

I want to backtrack for a moment. Prior to your going to Berlin, do you remember any conversation, any newspaper articles, any talk of America boycotting the Olympics because of what was going on already in Germany?

At the time we were competing in the regional finals and then the finals at Randall's Island. The talk was so slight that I truly was not aware of the possibility of a boycott of the 1936 Games. It had very little play in the press if any. I don't remember seeing it in the newspapers or hearing it on the radio.

As a matter of actual fact, no Jewish organization, like B'nai B'rith or ADL or the American Jewish Congress, if there was an AJC, no Jewish organization nor any individual ever said to me, Marty, don't go. There was no talk, general talk of boycott. I know now that there was a vote taken involving the AAU, the Amateur Athletic Union, and the American Olympic Committee, and that they voted to go. But there was no such publicity or promotion such as existed in 1980, when the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, strongly recommended that we don't participate in the 1980 games. There was no such popular movement at that time in 1936.

And you weren't aware that there were athletes who had decided not to go on their own.

I was not aware of any athletes who decided not to go. I know now that athletes say they decided not to go. There was a fine sprinter whom I never met, never ran against, a fellow named Herman Neugass of Tulane, who determined that he was not going to try out for the team. He didn't go. He didn't try out for the team. But I knew that in later years.

So this was just not an issue.

The fact of going or not going was not an issue, not as far as I was concerned, nor in terms of the public press or the populace generally. We didn't think in terms of not going.

I want you tell me about the trip over, the anticipation, what it was like being on the boat.

Being on the boat was fun. Being on the boat was a brand new experience, particularly for a kid from Brooklyn, or any of us who'd never been abroad. I'd been no farther North than Boston. I'd been no farther South than Philadelphia. And here I was, an 18-year-old kid from Brooklyn, heading for Europe.

It had been a name, a place my parents came from, going to Germany and visiting other countries as well. Our first stop, for example, was in Ireland with a ship, just stopping there and seeing it in the distance, and how beautifully green it was. We stopped in England momentarily at Plymouth. And I couldn't see the Plymouth Rock or anything like that, but it was Plymouth, England.

And then we went across to Germany, landed in Hamburg. And from Hamburg, took the train down into the heart of Berlin, to the huge Bahnhof in Berlin.

What was going on on that boat? What was the mood? People were, I assume, fairly excited.

All of us were pleased at having made the team. And the boat was wide open. In those days, a huge ship like the Manhattan had different classes, first class, second class, cabin class, or whatever, steerage even. But we had the run of the boat. And we ate in what amounted to the second class dining room. We were not in the top categories of dining room.

We had huge menus to choose from. We were not given training table food. We selected our own foods.

There was a fellow on the team named Tarzan Brown, a Narragansett Indian from Maine who'd never seen a menu like this before. And Tarzan was a marathon runner. He weighed perhaps 130 pounds-- A great marathon runner, he'd won the Boston Marathon-- on the team. And we had this huge menu. And every meal, every day, he ate the menu from top to bottom. I mean, six out appetizers, and two or three soups, and four main courses.

In those six days, on the ship, he might have put on between 10 and 11 pounds. He ran the first mile of the marathon, and then he sat by the wayside and gave it all up.

How were you spending your time on the boat?

We spend our time on the boat talking, working out, calisthenics mostly, jogging up and down on some of the very short straightaways on deck. There was no facility to really work out the way we would ordinarily on a cinder track or a clay track, certainly no quarter mile track aboard ship. But we stretched, we jogged, we walked, we did exercises, and we talked, and we read. And generally it was a group of guys having a good time together.

There were women on the team as well, but I guess I was not involved nor interested in any of the women. I had a girlfriend who later became my wife.

Was there any special camaraderie amongst the few Jewish athletes on the boat?

There was no special camaraderie amongst the Jewish athletes, except a warm friendship that I developed with a baseball player Herman Goldberg, who was a catcher on the exhibition baseball team. There was no international baseball competition. America was practically the only place where baseball was played in those days. So it was a demonstration, an exhibition team, and he was on the team, and on the Olympic team, Herman was, a catcher on the team. We hit it off very nicely.

But usually with the athletes from the different sports, the track athletes stayed together, the gymnasts were together, the swimmers were together. Not that we didn't fraternize with each other, but we had much more in common with each other. And so we were buddies amongst our own teammates within the Olympic team.

And when you say you talked a lot, what did you talk about? What it was going to be like in Berlin competing or?

We didn't talk about what Europe was going to be like. We talked mostly about America. We talked about baseball and football and particularly about track and field. We told stories. We swapped yarns.

We were-- how can I say it best-- a bunch of guys who enjoyed each other. We had enormous respect for each other. And I, as one of the younger fellows on the team, looked up to some of the older men, who were not only older but bigger and stronger than I. And it was just a very pleasant time, a group of young men being with each other, enjoying the sea voyage, enjoying each other's company.

Did you think about the fact that you were representing the United States in the Olympics?

It's rather unusual for me or any athlete to say that we represented America. I didn't feel as though I represented the USA. I represented me.

I was glad I was on the team. It was a goal I had sought. It was an achievement for me. It was an individual thing. After all, the Olympic games, in theory, and I strongly believe this, are for the individual, for the excellence of the individual. And theoretically, though we wear national uniforms, we don't represent the different countries whose uniforms we wear. We represent athletics, we represent sports-- we compete in sports for sports' sake.

The competition is all important. Winning is not important. Baron de Coubertin, who founded the modern Olympic games, insisted, has been quoted many times as saying, winning is not the goal of the Olympic games, taking part, participating, is what the Olympic games are all about. So it wasn't as though we were going there to win for the United States. That was a thought that was perhaps in the back of our minds. It was not a conscious thought.

We were going there as athletes, not necessarily as Americans. I was going there as a Jewish American athlete, but as an athlete basically. A Jew, an American, and an athlete.

What's the reality of what you're saying, that there are, theoretically, no national lines-- there are no politics in the

Olympics. I mean, that certainly isn't my perception.

People say that there are politics in the Olympic games. I say hogwash. I say nonsense. Where does politics fit in When you run 100 meters or 1,500 meters or put the shot or even played basketball against each other? What politics are involved? The first man across the finish line wins, no matter what the race. The man who puts the shot a longer distance than any other is the gold medal winner, or spins the discus, or throws the javelin, or whatever the event. There are no politics amongst the athletes.

You talk about politics amongst the nations, certainly. But not as far as the Olympic games are concerned. They don't exist politics are not involved in terms of winning and losing. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] right?

Well, clearly nations have used those gold medals in a political framework.

I don't believe that at all. I don't believe that having medal winners for a particular country means anything to that country in terms of anything important, anything solid. After all, the East Germans were terrific, as long as East Germany insisted, and they sought and worked hard to develop great Olympic athletes. And the Soviet Union won many, many medals, dominated a couple of Olympic Games. And certainly the Italians to some extent won many Olympic events, as well as other fascist countries doing well and centered their interest in the Olympic games.

And where is the Soviet Union today? Where are the East Germans today? Where is Nazi Germany today? They just don't exist anymore. And Nazi Germany won more medals in the '36 games than the United States did, 33 to 26. Although they won medals for dressage, and for pistol shooting, and rifle shooting, and things like that. I don't see the importance of international athletics in terms of politics at all.

They say that the governments use it, but even the successful Olympic teams like Germany, and East Germany, and the Soviet Union, where are they? What good did it do them?

Well, except-- and I don't necessarily need to belabor this-- for that in 1936 Germany's success is not only in presenting the Olympics but in also winning a lot of medals may have been an encouragement, may have spurred them on in ways at that time.

Many people say that the '36 Olympic games were the Nazi Olympics or Hitler's Olympic Games. I say they were Jesse Owens's Olympic games. The myth of Nazi Aryan supremacy was smashed to smithereens by the great non-Aryan athletes, black athletes, wonderful black athletes, won the 100, the 200, the 400, the 800, the long jump, the high jump, medalled in many other events as well. It was the Olympic Games of Jesse Owens, not of Adolf Hitler.

Jesse was idolized by the German population. He couldn't walk into the stadium using the regular players' entrance into the stadium. He had to be secreted into the stadium. He had to use a secret entrance to get in. Otherwise he'd been mobbed by the idolizing German population or whoever the spectators were-- and they were mostly Germans-- in the 120,000 seat stadium.

It was Jesse Owens's Olympics as far as I was concerned and I think as far as the world was concerned. And it certainly proved that this Aryan business of supremacy was ridiculous. These were non-Aryans winning the most important events.

Let's go back to your story now. So you had this terrific boat ride over. And tell me about your arrival, and getting to Berlin, and all of that. We arrived at the Bahnhof in Berlin at midday, and a huge crowd was there--

Let me just stop you. You arrived on the boat in Hamburg, yes?

Yes.

Was there anybody there to greet you?

We went right to the train.

OK. Nothing happened [INAUDIBLE].

All right.

There was a huge crowd waiting for us at the Bahnhof in Berlin, this huge railroad station. Newspapermen, camera people with the newsreels, photographers, fans, officials of all sorts, uniforms of all sorts-- huge crowd waiting on the platform when we arrived. And as we got off the train and milled about on the platform, I felt a tap on my shoulder. And I turned and saw a smallish looking young man in his mid-20s, obviously an American as soon as he talked to me, and he said to me, are you Marty Glickman?

I said, yes. He said, you're Jewish, aren't you? I said, yes, I am, slightly taken aback. I said, why do you ask?

He said, well I'm Jewish also. I said, you're Jewish? What are you doing here? He says, I'm going to med school here in Berlin.

I said, you're going to med school here in Germany? He said, yes. I couldn't get into an American med school. So the feeling I had of Berlin being very much like New York in its antisemitism or its lack of antisemitism was similar to New York and Berlin. It was the same sort of city, I thought, particularly as a result of this conversation with this young man going to med school.

What did he tell you about the political climate in Germany as a Jew?

I asked him, what was it like for you as a Jew here in Germany? He says, well, in Berlin, I go practically unnoticed. Nobody knows that I'm Jewish. I'm going to med school here. In the shtetls, in the smaller cities around Germany, there are problems. But now, during the Olympic Games and leading up to the Olympic Games, everything is quiet. Nothing seems to be going on in terms of antisemitism. And as far as my being here in Berlin, I'm just like anybody else here in Berlin. I'm going to med school.

All of these people who greeted you at the train station in Berlin, were they carrying swastikas? Was there any of that?

There was a huge number of uniformed individuals. I noticed, and we commented about it, my teammates and I, about the fact that there seemed to be no men under the age of approximately 35-- no young men-- who were not in one uniform or another. They were wearing either gray, or green, or brown in one uniform or another. No young men in street clothes, in civilian attire, except those who are older than 35 or obviously older than the age that we athletes were. Everyone seemed to be in uniform.

As for banners and flags, they were all over the place and dominated by the swastika. The swastika was all over. On virtually every other banner we saw there was a swastika. But this was '36.

This was before we really got to know what the swastika truly meant. This was two years before Kristallnacht. This was three years before the outbreak of the war. It was five years before the United States was involved in the war. So the swastika and those German flags, the black and red and white of the German flags, didn't mean very much to us except as a form of decoration.

And it wasn't sort of an unnerving amount of patriotism?

I've never been asked about the patriotism exhibited by the Germans at that time. It was a natural thing to see all these German flags. But flags of other Nations were exhibited as well. They rimmed the stadium, they were on the streets-- there were many flags, mostly German. Most of those German flags contained the swastika.

There seemed to be no outward display of patriotism except when Hitler walked into the stadium. He would walk into his box overlooking the field, and I was perhaps 50 to 75 feet away from Hitler's box, and he'd walk in, and the stands

would rise, and you'd hear it in unison, sieg heil, sieg heil, all together-- this huge sound reverberating through the stadium. That was the patriotism, the German patriotism I saw, sieg heil with 120,000 people shouting it-- or most of the 120,000 people.

But that same shout of sieg heil was matched by the sound of Jesse Owens's name. Every time Owens came on the track, and he was on frequently because he ran in four different races, and qualifying times, and qualifying races for all those races, every time Jesse appeared on the track, the crowd would yell, "oh-vens," "oh-vens." the W in German as pronounced as a V, and they would shout, with the same amount of fervor it seemed, for Jesse as they sounded for sieg heil-- "oh-vens," "oh-vens." It was a remarkable thing to see this marvelous black athlete saluted by 120,000 Germans.

That's a great story. Though when Owens wasn't coming out of the field, was there anything alarming about this sieg heil in unison, 120,000? I don't know how many people are actually shouting it, but what seemed like the entire stadium.

I never felt as though there was anything alarming in terms of the sieg heil, a feeling of fear or anything like that. It was almost as though we in the States were singing the National anthem or stating the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag. It was fairly brief. Hitler would walk in with an entourage of Goring, and Goebbels, and Hesse, and Himmler, and Streicher, and take their seats in this box with Hitler in the middle, slightly forward of the rest of the group, and Goring with his resplendent, outlandish uniforms, wildly decorative, and Goebbels that rat-like face, and the rest. Hesse with that very dark beard that he had. They sat there.

And Hitler particularly was extremely nervous when German athletes ran. He'd sit in this seat and rub his thighs and move back and forth as I'm doing now. And he was obviously very much involved in the race. And I thought he was nervous for his own athletes.

When other athletes competed, he just sat there quietly and observed. He was thrilled, overjoyed, smiled, when German athletes went to the winning podium. When the black athletes went to the winning podium, Hitler was gone. As soon as a Black athlete won his gold medal and was going to the podium to receive it, the box would empty out. Hitler's box would empty out, they'd all be gone, and they would not pay homage to the great black athletes who were there. They stayed for the white athletes, but they left for the black athletes.

I'm going to fix your Band-Aid.

[INAUDIBLE]

Marty, your tie--

Oh, it's coming--

Thank you.

Are we rolling?

We're back rolling.

OK. OK. Now I want to know a little bit about what it was like being in Germany, the Olympic Village what that was like. Did you take little side trips into town or into other areas as a tourist? If you can tell me a little bit about the mood before the Olympics.

The event I was supposed to run, the 400 meter relay, was one of the last events on the track and field program. The trials came on the penultimate day, and the final day of the games for track and field was the final of the 400 meter run. So I had plenty of time, and so did the other athletes, except for fellows like Jesse Owens and one or two others who competed in several events.

I had plenty of time to go into Berlin during the morning hours usually or late in the afternoon, after the afternoon

events took place. And I had my freedom throughout Berlin. I could hitch a ride if I chose to, get aboard a bus or a trolley, or whatever, because I was wearing an Olympic uniform. And I had Olympic identification of all sorts on me.

And it was beautiful. It was lovely. I walked along Unter den Linden. I thought that Unter den Linden-- later I went to Paris and walked along the Champs-Élysées-- I believed then that the Champs-Élysées was not as attractive as Unter den Linden in Berlin. But that was my own personal feeling about it.

The Olympic Village was a beautiful campus of bungalows and low-lying houses which housed the various teams of the Olympic Games. And it was like a college campus. Slightly rolling low hills and dotted with these bungalows and different buildings there.

There was a practice track. There was a swimming area, an indoor Natatorium. And we worked out at the practice track.

The single most important thing I got from the Games was the fact that the other athletes of the world were just like me, and I was just like they. I worked out with Hungarian athletes, and Romanian athletes, and British athletes, French, Japanese athletes. We had many things in common, the things involving our sports. And I jogged alongside of the different athletes. I walked alongside of them in the village.

We dined separately. Each team had its own portion of the dining room and rooms. But we were with each other, and we enjoyed each other's presence even though we couldn't communicate very well with most of the teams of the world, because I didn't speak their language and they didn't speak mine. I talk to the English of course and talk to those who spoke English.

There was one Finn, a great Finnish athlete, named Gunnar Hockert. Gunnar was the 5,000 meter champion, a young man in his early 20s, who was a beautiful blonde, blue-eyed, apple-cheeked young man, and a great, great runner. He won the gold medal. And he spoke good English. And we spent a great deal of time with Gunnar, because he liked being with the American athletes, he liked speaking English, and we liked Gunnar.

And to my shock and horror, he was killed in the Russian-Finnish war just a few years after the Olympic Games. But knowing him and knowing the other athletes, even just being with them for this limited amount of time, made me feel like one of them. And I think they felt like one of us. It was a wonderful education for all of us and me particularly.

Did you mingle with German athletes?

The German athletes usually stayed to themselves. The German athletes worked out together, worked out by themselves. They weren't as free, as loose, as easy as athletes from other countries of the world.