PHOENIX, Ariz. (AP) — Former Ohio State University and Olympic track and field hero Jesse Owens was the target of a 1956 FBI investigation that included interviews with people about such personal areas as Owens' sex life and background checks to determine if he was "a loyal American."

The Arizona Republic reported Saturday that the investigation was ordered by then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. The investigation is outlined in documents obtained by the newspaper under the Freedom of Information Act.

The documents were declassified after Owens, a Phoenix resident, died of lung cancer in Tucson in March 1980 at age 66.

The FBI suspected that Owens might have been involved in subversive activities, according to the documents.

All Hoover's agents ever found was that:
- Owens' name appeared on one occasion in the Daily Worker, a Communist Party newspaper.
- Owens was listed in a Michigan newspaper as a member of the "Committee to Seek Unity of Racial Groups," which Hoover believed was a subversive organization.
- Owens sent greetings in 1937, a year after winning four gold medals at the Olympics in Berlin, to the National Negro Congress, which Hoover also regarded as an un-American organization.

A SHOCKED Ruth Owens said, "My husband is resting in his grave, so he can't speak for himself. But I followed him all over, and I know he was loyal to America. He loved his family and his country.

"Jesse was a good man. He always tried to do what was right. But he went to his grave being dogged. His crime was that he was black."

The FBI documents show that background investigations and credit checks were also run on Owens' wife, his parents, his three daughters, his brothers and his sisters.

Dozens of people were interviewed by the FBI during the course of the investigation, including former employers and others who knew Owens or knew about him. Hundreds of records were checked.
Tracking a legend

By Wendy Wallace
Lantern staff writer

"I fell in love with her some the first time we ever talked, and a little bit more every time after that until I thought I couldn't love her more than I did. And when I felt that way, I asked her to marry me, even though we were only in the fourth grade, and she said she would."

Ruth Owens remembers her first encounter with Jesse a little differently than he recounts in his autobiography. Yet her recollection is no less romantic. Ruth met Jesse at Fairmont Junior High School in Cleveland when she was 13.

"He was in my sister's class. He gave my sister a note to give to me." The short message scrawled on the note, "I want to walk you home," sparked a romance that lasted more than 50 years.

And walk her home he did, she said.

He met her after school and carried her books.

"The little girl I had met, the little pigtailed girl without prejudice, had become my wife secretly when we were only 16-years-old."

Jesse and Ruth eloped on a rainy day in April, 1930. "We decided all of a sudden," Ruth said. Ruth and Jesse jumped into a car piloted by Jesse's best friend, Dave Albritton.

Albritton drove them from town to town in Pennsylvania until they found a justice of the peace who would marry such a young couple; Jesse was 18 and Ruth was 16.

After sharing a hotdog, the newlyweds and their driver headed as quickly as possible back to Ohio.

Ruth and Jesse didn't disclose their marriage until she became pregnant with the first of their three daughters. In fact, Ruth said, she and Jesse didn't live under the same roof until after Jesse brought home four gold medals from the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

While Jesse studied at Ohio State, Ruth continued to live with her family and baby, Gloria, in Cleveland. Typically, she only saw her husband when he wasn't in training or at a track meet. "That situation existed all through our lives," Ruth said.

"His travels kept us a very loving couple," Jesse's wife said. "He was like a date when he was coming home."
Ruth Owens

He was like a date when he was coming home.

I would be getting the house ready for him and getting the kids together and putting in the kinds of food he enjoyed eating.

“One couldn’t ask for a finer husband,” she said.

Jesse’s track career took him all over the world, but he is best known for his accomplishments in the 1936 Olympics. Jesse Owens won gold medals in the 100 and 200-meter dashes, the broad jump, and the 400-meter relay, setting three Olympic records and casting doubt on the Nazi racial propaganda promoted at the games.

Ruth Owens does not believe Jesse tried to prove anything to Hitler or anyone else.

“I have often heard him say he went over to Germany to run, and run he did,” she said.

“Jesse was an athlete and it meant a lot to him to go over there and represent the United States and to come out with such honor.”

Ruth Owens did not see her husband compete in Berlin. Instead, she listened as reports came across the Atlantic on the radio.

“Then, of course, Jesse was always very close to the sports writers and there were two from Cleveland, one from The Plain Dealer and the other from the Cleveland News who would always keep me informed,” she said.

Ruth Owens did not comprehend the magnitude of her husband’s accomplishments at the time.

“It wasn’t really brought home to me until he came back from the Olympics with all the hoop-dee-doo and the ticker tape parades.”

After the Olympics, Jesse and Ruth Owens returned to Germany several times. “The German people love him and they rolled out the red carpet every time we returned,” she said.

“Last October, they named a street after him in Berlin,” she said.

As a father, Ruth said, Jesse was loving and very strict. “He had dreams of how he wanted his girls to be raised and we lived with that.”

“There were certain things that he demanded of them — get an education, always be a lady, and carry out the rules and regulations of the home.”

“Although Jesse was often out of town, his image was in the home at all times. I would tell the girls “listen to me or I will call your father on the phone and he will take care of it,” she said.
"I guess maybe that was my hammer, but it worked very well for me."

Ruth Owens described an incident that occurred with their youngest daughter, Marlene, when she was about five years old. Jesse was out of town.

"Our youngest daughter was flipping over the couch and she broke a lamp. She was so upset because she knew 'Oh no, Daddy's going to get me when he comes home,' that she went outside and hid in the bushes and we couldn't find her for a long, long time. Everybody was panicking — where's Marlene? where's Marlene?"

"That's how strong he was in the household even though he was absent," Ruth Owens said.

When Jesse's track career ended he made several business ventures including establishing the Jesse Owens Cleaning Stores and a public relations agency.

However, more than anything, Jesse was a speaker — a motivator. He spent a good part of the rest of his life touring the world, delivering speeches and touching the lives of thousands.

Ruth Owens is currently living in Phoenix where she and Jesse moved in 1972. Since Jesse's death March 3, 1980, Ruth has continued to be active in organizing the Arco-Jesse Owens Games held every year in Los Angeles. She is chairwoman of the board of the Jesse Owens Foundation that each year awards scholarships to college-bound seniors. She is also a board member of the Phoenix Memorial Hospital that recently built the Jesse Owens Memorial Clinic.

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Dave Albritton

"One of my buddies, Dave Albritton, somehow got hold of a car... and we drove into Pennsylvania..."

"I was always the front man," Dave Albritton said, "because I could get a car."

Albritton recalls the times he and Jesse would double date.

"I would have the money to buy the tickets to the theater," he said. "And of course we would sit way up in the back corner."

Albritton said he first met Jesse when they were kids in Alabama. "He was from Oakville and I was from Danville. They were within walking distance of each other, about four or five miles. We met on a Sunday afternoon when our brothers got together to play baseball, Albritton said.

"He and I were too young to play (5-years-old,) so we used to sit and watch our brothers."

Strangely enough, both Dave's and Jesse's families left farming in Alabama and migrated to Cleveland in search of more prosperous lives.

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"I was his biggest booster and he was mine"
"Even though we met each other in Alabama we didn't really socialize until we got to Cleveland," Albritton said.

Albritton’s and Owens’ paths began crossing again during sporting events when they were in junior high.

Eventually Albritton transferred to the same junior high school Jesse attended and from then on, they were fast friends.

Both attended Cleveland East Tech High School and were members of the track team. Both competed in the state track meet in 1931, 1932 and 1933, winning state championships.

"We did everything together," Albritton said. "We even dated two sisters — he married Ruth."

Albritton said after successful high school track careers, he and Jesse were encouraged to attend the same college.

"We were a pair," he said. "I was his biggest booster and he was mine."

Albritton still remembers the time when he and Jesse were scouting different colleges, trying to decide which to attend. On their way to Indiana University, they passed through Kokomo, Ind. The day before, a black man had been lynched there. They ruled Indiana out.

"My dream was something I had heard about from the boss’ son when we weren’t fighting one day ... It was called college."

Jesse didn’t decide to come to Ohio State until Larry Snyder, Ohio State’s track coach, offered him what he wanted most — a job for himself and for his father. He enrolled in 1933.

Even in college, "We were synonymous," Albritton said. "We lived, practiced, worked and competed together."

"We used to thumb rides home on the weekends," he said.

Then, in 1936, Jesse and Daye shared an experience few people have ever known — the Olympics.

Albritton competed in the high jump, and in a close competition, captured a silver medal. He cleared the same height as his teammate from California, Cornelius Johnson, but Johnson did it in fewer attempts.

Jesse’s competition in the long jump, like Albritton’s in the high jump, was formidable. Hitler’s sandy-haired, blue-eyed Luz Long, stood before Jesse and the world as an example of Aryan perfection.

"He may have been my archenemy, but I had to stand there in awe and just stare at Luz Long for several seconds."

In a rare moment, Jesse struggled. He was one leap away from not qualifying for the finals. He fouled on his first attempt and fell short on his second.

Before Jesse’s final attempt, his archenemy became his coach. Luz Long, Jesse said, placed his hand on Jesse’s shoulder and talked him through his final attempt. Jesse not only qualified, but set an Olympic record.

In the finals, Jesse again struck gold, setting a world record of 26 feet 5.5 inches. Even better though, Luz Long and Jesse Owens left Berlin after the Olympics as friends.

After graduating from Ohio State in 1938 with a degree in education, Dave Albritton worked for the War Department in the 1940s, and also went on to become a state representative for Montgomery County for 16 years. He recently retired as head track coach from Dayton Dunbar High School. The track program he built while he was there produced three state championship teams.
He would reach his hand in his pocket and give you his last nickel.

"I've had some time since his death to really think about Jesse Owens the individual. My conclusion is that Jesse was first and foremost a humanitarian," said friend and teammate Melvin Walker. Melvin Walker should know.

In 1935 the track team was scheduled, for the first time, to travel to Los Angeles for a dual meet with the University of Southern California.

Walker, wanting to look his best, went downtown and ordered a new suit. This suit, tailored from grey plaid material, included a side vested jacket and trousers. Total cost — $22.50.

Working as a janitor at the state office building, Walker made enough for living expenses but not enough to pay for the suit.

"All I could get together was $15," the former high jumper said.

The day before the team was to leave Columbus, Walker bumped into Jesse on High Street near 11th Avenue.

"He said (to me), 'Well how's it going? Did you get yourself ready to make this trip to California?'" Walker told Jesse about the suit and Jesse said, "How much do you owe?"

"Seven dollars," Walker answered.

"He reached his hand in his pocket and brought out seven dollars and gave it to me," Walker said.

"Of course I went out and I bought the suit, and if I must say so myself, I was real sharp."

"Jesse was that kind of person," Walker said. "He would reach his hand in his pocket and give you his last nickel."

Jesse was an immaculate dresser himself, he said. "He always wanted a person to make his best appearance."

Aside from being a great humanitarian, Walker said, Jesse was a perfectionist.

"He was probably the most beautiful sprinter who ever lived."

"When we were in a track meet and Jesse's events came up, don't you know everybody stopped!" Walker said.

"He's the only track athlete I know, even today, who could fill a stadium with people."

Walker recalled how 50,000 fans filled the stadium when they competed against Southern California. He attributes a good part of the crowd to Jesse's performance two weeks earlier, at the Big 10 outdoor championships in Ann Arbor, Mich.

In the space of little more than two hours at that meet on May 25, 1935, Jesse set three world records and tied a fourth.
Despite Jesse's hectic life — practice, competition, school, work and a wife and child in Cleveland — he never let his worries or problems bother him, Walker said.

"I used to marvel at him. Hell, he could hit the bed (we roomed together) and before the light was out he'd be asleep."

"He may have had problems — but you would never know it. He was just as cheerful and jolly and had a big smile on his face all the time."

Mel Walker remained in competition after he graduated from Ohio State in 1937 and did not quit until 1942 when he married and moved to Chicago. After World War II, he started a trade school, worked in the cosmetic business and for the past 10 years was a personnel manager for Kraft Foods.

Charlie Beetham

Through his whole college career, I never heard anyone say a derogatory word about him.

The first time Charlie Beetham was really touched by discrimination was when he and Jesse Owens went to Milwaukee for a track meet. They booked a room at the Pfister Hotel which, unlike many hotels of that day, allowed black people to stay there.

However, where meals were concerned, the Pfister was not so open-minded. Jesse was not allowed to eat in the hotel dining room so he and his roommate had to dine in their room.

Ohio State's policy toward blacks was not much better. They were not allowed to live on campus, Beetham said. So, the three black men on the track team, Jesse Owens, Melvin Walker and Dave Albritton, lived in a rooming house at 11th and High, he said.

To complicate matters, the trio was not allowed to eat in any of the restaurants off campus, Beetham said. At a time when a person could get a T-bone steak, a potato, a salad, three vegetables and dessert for $.45 at the Blue Moon restaurant on High Street, Jesse and his roommates had to eat on campus.

But there was no racism on the track team. Every athlete had the same chance to win. All faced the same hardships.

For Owens, Beetham and the rest of the team, the indoor season began in January, but Ohio State had no indoor track for practices.

Instead, the members worked out on a cinder track underneath the west side of the stadium. "It was six laps to a mile,"
Jesse Owens hurries to catch a train to make it to the 1936 Olympic Games.

said Beetham, a middle and long-distance runner.

The temperature sometimes dipped below zero, he said. "The facilities weren't good for performance but they were good for getting in shape."

"They used to spray down the track with water to keep the dust from rising," Beetham said. "But they had to be careful that it didn't freeze."

For lack of an indoor track, Ohio State was always the visiting team during the indoor season. The team and coaches would load into several vehicles and go in a convoy. One Packard touring car had no windows; just curtains, Beetham said. "It got awfully cold sometimes."

When the team arrived at its destination, coach Larry Snyder and the white team members would check into a hotel. Most often, Jesse and the other two black men would have to go to the local YMCA and stay there, Beetham said.

"No one really thought about it," Beetham said. "That was just accepted."

When they were not competing or going to school, Beetham said, most of the team members worked. Jesse had three jobs, including working in the state office building as a janitor and at the Statehouse as a page.

During the depression, there was no money, Beetham said. "Nobody worried about the future, really; we had enough to eat everyday," he said.

Beetham made $50 a month working part time. He paid about $15 a quarter for university fees. "There were no (athletic) scholarships then. Some schools did, but the Big 10 frowned on it," he said.

One thing Beetham remembers about Jesse Owens was his uncanny knack for staying healthy. "He never once missed a meet and he was never injured," he said. He also never lost a college race during the outdoor season, Beetham said.

"He was very supportive of the other athletes," he said. "Through his whole college career, I never heard anyone say a derogatory word about him."

Charlie Beetham eventually returned to Ohio State and coached the cross country team until 1966. He retired as the assistant director of intramurals in 1973.
We just went out and did what we could do

Only a handful of men ever had the opportunity to feel the tape draw taut across their chests when they crossed the finish line ahead of Jesse Owens. Ben Johnson and Eulace Peacock are among an elite group who knew the feeling.

Johnson ran all the sprints for his alma mater, Columbia University, squaring off against his fellow competitors and friends many times.

"Jesse was one of the finest humans I ever met, although I spent most of my time looking at his back," Johnson said with a laugh.

Johnson said he never beat Jesse in the 100-yard dash but had more luck in the 60-yard dash. Eulace Peacock, however, said he beat Jesse seven out of 10 times in the 100-meter dash.

This Temple University sprinter also beat Jesse by one-fourth of an inch in the broad jump in 1936 at the National Championships in Lincoln, Neb.

Both men developed friendships with Jesse Owens. In fact, Peacock said, the only time there was no conversation between him and Owens at a meet was when the starter said, "Take your mark."

"Everybody was on his own then," he said.

"We never had a rivalry," Peacock said.

Because Johnson went to school in New York, he would show Jesse around when he came there for track meets. "After the meet we would go to parties together," Johnson said.

"When Jesse came home from Berlin in 1936, Eulace Peacock and I were there to welcome him home," Johnson said.

While Jesse was in New York, Johnson took him shopping. "I was looking at a beautiful topcoat," Johnson said.

However, he did not have enough cash to buy it so Jesse loaned him the money. "I tried to repay him but he would never take it back," Johnson said. "I have always remembered him for that."

Eulace Peacock, who ran a liquor store for 25 years, is now retired and lives in Yonkers, N.Y.

Ben Johnson taught high school after graduating from Columbia University. He entered the army, and before retiring from it attained the rank of full colonel. He was the director for the Pennsylvania Bureau of Welfare until 1983.

Owen’s daughters

As kids growing up, we didn’t realize how famous he was, he was just our dad.

Marlene Owens

He was a joke-teller, an armchair cowboy and a stern disciplinarian — not a track star. He was fair, supportive and understanding — not presumptuous or conceited. Above all, to Gloria Hemphill, Beverly Prather and Marlene Rankin, Jesse Owens was a father.

All three sisters agree they never really thought of their father as someone who was famous or a national hero.

"We were never really a part of that life," said Marlene, his youngest daughter. "He very deliberately kept us away from all that."

Marlene said she has no regrets about this. "Some of the experiences could be beyond belief. To have to live that constantly could create problems in distinguishing what’s real."

"As kids growing up, we didn’t realize how famous he was, he was just our dad," said Gloria, Jesse’s eldest.

"I’ll never forget when I went away to orientation for college. When I arrived they said, ‘We heard Jesse Owens daughter was coming,’ and I said, ‘Oh yeah?’ Then they said, ‘We heard you’re driving a Thunderbird.’"

"I said, ‘I got a big surprise for you, I don’t even drive, so now that we got all that out of the way, are we going to associate or are we not?’"

"Then they found out I was actually human," Beverly said.

"I got dressed just like you do, you know? I put on all my underclothes first; then, I put my clothes on."

Ironically, when she was 19, Beverly eloped with her high school sweetheart, just as her parents had done. When she told her father, he was shocked.

"I think he had to stay in bed for a day or two," she said.

"They, (Jesse and Ruth) really set a positive example for us. My sisters and I have all been married for 20 years plus," Gloria said.

When he was on the road, Ruth always kept his presence in the home, she said. "My kids were his best friend. They talked every day when he was away."

Gloria, however, did get to travel with her father one summer when he was promoting a black baseball team. They arrived in Cheboygan, Wis., for a ball game only to find they should have been in Cheboygan, Mich., Gloria said with a laugh.

Eventually, Jesse curtseied his travels and moved his family to Chicago so he could spend more time with them. When he was at home, he loved to watch TV westerns.

"Daddy watched every western that
came on TV. In life, I really think he
wanted to be a cowboy," Beverly said.
Marlene believes she had the ad-
vantage of having more of her father's
time because she was only 10 when they
moved to Chicago.
When she began searching for col-
elges, her father wielded a great deal of
influence. "I always said, there was
grade school, high school and Ohio
State," Marlene said.
One of Jesse Owens' proudest
moments was when he crowned his
youngest daughter OSU Homecoming
Queen in 1960.
Jesse had a strong belief that young
people should attend college. Gloria re-
counted the time her father helped a
Loyola law student. The woman was an
acquaintance of Gloria's and told her
the story one day when she gave Gloria
a ride downtown.
"I'll bet you don't know this," the
woman said. "But when I was a student
in law school, I didn't know how I was
going to make it.
"I had heard so much about how your
dad liked to help young people that I
gave him a call and he bought my
books," she said.
She told Gloria giving her a ride
downtown would never be going out of
her way. "It's a pleasure to be able to do
this for you," the woman said.
"I never knew about that," Gloria
said. "He did so much of that kind of
thing, I don't think anybody realized."

Gloria, Beverly and Marlene all live
in Chicago. Gloria is an administrator
for the Chicago Public Schools and
Beverly works for the city comptroller.
Marlene is the director of personnel for
United Charities and is also on the board
of directors for the OSU Alumni
Association.

This article is a tribute to Jesse
Owens' accomplishments 50 years
ago at the Berlin Olympics.
• 1933—Owens entered Ohio State.
• 1935—Big 10 Outdoor
  Championships.
  —3 World Records.
  —220 yd dash 20.2 sec.
  —220-yd. low hurdle 22.5
  seconds.
  —Broad jump 283.25.
  —Tied a fourth World
  Record
  100 yd dash 9.4 seconds.
• 1936—Olympics, Berlin
  —4 Gold Medals
  —100 m dash 10.3 seconds
  —200 m dash 20.7 seconds
  —400 m relay 38 seconds
• 1942—Appointed Director of Physical
  Fitness for Blacks Civil
  Defense Department.
• 1950—Named Greatest Athlete of the
  first half of the 20th Cen-
  tury by AP.
• 1955—Named by State Department as
  Ambassador of Sports.
• 1970—OSU Centennial Award
• 1976—Medal of Freedom from Presi-
  dent Ford; highest Civilian
  Award.
  —Inducted into OSU Sports
  Hall of Fame as a charter
  member.
• 1980—Track in Ohio Stadium renamed
  Jesse Owens Track.

All photos courtesy of OSU Photo
Archives
Fifty Years After Jesse Owens: What’s the Score?

by Chuck Stokes

We asked Chuck Stokes, a former sportswriter for the Washington Post, to give us an overview that would get this new department, Sports and Society, off to a good start. We’ll be looking at each of the topics he touches on—and many others—in greater depth in future issues. Our goal is to deal with sports issues that should—and do—concern every thoughtful American, even those who don’t know the difference between a T formation and a T square.

—The Editor

August in Berlin. It was unseasonably cool that month in 1936. The thermometer inside Germany’s new Olympic stadium read 61 degrees as James Cleveland “Jesse” Owens warmed up for the first of the four events he was scheduled to compete in. Moments later, his quest for gold that shook the world—and perhaps changed race relations and the future of sports—had begun. But Owens’ path to greatness really started before that summer in Europe.

May in Ann Arbor. The University of Michigan plays host to the annual Big Ten track and field meet. Representing Ohio State University, Owens dazzles with what has been called “the greatest single day in man’s athletic achievements.” Within a span of only 45 minutes, the “Buckeye Bullet” tied his own world record for the 100-yard dash (9.4 seconds), then broke world marks in the broad jump (26 feet, 8 1/4 inches), the 200-yard dash (20.3 seconds) and the 220-yard low hurdles (22.6 seconds).

It was a Herculean task indeed, but one that would soon be overshadowed...
by a string of athletic events on Chancellor Adolf Hitler's turf.

Tuesday, August 3. The second day of Olympic competition. Amidst a backdrop of Nazi flags, a confident 22-year-old crouches down behind the white-chalked line across his lane. He takes a deep swallow. With his eyes locked on the finish line straight ahead, he waits for the signal. He's off. A capacity crowd of 110,000 has 10.3 seconds to observe Jesse run a perfect race. No facial expression. No strain. Like well-oiled automotive pistons, his arms and legs pump effortlessly. Number 733 glides over the red-clay track, finishing one yard in front of his closest competitor, (later Chicago congressman) Ralph Metcalfe.

A New York Times headline carried the results: "Owens Captures Olympic Title, Equals World 100-Meter Record."

By the games' end, he had also shattered two Olympic records, set a world mark and stood on the "Platform of Champions" four times to receive gold medals (100 meters, broad jump, 200 meters, 400-meter relay).

More important, this black runner, born in the cotton fields of Alabama, had single-handedly (although not by personal design) destroyed Hitler's propaganda of Aryan superiority.

"Fantastic! I just think he was fantastic," says Ed Temple, the famous Tennessee State University track coach who has tutored 23 Olympic champions. "He was a great example for society... a national hero on the track and off the track."

Americans welcomed Owens back with ticker-tape parades in New York and Cleveland, his boyhood home. Everyone wanted to meet and shake the hero's hand, but no one offered him a job to help support his family of four; at least not at first.

Unable to pay his tuition at Ohio State—at that time the school didn't offer athletic scholarships—he dropped out before the start of his senior year.

Finally, he found work as a Cleveland playground instructor for $30 a week. It wasn't enough to make ends meet, so the "world's fastest human" eventually buried his pride and accepted a public relations job of sorts, for Negro baseball. Three times a week, before the start of each game, Owens challenged a thoroughbred horse to a 100-yard dash. Five cents of every dollar the people paid went into his pocket.

"It was degrading and humiliating. But it meant next fall I could go back to college," Owens would later write in one of his books.

As the old adage goes, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Just two years ago, about a month before the Olympic games opened in Los Angeles, a San Francisco television crew recorded Jim Hines—100-meter gold medal winner at the 1968 Olympics and unemployed at the time—trying his luck against a horse. He lost the race and, like Owens, probably much more.

History's winningest college football coach, Eddie Robinson of Louisiana's Grambling University, is one black who drew strength from Owens' successes and, undeterred by the sadnesses in his later life, learned how to succeed.

"I think Jesse and Joe Louis—Detroit's heavyweight boxing legend—were the first two blacks to be recognized in this country on a national level," he recalls. "They were the first two (black) people I had ever seen in white newspapers. They were the first two people to let me know within my heart that I was as good as, and could compete with, anybody in the world."

Louis and Owens were the psychological force that black America so desperately needed. They were its role models—that is, until April, 1947, when Jackie Robinson stepped across the major league baseball colorline.

As he was followed by names like "Satchel," Campanella, Newcombe...then Mays, Aaron, Clemente, Gibson and McCovey, the floodgates were finally opened. Professional baseball would never be the same again. Neither would sports in
In a searching article in the May 19 issue of *New Republic*, Malcolm Gladwell assembled some devastating statistics on the fate of black college athletes:

♦ At Memphis State University, not one of its many black basketball players has graduated.
♦ Only one in four black athletes playing for colleges graduates.
♦ Of some 200 blacks playing for the University of Georgia since 1969, when blacks were first admitted, records show as few as 15 graduating. Georgia has just lost a landmark court case over the firing of a teacher who refused to change athletes' failing grades.

America—or other walks of life, for that matter.

Half a century has blown by since Owens took Berlin by storm. Most will concede there's been tremendous change for America's athletes, and in particular, its black icons.

Today, it doesn't surprise anyone to learn that Edwin Moses, the man who never loses, hurdles his way to an annual six-figure salary.

Hey, look, there's Magic Johnson shooting another television commercial for his basketball shoe sponsor and Buick. Why not? After all, professional basketball today is overwhelmingly black—75 percent. The starting lineups for the 23 National Basketball Association (NBA) teams work out to 81-percent black. And what did the average player take home last year? How does $375,000 sound?

Times aren't bad on the college level, either. Last year, 55 percent of the Division I scholarships went to blacks.

Although the NBA leads the way, the National Football Association is not far behind. More than half of its athletes—57 percent—are black. According to the NFL Players Association, $190,000 without bonuses was the average check carried to the bank for last year's work. That sum fell short of what major league baseball stars tucked under their belts for 1985—$371,157.

Bygone stars Jim Brown, Elgin Baylor and Maury Wills would probably like to spring from retirement for these figures. Needless to say, today's salaries are light years away from the days when the Cincinnati Reds signed Curt Flood, Vada Pinson and Frank Robinson for "$4,000 apiece."

Folks, step right up. See the 1980s jock. With a basketball in one hand, a briefcase in the other, this fella has it made...or does he? The 50th anniversary of Owens' great triumph is a good moment for careful assessment. Dr. Harry Edwards, a noted black sociologist, an author and the architect of the 1968 Olympic boycott by blacks, doesn't believe it is time to cheer.

He warns in a matter-of-fact tone that progress can't be tracked as a straight line upward. "We cannot look at numbers of athletes who were in mainstream American sports during Jesse Owens' era and the number of athletes today and say, 'Gee, there's been tremendous progress.' There's been change but there's not been commensurate progress."

Edwards points to head coaching positions and says blacks are still "woefully" underrepresented. The NFL is a classic example. In its 64-year history, there has never been a black head coach, a black owner or a black general manager. The highest ranking black to date is Tank Younger, the first NFL star from a black college (Grambling). Younger is assistant general manager for the San Diego Chargers.

On some fronts, it appears that minorities are losing ground, not gaining. There have been only three black managers in major league baseball. None is active today.

In 1965–67, Bill Russell, the former Boston Celtic great, became the first black playing coach in the NBA. Seventeen years later, only two—Don Chaney (Los Angeles) and K.C. Jones (Boston)—are currently at the helm.
Edwards and others attribute this lack of progress to two things: racism and a lack of role models. "Blacks have not had commensurate opportunities," he says. "We're piling up in four or five sports in the rank of the gladiator, the entertainer, the producers, the laborers. They [whites] have a plantation system operating."

While these are pressing concerns for sports figures, even bigger, or at least more controversial, problems loom. Sports in America is under attack. Many charge that this megabucks industry is dominating society, corrupting the youth of this nation. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has imposed sanctions on some of America's most prestigious institutions. There are league strikes in the middle of a season, cocaine drug scandals in cities like Pittsburgh and gambling on a scale that causes many to conclude that it has become the nation's pastime.

As each successive shock wave of scandal erupts, hyped by the magnetism of big dollars and the power of big media to make everything, well, big—black athletes come in for unwelcome attention. Unwelcome, certainly. Unfair? That's harder to sort out. Harder to get at the fairness issue; harder, in any case, to prescribe cures. Take Proposition 48.

Last year, in an attempt to crack down on many colleges' callous exploitation of young athletes, the readiness to use their skills and wink at their failure to end up with an education, the NCAA instituted a controversial rule that said, "Enough is enough." The new rule, Proposition 48, sets tougher academic standards for prospective NCAA athletes. Specifically, it requires incoming freshmen to have at least a C average in certain classes and at least a 700 combined score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or 15 on the American College Testing Program (ACT).

Coach Ed Temple has been teaching at the same, predominantly black school for 36 years. Education is his "number one priority," and it's a fact he readily drives home. "I've put 40 girls on the U.S. Olympic team; 38 graduated, 18 have masters [degrees], 5 have M.D.s or Ph.D.s." But, even with his success and his unquestioned [belief in discipline], he doesn't like the NCAA's SAT and ACT score requirements. "Everyone can't score well on those standardized tests," he quips, "but now everyone can go to class."

Grambling's Robinson, a 45-year coaching veteran, tries not to view the rule as racist. "Black schools did what they could to change the rules, but they couldn't.... I think everyone wants high standards, but a lot of times people are not knowledgeable about what they're doing to a large group of people.... More whites are being hurt by this rule than blacks. But the reason there's such noise about the blacks is because you have fewer blacks than whites," he says.

Edwards, a former athlete now teaching at the predominantly white University of California at Berkeley, says there is no question that black athletes will be most severely hurt by Proposition 48. However, he strongly feels it's a problem blacks must fix. The average SAT score for blacks is 693. That's seven points less than the newly established minimum.

Studying the numbers elicits a charge from the professor. His voice rises an octave, his speech quickens. "If blacks can't bridge that gap," Edwards says emphatically, "that is not racism, that is a lack of educational motivation.... A situation where people are putting playbooks before textbooks."

What is a product of "racism and discrimination," Edwards contends, is the difference between whites' average SAT score of 923 and blacks' 693. "Thirty years after Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (Kansas), our schools are still largely separate and unequal," he says.

Would Jesse Owens and his contemporaries be pleased with sports in America today?
50 Years Later, Bitter Memories of the Berlin Games

BY ARTHUR FINCH

While others marched, Harry Glickman, Sam Stoller, the other Jews in the game, and the others who marched, were left behind.

The Olympic Games were never the same after Berlin. They were never the same after that.

There were American Jews in the Olympic Village on Aug. 6, 1936, who were going to march in the Olympic Games. They were going to compete in the Olympic Games. They were going to win medals in the Olympic Games. They were going to bring home the gold.

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Jesse Owens legacy clouds real events

By Jean Schulte


“How we Buckeyes like to crown and preen when Jesse Owens’ name comes up. After all, he was a student at Ohio State University when he brought home a fistful of gold medals from the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. But we should take a closer look at what William J. Baker, a history professor at the University of Maine, has to say about the way Columbus treated its track star. Columbus, and particularly OSU beginning with the dynasty of athletic director L.W. St. John, does not win any medals under this spotlight.

In a carefully documented work, Baker relies on newspaper articles from both the black and white presses, personal interviews with Owens’ friends and relatives and drawing from Owens’ own books about his life.

In 1933, when Owens first came to Ohio State, it was known among blacks as “a cracker town,” a place “just like Jackson, Miss.” Owens was given a job as an elevator operator in at the Statehouse to help pay for his education. He ran the freight elevator out of sight, in the back of the building, while white athletes ran the one that carried legislators. Owens was barred from a room in the dormitory because of his color. He had to live off campus on 11th Ave. in a boarding house with other black students.

The book says Owens ran into academic problems at OSU but, in the interest of a fledgling track program, he was given extra attention to maintain athletic eligibility. “Self-interest and benign paternalism coexisted comfortably in the office of athletics at Ohio State,” says Baker.

Baker lands hard on the motives of university officials who tried to honor Owens after he died in 1980. OSU President Harold Enarson seemed opportunistic, Baker says, when he announced, on Owens’ funeral day, that three campus buildings would be named in the track star’s honor. Baker sees it as a thinly veiled public relations ploy to nudge a tightfisted legislature.

Baker doesn’t show much sympathy for Owens either. Skeptical of Owens’ accounts of his childhood, Baker seems bent on refuting them. He calls Owens, “strong on imagination.”

Under Baker’s scrutiny, Owens turns out to be a pathetic figure, given a brief moment of glory before being victimized by it. After Owens’ Olympic victories, he received numerous offers, but somehow most vanished when he tried to track them down. At one point, for example, he was reduced to running against horses during exhibitions to make money to support his family.

In spite of the author’s lusty scholarship, reading this account of the track star’s life gives the same feeling as hanging over the fence with the backyard gossip. Somehow we are intrigued and tantalized by feet of clay. But at the same time we come away a little demoralized.

Jean Schulte frequently reviews books for The Dispatch.
He, James Cleveland "Jesse" Owens, was the Olympic legend, the man who symbolized America's first-salvo response to Adolf Hitler's warped ideology. The world's greatest track and field athlete, many have said, of the first half of the 20th century. She, Ruth Owens, was the loyal wife.

By Dick Fenlon
They met at Fairmont Junior High School in Cleveland and wed as teenagers in 1931. And over his lifetime, which ended on March 31, 1980, she became the unofficial curator of the Jesse Owens Collection. It was not an easy job, for they moved several times, and along life's trail some items were loaned and never returned. Some were lost. Some merely disintegrated and disappeared, victims of the wear and tear of everyday life. Jesse Owens' track career had begun at Fairmont, continued at Cleveland East Tech and flourished at The Ohio State University — in whose behalf, on May 25, 1935, within a space of 70 minutes, he set three world track and field records and tied a fourth. It culminated during those meteoric days of August 1936, when he won four gold medals in the Berlin Olympics, intended by Hitler to showcase Nazi Germany. Then Owens returned to the young wife he had left behind and to a post-athletic career of being required, with the inevitable mixed record, to fulfill everybody's expectations of a hero.

His life was not made easier by the color of his skin, for he was a black man making it in a white man's world. He started businesses that failed. He got into trouble with the Internal Revenue Service. He pleased some who did not think he was aggressive enough in advancing the black cause. He represented clubs and charities and causes. He became, in later life, a professional speaker, delivering a standard, yet compelling, spiel on the lessons of athletic endeavor and the amateur ideal. It rarely failed to move his audiences and further cement his special place in Olympic and world history.

"Dear Mr. Jesse Owens," a young man wrote on March 25, 1960, as Owens lay dying of cancer at his home in Phoenix, Ariz. "I wish you could get better but there comes a day when you go to sleep for the last time and I will keep you in my heart the rest of my life because there probably wouldn't be a Boys Club if you wouldn't have been born."

It was written on Boys' Club of Wake County, N.C., stationery and signed by "your fan" Lance C. Johnson, who added a P.S.: "Please send me a picture of you with your autograph."

We don't know if Jesse Owens ever saw it. It resides now, with many other Owens' artifacts, in OSU's Jesse Owens Collection, presented this spring to the university by his widow. It is only part of what he left behind. More will come later when she breaks down the family room at her home in Phoenix.

There are, in what Ohio State now has, items of significance and items of no significance. Photos, letters, pieces of personal clothing, trophies and reissues of lost trophies, medals, awards, commendations, reams of business correspondence, even a diary Owens began the day he and his teammates boarded ship for Berlin in 1936. Four inches by six inches, in a black leather cover, with autographs of many of his American teammates and of Larry Snyder, his coach at Ohio State and in the Olympics. One begins to read it with anticipation.

Here, at last, you suppose, is Jesse Owens' own personal account, written the day it happened, of his Olympic experience. Did Hitler really snub him? And, if he did, did Owens realize it? Did he realize the implications of his accomplishments — an American black striking an unwitting blow at the very foundation of Nazi Germany's racist foundation? Would there be a mention of Lutz Long, the German broad jumper who befriended him (who would later, as part of the Nazi war machine, die in Sicily), whose widow and son would after the war be visited and consolled by Owens?

The diary sheds no light. Almost as soon as he reached Berlin, Jesse Owens stopped keeping it. The entries, until then, are of a lonely man who loses his wife and of a penurious traveler who paid 93 cents to have his clothes dry by the ship's launderer. The last notation is for July 27, 1936. "Hall sessions with some of the boys," writes Owens. "What lies they are."

Perhaps at this point, Ruth Owens thinks, her husband merely became too busy with the challenge at hand to continue it. Seven days later, on Aug. 9, Owens won his first gold medal, in the 100 meters. The next day, he won the broad jump. The next day, he won the 200 meters. Later, he ran the first leg for the gold medal 400-meter relay team.

Whether Hitler actually snubbed Owens and the nine other blacks (they included silver medal high jumper Dave Albritton, an Ohio State teammate of Owens who lives in Dayton) is a matter of dispute. "Jesse always said the German people were very, very good to him."
Ruth Owens met the ship, the Queen Mary, 12 miles out and boarded it for the gala welcoming. Jack Dempsey, the former heavyweight champion, and Bill Robinson, the entertainer, were among other members of the American committee transported to the Queen Mary by tugboat. There was a celebration and parade for Owens in Cleveland and, later, a ceremony at an Ohio State football halftime in Columbus. Ruth Owens was presented a silver service "I still have and cherish," she says.

Even with the wear and tear of the years, there is much that she cherishes in the way of mementoes — but no single one, she says, of greater importance than another. "That's why I still have so many of them still hanging on the wall. Because during his illness, I could see him sitting there and gazing around. And I often wondered what was going on in his mind when he looked around and saw all that. And so I cherish it all, to the point that I think the only time I'll give it up will be when I move into smaller quarters. The children will have some of the pieces they want, and the rest of it will go to the university."

The children are Gloria, Beverly and Marlene. Marlene in 1960 was the first black woman elected homecoming queen at Ohio State. Says Ruth Owens, "That was a real proud moment, because when we lived in Columbus you couldn't even go downtown to the show or even think of staying in a hotel. So it was quite a thrill for her father and me."

There were many theater owners who wouldn't consider letting Jesse Owens watch their movies, hotel keepers who wouldn't want him sleeping there, restaurateurs who wouldn't dream of serving him a meal. Even as an Olympic legend, he remained a black man trying to capitalize on his fame and make it in a white man's society. See Jesse race the locomotive. See Jesse race the racehorse. See Jesse perform for the Harlem Globe Trotters. See Jesse quietly and with dignity struggle and cope.

"He was not a complainer," says Ruth Owens. "He had his ideas about things, and he kept them to himself, and he just tried to do good for somebody else. Once in a while, he and Dave Albritton and Mel Walker (another Ohio State teammate) would get together. And they'd talk about when they were traveling and how they couldn't eat in different places. But I only remember him showing what really happened once. When we lived in Chicago, I belonged to a bridge club that would entertain the husbands at a party every Christmas. One time, it was going to be held at the Windermere East. He absolutely refused to go. He said, 'Do you know, when I used to come here for a track meet, the white boys stayed there, and we had to stay at the Wabash Y? And that was the only time I really ever heard Jesse say anything.'

Fifty-two years later, even as another Olympiad is about to begin, this one in Seoul, South Korea, Jesse Owens' memory lives.

Ruth Owens: "He could never go anywhere without being recognized. Do you know that still exists where I'm concerned? There isn't a day that I'm in someplace and somebody doesn't say, 'There's Jesse's wife' and that someone doesn't come over and say, 'He was a wonderful man.'"

"I like to hear that. So, you see, he never dies." □

Dick Fenlon is a DISPATCH sports columnist. Tim Revelle is a DISPATCH photographer. The Jesse Owens Collection housed in the Division of Rare Books and Manuscripts in The Ohio State University Libraries. Persons interested in examining the collection can call 292-5938.
House panel considers bill for Jesse Owens gold medal

By R. Chris Burnett
Dispatch Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON – A House subcommittee is considering legislation to authorize a congressional gold medal honoring Jesse Owens, a former track star at The Ohio State University and Olympic gold medalist in 1936.

The bill is sponsored by Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio (Cleveland), and supported by 229 other House members.

In testimony yesterday before the House Banking Consumer Affairs and Coinage Subcommittee, Stokes, former Republican Rep. Samuel A. Devine of Columbus, and Owens’ widow, Ruth, endorsed the bill. At OSU, Devine was a teammate of Owens, who died in 1980.

Stokes said, “In 1936 black ghetto youth such as myself had few heroes to look up to or aspire to be like.”

Stokes recalled being in Cleveland and watching Owens ride by and wave to the crowd. Owens was from Cleveland.

Owens, in 1936, became the first athlete to win four gold medals in a single Olympic Games.
JESSE OWENS EXHIBIT OPENS

COLUMBUS -- A collection of photographs and memorabilia from Jesse Owens' life -- beginning with his junior high track days and continuing through the Olympics and beyond -- will be displayed for the first time anywhere at The Ohio State University Libraries' Philip Sills Exhibit Hall.

The exhibit opens Friday (4/7) and will remain in place until June 9. The Sills gallery is located in the Main Library at 1858 Neil Avenue Mall.

Jesse Owens sprinted, hurdled, and broad jumped for Ohio State in 1935 and 1936. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the university in 1972.

"The exhibit includes a facsimile of the bronze Olympic torch used in the 1984 games. The torch was given to Owens' wife, Ruth, by the Los Angeles Olympic Committee. The Berlin games in 1936, where Jesse Owens won four gold medals, were the first games for which the torch was lit in Olympia, Greece, and carried to Berlin by 1,000 runners, running 1,000 meters each," explained Raimund Goerler, university archivist and compiler of the Jesse Owens exhibit.

-more-
Also included in the exhibit are trophies, photographs and awards documenting Owens' life during and after the Olympics.

"One of the photos taken at the Berlin Games shows Jesse standing on the stage with the other winners. While Germany's long jump silver medalist, Luz Long, is giving a Heil Hitler, Jesse is in the foreground clearly saluting the U.S. flag," said Goerler.

The collection also includes drawings of Owens' running form sketched by the late Charles Riley, Owens' Fairmount Junior High School track coach in Cleveland.

"Riley coached Owens into the best possible form for his physique," Goerler said.

One case in the exhibit is devoted entirely to the Owens family's Ohio State connection. Not only did Owens attend Ohio State, but two of his three daughters are alumnae. His daughter Marlene Rankin serves on the board of directors of the university's Alumni Association.

Ruth Owens has placed the Jesse Owens collection in Ohio State's care. Portions of the collection that are not included in the exhibit, including letters, speeches and a diary kept by Owens during the Berlin Games, are available for review in University Libraries' Special Collections area in the Main Library.

The exhibit may be viewed during regular hours at Main Library. The library is open weekdays from 7:45 a.m. to midnight, Saturday from 8 a.m. to midnight, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to midnight.

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Contact: Raimund Goerler, university archivist, at (614) 292-2409.

Written by Toni Robino  (Toni/128)
UNIVERSITY HONORS RUTH OWENS

COLUMBUS -- Ruth Owens, widow of track star Jesse Owens, will be honored for her support of The Ohio State University at 4:30 p.m. May 12 in 102 Main Library, 1858 Neil Avenue.

Owens' visit coincides with the Jesse Owens exhibit in the library and the Jesse Owens Track Classic May 13 in Ohio Stadium.

The exhibit, which opened April 7, features a collection of photographs and memorabilia from Jesse Owens' life -- beginning with his junior high track days and continuing through the Olympics and beyond.

Jesse Owens sprinted, hurdled, and broad jumped for Ohio State in 1935 and 1936. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the university in 1972.

Ruth Owens did not attend Ohio State, but two of her three daughters are alumnae. Marlene Owens Rankin serves on the board of directors of the university's Alumni Association.

The reception honoring Ruth Owens and the library exhibit are free and open to the public. There is an admission charge for the Jesse Owens Track Classic.

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Contact: Liz Wheatley, director of Friends of the Libraries, at (614) 292-3387.
Jesse Owens’ widow to visit star’s display

By Tara Anne Powers
Lantern staff writer

Students can view some of the history made in 1936 by OSU track star Jesse Owens in the lobby of the Main Library, but if students want a first-hand account, Mrs. Ruth Owens, widow of Jesse Owens, will be visiting the exhibit today.

“We decided to put an exhibit out in conjunction with the Classic and we wanted to have Mrs. Owens here to thank her and show her that we appreciate it that she thought of Ohio State,” said Elizabeth Wheatley, director of Friends of the Libraries.

Mrs. Owens agreed to store memorabilia with the university in 1987.

Included in the collection are memorabilia from Owens’ years at Ohio State as well as the diary he kept on his trip to the 1936 Olympics in Germany.

“Technically the collection is on deposit,” said Raimond E. Goerler, university archivist.

Because of the Owenses long-standing ties to the university and the positive response to the exhibit, Goerler said he hopes the exhibit will become a permanent part of the university archives.

The exhibit, on display until June 9, includes a chronological account of Jesse Owens’ accomplishments, as documented by photographs, papers, medals and other artifacts.

“When you walk through the area, you usually can get an idea of how popular an exhibit is... there have always been a lot of people in this area looking at the exhibit,” Wheatley said.

The reception will be held at 4:30 p.m. in the administrative area of the Main Library. The event is open to the public and refreshments will be served.
A classic moment

A DISPLAY of four Olympic gold medals brings back memories for Ruth Owens, widow of legendary runner Jesse Owens. Ruth Owens, visiting Columbus for the Owens Classic track meet May 13 and 14, discusses the display in the Main Library with Raimund Goerler, University archivist.
CAPTIONS FOR THE JESSE OWENS EXHIBIT

NOTE: The numbers that preface each caption represent exhibit location destinations for the captions and should not be typed on the actual caption.

1.1 Wes Boomgaard, Preservation Officer for the OSU Libraries, with Mrs. Ruth Owens and the Owens Collection in Scottsdale, Arizona (November 1987).

1.2 Mrs. Ruth Owens and Raimund Goerler, University Archivist, reviewing the travel diary that Jesse Owens kept on his way to the Olympics at Berlin in 1936.

1.3 Two of the four gold medals won by Jesse Owens during the Olympic Games of 1936.

2.1 Torch given to Mrs. Ruth Owens at the Olympic Games at Los Angeles in 1984.

2.2 Trophy awarded to East Tech High School in Cleveland by the Ohio High School Athletic Association in 1933. Jesse Owens was a stellar member of the track team.

2.3 Tankard presented to Owens in 1955 as ambassador of sport during his tour of India, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

2.4 "Hard Hat" worn by Jesse Owens during ground-breaking ceremonies for the 1976 Olympics at Montreal.

2.5 Trophy awarded by the Boy Scouts of America, an organization for which Jesse Owens spoke frequently.

3.1 Fairmount Junior High School had an extraordinary influence upon Jesse Owens. There he met his track coach, Charles Riley, who did much to help Jesse excel in track. This early photograph shows Riley (top center) with the Fairmount track team and Owens (3rd row seated, 3rd from the right) in approximately 1928. He also met his future wife, Ruth, at Fairmount Junior High.
3.2 Charles Riley coached Jesse Owens into the running style best suited to him. This photo and the drawing by Riley illustrate the scrupulous attention to form that influenced Owens.

3.3 Jesse Owens (first row, right center) with the championship track team at East Tech High School, ca. 1933.

3.4 Jesse Owens with OSU track coach Larry Snyder, who also helped Owens at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. Owens was a running sensation well-before the Olympics, having broken three world records and tied a fourth at Ann Arbor on May 25, 1935.

3.5 Owens ready to run in 1934.

3.6 Hurdling in 1936.

4.0 The Olympics at Berlin in 1936 more closely resembled the games of today than any of its predecessors. Adolf Hitler had intended that the Olympics would serve as a showcase for Nazi Germany and spared no expense in the lavish preparations.

Owens and other male athletes stayed at a specially constructed and elaborate Olympic Village, complete with a library, hospital, theatre, and swimming pool. Meanwhile, the female athletes were at a dormitory near the Olympic Stadium.

The ceremonies and contests of the Olympics were filmed comprehensively and artistically by Leni Riefenstahl. Her film, "Olympia" was the fullest pictorial record of the Olympics ever created to that time. An effort was even made to "televise" the games to the Olympic Village and to eighteen locations in Berlin but with unsatisfactory results.

In the Olympic games at Los Angeles in 1932, the tradition of beginning the games by igniting the Olympic flame was begun. In 1936 at Berlin the lighting of the Olympic flame actually began with the lighting of a torch at Olympia in Greece, where a thousand runners, running one kilometer each, carried the torch to Berlin.

This exhibit case and the one to the left concern the Olympics of 1936.
4.1 Owens (right) running laps on the Manhattan, on the way to Berlin in 1936. During that voyage, he kept a diary which is part of the collection received from Mrs. Owens in 1987.

4.2 Owens with OSU coach Larry Snyder in Berlin.

4.3 Owens in full stride in the final heat of the 200 meters dash, in which he set a new Olympic record and a new world record.

4.4 Owens setting record of 8.06 meters in the long jump. Signs show previous Olympic and world records.

4.5 Owens receiving the baton in the 400 meter race, for which he and the U.S. team won the gold.

5.1 Owens relaxing with Luz Long of Germany, the silver medalist in the long jump.

5.2 Worker recording the feats of Owens in the mall of honor at Hitler's Reichssportsfeld in Berlin. Owens won gold medals for his victories in the 100 meter dash, the 200 meter dash, the long jump, and the 400 meter relay race.

5.3 Ticker tape parade in Cleveland, 1936.

6.0 Even though Jesse Owens was a hero to his country and to the world, it proved to be difficult for him, or any black athlete in the Great Depression, to transform Olympic fame into a livelihood that would support him and his family.

Following the Olympic of 1936 and during the remainder of the 1930's, Owens organized and managed a black basketball team "the Olympians," worked for the Parks and Recreation Department in Cleveland, owned a dry-cleaning business, worked as a salesman of men's clothing, and finally returned to OSU as a student in 1940, withdrawing in 1941.
When World War II began, Jesse Owens became director of the National Fitness program in the Office of Civilian Defense. From 1943 to 1945 he worked for the personnel office of the Ford Motor Company in Detroit. Finally, in 1949 Owens moved to Chicago and established a public relations agency. Much of his livelihood came from speaking engagements where he talked about the importance of athletics in fostering pride, discipline, and teamwork. While in Chicago, he was very active in youth groups, becoming a director of the Chicago South-Side Boys Club in 1951. His involvement with youth and athletics led to his appointment Secretary of the Illinois State Athletic Commission.

The Olympics and the world of international competition remained an important aspect of the life of Jesse Owens. In 1955 he toured India, Malaysia and the Philippines as part of the International Educational Exchange Service of the U.S. Department of State.

In 1956 President Eisenhower appointed Owens his personal representative to the Olympics at Melbourne. Thereafter, Owens attended the Olympic contests with regularity. Interest and involvement led to his joining the Board of Directors of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Owens did much to publicize the Olympics and to raise money in support of U.S. participation.

This case and the one to the right illustrate the post-Olympics career of Jesse Owens.

6.1 In 1937 Owens signed a contract with Consolidated Radio Artists as an entertainer.

6.2 Owens with the troops, 1940’s.

6.3 At a track clinic in Munich, West Germany, 1953.

6.4 Demonstrating good running technique in India, 1955.

6.5 With a youth group in Rockford, Illinois during the 1950’s.
6.6 Demonstrating the proper use of the hands while running. This demonstration took place during a news conference in 1965 when the New York Mets baseball team hired Jesse Owens as a running and fitness coach during spring training.

7.1 Relaxing in Olympia, Greece, 1969.

7.2 Jesse Owens played an important role in the design and publicizing of the sale of Olympic commemorative coins, which helped to finance the participation of athletes from the United States in the Olympics.

7.3 Another major activity during the 1960's and 1970's was the ARCO Jesse Owens games. Sponsored by the Atlantic Richfield Company, the games began in 1964 as athletic contests for boys and girls from ages ten to fifteen. Beginning first in Chicago, the annual event now involves more than a million youngsters each year in many towns and cities.

7.4 Medal awarded in the ARCO Jesse Owens games.

7.5 Four years after the death of Jesse Owens in 1980, a movie, "The Jesse Owens Story" appeared on television. Dorian Harwood played the role of Jesse Owens.

8.0 Jesse Owens and his family have had close ties with The Ohio State University. During his lifetime, Jesse Owens spoke frequently to alumni groups. In 1953 his daughter, Gloria, received her BS in Education from OSU. In 1960 daughter Marlene was the homecoming queen and graduated in 1961 with a BS in Social Work. Students elected Jesse Owens an honorary member of the senior honor society Sphinx in 1965. Owens served on the OSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and in 1965 received its Alumni Citizenship Award. So active and known for his good works was Jesse Owens that OSU awarded him an honorary doctorate of Athletic Arts in 1972.

After his death in 1980, the University renovated and dedicated the Jesse Owens track in Ohio Stadium and renamed its four recreational facilities in his honor. The Jesse Owens Track Classic has been an annual event since 1983. In 1984 the university dedicated Jesse Owens plaza and its sculpture in front of Ohio Stadium. Finally, in 1987 Mrs. Ruth Owens deposited the papers, medals, photographs, and artifacts of Jesse Owens with the OSU Libraries.
8.1 Jesse, Ruth and Marlene Owens at Homecoming Ceremonies in 1960.

8.2 Jesse Owens receiving honorary Doctorate of Athletic Arts, December 1972.

8.3 Mrs. Owens, OSU President Harold Enarson, and daughters Gloria, Marlene and Beverly during dedication ceremonies for the Jesse Owens track and recreation centers, October 1980.

8.4 Commemorative Plaque for the Jesse Owens Track.

8.5 Dedication program for Jesse Owens sculpture and plaza, 1984.

8.6 Boxes containing the Jesse Owens Collection awaiting shipment from Scottsdale, Arizona to the OSU Libraries (1987).

8.7 Football program for the game during which the Jesse Owens track was dedicated.
President awards Owens with honor

By Mary R. Hale
Lantern staff writer

President Bush will be presenting Ruth Owens, widow of past Ohio State and Olympic athletic hero Jesse Owens, with Congress’ highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, this morning at the White House.

Owens is being awarded the medal posthumously for recognition of his athletic achievements as well as his work for civil rights and humanity.

In addition to becoming the first athlete to receive four gold medals in an Olympics, Owens devoted much of his life speaking on the virtue of fair play and advocated the power of sports to bridge differences between races, classes, and cultures.

“Jesse Owens’ contributions to American sports, society, and history are invaluable,” said Rep. Louis Stokes, (D-Ohio), creator of the legislation authorizing the medal for Owens. “It is only fitting that the congress and the president should honor this American with his fifth and final gold medal.”

The ceremony will be attended by President Edward H. Jennings, Stokes, and several of Owens’ teammates from his years on the OSU track team, including former Ohio congressman Samuel Devine.

Joyce Larkin, spokeswoman for Stokes, said in order to award the medal, legislation must be introduced and accepted by two-thirds of Congress. She said Stokes introduced the bill in 1986.

The bill was passed in September 1988 by the Senate, and Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, (D-Ohio), served as the author.

“The reason for the delay since the time the legislation was passed is because the Bureau of Mint, which produces the medal, confers with the family of the recipient for the design of the medal,” Larkin said.

The medal is given as a tribute for what are considered to be distinguished achievements, Larkin said.

The medal contains a facial picture of Owens on the front, and a picture of Owens competing in one of his Olympic events on the back, she said.

The first medal was given to George Washington in March of 1776 when he served as commander of the Continental Army. About 108 medals have been awarded since that time, Larkin said.

Owens joins baseball Hall of Famer Roberto Clemente and heavyweight champion Joe Louis as sports legends to whom the medal has been awarded.
Medal honors Owens

By George Embrey
Chief, Dispatch Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Bush, presenting a special Congressional Gold Medal to the widow of the late Jesse Owens yesterday, compared it to the Nobel Peace Prize given to former President Theodore Roosevelt.

Bush recalled that Owens’ track triumph at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin “was an unrivaled athletic triumph, but more than that, it really was a triumph for all of humanity.”

“The Berlin games were to be the showplace of Hitler’s theories on the superiority of the (Aryan) master race until this 23-year-old kid named Jesse Owens dashed to victory in the 100, the 200 and the 400-meter relay,” Bush said.

Those victories and his win in the broad jump made Owens the first Olympic competitor to win four gold medals. The fact that he was a black shattered Hitler’s racial claims.

Jesse Owens

Bush showed Owens’ widow, Ruth of Cleveland, the Nobel Peace medal in the White House’s Theodore Roosevelt Room given for Roosevelt’s contribution to world peace, helping end the Sino-Soviet War.

“This gold medal sends the same kind of a message,” Bush said.

Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio (Cleveland), sponsored the legislation to strike a special medal honoring Owens.
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OLYMPIC SPONSOR, U.S. POSTAL SERVICE HONORS
FIVE OLYMPIANS WITH COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS

WASHINGTON, DC (July 9, 1990) Jesse Owens, Ray Ewry, Hazel Wightman, Eddie Eagan and Helene Madison, five of America’s greatest Olympians, are achieving renewed recognition on the U.S. Postal Service’s newest commemorative stamps. The stamps launch the Postal Service’s expanded international philatelic program and signify its worldwide sponsorship of the 1992 Olympic Games in Albertville, France and Barcelona, Spain.

The featured athletes, all Olympic competitors from the first half of this century, earned gold medals and acclaim long before the age of television brought instant and lasting fame. The latest stamp issuance marks the first time that individual Olympians have been honored on commemorative postage stamps.

"These were five outstanding athletes and their accomplishments are deserving of additional recognition," says Gordon C. Morison, Assistant Postmaster General for Philatelic - more -
and Retail Services. "With the exception of Jesse Owens, their names and their Olympic achievements have, for the most part, been lost in time. The issuance of these stamps is one way that we, as an official Olympic sponsor, can pay tribute to our American Olympic heritage."

Born near Decatur, Alabama, James Cleveland "Jesse" Owens' feats are legendary. At the 1936 Berlin Games, his four gold medals in the long jump, 100 and 200 meter runs and the 4x100 meter relay shattered not only records but also Hitler's myth of racial superiority.

The five Olympic commemorative stamps were issued July 6, at the opening ceremony of the U.S. Olympic Festival in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Olympic theme was highlighted on postage stamps as early as 1932, then again in 1960, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984 and 1988. Previously, Olympic stamps featured generic images of athletes performing in events ranging from skiing to long jumping to kayaking.

In order for individuals to appear on postage stamps they must be have been dead for a minimum of ten years. Deceased U.S. Presidents can be commemorated on stamps as soon as the first anniversary birth date following their death.

# # #
COLUMBUS RECOLLECTIONS
Owens’ feat still vivid in memory

For The Dispatch

The annual Jesse Owens Classic always stirs memories of my former classmate.

I recall one evening in the '70s when Jesse sat in our living room and said, “When I was at Ohio State, the old Ohio Union on 12th Avenue was the only place, on or off campus, where I was welcome to eat my hot dogs.”

I asked John Moore, captain of the 1935 OSU track team, for some memories about his teammate.

BOB THOMAS

“The greatest day in track history,” Moore said, “was made on May 25, 1935, in 70 minutes at the Western Conference (Big Ten) meet in Ann Arbor, Mich., where Jesse Owens broke three world records and tied another.”

Owens’ records that day were made in the 220-yard dash, the long jump and the 220 low hurdles. He tied the world mark in the 100-yard dash.

Not to be forgotten is the role of Larry Snyder, Owens’ track coach at OSU. He helped develop Owens into the winner of four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics.
In his schoolboy years, James Cleveland "Jesse" Owens became an unparalleled track star, dominating meets for Cleveland’s East Technical High School. Cleveland State University, Cleveland Press Collection.
Front Cover
Jesse Owens, arguably the greatest track star of all time, thrilled many crowds in Ohio Stadium.
Ohio State University Photo Archives
See: "The Greatest Day"

Inside Front Cover
In a display case in Ohio State University's St. John Arena sits this reminder of the collegiate athletic world's most memorable day.
Ohio State University Athletic Department
David R. Barker, Photographer
See: "The Greatest Day"
THE GREATEST DAY

Jesse Owens at Ann Arbor

by Steven P. Gietschier

Countries around the world have their Olympic heroes, the men and women who streaked to fame by winning the coveted gold medal in the international games. Long after the quadrennial flame has been extinguished, these champions live on, honored for their triumphs and admired across the generations.

Ohio has had its share of victorious Olympians, as well. From nearly every sport in which Americans have excelled — archery, basketball, boxing, figure skating, ice hockey, rowing, swimming, and track and field — have come superior Buckeye athletes who have used their special talents to reach the pinnacle of success and celebrity.

But even fame is relative, and at the peak stands Jesse Owens. For more than a half-century, his four gold-medal performances at the 1936 summer games in Berlin have stood as a supreme Olympic achievement. In the track-and-field competition,
he won the 100 meters, the 200 meters, and the long jump as well as running the first leg in the four by 100-meter relay. As one of a group of African-American athletes belittled in the German press as the “black auxiliary,” Owens poked an irreparable hole in the myth of Aryan supremacy. At the games’ end, Owens left Nazi Germany not just a hero but a legend.

The most casual sports fan knows of Owens’s place in the Olympic pantheon. As politics and sports seem to become more intertwined, the black sprinter’s showdown with the twisted theories of Adolf Hitler stands out as an eloquent statement against bigotry. But few remember that Owens’s Berlin exploits did not catapult him from obscurity. He was already a hero, perhaps the most famous amateur athlete in the world, a status he had attained while competing for Ohio State University at the 1935 Big Ten championships in Ann Arbor.

When James Cleveland Owens was born on September 12, 1913, his hometown was just a speck on the map of northern Alabama. Oakville was, as Owens recalled later, “more an invention of the white landowners than a geographical place.” The center of town was a store where black sharecroppers like Henry and Mary Emma Owens could buy on credit the things they needed to plant a crop and feed their families till “picking time.” Come each December, the storekeeper, who also happened to be the landlord, would total their debt and conclude that the revenue from the cotton and the corn they had harvested just didn’t seem to cover it. The Owens family with its ten children — James Cleveland was the youngest — was bound to the land, seemingly forever.

Henry Owens had seven sons to help him with the farm work and to tend the family vegetable garden. But the boys also played. They swam, hunted, fished, and joined in baseball games against neighboring communities. The youngest brother, soon called J.C., took a particular pleasure in running. “I wasn’t very good at it,” he remembered, “but I loved it because it was something you could do all by yourself.”

Simple pleasures aside, sharecropping kept families on the rack, and the Owenses were no exception. Henry grew to loathe his fate but equally to fear any alternative. When Mary Emma suggested that they abandon Oakville and join the northward exodus of other blacks, Henry recoiled. “We’d never make it,” he insisted. “We’d starve.” His wife persisted, though, and set her sights on Cleveland, Ohio. Soon enough — the exact year is uncertain — the family was on its way.
According to Owens's biographer, William J. Baker, more than sixty-five thousand Alabama-born blacks lived in the north by 1920. Many settled in the industrial Midwest, and nearly a third wound up looking for employment in Ohio factories. One of the Owens daughters had moved to Cleveland earlier and found both a job and a husband. After their arrival, Henry and three of his sons went to work in a steel mill, and young J.C., still of elementary school age, took a job in a shoe repair shop. More importantly, he got a new name as his teacher at Bolton Elementary School transformed his drawled "J.C." into "Jesse."

Southern black migration accounted for more than a third of Cleveland's population increase during the 1920s. African-Americans coming north were undoubtedly swayed by tales of racial tolerance, but the illusion faded as the black presence grew larger. A color line was drawn in the city's public accommodations, and some Clevelanders were eager recruits for the revived Ku Klux Klan.* Bolton was an integrated school, but black students were a minority. The principal, guessing that the new arrival from Alabama could not read, put Jesse in the first grade with children two and three years younger.

Jesse never developed into more than a marginal student, but, after a few years, he moved on to Fairmount Junior High School. There he met

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Charles Riley, the school's track-and-field coach, a man who would influence his life substantially. Riley befriended Jesse and nearly made him a member of his family. Jesse returned the affection and later called his white mentor "as much a father to me as Henry Owens was."

Riley got Jesse to come out for the track team and to take extra practice before school each day. Soon the coach's training techniques and motivational parables meshed with Jesse's natural talent. He ran two unofficial 100-yard dashes in an astounding 11 seconds, and in 1928 he set world records for junior-high athletes in the high jump and the long jump. Riley also introduced Jesse to Charley Paddock, winner of the gold medal in the 100 meters at the 1920 Olympics and an early claimant to the title "the
world's fastest human.” When Jesse expressed his desire to emulate Paddock, Riley encouraged him but counseled patience. “Train,” his motto was, “for four years from next Friday.”

To Jesse's great good fortune, Riley was able to move with his protégé when he enrolled in the vocational curriculum at East Technical High School. Track appeared to be his only escape from a life demarcated by the deepening economic slump that gripped Cleveland before the Great Crash and threw his father and brothers out of work. Riley hooked on at East Tech as an assistant to a rookie track coach who had never run competitively. From this vantage point, he guided the maturing sprinter to a string of triumphs that caused the Cleveland Gazette to laud him as "the outstanding track man in northeastern Ohio." The coach matched his charge against superior competition whenever possible. After Jesse's junior year, he tried to qualify for the 1932 U.S. Olympic team, but came up empty in the 100 meters, the 200 meters, and the long jump. After the games, though, he met a group of touring Olympians in Cleveland, won both sprints, and took second in the long jump.

In 1933, Jesse's senior spring, he proved that Riley's four years from next Friday had arrived. He put the icing on an extraordinary scholastic career by winning all his events at the state championships and setting a national high-school record in the long jump. His leap of 24 feet, 3 3/4 inches eclipsed the old mark by more than 3 inches. At a June meet in Cleveland, he extended his long-jump standard to 24 feet, 11 1/4 inches, won the 100- and 200-meter dashes, and anchored a victorious 880-yard relay team.

Later that same month, Jesse led East Tech to the national high-school championship in Chicago. He won the long jump, set a scholastic world record in the 220 (20.7 seconds), and tied the world record of 9.4 seconds in the 100-yard dash. As a postscript to these superlatives, Jesse took on Olympic silver medalist Ralph Metcalfe in the 100 meters at the national AAU championships. Metcalfe nipped him at the tape.

When he finished high school, Jesse Owens was as close to a national sensation as a young athlete could
Coach Riley

Owens acknowledged Charles Riley, coach and physical education instructor at Cleveland’s Fairmount Junior High, as the man “who made all the difference in his life,” training him “to become a man as well as an athlete.” Riley, a slight, taciturn man who, when he did speak, “had some little saying to fit the situation,” hailed from the eastern Pennsylvania mining town of Mauch Chunk. Neither of his own sons were athletes, and Riley enthusiastically took the young Jesse under his wing, investing long hours outside the classroom in his training and bringing him food to supplement the meager fare he was getting at home.

The “spindly little colored boy” first caught Riley’s eye when, as a seventh grader, he ran 220 yards in 27 seconds flat. None of Riley’s previous students had ever done it in less than 30. Initially, Jesse’s running form was terrible, his stomach out and his head down. Riley rigged up a “harness,” a broad belt connected to the gym wall by a rope, to teach the runner to keep his stomach in, his chest out, and his head forward. Jesse was a quick study; still, it took years to refine and establish consistency in his form. To Riley, his most significant contribution was teaching Owens to relax during a sprint, a point he demonstrated by taking the youth to observe horse races. This fostered the smooth, fluid style for which Owens would later be known. Evidence of its success can be seen in the innumerable photographs of Owens’s remarkably tranquil countenance as he crossed the finish line in front of wildly grimacing opponents.

David A. Simmons
Owens, here registering, did not disappoint the promoters, stealing the show from the more than three hundred athletes, many of them collegians. His time of 10.4 seconds in the 100-meter race was only a tenth of a second short of the world record. Cleveland State University, Cleveland Press Collection
be before the advent of television. His records would be good enough to last more than twenty years. But more important was his sleek, graceful style and quiet demeanor, qualities that captivated those who saw him compete in person. The Gazette offered the opinion “that the spectators scarcely realized that anyone else was on the field.” A victory parade staged by the city of Cleveland completed Jesse’s transformation from local phenomenon to celebrity.

To the dismay of African-American leaders in the Midwest, Owens decided to continue his track career at Ohio State, a school with a reputation for racial intolerance. Several colleges had approached Owens, but no traditional black institution was among them. Riley expressed a preference for the University of Michigan, but Owens chose Columbus. His reasons were complicated, but they apparently included, in the era before track scholarships, a position for himself as an elevator operator in the statehouse and some promise of a job for his father.

Ohio State had only one men’s dormitory in 1933, and Owens was not allowed to live in it. Neither he nor any other black student was welcome in the restaurants along High Street, the main thoroughfare bordering the campus. At the statehouse, Owens was assigned to a freight elevator, out of public view. Still, the young man from Cleveland persevered, under the guidance of Larry Snyder, a former Buckeye track star who had become head coach in 1932. Even before Owens could run for him, Snyder arranged a series of paid public speaking engagements and other odd jobs that, in combination, brought Owens a healthy monthly income.

Continued on page 17
A Jesse Owens Album

Riley and Owens at a Hamilton, Ontario, track meet in the late summer before classes started at Ohio State. Ohio State University Libraries, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Showing off his new letter sweater alongside Ohio State classmates Dave Albrighton (center) and Mel Walker (right). Ohio State University Photo Archives.

Getting ready in Ohio Stadium, 1934. Ohio State University Photo Archives.
At the Sohio station on the corner of East Ninety-second and Cedar in Cleveland
Ohio State University Libraries,
Rare Books and Manuscripts

With a part-time employer during his college years,
Cleveland businessman Alonzo Wright
Western Reserve Historical Society
Winning the 100-yard dash at the Drake Relays, Des Moines, Iowa, April 27, 1935
Cleveland State University, Cleveland Press Collection

May 25, 1935: a new world record in the 220-yard dash — it stood until 1952
Cleveland State University, Cleveland Press Collection
May 25, 1935: a new world record in the long jump — it stood for a quarter-century
Ohio State University Athletic Department

Marriage to Ruth Solomon on July 5, 1935,
the Reverend Ernest Hall officiating
Cleveland State University
Cleveland Press Collection

Winning the 100-yard dash at the Big Ten track meet in Ohio Stadium,
April 23, 1936
Cleveland State University
Cleveland Press Collection
A new world record in the 100-meter run at the National Collegiate Athletic Association meet in Chicago, June 20, 1936

Cleveland State University, Cleveland Press Collection
Greeting fellow Olympian Mark Robinson of Pasadena Junior College at the Randall Island trials, July 12, 1936.

Cleveland State University: Cleveland Press Collection
Continued from page 9

Snyder took over where Charles Riley left off. He liked much of what he saw, thanks to Riley's excellent tutelage. Snyder had only to collect Owens's arm motion and to improve his start. Freshmen could not then participate in varsity athletics, so Owens was limited to a series of open meets and exhibitions during the spring of 1934.

He wowed a large crowd on May 5 by long jumping 23 feet, 10 3/4 inches, and running a special 120-yard race against the clock. Timers stationed at 90, 100, and 120 yards caught him in two unofficial record times. Later, at a Big Ten freshman meet in Columbus, Owens set new conference records in all three of his events: 9.6 seconds in the 100, 21.0 seconds in the 220, and 24 feet, 10 inches, in the long jump.

Owens's varsity career began in February 1935 with the indoor season. Ohio State had no indoor training facilities, so his results were a bit checkered.

He often entered four events, adding the 70-yard high hurdles to his usual repertoire, and sometimes he won all four. At New York's Madison Square Garden, he beat Ralph Metcalfe for the first time in the semifinals of the 60-yard dash. But Ben Johnson of Columbia University nipped Owens in the final.

As track moved outside for the spring, Snyder attempted to hype interest in Ohio State's team by arranging another special exhibition for Owens. This time he ran a timed 100 yards, but began his sprint 20 yards behind the starting line. Three watches clocked him in an astounding 8.4 seconds, and 12,000 fans, taking the bait, turned out for the Buckeyes' next dual meet against Notre Dame.
Thus, when the Big Ten championships rolled around on May 25, Owens was accustomed to publicity and acclaim. But nothing he had accomplished previously could have prepared the spectators at Ann Arbor's Ferry Field for what they were about to witness. Generally described as the greatest day any individual has ever had in the history of track and field, Owens's feat included setting three world records and tying a fourth, all in the space of a single hour and all achieved despite a back injury that nearly forced him to withdraw from the meet.

The 100-yard dash final came first at about 3:15 P.M. Running without benefit of starting blocks, Owens defeated Bob Grieve of Illinois by five yards, an enormous margin in this event. The announced time, 9.4 seconds, tied Frank Wykoff's mark set in 1930, but Owens truly ran faster than that. All three official stopwatches caught Owens closer to 9.3 than 9.4 seconds, but the rules of the day mandated the higher fraction. The timers also may have heeded the head official's admonition to "watch for the back foot. See it cross the finish line, and then press the old forefinger."

The Michigan crowd applauded Owens's victory politely and gave a warmer reception to former Wolverine and double Olympic gold medal winner Eddie Tolan as he came down from the stands to congratulate the new champion. But Owens's day had just begun. He moved to the long-jump pit right in front of the stands and had a friend place a white handkerchief at the 26-foot mark. Observers knew that only three men had even reached that distance, but, on his first jump, Owens soared past the marker with graceful ease. His heel came down 26 feet, 8 1/4
Ever proud of family, alma mater, and country, Jesse returned with Ruth to Ohio Stadium in the autumn of 1960 to witness the crowning of their daughter, Marlene, as the university's first black homecoming queen. His positive outlook never faltered until he was claimed by lung cancer in March 1980.

When Owens’s time was announced, the crowd stormed onto the field to congratulate him. Buckeye trainer Tucker Smith rescued Owens and hustled him into the locker room. In the stands Charles Riley shed a tear of joy, left the stadium, and cranked up his Model T Ford. Owens showered and climbed through a window to avoid the crush of more admirers. Together, as they had done so many times in the past, he and Riley drove home to Cleveland. Shortly after breakfast the next morning, reporters arrived at the Owens home and, in a certain sense, they never really left. Owens went on to additional victories that spring at a dual meet against the University of Southern California and at the NCAA championships in Berkeley. Berlin lay more than a year in the future, but Jesse Owens’s star was already shining brightly.
COLUMBUS RECOLLECTIONS

Two sports stars excelled — even in enemy territory

For The Dispatch

College and professional athletes are always looking for the performance that's "one for the books."

Ohio State track star Jesse Owens and Michigan football great Tom Harmon got their wish.

Interestingly, their stellar performances took place on the other's turf: Owens on the track in Ann Arbor, Mich., on May 25, 1935; Harmon, at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 23, 1940.

Many called Owens' performance "the greatest day in collegiate track history." At the Western Conference (Big Ten) meet, Owens broke three world records (200-yard dash, long jump and hurdles) and tied another (100-yard dash).
Hometown finally honors Jesse Owens

BIRMINGHAM — About 100 of us sit atop Red Mountain in what may well be the city's most exclusive meeting room. Heavy rain clouds hamper the spectacular trade-mark view from The Club, its chalk-colored, private walls a familiar landmark in the shadow of the statue Vulcan. But no matter.


It's a little hard to comprehend. We are gathered together in a pre-fund-raising luncheon for a 17.5-acre Jesse Owens Memorial Park in his hometown of Oakville, Ala. The dignitaries are outdoing one another in expressing support for the park project.

Brevill says he's proud to tell people I represent the county (Lawrence) where Jesse Owens was born.

Folsom says he's real excited the Olympic torch may pass through Oakville, population 200, on its way to Atlanta in 1996.

Nobody dares mention the real birth of this Owens' tribute more than a decade ago. It began as a sadly typical racial dispute when white Lawrence County officials refused a request to allow a monument honoring Owens on the courthouse lawn. They said they feared "a flood of similar requests." Of course that wasn't it.

As if they worried about running out of grass if every Lawrence County Olympic legend who had won four gold medals and single-handedly made a fool of Hitler wanted to stake a spot.

No congressman took Jesse's part then. No governor. They cleared the briers from a corner of cow pasture and poured homemade walks. Before the little obelisk could be unveiled, hoodlums in a pickup truck tried to pull it down. But the ceremony came off on schedule, with singing and rejoicing. There was much joy in Oakville.

I realize all this is ancient history. Communities and leaders can mellow, see the light. It's never too late to do the right thing. The support for a first-rate park now appears solid and bi-racial.

Even cautious white politicians sense that it's all right in 1994 to recognize the greatness of Alabama's own international star Jesse Owens.

Brevill might have stumbled on part of the truth. "You know, we've got some really livewire citizens there," he said, meaning Oakville and the nearby county seat, Moulton. They have "seized upon the tourism value."

There are some $1 million plans. There will be a statue, a playground area, a nice running track. It must sound good to a rural county that could use visitors.

And any Alabama business or individual should be honored to contribute. Real heroes like Jesse Owens are rare, maybe even obsolete.

But I hope that somehow in the stampede to unveil Jesse in time for the 1996 Olympics that everyone remembers how this thing stumbled off the blocks. That someone gives credit to the Oakville Masons in the humble cinderblock meeting hall who didn't have money, only vision and determination.

From an Oakville cow pasture to Birmingham's The Club is 80 miles or a million. Depending on the measure you use.

Rheta Grimsley Johnson is a columnist for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and United Feature Syndicate.
JESSE OWENS, the world's greatest track and field athlete, was also a world class hurdler.

CELEBRATION for a Champion sculpture, OSU Jesse Owens Plaza.

Jesse Owens, 1913 - 1980

One name headlines the history of Ohio State University and international Olympic track and field championships: Jesse Owens. His unparalleled accomplishments, his charisma, captivating voice, and charm, his untiring support of youth make him a true hero model for today's generation.

The legendary Owens came to Ohio State University from Cleveland in 1933. But how many people know that Jesse Owens lived on the Hilltop during those days? Yes, he stayed at 292 S. Oakley Ave., in the heart of our Hilltop community. A plaque was dedicated at the site in May to honor the Hilltop's most celebrated world sports figure.

The Hilltop Reunion Committee is pleased to proclaim the high Winners Circle honor that belongs to Jesse - his wife, Ruth - and his three lovely daughters, Gloria, Beverly, and Marlene.

Owen's fabulous career began in junior high, where he set national records in both the high jump and broad jump (now called the long jump). At Cleveland East Tech High School, he set scholastic world records in the 220-yard dash, the broad jump, and tied the world record in the 100-yard dash. As an OSU sophomore, he completed the greatest feat in the history of track competition by setting three world records and tying a fourth in only 70 minutes. The world remembers Owens for his Olympic feats in 1936. He destroyed Hitler's Aryan race superiority myth by winning gold medals in the 100 and 200 meter dashes, the broad jump, and as a member of the 400-meter relay team.

In 1976 President Gerald Ford presented him with the U.S. Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award. He was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1988. Jesse best represents the character and nobility of our Hilltop Winners Circle enshrinement.
SOUVENIR PROGRAM

1995

HONOREES BANQUET

"PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK"

HILLTOP

REUNION

6:30 p.m., Friday, June 16, 1995

Berwick Party House

sponsored by

THE HILLTOP REUNION COMMITTEE, INC.

NOTE: The Hilltop is a neighborhood off West Broad Street in Columbus, Ohio.
On track
Jesse Owens’ hometown readying for torch

By Lesley Farrey Pacey
DAILY Staff Writer

OAKVILLE — James Pinion could use some of Jesse Owens’ speed right now. Pinion and a few others have nine months to transform an empty 17.5-acre field into an elaborate memorial park for the track and field star of the 1936 Olympics.

"Our window is getting smaller and smaller, we have just nine months and a lot to do," said Pinion, sitting through park plans covering his desk at the Auburn Extension Service in Mountic. "We’ve got a lot of unanswered questions and when you get to thinking about that, it sort of gets you worried."

Pinion, who got involved because he has a county agent he does rural development work, is looking for a project “engineer” to help make the miracle happen. His team of helpers include 10 others on a park committee.

Owens Park has struggled for 13 years

By Lesley Farrey Pacey
DAILY Staff Writer

OAKVILLE — Seventeen-year-old Franklin McDaniel spent his childhood waiting for a Jesse Owens Memorial Park that never came.

"It was about this big when they started talking about it," he said, holding his hand out near his thigh. "All these years, I haven’t seen nothing yet."

McDaniel — who lives across the street from the future site of the park and a cow pasture away from the Jesse Owens memorial — said tourists who visit Oakville usually share his disappointment.

Nearly 60 years after the son of a black Lawrence County sharecropper won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics, shattering Adolf Hitler’s dream of Aryan su-
**Park**

Continued from page B1

Preamacy, the only marker of Owens' birthplace is a brick display case filled with memorabilia and two chest-high granite monuments that mark the former site of his boyhood home.

"They say, 'This is it?'" McDaniel said. "It's embarrassing to say the park hasn't gotten started yet."

But an elaborate change is on the way. A 17.5-acre memorial park for Owens — which will include a sculpture, a replica house, a museum, ball fields and other recreation facilities — is set to open June 30 for the Olympic torch run.

Some people say the county has come along way in 13 years since a Lawrence County Commission in 1983 voted 3-2 against putting a Jesse Owens monument on the courthouse lawn.

The decision led to the monument's placement in Oakville.

Commission Chairman Clyde Cameron recommended the commission approve of placing the monument on the courthouse square.

But Commissioners Wayne Sutton and Rayburn Beck supported Oakley Lanier's request to deny state Rep. Roger Dutton's proposal to place the monument on the square.

Commissioner Pleas Hill, the only commissioner to openly support the proposal, abstained from voting because he said he was outnumbered by three "no" votes. All the commissioners were white.

The three commissioners who voted to deny, said the decision was not race-related.

Lanier said he voted "no" because Oakville residents wanted the monument in Oakville. He had said he fears many groups would try to have a monument placed at the courthouse. Sutton, who seconded the motion, said "I voted my conscience."

Beck said he is opposed to honoring individuals — white or black — with markers on the lawn.

But even with the progress, things haven't changed that much, said McDaniel.

"It is quiet here at night — there's no trouble — but when things like this start or there's an article about Jesse Owens, there's prejudice."

McDaniel said residents at a recent community meeting were concerned white racists would vandalize or tear down a new bronze sculpture of Owens, which will be unveiled at the park opening.

"They think it is going to get pulled down by the prejudice people," said McDaniel, an easy-going Speake High School football player.

McDaniel said chips in the memorial left by vandals and tire tracks in the grass nearby prove racism still exists.

He said fights between blacks and whites at a basketball court near the monument forced the community to move two basketball goals inside the empty, gated park.

When the Owens monument went up here in 1983, Oakville residents had to chase away vandals who wrapped a chain around the granite monument before its dedication, trying to rip it from the ground. The incident left chips still visible today.

But ask the chairman of the Jesse Owens Park Committee if racism is still a problem and he tries to dismiss the question.

"Negative talk isn't good for the state. It's not good for anyone," said Therm an White, a community leader. "That is something we don't bother to discuss. This is brand new day and time and I don't look back or talk about it."

White, who is black, was speaking for the rest of the community when he said, "We speak with one voice — everything else has been said before." Some residents in the community referred questions about the monument to White.

Owens' cousin Marilyn Fitzgerald also did not want to talk about past struggles, saying he's said too much in the past. But the Oakville resident did say, "I'm proud that the park is happening because it is long overdue. It should have happened 19 years ago."

What the men did want to address was the County Commission's vote and the vandalism attack on the monument.

Since then the community has come together, buying the 17.5 acre tract for $17,200 in 1990 and donating it to the county for the Jesse Owens Park. It was in 1992 that park committee members asked the Auburn Extension Service for help.

Now, an 11-member committee made up of white and black citizens, completed many of its goals, and the park ready to open next summer. Members say they have full cooperation from the County Commission and state legislators.

Owens' daughter Martene O. Rankin, who is executive director of the Jesse Owens Foundation in Chicago, said she admires the local group for overcoming racial and financial barriers and doing something meaningful for the community.

She plans to attend the park opening with her mother, Ruth Owens, her sisters and other family members.

"We think the people of Lawrence County are to be commended for a 14 year struggle and for demonstrating perseverance in the face of such adversity and really coming close to their goal. They've really come a long way and we admire them for having undergone such a struggle."

"It's a wonderful story of a very small community pulling together with a mutual dream, bringing to bear what they had to make it happen. The fact that it is an integrated group doing it is also exciting."

Lawrence County Agent James Pinion, spokesman for the Park Committee, said the park project has put Oakville on the state map this year. He said Lawrence County is proud to claim Owens as its own.

Finien, who is white, said he hasn't seen the racist element McDaniel is talking about. "I hope it's not out there." But he added any vandalism would be prevented by hiring a museum curator and night watchman for the new park.

"The past 14 years don't have thing to do with what we're doing. . . . The only negative thing I've heard is 'Why haven't you done it sooner?' That's from blacks, white all races."

Owens' only living sibling, 81-year-old Sylvester Owens of Euclid Ohio, is looking forward to being here for the torch run and the park dedication. His first trip back to Alabama in 72 years was in October and he said he heard no more prejudice here than in Ohio.

"I think it's a long time coming under the circumstances, but I don't have any bad feelings about it," he said of the park. "There was prejudice and so on at that time. But things have changed for the better."

If they haven't, McDaniel said Oakville residents will protect the park and the memory of their famous citizen.

"This is our community, we're not going to let anyone ruin it," he said. "Jesse Owens made something out of himself, there's no use in ruining it."
Track
Continued from page B1

and field on rural Lawrence County 201 off Alabama 157 is freshly mowed and partially leveled, exposing its red clay.

But save for an occasional cow "moow," the future park is eerily quiet. The only indication of things to come is two rusty basketball hoops, a gate bearing Olympic rings and a "Jesse Owens Park" sign.

The park was a five-year plan squeezed into 1 ½ years when it was announced the torch run would come through Oakville. The local committee campaigned to get the torch run here, using the park as leverage.

Now with international attention focused on the community, the committee is feeling the weight of their task.

The plan includes a bronze statue of Owens surrounded by a Gold Medallion court representing the four gold medals Owens won in the 1936 Olympics; a replica house; a museum; a baseball field; a basketball court; a running track; a welcome center and pavilions. A street into the park, parking lots, bathrooms, and sewer and electricity also are needed.

The committee has already received about $135,000 in state and federal grants. The group may get another $25,000 of an Interstate Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grant. Another $95,000 in private and grant funding is paying for a sculpture.

But the committee still needs about $900,000 for the museum and another $100,000 for a running track. Pinion said he is trying to get a corporation like Adidas - which made Owens' running shoes - or Mercedes or Bell South to sponsor

the museum. He said corporate sponsorship would mean a promise of funding fast.

Pinion said despite the tight deadline, he's optimistic the committee - made of Oakville residents and Auburn Extension service employees - will have most everything together by the torch run. He hasn't ruled out cutting corners.

"If we don't have bathrooms, we could use portables," he said. "And I'm still uncomfortable about the museum."

Owens' family is donating memorabilia for the museum. Other items for the museum will come from Ohio State University, where Owens went to school. Pinion does not yet know how the museum will be set up.

Things are looking good for the statue. Birmingham sculptor Branko Medenica is a few months away from finishing a running replica of the track and field great.

Another main attraction at the park is the replica house. Pinion said he and other committee members found an old board-and-batten, tin-roof house that resembles the one Owens lived in as a boy in Oakville.

The three-room house will be moved to the park this month and restored, mostly by volunteers. The house will be placed on a spot about 300 yards from where Owens was born to sharecroppers. "They picked cotton on that hill behind where the house will go."

Owens' only living sibling, 86-year-old Sylvester Owens, described the house to Pinion and other committee members. The house has two bedrooms and a kitchen - just like the Owens' house.

Sylvester said his parents slept in one bedroom with a pot bellied stove nearby and he and Jesse slept on the floor in the other room. They

only other room was a kitchen with a wood-burning stove.

But Sylvester - who will be at the event with his family - doesn't seem worried about the status of the park project or Pinion's ability to pull it together. He said the project has "come alive" since he was here a year ago and he calls Pinion "one of the nicest men who ever lived."

"I think this is one of the nicest things that could ever happen to the Owens family - getting this for my baby brother," Sylvester said from his home in Ohio.

"The only thing that will keep me from coming to Alabama is if the good Lord takes me to heaven - or to hell," he said with a laugh.
Oakville residents excited about torch visit to city

By Clyde L. Stancil
DAILY Staff Writer

OAKVILLE — People are excited about the possibility of the Olympic torch passing through their small community, bringing the world spotlight on the birthplace of Olympic track great Jesse Owens.

"I like the idea," said Rayford Taylor, an Oakville resident. "I've never seen one before. I think the people are real excited."

The excitement is about the event and the effect on the area once the torch has passed.

"Magnificent," said Therman White, an Oakville resident and president of the Jesse Owens Park Committee. "It's going to do a lot for the whole county and the state of Alabama. We have some tourism now, but this will have an impact."

White and members of the park committee met several times with the Olympic Committee and Owens' family members to secure the torch run, beginning in March 1994. When the torch finally arrives, for however brief the moment in time, it will be the result of Oakville's two greatest efforts ever — Owens' striding and the committee striving.

Oakville is a tiny community easy to miss if you don't know what you're looking for. It's located seven miles south of Moulton off Alabama 157. A sign on the side of the highway directs alert drivers to Owens' memorial.

"A lot of people don't even know where Oakville is," said Franklin McDaniel, a 17-year-old resident of the community. "It's going to put a small town like this on the map. I think it would be interesting to have something like that come through here. I know a lot of people will be here to watch it because it's exciting. I think it will bring a lot of tourism to the area."

After being flown into the United States from Olympia Greece, where it will be lighted, the torch will begin its cross-country relay April 27 in Los Angeles. A total of 10,000 runners, 5,500 selected by area United Ways, will carry the torch on the 15,000-mile, 84-day-long run.

The torch will be brought into Alabama through Huntsville. It will travel about 13 3/4 hours each day with each runner carrying the flame for one kilometer, or .62 miles. From June 28 to July 1 the torch will travel through Decatur, Oakville, Cullman, Birmingham, Clanton, Montgomery, Selma, Troy and Dothan.

Traditionally, the torch has been carried by runners, but there are several different modes of transportation planned for this year's edition of the relay. San Francisco's cable car system, a ferry on Seattle's Puget Sound and Pony Express riders in Nebraska, all representative of American culture and history, will bear the torch.

And just how should the torch be carried through Oakville?

"I think they are going to run it through, because Jesse Owens was a runner," said McDaniel.
THE OLYMPIC TORCH ARRIVES... I WAS THERE

Jesse Owens
OLYMPIC HERO
The Olympic Torch

City to celebrate arrival of torch

By CHRIS WELCH
Executive Sports Editor

Huntsville's own Olympic dream officially began on Feb. 16, 1995 in an Atlanta hotel. As in a cheap spy novel, an unsuspecting member of the United Way of Madison County was ushered into a meeting room under a cloak of secrecy and interrogated.

About the Olympic Torch, that is.

"I had received a fax on Jan. 24 of last year saying they wanted the United Way to help provide support for several aspects of the Olympics," said Donna Rush, director of communications and marketing for the United Way. "So we went to Atlanta on Feb. 16 with other cities like Miami, Louisville, Montgomery and Birmingham.

"They took us into a press conference and told us we would select 5,500 of the 10,000 Flame Bearers. Then the next question was this: 'What would you do if we brought the flame to your city?' A cold chill came over Rush. She tried not to panic. After all, this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance for the city.

"I told them we had the U.S. Space and Rocket City and we could hold the celebration under the shuttle," Rush said. "I didn't know how I'd done it, but we called back in June and confirmed that Huntsville would be on the route.

A year later, the dream is about to become reality. The Olympic Torch will make its way through Huntsville, Tenn., on Friday from 4:38-5:30 p.m. then arrive at the Alabama-Tennessee state line near Hazel Green at 6.

From there, 152 people selected from various walks of life — 44 from the United Way Community Heroes Program — will carry the torch through the city, downtown, then out to the U.S. Space and Rocket Center. There, a gala celebration will be held at approximately 10 if the heat isn't bad and everything is on schedule.

If everything goes the way the United Way would like, and if the Atlanta Olympic Committee approves, Rose Magers-Fowell, a member of the 1984 Olympic volleyball team, will carry the torch the final leg and light a cauldron at the Space and Rocket Center.

The torch will remain at the center for 20 minutes, and after a big fireworks display, head to the Decatur Holiday Inn to spend the night.

It will return to the Space and Rocket Center Saturday at 6:30 a.m. It will be carried by a U.S. teacher and Australian student who are attending the International Space Camp. Australia was chosen because it is the site for the 2000 Summer Olympics. The torch will wind its way through Madison, Decatur and eventually make it to the Oaks, where the grandson of Jesse Owens, American hero of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, will carry it through the Jesse Owens Memorial Park.

Rush said she believes that one of the main reasons the torch is coming through Huntsville is due to the efforts of the citizens of Oakville and the Jesse Owens celebration. Besides Huntsville, the only other major city to get the torch are Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma, where the torch will be carried across the Freedom Bridge.

Rush said there are several celebrations planned along the torch route.

The main extravaganza will be at the Space and Rocket Center. People can park in Research Park, where fee shuttles will begin at 6. There will be children's activities from 6-7, with the official program starting at 6:45. There will be introductions of Olympic and past Olympic, including Harvey Grace, Peter Nordel and USA hockey coach Doug Ross (who coached the 1976 U.S. Olympic hockey team).

Former Alabama A&M coach Joe Henderson will represent some of his outstanding former athletes, including Darnell Young Stone and Jared Miles, who have already qualified for this year's Olympics, and Grace Small.

The music will start at 7:15 and include the Huntsville Concert Band, the United Voices of Praise, and the 14th U.S. Army Band from Anniston. On Saturday morning, Motorola will host a celebration with Grace and the Huntsville Concert Band as the torch pauses for about 10 minutes before it heads toward Decatur.

The Huntsville Times, Thursday, June 27, 1996
OAKVILLE — Jesse Owens' widow, Ruth, spent Thursday night near this spot in the road that the Olympic great left at age 9 and never saw again.

She is here for Saturday afternoon's ceremony when a statue of her husband is unveiled while a runner holds the Atlanta-bound Olympic torch.

The event is expected to attract national and international attention.

Mrs. Owens is staying at an area motel with relatives, including Owens' grandson, 29-year-old Stuart Owens Rankin of Boston, who is to carry the torch.

Owens was born and lived in this southeast Lawrence County community before his parents moved the family to Cleveland, Ohio.

In one day, while a track and field star for Ohio State, Owens set three world records and tied another.

At the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, he claimed four gold medals and was proclaimed the event's star athlete.

Gov. Fob James will be here for the ceremony, which begins at 11:30 a.m. with the torch to arrive about an hour later.

"What a tremendous, great human being," James said of Owens in a recent, statewide radio address. "Those of us in Alabama can be proud and can be thankful."

Owens returned to the area a quarter-century ago to speak at Calhoun Community College. But he declined an invitation to visit Oakville, about 12 miles southwest of Decatur.

The Spirit of America Festival at Decatur honored Owens on July 4, 1979, with the Audie Murphy Patriotism Award. However, Owens was unable to attend the event. He died the next year.

In recent weeks, such newspapers as the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times have had front page articles about the upcoming Owens ceremony.

James Pinion, chairman of the park committee, said he believes "the park will become a tourist attraction."

He went to Birmingham Thursday afternoon to escort Mrs. Owens and others, who had flown from Chicago, to Lawrence County.

"Today is a day of rest for Mrs. Owens," said Pinion. "But she wants to visit Boaz and do some shopping."
Torch bearers are real heroes

Approximately 44 community heroes from the Huntsville area will take turns carrying the Olympic Torch as it passes through the area Friday and Saturday.

The torch bearers were chosen earlier this year through the United Way's Community Heroes Program.

Here's a brief look at those who will carry the flame through Madison County and the Huntsville vicinity:

SARAH LYNN BOWMAN - Special Education student at Liberty Middle School in Madison. Equestrian and ice skater.

JUNE BUFF - Wife and mother, court-appointed Juvenile Adjudicator volunteer, UAH honor graduate and former in-house therapist.

JOE HALL BURSON - Retired NASA engineer. Worked on Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab and Shuttle programs. Former president of South Huntsville Kiwanis Club.

JIM CALL - Has performed over 450 hours of community service in Huntsville for 15 organizations and more than 200 hours in a community garden to feed the needy.

J. MICHAEL CAMPBELL - Employed by Loral Defense Systems-East, Boy Scout troop committee member, Red Cross volunteer and mahogany carver.

MARK CLOUSER - Driver engineer, Huntsville Fire and Rescue Squad. Assistant with Special Olympics.

BO CUMMINGS - Employed by Bradford Health Services in Madison as alcohol and drug counselor.

EDDIE DAVIS - Attended school at the Opportunity Center. Has won ribbons in bowling and baseball on the local and state level in Special Olympics.

JOHN W. DAVIS - Owner of Davis Realty. Has worked with ALANON Downtown Rescue Mission and Hospice.

JOSEPH P. DEL PONTE - Adult volunteer for Boy Scouts and has worked in Scouting's Outreach Program.

RICK DUNN - Employed by EEF Systems, Inc., performing engineering-related service for Department of Defense and NASA. Winner of Governor's Award for outstanding community service.

GRADY EDWARDS - Leader in providing homes for the homeless by building or restoring homes.

MALCOLM GILLIS - Role model for healthy living and fitness. Hold two state records in running, won 1995 over-60 title in Boston Marathon.

PATRICK H. GRAVES, JR. - Lawyer with the firm of Bray, Acres, Rose & White. Received degree from West Point, President-elect of Huntsville Rotary Club.

TERRY R. "ABT" HARRIS - Pastor, State line United Methodist Church, God picker at WIND, Alabama A&M grad student.

WILLIAM J. HARRISON - Retired from U.S. Army and from Boaz-Alan & Hamilton, active in Rotary Senior Volunteer Program.

RICK HEMBREE, JR. - Owner, Bob Hembree Motor Company, active in many civic groups in Huntsville.

HOMER HICKAM - Employed by NASA in Huntsville, Vietnam veteran. Organized first diving rescue team in Alabama.

MARGARET HOOD - News director, morning news anchor, WPHV radio.

WES HOPPER - Seventh-grade student at Madison Academy. Has worked

Please see TORCH on 4
Torch Relay Includes Oakville, Hometown of Jesse Owens

By Ben Johnson, Staff Writer

OAKVILLE — James Cleveland Owens — better known as Jesse because of his initials (J.C.) — made his mark on the world in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, winning an astounding four gold medals in track and field. Now, Owens' hometown is focusing the world's attention on Owens' legacy on June 29. That's when the Olympic Torch Relay makes a highly publicized stop in his hometown here in North Alabama.

Actually, the flame will be in North Alabama for two days (June 28 and 29) with stops in Huntsville, Decatur, Oakville and Cullman. The torch began its 84-day, 15,000 mile journey Saturday in Los Angeles, and will cross the country in a zig-zag pattern whose only logic is to assure that millions of people can see it.

The torch will hit 42 states and come within a two-hour drive of 90 percent of the nation's population. With Coca-Cola as its major sponsor and NBC providing daily updates, the relay will be a publicity-generating behemoth. Between now and when the torch lands in Atlanta for the start of the 1996 Olympic Games, images of the torch will be omnipresent.

The Oakville program will feature folks from Oakville and the surrounding Lawrence County community who remember Owens as well as others who have only read about Owens in history books. The arrival of the Olympic flame will be heralded by the opening of the million-dollar, 17-acre Jesse Owens Memorial Park at the junction of county roads 187 and 203.

In fact, the Torch Relay and its accompanying cars, vans, bicycles, staff, onlookers and of course, the torchbearers and media, will stop at the park for lunch June 23. While attention has been focused on the few black "community hero" torchbearers in North Alabama, one of Owens' grandchildren will carry the torch inside the park's sweeping expanse.

The park is a saving grace for the disappointment that some black in Lawrence County feel because there are no other "community hero" torchbearers.

The park is truly a multicultural endeavor that has attracted the support of all manner of people in the town, the county and the state. According to organizers, support for the park comes from all quarters and knows no racial or cultural bounds.

"It's a magnificent, just amazing feeling," said Thermon White, chairman of the Jesse Owens Memorial Park. "This is a county effort, a whole state effort. So many people have been involved."

Notably, then-Gov. George Wallace, pushed by long-time friend and state Rep. Roger Dutton, helped secure the initial $30,000 funding that paid for the memorial, built in 1983, and was the seed capital for the park. Both are white. In fact, the memorial was Dutton's idea.

"From his idea, we developed the park," White said. About $15,000 was left from the state grant for the memorial. That money was used as part of the payment for the land, he said.

Then, of course there are the many residents of all-black Oakville who lobbied and labored for years for a fitting memorial. They were not deterred when county commissioners vetoed a plan to put a bust of Owens in the county square. In fact, some supporters now say that rejection was a blessing because it led to the park, a more elaborate and fitting tribute.

Students and faculty of all colors from Auburn University helped design the park as a class project and a community service. Staffers from Auburn's communications department helped with the park's public relations effort. The department's head is black.

The Griffin family that sold the county much of the park's land is black. The construction company is owned by a Native American. The park's architect is black. The sculptor of the Owens statue is German. The welcome center is being financed by the Decatur Daily publisher, who is white. Numerous other individuals and businesses also have contributed.

(Donations still are welcomed. White noted that the private, nonprofit park board will have to raise money to take care of the park's upkeep.)

Ironically, the park is just a few hundred feet from one of the state's most significant Native American memorials, the Oakville Indian Mounds Park and Museum, site of a 2,000-year-old Woodland Indian burial mound.

"Oh, everyone's involved," White noted. "They're doing it for the memory of Jesse Owens, what he accomplished. They're not in this for themselves, for any personal glory."

For all of the controversy, Thermon White is thrilled with the park. He and others are racing to get it completed in time for the June 28 festivities. "Despite that (controversy), we've got to build a park," he said. "What has happened, we can't change it. We're proceeding on."

Owens was born in Oakville in 1913 to sharecropper parents. His father raised cotton and corn, the area's staple cash crops. Owens lived with his parents and brother in a two-room shack. A replica of the house will be a part of the park. The family moved to Cleveland when Owens was 7. He was an all-state athlete at East Technical High School in Cleveland.

Owens became a track star during his college years (1933-36) at Ohio State University. His feats were legendary even before the 1936 Olympics. At a 1935 track meet in Ann Arbor, Mich., Owens broke three world records and tied a fourth in the space of 45 minutes. During his track career, he set seven world records.

He wrote his name in the history books during the Berlin Olympics. With Adolf Hitler in the stands, Owens made a lie of the Third Reich's claim to white Aryan superiority.
Controversy Looms As Olympic Torch Heads to North Alabama

Only Four of 86 "Community Hero" Torchbearers are Black; Festivities Include Stop in Oakville, Hometown of Jesse Owens

By Ben Johnson, Staff Writer

In less than two months, the globe-trotting Olympic torch will arrive in North Alabama amid much hoopla and the glare of global TV coverage. But controversy surrounding this symbol of international cooperation and multicultural involvement is already here.

That's because when the torch arrives, transferred one kilometer at a time from runner to runner, there won't be many black hands touching it. Amazingly, only four of the 86 "community hero" torchbearers are black. That's a representation of just 5 percent in a 10-county region whose black population is about 15 percent. In Madison County where blacks are 20 percent of the population, there is just one black person designated as a "community hero" torchbearer.

That abysmal demographic representation flies in the face of the dominating role black athletes have had on the field in the Olympics in representing the United States. One of the most important Olympic athletes ever is a native of North Alabama. Herman White, a driving force behind the Jesse Owens Memorial Park, is thrilled that the community's dream of a living legacy for Owens will finally come true next month. "The same thing that happened to Jesse Owens in Germany is happening to his hometown," said Hoover White, a Lawrence County black activist. White is one of several North Alabama black leaders who are complaining to anyone who will listen. He was referring to the negative and racist reception Owens' heroics received in Germany.

However, there still is a chance that the number of black torchbearers will increase by the time the Torch Relay arrives here. Also, plans are being made to assure that a significant number of blacks are involved.
"IT BEHOOVES A MAN WITH GOD-GIVEN ABILITY TO STAND TEN FEET TALL. YOU NEVER KNOW HOW MANY YOUNGSTERS MAY BE WATCHING."

JESSE OWENS
Jesse Owens Memorial Park Dedication
Oakville, Alabama Saturday, June 29, 1996

11:40 a.m. Dedication Ceremony

Masters of Ceremonies
Kenneth Brackin, Professor,
NW Shoals Community College
Rip Proctor,
Lawrence County Probate Judge

National Anthem
Reginald Jackson, Decatur

Presentation of Colors
Local ROTC Groups

Invocation
The Honorable Fob James,
Governor of Alabama
Aubrey Miller, Director,
Alabama Bureau of Travel and Tourism
Jim Corum,
Lawrence County Commission

Song
Bishop Gary Taylor,
Oakville Christian Faith Center

Introduction of the Jesse Owens Family
Marvin Fitzgerald, Relative, Oakville, Alabama
Marshall Lewey and a group of coaches

Jesse Owens Ballad
Reggie Anglin, Public Relations Coordinator,
OSU, Columbus, Ohio

Remarks from Ohio State University
Area and Local Talent (until Torch arrives)

12:50 p.m. Olympic Torch Arrival

Torch Run Through Park
Carried by Stuart Owen Rankin, Grandson of Jesse Owens, Boston, Massachusetts

Olympic Torch
Atlanta Committee Olympic Games

Relay Program
Branko Medenica, Sculptor, Birmingham, Alabama

The Jesse Owens Statue
Mrs. Jesse Owens, Chicago, Illinois

Unveiling of Statue
Melvin Walker, Lifelong friend and teammate,
Chicago, Illinois

Tribute to Jesse Owens

Olympic Torch Exit the Park

Lighting of 1936 Torch Replica
Mrs. Jesse Owens

Torch Replica
Lawrence County Commission

Park Dedication, Ribbon Cutting
Jesse Owens Family
Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board

Jesse Owens Family and the Jesse Owens Foundation wish to extend our congratulations and pledge of support to the citizens of Lawrence County, Alabama, for your unceasing commitment and hard work on the Jesse Owens Memorial Park project. We embrace your vision of providing an area in your community for young and old to benefit from athletics, physical fitness and education.

How fitting a tribute to one of your own who gained international recognition and esteem because of his God-given abilities in athleticism and humanitarianism.
Appreciation to contributors who made our dream possible

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Wendell Sivley, Moulton
Wiley Smith, Birmingham
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Thorton Stanley Construction, Inc.,
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Authority
Wheeler Chapel Missionary Baptist
Church
Therman White, Oakville
April Williams, Decatur
Norman M. Wilson, Oxford, Pennsylvania
And thanks again to the many others
who helped in countless ways.

Special thanks to the Alabama
Cooperative Extension System
staff for development and support of
the Jesse Owens Memorial Park Project

Beth Atkins, Extension Development
Specialist
Thomas Chesnut, Extension Tourism
Specialist
Bruce Dupree, Extension Communications
Specialist, Art
James Harvey, Editor, TV Post
Production, Communications
Maggie Lawrence, Producer/Director II,
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Warren McCord, Extension Assistant
Director, Community Resource
Development
Virginia Morgan, Extension
Communications Specialist, Educational
Methods
Donna Reynolds, Assistant Editor, Communications
W.L. Strain, Extension Assistant
Director, Communications
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Sheila Sims, Moulton
Wendell Sivley, Moulton
Wiley Smith, Birmingham
H. L. Speake, Moulton

JESSE OWENS MEMORIAL PARK

1. Welcome Center
   2. Statue
   3. Museum
   4. Baseball, Softball Field
   5. Picnic Pavilions
   6. Restrooms
   7. Walking Trail
   8. 1936 Torch Replica
   9. Jesse Owens Home Replica
   10. Gold Medallion Court
   11. Basketball Court
   12. Concessions
   13. Future Playground
   14. Souvenir and Gift Shop
   15. Future Track, Soccer Field
   16. Parking

Park Facts
- Size: 19 acres
- Owned by: Lawrence County Commission
- Managed by: The Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board
- Tax Status: Non-profit, Tax exempt 501 C(3)
- Funded by: grants, businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals
Owens Immortalized in Bronze

On June 29, more than 60 years after Jesse Owens won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics, the athlete and humanitarian is being honored with the dedication of a park in his name. Owens will be immortalized in bronze by a statue sculpted by Branko Medenica of Birmingham. The $80,000 statue is the center attraction of the Jesse Owens Memorial Park in Oakville, Alabama.

Medenica was hired three years ago by the Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board to create the sculpture. He did a lot of research on Owens, including reading books about Owens, searching through archives at Ohio State University and visiting with Owens’ wife, Ruth, and three daughters in Chicago. He also used 1984 Olympic gold medalist Willie Smith as a model. Medenica took numerous pictures of Smith running, to get better muscle definition of the legs for the statue.

The eight-foot, one-ton sculpture, which shows Owens running mid-stride with one leg in the middle of the center Olympic ring, was molded with great detail, from his uniform bearing the Olympic insignia and stripes, to the spikes in his running shoes and the safety pins holding his No. 3 paper on the uniform. Once it is mounted in the six-foot granite base, the statue will stand 14 feet high.

Medenica first molded a two-foot, oil-based clay model, which took almost two months to complete. From there, a full-sized model was made. He worked closely with the Owens family to get the face just right. Once the details were right on the full-sized clay model, molds were made and the model was sent to Montoya Arts Studios in West Palm Beach, Florida, where it was cast in bronze. Three of the Olympic rings then were added to the sculpture. Medenica also used patina, a chemical applied with heat that creates different colors in bronze, to color Owens’ hair and uniform.

Medenica moved the statue to a small Southside studio in Birmingham in early February to complete the last two Olympic rings and prepare the base support.

He almost had to sculpt Owens with both feet on the ground, because of the Olympic Committee’s exclusive rights to the Olympic rings. However, Medenica says, once the Jesse Owens Foundation got behind the project, the Olympic Committee agreed to let him use the rings with the statue.

A native of Germany, Medenica, 45, has been sculpting professionally since 1976. He is a graduate of Birmingham-Southern College. Although he has works displayed throughout the world, Medenica says the Owens project is his biggest. He delivered the sculpture to the park site just a few days before the dedication.
Jesse Owens
(1913-1980)

The seventh child of Henry and Emma Alexander Owens was named James Cleveland when he was born in Oakville, Alabama, in 1913. "J.C.," as he was called, was nine when the family moved to Cleveland, Ohio. It was there his new schoolteacher gave him the name that was to become known around the world. The teacher was told "J.C." when she asked his name to enter into her roll book, but she thought he had said "Jesse." And Jesse Owens was the name he used the rest of his life.

His athletic career began in 1928 in Cleveland, where he set new world records for junior high schools by jumping six feet in the high jump, and 22 feet, 11% inches in the broad jump. During his high school days, he won all of the major track events, including the state championship for three consecutive years. At the national interscholastic meet in Chicago, Owens set a new world record for high schools by running the 100-yard dash in 9.4 seconds to tie the accepted world record, and he created a new high school world record in the 220-yard dash by running the distance in 20.7 seconds. A week earlier Owens had set a new world record in the broad jump by jumping 24 feet, 11% inches. After this sensational high school career, he was sought by dozens of colleges.

Owens chose to attend Ohio State University over all the colleges pursuing him, even though it had no track scholarships to offer at the time. He supported himself and his wife, Ruth, with a variety of jobs — he was a night elevator operator, waiter, gas station attendant, library attendant, and a page in the Ohio Statehouse—all in between practice and setting records on the field in interscholastic competitions.

Owens stunned Adolph Hitler and delighted the world when he won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. In doing so, he not only discredited a heinous dictator, but also affirmed that individual excellence, rather than race or national origin, distinguishes one person from another.

He won a gold in the broad jump with his world-record-breaking leap of 26 feet, 5%¼ inches. On the opening day of the Olympics, Owens won another gold and tied a world record of 10.3 seconds in the 100-meter dash. Owens won his third gold medal with a record-breaking run of 20.7 seconds in the 200-meter finals. His fourth gold medal was won in the 400-meter relay. He was the lead-off man for the American team.

Athletes didn’t return from the Olympics to lucrative advertising and product endorsement campaigns in those days, and Owens supported his family with a variety of jobs. One was of special significance—playground director in Cleveland. It was his first step into a lifetime of working with disadvantaged youth, which he said gave him his greatest satisfaction.

After relocating to Chicago, Owens devoted much of his time to disadvantaged youth as a board member and former director of the Chicago Boy’s Club, an organization that served more than 1,500 youngsters. For five-and-a-half years he was a sports specialist for the State of Illinois Youth Commission.

In 1955, named by the State Department as America’s Ambassador of Sports, Owens spent two months touring India, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines, where he met with government and sports officials and, as always, talked with disadvantaged children. In 1956, Owens was named the personal representative of President Eisenhower to the Olympic Games in Australia. His itinerary also included visits to schools and youth clubs.

Owens traveled widely in post-Olympic days. He was an inspiring speaker and addressed youth groups, professional organizations, civic meetings, sports banquets, schools, parent-teacher organizations, commencement ceremonies, church organizations, and brotherhood and black history programs. He was also a public relations representative and consultant to many corporations including Atlantic Richfield, which still sponsors the annual ARCO/Jesse Owens Games. Owens spearheaded the founding of the games in 1964, and more than a million young people between the ages of 10 and 15 participate each year.

Owens was admired all over the world. For example, the government of the Ivory Coast named the street on which the U.S. Embassy is located “Rue Jesse Owens.” He attended the dedication ceremony in 1971. While there, he also conferred with the Minister of Youth and Sports and met with the nation’s top athletes, who considered Owens their greatest hero.

In Berlin, the street leading to the Olympic stadium is named Jesse Owens Allee. The Owens family attended the dedication ceremony as guests of the German government in 1982.

The United States awarded Owens its highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom, in ceremonies at the White House in 1976. President Ford presented the medal, with the 250-member U.S. Montreal Olympic team in attendance.
In 1979, Owens returned to the White House where President Carter presented him with the Living Legend Award. On that occasion, President Carter said, "A young man who possibly didn't even realize the superb nature of his own capabilities went to the Olympics and performed in a way that I don't believe has ever been equaled since...and since this superb achievement, he has continued in his own dedicated but modest way to inspire others to reach for greatness."

Jesse Owens died March 31, 1980, and President Carter added his voice to the tributes that poured in from around the world: "Perhaps no athlete better symbolized the human struggle against tyranny, poverty and racial bigotry. His personal triumphs as a world-class athlete and record holder were the prelude to a career devoted to helping others. His work with young athletes, as an unofficial ambassador overseas, and a spokesman for freedom are a rich legacy to his fellow Americans."

In 1990, President Bush honored Jesse Owens with the Congressional Gold Medal presented to his widow, Ruth S. Owens. Since the 1936 Olympic games, others have broken Owens’ records and accumulated gold medals, but for good reasons he is the best remembered of all the Olympic athletes. A young black man, the son of a sharecropper and grandson of a slave, achieved what no Olympian before him had accomplished. He triumphed through determination and self-discipline and by relying on the help he received from others. He proved in Berlin and afterward that he was a dreamer who could make the dreams of others come true; a speaker who could make the world listen; and a pragmatist who could make the possible acceptable. Fueled by the needs of others, and despite the setbacks and poverty he faced before and after the Olympics, Jesse Owens was a citizen of the world and a source of hope, inspiration, pride and determination to the millions who knew him or knew of him and his enduring accomplishments during his 66-year lifetime.

His work with young people reflected his relentless desire to share himself and what little material wealth he had with others. As he once said, "It behooves a man with God-given ability to stand ten feet tall. You never know how many youngsters may be watching." In his way, Jesse Owens was equally the champion on the playgrounds of the poorest neighborhoods as he was on the oval of the Olympic games.

State of Alabama
Governor’s Office
Montgomery 36130

June 29, 1996

Dear Friends,

As Governor of the state of Alabama, I am pleased to welcome you to the dedication of the Jesse Owens Memorial Park—a tribute of pride to Jesse Owens, what he stood for, and the community he called home.

Today, the passing of the Olympic Torch in Oakville will signify a new historic moment and a rebirth of an old one, as we take time to honor a great Alabamian and Olympian, Jesse Owens, while we mark the beginning of the 1996 Olympic Games. It will also be a pivotal time in our state’s history, as we share in this once-in-a-lifetime event for a memorial that recognizes the greatness of a past citizen and inspires dreams of achievement for future generations.

Combined with the dedication ceremony, the passing of the Torch acts like a flame of freedom for all time, just as Jesse’s competitiveness served as a light of hope to the oppressed of his era. He achieved success against enormous odds, and we can face the challenges of today by again instilling a spirit of patriotism in the hearts of Americans. Therefore, we voice our goal through the Jesse Owens Memorial Park.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Governor
# The Modern Olympic Games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Olympiad</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Host City</th>
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<td>III</td>
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<td>XXVII</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
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Who will be carrying the Olympic torch through your area?

1. Audie Clement and Don Curtis Grissom carried the torch Friday in Huntsville. Here are today's runners:

2. Joshua White, 6:44-6:47 a.m., passes Calhoun Community College drive-in and entrance to office complex (Huntsville).

3. Lane Barnes, 6:49-8:43 a.m., Alabama 20 West (U.S. 31) at Westchester Road in Madison.

4. Katie Harris, 8:43-8:47 a.m., Alabama 20 West (U.S. 31) in Madison.

5. Bruce Jones, 8:47-6:50 a.m., Alabama 20 West (U.S. 31) in Madison.


8. Angelina Nazarellas, 8:57-9:01 a.m., Stop light sign, enter Limestone County and cross County Line Road.

9. Lisa Montgomery, 8:15-8:18 a.m., Alabama 20 West (U.S. 31) picks up Torch at Day Park and slants across causeway.


13. Megan Henson, 9:29-9:32 a.m., runs the length of the Tennessee River bridge (Decatur).


15. Anita Pate, 9:34-9:37 a.m., Church Street, past Wheel Lake Marina, walk Ferry and Oak streets to Court Street (Decatur).


17. Tara Taylor, 9:43-9:45 a.m., from Cherry Street to Morgan County Courthouse steps for a 15-minute break.

18. Frank DeFulvia, 10:03-10:05 a.m., from courthouse onto Second Avenue Southwest in Moulton Square.

19. Kevin Hall, 10:05-10:08 a.m., from Moulton Street to the Gordon Drive overpass.

20. Charles Langham, 10:08-10:11 a.m., from Gordon Drive overpass to Second Avenue Southwest.

21. Lyn Cullman, 10:11-10:14 a.m., passes Cullman Center.

22. Jordan Handcock, 10:14-10:14 a.m., on Gordon Drive from Second Avenue to Fourth Avenue.

23. John Henderson, 10:15-10:21 a.m., on Moulton Street West from 11th Avenue to Westgate Shopping Center.

24. Reenie White, 11:25-11:29 a.m., Alabama 157, pass McDonald's, Win White and Western Sibley Steak House. (Moulton)

25. Clyde Gooch, 11:29-11:32 a.m., on Alabama 157 West, passes through the length of the Tennessee River bridge (Decatur).


29. Chad Smith, 12:45-12:49 a.m., Lawrence County 187, passes Oakville Indian Mounds and Museum Park (Oakville).

30. Neal Hall, 12:49-12:53 a.m., Lawrence County 187, passes Oakville Indian Mounds Museum Park (Oakville).

31. Jesse Owens' grandson Stuart Owens Rankin of Boston, 12:47-12:52 p.m., Lawrence County 157, carries Torch into the Jesse Owens Memorial Park on Lawrence County 203, pass baseball diamond and to the edge of Oakville.

32. Mark Turner, 1:22 p.m., stitch stage leg, Oakville.

33. James Pate and Toran White, 1:27 p.m., exit of park, down Lawrence County 203 to Alabama 157.

34. Steve Woodard, Jr., 1:27 p.m., Lawrence County 157, Oakville.

35. Susan Driver, 1:34-1:40 p.m., Oakville, Lawrence County 203 to Alabama 157.

36. Charles Friedeburg, 2:12-2:19 p.m., Moss Terry Funeral Home. Cullman Marble and Concrete. (Cullman)


38. Mark Witten, Sunday, pass Texaco on Helena Road and Moss Greek Pizza (Pelham).
The torch is here

Torch schedule
The Olympic torch spent Friday night at the Holiday Inn in Decatur and was driven back to the Space and Rocket Center to begin today’s run. Here is the schedule.

Today
6:30 a.m. — Departs Huntsville Space and Rocket Center.
6:35 — crosses stop sign after i-565.
6:42 — turns right on Wynn.
6:51 — passes Redstone Federal Credit Union.
6:53 — turns left on Bradford Drive.
6:55 — turns right on Motorola Drive.
7:10 — turns right onto front drive of Motorola.
7:11 — bears left, turns right onto Bradford Drive.
7:19 — turns left onto Rideout Road.
7:33 — turns left on Old Madison Pike Road.
7:53 — turns right onto Alabama 20.
7:54 — passes Teledyne Technologies entrance.
8:02 — crosses Slaughter Road.
8:08 — passes Wyly Laboratories.
8:09 — passes Madison City Limits.
8:22 — crosses Hughes Road, Texaco.
8:28 — crosses railroad tracks.
8:35 — crosses Wall Triana Highway.
8:47 — passes ABC Beverage.
9:00 — enters Limestone County.
9:01 — crosses County Line Road.
9:02 — merges onto i-565.
9:05 — passes Greenbrier Road.
9:07 — passes Mooresville Road.
9:10 — passes i-65.
9:10 — enters Decatur city limits.
9:11 — i-565 ends.
9:15 — passes Day Park.
9:16 — passes stoplight at Keller Memorial Bridge.
9:24 — passes end of bridge.
9:35 — turns right on Church Street North.
9:36 — crosses Oak Street.
9:41 — turns left on Bank Street.
9:44 — turns left on Lee Street.
9:48 — arrives Morgan County Courthouse, break begins.

Brandon Key of Hazel Green waves his American flag as Ed Ricco bikes the Olympic torch into Alabama.

Torchbearer ready to begin Decatur run

By Paul Huggins
DAILY Staff Writer

You might think sleeping would be difficult for the torchbearers hours before taking charge of one of the most respected symbols in modern history.

Not so, says Lisa Montgomery, who receives the flame at Day Park at about 9:15 this morning, starting the first Decatur leg across the causeway. Today’s trek starts at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville at 6:30.

"To tell you the truth, it’s been so long in anticipating it, that I don’t think it’s really sunk in that it’s actually finally going to be here. I think maybe when I put the uniform on in the morning that’s probably when it will really hit me."

Though Mrs. Montgomery runs regularly, she said she’s a little nervous. "I just hope I don’t trip over my feet or drop it. It’s like when you’re graduating high school and you pick up your diploma, you always think you’re going to trip going up the stairs or something," she said.
Owens park 'marvelous,' says daughter of legend

By Lesley Farrey Pacey
DAILY Staff Writer

MOULTON — Jesse Owens’ oldest daughter admits 60 years is a long time to wait for hometown recognition of her Olympic hero father.

But joy replaced any disappointment Gloria Owens Hemphill felt when she and four generations of Owens’ relatives arrived here.

"It's absolutely marvelous," Mrs. Hemphill, of Chicago, said of Lawrence County’s effort to build the $1.5 million, 17.5-acre memorial park for her father, the son of a Lawrence County sharecropper who won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, shattering Adolf Hitler’s myth of Aryan supremacy.

"It is so beautiful and the community spirit behind this just floored me. From the moment we left Birmingham, I just felt so engulfed in love. I feel so much a part of this community and I’ve never been here."

Mrs. Hemphill, her family and friends were at home Friday morning at a back-yard breakfast at park project coordinator James Pinion’s home. They sat under willow trees, autographed programs and talked about their first glimpse of Alabama and the park.

Relatives are guests of honor at today’s ceremony where Owens’ widow Ruth Owens will light a 1936 torch replica that will burn eternally. A 14-foot bronze statue of Owens will be at the park.

The family of Olympic medalist Jesse Owens posed for this portrait. Family members include, front row, Sylvester Owens, brother; Gloria Owens Hemphill, daughter; Beverly Owens Prather, daughter; Ruth Owens, widow; Marlene O. Rankin, daughter, and behind her Stuart Owen Rankin, grandson.

In case the flame is accidentally extinguished, the mother flame that travels with the torch relay caravan can be used to re-light the torch.

As the flame approaches Keller Memorial Bridge, dozens of boats are expected to announce the arrival by sounding their horns and releasing about 500 helium balloons. It’s just a hint of what lies ahead.

Friday night, under the direction of Larry Counts, general manager of Balloons Above, about 23 volunteers worked feverishly for more than three hours to inflate 3,000 balloons to be distributed between 8 and 9.

It’s the largest single-day inflation job Counts said he’s ever done. The major logistical problems are time and heat, he said. "The biggest thing going against us is the lifetime of the balloon. They have about 20 to 24 hours of float time.”

They were stored inside the air-conditioned Robinson building.

Please see Owens, page A7
Owens
Continued from page A1

Owens breaking through Olympic rings will be unveiled and the family will walk through a replica of Owens' childhood home. "It will mean so much to everyone," said Ruth Owens, 81, who came to Birmingham in 1978 when her husband was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame but visited Oakville for the first time Thursday. "And for the grandchildren it will be wonderful. It will be something for me to completely retire on."

Stuart Owen Rankin, 23, who resembles his famous grandfather, will run the torch into the park today. The Harvard Law School employee from Boston was impressed by the park's 14-foot bronze statue of his grandfather and the replica home. "It's a far cry from what was across the road," said Rankin, referring to the two granite monuments and bridge built out in 1983 to mark Owens' birthplace.

Most of the family has never been in Alabama and this is a time to relive old images with new ones. "We've been talking for awhile about coming to the Owens Memorial 10K Run," said Stuart Owen Rankin Sr. of Chicago. "Probably after this experience we will come down. Everyone has been so wonderful I feel we owe it to them -- and ourselves -- to come back."

Mrs. Hemphill says the park effort is a testimonial to her father's faith in humankind. "It speaks to my dad's philosophy that we are all one race -- the human race -- and if we all work together what a wonderful, wonderful place this would be.

"Young people on the Johnson family who had headed an intercessory prayer committee the past two years are the park's reality."

Mrs. Hemphill said her father, who died in 1980, wouldn't have said anything about the recognition being so late. "It is not something you walk around expecting," said the executive director of the Jesse Owens Foundation in Chicago, "if it happens it's wonderful, but it is not something you expect people to do for you. I think it is great it is happening and I admire the people who have really given it their all to make this happen."

Owens' middle daughter, Beverly Owens Prather, 58, said, "Living in this world as long as I have, you realize what people are and you accept people for what they are and as they say, everything comes in its own time. And it's just sad to think that we had to have it this late, but thank God it has happened."

Mrs. Hemphill said the park is special because it honors her father and provides recreation, education and hope for young people. "Children who see the sharecropper's house alongside the Owens' sculpture will realize "they can rise to this.

"It is very important to see life is not hopeless. That the world is their oyster. We have to give them hope. I want them to see that my father did this. That he had this in his gut and he succeeded." She said she has a message in the park being built. "It is more than just a park and more than just a statue. It gives meaning to one's life and one's life work. It shows people that although it took 60 years for this to happen, it happened."

While Owens got worldwide recognition for his athletic and humanitarian achievements, he was largely forgotten in his hometown. "I didn't realize Owens was from Oakville -- not until the controversy came up," said Lawrence County Commissioner Jim Corum whose district includes Oakville.

The late state Rep. Roger Dutton in 1983 attempted to get a monument to Owens on the courthouse lawn, but an all-white Lawrence County Commission blocked it. That decision led to its placement in Oakville. A chest-high granite monument was erected on a half-acre plot. The only other markers of Owens' birthplace were a small granite monument bearing the wrong birth date and a brick display case filled with faded Owens memorabilia.

Other struggles followed. Residents of this predominantly black town chanted away vandals who wrapped a chain around the new granite monument, trying to rip it from the ground. The incident left chips still visible today. The biggest struggle was money. The park site was acquired in 1989 when White matched a $15,000 grant with $2,600 from his pocket, and asked Finion for his help. "The Olympics and the torch coming through here, were the catalyst for corporate and government funds to complete the park."

"Owens' only living sibling among nine children, 87-year-old Sylvester Owens, has memories here, among them working fields and sleeping on the floor. Sylvester Owens also remembers prejudice. "There was so much animosity between the races," he said. "And now today, you can go anywhere you like and you can do what you like..."

Surrounded by family here, Sylvester Owens said his brother would be one of the most proud followers in the world that people thought enough of him to do this."

Run
Continued from page A1

Friday night because the heat would cause the latex to expand releasing the helium even faster. But today, "the heat will help us because it causes the gas to expand."

When Mrs. Montgomery receives the flame, the celebration will have been under way for more than an hour. Crowds in the thousands are expected to attend today's event, and the relay planning committee has set up entertainment through-out the morning.

From 8 to 11, simultaneous performances will be at Founder's Park (Morgan County area band), Princess Theater (Encore) and Westgate Shopping Center (30-member youth choir).

The Bank Street Players were scheduled to perform at the corner of Gordon Drive and Second Avenue but a guitarist was suddenly called out of town and it was too late to get another group.

At 5:20, the mayor will unveil the Olympic Commemorative monument at Founder's Park and issue a proclamation encouraging all citizens to celebrate the message of the Olympic flame and uphold its ideals.

The torch relay caravan will stop at the Morgan County Courthouse at about 9:45 allowing the crew to take a 15-minute break. While the flame rests on the courthouse's second-floor landing, Encore will perform from the courthouse steps.

A reserved grandstand for Olympic Torch Relay officials and sponsors will be set up at Founder's Park. A public grandstand will be at Second Avenue at Moultin Street Southeast.

A souvenir truck will be traveling with the caravan selling T-shirts, pins, mugs, and other items. No private vendors will be allowed to sell near the relay route.

After making its way west of Decatur, through Trinity on Alabama 24 and Moulton on Alabama 24 and Alabama 157, the torch will lead to Oakville.

Gov. Bob James will be at Oakville to greet the torch when it is carried into the Jesse Owens Memorial Park by Owens' grandson, Stuart Owen Rankin, at about 12:40 p.m.

A sculpture of Owens will be unveiled and the late Olympic hero's wife will light the eternal flame, which is replica of the Olympic torch. Entertainment and food are planned throughout the day.

Members of the Olympic caravan will have lunch in the park and will depart about 1:20 en route to Limestone County on Alabama 157.

Limestone torch bearer Ausie Clement, who is disabled, was excused after dually carrying the Olympic flame.

"It was exhilarating for me, seeing the person that was bringing the torch to me. We did a high-reach to light it, we shook hands and I walked my part. It was beautiful to see all the people along the way saying, 'Go USA' and waving flags," he said.

Limestone County Agent Curtis Grisson, who carried the torch in Huntsville, agreed. "It was exhilarating. The most exciting part was to see the people participating. The crowd was tremendous. They cheered you on and made you want to soak it all up."
The making of a hero

Born James Cleveland Owens in Oakville, he was called J.C. by his family. Later, his friends in Cleveland, Ohio, turned J.C. into Jesse. The name stuck.

Although Oakville is in Lawrence County, many Olympic histories such as Sports Illustrated's 1996 edition of "The Complete Book of the Summer Olympics" refer to Owens being born in Danville, which is in Morgan County.

The error may result from the way mail is delivered. Even today Oakville residents have a Danville mailing address.

Despite his fame for winning four Olympic gold medals, Owens didn't make money off his success the way athletes do now. There were no promotional opportunities, especially for a black man in 1936.

Kurt Freudenthal remembers well the first time he saw Jesse Owens compete. It was in 1936 at the Olympics in Berlin, and Freudenthal, then 15, and three or four friends had tickets to watch the track and field events, which meant they would see Owens reach one of the benchmarks of his career.

He would see Owens build part of a legacy that has made him a memorable athlete to many even 60 years later.

By 1936, everybody in Europe knew who Jesse Owens was, Freudenthal said. "In Europe, they're more track-conscious than in the United States. So Jesse Owens was a household name - especially in my house."

"Watching him perform was magical. I saw him win the 100 meters, the long jump and another gold medal in the 400-meter relay. We didn't have tickets for when he won the 200. Before he ran, you knew something magical would happen.

"Freudenthal and his family left Germany a couple of years later. He lived in Indianapolis and spent 33 years as the sports editor of the United Press International's Indiana bureau.

"He was such a rare athlete," he said. "He was so ahead of his time. I believe that if he were competing today with the improvements in equipment, diet and training, I don't think anybody could touch him - not even Carl Lewis."

"Filmmaker Bud Greenspan learned plenty about Owens' Olympic legacy in 1964 when he did a documentary on his life.""Jesse Owens was a pioneer in and out of the arena," Greenspan said from his Canny Productions offices in New York. "In 1936, he competed in the Olympics in Nazi Germany. This was two months after German boxer Max Schmeling defeated Joe Louis.

"Adolf Hitler proclaimed that victory a victory for Aryan supremacy. But Jesse Owens put all that to shame.

"Auburn track and field coach Harvey Glance shared a relationship with Owens, too. Glance competed in three Olympics and won a gold medal in the 400-meter relay in 1976. Glance respected Owens' talent, and Owens respected Glance's. In an article done for The Sporting News in the late 1970s, Owens listed Glance as one of the 10 fastest men alive.

"But Glance idolized Owens for what he meant off the track as much as he meant on it. "He was a role model for me," Glance said. "He had a kindness for kids, public speaking and children's programs. He was a good person. On the field, he motivated me just as much."
To make ends meet, he raced against horses and once made $2,000 in Havana, Cuba, for such a race. He didn’t like being a sideshow. “It was worse than sharecropping,” he wrote in his autobiography. He eventually prospered in public relations and as an inspirational speaker.

The 1936 Olympics were held in Berlin while the Nazi Party and its evil leader, Adolf Hitler, were in power. He believed the Germans were a master race and referred to African-American athletes like Owens as the United States’ “black auxiliaries.”

When German Hans Wellecke won the first gold medal of the Games in the shot put and countryman Gerhard Stöck placed third, they were invited to Hitler’s private box to be congratulated. Other athletes were honored similarly. But when Germans were eliminated in the high jump later in the day, Hitler left his box and wasn’t around when Americans Cornelius Johnson, Dave Allenton and Delos Thurber swept the medals. Johnson and Allenton both were black.

Count Basie-Latour, president of the International Olympic Committee, told Hitler to honor all winners if he was going to honor some. Hitler responded that he would congratulate German winners in private of the rest of the Games. Thus, Hitler was following a directive when he never congratulated Owens in person.

One German became Owens’ friend. When Owens fouled on his first two attempts in the long jump qualifying, Germany’s Carl Ludwig “Lutz” Long suggested by American jump several inches behind the taped line on his final attempt. Owens took the advice and qualified by a centimeter. In the finals, Owens cleared 56 feet, 5.5 inches to defeat Long for the gold medal. Long congratulated Owens as Hitler watched.

Sadly, Long died fighting for Germany’s Jews in World War II during the Battle of St. Pietro on July 14, 1943.

Standing the test of time

How Olympic gold medal performances in the 1936 Berlin Games and 1992 Barcelona Games compared:

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<th>Event</th>
<th>1936 Berlin</th>
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Owens has his day in the sun

By Lesley Farrey Pacey
DAILY Staff Writer

OAKVILLE — A lifelong friend of Jesse Owens told a crowd that a park dedication for the Olympic great Saturday means a new day for racial harmony in Alabama.

"Today by dedicating this memorial to the memory of the world's most famous track and field Olympic athlete, the people of Alabama are taking that first step in the journey of a thousand miles leading toward the objective of creating a genuine color blind paradise on earth," said Melvin Walker, one of Owens' black teammates at Ohio State University.

Atlanta 1996

The $1.5 million park in Owens' hometown comes 60 years after he won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics shattering Adolf Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy.

But Walker, 81, of Chicago, said the dedication came when the time was right.

Five years ago an interracial park committee began working to build the 17.5-acre park and earlier struggles like an all-white county

Please see Owens, page A7

Ruth Owens shows her pleasure when the statue of her late husband Jesse was unveiled at Oakville.
Owens
Continued from page A1

Commission's refusal in 1983 to allow a monument on the courthouse lawn were passed.

Blacks and whites gathered in the 90 degree heat and celebrated the moment that brought four generations of the Olympic hero's family to the park and put them on the same stage with Gov. Fob James and U.S. Rep. Tom Bevill, D-Jasper. The Ohio State public relations director Reggie Anglin who arrived with memorabilia.

"The fact is Jesse Owens represents more than a great athlete," Bevill told the crowd estimated at 7,500 people by Chief Deputy Jim Martin.

The crowd surged around her as she unveiled a 14-foot bronze sculpture of her husband breaking through the Olympic rings sculpted by Branko Medenica of Birmingham. Then she lit a permanent replica of the 1936 torch at the park.

"I feel like Princess Di," Ruth Owens, Jesse Owens' widow, after signing autographs.

Leon Graham, 75, of Florence told her. "He was a great inspiration for all of us in Alabama, the United States and the world."
Thousands see flame, throughout the Valley,
Emotion

Continued from page A1

Decatur lawyer Arthur Orr, who passed the torch to Calhoun Community College baseball coach Gary Redus at 9:25 a.m., discovered a surprise during his run to the north edge of Keller Memorial Bridge.

His sister, Blythe Bowman, and a group of 10 friends and family members were wearing bright blue T-shirts that read, “Run, Sunshine, Run.”

“Arthur’s a quiet, contemplative person, so calling him ‘Sunshine’ is kind of sarcastic but in a nice way,” Ms. Bowman said. “He saw us cheering us when he was running. “It was fun, and we’re proud of him.”

Torchbearer Frank DeButy has seen plenty of large crowds in his 19 years with the Decatur Police Department.

Saturday surprised him.

The lieutenant, who carried the flame from the Morgan County Courthouse to Second Avenue Northeast to Moulton Street, had difficulty estimating the number of people who watched in Decatur.

“It’s more than I’ve ever seen,” DeButy said. “I’ve never seen anything close to the number for any function in Decatur. “There were thousands.”

Eighteen-year-old torchbearer Jay Boles received a hero’s welcome as he waited on the flame at 10:10 a.m. Long lines of spectators stood several rows deep in front of Westgate Shopping Center on Moulton Street.

“This is amazing — I must have signed a hundred autographs,” said the recent Grissom High graduate, who bicycled the torch from Westgate to the city of Moulton.

“I didn’t think this many people would show up.”

Pedaling the torch, which was affixed behind his bicycle seat, 18 miles to Moulton in almost 90-degree weather was no problem for Boles.

Boles, winner of last year’s Alabama Junior Road Race championship, pedals 50 miles every other day. But those 18 miles Saturday won’t soon be forgotten, he said.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience,” Boles said. “It’s overwhelming to do this.”

Moulton’s Tony Peeples and his sons watched the torch pass on Alabama 24 in All-American fashion.

They were on horseback and wearing cowboy boots.

Peeples, sons 12-year-old Tony Paul and 6-year-old Dave, and family friend Jeff Pettee rode horses from the Peeples’ house and waited an hour and a half for the Olympic procession.

“The Olympic torch is in our neck of the woods, and riding is what we do every weekend, anyway,” explained Peeples, an owner/operator truck driver and part-time horse breeder.

“This was some kind of exciting” said Peeples, peering from under a red, white and blue baseball cap.

“I almost caught enough American spirit to gallop up to the torch and take it all the way to Moulton myself.”

Peeples and his group were only a part of the practically unbroken string of spectators lining Alabama 24 from Decatur to Moulton.

Chief deputy Jim Martin estimated 5,000 people lined the route through the city.

“Yep, the torch was moving to watch,” said Tony Paul. “Neat.”

The day’s largest crowd gathered at Jesse Owens Memorial Park in Oakville, where at 7,500 people watched Owens’ grandson Stuart Owen Rankin carry the torch.

Leonard Hampton, a 33-year-old Hillsboro native, chose to ignore his camcorder as Rankin made his way the podium, raised the torch to several minutes of applause and lit the replica of the Olympic cauldron.

Instead of recording the event on video, Hampton sweated as he held his 6-year-old son Blake, 4-year-old daughter Brea and 6-year-old niece Kanesha in a bearing high enough so the youngsters could watch Rankin approach the podium around 1 p.m.

“I wanted them to see it with their own eyes because they may not get another chance,” Hampton said. “At least want to get it in their minds of seeing this happening.”

Decatur native Erica Allen almost came to tears watching Rankin wave the Olympic flame 60 years after Owens crushed Adolf Hitler’s idea of Aryan supremacy at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

“I feel this is an honor for all people, but especially for black people,” said Ms. Allen, who is black and has three sons and daughter ranging from 2 to 17 years old.

“Watching it moved me, because it’s Jesse Owens’ grandson and because it’s important for young black boys to see a young black man do something in a positive manner,” she said.

“It was just beautiful.”

After leaving Lawrence County and briefly re-entering Morgan County, the torch passed by motorcycle along Alabama 157 into Cullman County at 2:01 p.m.

The torch’s final miles in Morgan County, capping a five-hour journey from Madison County, drew only a smattering of spectators. But a large outpouring of Cullman residents was only minutes away.

Where more patriotism and more pride awaited.
Torch
Continued from page A1

speaking to the crowd gathered at Founder's Park at the end of Bank Street.

Price read a proclamation and dedicated an Olympic Flame Commemorative monument, while the Morgan County area band played patriotic music filling everyone's anticipation.

At about 9:30, the crowd started to cheer as the long relay caravan led Jeremy Gectner down Church Street and onto Bank Street.

There, a few young future entrepreneurs were selling pink lemonade for 50 cents a glass. They sold more than 36 glasses in the first 50 minutes.

Rae Gillen, 8, said "It's just fun watching the people go by."

Though her partner, Melissa Jefferson, may have more opportunities to see an Olympic torch pass by, the 12-year-old said she still considered the day a "once in a lifetime" chance: "It's really special seeing the Olympics start right here in Decatur," she said.

Though temperatures hadn't reached the 90s, the Big Brothers/Big Sisters vending booth at the corner of Lee Street and Second Avenue had sold more than 250 bottles of Coke in less than 1½ hours.

The relay caravan stopped at the Morgan County Courthouse for a 15-minute break, and runners who already carried the flame were met with bunches of well-wishers wanting their picture taken with the torch. All gladly obliged including Cathy Smith of Huntsville.

"It's something people don't get to see very often, so it's good to share," she said Monday night that she could carry the torch while riding a motorcycle from the Morgan-Limestone County line to Day Park.

It became even more special when she discovered she would receive the flame from her former teacher at Athens State College, Angie Nacarian.

"It definitely was a Kodak moment," Mrs. Smith said.

In his 83 years, Wesley Hoskins of Decatur said seeing the flame go by was one of his most memorable moments. "It's wonderful. I've never seen anything like it," he said. "The kids who said they didn't know if she wanted to come back here were just excited. I wanna go home!"

"We saw one lady who said she didn't know if she wanted to come out here but once the torch went by she started to cry," she said. "That's what we're doing it for."

Mrs. Weaver added, "This was just another chance for our children to see a little part of history." Mrs. Martin added, "Perhaps it will inspire everybody in the morning before the flame even arrived. We're all going to carry away something very special memories."

Torchbearers included: Mrs. Weaver, Betty Weaver; Kelly Short; Jerri Hiet; Belinda Lavender; and Melissa Jefferson.

The Jesse Owens Memorial Park Visitors Center, sponsored by DAILY Publisher Barrett C. Shelton Jr., was a popular spot for those seeking a little shade.

Decatur Police Lt. Frank DeBaty carries the torch up Second Avenue Southeast from the Morgan County Courthouse.
History visits Oakville

Grandson of Owens sprints with torch high

By Clyde L. Stancil

OAKVILLE — The crowd cheered when Stuart Owen Rankin ran past with the Olympic torch held high.

Rankin, the grandson of Olympic great Jesse Owens, sprinted to the Owens Memorial Park stage accompanied by his escort runner. The scene must have looked like a bracelet to 6-year-old Jackie Wolfe of Hartsville.

"Mama, mama who won?" he asked.

Many of the younger children in the crowd didn't know what they were celebrating or who Owens was, but they knew it was important and fun.

"We're here to celebrate Olympic Day," said Kezina Stevenson, a member of the Oakville relay team.

A crowd of 2,000 by Lawrence County Chief Deputy Jim Martin turned the 19-degree bend to witness the dedication of Owens' park and the Olympic Torch Relay. The day's high was 32.

Rankin was ecstatic and his pace faster than most torchbearers as he arrived with the flame at about 12:50 p.m.

"It was a tremendous honor," he said. "I was very happy to be a part of the whole thing. It's just grand to be here."

Sabrina Smithsonian of Tuscaloosa cleaned her home before waking her sons early Saturday.

"We've got to go," she told her sons, after working the 3 a.m. to 11 p.m. shift the previous day. "We're not going to get a chance to see history being made."

A current member of the Olympic team thought watching another sprinter enshrined in his hometown was worth a training break.

Sprinter Steve's story.

The crowd was filled with the excitement of athletes slowly making their way toward me. Lights flashing — it crept ever closer.

A motorcyclist on the torchbearer stage preceded the caravan and mimicked up to extinct the propane filled torch in my hand. The torch flashed, including gas steadily, as I walked on Sylvia Matthews, who was advancing to light my torch. Sylvia, a mother through the years of over 80 foster children and still going strong, is dedicated, with her husband, to providing a loving home for any child in need.

Sylvia approached slowly — walking with the torch held high and a large smile on her face. She called out loudly as she drew near, "Arthur, are you ready?" Responding affirmatively, I stepped forward a few steps and took her torch in both hands. As we joined torches wherein one flame became two. Smiling broadly still, she pushed me on the track and urged me forward as I turned to carry the Olympic flame the next several hundred yards.

As I turned, however, I heard a bystander say, "Get going here," in a light-hearted manner.

"Here?" There it was again. That word. Ever since I had been named a local torchbearer, the word or label seemed to follow me. Sometimes brought up in jest, sometimes in true admiration. Sometimes
an alternate for the 400 meter race, was at the dedication.

Ms. Stevens is a five-time winner of the Jesse Owens Classic 400 meter race and was a silver medalist on the 1992 Olympic 4x400 meter relay. She also finished sixth in the 400 meter.

The fiancee of Pierre Goode, she was supporting the torch run of her future brother-in-law Clyde Goode III of Town Creek.

"It's great to be here and (Owens) is a great role model," she said. "I think the dedication is great and hopefully one day I can get a memorial park in my honor, and maybe a statue too."

Before Rankin sprinted into Oakville's history, the mid-morning crowd streamed into the 17-acre park, with some 5,000 people arriving by shuttle bus, according to Sheila Bishop who headed the public transportation effort. Others parked on roadsides and walked in.

People strolled across the acres of baked red clay and new Bermuda grass, calling to acquaintances, buying memorabilia and listening to vocal groups.

They visited the replica house of Owens' birth which Sylvester Owens said was better than the one where the family lived. Now 87, he spent the morning in the park. A welcome center offered the only air-conditioning but some sought refuge from the sun within the unfinished museum.

Children played a game of tug-of-war and women played softball on the park's diamond.

Umbrellas were the shade trees that were missing. People wore wide-brimmed hats, baseball caps and even towels for protection against the sun.

"It was very hot and I've enjoyed it," said Ray Walker of Moulton. "But now I'm ready to go home and cool off."

Empty plastic bottles littered the grounds, a testament to the Coca-Cola patrons bought to quench their thirsts.

Cola. The litter is no problem, said Owens Park committee member Henry Buchanan. Members of the Limestone Correctional Facility chain gangs will be here Monday to clean up the mess, he said.

Some vendors said the excitement was an appetite stimulant.

Kirksey Emu Farm co-owner Robert Kirksey had a good day selling his exotic Emu burgers.

"Sales are good," he said. "Everybody likes them and thinks they are just like beef."

Jo Raley sells funnel cakes and ice cream from D and J Concessions. She said sales were slow because the event was too scattered.

"We had a good crowd here, but Heat didn't dissuade the crowd waiting for the torch to arrive at Oakville.

Kyosha Yarbrough and her grandmother Jacqueline seeks shelter from the sun as they wait for the torch to arrive at Jesse Owens Memorial Park.

"I think the event speaks for itself." said Mark Taylor, an Oakville native now living in Madison. "It took a long time, but it's here and I'm enjoying the events. It's a great thing to see the torch coming through Alabama and through this little town called Oakville."
Ruth Owens lights the replica Olympic torch at the Jesse Owens Museum with the help of her daughter, Beverly Prather.

Support for the torch bearers came from all sections, including these unidentified supporters who rode alongside bearers as they moved from Day Park to Decatur.

Olympian Rochelle Stevens and Pierre Goode during ceremonies at Jesse Owens Memorial Park in Oakville.
January 24, 1997

Mr. George B. Allison  
Bureau of Environmental Services  
572 E. Patton Avenue  
Montgomery, Alabama 36111

Dear Mr. Allison:

It was very thoughtful of you to give to the Archives the photos and newspaper clippings concerning the Jesse Owens Memorial Park. These will be added to our collection.

By the way, we have been working with Mr. Pinion and the Owens family in this project.

Did we meet this fall when I made a presentation to the OSU Alumni Club in Birmingham? I do visit clubs and give a slide presentation concerning the history of OSU.

Sincerely,

Raimund E. Goerler, Ph.D.  
University Archivist / Associate Professor

REG:me
Honor
Continued from page C1

During the relay, each torchbearer may choose an exchange partner to hold a flag next to him or her, signifying the approaching runner who receives the flame.

If he wanted a group of kids who have benefited from the program to join him, "Now that would really make me feel good. Without them I wouldn't have gotten this honor."  

Lil' Peace Royalty, 40, head of the Decatur police narcotics unit and a Special Olympics and Mental Health Association volunteer, said he wanted his kids to carry the torch and be part of its rich tradition.

"Holy cow. That are starting in Greece. I remember studying that in Latin class in high school. To wrap my hands around something that is that pretty special.

The runners were notified of their selection in February about the same time as the list was announced. John Henderson, 29, director of field services with the Day Scouts and a deacon at 16th Avenue Baptist Church, said he had been shot in the face for a few days at the time and was ready to get out.

His wife, Sarah, said a UPS truck drove up their driveway and "The first thing he said to me was 'What did you order now?'" It turned out the truck was delivering the letter, notifying him of his selection.

"I had cabin fever," Henderson said, defending himself.

He said he thought he could handle the situation but the patriotic feelings were starting to catch fire. "I think the closer it gets to the time to run — the more special it gets.

Gerald Turner, 42, who helped to organize relief efforts for disaster victims of the 1995 tornado in Joplin and 1994 flood in Greene and others before, said he was having a hard time trying to accept the honor.

But discovering he would carry the torch off the stage in Jessie Owens Park, where Saturday's celebration reaches a zenith while blowing me away, I had to call Allints and verify that I just couldn't believe it. "Saturday, it's probably going to be the biggest highlight of my life."

To keep Turner and the other torchbearers' memories warm, they've been given the option of purchasing the torch they carried for about $250.

Turner said he plans on donating his to Decatur High School where it will be displayed in memory of his older brother. Donald Turner, who was a star quarterback for the Real Raiders in the early '60s.

Or said his family would probably take it as a find for entertainment. "I can see the days when my grandchildren drag the torch out and show off to their friends saying 'This was the torch my grandpa used to light the big flame in Atlanta.'"

But Jones said he will have to do without his torch as "It's not in my budget this year, I'll just save the moment for the rest of my life."
“WALKING THROUGH the exhibition, I was struck by man’s capacity for hate, and how people can be swept along by it. Why can’t we have that same capacity for love?”

Marlene Owens Rankin
daughter of 1936 Olympics star Jesse Owens

HISTORY LESSON.
Barbara Barnhart (left) and Betty Walters of Canton look over the "Nazi Olympics” exhibition Sunday at the Canton Museum of Art.

WASHING WELCOME.
Sara Bloomfield, acting director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., greets visitors to the Canton Museum of Art on Sunday afternoon.


It was at the controversial Berlin games, presented by Adolf Hitler’s Nazi regime, that black American Owens made history by capturing four gold medals.

By DAN KANE
Repository entertainment writer

“While his accomplishments in and of themselves were phenomenal, they were made that much more so because of what was going on in Nazi Germany at the time,” Marlene Owens Rankin said. "Walking through the exhibition, I was struck by man’s capacity for hate, and how people can be swept along by it. Why can’t we have that same capacity for love?”

VISITING OLYMPIANS stress need to fight racism. / B-5

‘Nazi Olympics’ exhibition opens
Contemporary medalists view somber display
Olympics

CONTINUED FROM A-1

A touring exhibition from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., "The Nazi Olympics" had a resonance for the Olympic medalists who viewed it Sunday.

For Chandra Cheeseborough, a gold medalist at the 1984 Olympics, it brought back memories of 1980, when she was a member of the U.S. team that boycotted the Moscow games.

"It was something taken away from me," she recalled.

The Nazis' attempts to use the 1936 games as a tool for their propaganda inspired 1992 gold medalist Leroy Burrell to realize that "we have to vehemently fight against sports being used as a voice for ill will," he said.

Sara Bloomfield, acting director of the Holocaust museum, said the Nazi Olympics exhibition, which debuted in Washington, was conceived as "a sobering counterpoint" to the 1996 Atlanta games.

"Most people think of the Holocaust as gas chambers, but the genocide lasted from 1941 to 1945, and Hitler came to power eight years before that. Everything happened incrementally, and that's what this exhibit looks at."

Ms. Bloomfield, a Cleveland native, said she "can't believe what this city has done" in terms of programming events and student tours around the touring exhibition.

"Canton has set the standard," she said. "I am overwhelmed and touched."

U.S. Rep. Ralph Regula, R-Navarre, was instrumental in securing a Canton stop for the exhibition.

"The fact that (the Holocaust Museum) gets its funding from my (congressional) subcommittee had something to do with it," he said.

"I probably got the door open, but the people in the community really did the selling for the potential of having it here."

"In another 35 years, there won't be many people left who lived through World War II and the Holocaust," Regula said. "That's why it's so important to have a way of telling this story."

"We've got 90 days here to touch a lot of hearts and feelings," Neil Berro, director of the Canton Jewish Community Center said about the exhibition's local stay through July 12.

Berro was one of about 200 runners and walkers from the community who participated in a ceremonial torch run in Sunday's drizzle. The route ran from Malone College to the Cultural Center for the Arts. At the run's end, participants lined up to have their souvenir T-shirts signed by Ms. Rankin and the Olympic medalists.

The other Olympic medalists on hand at Sunday's event were Bill Collins, Joe DeLoach and Butch Reynolds.

Their attendance was arranged by Walter Henderson, executive director of the Stark County Community Action Agency, who as a runner qualified for the Olympic trials in 1972, '76 and '80. He explained that he invited track-and-field medalists in honor of Jesse Owens' accomplishments; Canton native Dave Wottle, a '72 gold medalist, was unable to attend.

While viewing the exhibition, Sarah Gibbs of Akron remarked, "Some things here are very eye-opening. I think it was really very strong of the Jewish athletes who chose not to be in these (Berlin) games."

After viewing the exhibition, Tom Flynn of Cleveland, remarked, "I don't think this country should have sent a team to Berlin. It was hypocritical on our part."
Summary: this brief biography of the black athlete who won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics was compiled by Historical Arts Museum, Historian Jeanette Alexander, a native of Lawrence County, Executive Director of Historical Arts Museum, 2807 Meridian Street, Huntsville, Alabama. Copies are available upon request.
JESSE OWENS

OLYMPIC HERO

James Cleveland Owens was born, on September 12, 1913, in a little shack in Oakville, Alabama. It looked like he would not have a chance even to live very long. There was no reason to imagine that this child would grow up to be the world’s fastest human.

Jesse’s first years were spent in Oakville, Alabama living in poverty in the same area that exist today. His father and mother, Henry and Emma Owens, were sharecroppers. They lived on a fifty-acre farm, where they grew cotton for Mr. John Clannon who owned the farm.

Mr. Clannon owned two hundred and fifty acres of land which was farmed by several families of sharecropper. The sharecroppers bought seeds-usually cotton seeds-from the land owner. Then he planted the seeds, raised the crop, and harvested it. When the crop was sold the land owner and the sharecropper shared the profit. Sharecropping may have sound like a fair arrangement, but it was not.

The sharecroppers were forced to buy food, clothing, seed, tools and every other necessity from the landowner. The owner figured up the amount owed to him at the end of the year. He subtracted that amount from the profit the sharecropper was suppose to have received. It worked out that what the sharecropper owed was more than what any profit made on the crops. Year by year, most sharecroppers got deeper and deeper into debt. This was a kind of poverty from which there was no escape. Sharecroppers who complained about the landowner’s bookkeeping were often told to pack up and move.

Like other sharecroppers, Jesse’s parents lived in constant fear of angering the landowner. These families knew that they were being cheated by Mr. Clannon, but there was nothing they could do. They were not able to read or do arithmetic, which meant they had no way to check Mr. Clannon’s numbers and store bills. Mr. and Mrs. Owens were lucky, they had six children who could work fields. James Cleveland’s nickname was J.C., who was a sickly and scrawny child who could not help much. His job in the family was just to live and try to get strong enough to do his share.
Every winter J.C. had pneumonia, he coughed and ran fevers throughout those winters but there was no medicine to give him, there were no doctor's in Oakville, even if there had been the Owens family could not afford to pay for medical bills. J.C.'s poor health did not improve because of his living conditions, the shack they lived in was made of cardboard and old wooden planks. When it rained the roof leaked, in cold weather ice winds blew right through the house.

Mr. Owens cooked the meals on a fireplace where the only heat in the house came from. The shack had no stove, no running water, no bathroom and hardly any furniture. During the winter nights Ms. Owens wrapped J.C. in a blanket and put him to sleep next to the fireplace.

Getting enough to eat was another problem. Ms. Owens had a tiny vegetable garden behind the shack. She planted potatoes, beans and corn in the garden which made up most of the family's meals. J.C.'s older brothers killed rabbits for meat on the table. The family bought all there other food at Mr. Clannon's store, this included the ham the Owens family had twice a year Easter and Christmas.

In 1919, J.C. was six years old and during this winter his health worsened, his pneumonia returned, he developed a large lump on his left leg, which made him limp and hardly walk at all. Mrs. Owens was afraid the infection would kill her son. Mrs. Owens had to cut into the lump and the cutting turned out to be a real good thing in which the leg healed.

J.C. ran and played a lot because he had no toys or games and no other children his age to play with. His brother and sisters were in the fields working along with their mother and father each day. J.C. did not go to school for there was no school for black children in Oakville.

Mr. Owens talked about escaping from the life of sharecropping by moving up north for a better life. J.C.'s parents were afraid because Oakville was the only home they had ever known. They had never traveled to the small town called Decatur, Alabama.

In 1921, two things finally happened to change the family's mind. J.C. had pneumonia again and Mr. Clannon decided to take a larger share of Mr. Owens sharecropping earnings. Mr. Owens protested but Mr. Clannon gave him a choice of accepting the terms or getting off the land.
The family chose Cleveland, Ohio, as their new home. They didn’t know anyone in Cleveland, but they had heard that it was a good place to live and work. In the spring of 1921, the Owens family packed their few belongings and took the Louisville and National Railroad north. When they arrived in Cleveland, they rented a small apartment in a three-story, wooden house on the east side of the city.

It was an exciting new world for young J.C. There were sidewalks, paved roads, and so many houses! People seemed to be everywhere. Why, their new apartment even had running water and electricity.

Best of all, J.C. started school. He was almost speechless with excitement on his first day at St. Clair’s Grammar School. When his teacher asked the shy little boy his name, he whispered, “J.C., Ma’am.” The teacher smiled, and said, “Welcome to the class, Jesse.” Young J.C. was so nervous, he did not correct the teacher. As a result, his name went onto the school records as Jesse Owens. He liked the sound of it, and he used that name for the rest of his life.

Jesse enjoyed school, learning to read and write and do arithmetic. He also was glad to have so many friends his own age. Jesse’s only regret was that he couldn’t play with them after school. Even when he was in grammar school, Jesse had to work to support his family.

Jesse’s health was better than it had been in Alabama, though he was still very thin. Despite Jesse’s skinniness, there was something about him that caught the eye of Coach Charles Riley—Jesse’s speed in schoolyard races during recess. Mr. Riley was the gym teacher at Jesse’s school, as well as the track coach at Fairmont Junior High School and at East Technical High School.

In the fall of 1923, Coach Riley asked ten-year-old Jesse if he would like to join the track team. Jesse was thrilled and said, “Yes!”

When Jesse was attending Fairmont Junior High School, he ran in his first interscholastic track meet. The best runners from all the junior high schools in Cleveland would be at that meet, and Jesse was nervous. But his nervousness disappeared the instant the starter’s gun sounded, and he won the hundred-yard dash by several yards.

While he was still in junior high school, Jesse took an important step toward Olympic glory. He ran the hundred-yard dash in ten seconds, and the time was so remarkable for someone his age that the race was reported in Cleveland newspapers the next day.
As a member of the East Technical High School track team, Jesse was the star in every dash and relay race. In addition, he began running the hurdles.

To race the hurdles, a runner must leap over a series of barriers. These barriers are slightly higher than three feet. Hurdling takes perfect timing in addition to speed, and Jesse quickly became a winner in this event, too.

Next, at the suggestion of Coach Riley, Jesse began working on the broad jump. In this event, now called the long jump, a competitor sprints toward a board set in the ground, lands one foot on the board, and leaps forward. The jump ends in a sandy area called the pit. The distance of a jump is measured from the takeoff board to where the jumper lands in the pit. Jesse soon became an outstanding broad jumper as well as a track star.

By 1933, Jesse Owens' reputation was statewide. That year, the National Interscholastic Championships Meet was to be held at the University of Chicago, in Illinois. Jesse was on edge. He was going against tough competition, in front of sportswriters and college coaches from all over the country.

What happened at that meet is now track-and-field history. Jesse Owens won the hundred-yard dash in 9.4 seconds, setting a world interscholastic record. He also won the 220-yard dash in 20.7 seconds, and the broad jump, with a leap of 24 feet, 9 and 5/8 inches. In the words of one sportswriter—it was an unprecedented triple.

A week later, Mr. Riley had good news for Jesse. Ohio State University would be glad to have Jesse enroll there. The school did not offer athletic scholarships. However, school officials would arrange jobs for Jesse to help him pay for his room, board, and tuition.

During his college years, Jesse Owens became known throughout the world. His greatest track performance was at the National Collegiate Track and Field Championships, held at the University of Michigan on May 25, 1935. On that one day, Jesse tied the world record for the hundred-yard dash. He set a new world record for the 220-yard low hurdles, and a new world record for the broad jump. His broad jump was so long that the record leap lasted for twenty-five years.
In 1936, Germany was ruled by the Nazis, whose leader was the dictator, Adolf Hitler. The Nazis believed that all other people were inferior to them. As the Olympic Games were about to begin, German newspapers called the black members of the American team inferior. This infuriated the ordinarily calm, even-tempered Owens.

All this was a preview of Jesse’s performance at the 1936 Olympic Games. In those Games, held in Berlin, Germany, Jesse Owens dominated the track-and-field action by winning four gold medals. He took first place in the hundred-meter dash and the two-hundred-meter dash, and ran the final anchor leg for the victorious four-by-one-hundred-meter relay team. Jesse’s fourth gold medal was awarded for his broad-jump victory. It was the victory he treasured the most, and he liked to tell why.

Jesse Owens won the broad jump with a record leap of 26 feet, 5 and 5/16 inches. It gained him the much-desired gold medal. He also gained a warm friendship that lasted until Luz Long was killed in battle during World War II.

Following the Olympics, Jesse Owens was given a hero’s welcome back in the United States. It began with a big parade in his honor in New York City. Everyone respected and admired the great athlete and fine young man. This respect and admiration continued for the rest of his life.

In his later years, Jesse Owens served on youth commissions and as a good-will ambassador for the U.S. State Department. He also remained involved in Olympic activities until he died, on March 30, 1980. The man known as “the world’s fastest human” was voted the greatest track performer of the first half of the twentieth century. Although Jesse Owens’ records have all been broken, his deeds are a permanent part of sports history!
April 21, 1999

Ms. Rebecca Gray
The Ohio State University
2700 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1046

Dear Ms. Gray:

On behalf of the United States Postal Service, I want to extend our appreciation to you for participating in the Celebrate The Century program.

I have enclosed a sample of the stamps and other philatelic products featuring the Jesse Owens stamp. We hope that you will find these items interesting and enjoyable.

Sincerely,

Kelly L. Spinks
Stamp Development

Enclosures
THE 1930s
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
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CLEVELAND, OH - SEPTEMBER 10, 1998

Music
Cats On Holiday

Welcoming Remarks & Introduction of
Master of Ceremonies
Don Peterson
District Manager
Cleveland Ohio

Master of Ceremonies
David Sidoni

National Anthem
Rocco Scotti

Remarks
Michael S. Coughlin
Deputy Postmaster General

Proclamation
Honorable Michael White
Mayor, Cleveland Ohio

Special Guests
Tim Daly
(The Voice of "Superman")
Dana Delany
(The Voice of "Lois Lane")

Official Dedication
Children of
United States Postal Service Employees

Honored Guests
Jack Larson
(Jimmy Olsen)

Joanne Siegel
(Wife of Superman Co-creator Jerry Siegel)

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Azeezaly S. Jaffer
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On May 25th, 1935, Jesse Owens became the fastest man in the world (breaking 3 world records and tying a 4th)—even though he had fallen down the stairs and hurt his back the night before! A year later, at the international games, Adolph Hitler was hoping to prove the German athletes were better than any others. But Owens showed him (and the world!) that they really weren't, by walking away with an incredible 4 gold medals!

Owens' father named him J.C., but his friends in school began calling him Jesse, and it stuck.
By 1933 the average wage was 60 percent less than in 1929 and unemployment had skyrocketed to 25 percent. Dust storms forced many farmers to give up their land. Americans escaped harsh realities by playing Monopoly, reading the adventures of "Buck Rogers" and "Flash Gordon," and listening to Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust." Popular films included King Kong and It Happened One Night. For the first time, African-American athletes became national idols: Joe Louis in boxing and Jesse Owens in track and field.

Prohibition was repealed in 1933. President Franklin Roosevelt fought the Great Depression with his New Deal programs. The "Star-Spangled Banner" was chosen as the national anthem. The Empire State Building rose above the Manhattan skyline and the Golden Gate Bridge spanned the San Francisco Bay. Back on the ground, the parking meter made its first appearance in 1935.

As the decade closed, many Americans were anxious about the growing war in Europe.

New words: all-star, oops, pizza, racism