

When we stopped, you were describing what it was like being in the Olympic stadium-- the pageantry of--

The Opening Day Parade.

Yeah.

One of the things I best remember about the opening day ceremonies of the Olympic games-- I was standing in the infield of the stadium while the Olympic oath was being taken, and the various music was being played-- was the release of these thousands of pigeons, which had been cooped up. And they were alongside the inner perimeter of the stadium.

And now after being in these cages for-- I don't know how many hours or how many days, they were suddenly released. And they flew up over the stadium and circled round and round. And we began to hear on our straw hats-- that was part of our uniform, the straw hats-- splat, splat, splat from these pigeons.

And we were afraid to look up, of course, or else, we'd get it in the eye. But there we were cringing in the stadium. And the splat-- splat of all these thousands of pigeons going round and round, and finally, they went far enough up to get out of the stadium and flew away. It was a very funny moment.

Do you remember-- were you at the closing ceremonies?

No, we left before the end of the Olympic games. Avery Brundage, I believe, the head of the American Olympic Committee, was the basic reason, I believe, that Sam and I didn't get to run the Olympic games. Adolf Hitler was being humiliated by the great success of the Black American athletes.

And I think that he wanted to see to it that Jewish athletes didn't stand on the winning podium and further humiliate Adolf Hitler-- embarrass him with that nonsense about arrogance of primacy because here were the great Black athletes, who couldn't be kept off the winning podium because of their number and their great reputations. And they were marvelous.

But he went too rather obscure Jewish American athletes who could be kept from the winning podium. And, I believe, that Avery Brundage, who was close to Hitler, who had examined Germany for anti-Semitism the year before to see whether or not the games should be held in Germany. He was Avery Brundage keeping Jews from the winning podium, so as not to further embarrass Adolf Hitler.

It was something that you realized later.

I was more aware of it later than I am-- I was more aware of it later than I was at that time. But Brundage was a most important figure-- head of the American Olympic Committee and, later on, the president of the International Olympic Committee.

You mentioned you wanted-- you had wanted-- or you were thinking forward to the 1940 Olympics. So apparently, this experience didn't sour you at all on sports, fierceness, Olympics.

My experience in the Olympic games and the fact that I didn't run didn't sour me on the games at all. It soured me on Avery Brundage, certainly soured me on anti-Semitism and the Nazis as well. But as far as the Olympic games then and for many years thereafter, I was an Olympic booster.

I didn't want us to boycott the games and the Soviet Union in 1980. I didn't want the Soviet Union to boycott the American games in 1984. But I'm not very happy with the current Olympic games-- the Olympic games of '96 and the enormous commercialization of the Olympic games.

I think that the Olympic ideal, the Olympic Creed, doesn't exist any longer. It's all strictly professionalism. I think that

the current Olympic games in Atlanta is a huge project for profits, and that's about all.

At what point after the games did you become more aware of what was actually taking place in Germany and in Europe?

I became aware of what took place in Germany in 1938. Kristallnacht was the beginning of the knowledge generally of what took place in Germany in 1936. Even the German Jews stayed in Germany until 1938. Many left but far more remained in Germany until '38. And then they started to try to get out of Germany.

Of course, I didn't know about the Holocaust until after the war was over. I was a Marine in the Central Pacific during World War II in the Marshall Islands. And the European campaign was that far distant from our involvement in the Pacific.

So it wasn't until I came back in December of '45 that I began to realize-- I began to hear and know of what took place in the closing years of World War II.

Did you rethink at all about your participation in 1936? I mean, when you started learning much more, did it make you think about it all in context?

I've been asked many times whether I have second guesses about going to Germany in 1936. And I persist in saying that I'm delighted I went. I'm glad that the games took place in '36. I saw no harm from the games themselves.

I saw a great deal of good from the games for me as an individual, learning about the other athletes of the world and for the great success of the non-Aryan athletes, the marvelous Black athletes, who had this great success in helping smash that myth of Aryan supremacy. I think that was a very positive thing.

Did you afterwards think more about being a Jewish athlete? I mean, did it-- because, in fact, that seems to be what happened in 1936, even though prior to that, you never considered yourself a Jewish athlete. You were one.

Something took place in 1937, which was a direct result of what happened to me in 1936. I was playing football at Syracuse. And for this particular week, I was the star of the team. We had upset Cornell the week before. And I had scored both touchdowns for Syracuse against Cornell, 14 to 6 was the final score. And I had the best day I ever had on the football field-- a lot of publicity about me then.

And I'm embarrassed almost to say I was the star of the team, going to a game against Maryland, in Maryland, in Baltimore. And as we're getting dressed for the game, sitting alongside of me is the other starting halfback. His name is Wilmeth Sidath-Singh.

He is a Black man, but his mother had married a Hindu physician. And Will and I played side by side. We're in the same class. We took classes together. He helped me through my physics class, my physics course.

Later, he was a member of the Black airmen, the Black squadron, who helped form the one squadron of Black aviators in World War II. But this was in 1937 in Baltimore, Maryland moving-- getting dressed for the game. He's sitting right alongside of me right here. He slept alongside of me where we slept in the gym during the football season.

And the coach came in as he saw him along with the Director of Athletics, Lou Andreas. And he said, fellows, I've got some news. The local press in Maryland just found out that Will is not a Hindu. But he's a Black man. And, consequently, he won't play today.

And I said to myself sitting there, stand up, Morty and say, if Will doesn't play, I don't play. And I'm one of the leaders of the team. I'm the star of the team this week anyhow because of that previous game the week before. And I say, stand up and say that.

And I think to myself, but if I do stand up and say that, and the game is canceled, and there's a ruckus-- just furor

develops as a result of the game being canceled, if that happens, they'll point to me, and there's that Jewish guy getting in trouble again.

Because just the year before, I'd been involved in the anti-Semitic incident in Berlin. And so I didn't say a word. And Will didn't play. And I played. And we got beat. We got beat 12-0. A couple of years after that, Will was killed in World War II. And to this day, I still feel very strongly about it, that I should have gotten up and said.

And he was good enough to die for our country, but he wasn't good enough to play against Maryland.

I'm going to ask you one more question.

Sure.

And also would you try to pull your jacket down a little bit?

I'm slumping down.

Why don't you tell me your question?

Hmm? Yeah.

And your time.

[CREW TALKING IN BACKGROUND]

After the Olympic games, many of the track and field athletes toured Europe and several different track meets. I ran on a 400-yard relay team in London at White City stadium. I ran with Jesse Owens, and Ralph Metcalf, and Frank Weiskopf, and me.

We set a world's record at 400 yards. That world's record still stands mostly because they rarely run that race. And they don't run yards anymore. They now run meters. So the four of us are still world record holders at the 400-yard relay.

I also ran in Paris after the Olympic games-- ran against Frank Wykoff. And I won the race against Wykoff that day. And a combination of Japanese and French athletes, as well as American athletes, competed that day. And I won that race.

Also I ran in Scotland. I ran in a handicap race and didn't win that handicap race. I would set back so far from the rest of the field because these were local athletes in Edinburgh, Scotland, that I was literally off the track, that far back. And I had to run up a slight incline to get to the track and then start running. I finished out of the money.

But what I think what you're telling me from those first few races is that you probably were good enough to run in the Olympics.

Yeah, well, I was on the team.

But to have actually competed instead of all that stuff--

Well, you want me to say that?

Sure.

Well--

All of a sudden a few weeks after the Olympics, you're making a world record in the same event

I don't want to brag. I mean, it's been said I was on the team. And that's the important thing. I made the team. And, obviously, I was good enough to run in the Olympic games because I was on the American team. And American athletes compete in the Olympic games when they make the Olympic team, except for these two Jewish athletes who didn't because of Avery Brundage, and Adolf Hitler, and anti-Semitism.

And I'd like to add one other thing that sometimes people feel sorry for me and what happened to me in Germany in Berlin in 1936. What happened to me was as nothing, absolutely zero, compared to that which took place later on. There was just no feeling of comparison and no feeling of hurt. Still feeling of anger, but I was there. And that mattered.

What took place was much, much more important afterwards.

I think I have one more question.

Certainly.

You mentioned this race in Maryland and--

The football game in Maryland.

Right, I'm sorry, the football game and the fact that you are very conflicted about standing up for this Black Indian athlete--

Yes.

Have you thought about ways in which your experience from the 1936 Olympics impacted you or shaped you in terms of values or choices you made afterwards It's a fairly broad question, but--

I think my experience in 1936, my experience in athletics, generally, specifically in '36, made me aware of the fact that I am not different than other people of the world. I'm not different than Blacks or Browns or yellows or whites, that we're all one. And I think I've learned not to be tolerant necessarily. Because tolerance, I think, implies sort of a superiority over individuals.

But I've learned to appreciate of the people, I think, because of my experience in '36 and my experience in athletics.

Did it make you more vigilant toward racism, anti-Semitism, discrimination?

I think the experience of all athletes makes me more conscious of other people, of bias and prejudice against Blacks, and Asiatics, and Latins, and Jews. I think that we're people. I've learned that through sports.

I think that at every level of sports from my days as a schoolboy to my days as a broadcaster has enabled me to thoroughly enjoy and appreciate the abilities of the great athletes I was able to look at and broadcast about the Jim Browns, the wonderful Black athletes, the wonderful Japanese athletes, the great athletes of the world regardless of what their background was.

Sports is the great equalizer.

Sports is the great equalizer. The fellow gets to the finish line first is the winner, which brings to mind another thought that the Olympic games should be a competition amongst individuals and not amongst teams. Because teams represent nationalities. Individuals represent themselves.

Even though we wore the uniform of the United States Olympic team, we ran as individuals. For the relay, the relay is a unique track-and-field event-- four men running together but running individually together. Basketball and hockey-- great sports, a wonderful sports, and football, too, of course.

But the point of sports is the exultation of the individual athlete feels when he does it by himself. And that's the point of the Olympic games. Team sports are marvelous. They teach all the things that ought to be taught in terms of teamwork, and cooperation, and practice, and respect for the other team, and all that.

But the Olympic games are for the individual and for the extolling of the individual abilities-- the excellence of the individual rather than the nation or the team.

Thank you.

Thank--

Anything else you want to add?

I want say a little Margaret.

OK.