

OK. From the Olympic Village, did you ever travel around or go into Berlin and have any unusual experiences?

Yes. There were opportunities to go from the Olympic Village into the city of Berlin. Every 30 minutes, there was a special bus arranged for the athletes from different countries. I can recall one event when Marty Glickman, a friend of mine from Syracuse University, I had an opportunity to go downtown together.

And we went and we went out on the road, ready to thumb a ride into the town. And the way it worked out was that a German Jeep or [MUMBLING] with sidecar, came by and saw our thumbs out waiting for a ride. And so they stopped and they invited us in.

We went in, into their vehicle. And we moved along very rapidly. And at one point in the ride, the German driver said to us, can I see your passport? Your autograph? And he said to me, can I see your autograph, also in German. And we had them with us.

But we didn't think it was their right to have them. And so I went beyond that, and I said, tell me, did will Jackie Wilson, from [YIDDISH], from North America, [YIDDISH]? I was really speaking Yiddish. The word haynt meaning tonight. And instead of saying heute, which is tonight in German, I said haynt.

And so that aroused their concern somewhat. And they asked us to stay over on the side of the highway. They talked to us a little bit, much of which we couldn't understand. But they asked for our autographs in spite of the fact that they were saying to themselves, these are two Jewish athletes.

And we were dressed in uniforms, so they knew what we were doing there. The opportunity for knowledge of other country would be helpful to them. So they asked us for our autographs. But being stopped on the road, driving along with them and then being stopped to be asked what your autograph, what your number was, and then linking that to a request for an autograph, was unusual.

That did happen, yes. And was frightening.

Did you, in going into Berlin, did you notice any signs of Nazi Germany and anti-Semitism?

There were beginning signs going up. There were workmen. Some men, some women in ladders. Climbing, three, four, five step ladders. Taking down signs, putting up signs. Identifying where they did not want you to be. Where you were forbidden to go. We saw those quite often.

As a Jew.

That's right.

What did the sign say?

[NON-ENGLISH]. Jews forbidden to ride on this road.

You know what, I think I need you to restate this, because I interrupted you. And I need you to say it as a complete thought, as if I'm not here.

OK.

So did you see indications of anti-Semitism when you went into Berlin?

Yes. There were some.

There were what? I need the whole--

There were two situation which was very frightening. Marty Glickman and I were on the highway we had--

I don't need that story.

I want the signs.

Oh. We were in the bus and we were asked for our autographs. We wondered why. And they were beginning to understand when they saw my autograph, Herman Goldberg, Yiddishah [? man ?], a Jewish man. That it was something that they should have been more cautious about, at least they were very scary to us at the beginning.

And we did our very best to steer clear of them and we walked the last mile or two into town. And I went to where I wanted to go, to the Music Hall to hear the opera Die Fledermaus. And Marty went to some event, I can't recall what he went to.

In Berlin itself, were there signs of the Nazi regime?

No. There were not. They were being very careful to keep those hidden from direct public view. There were some evidences where news people, news syndicated people, syndicate people, wanted to see if there were troubles going on between Germany and the United States because of the existence of Hebrews on the American team.

And it was clear to us that they wanted those signs down. And so there were some ladders, maybe four to six feet tall, that I noticed very carefully. And there were men and women on that ladder core, directing whether or not those people were going to stay on that or were going to move away from it.

There was no smooth sailing. It was dreadful to think of what might be coming ahead. You couldn't quite tell everything. The preparation for athletic events, the preparation for musical events, et cetera, were all things that were good things. And you couldn't tell immediately that their anxiety over seeing what they could do to Americans could be completed.

Did you have any other experiences where you were alarmed or felt that there was danger or that this anti-Semitism was rampant?

Yes, there was one series of events where I felt that the-- some news syndicates in America were very anxious to get evidence that things were not going well for American athletes. And that they would like to have me, and then perhaps others, spread the story through their syndicated news service.

Spread the word that things were not going to be good for American athletes of Jewish background. The possibility of manufacturing such events when they really didn't exist was presented by one person from an American news syndicate. It was the kind of situation where my greatest hope would have been the ability to just knock them out on the floor.

And get them off the boat. He followed the boat out into the river and then met the boat 80 miles from New York, checking on where could he get it, where could he dig a good story?

But there was no foundation for that--

But there was no foundation for that, that's correct.

Speaking of the boat ride over, what was that like? Was it exciting?

It was very exciting--

Please say the the boat ride over.

Yes. The boat ride over was very exciting. People were thinking about Eleanor Holm Jarrett, wondering about the allegations that she was drinking, using alcohol, using tobacco. There were statements having to do with, I think, a reduction in the credibility of some of the American athletes was rampant.

And it got cleared up, I think after the thing was laid out on the table and was forcefully presented.

But what was special about this boat ride over? What was happening?

What was happening was the athletes were not sitting around. They were in training. I was surprised. Jesse Owens, Marty Glickman, Marty Stoller, a whole bunch of athletes, running, jumping--

I need you to say that over, because you said Marty Stoller instead of Sam Stoller.

Yes.

So what was going on on the boat?

There was a great deal of activity going on on the boat. They were practicing in their events. They were movement. There was nobody sitting around reading a book. They were trying hard to keep their weight down, they worked very hard in every aspect of self care. And it was important, because these athletes needed to have that great spirit, the great ability, the great bodily condition in which to participate.

And I think the Americans had it.

Was this an exciting opportunity for you?

It was an exciting opportunity for me, for the first reason, Mickey Cochrane was aboard ship. And one wondered why would the manager of the Detroit Tigers be on board ship? Well, all the anxiety about it ended for me when I got word that I was picked up by the Detroit Tigers to become a member of the Detroit Tigers baseball team and to become a member of that rookie staff. And then to play with that team and to play with Buffalo in the International League. They were all very exciting to have Major League managers talk to you. And who knows how much they were watching and what notes they would take?

Who knows? I don't know. But at any rate, it was a great feeling that having important people on board ship was present and they were taking plenty of time to talk to athletes and to be with them and to try to assess what they were really like. And I was lucky.

I happened to hook on well with the Detroit Tigers.

The games themselves. What was it like being there?

It was thrilling in so many ways, because you looked out on the playing area and you saw room for 125,000 people. Not every event drew 125,000, some drew fewer numbers than that. But however, it was a very exciting thing to see that size crowd.

Also to see a group playing a game that they weren't used to. The foul lines were white ribbon, four inches wide. And they didn't put plaster of Paris or yellow white dirt down on the field.

You know what, I think you've explained that really well already. So I'm going to move on to when you were in the stands. You can kind of tell me about the atmosphere, if you saw Hitler, and the sort of general ambience.

In the stands, where I sat next to Marty Glickman for several weeks while events were going on, there were some things happening that gave you some more idea of what was going on. Hitler did not stay in the visible area of his private balcony when a German athlete won an event.

When a German athlete won an event, he walked out on his little balcony, he raised his hand, it was round of applause. And then he went back in. When a Black athlete, perhaps the Jewish athletes, too, there were very few of us, I couldn't count. There wasn't time to count.

The Jewish athletes, and the black athletes, especially, caused Hitler to turn around and to walk out of his own private balcony. In other words, he did not want to be seen praising a Black athlete even in his own track and field area. He just didn't want to be seen.

So what you're saying is, explain this to me once more. You could see Hitler from where you were sitting?

From where I could see Hitler, I could see Hitler every single day. I could see him every day because his travels were mainly going from inside the balcony, outside, some applause, for the German athlete, his hand down when a Black athlete won an event, and his reverse and his walking out of his balcony when some other country became the winner of an event.

He did not demonstrate the real feelings of Olympic history, Olympic meaning, Olympic strength. He did not demonstrate that at all. It was only what he could gain out of his own team's participation.

And so he didn't even salute other white athletes? Basically just his own.

He did not salute white athletes. He stayed away from any opportunity to applaud an athlete who won an event who came from a country that he didn't like, perhaps. I can't describe it in another way, but I would say it would be accurate to say that he removed himself from his own private balcony as often as he wanted to to demonstrate his own feeling. And that's what I saw all the time.

Marty and I were very close to the balcony, Hitler's balcony. We were not far away. We could see that happening, his walking back and forth.

What was it like seeing Hitler up close like that?

I was no more than five feet away from him in the swimming meets. I went to the swimming meets and I learned that Hitler went to many of the events without prior notice. For example, wrestling, swimming. Kinds of events that didn't draw big crowds and without prior notice. In other words, he didn't call, on the phone, the committee connected with a particular event.

He would just arrive there in his car, get out, follow his entourage, get up in the stands, sit there for three, four, or five minutes, get out, go on to the next one. That we saw very often. There was nothing that I can report that indicates that someone in charge of an athletic event of such great importance would behave that way. I could sense that. Yes.

Was there something frightening about him, something awesome about him?

Yes, because--

I need you to say the whole thought.

Yes. I think there were some frightening characteristics of that type of behavior, because it was evident that he did not wish to demonstrate fairness to athletes from several different countries. He avoided the opportunity to be even handed as often as possible, which is one of the one of the credos of the Olympiad, to be fair to all the countries of the world.

Was there anything just viscerally significant about his presence?

Walking out onto the field, he did that at the beginning, walking out--

Please say that again, sir. Walking out into the field, Hitler.

When Hitler was walking out onto the field, and that happened several times, it was very, very difficult to understand how he could possibly behave one way in the stands, another way on the field, another way to the press, another way to perhaps his own political leadership.

It was very difficult to understand that. Because the work of the Olympiad is entirely different than being angry at other people. It's being friendly. It's being-- togetherness, trying to work together, trying to understand each other from different parts of the world.

Did he have a commanding presence?

What is it?

Did Hitler have a commanding presence?

Hitler had a very commanding presence. Never strong enough to present it solo, but always second or third line with other protective units around him all the time. Never walking into a situation by himself, but at least Goebbels and many of the others, 10, 12 people surrounding, walking in a way that would give you fright.

And the audience went wild for him?

When he entered the stadium, what happened? When he entered the stadium? When Hitler entered the stadium, there was great applause. There was a tremendous attempt for his own citizens, his German participants, his German spectators, to applaud his presence. Yes, that's true. And they felt that he was the producer of this grand spectacle, this grand spectacle, to make it possible for the rest of the world to be waiting and watching.

What was going on in Hitler, in Germany, at this place.

I want to just ask you a question, again, about your role over there, because I know that in Berlin, you played exhibition games. And after that, you did what?

After we played an exhibition game, we assigned a series of locations where the 28 of us on the Olympic baseball team were divided into squads and working with local physical education teachers and leaders to teach baseball to clubs, to teams, not to fight them against their great desire to play soccer, but to teach them that there was another sport and that the rest of the world was waiting for them to come in to baseball.

Did you play exhibition games in these locations?

We played exhibition games throughout Germany. Yes.

Did you ever experience any Jewish sentiment while you were doing this?

None whatsoever. None on my part. The only anti-Semitic feeling that I had slight touch from had to do with the newspaper syndicated people.

You explained that, so you don't have to go through that--

Who wanted to manufacture a story.

Right. I'm going to change the tape. How are you doing? Are you OK?

Yeah.

Am I wearing you out?