archie Williams, who won the 400 meters, he died about three years ago, and he was the last of the gold medal winners other than myself that was still living.

So it was really a special bond.

Oh, yes. Stronger than a fraternity, much stronger than a fraternity, because of what we go through in training and what have you, the feeling of pain when we're training, the feeling of pain when we race. That gives us a lot of strength, and it's something that we have in common with each other and something that we understand. See, one athlete understands another athlete and what he has to go through.

If he's a football player, a football player understands what another football player has to go through, and that same way in track and field.

When did you become friendly with Marty Glickman, or how?

We lived in the same neighborhood up in New Rochelle, New York. His family and my family lived in the same neighborhood.

But you met at the Olympics.

We met at the Olympics.

OK, I need you to say his name.

Marty Glickman, I met in Olympics as part of the team. I didn't know him before that, but I knew him after that, after the Olympics, where he resided in New Rochelle and where I resided with my family in New Rochelle, New York.

Do you remember him at the Olympics?

I used to see him on occasion because he was a sprinter, and I used to see Sam Stoller. Also, incidentally, is Sam Stoller dead?

From your memory of 1936, what kind of a guy was Marty Glickman?

Nice fella, very nice fella. Very friendly, as all the athletes that were on the team were all very friendly, all very cordial, all very accommodating. We were just like one big happy family.

Was there anything that set him apart in your mind?

No. No, he was just another athlete like all the rest of them that were over there to win a gold medal. And I was very, very sorry that he didn't get that opportunity to do so.

Did you go to the closing ceremonies?

The closing ceremonies at the Berlin? Yes. Yes.

Tell me.

It was very, very, very exciting.

We need to start--

The closing ceremonies were very, very exciting, because of course, I witnessed the closing ceremonies on the Olympic Games that I attended, but this one was much more important because I was part of it. And they put on quite a show, quite a show.

Tell me about it.

Well, they had the athletes-- of course, one thing about the closing ceremonies, the closing ceremonies are not as exciting as the opening ceremonies because a lot of the athletes after competing go home. So the whole team is never there at the closing ceremonies.

So therefore, it's not quite as exciting as the opening ceremony when they march in each country with their flags, and of course with the Olympic flag preceding everything, you see, the five-ring Olympic flag. But as I said, it's not as exciting. But it's still exciting for those who participated in the closing ceremonies.

What did it look like?

Well, it looked like a closing ceremony. That's all I can see. I don't know what you--

I've never been to one. I don't even know what the opening ceremonies look like.

Well, the opening ceremonies were all these various nations. All these Olympic athletes representing all these various nations march in. The host country athletes march in last. It's all set up. It's all organized, and of course, all these countries, it's preceded by the Olympic flag, the five-ring flag.

And of course, right after they march in and the Games are declared open, they have pigeons, and they release all these pigeons, and they all fly. And that's the opening of the games. It was beautiful.

And you were on the field at that time?

On the field as part of the American team. We came in with our white trousers, blue jackets and straw hats with a red, white, and blue band, white shirt. And I think the tie was white, if I recall. It has been a little while, but I remember the hat. I remember the jacket and I remember the trousers, and of course, white shoes.

How were you feeling?

How were you feeling marching across that?

Oh, felt good. Felt good. You know, you always felt good marching in the parade. Always did. It kind of does something to you.

It was a big parade.

It was. It was.

I'm going to ask you, is there anything else that you can remember about what the stadium looked, like what the track was like? Was it similar to other tracks that you competed on?

It was a very beautiful track, a very fine track. It was made with some kind of red dirt, red cinders or something. It was different. It was very different to the tracks here in America at that particular time. And when I was over there for the 50th anniversary and I got a chance to visit the track again, that track was still in excellent condition, and the stadium was in excellent condition.

All the facilities that the Germans built for the 1936 Olympic games, they did a marvelous job, a marvelous job, and everything is still intact even today, even today.

Did the weather cooperate?

It cooperated very well. We had no inclement weather at all.

So it was kind of an ideal situation?

Ideal.

End the tape.