

Jesse Owens - Tape 1

Subject: Childhood In Alabama
Cleveland, Ohio
Thru Ohio State University

JO - Our home was in Alabama. I remember distinctively our living in one place. My parents were sharecroppers on this particular place. We lived in the back of this huge white house. It was perhaps off the main road, perhaps about a quarter of a mile. We live directly in back of it and just before you would cross a bridge coming over to the quarters of where the sharecroppers lived and there were three families living in this area. We all lived, I would say, about three hundred yards apart. One family had children numbering about I think it was five; two boys and three girls. The other family had two girls and of course there were a number of us. And being one of the younger children of the family, I have a sister younger than I. We were considered the young children and we were living and playing with these people behind this bridge where you cross this creek. My father was a man that was quite athletically inclined. He was tall. He was about six two. Very straight and weighed about a hundred and seventy-five pounds. My mother, quite a different contrast, she was about five feet one inches tall inclined to be a little plump, but a very very kind voice and very lovely face. My father, of course, worshipped my mother. My mother, she was the queen bee; everything evolved around her. All of my brothers and sisters looked forward to my mother of the things be done and they were turned to her for them. My dad, of course, being the head of the household was the ruling factor. Nobody contradicted my father. He was a good judge and a wise one, too. He gave my brothers, my older brothers, a concept of many things they wanted to do and he considered for them to do it. He was a kind of a man that when he said no about something he meant no because he had given it time to think about it.

BM - When you're a sharecropper does that mean that you farm a particular area of this land and share in the profits?

JO - That's right.

BM - Now was that the only money that he made or did he also make a salary from the owner of this land?

JO - No he did not make a salary. However, he was rather enterprising in many ways. He wanted to own his own stock, his horses and cows. Each year out is some of the monies from the profits that he would make from the farm land, he would pay until that he would finally paid in full for the horses and cows. All of the other, chickens on the farm, everything there belonged to him, to our family. Everybody in the family worked. The chief commodity of course was cotton. And most of the land was planted in cotton. Then of course there was a large acreage in corn and that of course was for feed and for bread like corn meal and things of that nature.

BM - Now did he have to pay rent from his home or from his land?

JO - Oh no.

BM - That was part of the deal?

JO - That was part of the deal. The man furnished the land and the house. My father had to furnish the labor and of course out of his share of the profits he took care of his family. And then there were days I remember well when I was getting up to be about eight or nine years old or I would say seven, I'll go back to seven. I can remember the time the boll weevil came in and all of the farmers had trouble with their crops because of this insect. And this is the time when my father began to lose money. And at the end of the year I remember my mother standing at the foot of the bed folding the laundry she had washed that day, and this is the close of the year, and there was no money. And I remember her crying and then I remember there was no money to buy clothing. And I didn't have enough clothing at that time to cover my entire body because there was nothing that he could do or she could do. Credit, my dad didn't believe in it. There was a company store but he would not buy on credit from the company store. Unlike the other tenants and other people around that area he would never do it. Whenever he bought anything he would pay for it because his philosophy was "at the end of the year I owe nobody and whatever I have is mine." And as a consequence we went without because we couldn't, he didn't believe in the credit of the stores.

BM - But did you farm anything on your land which was edible?

JO - Oh yes, we had our gardens. Quite large gardens. All of the foods such as the beans, string beans, squash, the onions, the turnips and all of the other things. Yes, they grew. And very well. We picked berries and there was canning of berries and we had fruit trees on the land, peaches and apples. And of course my mother canned peaches and pears and which was the common thing to do in those days. And to store them we used a cotton seed and the cotton seed house to put these jars of fruit in and to keep them from spoiling.

BM - You mean to act a preservative, the cotton seed?

JO - Yes, the cotton seed. And then we had our own smoke house, of course, we smoked our own meats and things like that.

BM - In other words you slaughtered your own cattle?

JO - Oh yes, yes because this was a common practice of all people in that area. The neighbors would come over and they would help you at slaughtering time. You, in turn, would go and help your neighbor. This is a common practice among all of the farmers at that time where one would help the other.

BM - Now at seven, eight, and nine years old how did you participate? What did you do? What was your labor at that time?

JO - Well, being a member of the family I had to work in the fields, too. When I was seven years old I was picking a hundred pound of cotton a day. At the time before cotton picking time arrived and the tilling of the soil I had to learn to use a hoe too. To hoe the cotton, to cut out the weeds so the cotton could grow, the cotton stalks could grow. Corn, I was so short that I was able just to look over the plow handle and to handle a mule in order to break the furrows in order to bring up the soil around the corn stalks so that it could grow. We use to call it busting the furrows. And this I was just tall enough to be able to do, but I handled a mule at eight years old, seven and eight. I remember when we use to have a lot of fun; we swam, we fished, and went hunting with my older brothers, and was taught certain things about game life and certain things to do and not to do. In those days we didn't call it camping like the youngsters call it today. We use to go hunting at night and hunt for opossums which was a night time thing and I used to go with my older brother at night and would stay out until maybe early in the morning and we would camp out at night with the dogs and hunting the opossums. This all added up to a great experience and a lot of fun until at the time the boll weevil was getting worse and then finally my father left the South and he left us there and we moved in with my older sister and my brother-in-law.

BM - Now that was in Cleveland?

JO - No that was still in Alabama before I came to Cleveland. Then he remained and he had his own land and he tilled his own soil.

BM - He wasn't a sharecropper?

JO - No he wasn't a sharecropper.

BM - He had purchased this land?

JO - Yes he had purchased this land so we lived with him. Then a

BM - How did you all live? Did he have a house that was big enough?

JO - He had a big house. In those days, of course, you must remember that there was no plaster, it was logs and wood. No paneling in the houses. We lived in a section of the house which was very much like a log cabin. But it had a fireplace and a kitchen and several bedrooms off of the porch. The architect of course very simple. So my brother and I slept together. I had two sisters remaining there and they slept together with my mother. My brother-in-law had three children and they lived in the other end of this house which he had living quarters for his family. And we did a lot of things together as a family and as a unit. And he looked out after everybody.

BM - Was there any hostility involved with all living together?

JO - No, it's a strange thing. My mother still being the dominating factor of which my brother-in-law with great admiration for my mother and my older sister being brought up under the tradition of obedience even though she was married obeyed my mother. My mother, being a wise woman, too, recognizing the fact that she was living in another woman's house or domain but she gave counsel and they would see counsel from her. Of course, my older sister, much like my mother, if I did something that was wrong she chastised me. As if my mother would do it. And if she didn't chastise me, my mother would speak to her, why didn't she.

BM - In other words your mother allowed her daughter to be mistress of her own home?

JO - That's right. And she also, this is a tradition in southern families, it was at that time that even when my father was there, and I would go over to visit my sister, and she had a little boy about my own age, and if we did something that we weren't suppose to do why we got a lickin' there at my sister's house. And they didn't even have any telephones in those days and how my mother would find out I would never know, but when I got home I would get another lickin'. But for the simple reason that you are to obey and you weren't suppose to get into any kind of trouble, you know, when you left home. All of these things as I can remember not being a person at that time of knowing too much about the world. The only time I can remember being embarrassed was when you saw the neighbor girls and you didn't have enough clothing to cover you body. It was only natural that you would run and hide. Then leaving the South and coming North many people were migrating from the South and getting on the train and riding on the train. Everybody carried the large baskets of groceries with all the foods in it. These people sitting on the train sharing their food with all, even strangers that were migrating from other areas would get on the train and you would meet them and they were all going to the same location and they were all going at that time to Cleveland, Ohio. We arrived Cleveland in the winter time. This was the first time that I've ever seen as much snow because in northern Alabama we did have frost where the ponds would have thin coating of ice but it would never remain. It would break. It was never frozen solid. But I had never seen snow until I had gotten to Cleveland.

BM - Did you go to school in Alabama?

JO - Yes, we went to school there, I went to school in this log cabin school. We could only go to school during the time say, for instance, if we had to harvest either the corn or the cotton we'd have to wait and go to school when there wasn't anything going on. So your school year was rather split up.

BM - Was this an integrated school?

JO - No No

BM - So at this point you didn't know that there was any problem existing between races at all?

JO - No

BM - This didn't occur to you?

JO - This was nothing. I mean as a child you'd been living one way and your accustomed to the South you paid no attention to it.

BM - What about the people that owned the big house where your father was a sharecropper? Was this a Negro individual or was he a white man?

JO - No it was a white man.

BM - Were there children?

JO - There weren't any children, and he's an elderly man and an elderly woman and they had children but they were grown and had gone away. I had never had the opportunity to meeting them. However, my father knew them and my mother knew them and my older brothers had an opportunity to talk with them from time to time but I don't remember them at all. And so leaving there seeing snow for the very first time.

BM - Were you sorry to leave or were you enthusiastic and excited and apprehensive?

JO - Well, I was very happy and looking forward to coming to North as we called it.

BM - How did the decision come into effect? Where there great talks and long discussions at home in Alabama about the final move?

JO - Well, there were discussions but being as young as I was I wasn't allowed to sit around to listen to the discussions. My older sister married and moved North and this is at the time at the end of World War I. And then all of the cities and the country began a boom at that time. And in 1922 I arrived Cleveland. Because of this urge and need for manpower many men were leaving at the suggestion of relatives because it was a better life for them.

BM - Did your father do anything else beside farm? What did he think he was going to do when he got to Cleveland?

JO - Well, naturally he came at the suggestion of my brother-in-law because he had a job for him in the steel mills. They were looking for unskilled labor they needed. And there were great openings in all of the steel mills for such persons.

BM - What about housing, how did you find that?

JO - My sister found a housing for my dad. However, my dad came and he was in Cleveland a year before we left the south to come.

BM - Then you and your mother and the rest of the children were staying at your sister's in Alabama while your father was getting things organized in Cleveland?

JO - That's right. And he had the house. The furniture was there. The curtains were up the whole

BM - The furniture from your original house in Alabama?

JO - No, we didn't bring any furniture at all.

BM - What about your animals what did you do with them?

JO - We sold them, my dad sold those and that's how he was able to come. He took the livestock that he had and sold it to the man that owned the land. He didn't get full value for it but he took what he could. And this money enabled him to bring my two older brothers and himself and to leave some money for my mother to take care of us. Because at that time moving off the land and moving in with my sister and brother-in-law, then we had to have some monies in order to help my brother-in-law to keep things going. When he left and he came here he went to work immediately and every month my mother got a money order from him for a certain amount of monies. Then he saved the money and sent the entire lump sum for the railroad tickets. Then my brother-in-law had an opportunity to sell his land and his property, I mean land and his livestock, and then he decided that he wanted to come North, too, and we all came together.

BM - In the mean time your father, bless his heart, had furnished the place and put up curtains and all of this without your mother being there to supervise all of this?

JO - Well, my sister did it.

BM - She's the one.

JO - He supplied the materials, she bought it and she put it together in this house for us. She knew we were coming.

BM - Then in 1922 then you saw real snow, lots of it, for the first time?

JO - For the first time and ice, and it's a strange thing. I almost had a tragedy on my first day. As I walked across the street not being accustomed and knowing about the slippery streets, I was almost run over by an automobile. I slipped and fell and

the automobile swerved just in time to keep from hitting me. And of course, I got a real stern lecture from my dad about automobiles and about playing in the street. So this I always remembered. I remember moving into this house and I remember having a room with my brother and I. We constantly slept together as roomies all the time. Then my older brothers had their rooms in the house. It was quite a large house. Then of course there came the question of schooling. My mother being a very very shy person for about six months. During the day she kept the shades drawn because she was a stranger. She didn't know she was afraid. She would only go to the store when my sister would come and take her to the store. She wouldn't venture out to the store by herself.

BM - She had never been out of Alabama before?

JO - No she had never been. And then it came to the question of schooling. And, of course, the law says you must send your children to school. And I remember my first day in a mixed school. I had never been to a mixed school in my life. We lived about three blocks from the school in which I was going. And I remember going there that morning and registering in school. My sister took me there to register me in school with the principal. And they wanted to know whether I could read or whether I could read or write. And this I learned in the schools in the South. I learned to read and to write. I knew something about figures a little bit, I could add and subtract. So they put me into the first grade to see whether or not.

BM - Now you were how old at this point?

JO - At this point I was nine. I was a rather big boy and looking at the first graders which were about six years old, it was very difficult for me to sit in the chairs that they had for us.

BM - Were you frightened, do you recall?

JO - Yes I was very frightened because this is a new experience I had never met and I had never talked to white people very much before.

BM - Did you father talk to you about this before you went?

JO - No my dad didn't talk to me about it. My sister talked to me about it. And she told me that it would be a new experience and that I was not to be afraid because these people were nice people.

BM - Then she had had good relationships with white people?

JO - Yes, yes she had. She had been here about five years and lived in the North and she knew some of the ways and this is the indoctrination we got. My indoctrination came from her about the folk ways and the mores of the community in which we lived because we lived in an area where there were predominately Polish people.

There were oh I would say about twenty-five or thirty Negro families living in this area. And the rest of them were Polish. They all worked around the steel mill.

BM - Were these immigrant Poles?

JO - Yes, most of them were immigrant Poles. They had migrated after World War I. The great immigration took place in the European countries at that time.

BM - In looking back now do you recall any impression as how they, as group, felt about the Negro families that were moving into their area?

JO - Here again is where I didn't pay much attention to it because I got with the youngsters and I became one of the members of the gang. I was accepted into the groups that we had in the areas.

BM - Or would you feel that there was no particular problem?

JO - No, there wasn't, at that particular time I didn't know anything about a problem. When I went to school and I was assigned to this first grade, I was there for a day and they knew that I could read and write and they assigned me again to the second grade in Two B, and then I could do that work and then went to Two A. And then I began to study different things and I remained in the two A's until I was able to until the end of the semester and then I was promoted to the Three B and skipped the three b and went to the Three A. All of this time I developed friendship with the Polish boys and there was a Chinese boy that lived the area. He and I were good friends. So we played together quite often with the Polish kids. And there was no difference. We didn't talk about racial identity or anything like that at all. We played marbles together, we played baseball together, we built a little club house and all of the kids, you know 25 or 30 youngsters ran together. We went to the shows together.

BM - Now by now your economic situation was somewhat improved?

JO - It was because this is at the time when there was a horn-of-plenty. Everybody was working. Everybody had the steel mill money and people were buying clothing. I remember new shoes I had gotten and new clothing and this is the finest I've ever had in my life. And then the other families, who were of the same economic standings, their children were experiencing these things too. However, I got a job. This was one thing that my mother always wanted. You stay out of trouble. Get something to do. And I met a fellow that had a shoe repair shop and it was Phil, a fellow by the name of Phil, and one by the name of Tony. And they had this shop together. They came from Sicily, Italy, and they opened up this shop. And I shined shoes and at the age of nine I got the job the first year I went to school and I washed the windows and kept the store clean. I worked for them from grade school through junior high school and even through high school shining for them and learning about the shoe repair trade.

BM - Was there any thought in your family at that time that you might go into the shoe repair business.

JO - No, this was something that I had to do. I had to help my end and it kept me out of trouble.

BM - And the other children of the family also got odd jobs?

JO - The boys, not the girls. The girls of my family did not work. They went to school and, of course, there were only two: my younger sister and there was a sister a little older than I, I'm a little older than she. No she's a little older than I.

BM - There were, how many were altogether?

JO - There are eight.

BM - There were eight children. You have a younger sister?

JO - Yes, and I was the youngest boy.

BM - And you were the youngest boy and then there were six others?

JO - Yes

BM - One other girl?

JO - No there were four boys and four girls in my family. Actually there were five girls but at this particular stage when we moved from the South into Ohio, my oldest sister that came, she died shortly after she got to Cleveland. She had a heart attack and passed away. And of course that left four boys and four girls.

BM - Now was this the older sister you were living with in the South?

JO - Yes in the South.

BM - Now what about her children?

JO - Her children remained with their father. He stayed here for a number of years and then he went back South. The depression set in and he figured it would be best for him to go South he took his family back South but when his children began to grow up they migrated back North again and they are now living in Cleveland and married, you see.

BM - Well now we have you in third grade with a job at a shoe repair store. And your economic status had improved considerably. You've got a new suit of clothes and

some shoes. Have you at this point, anytime up to this point, have you given any thought to your athletic prowess? Did it mean anything to you to be able to run faster than somebody or jump higher or did any of this, was it important at all?

JO - No this wasn't important at all because it never entered my mind.

BM - What about the other kids, did they admit that you were faster than they?

JO - Yes, we use to play tiddly winks and we played kick the can and we had the sleds and I could go further on the sled than the rest of the youngsters. I probably could gather more speed and the momentum I had would carry me further on my sled than anyone else. The youngsters us to marvel at this too. We paid no attention to it.

BM - This gave a sort of important recognition amongst your own young people, your own friends?

JO - No we paid no attention to it. It was the funniest thing. Of course we were all the same economically and there was no thought of one figuring that he was a better ball player than the next person or that he could run faster. This never entered the picture. We used to have races in the evening and playing kick the can and all that kind of business and usually I could always overtake everyone else in the group but we paid no particular attention to it. Well up until I left the fourth grade. Everything was lovely and then suddenly the depression set in. I remember my dad and the rest of the men in the area were working. Instead of working six days of the week they started working five and they started working four and then they started working three days a week and then they started working two days a week and then all of a sudden the news came that the banks were closing. And the banks closed and there was a bank in the community where we lived and everybody in that area lost every dime that they had. And there was an A & P store there where everybody used to do their business at the A & P store, and with the money gone in the banks now people were seeking work. My dad, remember the day after the banks closed, my dad was hit by a taxi cab and he got his leg broke. And then about a year later they had a settlement in the case and I think my dad got about \$1500 out of the case from the insurance company. And this \$1500 became a great relief in our family because it was able to help our family to pay up some bills and to pay the rent.

BM - The man gratefully had his leg broke?

JO - Yes, Then he went back, he was called back to work. And being called back to work he had to have another physical examination and they find at the time when he came back for the examination that he had a defective left eye, which he's always had, but they over looked it at the time when they needed help so badly. He was turned down on the job and then it began a series of days of going to different places trying to find work as an unskilled laborer. And then we moved

from that side of town which was still the east side of town, but we moved further out which was, we lived in the twenties on Twenty First Street and Hamilton Avenue at that time. Then we moved to Ninetieth and Cedar Avenue which was a better neighborhood, but the rent wasn't too much, but it was a lot of money in those days. Then in the meantime by older brothers had gotten married. Well, they were out of work so what are we going to do. The families moved in together you see. Now here comes additional people: my two brothers and their wives and then there was a child you know. Each one had a child. And this meant we were living in crowded conditions again. Now I'm going to a new grade school.

BM - Now what grade were you in now?

JO - At this point I'm in the Four A.

BM - Now you had only lived at this original address two years?

JO - No well

BM - A year and a half?

JO - Well about two and half years actually. Perhaps it was a little longer, I might say that I'm going into fifth grade because I remember going into the fifth grade there, and trying to be the model student, and we had a lot of boys that were quite big. We had a young teacher in the fifth grade.

BM - Woman or man?

JO - Woman, and she had a hard time disciplining the room. And being one of the bigger boys in the room you had some influence over some of the kids that were there. And to maintain discipline in the room. And I remember this teacher always using me as an example of what should be done. And I was quite interested in school. And then I remembered that summer, when summer came and school was out, we'd start playing on the playgrounds in the evenings when I would close the shop. I went back and I was still shining shoes. I used to ride the streetcar from Ninth back to Twenty First and St. Clair where we had the shop you see. And I would go back every evening and leave there about seven o'clock. And then come home you know to help close the shop and perhaps pick up maybe fifty or sixty cents in shining shoes for that evening. Then working on Saturdays and half a day on Sundays because Sundays I would go there to wash the windows and to scrub the floors and to take out and to clean the machinery where they cleaned the rubber heels and take all the waste out so the shop would be ready for Monday morning. I became interested in athletics at this grade school because the coach of the junior high school where we were going was the playground instructor.

BM - Was that Charlie Riley?

JO - That was Charlie Riley. And being a man that was interested in track and field he became vitally interested in me and we would run everyday. I'd get there about seven-thirty in the evening and we'd have foot races, fifty and sixty yards, in age groups you see. I was fortunate enough to win most of them and he began to talk to me about track and studies.

BM - He was I would say probably one of the most influential human beings in your life, is that true, Jesse?

JO - That is very true. There's no doubt about it. He was the greatest influence from the stand point of directing where you wanted to go, what you wanted to do.

BM - Do you feel that if there had not been a Charlie Riley in your life that you might have either not gone into athletics or that you would have gone into another phase of athletics?

JO - I probably would have gone into track and field because I could do that better than anything else, but I feel that I wouldn't have been as successful. He had a tremendous amount of knowledge and he was a tremendous personality. I grew to admire and respect his words and his actions and everything else. I wanted to be very much like him because he was a very wonderful person, well liked by everybody, no problems with anybody, and he preferred working over there with these Negro kids than going into another area that was perhaps a white area you see. He got a great deal of enjoyment out of helping really the under privileged people and this is something that has stuck with me for many many years because of his immense interest. Not because these youngsters had the athletic ability, you know, so much because at our junior high school where I finally went, we had about seven hundred and sixty people, a very close knit organization. The students were just like a family and the faculty took a great interest in all the children there. We had about, oh I would say, the greater majority of youngsters in the school were Jewish children and then the next greatest were Italians and then the Negroes and this is the three racial groups that were there. He took a tremendous amount of interest in all of us.

BM - There really wasn't enough time in your life to get into trouble as a child was there?

JO - No, we didn't have time I mean I played the baseball games whenever I could and I played baseball on the teams.

BM - What about juvenile delinquency with your comrades, with the people that you were with?

JO - Well, when I lived on Twentieth and Hamilton the older boys and particularly the Polish boys, they had some pretty rough games in those days. Many of them we

knew were boys that had gone to jail, some are serving ,you know, went to jail for life for murder, you know, and as they got older when they got into young manhood. I mean if we broke a window pane playing baseball we didn't run, we would go to the house. We didn't have any money to replace the window but they all knew who we were so why run. So we would go to them and we then would manage some little kind of a way to get a nickel and dime here and you put all the nickels and dimes together, we had enough money to buy a window pane to put in.

BM - Did you know these boys that were members of the gang?

JO - Yes, oh yes.

BM - Did you have anything to do with them at all?

JO - No, they were older. You see I knew their brothers, the younger brothers, and then we vowed as youngsters that we wouldn't do the things that they did such as going to the coal yards robbing coal off the truck, I mean off the cars, and selling the coal or stealing perhaps something out of the box cars. This is a dangerous thing because of the police that they had around and when you were caught you were subject to being shot. And I remember one boy that was in the gang, and his brother and I were very good friends, and this boy was down at the railroad one day, and you know how the trains cars unbuckle, you know, they take the cars from one. He was standing where there was a coupling, where the train thing would come together and hook onto the other. He was standing there and he didn't hear the car coming and this car cut him in half. We remembered that and this was the lesson. We stayed away from the railroad. But playing baseball, oh I mean we use to steal the apples from the food display on the outside, and then we would run and the man would chase us. But as far as doing something that was, well what you would call, what would you say, criminal intent, no. This was all in fun. We would take the apples, eat the apples, we wouldn't take more than one you see. And then we would share this apple with the other kids, and play baseball. And it was common practice if you played away from your playground you were subject to be run back to your playground because if you won a ball game there was always a fight that ensued. No knives, no bats, all hands you know. And then you would run. This is part of the thing. They would chase us out of their neighborhood. They came to our neighborhood. We would chase them back to their neighborhood, you see. This was a practice but nobody ever got hurt. It was fun.

BM - When you went to the new school after you had moved did you have any problems there?

JO - No I didn't have any problems because at the new school we had more Negro students at this new school because this was an area where predominately Negroes lived. The middle class or professional Negro lived.

BM - Was there any teacher that you can recall who might have influenced you toward a certain area of study. Is there anyone that you can remember that you liked particularly or disliked particularly?

JO - I don't think that I've ever had a teacher that I disliked. All of my teachers were very nice to me especially in junior high school. The coach was the balance wheel. I mean if you didn't obey or if you had discipline problems in your classroom, then you couldn't participate upon the athletic teams. You see, other than being able to pass your work, you had to show leadership within the school room, the classroom. You had to show respect for the teacher in that classroom. And the reason I think I say that I don't think that I've ever had a teacher that I disliked because I used to go to their homes and wash their windows and scrub their kitchen floors. They never gave me any money but they provided me with shirts and stockings and underwear. And then the school, the principal and the coach, would talk to a merchant and I got two suits a year in order to represent the school at the council meetings, such as the student council.

BM - This is junior high school?

JO - The student council meetings, and I was captain of our guards, which were the bigger boys that we used to keep the grounds clean.

BM - Did you ever have any fights because you were teacher's pet?

JO - No, no fights because I was teacher's pet. I don't think I've ever had a fight. I've never had a fight all the time that I was in school. It was a thing that my coach, he never played with me, he never kidded with me. All of his thoughts were something of a nature fatherly or it was something that you were suppose to show certain leadership. You had proved that you could show leadership to him.

BM - Do you feel that all of this is because you had shown signs of leadership before you were even aware of what the word meant?

JO - Well, yes because the teachers were the ones that talked about it because they would always pick you to head certain things. They'd give you certain little responsibilities and this is what you were suppose to do. I didn't know what it meant. But I knew that they asked me to do it, I knew it had to be done and so I did it.

BM - Now by this time had your mother become a little less shy about shopping about going about the neighborhood, had she made friends and was she more orientated than previously?

JO - Yes, she had. Before we moved from Twenty-First Street she had become much more orientated to the community. She went to the grocery store, she talked to

the Polish women who spoke broken English. They used to come over to the house, and my mother, I remember, making donuts and pies and cakes. These people would come over during the day and they would drink coffee with her or lemonade or whatever.

BM - Coffee or whatever women do?

JO - Yes, then she became a little more relaxed and of course they all joined church. They went to their churches and met their friends there.

BM - Now what church was available there?

JO - It was a Baptist church, I don't remember the name of the Baptist church. I went to Sunday school there and but it was so long ago I don't remember the name of the church.

BM - Why I didn't mean the name I meant the denomination.

JO - Baptist. My family were all Baptist.

BM - And your father ,by now, what was he doing at this time?

JO - At the time that I was in junior high school?

BM - Yes

JO - He wasn't doing anything because he couldn't find any work to do. And he was doing odds and ends of a -He was a fair carpenter he could do a little of that you know patching. And then he would get maybe two or three days work and something else and then when that was out we went on associated charities.

BM - Then the whole family was living on what you brought in, what your brothers brought in and the little bit that he could bring in?

JO - That's right.

BM - And the presents which you received through the merchants and the teachers and so forth. This was the whole economic structure of the household at that time?

JO - That's right, at that time.

BM - All right so now you're in junior high school and Charlie is talking to you like a Dutch uncle about field and track how are you doing in your studies?

JO - I was doing very well. I skipped from the Seventh B. I never did go to the Seven A I went from the Seven B to the Eight B. And I finished junior high school, instead

of going for three years I went for two and a half years. And then I went to high school and at this junior high school I became captain of our basketball team.

BM - Now that's where it all began, isn't it?

JO - Yes.

BM - In junior high school?

JO - Captain of the basketball team, captain of the track team, captain of the baseball team. I was president of the student council, captain of our guards.

BM - How did all of this make you feel? Now remember you're a youngster from the cotton fields of Alabama. This is all relatively new to you and suddenly you're a captain of so many things and you're a good student and people liked you?

JO - Well, you felt like you were somebody. You know this gives you a feeling that well, look this can happen, you know. It wasn't the feeling of where you felt that you could lord over anybody, this I never did. I guess this is the reason? I was elected captain of our teams because I was with the boys. If it's something went a miss well we would sit down and discuss it. If something that we felt was wrong within the school, we would sit down together, all of us on the teams, and the majority of the boys in the school's participated. We used to have our meetings after track sessions were over at night and we'd probably have forty or fifty boys out for track and field. Before anybody would go home, in the locker room, we would hold meetings and find out if somebody was out of line and then we would bring them in and we would talk to them. Nobody ever threatened anybody. But thinking in terms of what each of us can contribute and this was important. And if you wanted to be on the team then you had to conform to what the majority thought was right.

BM - You had your own special little government?

JO - Oh yes this we never went to the principal with, never went to the coach with. We knew what the coach wanted. During our track season, it was imperative and it became a very very important thing you went to bed on time. You trained everyday on time. You adhered to the principles that were laid down by them and anybody that broke those rules had to suffer the consequence by getting off the team. Nobody wanted to get off the team cause we had a good team. It was fun. Everybody looked to our school because we were the outstanding track and field school in the junior high league.

BM - Are there any of the boys who attended junior high at that time with you who have done anything professionally or have gone in the track and field?

JO - Well, we've got a number of boys in business, some of the kids today are in the profession or professional men, lawyers and doctors. Some of them, because of their economic situation, had to drop out of school. But basically all of them that are living today have a fairly nice job and out of the whole bunch I only think that we've lost one that started to drink and he passed away just about two years ago. And you know it was a funny thing about it. Most of the kids, before and after I graduated, were youngsters that have always looked forward to meeting the challenge and matching what the others had done in the past you see. It was a good school. The principal was a fine man, fair and he and the coach, were the balance wheels in the school. Most of our teachers were women. We had shop courses, we had some men but they associated with the coach you see, not upon the athletic field but socially in the school. And anything that went amiss in the classroom the coach knew about it. So nobody wanted to be reprimanded by the coach cause he could be very, very tough.

BM - Now when you left East Tech now what was the junior high school?

JO - Fairmont.

BM - Fairmont. Then you went into high school and that was East Technical High School. You were probably a little sorry to leave Charlie at that point.

JO - Well, we were sorry to leave the junior high school but we never left Charlie because fortunately for us when I went to this high school, East Tech High School we got a new track coach and the new track coach was doubling in brass, he was an industrial arts teacher too. He had just graduated from Miami University. He was a half modern but he didn't know too much about track. And so when I came to this junior high school we had gotten good press notices and everything else, and he being a very smart person, he went to the junior high school and asked Riley if he would give him some advice on track and field and help him because he had just graduated and no experience.

BM - And Charlie didn't have enough to do?

JO - Yes, (laugh) but this became quite a thing because it was quite an honor for Charlie because being asked by this man he was more than happy to do it. And then the things he taught me if something went amiss, if I wasn't getting the most out of my actions and the coach he didn't know so naturally he would send me back to the junior high school and he'd work out my problem for me.

BM - How'd you find high school?

JO - High school was one big party. By that I mean we had a wonderful principal. A man that was about six feet four inches tall weighed two hundred and twenty-five pounds, broad of shoulder, slender of waist, wavy black hair, a wonderful looking man but tough. Four thousand boys, forty-two hundred boys in this school no

girls, technical high school. And he ruled that school with an iron but deft hand. He was a kind of a man that you didn't fear but you had a deep amount of respect for. He was tough, but he was fair. The teachers in the school were nice people. I always got along fine with my teachers. If there was something I didn't know, I'd go ask them and this they liked. Playing basketball, and not being a very good high school basketball player, I was a fairly decent junior high school basketball player but in high school you take the best from the different schools and you put them together and you've got a high school team. And I played basketball for three games. I got hurt and the principal was vitally interested in my staying out for track and field. And this is how I came to know him so well. Is that when I got my ankle hurt he brought me into the office one evening after school and he sat down and he began to tell me about the things that he felt that I could do best.

BM - What did he say?

JO - Well, he said to me, he says, now you're fairly decent athletic, all around athletic, he said, but we here at East Tech are vitally interested in your education. You have the potential of being college material to go on from here. Now you came here with the reputation in track and field and we're going to maintain that reputation. We're going to get your ankle well but I don't want you out for basketball. So I said all right and left. And the track coach didn't want me out for basketball. So with that in mind he came to track practice every night. We were practicing in the indoors and in the basement, in the quarters in the basement of the school, in the gymnasium and he would come out every night and watch the track team workout along with the basketball team, you see. And he was there everyday. He didn't interfere with the coaching staff. He was just there he was a football player himself. So I don't know, then he began to watch me in track and field and he'd come over from time to time, and well now this is what I wanted you to do. Then we had our dual meets. We won our dual meets and he was there.

BM - What meets?

JO - Our dual meets. Yes, we'd have them with the different schools and sometime we'd have a triangular meet. But it was all preparation for the big indoor season you see.

BM - Was there much competition between all of the high schools?.

JO - Oh yes. We had a conference called a senate and all of the technical schools and public schools were in this senate. We had about twelve schools in it and it was a big honor to become senate champions. It was the toughest schools in the city with large enrollments you see and the better athletic and good coaching too. Fairly decent facilities. But in our outdoor season we'd have to travel maybe ten miles to get to the track and field where we wanted to work out. We'd ride the streetcars you know and thumb rides in order to get there to workout.

BM - How closely did the press follow all of these high school meets?

JO - They were there everyday. Everyday.

BM - Was it something in which the entire city was vitally interested in?

JO - Oh yes. The city was vitally interested in our track and field. Particularly so after my sophomore year. We went down the state meet and won the state tournament in my sophomore year and consequently we won three years in a row. There was one man that followed me from junior high school all the way through college and his name was Jack Klauser. And he was a sports writer for one of the, at that time, the Cleveland News. And he followed me from junior high school all the way through high school and he wrote everything. He used to accompany us on trips and I use to sit and talk with him.

BM - Now how did he know you were going to be an Olympic champion?

JO - This he didn't know but he was seeing the things we were doing, the records.

BM - He must have had some premonition?

JO - Well, he, I don't know if you call it that or not, but it was one of those things. He took a great deal of interest in and he was amazed at some of the things that we were doing and felt that well this is a story and as it turned out week after week we were very successful with our team and we were very fortunate in bringing our times and distances down.

BM - Now when you say we and our, can you be a little bit more specific and talk about I and my?

JO - Well, on the track team ,well, we had four fellows that were quite outstanding. There was a boy by the name of Dave Albritten that entered this junior high school, I mean this high school, at the same time I did and I was a high jumper. And this boy was tall, agile he didn't know how to high jump. And he came out to run the hurdles so I taught him how to high jump, and so at the end of my sophomore year he was jumping around six one and six two. Now he could win or place second in the high jump and I could go and run on the relay team, and with my help on the relay team we could win the half mile relay which gave us an additional, sometimes ten and sometimes eight additional points that we would not get you see. So as a result of it he continued to work on the high jump and then I ran the hurdles at times and then I switched over from the hurdles to run the relay rather the hundred and the two twenty and the broad jump and on the relay team rather the hundred and the two twenty and the broad jump and on the relay team and that would give us an assurance of winning. And we would combine these efforts, along with a fellow by the name of Story and a fellow by the name of Jerry. So this, four of us, were the main springs in this success.

BM - You had a full house didn't you. They couldn't beat you?

JO - Yes we did. We had a real good team. We could win, say for instance, we could win the high jump, the hurdles, the hundred, the two twenty, the broad jump, the relay, and get some seconds and thirds in the other events and we had the thing won, you see. And thus we had a perfect balance with these four fellows and the supporting cast that we had of the other fifteen men on the track team. And this became a very interesting thing because in those days a high school youngster that was running the hundred and nine, seven or nine, eight was quite a great treat. We were able to run the hundred and nine, seven and nine, eight in my sophomore year. Then my junior year I was running nine six and my senior year I was able to run nine four you see. This became an interesting thing for the sports writers and the citizens of Cleveland because the sports writers let them know. And the various guys on the sports programs on the radio, and they were letting the people know. As a result of that, I remember my senior year we had our last meet. This in my last meet running for East Tech and this was the Senate championship and we had twenty-thousand people to watch this last track meet.

BM - A high school meet?

JO - A high school track meet and this was my last one. Then we went from there to represent the city here in Chicago.

BM - Was that the first time you came to Chicago?

JO - First time in 1933 at Soldiers Field. We brought these four fellows with us. The four of us came. And we won the last national inter-scholastic championship they've ever, they held in this country. We took the title back to Cleveland. They had a parade for us and the citizens were quite proud. This is our senior year. I went to summer school to graduate and then I went down to Ohio State.

BM - Before we get to Ohio State which is quite a different story what about social life during all of these four years, Jesse. Now you did well in school and you liked your teachers and you were doing magnificently in sports but what about dating, what about dancing and taking out girls, did this enter the picture at all?

JO - Oh yes, I only had one girl and I married her.

BM - You mean all the way through high school?

JO - All the way through high school I only had this one girl that I would of course, we married very early. I didn't worry about dates I was with her all of the time. Dancing, I danced but not to often.

BM - You remember your first prom?

JO - Yes, I remember my graduation from junior high school which was quite a deal.

BM - Tell me about that.

JO - Of course I didn't know how to dance until I got into the ninth grade and my sisters and I met my wife in junior high school. My younger sister and my wife were friends and they could dance very well. And so they taught me how to dance in order to go to my senior prom in junior high school. A prom that you would say at the graduation. We had a party in school. We had a little three piece orchestra in the gymnasium. Which the orchestra was graduates of our junior high school that had gone and studied music and had little combos around the city and they came back to play for our junior high school dance. They always had musicians at no cost to the school because these were all alums of our junior high school.

BM - Now, when you first met Ruth tell me about that. You're meeting and your growing together?

JO - Actually, I met her going to school, well I saw her at school and she came from a family of four, that is four children. Her brothers all worked in dress shops and she was always dressed nicely. When she came to our junior high school, transferred from another school to our school. I saw her but I didn't pay any attention to her the first few days around school, the first few weeks. And one morning we were going to school and it was raining and she had an umbrella and her books and so I offered to carry her books and her umbrella and we walked to school together. I saw her after school and then it became a habit everyday. She'd wait for me. I'd meet here every morning we'd go to school together. And then I'd take her home or she would go home and I'd finish track practice and on my way to work I'd, you know, go by her house on my way to work, just to stay five, ten minutes in order to catch the next streetcar then go to work.

BM - Do you remember your first real date?

JO - Yes, our first real date, of course, was, oh, I guess it was about a week. We went to a show and soda and this was the deal in those days. There was no dances to go to you know, you couldn't go to any dances because you weren't old enough.

BM - Well, at this point you couldn't dance anyway.

JO - And I couldn't dance anyway so the date

BM - Did they tease you about it at home?

JO - Oh yes, they teased me about a lot of it at home. My sisters you know, about my not being able to dance, not being able to hold a girl, you know, my interest I was so interested in athletics that in those days you were taught athletics and girls

didn't mix you know and all that sort of business. And I was real gullible about it and I swallowed it because you know, frankly it doesn't. I was vitally interested in athletics. I was interested in athletics. I was proud of my grades in school too. I wanted this to compare with what I was able to do on the athletic field and it was a challenge in myself you know competing one against the other and trying to whether or not I could measure up to one against the other. And so she became a great help too in my studies.

BM - Now how old were you when you asked her to marry you? And how did you happen to marry her?

JO - Here is the thing, I was about eighteen, I guess, never been in love.

BM - Well by now the athletics and the grades were competing with being in love.

JO - Yes that's right. You could get around to the point where sometimes you can't live without this and that and this is the point where we're on a picnic and we were constantly together and didn't want to leave her and all this sort of business and this question of marriage came up.

BM - Can you recall how it came up?

JO - Yes, I, oh yes, I remember, I brought her a ring. This ring I had worked hard for and it costs me twenty-two dollars and fifty cents, which was a lot of money. I was saving it fifty cents, quarter, a dime at a time. I finally got this money. And I bought it next door to the shoe repair shop where I was working. We had moved from the Twentieth Street down to Ninth which was in the downtown area. This guy had opened up a big place now. He had a relative die and the relative left him a lot of money. He went back to Sicily and he got the money and he came back and he opened up a dry cleaning and pressing while you wait, hat cleaning, shoe repairing and a big shoe shine stand of which I was the manager. I locked up every night for him because I had been with him all those years. I would save this money and next door was a jewelry store and I bought this ring and I remember giving it to her. She couldn't wear the ring because we would get killed so her sister put it on and it was small for here sister but she got it on and she couldn't get it off. I remember we had to have it cut off and I raised the devil with her about this you know. But finally she knew exactly what it meant and she dated nobody else and so finally we just got married.

BM - Well that was the first time you got married and then the daddy had it annulled because he didn't.....

JO - Well he didn't, well I can't say that

BM - Yes you can

JO - He was quite put out about this

BM - To put this mildly (laugh) yes. Well now what were you going to do? When you talked about this how did you decide you were going to handle this?

JO - Well, we didn't know. We had just gotten married and well I

BM - Where did you go to get married?

JO - Went to Erie, Pennsylvania.

BM - How on earth did you get there?

JO - This friend Albrighton that was in junior high, went to high school with me, who I taught the high jump, we had bought a Ford together, a Model T Ford. I shall never forget we paid fifteen dollars for it between us. So I told him this morning. I says the night before, I said, "look I'm going to get married," and I said, "we've got to go to Erie, Pennsylvania." He's a big guy. He said fine. He use to call me shorty. (Laugh) He said okay shorty. He thought I was kidding. I said, "you're going to pick me up at eight o'clock and we're going to pick up Ruth at nine. She's going to be out. She's going to be somewhere." So sure enough, I had ten dollars and we could fill up the thing full of gas for a dollar and we'd go ninety-three miles and it took us almost the whole day. We finally got there, got our license before the thing closed and went to the justice of the peace, and then we had to come back home. This was all fine and then I remembered our wedding dinner was hot dogs and root beer. And we got closer to home, which was late at night when we got back, and her mother was frantic, because you know she should have been back long before. So she a

BM - Did you take her to her home?

JO - Oh yes. I took her to her home but I didn't tell them anything about, I told them we had gone to the show and it had been out but her mother trusted me. She knew that if she was with me that nothing, you know was amiss. But her father didn't like it. He didn't say nothing so I put the marriage license in my hip pocket. So I go home and my father wants to know where have I been all day, so I tell him a cock 'n' bull story and everything is all right cause I'm a big boy now. He's interested in my athletic career and he says certain things and I was working. But I had gotten off from work that day and Phil wanted to know where I was, so Tony knew, but Phil didn't know. So my dad happened to stop by the place and wanted to see me, but I wasn't there. When all of this take fire a few months later they find out about this deal and all of a sudden the lid blew off and

BM - Now a few months later? What happen during those months? Weren't you two crucifying each other? You're married but you're not married?

JO - Well, I'm with her everyday, every evening it wasn't.

BM - Then you kiss her good night and she goes to her house and you go to your house and you're married.

JO - Well, it's not, look you have fear. You have fear of your parents and you have fear of her parents but nothing is so wrong what you're doing so wrong. It's just the idea of working to the point where you'll be able to tell this story and when I did I got put out, she got put out and then her father relented, brought her back the same night, and then he had the thing, he went to court and had it annulled, because first of all we were too young, and then he forbid me to see her, but we saw each other anyhow.

BM - How'd you managed that?

JO - Well her sister and my sister are friends, you know, where you could meet and see each other. It was no problem. That wasn't tough, whenever you wanted to see anybody you could always see them you know. So this I didn't have no problem with. Then I was busy going back to school and now I'm coming up and things are beginning to look better each day for me in school. The future was bright. Then when I began to get pictures in the paper and press notices the radio commentators would talk about it and then her father began to perk up and listen and people would go on the jobs and say I understand he's going with your daughter and this put me in a real good position with him.

BM - So what did he do, contact you and say you could see Ruth again?

JO - No, I saw him on the street and we talked. I told him how sorry I was and he said that well, I can understand that, he says I just want you to know I hold no malice against you. And so I never did ask whether I could come back I just took it for granted and I went back and he didn't say nothing, so I just kept going. So I used to eat at the house quite often. I used to talk to him quite a lot. He was quite a wise man and we used to have a lot of fun together and looking at different things. His eyes were weak, and certain things that he couldn't see in the paper, and he wanted me to read it to him and I would read it to him. And we became very very good friends.

BM - Then how long was it after this that you two got married again?

JO - Well this was back then a few years later it was 1935, you see in July of 1935. I was in college and we were together. Then, of course, in the meantime during the course of this thing I was, before he had the marriage annulled my wife became pregnant and he didn't want no parts of me and he took his daughter back home and we're going to have you know. Of course I didn't argue with him and I kept seeing her and her mother was always in my corner, and so when all of this came

about it was one of those things where people had forgotten and everybody thought that we were married anyhow so I didn't say anymore about it.

BM - And how did your mother feel all about this?

JO - Well, she didn't like it at first, but she like Ruth and my dad, of course, was raising Cain with me and but my mother loved my wife as if it was her own daughter and they were always best friends and my wife could get the last dollar from my mother even before my sisters could get it. I remember when things were fine. I came back from the Olympics and things began, financially we were able to do a lot of things. I was able to take care of my mother and bought her a house and bought my coach a car before I spent a dime on my family, such as my wife and my children. And all the time I was in college I had a job. I was making a hundred and fifty dollars a month. And then I was speaking and I was making an extra fifty dollars a week speaking to Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, you know, and travel expenses. And I was sending home seventy-five dollars a month home to my mother and seventy-five dollars a month home to her mother. And we still had money to live on while I was in school.

BM - When you went to, was there any decision to be made about where you would go to college, or was this just taken for granted, that you would go to Ohio State?

JO - No, I visited perhaps about ten schools and I had offers from many, many schools to come.

BM - On scholarship basis?

JO - On scholarship basis yes. But I wasn't interested in a scholarship. I was interested in a job. And I wanted a job to work. I wanted to bring, I knew I had my mother to take care of. I knew, you know, I had other responsibilities and I wasn't just interested in going to school for my books, you know, and room and board. I could buy my own books. I could pay for my own tuition if I had a job, and Ohio State offered me the job. And I went to Ohio State because I had the job and the next place it was closer to home than any other school.

BM - Now what kind of a job did they offer you?

JO - I was running an elevator. I was working at night running the freight elevator. The superintendent of the building was a very fine person. He was interested in Ohio State and a booster of Ohio State so he gave me this job. I mean I got it through the school, but he knew that I was coming to work, and he made it as pleasant as possible. He refused to let the elevator to be constantly moved by the foreman, where the foreman was going from floor to floor checking on the work of the people that were cleaning up the building at night. He couldn't ride that elevator. He'd have a ride a passenger elevator. They put a desk and a chair on the elevator for me. And I would go to track practice in the evening and the manager

of the track team would go over to the library and pick up my books that I had to study, reference books. And I'd take them to work and study and do my homework on the elevator and the elevator moved every hour. It would take about ten minutes to move the crew and I had fifty minutes to study. And then I would study every night on the elevator.

BM - How'd you find college life compared to high school?

JO - Well, it's just like one growing up you know from childhood into manhood and this is a new life. In college of course you're at a bigger place. There are more people. Everything is not sort of impartial now. Even though people knew you, you were more or less on your own. If you didn't want to go to class you didn't have to class. But you had to, you knew that there was certain work that was going on in the classroom and lectures that the exams were based upon. So it was your responsibility to go, and so I went.

BM - Did you have any particular recognition when you first entered college? The students, how did they treat you?

JO - The students were fine. When I first went to college, of course, I went down two months before school started. And the press, of course, carried big stories about my coming to Ohio State because when I was in my senior year in high school and I came here I had broken the world's record for high school boys in the hundred yard dash by running it in nine four.

BM - Is that at Soldiers Field? In 1933?

JO - Soldiers Field, yes. Then, when I, of course, the press was looking to this when I came, they gave me a royal welcome to Ohio State and pictures were made with the coach at the stadium and the athletic office.

BM - Was it Mr. Synider?

JO - Yes and pictures were made at the registration desk you know, the registrar's office and my ruling in school and the people knew. And so when I was on campus you know freshman week I met a lot of kids who were athletics whom some I had run against. And we became very good friends. The football players, the basketball players all freshman we all got together and we had a wonderful time. So I don't know, college was something like high school.

BM - When did you give up your job with the dry cleaning, shoe repair establishment?

JO - I gave that up in my senior year in high school.

BM - So now your only job when you entered college is running the elevator the freight elevator?

JO - Yes.

BM - Undoubtedly, you need something else to do?

JO - Yes we had the doings once a week. We were visiting the Kiwanis and the Lion Clubs and the other service organizations in that area once a week at noon. We didn't have a class usually on Wednesday afternoon and that's when they usually met and we had Wednesday or Thursday and we would go and speak at noon.

BM - Now what would you talk about?

JO - We would talk about Ohio State and talk about our programs, talk about athletics and things of that nature. Talk about some of the trips that we had made and some of the people that we had met some of the races that you had run.

BM - These businessmen organization then would pay you?

JO - Pay the expenses yes. And expenses would usually be around fifty dollars.

BM - That actually didn't put any money into your pocket?

JO - Yes, we got the fifty dollars.

BM - This was your expenses?

JO - This was my expenses. And then this gave me three hundred and fifty dollars a month. And then I gave a hundred and fifty dollars a month to my mother and to my mother-in-law. Because in those days a hundred and fifty dollars, I mean seventy five dollars went a long way in helping maintain the family.

BM - And then out of the rest of the money you bought your books and paid your tuition?

JO - Yes and paid my room and board.

BM - Ohio State didn't help you in anyway?

JO - No, their help was in the job which they gave me.

BM - Now what about athletic equipment?

JO - Well, they bought all of that. See the athletic department furnished you with all their equipment that you needed to work with and of course that's with every school.

BM - Now when did you get the job with the Ohio State Legislature as page boy?

JO - Well this came after my junior year. You know. We would change jobs according to the schedule in which we had. Now when I became a sophomore they didn't want me to work eight hours a night. You see I could only work four though we got paid for eight you see. And because then your practice sessions became longer. We had more meets.

BM - Did anything significant happen in your first year at Ohio State from any standpoint?

JO - Yes, in my freshman year we established records in the sixty yard dash and we continued to establish outstanding records in track and field.

BM - Were these inter college meets?

JO - Yes, we were running unattached because you could not run for Ohio State University at that time.

BM - Why not?

JO - See as a freshman. You allowed three years of varsity competition. Your freshman year is more or less your apprentice year.

BM - So you called it unattached?

JO - Unattached yes. You don't run for any club. You don't run for anybody, you see. You're invited from Ohio State. You can wear freshman equipment which says freshman but you couldn't be recorded in the books.

BM - Now did anything that you did during that first year, was not documented, not recorded, it wasn't?

JO - It was all recorded but it wasn't in the name of Ohio State University.

BM - It was just a personal record?

JO - A personal record. And this is the kind of thing, see, now like in the freshman year you have a lot of meets but they're telegraphic meets. In other words you don't run against anybody. We may have a track meet with the University of Illinois, so Illinois runs their track meets and they record the times and we run ours and record the times and then we compare the times and then you determine who won the meet and that's what you call a telegraphic meet you see. But we got together in New York. We could go to the National AU, the Melrose Games, Knights of Columbus, the Philadelphia Inquirer track meet or the Cleveland indoor track meet or the Boston AAU see which were a number of track meets going you know every

week you could run in these different cities. They would invite you to come. So through this method we were able to build up continue to build your reputation in track and field by winning the majority of these meets and then your name became known. And then as you became a sophomore running for Ohio State University then all of these things you know would come to pass.

BM - Now when were you asked to become a member of a fraternity?

JO - I, in my sophomore year.

BM - Now what fraternity was it?

JO - Alpha Phi Alpha

BM - Now did that cost you?

JO - Yes, I had to pay my tuition into the fraternity you know initiation fees which the school wanted pay but I refused because I had the money to pay it myself.

BM - Now that took you out of the dormitory situation into the frat house?

JO - Well, we didn't have a house on campus. See at that time Negro fraternities did not have a house. We met at one of the buildings on the east side of Columbus, the east end. We had a regular room there but we did not have a fraternity house on campus.

BM - Was this an athletic?

JO - No, no this is a social fraternity. Just like any fraternity on up near the campus. But we weren't in at that time. We weren't on the fraternity council because we did not have a house but we soon were recognized because of the number of boys and the grades that we were getting, the kids were getting, was soon recognized by the University. And we were put into the counsel because the grades.

BM - Now when did you first meet Ralph Metcalf?

JO - I met him in 1933. I saw him run here when he was a sophomore, a junior at Marquette. He was running in the same meet. But the National Colleagents was held at night and the Inter-Scholastics was held in the afternoon.

BM - I read a story in the one of the papers about his snubbing you in something you had said, is this true?

JO - Well, this was more or less true because we had been hearing a lot about the Colleagent boys and when I came here you know

BM - This was in Chicago?

JO - This was in Chicago. And he was quite concerned with the college meet that night and paid no attention to us high school youngsters even though our reputation had preceded us here. We did not believe, when we had an opportunity to meet him, why he didn't have much time for us.

BM - And was it true at that point you said something to the effect that you were going to run him right off the track?

JO - Well not right off the track I says one of these days I'll get even. Of course, some things often times misquoted in a sense but it was in effect that we were going to get even. We were pretty sore with it because all of us had admired him and wanted to meet him but he didn't have the time for us, but later on this all came to pass. We became very very good friends.

BM - And in your freshman year how well did you do in your studies?

JO - In my freshman year I had a 3.2 average.

BM - And this was working eight hours a night?

JO - Yes, and I think I had better grades then, than I had ever did at any other time in college.

BM - How did your mother feel and your dad about your going to college?

JO - Oh, this was a big thing in our household, big thing. Because none of our children in the family had the opportunity to go and especially the boys and I was the only one who had the opportunity to go. And they were quite proud because of this fact that I was able to go to college.

BM - Was it that you had the opportunity or that you made the opportunity?

JO - Well, the fact is that if it hadn't been for my brothers, that had my brother a little older than I had to drop out of school to help maintain the family and I wasn't old enough to quit school to go to work by his working he kept me in school. And then by the performances I was able to get a chance to go to college you see. And this is the first time in our family that anybody had ever gone past high school.

BM - Were any of the other boys athletically inclined?

JO - Very much so. I think that my brothers would have been much greater in athletics than I could have been. Because all of them were well built. My oldest brother was quite a baseball player and he was quite fast. And then my two older brothers both were both great ball players. They were just born thirty years to soon. And

my brother that's just a little older than I was very fast and a tremendous football prospect but he had to drop out of school you see. And that was the thing that held them back.

BM - Did Ruth go to Ohio State?

JO - Yes.

BM - She registered at the same time that you did?

JO - No, not at the same time, a year afterwards. See she came down and went to night school. See because in my sophomore year I brought her down to school after I had gotten established. I got a house and then I brought her down to school and we had a five room house. And we got furniture.

BM - That was the year you married her again? 1935?

JO - Yes. And we went down to school and

BM - Now where was the baby all of this time?

JO - She was home with her. With my wife and her mother.

BM - And when Ruth came to school again?

JO - She came with us. I brought her to school with us.

BM - Then you had to get a sitter or someone to take care of her?

JO - Oh no no when she was at school at night I would work the four hours. I was home and she would take the car. My cousin would drive her over to the school and pick her up and I would stay home and study and watch the baby. And then we had her in nursery school too.

BM - Did you recall this to be particularly tough or did you take it in your stride?

JO - It wasn't tough. In fact it was fun. We had a real wonderful time. I don't think that marriage has been a real tough thing for us. We've always had fun and sometimes you play it as a game and there are times when every marriage of course had its financial problems and many other things that are going to come up, but if you don't let it bother you too much and sure you work it out. If you start worrying you can't do anything about it.

BM - Now the report I read prior to your second marriage to Ruth that you were going with a girl in California?

JO - Oh, this was really a thing that was blown out of all proportion. You see when I went to the coast for the track meet, this girl's family was quite a wealthy family, well known family. Her father was president of an insurance company and they were well-known in California. She came to the train the day that we arrived and they had a big parade for us, and people like Ellen Noten and old movie stars, like Clarence Mules "Stepin Fetchet" to Bill Robinson and all the Negro movie colonies so to speak were there to greet us. We went to the City Hall and the City Council gave us a Proclamation for the day and many other things. So we got there and we finished up all of the and then we had to go in the afternoon for the press. They were building up this track meet for the weekend. So we took pictures and things like that. We didn't have a workout that day. We just took pictures and started positions and things like that. Then you were meeting people and they were taking pictures of the people that were there and this girl happen to be there. So we got to talking and she invited me to her house for dinner, the following day. So they came down and picked me up she had a couple of brothers, they were athletically inclined. So she took me to her house for dinner and I met her parents and then every day she would come down to the practice field at Blueberry Field. She had a car and then she would pick, we had two, we had two Negro boys on the team, a fellow by the name of Mel Walker that is here now and she would pick the both of us up and we would ride around town. She was showing us around town, took us by dad's office and we went through and met all the people that worked in the office and all this sort of thing. So one day we were downtown after my track practice and we were window shopping, just walking, looking and a photographer was following us and I didn't know this and I don't think she did either. So we stopped and looked into a jewelry store window, just looking as we did in the big department store windows. And while we were looking in the window he took this picture. And then we had the track meet. And after the track meet was over there was a big party and we went to this party and I was her guest, her company. And so after the party was over we went back to the University and we had to leave the next day to go to Berkeley, California. So they had all these people to see us off at the train. So while we all are waiting at the train station, a photographer came to me and said I'd like to take a picture of you and your young lady. I said fine. So she had her hand up like this and I was looking down at her and we were laughing and so when the picture came out in the paper they could see her ring you know engaged and all this kind of business see. So this is how this all came about, absolutely nothing to it and you know it was a shame because her family was a nice family and the girl was a nice girl. And there was nothing you know that but a good friendship had developed there and I told her all about Ruth, the baby and everybody. And about my life and what we had done and she said well this is fine and we just had a wonderful time. So all of this just blown out of proportion. It was absolutely nothing to it whatever. So since then she has come she came to Cleveland to visit us. You know she got married. The fellow she was going to married he was away and I knew that she was going to marry this boy so there was nothing between the two of us. But this is how stories get out. And so even today when I go to California, anywhere in California, I might be,

I will either call her husband, and they live in San Diego. And if I'm in Los Angeles she and her husband will drive up to Los Angeles and visit with me.

BM - How did Ruth feel about all of this?

JO - Well, after it was explained to her why you know she understood. Of course, any woman who would take it wouldn't be to kindly toward her.

BM - Did you have any other brush with gals that were interested in you?

JO - Well, no I haven't had, I've know a lot of girls it's true but from the standpoint of seriousness no.

BM - And what about the people that you met out there at that time. Were you awed by them Bill Robinson for example? Ellen Norton?

JO - Well I had always know about Bill Robinson, very happy to have met him. Ellen Norton, I had heard about her and she's a very beautiful woman and I was struck by her beauty and by her charm and sure I felt real elated of being able to meet them. And to be shown around and I met Will Rogers at the time and Harry Carey and Freddie Bartholomew, Mickey Rooney and Clark Gable and they all came to the track meet and this was a real big thing.

BM - Did you have any personal association with any of these people?

JO - Other than meeting them on the set and coming to the track meet and talking with them there and going to the Hollywood Bowl. At that time they were having the American Legion Bowl and they were having the boxing and I met Mae West and she gave me a watch for the ring and we sat which we were her guests that evening and she took about ten of us out and we just had a marvelous time.

BM - Can you tell me about her?

JO - She was a fine girl, a fine woman. She was quite different than what I had pictured her you know. She was refined and she was not like you read about and see in the movies. She was very cultured. And so we had one of the boys on the team by the name of O'Brien. He was quite a handsome man and so she, he came from a very fine family in Ohio, and she took to us including him and he was you know with her most of the time. I don't think anything was happening but. (laugh) But I was invited. I was, first of all, suggested, that take that and I was very happy that we did. We had a marvelous time. We all came back home together and she was quite impressed with the boys because most college kids they think most college kids are you know wild and none of the boys were nobody drank nobody smoked you see.

BM - What about Clark Gable, what was your meeting with him like?

JO - Oh meeting with him was a real joy, just like Will Rogers. He was a real regular guy. He took us to lunch, talked to us. He knew a lot about track and field.

BM - Did he?

JO - Oh yes.

BM - Do you recall any of the things he said to you?

JO - No, he was asking particularly about the broad jump. He was asking how could you get so much distance and we were talking about height and we were talking about body angles and he was quite impressed with this.

BM - Did you hear from any of these people later on in your career?

JO - No I didn't. Only from, I got letters from Mickey Rooney you know and Freddie Bartholomew, pictures from Clark Gable, little notes and things of. How happy, how much they enjoyed the track meet and what a wonderful time they had. But I thought meeting Will Rogers was the greatest thrill.

BM - That must have been an exciting trip for a boy, you were what about twenty?

JO - I was about twenty I guess about twenty-then. Going to be twenty one in September that year.

BM - Then you came back home and went to work?

JO - That's right. Went back home, went back to work and then moved back down to school. I worked well, I was traveling most of the summer running but in the meantime I had a job.

BM - Now when you say traveling during the summer, who were you traveling for? Who was picking up the tab?

JO - Well, the different track meets. They had track meets in Buffalo, New York over in Canada and New York City and then they were going abroad see.

BM - Well I don't understand who pays for all of this?

JO - The promoters of the track meet. They send you the expense money you see.

BM - Now, how did they get their money?

JO - They get their money through the gate receipts. See they charge.

BM - The promoters then gave you expense money nothing more to come and run?

JO - Yes AAU won't allow you to accept anymore than your legitimate expense. That's your train fair and your hotel bill, you know that's it. And of course your meals, they pick your tab up for your meals.

BM - This you did then each summer or that first summer?

JO - The first summer. And then I ran up until after of a couple of weeks July the 4th and then I stopped and then the team went to Europe and they wanted me to go with them but the AAU took a team abroad and they wanted me to go. The Olympics were coming the next year and I didn't want to take the chance on getting hurt.

BM - Now how are the Olympic contenders chosen?

JO - Well they are chosen this way. All through the year, they these different meets. Now, then they come up to the finals. The finals are for two days and in order to qualify into the finals, either you have to place one, two, three, four in the national Collegiate track meet, the AAU track meet or your conference track meet. You know like every school has a conference involved in some conference and so these athletes that qualify in the conference meet and in the National Collegiates and or in the AAU are invited to the final try outs at Randles Island.

BM - Are the Ann Arbor Incident was a conference meet was it not?

JO - Yes that's right. That was our Big Ten Conference.

BM - And that was your first really big sensational wait.

JO - That's right, that was my big day. I think that perhaps it's the biggest day I've ever had, one single day.

BM - That was in your sophomore year, was it not?

JO - Sophomore year, yes.

BM - Now leading up to that year you had a fracus in the frat house of one of your friends and you had hurt your back rather severely?

JO - That's right. This was about three weeks before the Big Ten meet.

BM - Didn't that worry you terribly that you wouldn't be able to run?

JO - Yes I was, I was very worried about it frankly, and the coach was ready to withdraw my name, but there was no point in withdrawing it unless you couldn't go through with the track meet.

BM - How, actually, was the extent of your injury?

JO - Well, it was one of the vertebrates, was out of place, you know, and it would swell, you know, the muscle would jump out, and then the muscle would swell. And it would take a little time for the muscle to dilate in order for the disc to go back into place you see. And we would rub it you know. We had whirlpool baths and we had, you know, hand rub, then we put heat, such as red pepper rub, which would supply the heat, in order to keep the back warm. And this would last for maybe an hour or two you know, but then it would start getting stiff again and during the course of the workouts, during the week, and you get through, and you know you'd feel fine by the time you take your shower, but the moment you cool off then this thing would all come back again, you see. Then the day, the week of the Big Ten meet, I mean the week before we came here to Northwestern. And we ran a quad meet with northwestern Wisconsin, Purdue, and Ohio State. I was doing fine. My back had stopped hurting then. I was doing fine until I got to the last event which was the low hurdles. And so I hit the last hurdle with my instep, you know, you hit it here see, and you knock the top of it off, and when I hit that hurdle it looked like something drove up into my spine. And this thing I took, I was taking a shower, and oh God I could hardly get out it was hurting so badly. So we went to the Y, we were staying at the Emerson YMCA in Evanston at that time. And so we came back the next day and I didn't work out all week. All week long I spent my time in the training room and they were working on this back. And I was able to go up to Ann Arbor, and I remember we got there on a Friday morning. We left early and got there Friday morning, had the preliminaries in the afternoon. I remember going to the field and working out. No, we went up there on a Thursday. We worked out on Thursday, the preliminaries were on Friday. I qualified in all the events. My back was still hurting but not as bad, but they wanted to keep heat on it that night. And so, well, we got some chemical heating pads and put one on my stomach and one on my back and we tied it around with a towel and we put water in this thing, see, and this generates heat. So I slept with it on all night long. I got up the next morning and got into a tub of hot water, as hot as I could stand it, and then my back was still stiff and sore. So we went down and had breakfast, and after we ate breakfast, and we went back upstairs, and I laid down for awhile, and we went down stairs about eleven o'clock, and we were getting ready to go over to Ann Arbor which was about ten miles away. So I got to the field, and I went upstairs, took off my clothes, put on my track suit, and got on the training table before I put on my suit, and then they rubbed my back with this, you know, right up and down my spine, with this red pepper rub. Then I put on my track suit, and then heavy sweat suit. I was trying, you know, you usually warm up with a quarter mile. Well I tried to run this quarter and I couldn't make two hundred and twenty yards, you know, giving me so much pain that I came and sat down by the flagpole and I watched the people come in. And then the coach came over and wanted to

know how my back was and I told him it was still sore and he said well I think I'll scratch your name because I don't want you hurt. I said well look let me lose the first race and then withdraw me. So as well I don't, whether it's luck or whatever, you know, problems I had. I know when the race started it seems as though my back stopped hurting, I had no problems with it and we had this big day. When the last race was over and I was standing taking some pictures I almost collapsed because that pain started shooting up my leg. And then they took me upstairs rubbed me down and I got into my street clothes and I drove to Cleveland that night with Jack Clauser I was telling you about. And then we

BM - Is that the same Jack Clauser that wrote for the Daily News?

JO - No. He wrote for the Cleveland papers.

BM - Then I read a reprint yes he must have had a syndicated column because I read six editorials that he wrote upon you.

JO - Well anyhow he drove me to Cleveland that night.

BM - Were you in agony?

JO - Well I had cramps in my leg first, you know. And then after I got the cramps out of my leg I just, you know, stretched out in the back seat of his car. And while I was in one position it didn't bother me. And the only time it bothered me really when I tried to get up and once I got up I was all right.

BM - I want you to describe the day at Ann Arbor, though I don't want you to describe it on this tape because you'll get right in the middle of the second event, we'll run out of tape. On the end of this tape let's talk about something very simple. Tonight for dinner at your home we had prime ribs, fried chicken, wonderful vegetables and so forth. How does that compare with the food you grew up on as a child, Jesse?

JO - Well, I'll tell you. We didn't have that when we were a child. I mean things were rather tough in some of the days. You had soup for the first course and soup for the last course sometimes. If you didn't like soup you didn't eat, I mean that was how tough things were. But I don't mean to intimate that our life was always that way. We always had, because of the farm life in which we lived, there was always food on the farm.

BM - What was an average meal?

JO - An average meal was vegetables, ate a lot of greens, like collard greens or string beans, squash and tomatoes, okra, and often times we would have a piece of ham that would be cooked with the cabbage or with the greens or whatever the vegetable might have been. The family did believe in a lot of vegetables, and because we had an abundance of vegetables, because we grew them as a child.

And then after we moved North, when the situation changed to the point of where there was a lot of meat around the table, such as pork chops, for instance, steak or you know the different cuts of meat at that time, not the expensive cut.

BM - How did you mother fix pork chops that make them so tender? I had a dreadful time trying to make pork chops and make them tender?

JO - Well, I wouldn't know, I never did monkey around the kitchen see. (Laugh) I just wouldn't know.

BM - One thing can you remember, mostly how you felt the crowd, the people?

JO - This is something I have thought about many, many years. I remember the day going there on a Friday and qualifying on a Friday, tough time getting up the next morning, going to the field, driving up in the Hupmobile which was a popular car in those days. In the front seat of the car our coach was driving and I had got down in the car as far as I possibly could to get as comfortable as I possibly could. And then going upstairs into this fieldhouse, the red brick and the ivory covered walls. And the first thing that I did when I got upstairs, I went to my locker, took off my clothing. The trainer came and got me and took me to the rubbing room and rubbed me down first of all with alcohol. Then he took some wintergreen, rubbed my legs with it and then he takes, he took his fingers into a brand new jar of red pepper rub and he ran those two fingers down. He got a goodly portion on his fingers and he started at the base of my neck and he start rubbing it into my spine all the way to the bottom of my spine. Then I got up and put my track suit on, my heavy warm-up suit, and then we went out on the field with our indoor shoes on and track with our spikes in our hand. Walking down with four or five members of our track team, and preparation of getting warmed up, because now we were watching. The crowd was coming in. The track meet was to get under way about forty minutes later. I remember going out and the five of us getting on the track and start jogging around and I got about two hundred yards and I told the fellows I couldn't go any further. So they continued on jogging, warming up, and I walked back to the flagpole, and the flagpole was at the end of the hundred yards, where the hundred yards finished, and I sat down upon the ground and leaned against this flagpole and I began to watch the people as they came in. Among the people that came in was my junior high school coach. And he came over to me and he knelt down and we talked for awhile and he wanted to know how I was feeling and I was telling him about my back. It was a warm afternoon. I imagine the temperature was about seventy-five degrees, sunny, no wind, shirtsleeve crowd. Then as I sat and chatted with him, he was patting me on my shoulder and giving me words of encouragement and then telling me that everything would be all right, he thought. Then I sat there and turned my attention to the boys whom I were going to compete against came over and began to chat with me in reference to my condition. And then just about fifteen minutes before the first call of the hundred yard dash, I got up again, I started to jog a little bit to loosen up my legs and the pain was still in my back and it was shooting up through my spine, not in my legs now. And knowing that I couldn't jog too well I began to walk and swinging my arms and loosing up and see whether or not the muscles in my body were loose because of the heavy suit and the warmth of the weather and the red pepper rub that I had gotten on my spine, and the wintergreen that he had used on my legs. I

was beginning to feel warm and perspiration started to appear upon my brow and on my arms.

BM - Were you frightened?

JO - Yes you're always frightened before any big event gets under way and this was my first Big Ten Conference meet and there were a number of seniors from other schools whom you had read about. Fellows like and Willis Ward. And sophomores like Don Lash and Sammy Store and many others, big names from the different schools. Then I was wondering whether or not I was going to be able to even make it. And then I came back and I sat down with members of the team and the coach came over and wanted to know how I was feeling and was I warm. And then he says, well I think I'll scratch you. And I says, well don't do that until I run the first race. And I will know then, you know, let me if I'm going to get beat I would rather get beat in the race.

BM - Did you have any feelings of wanting out?

JO - No, I had no feelings of wanting out. The only thing that I had at the time was that here I am, it's my first conference meet, sorry that I was feeling, you know, the way that my back was, otherwise mentally I was ready for the meet. Physically outside the back, my legs were in shape, my body was in good tone but this pain in my back was the only thing that marred any thoughts that I might have. And then when they called the first call for the hundred and we went up and we were ready and picking our lanes and walking around and waiting. And then when the final call came and I tried to take off my sweat suit I couldn't get it off and I had to have one of my track teammates to take it off for me.

BM - You couldn't get your arms up?

JO - I couldn't get my arms up. So he helped me get it off and then I went to the starting line and stood there where everybody was prancing around. I stood still. And then when he said on your mark and as I tried to get down on my mark I felt this pain still in my back. And then when he said set I came up waiting for the gun, I felt no pain when I came up. The gun went off. I ran the entire day without a pain anywhere. Everything was timed right. My timing was right. I was off with the gun. My knees were working perfectly. My arms were synchronized with my legs. The body position that we worked so hard for was there. The movement of the head was none which was there. You kept it stationary as if you had a glass of water there. And so I finished the hundred and we ran it in nine four. Then we didn't take time to put your sweatsuit on to work because the broad jump was in progress. Going over to the broad jump and reporting and waiting for a couple of fellows to jump. It was my turn to jump. I asked to have the handkerchief to be placed on the twenty six feet two and half inches which was the world's record at that time. I took this one jump, I got up into the air and I sailed past this two and

half mark and when it was measured it was twenty six feet eight and quarter inches. And then the field

BM - At this point before you go on to the next event was the crowd going crazy?

JO - Everybody was watching. And when they tied the hundred they announced the hundred was tied. They didn't have a microphone on the field and the man was talking through one of these megaphones. And he immediately goes before the crowd, and he grabs me, and takes me, and tells me, and as the people had watched the broad jump knew, that I had passed the mark, but they didn't know what the mark was, but they knew it was a tremendous distance. And so when it was announced it was a new world's record the people began to cheer. And then they were awaiting the two-twenty dash. So twenty minutes later after walking and keeping warm the two-twenty got under way and here we came down the two twenty and I finished about maybe five or six yards in front of everybody else. And this time was announced as a new world's record and now everybody is watching. Everybody is watching every move that you make. They got the low hurdles coming up and they're wondering whether or not you can win the low hurdles. And the coach was over asking me how was my back and I felt no pain, nothing. Everything was working as he had planned it, and as we had worked through the week and timing it, everything was there, and the two-twenty hurdles without any exception to that too. We ran the two-twenty low hurdles perfectly as we had practiced it during the coming weeks. Finally when this was over and the time was announced then the crowd of people came out of the stands and everybody began to crowd around the newspaper men, the photographers and everybody was asking the questions. Immediately when this was over, I had trouble trying to get upstairs. They had to carry me upstairs. And then the pain, not so much the back, but in my legs, because well it was a short day but yet so a long day. Where you begin to have cramps in your legs and getting rid of those.

BM - Jesse I think it would be an interesting thing to conjecture how the day would have gone if you had not injured your back? I can think of two answers.

JO - I can say this. I don't think that it could have gone any better. I don't think that if we didn't have the hurt or if we didn't have the injury we may not have been as sharp or maybe something would have gone amiss to the point.

BM - You mean your concentration might have been elsewhere?

JO - Elsewhere that's right. You see because your concentration was there on that one particular thing at the time because you were worrying when was this going to start again and so you make the best of what you have now and this was the thing that I felt and thought about. I don't want to say what could have happened if my back hadn't been injured because it wasn't injured at the time, I was running, it didn't hurt. And I don't think that I had any better timing at any other time in my whole life in track and field as I had on that particular day.

BM - You commented earlier that this was probably the greatest day in your life, greater than the Olympics?

JO - Yes. This is the one day deal. The Olympics is five, you see. And everything was crowded into this one day.

BM - When you got back to Cleveland, when you got back to Ohio State, I should say, what was your reception?

JO - It was a warm one from the classmates, I ought to say the student body and teachers in the school. Of course we were constantly besieged for pictures from the newspapers and they were from all parts of the country that were there. And our classroom work was not interrupted because the athletic department would not allow it and then we would have to go to the athletic department and there we would have the pictures made you know at certain times of that particular day for the press that were around. And we were back to track and field practice on a Monday as if nothing had happened.

BM - But something had happened. How did it change you, or did it change you, or your thinking, or your attitude, or your feelings?

JO - It didn't change anything but only it began to build up the pressure. Because constantly people were wondering, well how much further are you going to go, how fast are you going to run this, you know. It brings about much like the pressure that was brought upon Roger Marris just a few months ago trying to break Babe Ruth's record. This is the thing that people, you go out, and you've reached the zenith. Now you've gone farther and faster than anyone else has ever gone. But you, this considered tops, where are you going to go from there. But this is something you're trying to maintain because now you have a reputation where people are looking for it. People are coming out to see you perform and people wanting to see records broken and records are not broken that way. Records are not broken with the idea in mind that I'm going to break a record because you can't do it that way.

BM - Was this the beginning? Would you think of your responsibility to society as well as the responsibility to yourself and your family?

JO - Yes, I do believe it became more serious at the time. Your responsibilities before was in the realm of your family and in people and the few people that believed. Now this is something else. This is something else, this is something where you become world wide. Where people begin to talk about it. Now you have an obligation to fulfill. People coming to see you perform and you've got to give them the best that you have within you on that particular day. And then you begin to realize that now this I've got to be a little bit more careful of. I've got to be ready on this particular day. On a Saturday with the people to come and they're going to

look at you they're going to make comparisons and if you give a creditable performance on that day then these things is worthwhile for them coming.

BM - I suppose the young people now, the younger people, the junior high students and the high school students, were looking up at you with great worship and asking your advice and coming around a great deal?

JO - We used to receive a lot of letters from youngsters in junior high school wanting to know the formula, wanting to know your training schedule, even high school students, even college students.

BM - Do you think this was the real reason or is it just that they wanted contact with success?

JO - Well here.

BM - In other words excuse with what they had to write to you other than to ask you for some information, some technical information?

JO - Well I imagine, Barbara, in this sense, that if they hadn't of heard of you they'd probably wouldn't have any reason to write. Now that you been fortunate enough to achieve certain things they feel that they have the right to ask because you're suppose to know what is good and what isn't good. What did you do when you were in junior high school, some of the things that you did. They wanted to know that in order to improve their particular performance you see.

BM - Did you answer?

JO - Many of them I did. We would answer them through the coach's office. And the coach would write to them, and being a coach, and as this is his field, why he would give advice to youngsters pretty much in the words that we would give and I would sign the letters. Because at that time, trying to study, trying to work, trying to practice three jobs and none of them are easy.

BM - Also you were married and had a child.

JO - Had a family. Had to look after the family and

BM - Your father was still living?

JO - Yes. Mother and father. And then I had them down to school from time to time, some of the track meets we would have. It was the first time my father had been out of Cleveland since he arrived. Farthest that he had been away from it was, at that time, was Columbus, Ohio.

BM - And what was his reaction to all of the adulation you had received and the friends that you had made and your relative success that you had made at this time?

JO - Strange man. You couldn't read his emotions. He was a man like this. He always called me Buster. And he says that's pretty good, that's pretty good. This was all he would say but I could always see a smile that played around his lips you know corner of his mouth of satisfaction, of feeling that this was well done.

BM - Do you think that he had a feeling of having failed you, or having failed his family, in anyway because he had to give up his farm and so forth?

JO - No, he did the best that he could. A deeply religious man, he believed in his God. Did the things that he thought as he read the Bible that God would want him to do and he was a man that could lay down at night and sleep because his conscience, his mind was not troubled. Then he gave all that he could give with what he had to give. And that's why I was always quite proud of my mom and dad because what little they had to give, they gave plenty of. And this is the satisfaction I got out of being able to run and have his fellow men as neighbors and the people in the community and the places where he was able to work and they would talk about it. This became a big thing in his church where he received recognition in church from the pulpit, this is the father of, you know, the boy that's running. This was a rather proud moment in his life as well as mine.

BM - What a nice thing to be able to give your father?

JO - It is, you know there is very little that we can give people in this world and if we can give back something where they're receiving satisfaction out of it then, then you're well paid.

BM - Now this was in your sophomore year, the Ann Arbor day? And during that year was there anything else significant that you can recall?

JO - Yes. Yes, I thought that I would tour the remainder of the year such as the Central Inter-Collegiates at Milwaukee were very successful. We were able to go there and continue to win four events. Then leaving there, we went to California and competing in the dual meet with Southern Cal. Competing in four events, and in every event that you'd have, you'd have a fresh competitor. You'd have one in the hundreds, two in the hundreds, then you'd get two more in the two-twenty. Then you'd run the low hurdles and you had two more competitors in the low hurdles fresh. And then you were broad jumping and you'd have three fresh competitors in the broad jump and you're competing against all of these fellows in the afternoon trying to win four events and running incredible time. This is where the pressure begins to build because you got thirty seven thousand people sitting in the stands. Thirty seven thousand people watching and looking for a miracle to happen, world's records to be broken, you see. But my concern was to be able to

beat these four fellows, I mean these two fellows in fresh fellows, in every event that I was running in.

BM - Explain what is meant when you break a record and then they say that they cannot record this as such because the wind was in your favor?

JO - Well if the wind exceeds certain mileage, if the wind is blowing more than three miles an hour then it's not considered a world's record because the wind is at your back and it aids you, you see. They have a barometer, a little thing that goes around. It records the miles per hour of the wind and it is within that range of less than three miles an hour, then it's considered a world's record. But if it gets above that then it's not considered a record.

BM - And then describe that starting block and wasn't there some dissension about whether or not this is was legal some time ago.

JO - Well in our day starting blocks weren't legal. It hadn't been adopted by the National Collegiate Council.

BM - Because it gave you too much leverage to begin?

JO - Yes that's right and as a result we use, still use, we dug the holes and started from the ground, you see, by digging the holes in the ground.

BM - But you accomplished the same purpose actually?

JO - You accomplished the same purpose you see but with the starting blocks you don't have to worry about anything giving because the starting blocks will not give. The ground sometimes will give and sometimes will break, you know, as you push out and you put the pressure there, then you have a tendency to tear up the ground and the back of your foot begins to slip. But on the starting blocks it's not going to move see. Its either a piece of wood or they'll put, you know, where your foot is at, or it might be a piece of rubber put where it won't slip, you see. And the blocks having been placed upon this little piece of metal and screwed in, you cannot push it back and you've good footing as you push off.

BM - When was this made legal?

JO - A, about 1938. Because in the indoor meets as today the boys have the starting blocks can get away much better, but in our day we had to put a, we had to start flush with the floor, and you had these very small spikes that we called a needle spike, and you push, you stomp your foot to get your hold in the floor and there's where you had to start from.

BM - Now didn't the boy also have a disadvantage when he was running on a track which had been run previously because of the spikes have dug into the ground?

JO - You would find it more difficult in the two field events such as pole vault and the broad jump because you were running down the same runway and when four or five fellows run down this runway it invariably digs it up. And then, therefore, when you're going down, you're running into the footprint or the place where it's been dug up by other people and you're not getting the same footing as you would with something that's made of a composition. And you can run on it and your spike would go in but it's not going to dig it up and you always got good footing, firm footing all the way. Our trouble in those days came primarily in the broad jump and in the pole vault. Now for instance in track and field they did roll the track. Not as often as they do now, but they did roll it from time to time in a course of a meet. And the one lane that everyone tried to avoid would be the pole lane. Lane number one because this is where everybody would run, like the half milers and the quarter milers, if they weren't running in lanes always fought for the pole. Then you dug up this one lane quite a bit.

BM - How did you arrange for a lane, who said?

JO - You had to pick your lane out of a hat see. They had little balls with numbers on them, so you reach into the hat and pick a number and that was it. That was your lane.

BM - Well now after the tour then you came back and continued on with your regular school routine?

JO - That's right.

BM - You went into third year.

JO - Third year, this is our junior year, now. This the Olympic year.

BM - Is Ruth still going to a

JO - No she's not in school now. The baby in nursery school, household duties increase and then we had a number of other things to do which took up a lot of time.

BM - Now didn't she at one point have something to do with a beauty parlor?

JO - Yes. This was in the early days.

BM - Earlier than this?

JO - Oh yes, much earlier.

BM - Now when was it then that you competed for the Olympics?

JO - In '36.

BM - This was early in your junior year?

JO - This was, no, at the end of my junior year. Because Olympics were held in August, and you know, of that year. School was out and of course Olympics summer games were always held in August or September.

BM - Then leading up to that, was there something that you can recall in your junior year of significance other than the preliminaries for the Olympics?

JO - No we ----

BM - Were you having any trouble in school at this point?

JO - No. Our school work was going on pretty good.

BM - Now this is the year you were a page boy?

JO - Yes, the page boy year. This is the year that I would say that we had trouble with the Amateur Athletic Association in trying to declare you're a pro at that particular time.

BM - Yes, and I couldn't understand the reports I read about this, because in the first place, how did you obtain this position? Was it because of anyone you knew or did you simply apply for it or how did it happen that you became page?

JO - Well we got the job through the University and most of our jobs were through people whom were in the field of politics. With a state position who were interested in the University and trying to give aid to the boys on the athletic teams to help them through school. The man that sponsored me in the house of Representatives was a man by the name of Bret Ward. He was alumius of Ohio State University and one of the great legislators of the state of Ohio and put in many bills that were for the benefit of all people concerned. We worked for the money. It wasn't a question that we did not work.

BM - What was meant then when it said that a you were being paid during the time that the legislature was not in session?

JO - That was something that they said, that we were being paid, of which was not true, because when the legislature was not in session we moved over into other jobs. I moved over into a job of an oil company working in the gasoline station.

BM - They said it was revealed that Owens received \$159.00 between June 9th and July 31st as an honorary page for the state house of representatives.

JO - During that particular time the legislature was in special session and we were away on track meets. It was a salary whether you worked or not. It wasn't a question of everybody else was the same way. But we were singled out because of the track and field.

BM - Because of the Amateur Athletic rules?

JO - And they were a little mad with the University anyhow.

BM - Now explain to me how they would want to make an issue out of this?

JO - Anybody.

BM - Frankly in all of my research on you I've not been able to understand the Amateur Athletic Association?

JO - Well, this is a strange thing to understand that body, because they have nothing. They don't have an office but they don't have any athletics under their jurisdiction such as going to school. The National Collegiate Association has their rules by which they set it up. The Amateur Athletic Association, in my opinion, is a fine organization on paper. But when you have nothing that you can give, you're not providing anything. A, to me it was a sense of promotion. They say to set up a body, and this is the rules by which, if you're going to compete, this is what you've got to do. You got to pay fifty cents dues in order to belong. You can't go into a place where it's paid but they charge admissions for people to see you run. And I can't see the difference between that and another promoter, unless they want to run a monopoly on something, you see, that prohibits a person, that they don't do anything for, you see, in order for them to compete in a meet that they sanction.

BM - Well, who established this organization?

JO - I don't know who was the

BM - This particular one who headed this particular one in Ohio?

JO - I think a fellow by the name of Floyd Roe.

BM - Had he been an athletic?

JO - Oh yes.

BM - He knew the rules and the procedures?

JO - And these are the things they do to suit their own particular needs at the time, you see. They can enforce it or they can't or that they won't.

BM - Who gave them the authority to be able to legislate amateur athletics?

JO - Well their body at their annual meetings of where they set up their rules and regulations which is governing the AAU body.

BM - Would it not help the entire body for an athletic of your stature to be able to belong and enter the Olympics and so forth and so forth?

JO - Yes, but their thought is that there are to be no special privileges for anyone. Well I go with that. I don't think there should be any special privileges.

BM - Well if you gained a position with the legislature because you were a student at Ohio State this seems to me has nothing to do with the fact that you're Jesse Owens or Joe Wolf.

JO - Well they figure that you weren't give a job because you were a student but because your name was what it was.

BM - What about the other pages?

JO - Nobody paid any attention to that.

BM - And yet they received the same information of whether they were there or whether they weren't there and so forth?

JO - That's right. They received the same information. That's right.

BM - And then you obtained a job pumping gasoline at a gas station?

JO - Yes, which was a very interesting job.

BM - Interesting in what way?

JO - People that you met. The people with whom you worked.

BM - Did people come to the gas station to see you specifically?

JO - That's right.

BM - Well didn't the AAU have clamp down on this. They were using your name in order to pump gas and make money doing so?

JO - Well this they don't say anything about. Anything pertaining to their pocketbooks, they got something to say about it. But now here you are working.

BM - How did you work that out I noticed that Maurice Snider made a statement that it had nothing to do with athletics, if the Ohio Legislature or the people of Ohio want to pay Jesse as an honorary page that is no concern of the AAU. Even if the state does not call upon Owens to earn back the money by working?

JO - Well that's true because at their point that's their business. They can pay you whatever they wish to pay.

BM - It even, I understand, became a part of the Congressional Record at that point and several gentlemen including Mr. Ward made a statement which went into the records to that effect. So that was cleared up. A statement was issued that it was all right for you to go ahead and participate?

JO - That's very true.

BM - In the meantime did it give you a bad turn, were you condemned?

JO - No, because the coach told me not to worry about it. He'd take care of it.

BM - And he did.

JO - And make no statements to the paper, any statements that were to be made would come through the athletic department office and this was a great help.

BM - We haven't talked at all about Larry Snyder and your relationship with him?

JO - Well I, a, Larry was pretty much like Charles Riley in a sense. He was a nice fellow. He was a great person to go to with problems. He helped me in every way that he could. If I was weak in a subject I'd go to him, he would find a tutor for me. He was constantly on me about the job that I was to do and the responsibility that I had upon that campus. And how I must be able to carry myself because people were looking. Everybody's eyes were upon you. And they would scrutinize everything that you did and so therefore you had to be very very careful of the things that you did.

BM - Did you get tired of this sometimes?

JO - Oh yes you get tired of living in a glass bowl. But it's a wonderful thing to have people to recognize you. People to admire for your ability. But sometimes people forget you're a human being and that you're no different than any other mortal man. That you would like to do something the same as anyone else would like to do. People won't let you do it. And it's a tough thing sometimes, as you well know, because what you might do would be criticized where someone else would do it and nothing would be said about it. But you're not suppose to do certain things.

BM - But you could have given up at this point. You didn't have to go on with it if the recognition and the status hadn't been as important to you as it was. You could have said I'm through with this nonsense. I'm going to finish my education and go on and become a lawyer or a something else.

JO - Well, this you could have done but still you feel that here you are where people have made it possible to this point. Yes I paid for it. I worked for it but these people made it possible for you to start. Why at this point you're not any greater than the people will make you. You can do a number of things, but if the people are not with you then who knows about it. They pass it over very lightly. And then, too, you can do a number of great things and lose the battle because of your attitude and the way that you think.

BM - Where were you headed scholastically, what did you have in mind as a career?

JO - Well I wanted to teach industrial arts and coach track and field. Eventually wind up as the athletic director in some institution of learning. This was my goal at that time. And the course of events detoured that you know.

BM - Could you still do this if you had a mind to?

JO - Of course, yes I could still do this if I had a mind to. But I don't think that I could now. I don't think that I could stand the regimentation of a classroom day by day doing the same thing. Coaching I could, but teaching no. Because over the years I've had the privilege -- your time is pretty much your own. You don't have to punch a clock. And you're not working eight hours at one place, you know leaving and going. I don't think that I could stand that. Your hours today run some twelve fifteen to sixteen hours a day which you have become accustomed to.

BM - Well now we come to the annual Collegiate AAU Track and Field Championship at Stag Field. This was in 1936. This was prior to the preliminary for the Olympics. And again you came off with the most of the glories for that particular meet?

JO - Yes we were very fortunate winning four events, you know, in every meet for the three years we were running.

BM - This was the year you were approached to run for the legislature?

JO - Yes.

BM - Now how did you feel about that? Were you interested in politics at all?

JO - No, this was just a group of men, a group of people you know, because of the popularity that you were enjoying at the time to run for the legislature. I thought it was foolish and we paid no attention to that whatsoever.

BM - Most popular man on the American team they said about you in Germany.

JO - We had fun, we had a lot of fun. We met a lot of wonderful people. We got a chance to know them as we went over on the boat. We talked to everybody.

BM - Course you had no problems in the preliminaries at all. You sailed through that as though it were nothing?

JO - That's right we had no problems in qualifying at all.

BM - Then you got ready to go. Were you excited with Ruth and your mother and dad, everybody excited this was a great thing?

JO - This was the greatest thing that ever happen to me. Whoever thought about me going abroad, going to Germany or any place else in the United States.

BM - A little boy from Alabama now suddenly.

JO - That's right, all of these things happened. They unfold and here you are standing on the threshold of all of this. Sure it's a big moment and a big thrill.

BM - And you apparently were a big enough man to carry this off without getting your head turned. I think this is probably one of the most exciting things about you is the fact that you could go into these things naively and come out of them without being touched by all of the plaudits, the glory.

JO - You know, I don't understand people because, you know, I like people. I try awfully hard for people to like me. And I think that one way this was taught, back in the very early days, junior high school days, I mean how long does it take for you to say hello to somebody. How long does it take for you to answer a question of a child or anybody that asks you a question if you know the answer. If you don't know the answer just tell them I don't know. But you don't have to fluff the people off. I mean take time because they take time to stop to talk to you. And this is one thing that I can't understand about people that don't want to take a moment or two just to answer a question or to sign a piece of paper. You may be busy yes but how long is it going to take. Even if it takes a little time, you've satisfied a person that wanted to ask something. Members of the team you'd like to know something about their families so you sit down and talk. You don't have to talk shop but talk about them, their families. All of this to me will bring about a closer relationship with a person. You don't have to talk about what you have done because people know about you've done. But lets find out something about you.

BM - When you were getting ready to go to Berlin, what did Hitler mean to you? The German people?

JO - Hitler meant nothing. I wasn't interested in politics. Never heard of Hitler until all of this business and the decision of whether the team should be sent. Never heard of him before.

BM - You didn't know about his strong Pro-Aryan youth movement?

JO - No. This I didn't have time to read about. And when we got there I had no feelings one way or the other. The German youth were real nice to us.

BM - They were?

JO - Very nice. The German people were wonderful. They had thousands to greet us as we came into the station. And they cheered and cheered and they were calling out your name as you sat upon top of a bus and rode to the city hall and people wanted to get a look at you. So I had nothing, I didn't worry about anything. I didn't even know.

BM - What do you know. And how did they village you there? What were your quarters like?

JO - The quarters were beautiful. The Olympic Village was one of the finest I've seen, and the Olympics since then. I thought that the village itself was very very beautiful setting. They had these houses where they would be twelve men in the house, two men to a room. They had a patio on the back. These beach chairs on the front. Grass was all around the place. Trees were growing everywhere and they had the winding streets. And at the head of the village was the dining room in a three tier affair in a semi circle. You could stand on the veranda of the dining room and you could look over the entire Olympic Village. They had the practice fields within the village, the swimming pools, practice pools within the village. They had the Swedish baths, they had movies and all kinds of recreation. So the facilities were very, very fine. And this is the first time I had an opportunity to witness a television back in those days.

BM - German television?

JO - German television?

BM - What was it like?

JO - It was a very. like one of our very small sets. I guess it was about a eight or nine inch screen. And we saw them in the Hall of Nations inside of the village.

BM - Was the Olympic Village, because I don't know was it in what is now East or West Berlin?

JO - I think it's in West Berlin, I'm sure that it was in West Berlin. Yes it wasn't too far from the Olympic Stadium and it was in West Berlin.

BM - How long were you there before the actual meet began?

JO - Ten days. We were ten days before it started. We had ten days preparation to get the sea legs off and because at that time you were in top physical condition now it was just a matter of, you know, of keeping yourself in a fairly decent shape before the Olympic games. Watching your eating, working off the excess energy you know the foods that you did eat.

BM - What kind of food did you eat?

JO - The food we had, American food. We had steaks and plenty of it. We had bacon, eggs, ham, fruits, juices, everything that you have at a normal breakfast here.

BM - Did you learn any German?

JO - I usually have a hard time with the English language. (Laugh) So the youngsters that were our guides in the village, they spoke several different languages and they spoke very beautiful English and they were wonderful guides.

BM - Then were you receiving a tremendous amount of fan mail from young German people?

JO - We did. In fact even today I receive on the average of forty letters a week from youngsters overseas. Youngsters whose parents were children at the time we were running. And youngsters that now read the books and they refer back to the Olympic games in 1936 and they send their letters wanting autographs and pictures. And we give away about four thousand pictures a year which runs into considerable money.

BM - And you're thrilled at seeing the American flag in Berlin?

JO - You know, it's a thrill to see the American flag anywhere particularly so in Berlin. Of course this is a symbol of victory and this is the thing that we were trained for and this is the thing that hundreds of thousands of people came day by day to see the American athletic and certainly he didn't let them down. And so it was a thrill to sit there and watch the American flag and listen to the National Anthem day by day.

BM - Now we get to the meet itself and how you felt about it. Can you describe it to me? The first day was August 2nd?

JO - Yes.

BM - And that was when you did hundred meter?

JO - Hundred meters. You know it's a course to me.

Jesse Owens
Tape 3

JO - Oh honey I'm telling you I just feel like going away and forgetting it for awhile I'm so damn tired of all of this hassle, you know. So damn many things that a come up and you try to get it done.

BM - Are you trying to do too many things at once?

JO - A no, it's not that I cut down a lot of things, it's just, you know, I we've got a deal going, you know, with this a specialty selling and I've got a lot of paper hanging fire. These guys are supposed to have gone through with this deal for me and I've got this thing over to the bank and I made a mistake by not having two sources you know and I've got this one source and I'm getting a hard time trying to get this paper passed. Well, I think we've got about twenty some thousand dollars in paper. And you know I'm trying to get this thing through and get the twenty some thousand dollars, and pay for some of the material merchandise we've sold. You see in it you've got about, in it I've got about fourteen thousand dollars that's due me, you know, to the company. And I'm trying to go to the bank this morning and trying to get them suckers to hurry this deal up, you see. The president of the bank is with me. The guy that owns the bank is just got back from Phoenix, Arizona, you see. They're holding conferences and they held one yesterday for four hours and the guy called me this morning and he said Jesse I'm trying to get this stuff through for you today, you know. And you sit and I'm worrying with this and I'm selling this stuff and these people got this merchandise you see. And so because I gave it to them at the suggestion of the bank. They've got a receipt signed that they've got. They've received the merchandise you see. Gee if I don't get this thing through and I've got to go back and pick up this merchandise I'm in bad shape. So it's put you way out on a limb. So it's been kind of rough. So, what else is new?

BM - What else is new? Jesse let's go way back to now to 1936. And reminisce about the Olympics. I'm sure that you have told this story how many hundreds of times to how many papers and magazines and persons. You were on person to person with Edward R. Murrow. You were on what was the other show?

JO - "This is Your Life."

BM - "This is Your Life." And this has been broadcast certainly many many times, but for the Historical Library we would like to have a record of the Olympics in your own words. The feeling that you had when you knew that you were going to go, the trip over on the boat, your associations and so forth. Mr. Hitler.

JO - Well, Barbara, I we would go back about twenty five, maybe twenty six years ago, and if memory serves me right, I remember it was in July, July the fourth of 1936 when we had the final try outs for the Olympics at Randall's Island. And that was the fourth and the fifth and of course the boys and girls that qualified on those particular days chosen for the members of the Olympic team. And after we had all qualified and the team had been picked a question came up of whether or not the American team should because of Hitler. A number of things had been said in the papers and throughout the world that many of the countries would not go because of his policies that he had spoken of and things that appeared in the paper. And after two days of real anxious waiting we finally got the word that the American team was going to go regardless.

BM - Who was to make this decision?

JO - The members of our Olympic Committee, plus certain members of our government, the state department of our government, and the decision was made in our favor of going. And I remember very well when we got ready to go and course birth certificates and those that did not have it they had to have an affidavit of your birth and we were scurrying around trying to get all of these things and then we were told you could only take so much clothing and just each person would be allowed to take one suitcase. And they gave us a certain Olympic equipment that we were to carry, such as a dress up parade uniform consisting of a straw hat and a tie and a couple of shirts and a pair of pants and a pair of shoes. And of course they issued you the Olympic uniform: the sweatsuit and the pants and the jersey and then you had to carry your own shoes. They did not provide shoes for us in those days as far as track and field was concerned. I remember we got on the boat, The Manhattan and this was the first time that many of us had ever been on a boat of this size. And I can remember the first night that we were, we went down to dinner. We set sail in the early afternoon and dinner was served at six o'clock. Of course we were all assigned to different tables and sitting at the table with boys from Louisiana and Alabama and Mississippi and we all sat down to eat. That first night they served hors d'oeuvres and none of us had ever heard of hors d'oeuvres before and they brought it in and sat it down upon the table and naturally not knowing what it was why we ate up all the hors d'oeuvres that were put there. And not realizing that this was just an appetizer. But after that they didn't bring anymore hors d'oeuvres because (laugh) they felt that we didn't know what they were and it wasn't necessary. But the food was very good. Breakfast and lunch and dinner and have a tendency to put a lot of weight on a number of boys because well you didn't have enough room to run around. We worked out even though we worked out on top deck. A working out there of course, the floor was very hard and there was no give and it can create shin splints and other injuries that would be detrimental to the members of the team. We worked out very lightly. Some worked out on mats and, you know, in order to keep our weight down and just to keep loose for the time that we were on the boat. Some nine days later we finally arrived in the country of Germany and then we took the train from this point down to Berlin. And I remember very well when we arrived in Berlin

that morning about eight o'clock there were hundreds and hundreds of people out there to greet us. When they had a band in the railroad station and the band began to play the Star Spangled Banner and we all filed off the train and into buses on our way to the City Hall to be officially welcomed by the members of the German Olympic Committee and the German government itself. Prior to our going to Berlin, of course, our names were printed in the papers and the records that you had created were printed in the papers and the people there at the station were quite anxious to know who Jesse Owens was. It was a strange thing they never said Jesse Owens they always called you Jessthie Ovens. And this I always remember, and I remember the members of the Olympic Committee, our Olympic Committee and the German Olympic Committee, in order for me to be identified to the crowd I sat on top of the bus. And we rode to the City Hall amongst the cheers of thousands and thousands of German people. And after the official welcoming from the German Government and the German Olympic Committee we were then sent off the Olympic Village. The Olympic Village being some ten miles from the city of Berlin in a very beautiful setting, I don't think that any Olympic Village that I've ever see since then had a more beautiful setting than the Village in 1936. It was winding roads and they had beautiful grass, trees and then the houses in which we lived all set among these trees with a very beautiful patio on the back. And of course in front of the house they had a couple of chairs where you would sit and you would come in. Now each house would house I would say about twenty-six men. You had thirteen rooms and you had two men in a room. They had all the facilities, your wash room and facilities for showers, even had a bathtub there. Those that wanted to take a bath. And each man had his own individual bed and at the foot of every bed was a locker and a closet in each room. And there was plenty of room for you to hang your clothing for the two men that were there. And of course all of your personal belongings could be put into the table drawer which was the table between the two beds and a light upon this table and gave you room for writing space and what not. And all of this was yours for the time that you were there. As all Olympic Villages that I have ever seen and the story of the Olympic games, every nation has what they call a Hall of Nations. And in this Hall of Nations, of course, they have representatives of all of the people that are there speaking the language of all of the people that are there and whatever the questions you might have the people that you wanted to see, would go to this particular booth, of this particular nation, and you have a person speaking the language of that nation and you information was transferred into the village and into the house in which the person lived. I felt that the arrangements of having the youth of their country that spoke several different languages was quite a unique kind of thing. Every boy that was there was a, which was a Hitler Youth Movement, something like our Boy Scout Movement here is this country. Every boy had to speak the English language and they spoke the English language very clearly and distinctly. And of course they spoke German and several other languages and they acted as your guide throughout the duration of the Olympic games. They would bring visitors to the house in which you lived. If you needed an interpreter they would act as an interpreter.

BM - Jesse, what was your relationship with any of these guides? Was it as cold as we are taught the German people are or did you form any sort of warm relationship with any of these guides or any persons there?

JO - Well, Barbara, I've always felt, and I've said this time and time again, I thought that the German people perhaps are the greatest sports enthusiasts in the world, great hero worshippers. The guides were my friends. Day by day they would come to the hut in which we lived. The boy that was particularly assigned to the house in which I lived, he would bring his friends and they would be there every morning and every noon and in the evening.

BM - Did they ask you about our country? Were they interested?

JO - They were, very much interested in America.

BM - Did they believe what you told them, you and the other persons that were from America?

JO - Well, I somewhat believe that they, you know, they listen intensely with what we had to say in reference to our country. And at that particular time not being interested in the political situation as it was at that time and not knowing too much about it, the political questions never came up. There weren't any questions that would put an embarrassing situation to it at that time. They wanted to know about the kind of land in which we lived, the kind of houses which we had, something about our cities, something about our big theaters and our country in general. They wanted to know whether or not our cities were as beautiful as the city of Berlin, most of the youngsters there were from Berlin. And I didn't get a chance to see too much of Berlin because we were busy getting ready for the Olympic games and we arrived there nine days before the games opened and with the number of days we spent on the boat trying to get yourself back into condition or get rid of the sea legs, as you call it, I didn't get a chance to go out of the village. In fact, I never did leave the village. The only time that I was ever out of the village was at the time when we went to the Olympic Stadium to compete. We had our competition in the morning or in the afternoon and then when I finished the competition I came immediately back to the village awaiting the next day's competition.

BM - Were there any incidents with any of the boys there from our country with any of the German people that were significant?

JO - Well, I thought that the German people were really wonderful hosts to all the teams that were there. Particularly so we had a boy by the name of Zaberinie that climbed up the flag pole one night in front of the Olympic Village and hauled down the Nazi flag which was flying the top of the mast. Well he could have been shot for destroying or taking something that didn't belong, of course, there was quite a rumble for several days but he was allowed to keep the flag and brought the flag

back to America and he still has it as of this day. I was on "This is Your Life" with him and this was one of the things that was brought up in his life on the Edward's show and the flag was shown at that particular time. Outside of that there weren't any incidents that I can recall that really was unpleasant. However we did have two Jewish boys on our team. And I've always felt that it wasn't the German people that more or less kept them off the relay team but I thought that it was the politics of our own American officials that kept them off the team. Because they were told when we left America and when we arrived at the Olympic Village the team would be picked from the boys that showed the better times during the time trials in the Olympic Village. And this boy Marty Glickman, who is now one of the foremost basketball announcers in the country and on television and has done quite a bit on television and radio. And another boy by the name of Sammy Stoller, from the University of Michigan, who is now in Washington in radio. They had beaten the times of both the late Floyd Draper and Wykcoff and I felt that they were the boys that should have been picked for four hundred meter relay team but since the team itself is run by the Olympic Committee and they are appointing the track coach and other people, why then I think that it was a more or less a little politics on their part not wanting to run these two boys from America on our four hundred meter relay team. Why we had quite a discussion in the coach's quarters a day prior to the running of the four hundred meter.

BM - Were these boys not allowed to compete in any?

JO - Not in the Olympics. They did compete after the Olympic games were over in the post-Olympic meets. Both in Germany and Czechoslovakia, they were in London.

BM - What was their treatment in Germany?

JO - A, very fine. They were invited out by the German people. They went to the nightclubs and from their reports they had a wonderful time.

BM - And there were no embarrassing incidents?

JO - No embarrassing incidents at all as far as they were concerned.

BM - And you don't feel that the German government had anything to do with their not being allowed to compete?

JO - In my opinion, the German government had none. They didn't have anything. In fact, no country has a right to say what nationality you should use in any competition in the Olympic games. In the first place there's a misconception of, that people have of, Olympic games itself. You see the Olympic games is run solely by the International Olympic Committee. And the heads of the government of whatever country it happens to be the host country. The head of government of that state or that country has nothing to do with the Olympic games, whatsoever. It was, so happen in the part of Hitler, that Hitler felt that it was his duty to present

the medals to the German winners but the first day that it happened the American Olympic Committee immediately called together the President of the German Olympic Committee and they had a joint meeting of the national body and to inform Hitler that he was to remain in his box and that he was just a guest of the International Olympic Committee and that he was not to have any part in the presentation of the medals or any of the ceremonies that were there. And it was told to Hitler and Hitler abided by that decision. And that's why Hitler remained in his box there after, you know, during the duration of the Olympic games.

BM - Was he there for every, everyday?

JO - He was there everyday. He came in usually about one o'clock in the afternoon and usually left about five. Naturally, he was quite enthusiastic in encouraging the German youth to win. He provided a great deal of inspiration for them and they wanted to win der feuhrer and then of course they gave their best and they gave their all. But America had a far better team and our boys were, I thought, in much better shape because of the kind of competition that we have in this country. And as a consequence why America was able to run off with the lion's share of the Gold Medals in every event.

BM - Didn't he show no resentment?

JO - Well, you see from my standpoint, in where I sat, I couldn't see. In the first place, you're not concerned with whose in the stands. If you're there everyday, and you're competing day by day, you're concerned with the boys with whom you're going to compete against. And the one thing that you can never do, is take your mind off of what you're doing down there on the field. Because when you get this far into the Olympic games you've got to remember this, that every country is sending his best, his or her best boy or girl, and you're getting down into the semi-finals and into the finals. And when you get down to the finals, you've got six men in the finals. These six men represent the fastest human beings in the world in that particular event. If you're going to think in terms of being able to win, then you've got to study the five other boys that are in that particular race. What goes on up in the stands is no concern of yours. It may be a hundred or a hundred and ten thousand people or a hundred and twenty thousand people but to you there is no one there and you're concentrating upon the five that you're competing against. And this was a day by day bit with me, because one day you run the preliminaries in the hundred in the morning and in the afternoon you'd run the semi-finals. The next day, you're running the finals and you run the preliminaries in the two hundred meters the next day and the semi finals the same day, the next day you run the finals in two hundred meters and then you've got the broad jump and then we have the relay team in which to qualify so you weren't concerned. What happen in the stands I would never know. The only thing I know is what I read in the newspapers and then when I talk about it I'm talking through somebody else's eyes and what they've seen. How true it is I don't know.

BM - Well, what about the newspaper report that you were actually snubbed by Hitler, is this true or any of our boys?

JO - Well, I could never see any, the point of where we were snubbed, but I might say that the one day that he was on the field and we were finishing up the two hundred meter semi finals and we had just gone by and finished and we were picking up our sweatsuits. He was down there congratulating a winner of his that won their first Gold Medal, and while he was there, three boys from Finland had just finished one, two, three in the ten thousand meters which is unusual for one country to have a clean sweep. And then Helen Stevens was standing by, and he shook hands with the boys from Finland, and to persuade him to shake hands with Helen Stevens, and then while we were coming back he left the field, and not that I was anxious to shake hands with Hitler, but this was one of the things, he left, and whether or not that was considered a snub I don't know.

BM - Do you feel that our papers made a great big issue out of possibly nothing?

JO - Well, in my opinion, it was. But I'm very happy somewhat that they did, because you see this has brought up a lot of questions in the minds of people for all these many years. I might say I've gotten a lot of mileage out of it. It has served me well in the field in which I've gone into. These questions always arise where ever you go and what ever you do. You talk about it and it makes a very interesting story. And part of the repertoire that you use in the speeches that you make to people throughout the country. And talking about bigotry and what it can do. And so this has served me well in my particular phase of operation. However, I've thought that the Olympic games itself, at that time, again not knowing too much about politics and just going strictly from the standpoint of what competition is supposed to bring about, such as goodwill, sportsmanship and the friends that you make while you're there competing. And we did make a lot of friends, friends that I corresponded with for many, many years. Even though I went back to Europe, oh fifteen years later, and men that I'd competed against in the Olympic games at that particular time, were men that came many miles in order to shake hands once again and to sit down and to rehash the old days and talk about the Olympics itself.

BM - Jesse, were you corresponding with the German boys all during the rest of the war years?

JO - Well, there was one boy that I had corresponded with quite often. And our correspondence lasted until 1938 when Hitler invaded Poland and at that time, I lost contact with this boy Luekslong. Then he was one of the boys that I had met during the Olympic games and one of the boys that I felt I had a great deal of admiration for, because of his, well, he had a great deal of determination in order to be able to win. Who wanted to win the broad jump more than anything else. Great broad jumper, good competitor. But yet and still he was fair with all that he did. I remember so well when I won the broad jump, which was on my second to

last jump, and in my last jump as I made it and set the Olympic record, the first person, of course, to congratulate me was this boy Luekslong and from that point on we began a friendship that lasted up until the year of 1938.

BM - When he wrote to you were his letters just about sports or did he discuss government issues at all?

JO - No government issues. It was all pertaining to sports, all pertaining to the things that we were vitally interested in. I think that perhaps in one letter that he mentioned the fact that he didn't know about the future of his country, nor did he know about his future, because he was in the army of the German people and that he knew he would have to go to war and that his days of competing were coming close to an end. This was the only reference that was ever made.

BM - Did you boys discuss at all the fact that there was a possibility that you were making friends and competing with persons that you might have to fight later on?

JO - No, this was far removed from the minds of all of us. No one ever thought about war. We never did think in terms of that. We looked forward to the day when they might be able to come to the America and compete on a basis of one country against another as we are doing with the Russians today. This was thought of back in the early days of 1936 and 37 and, of course, Germany at that time was on the rise as far as athletics were concerned. And we and the number of German athletes that had been to America in 1932 and that had gone across the country competing in the post-Olympic meets had expressed a desire to the German Olympic Committee that they would like to have a team sent to America that compete against America's best in this kind of competition and this is one of the things that we discussed in our letters and what we had looked forward to having a little of these many things. However, in my letters to him I was telling him about the change of events that had taken part in my life and how I had gotten out of the athletic world and gone into the professional world. Talking about some of the things that had happened to me at that particular time, these were the letters that I had written him. I would talk to him about the band, I would talk to him about some of the other things that I had gotten into. Some were glamorous, some were very interesting, and others were rather boring and, you know, this sort of a letter that I would write to him you see. And then I would write to him about my family and he was getting married and so on and so forth.

BM - Now the Olympics themselves and your feeling before you?

JO - Well, you see, the Olympics itself is perhaps the greatest thing that could ever happen to an amateur athlete. This is the major league, so to speak, this is the tops of his career. Making it once every four years, a very seldom, happens to very many people, particularly so in certain events and especially so if you're in the sprints, if you make it one time, if you make it twice, it's an exception. And so you've pointed to the Olympics now for a number of years. You've looked forward

to this and finally you make it and then you can count your athletic career as somewhat of a success because it is a success because you've attained the top position, the top thing that you've looked forward to attaining. Of course, then the other thing you look forward to is to be able to win the particular event that you have been associated with.

BM - Jesse, has there been any other single person who has won four Gold Medals during one single Olympic competition?

JO - Yes, there has been. We had a boy by the name of Peppy Nurmay back in the early days about twenty eight. Peppy Nurmay was a distance runner up from Finland. He had won four Gold Medals. And then no one has ever won four Gold Medals in the short sprints, you know, or in which we had, which was the broad jump and the sprints and the relay. This was the first time it has ever been done because of the terrific risk that you have in those particular events. And then we had a woman in 1948 or 52. A lady by the name of Blankacorn from Holland. She was a woman that won four Gold Medals in the hurdles and in the sprints and in the relay. Quite a gal. And, but outside of that, there hasn't been anymore and I don't know whether or not in the future we will have a person winning four Gold Medals because today we have converted to specialization. People specialize in certain events. They specialize either in the hundred, and the two-twenty, or they will go into the field events and you will find different individuals now competing. You'll find very seldom, where you'll find, with the exception of the hundred and two-twenty, where boys are competing in more than one event because of our specialization in track and field throughout the world today.

BM - Were you prepared for that much success, or were you?

JO - Well, this is the question. A no. Because coming from humble beginnings and not having many things in life, one that finds himself thrown into the flood light of all of the things and of all of the possibilities, I don't think that anyone is ever prepared for that sort of thing. You never know that things like that would happen to you.

BM - How did you feel, for example, with thousands of people in the stands standing up and yelling and screaming, the thunder of the applause, what happened to this very young champion?

JO - Naturally you're pleased, elated and tremendously thrilled. Humility is a thing that I didn't know the meaning of.

BM - Were you arrogant at all?

JO - No. But this is the newspapers. They taught me the meaning of humility. This is the thing that we had all the time. You graciously accepted their cheers and their hospitality. You thanked them because this is the only way that we were ever taught. Arrogance no. I mean you, if you, knew something and you could help

another person you gave of your advice to that person. You were friendly to them. You talked with them. You tried to be as close to this individual as you possibly could. Not trying to get any secrets from him, but this was a part of our training during the years at the beginning in our junior high school when you started running. It was our coaches point to be able to know the other members of our junior high school teams in the city of Cleveland. To be able to talk with them and converse with them. It was an idea back, it was borned, because in basketball where people use to fight at basketball games. Our sportsmanship and everything our department on the floor of competition and off the floor prevented a lot of fights. It prevented a lot of troubles, and this was the beginning of getting closer and knowing the opponent, that you were going to run against, or compete against or whatever it might be. And at the Olympic games itself this was the thing I was pretty well prepared for because we had been taught this all of our lives, and acknowledging the cheers of the crowd, it was one of those things that we had been very fortunate to be able to receive in the past.

BM - Do you feel that this type of education, the type that led you to the Olympics, makes you, not you specifically, but all of the persons invited to participate in the Olympics, are by virtue of this education almost superior beings, because of the training that they have had, their relationships with other persons, the lack of resentment and arrogance?

JO - Well I think it does this. Not that we're set aside, but I believe that as I've watched the Olympics in the past, and I've watched individuals that carry the same qualities as we carried back in the year '36, certainly has been youngsters far more remembered and better remembered than those that felt that they had accomplished something and they were sitting themselves upon a pedestal that no one could reach. You see the idea is that the more successful you become of course the humility that you are to show and being gracious to these people. It endears you close to the hearts of a person and it spells well for your country from which you have come and it creates a better impression with the host country. They'll long remember you and long remember your team.

BM - Now what about the Olympic Champion himself, not you specifically, but is there any pattern of behavior following this sort of success? Does this type of person generally make a success in other things that they do?

JO - Well a great deal depends upon the individual.

BM - Is it easy to go back into obscurity after you have received this much acclaim?

JO - Well, you know, this is just like saying, if I knew now what I knew then. One goes through the years of gaining experience and as he gains experience he becomes older, and if he had the experience before he went into the Olympic games maybe his story would have been different. I might say that perhaps I would have done some things different even though I'm not sorry for anything that I have ever done.

I probably would do it again, but perhaps in a little different way. But I feel that through the years we have made a number of friends by virtue of the fact, that even at this late date in our lives, we're still receiving thirty-five and forty letters a week from youngsters overseas whose parents were youngsters at the time that we were running. Today, because of the words of their parents and the little booklets that they still have, these youngsters remember and they write letters for your autographs and pictures.

BM - Do you answer all of these letters, Jesse?

JO - Yes I do. I think it's a very small part which you can do to answer the letter. It doesn't take long to answer it and if they take the time and the effort to send you a letter, I think that all letters should be answered regardless how you feel about certain things.

BM - What did your fan mail run in volume following the Olympics?

JO - Well, it ran into hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pieces of mail a week. I know that when I returned, we used to get sacks of mail daily. The mail would be separated and I would probably be out for maybe four or five days on a tour somewhere. And when I came back we would spend the entire day answering these letters and getting a big kick out of it. Signing pictures and autographs, I mean this would be an eight hour deal. But we would do it until we had finished, and sometimes it would take up three and four days to get it done, but nevertheless we got it done.

BM - Jesse, a directly or indirectly, what were some of the financial benefits that you received because of the Olympics success?

JO - Well, I think that perhaps it stemmed from politics, it stemmed from endorsements, it stemmed from personal appearances we were making.

BM - Were you always wise as what to endorse or whom to endorse?

JO - No, well, because at that time we were very limited into the field of endorsement, because of the southern part of our country at that time. It did not advocate the Negro's picture on any bread or any other national brand of advertisement. We could not get it at that time. And so there you were limited to the kind of advertising that you could endorse, you see.

BM - What sort of things did you endorse?

JO - Well, we endorsed a local situation, we endorsed bread, we endorsed Wheaties on a local basis. We would endorse a, perhaps, toothpaste on a local basis.

BM - Now did you receive any guidance about these things? Did you have anyone who more or less managed your affairs?

JO - Oh yes, a fellow by the name of Marty Forkins which was Bill Robinson's manager at the time, was more or less our manager and counsel at that particular time on some of the things that we endorsed, you see, and the personal appearances that we made, and you know, the things that we did. They handled all of these particular situations for us.

BM - Now when you decided to turn into professional, what were the events which led up to this decision?

JO - Well, we were due to go to the Scandinavian countries to compete after competing in London and the American-British games. I had been running every weekend starting in February and this is September. The latter part of September, I had gone into the Olympic games weighing a hundred and sixty-three pounds. And when I finally arrived in London, England to compete in the British-American games I was weighing a hundred and thirty-nine pounds. And I was rather tired and drawn and I was just sick and tired of looking at track shoes. So then I decided to return home, and then at that time we received the suspension from the AAU. And when I came back with this suspension hanging over us, why I talked to the athletic director of Ohio State University, and there were a lot of offers and a lot of people and a lot of things dangling to make a lot of money. And being of a very poor family and no money, I mean this is, a, unheard of, fifty to hundred thousand dollars well then was unheard of as far as I was concerned. And so we decided that well, we would take a whirl at some of the things that were offered and even though the athletic director at that time was named. St. John wanted me to go on and stay in school for that year and then finish up and then become a coach at Ohio State University. Of course, the coach there advised me that my coach that time, well this was an opportunity of a life time, and you know, and we decided to go into the professional field.

BM - Jesse, did you present your case properly to the AAU that you were very tired and ill and under weight and so forth?

JO - Oh yes they knew it, they were with me all the time. But see this is where I differ with the AAU because they're not too concerned with the condition of an athlete, the only thing that they're concerned with is keeping their commitments to a country. And you see, you can go and run and lose, and it doesn't do one any good. I mean no one ever takes the time to look into the fact that you're a human being and you are subject to the human fragility of not being able to finish a competition and not being in tip top shape, you see.

BM - It's our understanding that the AAU is set up to protect the amateur athlete, is this not true?

JO - Well, not in a sense. This is all right on paper, but the AAU is why they're running into difficulties today, because most of the men in the AAU are perhaps dedicated men to the amateur world, but they're businessmen too. And this is when they make a commitment and they commit you to going to a country without consulting you, and they didn't even consult me, they said well this is where you're going. Well they didn't ask you, how did you feel or anything in that nature. They committed you to go to the Scandinavian countries and you're supposed to go. Well at this particular time I refused to go, through the permission of my coach, and they knew the condition under which I was laboring and this suspension came about.

BM - Did the suspension last then? Was it never revoked?

JO - A, no. It was never, well we never, did give them a chance to revoke it because then after that we turned professional and we just forgot about it.

BM - A, how soon after this time did you run a race with a horse in Havana?

JO - Oh that was in the Christmas of 1936.

BM - Was that your first professional adventure?

JO - Yes, that was my first professional adventure within that phase. We then immediately came back, and of course, we made a lot of appearances before then, a, at baseball game, we didn't run, we were just there to make a personal appearance. We made personal appearances at different banquets and we spoke at different affairs, and of course, the political picture came into focus, and we did travel for the Republican party, speaking for Alf Landon at that time whom was running for the president seat under Republican banner. And I met a lot of wonderful people in that particular phase in our lives.

BM - Eddie Cantor wanted you to sign up for a rode tour for a pretty fabulous amount of money I believe?

JO - Well this was a Newman, a telegram, to that effect but when we talked to his agent in New York, I never did talk with the agent. The agent talked to my coach and the coach told me that there wasn't much to it. I don't know. I never did get the true gist of it and I don't know whether he had any reason to lie to me or not, but he told me that it wasn't what it was stated in the telegram, you know, and this made the difference you see. However, I sometimes wish that I had spoken to him and perhaps many things would have been different, you know, as we had gone through life and made a lot of other arrangements in life, you see.

BM - Things were pretty confused at this period of time?

JO - It was, and it's always confusing with anyone, if they're coming fast and furious, you don't know. And being in that particular field you just don't know all the things that are going on.

BM - Now Mr. Forkins, what did he manage to do for you at this time?

JO - Well he was in charge of all of the things that we were doing such as we had a band and he had the band booking out of his agency and I fronted the band and we traveled with this -----.

BM - A, who taught you to do this, Jesse?

JO - Well, we had, a, some of the best---

BM - I was under the impression that you didn't play an instrument.

JO - I don't. I didn't know one note from another, but we had such men as the late Fats Waller, the late Jimmy Lutchford, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Bill Robinson and a

BM - These were members of the band?

JO - Well, no these were men that were in the musical world, men that I had met and had become very fond of, and they in turn became very fond of me. They taught me the art of timing as far as music was concerned, they taught me how to handle a baton and a number of things.

BM - Did you rehearse with the band?

JO - Oh yes and this is part of the game in which you learn to be able to, a, finish with the band on time, and showmanship and they taught me well.

BM - Did you MC as well?

JO - I MC as well.

BM - What sort of places did you play?

JO - Well, we played the theaters and circuit that was, at that time, the Howard Circuit. We played in New York, in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, all on the east coast, and then we played a lot of one nighters throughout the southern part of the country, and then even in the northern part of the country and we played in Akron, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, I mean through Pennsylvania.

BM - Did you consider, at that time, that you might make this sort of thing your career?

JO - No, I'll tell you I enjoyed it for about three weeks and then everyday it became a chore. And after a year of this I decided that this wasn't for me and I decided to quit.

BM - Now you had, a, Ruth was still in Cleveland or was she with you?

JO - She would visit me in New York when I came to New York.

BM - And at this point you had just one child?

JO - Yes at this point, one. And then I quit the band after a year. And then I went back to Cleveland and then I went into business myself and it was going along pretty good. I was in the dry cleaning business. And then I began to become interested in sports and I went back to school and ----

BM - You did finish?

JO - Yes, I finished school. And then I went, I had, you know, professional basketball teams and I put those teams on the road and I traveled with them for awhile, then I was in school and I got out of school and I went with baseball during the summer, traveling with my own baseball team and running exhibition races with the baseball team, you see. And then finally after that was over, I, the year 1941 came along and I wanted to remain in school and I wanted to remain to work on my masters. I was there for about a quarter and a call came for the physical fitness program that started in Philadelphia by the government and headed by John B. Kelly, the late John B. Kelly. And I went to Philadelphia to meet him and he wanted me to handle the Negro phase of the physical fitness campaign and I went to work in Philadelphia and worked there for nine months and then we moved to Washington.

BM - Now what happened to your dry cleaning business in Cleveland?

JO - In the ensuing years, well, because I wasn't there to take care of her as it should have been, and my wife not knowing very much about the business, it became too tired for her to handle. Then if you, we had people in there that were running the business for you and of course when you have someone else running the business they take more out of the business than you take. And so therefore you finally wind up working for them, so I sold this part of the business and I told them that they, you know, that if they wanted it they could have the store. I sold whatever interest I had in it, took it out and then I went on doing the things that I knew best to do, you see.

BM - So then you went on to Philadelphia, physical fitness program?

JO - I went to Philadelphia, the physical fitness program remained there with them in Philadelphia for about nine months and then moved to Washington.

BM - Now this was a federal program?

JO - This was a Federal Program, and then they moved over to Washington in the Department of Recreation. And that particular time the war was on and we were recruiting men from all parts of America, and our job at that particular time was to go into the areas where they had a large contingent of Negro troops and to set up with the local community the kind of USO center that was to be built within that community. Realizing that this center would revert to the people after the war was over. And we were traveling throughout the south where most of the Negro troops were centered. And working with local communities in that area. And then working with them for awhile, the government wanted me to stay with them and sent me to different parts of the country, particularly so up here in Milwaukee to study their recreational center, because Milwaukee at that time had the finest recreation center of any city in the country. So we went up there and I stayed up there for about a month, and I think it was a little longer than a month, and then after I had finished my tour of duty there I was sent to Inkster, Michigan. Where Inkster, as a community that consists of Negro population, close to the Ford Motor Company plant there. And we worked out there in their recreational center, set up certain things for them. And then while I was living in Detroit and traveling to, commuting to, Inkster, which was about seventeen miles out of Detroit, I met a fellow that was at the University of Michigan, at the time that I was at Ohio State. But this time was Negro personnel director at Ford Motor Company. And he wanted me to come to work for Ford Motor Company, and because at that time I was getting rather tired of traveling, you know, my family was growing up and I wanted to be with them. And so I wrote to the government about this offer from Ford Motor Company and I resigned my position with the government in the recreation department, to work at Ford Motor Company as special investigator for the personnel office. And after I was there for about four months, this person that was in charge of Negro personnel was called back into service and I was elevated into his position.

BM - As head of Negro Personnel?

JO - As head of Negro personnel. We had a dual set up at that time. See Negroes hired all Negroes that worked at Ford Motor Company. My job was to hire all Negro personnel, fire all Negro personnel, during this particular phase of the Ford Motor Company life.

BM - Now, why did they feel that they needed two personnel directors?

JO - Well this was a dual set up. This was one of the part of phase, I don't know why.

BM - Did they feel that you, or any Negro gentlemen, would understand the problems of the Negro personnel better than a white man?

JO - Well this is true. They felt that, and at that time, we were trying to get help from that, were coming in people that were migrating into the cities from the southern part of nation looking for employment, and you were getting all kinds of people. Unskilled yes, and you had an opportunity to weed out some of the, you know, most undesirables.

BM - Did you have any sort of training program for some of these persons? They would have no knowledge of the work.

JO - Well, the only training program that we had, and, to help people was at Ford Motor Company, you had to write your name, before you could get your pay. You had to sign your pay slip, and a lot of people could not write, and the only training program that we had was, I would go to the YMCA three nights a week with the aid of five other fellows, we taught people how to write their names in order that they might work. They were good workmen, men with families, and they had come this far to settle, and substantial people, so we worked with them and we taught them how to write their names. And the Urban League, at that time, was working closely with us in settling and getting these people rehabilitated into areas and get them used to urban living, you see.

BM - Were there any incidents of any significance that you can recall from your period of work with Ford Motor Company as regarding a racial issue?

JO - Well, I, a, used to to have a great deal of arguments and disagreements with management of Ford Motor company because I felt that the union and management at times took advantage of individuals.

BM - In what way?

JO - Say for instance, they worked hand and hand, for instance, if they had a disagreement in a certain part of the plant, instead of firing the person that was responsible for the disagreement, which was usually a committeeman working, that was a union man that was on the union pay roll, or on the payroll of the company, but he was a union man and an elected official. He would cause a great deal of disharmony with the workers and cause wildcat strikes and things like that. And they would fire people on this basis when they should have fired the committeemen who started all of the disturbances. This was my disagreement with the company and with the union because of these unethical practices and it was totally unfair to the worker himself. And of course I was fired from Ford Motor Company four different times, but it never lasted over twenty-five minutes, a half hour, because the workmen knew that I was working with them. I was working for the company, for the interest of the company, and we had a war going on and it was mighty important that all the work and the work stoppages wasn't necessary. And I thought that the ideal conditions under which a man works should be exemplified within the plant. The company should provide the proper facilities for them to work, and it was the man's job to be there on the job, day by day, and

putting in a full eight hours for the eight hours pay that he was getting. And, a, working with these people, knowing that they were putting in the eight hours, and when we found a person that was not putting in his eight hours, he was fired, and with his being fired there was no, a, disagreement as far as the union was concerned because we had our labor relations outfit and we sat and we discussed the labor relation problem. And if a man was found wrong he was fired and there wasn't anything the the union could say because the union was there, had their legal representatives representing the man. For instance, a fella would work and get paid on Thursday, you wouldn't see him anymore until Monday. Well, I mean, a, this isn't responsibility, and if he could lay off for four days then we'd have to have someone to replace him, and we were interested in the man working the total time, because of the seriousness of the job in which he had. And if we found one that didn't think that, why we'd get rid of him.

BM - Now Ford was in their throes of manufacturing parts for planes, were they not?

JO - Well, we made the Pratt-Whitney motor. We made the B-24 Bomber and the tanks. We had made certain parts, you know, for all the tanks and it was a mighty important job that we had there, you know, pertaining to the government and it was a pretty rough thing.

BM - You didn't go into the service?

JO - No, I didn't. I had three A classification because of the three children that I had. And then when I went to work for Ford Motor Company it became an essential job and I stayed there all during the war.

BM - And then following the Ford Motor Company, I believe you left there, weren't you also interested in public relations while you were there? Did you get into public relations in anyway?

JO - No, not in a sense, not in the public relations sense, what we did, we did work for Ford Motor Company after the war was over. And during the course of the war, of course, we had the big racial strike, I mean the racial disturbance in Detroit, the race riot. And we set aside at that time, a portion of our time from the personnel department because we weren't hiring as many. And then working in the community with people, and particularly so during the strike in mobilizing our leadership within the community to settle the strike and to get people to understand, you know, that look what are we accomplishing here?

BM - And what was the story behind the strike?

JO - Well the riots, you mean?

BM - The riot, yes.

JO - Well the rumors, of course, were the cause of it all.

Jesse Owens
Tape 4
Race Riot-Detroit Southside Boys Club-Chicago
Taxi Cab Union Participation
Abata-Glimco Fight

BM - Jesse, what in your opinion was the prime reason for the race riots in Detroit?
When were they, do you recall the year?

JO - Well, Barbara, I think the year started back, I think it was 1941 or 42, I'm not to sure of the year. Many things are started by rumors. The rumor was out at Belle Isle where they had been having a number of racial incidents. It is one of the big areas in Detroit where people go for their Sunday afternoon picnics and whatnots and boat riding and so on and so forth. And the rumor started that a Negro woman and her baby was thrown over the bridge by a group of white youths. Of course, this came back within the Negro community and all of these things started. However, I think that some of the prime factors for the race riot which finally happened, a, it began to build up with new people moving into the area, crowded conditions, the war was going on and then you had newcomers from the southern part of the country, both Negro and white. And they were working in the various industrial plants, and with many of the people brings their folkways and mores and their social conditions with them into this area, then this trouble began to ferment and the race riot was the climax of many of the dissatisfaction among both races of people that were involved.

BM - Jesse, was it ever established whether or not this rumor about the Negro woman and her baby was or was not true?

JO - Well it was established that it was not true. Of course, some racial incidents had happened out there where there were fights between the white and the Negro on that very same day. And between both men and women. Of course, with someone thinking that a Negro woman's baby and herself had been thrown overboard, why this wasn't an established fact, but the other things were established in reference to the many fights that were going on.

BM - Did you feel that there were subversive influences as well involved?

JO - Yes, yes. At that time we did have a lot of subversive elements in Detroit and in the industrial area particularly at that particular time when America was fighting. We had a lot of communist influence in the community that had infiltrated into the Unions and into the social lives of people and then this began to ferment and to help build up many of the problems that were existing in the community.

BM - Did you know any of these persons? Were any of them discovered during your working with the Ford Company?

JO - Well at the out set of the riot at that particular time I was in charge of Negro personnel. We were removed from that office to work into the community, to help the leadership settle many of the problems that were existing within the community, to help quell the riot. From that point we began to work with an attorney in Detroit that knew a great deal about the subversive elements. I had a boy that was working in the office with me and he, being a very astute political student in history, that had studied the political aspirations of people. He did love history and he knew something in reference to communistic trend of government. And he and I went to work with this attorney by the name of Kouse and we began to discover some of the people whom were within the organizations, who has since been expelled from the parties. Some have died. We had one fella by the name of Noels that was at one time a known communist but had denounced, had thrown away his card and then came back on the side of democracy and was working with us, because he knew practically all of the leaders within the area of Detroit and those that would come in to help with the particular problem. As far as my knowing any of them personally, I have never had any contact with them.

BM - You never attended any of the meetings?

JO - No. I've never attended any of their meetings, no. All of my information was observation from observing certain people outside as they began to work, and to watch them as they met with other people, and the conversations that they might have.

BM - Now how long did all of this last?

JO - Well, this lasted, you mean the observation or the riot?

BM - The actual, from the beginning of the riot right straight through to the end of it, and how did you quell it?

JO - Well, the riot lasted, I would say, for about a week. Intensive rioting lasted for about three days, but the mopping up operations and the little incidents happening all calmed down within six or seven days. From that point on we continued to work within the community and I worked two years after riot started.

BM - What was the relationship between Negro and white after the riot? Were they embarrassed or a little concerned about each other or---?

JO - Well actually the leadership and the people that mean, something, they began to meet together more often and begin to discuss many of the problems. I know the people from the real estate boards and the institutions of learning, our welfare departments, the human relations department within the city, began to meet more

and more and to begin to bring out the problems that were existing more in the open, where before it was sort of hidden under the rug, so to speak. However, with the average man in the street it was one of those things of suppressed courtesy. If the street car was crowded and Negro or white would be close together, or bump into each other, there was a quick remark of "I'm sorry" or "excuse me", and people had a little more respect, self conscious of really the things that were going on and they, no one wanting to have another, and were somewhat ashamed of what had happened. They went out of their way many times to suppress some of these things. Then immediately after that the Negroes began to move into other areas and whites begin to accept them, and then there were invitations to the homes of white, other white, of Negroes, to come in and then in turn they would come be invited into the homes of Negroes of leadership caliber, so that they began to understand each others problem a little bit more.

BM - Then Jesse, it wasn't long after this that you came to Chicago?

JO - Yes it was. I started back with the Harlem Globetrotters. We were traveling during the summer months and then, oh say for instance, we would take baseball in the summertime. I would probably be gone from Detroit, a, maybe three months, or I would be coming back from time to time to visit my family. And then basketball would take over and I was with them perhaps about nine months out of the year. And then ----

BM - You were not allowed to play?

JO - No, I wasn't playing baseball. I was, at that time I was still running exhibition races with people. Then I was handling the public relations for the various teams that, I were, that I was traveling with. Then I came to Chicago, I think it was in 1948. We had a basketball game at Chicago Stadium and a man was there that owned a clothing store on State Street by the name of Leo Rose, and he had heard me that night handling the proceedings of the basketball game and wanted know whether or not I would come to work for them, and he had a emissary to come to me and we talked it over and then in the fall of 1948 I came here to work for him.

BM - And did you work in public relations for Mr. Rose?

JO - Yes, Yes I did. Special promotions. We organized youngsters. We had about fifteen hundred young people in different leagues and bought uniforms for them. We held fashion shows, we took part in all the civic activities on the south and the west side of Chicago that pertained to Negro people.

BM - Did Mr. Rose have the policy of credit?

JO - Yes.

BM - And I believe you have a comment to make regarding credit for ignorant people, both Negro and white persons who don't know.

JO - Well I think that lot of people take advantage of their ignorance of the law, in buying. I think that they pay too much for the articles that they buy. I think that in taking advantage of these people it's one of the crimes of our society today. Much of these things can be avoided, say for instance, the Negro person is often times accused of not paying his bills and he's working on a job, and he receives more garnishes than anyone else and this is through many of the local credit houses that will prey upon this person, and loading him up with all the articles that he can, and running up a big bill, when a man has a large family, and realizing that it's going to take X number of dollars for him to pay it, and if he happens to be laid off, and then he gets another job, and he misses a couple of payments, and then they're going to find where he's working, and then that's when he is garnished again and many of the companies do not stand for these things to happen on their jobs.

BM - Was this one of the things you quarreled with Mr. Rose about?

JO - Yes one of the many things that I quarreled with him about in reference to Negro people. And I felt that often times that whites would come into the store and they were charged perhaps ten to twelve and sometime fifteen per cent less for a garment than a Negro was charged. And 99% of his business was Negro business and I felt that if there was any deductions to be given, then they should have gone to the persons that were supporting him and keeping his store going on State Street.

BM - Of course, this credit buying is not relegated to Negro buying alone. There are many of the southern white people who come in with as little knowledge as the southern Negro who comes in to this town. Don't you find that many of the problems just as great, with say the hillbilly, for example, or a person of this?

JO - Well the hillbilly doesn't buy as much, or he's not as clothes conscious as the Negro, and when I speak of the one credit house, this is the only one that I know a great deal about because I was there. We didn't have very many, our white clientele was about one per cent of his entire operation. And of course I didn't bother, with them and I knew that they very seldom had garnishes because what little they bought, it wasn't too big that they couldn't go along with, and the loss they would make it up on somebody else, you see. And this is the one thing that I resented very much.

BM - And you also became associated at that time with the Southside Boys Club?

JO - Yes, I became a member of the board and at the time we had a fellow by the name of Frank Young who was one of the dean, one of the oldest Negro sports writers in the country. He was vitally interested in the club. And then I became interested,

at that time the director of the club, a man by the name of Mr. B.B. Church. He had been at the club for some twenty-six years since his inception of the Boys Club, and had devoted his entire life to it. Many members of the board that I liked very much, and I became a member of this board. I was, I imagine, a member there for about four or five months and then they had a shake up. Mr. Church became very ill with cancer and later died. They needed a director and they asked me would I take over the directorship of which I did. And then we worked with the club for, oh some, I worked there as director for about two and half years. And then I became a member of the board again when we, the welfare wanted a person that had a degree in social work in order to take over the job, and of course I relinquished the job as director and became a member of the board again, and doing so I still worked toward the end of raising funds and keeping the club alive because it was a necessity in the community in which it was located.

BM - Jesse, did you work with the boys themselves while you were both director and on the board?

JO - Oh yes. We held, we worked directly with the boys, getting a chance to know them, we visited the children's home. We tried to get the parents vitally interested working with a number of social civic organizations and getting them interested in the philosophy of the boys club. You just couldn't help it. I mean this was part of the operation. You had your leadership clubs within it and you had your program director that put up your, that picked the boys that were leaders. We would meet with them, talk over the problem, figure out ways and means that they themselves could raise money, and to do a job in order to have those that could not pay their membership to workout a way in which they could pay their membership and be a member in full standing with dignity.

BM - Jesse, were these boys potential trouble makers, some of them? Do you feel that the club helped to rehabilitate these boys or to keep them out of gangs and out of trouble?

JO - Well potentially all of us can get into trouble if we got a lot of time on our hands, and the idea there was to take these youngsters that lived in crowded conditions, and to get them to come to the club where they could belong to some member, some one of the many clubs within the organization, and taking part in the activities of the Boys Club was something to do. We feel that we had a part in the rehabilitation of many of the young people and have kept them out of trouble. We also want to feel that many of the boys have been members of the club that were big names in the entertainment world, in the athletic world, a served as a deterrent toward keeping a child out of trouble, because Joe Lewis use to visit the club quite often, a, Lionel Hampton was brought up within the club and many of the lesser known musicians around Chicago that have gone abroad, have left our city rather, and gone to other towns and have made a mark in the musical world at one time were members of the club. Many of the boys in the armed services today are youngsters that were members of the club whom have made the army their career,

because many of them was going to finish school and they didn't have anything particularly to look forward to, and the army provided a outlet for them and they remained. These are the youngsters that we are quite proud of because many of them now are staff sergeants, many of them have gone on and gone to officers training school, and have become officers in the armed services of this country.

BM - What is the Negro persons most difficult adjustment to make when they come north?

JO - Well, first of all it becomes an economic factor. If he doesn't have a job this becomes very tough for him. I think that the new way of life, he has been told that there were so many things that would be for him, and when he gets here he finds that they are not true. And then trying to adjust from a rural area in which he lived into an urban area, this becomes a very, very difficult thing for him to do. Not only with the children but with the adults as well. Then they revert back to their way of life in which they've come by becoming people that will isolate themselves, and will only associate with the people from their particular state or area, and they will seek these people out. Say, for instance, if a people, certain people came from Alabama, they would seek out the people from Alabama, they would seek out the people from Mississippi, and then they would, or any other state of the south. And then they would go with just those people. They would not try to find, and to know other people within the area in which they lived in order to find a new way of life or a new folk way, or more adapted to the area in which they lived. This is one of the toughest assignments that a person has of trying to reconvert his way of life from the area from which he's come to the area in which he lives today.

BM - Now what about the very young children, is their adjustment, would you say, more difficult than the grown-ups or less?

JO - I think the children are less. I find the children today are playing with children regardless of, you know, where they come. Of course, when you have crowded conditions as many of them live, they begin to get together and one group over here and another group over there. And these groups, in order to protect themselves, they formulate their gangs, and, a, in order to have protection for themselves, you see against another group, and I don't think that they're adjustment as far as a new community is not as great as that with the adult because he's in school. He has a chance to see other kids, and then he has a chance to pick or to choose the people that he wants to associate with, you see.

BM - Well you just mentioned something about the formulation of gangs, and you said that many gangs were started by a group in order to protect themselves. Do you feel that this is a contributing factor to some of the more menacing and more dangerous gangs which are started on the southside?

JO - Well, lets take for instance some of the more famous names that we hear in the cities such as the Cobras and the Falcons, or you might have another gang that I

will think up in a moment. This all started when they were moving into the areas on the west side of Chicago. These youngsters were, at the time the Negro was in the minority, and when he moved over there you had whites that did not want them to move there and resented their presence there, and singly if a Negro was on the street he would be beaten up by a group of whites. And so these youngsters began to recognize this fact and they felt that in numbers there was strength, and so then they begin to form their own gangs for the protection of themselves. And then when the Negro moved in and continued to move, and the whites became a minority, then this gang became stronger and stronger, not only against the whites, but against society itself, into the area of trying to say for instance, to control a particular section of the city, and this thing began to spread not only on the west side, but it came to the southside as well.

BM - Did you know any of these boys?

JO - I didn't know any of them personally. I have met them. I have talked with them. I knew them, many of them. By nicknames, never did know their full name, but I associated with them and I've talked with them about various things. I've helped them get jobs, and those that got jobs, to help those that did not have jobs, and then the problem, then they begin to alleviate and then all of a sudden, when they did not have jobs, and because of much of the robbery and the death, because they needed money. They didn't have money, and so this was the only way they knew how to get it. And in their direction many of them, a lot of people were killed and a lot of people that had never been reported, fights and so on and so forth, that have taken part in that area. I think it is a disgrace to society, and society itself has done like the ostrich, will bear it's head in the sand sort of forget it, you see, thinking the problem will go away. But it will not go away. It continues to grow unless something is done to help that particular problem, and I think today that, a, with more people in the field working, it has come now to the point of where you don't hear too much about the gang fights and many of the boys whom were leaders of the gang and committing crimes have been confined to jail, and they're beginning to realize that stiff sentences are given and things that have subsided to a great degree now.

BM - Do you feel that gangs are disintegrating, the reasons for the gangs possibly are beginning to disintegrate?

JO - Well, they are, I wouldn't say that they are disintegrating. It hasn't come to the past where you don't have them you're constantly going to have them. But I think that their activity has been checked, and that it's not the fights are not as prevalent and the mugging is not as prevalent as it was just a few months ago. And I feel that with this concentration of more people in the social work field and child welfare, and with the Boys Clubs and the YMCA's being infiltrated within this area, and a new programming being developed, it's going to minimize actions and the brutality of those gangs.

BM - Jesse, do you feel that amongst the southern, the recent southern immigration of Negroes, that there would be any fertile field for any sort of subversion: Those who cannot get jobs, those who are hungry, who are not happy, not satisfied?

JO - No, I don't think, you see, the Negro as a whole, is not a, gullible to the fact of another form of government. They will not listen to that too much. And I can say this, that even though many persons disagree with the NAACP and much of the Urban League's work, I still think that they're a big factor in stabilizing democracy. However, they talk in reference to employment and they're fighting discrimination, but yet, on the other hand, they're fighting within their own ranks of getting people to be qualified for certain jobs, and to stay in school, and they're having a big back to school campaign that is going on, that is having some effect with a great majority of people, you see. And with this in mind, and a few getting good jobs here and there whom are qualified then others are beginning to recognize the fact that if I do become qualified there is an opportunity for me to. And even though he fights, the NAACP fights against discrimination and bias and all of the this sort of thing, he, the same organization will come back to its people and begin to fight within the group of getting the people to equip themselves for the jobs that will become available and that are available now.

BM - What are some of the techniques of the NAACP?

JO - Well, I think the the NAACP, along with some of its leaders, has their educational program, you know, within the organization they have some very smart people within it. And they go to the various meetings and they get groups together, the social meetings, the social organization, the business organization, that even where you're going to meet a great number of people who are within the churches, you see. And their methods there are talking about the better things of life. What can be done? How can we do this, and setting up with the people that have never been asked to do anything before, meetings with them. They're becoming vitally interested and becoming aware of some of these things that can happen.

BM - Did they instigate the freedom riders for example as a test case?

JO - Well, I don't know. It was a test case, testing the interstate commerce of our country and this thing awoke a lot of people to the fact that they probably knew it, but they never did pay any attention to it. They tried to make the people aware of the fact that if we're going to promote democracy and we're going to let the peoples of the small nations of the world understand that democracy is the way of life then they felt that, well now if we're going to preach this abroad, and people come here and they see it's not working, then what good is it of going over there, because this becomes an easy target for the communistic countries to win those people over. Well now they began to move not only with Negroes but with whites as well, who took part in those riots, you see, and to awake the people of this country about some of the local conditions and the social structure of this land. So, in so doing they have awoken the people of the country, because it is in all the

papers, and because many of the southern towns that have always adhered to this particular way of life are beginning to change, and some of our cities which was the bastille of the headquarters for this sort of thing, like Atlanta, Georgia, Birmingham, Alabama and these were the bastilles where the people held on to their southern traditions, beginning to crack now, because you've got new people into the world younger people that are grown up now and recognizing the fact that here we've got to do something in order to help this particular group of people. Now it's not going to happen now, it's going to crack more and more each and every year and within ten or fifteen years we're going to find that these conditions are the things that we're going to talk about, but in the meantime, along with the freedom riders and along with men like King, Reverend King, and other leaders that are leading these things they are going back not only to fight the social conditions, but lets fight within our own economic conditions, within our own ranks in order that when this thing comes we'll all be ready for this particular thing, you see.

BM - The NAACP has a lot of people with a great deal of courage to participate in their movements.

JO - I think so. I know I was down in Baltimore and I was down at the NAACP meeting there, and I talked to a lot of young people whom were in the freedom riders and the sit-iners. And I admire, I just admire their stamina, admire their courage and everything else because they are certainly locked up and spat upon and they're called all kinds of names, but yet and still they take all of this for a reason, to keep right moving, you see. And this is admiration, I sometimes wonder whether or not I would be strong enough. However, I've given some of my money to the particular movement and I have sat back on the sides and watched these youngsters with this courage.

BM - Well Jesse, you have made the comment from time to time, that from your point of view rather than Negro people trying to move into areas which are white in a good neighborhood, that you are trying to inculcate your people, the ones that you know, into cleaning up your own neighborhoods and making them so attractive and so lovely that nobody would want to move out. You commented about this sometime ago and I wanted to get it on tape.

JO - Well, this is very true, Barbara, we've talked to people about their neighborhoods, we've worked with them, and we've set up prizes for the cleaning up of their neighborhoods. And then those that have people that have worked for long years that now have enough money to buy their own house, were people that began to move in neighborhoods where here to for where Negroes have never lived and in moving within those neighborhoods they decided that they would have to live up to far greater expectations than those that already lived there, that is with the whites. When they moved in, they begin to spend money on the improvement of their homes and in so doing people, white people, began to run. Those that could not get out at the time, that remained and where the Negro wanted them to remain,

because this becomes in integrated neighborhood. Well they began to form their block clubs and their block organizations. They set up rules and regulations for everybody in the block and people begin to meet. They met once a month or usually the first of the month, or the first Sunday in the month, in the afternoon and as they met and they began to unfold their plans, people readily became closer and closer together. And with people working it became a neighborhood then: community living where people would help one another clean their lawns, cut their grass, and to help his neighbor paint his house or put up a fence or something of this nature. And then when white people begin to realize that these people were able to live there and taking on their property, why move. Because they were good people and their restrictions were very rigid and so therefore they did not live under those rigid restrictions before, but now they begin to accept them and then their property became, instead of going down in value, became higher in value, you see. And this has happened in many many areas throughout the city of Chicago, and the Negroes are not so prone today, you have a few isolated cases where they want to move over into areas and where they want to say, well I'm the first one to live here. But he's looking for a new house now, and they're beginning to build a number of new homes, and you can find in certain sections in this city, particularly so on the southside and particularly so in the eighties and nineties where row upon row of new homes have gone up and Negroes are living in them, and you wouldn't know, that if people say that Negroes destroy property you would go out there and you wouldn't think that other whites were living in a neighborhood that of little income, that wanted to keep their property up, but these are Negroes. And they're doing a tremendous job in maintaining the value of their property.

BM - There's a certain group of white persons who are frightened to death at some statistics I heard recently that by nineteen seventy-two there would be more Negroes in the city of Chicago than whites. Well that's very true Barbara. You're going to find that, you see, it's not so much that the Negro is migrating into Chicago, but those, because of the growth of the families that are here is becoming greater and greater. Medical scientists today, child is healthier and the longevity of his life is longer and with more children being born in this area, and people constantly running to the suburbs and setting up other areas, you're going to find that you're going to have it natural, that you're going to have more Negroes, a, in Chicago in ten years from today than you have whites.

BM - Do you predict that we will have a Negro city government?

JO - Well, if, a, the thing continues to grow as it is, I don't see any reason why, and the reason why I say that there wouldn't be such a tragedy is because Negroes today are ever mindful, and they're studying, and they know about government, they know about organization, they know how to be administrators. In various fields you've got too many that are coming out of schools today that are studying administration, that are studying the various phases of our way of life within a city and knowing how to run certain things. And he is no different than anybody else, only thing different is the color of his skin. You'll find that he has as much know

how as the next person in reference to some of the jobs to be done by virtue of the fact today that various political parties are putting Negroes heads of certain departments, where they've never had before and they are running them well, you see.

BM - Where do you feel Chicago stands in integration as compared to other big cities, northern cities?

JO - Well, I think that we're somewhat behind in much of our approach to this thing and our feeling too. We still got hotels here that don't want to accept qualified Negroes. We've got restaurants that---

BM - But it's against the law.

JO - You've got laws, yes laws are written to be broken but it still exists and there are many eating establishments and a many of our places of entertainment are being sued by qualified Negroes because they go and are not accepted or given the service of the organization.

BM - Now what does the NAACP do about a hotel, for example, that would not accept you. Say for example you went to what hotel, which ones in Chicago are still old-fashioned?

JO - I think that the Drake Hotel is still old-fashioned.

BM - All right, suppose Jesse Owens and his wife went to spend a weekend at the Drake Hotel and they said we have no room?

JO - Well this becomes a point where the NAACP and other organizations in the city, they make an inquiry. They want to find out about why this thing happens. They would check into the registers of the hotel to see whether or not you, if you had a reservation, and you went there and the reservation, much like many of our motels that accepted the reservations of people not knowing what color they were, when they came they were filled up and the law suit was on their hands. And when they find out that they have a number of them, this doesn't spell well for the business and so they begin to accept them. And when they begin to accept them they found that they were just as good as any other person that came to the motel, spend as much money, perhaps more, and pay their bills promptly, the same as anyone else, you see. So this made a big difference.

BM - So would the NAACP, for example, if they discovered that a thirty reservations had been canceled from thirty Negro people would they file a suit?

JO - Oh they would. Definitely so, and they're absolutely right. If you're going to say the law says that the person comes and sure they want to reserve the right to refuse people, this is a law that's got to be passed on, a, passed over and the

person comes and they've accepted your money and given you a confirmation on your reservation, sure they will sue and letting them know these are just the things that they just can't get away with. And I think they're right.

BM - Jesse, the next big development in your life following that of coming to Chicago, which certainly in our favor, was when you went to work for the Republican party, I believe as Director of the Youth Commission?

JO - No, I wasn't director of the Youth Commission. I went to work with the Republican party back in 1951 when Stratton was running for governor for the election of '52. I became secretary of the Boxing Commission which was the first Negro they've ever had to be secretary of the commission. And then later on I moved over into the Youth Commission, not as director of the Youth commission, but I became a part of, they have different titles, I was, first I was administrative assistant to the director and then we moved over into another phase where we were handling all of the recreational activities for the commission. We inaugurated a program called the Junior Sports Jamboree and from there we had a number of kids taking part in swimming, track and field meets, and we had a local meet, state meet, and a number youngsters participating in the local meets to qualify for their district, and from the district they went tot the state finals, you see, and having a number of districts throughout the state where we would perhaps have about twelve hundred young people in Springfield at one time to compete in the various events and to vie for the awards that we would set-up for them, you see. Then in turn we would work with our institutions such as St. Charles and Geneva and we would set up entertainment programs for them out there, we'd take the name baseball players, football players and basketball players and we'd go out during this, you know, the current seasons and we would have clinics and have these youngsters to see these people whom they had read about, but they never had seen, you see. And we got the baseball teams in town to give us a number of tickets for youngsters from St. Charles, and some of our camps, that we a had and they would bring them in during the course of the baseball seasons and they would see a baseball game maybe twice or three times a year. And then our forestry program every year at the All Star Football Game, we would perhaps have about five hundred youngsters from the various camps around that would come to see the All State Football Game and this was another outlet for them and we thought that it was a pretty good program in order for these youngsters to see some of their name people that they had read about, and then from that perhaps inspiration would come, you know, when they were returned to society again and they would have a new outlook upon life. And attain some of the things these other people who were similar circumstances that came out of the jungle so to speak as they had come and had made their way in life that they was an opportunity for them.

BM - Jesse, what's happened to all of this wonderful program since you are no longer with the commission?

JO - Well, frankly I don't know. I haven't tried to find out. I don't know what they're going to do in reference. They'll probably keep the Junior Sports Program going and working with the Junior Chamber of Commerce with it, and they'll probably continue that, but I don't know what they've done in reference to the other things, you see.

BM - Do you care to comment on the Glimco-Abata fight and your participation?

JO - Well no, I in fact, I don't have anything to be ashamed of. My only point was that I was only interested in the employment of Negro personnel. I know nothing about the inter fights of the union. I've never tried to find out. But I was vitally interested in any group of people that was going to give employment to Negro men that heretofore did not have an opportunity to work. It wasn't many years ago that we did not have, and a Negro could not drive a cab, in Chicago but through one of the administrations of one of the Teamsters Local they did come in to work as taxicab drivers. And many of those people in there found employment where they were able to feed and educate their children and to live in decent housing. Now this was my only concern. Now if those that had received the employment under this administration then I felt that they should, you know, maintain an organization or administration that had provided for them the opportunities that they did not have before.

BM - Well, I think that the biggest criticism that you received for standing up for Joey Glimco was that he and his direct boss Mr. Hoffa, considered by journalist and others to being crooks and I think that the biggest criticism of you was that you didn't know this, or if you did you ignored it. And I think that a lot of people felt let down because their great hero had stood up and talked for what is considered a syndicate operation. Now how do you think about that? I feel that this is important to go on this tape.

JO - Well I felt that anytime that an organization or administration or people whom are the keepers of the law, find and feel that these people are breaking the law, and that they are racketeers, then they should have enough on them to convict them and to put them into jail. But you cannot, under the law of our country, a person is not guilty until he's proven guilty. Now you can have a lot of things said about people that you do not, and you can say anything about anybody, and as long as somebody disagrees with them, and their going to use their tools to discredit these people, then in discrediting these people come up with the facts and figures that are necessary to put these people in jail, and then don't let them run the streets or hold offices until that is proven. I don't feel that people should criticize another because of what he believes politically.

BM - Do you feel that that's all over now? Has it hurt you in your present business in any way?

JO - Well, it has hurt in a sense, because there are a number of people yes, that thought a great deal of you, and I sometimes wonder in reference to their loyalty in what they think or feel. If it's going to be to the point of where you're going to have an incident of that nature that is going to knock off all of the glimmer or going to become tarnish to the point of where they don't want to have anything to do with you, then it wasn't a true feeling that they had in reference to you. Because I feel that if people will think in terms of a person as somebody that they have thought a great deal of and admire greatly, then I think that admiration should go a little bit beyond the tarnish stage, and stand by, and begin to understand and listen to some of the reasons why he did certain things. You see there's always a reason for something, and I think that every person, and that's why I like America and knowing this is the only government, I know why it is that a person has a right for rebuttal, but when you take that right away and if you're going to take your newspapers and they're going to say this is the way it is, they will not write a rebuttal to what you have said, then I think that this becomes very dictatorial and in there sense, and because every man has right to explain the reasons why he done certain things.

BM - Do you feel that a the Abata-Glimco thing had anything to do with your leaving the commission?

JO - I don't think so. I think that this is a fermenting before, because of the political change, how could a man justify a person like knowing that I had been of another political faith and belief and then maintain him on this job against the criticism of those that voted for him. I think that this is the real crux of the thing.

BM - A purely political move?

JO - That's right. Because many others are still there who passed the Civil Service examination. I passed the Civil Service examination, was certified as a Civil Service employee, but this well, you can take and change to and abolish certain things, so why argue, make it easier for them and then in turn you don't create anymore enemies, you see, than you already had.

BM - Jesse, when you look back has it been a good life?

JO - Well Barbara I'll tell you something. This has been a very good life many, many, ways. If I perhaps had to do it over again, perhaps I'd do the same thing. Life has been good to me, I've got a good family, I've got good children, I've met a lot of wonderful people, I've been able to travel, I've been able to know a lot of people, receive a lot of accolades from people and this is all that a man can ask for in life.

BM - Your present business is one of public relations and food promotions and merchandising?

JO - And we're enjoying it, It's coming along, pretty good shape, and I think we're learning more and more about it everyday. We're able to service the people we have much more profitable and I think that in time, which is not to in distant future, that we will be recognized as one in the Negro market to give the kind of service that they're looking for.

BM - Jesse, do you know Sammy Davis Jr.?

JO - Yes I do.

BM - Why did he become Jewish, do you know that?

JO - Well I don't know.

BM - Didn't he already have enough strikes against him?

JO - Well, maybe some people, like a lot of strikes, but I don't know. This is another thing that goes back to this country. It goes back to the point of the things that you can do in a nation like this. If it's something he believes, this is the mans right to believe.

BM - Well, I think that was really what I wanted to ask was it something that he really believes or was it a gimmick, a device?

JO - No, I don't think that it was a device or a gimmick. I think that he believes it and as long as he believes, I'm with him.

Ruth Owens - Wife of Jesse Owens
Tape 5

RO - All right, general chit chat, and of course I have three granddaughters whom I'm very proud of one four, one three months, and one five months.

BM - Ruth, this is a paper that I have written on Jesse which is pretty factual. I let him read it so that he would know how I was beginning on the project. I want to get to the point where you folks got married and I want to talk to you about how you felt, let's see here were are July 6, 1935 is that correct?

RO - A, when we were married?

BM - Yes, is that right?

RO - No, July 5th, 1931.

BM - Well this is typical of newspapers. And you come across so many conflicting reports. Now you were a beauty operator in Cleveland?

RO - No, I wasn't a beauty parlor operator; I was a permanent wave assistant.

BM - OK, now rumors had it that Jesse was going with a society girl in Los Angeles and that this disturbed you mightily, is there any truth in this?

RO - Well, there was a report in the newspapers. Jesse was out there on a track meet and there was a report that he was engaged to Quinsella Nickerson is her name, was her name, still is I'm sure, and, a, that he was engaged to marry her. And, at that time, I was wearing a ring myself that Jesse had given me, and prior to that Jesse and I had been married before and our parents had it annulled because they felt that we were too young. My parents wanted me to continue school and so did his parents.

BM - When was the first marriage?

RO - Our first marriage, gee, I really don't know. It was back in, I would say, about 1930 or maybe twenty-nine.

BM - And they had this annulled and then you were married again, actually permanently on July 5, 1931? When you first met Jesse did you have any feeling at all that he might be an important athletic figure? Did it occur to you or was it important?

RO - It wasn't important because I was thirteen when I met Jesse. And he was in my sister's room at the time. And of course, he was an athlete, and I thought that I was a very popular girl in school, and much sought after, by not only Jesse but

some of the other boys in the school, also. So he use to write my sister notes and tell her to give them to me, you know. And once in a while I'd bump into him going to school and he would ask me if he could carry my books, you know, and this, that and the other, and of course, I obliged and it went on from that. But I never looked upon him as being a prominent athlete and to tell you the truth I have never looked upon Jesse as a, well, a maybe, I wouldn't say a prominent person but something out of the ordinary. To me he is my husband. I'm very proud of his accomplishment but I don't worship him, you know, or his accomplishments, because I think that I'm the type of person that if I have married any man I would want the best out of him.

BM - What was there about Jesse originally that caught your eye that made you interested in him?

RO - Well, he was a nice person. All the girls were chasing him, you know, and I felt that, well, I can get him and they can't, so I went along with the program and his athletic ability just didn't bother me, as I sad I was proud of him, but it didn't bother me.

BM - Now financially, were your people in better economic conditions than his?

RO - They were as we were growing up.

BM - And did your parents feel that maybe this was a pretty bad deal for you?

RO - Well, yes and no, my parents have never interfered with our marriages in that way. If it's what you want then you go ahead with it, and they always liked Jesse very much. My father has often said of course, my father has passed, he has often said that he was one of the bravest young men I've ever seen in my life.

BM - Why does he say that? What does he mean by brave?

RO - Because see, we, in during those days, like girls, see boys every night, now when they're dating them we were only allowed to have dates on weekends, like Friday and Sunday and that was all. But Jesse would come by each and every day and of course it was against my father's ruling but he just came by anyway.

BM - And for that reason he said he was pretty brave.

RO - Yes, the bravest young man I've ever seen.

BM - What was it like when you first married Jesse? You were both still in school?

RO - Yes, we were. Jesse and I first married, Jesse went to college. I remained home and kept my job in the beauty parlor. And it went on for awhile and then he said well, unless you come down and live with me I'm going to drop out of school. And

then, I think, then is when I realized that he possibly had a future and I said no, I don't want you to drop out of school so, I will stop and come down and live with you.

BM - And did you go to school too at Ohio State?

RO - Yes, I did. I, not day classes, I went to night classes at Ohio State because they were giving adult classes there free and I went to not to further my education, I never thought of that, because I always felt that Jesse would be a person that would always be able to provide for me and I went to build myself as an individual so that I could make a better mother and better wife.

BM - Do you suppose that this is part of the success of your marriage, the fact that you took it upon yourself to build yourself as a person?

RO - It could be. It could be and not with the profession because Jesse's the type of man, he's like my father, my father never believed in a woman working and Jesse's the same way. He never believe in woman working. When our girls became of age, and like when school is out, and children become very restless, especially when they're teenagers. And after a certain time what am I going to do, I've nothing to do, nothing to do so our first daughter Gloria was never allowed to work until she graduated. No, before she graduated from college she came home one summer and she worked the time away. And then, the years later on, the thing that made him allow our girls to go to work was when Mayor Daley's daughter went to work. And I said if Mayor Daley's daughter can work, surely Jesse Owens' daughters can work. So they got a job at Lincoln's Cleaners just six hours a day. They wouldn't allow them to work any longer than that, but it meant so much to the girls. It gave them independence. They could buy cashmere sweaters and this, that, and the other, and that's all kids want to do with their money anyway, is to buy clothing and they worked. And our Marleen is the only one that hasn't worked more than the other girls, because every summer she worked down at the Industrial Commission because she types well. She takes shorthand and she's just I'd say more or less on the ball, that's all.

BM - What was it like while Jesse was over in Berlin? Were you on needles and pins or was it a thing of not too much importance to you? How did you feel?

RO - It was very important to me when he was over there. I was concerned about his health. I was concerned, you know, whether he in his competition, how he would come out and things like that.

BM - Were you worried about him? How he would feel if he did not succeed? Did you feel that he would be hurt?

RO - No, I never thought no, it never occurred to me. I never thought of that at all.

BM - And then when he came back, and there was so much hooped-dee-do and hoop-la and all, how did you feel about all of this?

RO - I was well please with him. Of course, I'll tell you this, I'll sum it up this way. I think that I have been a person, I've had my ups and downs like any other married woman to a man of this type, a national figure. I think that I have been a person who has always been a little bit too calm and cool about things, instead of looking things straight in the face. I looked around the corner and threw things over my shoulder. I never let anything affect me and I think that I was a little bit too sure of myself.

BM - What makes you feel this way in looking back now?

RO - Oh, in lookin back now, cause I think that some of the things that has happened in our lives probably would have not happened if I hadn't felt that way.

BM - Can you define one?

RO - Yes I can. Like, a, he took a job, what was the name of this program, he was showing pictures on the birth of a child. Now maybe somebody else would have done the same thing, but I was trying to find a qualified person who would travel with him because they would act the part of a nurse and he would in turn tell the story. And I think that if I had thought differently, it's better staying in the city maintaining a home for him to come back to. I would have packed up children and everything else and gone along with him.

BM - Was this a live program which he did, a movie that he narrated, and apparently something happened during the run of this movie that displeased you?

RO - Yes, that's right, yes.

BM - Have there been a lot of women who have thrown themselves at Jesse that have caused you a lot of trouble?

RO - There has been a lot of things. Well I'll tell you, I hope all of this isn't for publication. Well I'll tell you, that I as I have said, I can't understand how a woman can go and get so old like I did and not know facts of life. I didn't know until I came to Chicago. And that was 1949 when I came here. I'm forty-six now, so you see, I was old when I came to Chicago. I knew things happened, but I didn't know that, a, it was just, so you know, I never thought a man put anything before his family because that's how my father was.

BM - You didn't associate any of the realism with you or your immediate family?

RO - That's right. No, No, it just couldn't happen to me. My father didn't do any thing like that. I looked at my husband as I would look at my father. My father, he was

to me perfect. He may have done everything that any other man would do, but to me he was perfect because nothing came before home. Home was always comfortable, always comfortable.

BM - But he was a man who worked in the same place and didn't travel around a great lot?

RO - And he wasn't a national figure. And so all those things have to be understood. And when Jesse would travel, as I say he was my sweetheart, well you know like, a, your daughter would clean up for her date, my boyfriend is coming over. I'm going to do this, you know, get everything ready lets prepare all the things that you know he enjoys eating and those are the things has been my life, see. When Jesse is out of town, I prepare the things that I know he enjoys eating. I knew how he liked his children kept, and I would have them oh just polished to the last mark when he came in and this, that, and the other, so everything was just perfect you know. When he came home, and of course, we had no time for all these gruesome conversations, you know, nor if he had I wouldn't know what to talk about, because I didn't know anything about it. So my life was tied up in civic work. I've always tied my life up in civic work and Cleveland. The children were small. I didn't have any time for it. And we moved to Columbus. We were too poor for me to go out and do anything. I couldn't pay a baby-sitter so I had to stay with them. We ran a dry cleaning business in Columbus and Jesse took a job with the government, traveled all over, and I had to take care of the dry cleaning business, while he was in school and I had to sack up the two little ones and take them over to the shop with me and keep them over there all day until I closed the store, and then we come back home in the evenings. Then when we moved to Detroit they were a little bit older and he started working for Ford Motor Company and our financial status was just a bit different. So I tied myself up with the Girl Scouts and I was the neighborhood chairman. I had four troops underneath me: the Marionettes, the regular scouts, the Brownies, and one other. I don't remember the name of them now. And I've always tied myself up like that and of course we played bridge in the neighborhood and pot luck, I'll bring the coffee and you bring this and you bring that. We didn't smoke cigarettes. We didn't drink, you know, and it was just like that, see. I mean just a nice clean life, you know, a square as they call you now days, you know, and it remained like that until I came to Chicago.

BM - What was the determining factor in your coming to Chicago?

RO - Well, Jesse was going to make Chicago his home. He was in business here and my mother, bless her heart, she would come and visit us all the time. She lives in Cleveland, Ohio with one of my sisters. One of my brothers and I would suffer with these headaches, you know, that last week-in week-out, you know, and she said to me you're too young of a woman to live the way that you live. Oh mamma, she doesn't know what she's talking about, you know. And I never, it never dawned upon me that I need companionship, you know. I thought I was getting

everything from my children and then when he comes home on the weekends, I was, that would fulfill everything, cause Jesse travels and gone seven, eight, and nine months at a time, you know. But I never thought about things like that. I had my friends, you know, and this, that and the other so I just thought well i'm just all set, see and this is the way he has chosen to make his living so I had to go along with the program. And when he came to Chicago he went into the sporting good business and he says that this is where he was going to stay. So it was a very big decision for me. We owned our own home there. Our daughter Gloria had about three or four months before she graduated from high school. I didn't want to take her out of school, trying to find a place for her to stay, because knowing the type of child that she is, I didn't want her to dwell herself up in her room and mourn, you know, her parents are gone, her sisters are gone, and everything, so I'm going to try and find a home for her where they're children in the home, where there's some activity and be something like home. So finally a friend of mine lived there and, she told me that she would keep her. We missed all of her high school activities, you know, the last graduation, but he did get back to her graduation. She, my sisters, her sisters, and I, and then we had her coming out party there in Chicago, I mean Detroit. We went back to there. Well then I came to visit Jesse once here and I felt that he needed me. I could see that he needed me and I gave up everything and came.

BM - Did you feel torn?

RO - I did. I was torn between leaving my child and coming to him and you can see my side of it, Sometimes I think now since the children have become grown and have left home that I have given them too much of my time and not enough to him. He never complained. But I can see how much he enjoys being, just he and I since the children have left, where before there was interference. He loves his children, but a kind of selfish sort of person inside.

BM - I think that's pretty typical masculine way. A male view.

RO - Yes. Well, you see, I never realized that, see, until the children left. Now we had two to leave in one year, three because Marleen, a, went to school together with Mary. Dorey was married so they were all gone at once. I suffered. He was very happy. But I didn't realize that until then. And a lot of things have, you know, passed over that I have thought about now that didn't think about before. And now I would like to be a part of his life, but he's so accustom of going without me that I think sometimes he forgets to even ask me would you like to go or something, you see. And I don't know how to do it, you know. I try. Of course, I'm a woman. I mean I'll ask so often and after that the hell with it, you know.

BM - I suppose you just have to say I'd like to go. Flat right out. What were some of the things you learned when you came to Chicago that so astonished and amazed and almost frightened you?

RO - How forward woman are. Anything they see they, want they go after it. They say anything under the sun to you, you know, because when I came ---

BM - Did they actually approach you?

RO - Oh yes, well of course, they didn't know that Jesse was a married man when I came here, that was the difficulty. They thought that he was a single man and I said how on earth could you ever think a man like that could remain single. He had to have a wife somewhere. And it just amazed me. I just didn't understand, you know, of the things that they would do. And as I said, with me, and I would, go see, he would take me with him to the parties and things and I'd sit in the corner and fold my arms and watch.

BM - Do you feel that there was a point at which it went to his head? Did he at any point enjoy this sort of adulation from all kinds of women?

RO - Well, of course, Jesse being the type of athlete that he has been, always in front, he likes attention. And naturally he enjoyed it, yes. He enjoyed it, but I can say this for him, although they gave him a lot of attention he never forgot about me. He would always come back to me.

BM - Well, he's basically a kind and principal person regardless of his wondering.

RO - Very. Yes he'd come back and say are you all right. He may be gone for half and hour, or an hour, but he come back and say are you all right. And I would say yes. And then he'd go on again. But he's always been very kind and very careful of me, because he knew that I did not understand, and so he was always very tactful. It wasn't he, it was people. The people, and they knew that I didn't know, cause I've had them say to me, have you ever lived in a big city before? And I would say yes, I thought Cleveland and Detroit were pretty large. They'd say it's nothing like Chicago. I'd say you can say that again. (Laugh)

BM - But you didn't mean it the same way they did?

RO - No I didn't. (Laugh) No I didn't.

BM - Now when Jesse came back and he started on this long and arduous and non-cynical and fruitless show business career, how did you feel about that?

RO - Well at first, you know, I traveled with him. When he first came back we started our campaign for Landon. I traveled with and I became pregnant and I stayed with him, oh, almost until the baby was born. And after, up to the last, I had to go home, see, and the baby was born and I stayed there for awhile and I didn't travel with him anymore. I didn't, a, the only thing Jesse has ever done in his professional career that I objected to was racing against horses and the dogs on the tracks, those were the only things that I disapproved of.

BM - It cheapened him.

RO - I thought so.

BM - That's odd, because I felt the same way, and I didn't even know the man. I thought that this takes something away from all the wonderful things that he's done. It was a financial thing, wasn't it, more than anything else?

RO - Yes, a financial thing. It was a promotion where they were out to make money, the promoters were out to make money, they felt they could make something for him but I didn't like it. I think that I have been a misunderstood person cause people think that I am of the high, you know, society type that I don't like this person, that person, the other person and I'm not that way. I'm smooth. I treat, I try to treat everybody right and everyone's welcome in my home. I do everything that I can to make them comfortable, but there's certain things that I just don't go for and I just can't give into it, that's all.

BM - That has to do with taste and breeding.

RO - I just can't do it, that's all, see, where Jesse is a very cordial person and he, I feel, that he has to go along with these things because he makes his living off the public, but I don't and I can remain home and when he goes into these crowds. I don't have to go. I know there are places that I have been with him, and when I get into the place the people, and I was very friendly with them and everything they were amazed. They said that we never thought that you were so nice. We thought you'd come in with your nose in the air looking down on us, but no. And I've had women to say the same thing to me. I never thought that you were so nice.

BM - Well women can be more cruel than men, but they can be awfully nice.

RO - Yes they can. Well I have learned to understand, as I say, Jesse sheltered me, my father sheltered me, my older sister sheltered me, and it was a mistake and I didn't understand. I just didn't understand life, and these are the things that happen in life, but I didn't know.

BM - Now that you are certainly far more realistic than you were, Jesse's plans to go to Jamaica or here or there or so forth.

RO - I will be with

BM - There you go. I will be with, now you have nothing to hold you up, and if you feel that you would rather stay home instead, then I suppose you'll talk to yourself and you'll say Ruth

RO - No I won't

BM - This is for Jesse now

RO - Yes, that's right. If I had my life to live over again with three babies I would go. If I lived in a trailer or in back of a car I would go.

BM - Now how do you think that this would have changed the events that have gone on since the Olympics?

RO - I think that it would have just quirt everything because there's nothing Jesse likes better than his family. He's very fond of his family, there's things here my girls worked. They're in public. They're things that they hear and they come back and they tell me and I says don't tell me, tell your father. I'm not responsible. I've felt a lot of them were lies and I've always maintained within myself that the poor boy would have to be a super human to do all the things that people say that he does. And Jesse's trouble is that he's too good.

BM - I find it rather remarkable that he can come out of what he came out of and suddenly over night be a public hero. Over night he's given money and adulation so far and above what he could possibly cope with, it's really wonderful and I think partially up to you that he has turned out to be as good and kind and mature as a man as he is now.

RO - Cause I don't go for it. I don't. I break it down. I give, he knows that that a lot of people say that I try to run his life but I don't. I don't try to run his life. I don't interfere. I'm never in his office unless I'm there to help to do something. As far as calling him on the phone, I don't do that. I, he calls me, if he's going to be home. I ask him if he's going to be home for dinner, if he is then I prepare dinner for him. Anytime he feels that he wants to, he can always bring somebody home for dinner and they're no questions asked, whether it be man or woman, he can always bring somebody home, but all I ask is above everything respect me. Do what you want to do, but respect me and respect the girls. That's all I ask and I don't think that's too much.

BM - I think you have a wonderful philosophy.

RO - And of course, as I say, he's an excellent person, and excellent person. He's too good. He'll give you the shirt off of his back.

BM - When he was there, was some question, as to the honorary page job that he did during the legislature in 1935. Do you recall anything about this at all?

RO - No.

BM - He was paid a certain amount of money for the period that the legislature was out of session, and there was much to- do in the papers as to whether or not, a, well this is not your veil so I'll leave that for Jesse to talk about. What about fan mail does he still receive fan mail? Do you get any here at home? Do you help him answer this?

RO - Yes, from all over. Yes I do, and we get things like kids are in town visiting and they'll ring the door bell and to see him, see, he's history to the young children. But more so to the younger children, because a lot of us have read about him in the newspapers or maybe seen him in action. Some of these children only hear about him, maybe during history week, you know, and they talk about the athletes, and this and that and the other things and they'll come and ring the doorbell, and they'll want to see Jesse Owens. And they'll see him and they're amazed, you know, they just can't get over, we have people, they come from anywhere and the ring the bell and come to see him.

BM - How much mail do you get, say a week?

RO - Well, I'll say we get on the average ,now, oh, twenty-five, fifty letters, a week for autographs and things like that. And information on, I'm interested in track and I run such and such a thing and I what am I doing wrong, you know, and can you send me something on how I can improve my running this, that, and the other.

BM - What, who were your mother and father?

RO - My mother and father. My father was John W. Solomon. They were southerners. And my mother was Ellen Prue, of course, Solomon, also, now but they, a, my father came from, as you know, the name Solomon is a Jewish name and my father came from a family in the South who were good livers in the south. They owned a plantation. They owned cattle and stuff like that which ---

BM - Money people.

RO - Yes, as far as the south goes, you know, they were, I wouldn't say wealthy, but I say good livers, that's how I would put it. And my family now all live in Cleveland, Ohio.

BM - How did he get the name Solomon, where did that stem from?

RO - I really don't know. From way back, because you know the Negroes were slaved and a home -----

BM - Would sometimes take the names of the people. That is quite likely however.

RO - That's right take the names of the people that owned the plantation.

BM - Did you have sisters and brothers?

RO - I have one sister and two brothers.

BM - And are they all in Cleveland?

RO - Yes. Jesse's family likewise.

BM - Why do you suppose the cleaning business failed?

RO - The cleaning business did not fail, you mean, in Cleveland or Columbus?

BM - Incidentally, anytime you object to anything I ask you, just say I don't care to answer, if I don't want to get too personal, it's nothing that I ---

RO - Well, I feel that you know what to write about and

BM - Well a know a good deal about you folks. At this point what I'm trying to do now is fill in

RO - You want to fill in some true statements

BM - I certainly do, because already I've noticed some of my facts are not facts.

RO - Well no, we were in the dry cleaning business in Cleveland, Ohio, and then we were in dry cleaning business in Columbus, Ohio.

BM - On one of them Jesse took out bankruptcy. I don't recall at this point which one that was.

RO - Cleveland, where did he file bankruptcy was it Cleveland or Columbus?

BM - It was in 1939.

RO - 39, well I think it may have been Cleveland.

BM - I think it was.

RO - Yes. It probably was.

BM - Cleveland yes. Same time that he had the basketball team.

RO - Yes, well that was the thing that drained him, the basketball team.

BM - I figured there was a tie-in there.

RO - Yes he, a, took this team out on the road, dressed everybody up, and you know how athletes are, they were on the road, they all had families and

BM - Jesse picked up the tabs?

RO - Jesse picked up the tabs for everything.

BM - How did he actually feel about loosing his amateur standing with the AAU? You must have through some thing with him because of the horse racing and so forth.

RO - No, he didn't lose it because of that, he lost it before he came back from Germany.

BM - When he wouldn't go to Sweden. That was the beginning. But then there was additional material about their feelings, that he had made money on this horse race on Havana and this was the second reason they didn't want it, according to my, a, paper. The second reason was they wouldn't reinstate him.

RO - Well as Jesse has often said, at that stage of the game he had a wife and a child, and he had sacrificed his life for the competitive sports and he felt that he had an opportunity to make a decent for his family so he went into it. Jesse's mistake was politics, and then here he comes again, see politics. If he had remained neutral then he would have probably been a millionaire.

BM - Is it your feel that a person in the public eye should not announce their politics. Have you discussed this with him? Then he knows how you feel.

RO - Yes, and Jesse is really not interested in politics. It's just loyalty to individuals.

BM - Governor Landon or Governor Stratton?

RO - That's right. He had no reason to be loyal to Governor Landon, but the one campaign, the last name was Pane from Cleveland, Ohio. He's dead now. There was Pane and some of the other big boys, I would say, that went to New York with me and Jesse's mother and father to meet Jesse. If Jesse had, a, had proper guidance, at the time, he never would have gone into politics. I remember Al Silverman, who was a reporter for the *Cleveland Plane Dealer* at the time, when we got off of the boat or the train or something, someone handed him a sunflower, and he says don't take that, that's Republican, you know, and at the time, when he came home the presidential campaign was in full swing. So naturally they're going to grab something hot to ride on, so they grabbed Jesse. They were suppose to have paid Jesse, I think it was either a hundred thousand dollars or a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, for this campaign.

BM - You mean this had been offered to him or this was a rumor?

RO - Oh yes this was offered to him. When the campaign, of course, unless you get in front, you're doomed, you know, cause when the campaign was over you forget it. All right, when the campaign was over I think they owed Jesse ninety thousand or a hundred thousand dollars. It was an attorney in Chicago, in Cleveland, who was suppose to be looking out for it for Jesse. We got, he talked, I went in to talk with him about it and he says you know Mrs. Owens you either need a lawyer when you're in trouble or you don't need one period. So I'm going to try to help him to, you know, get some of this money that the Republicans supposedly owe him. So we got three hundred dollars, three hundred dollars in order what nuisance value. That's what we got.

BM - To get rid of you.

RO - That's right. That's what it was because he and I, both young, don't know, neither one of us held that kind of money before, you know, so there you are.

BM - For this he sold something priceless.

RO - That's right. And Jesse, he had gained everything he had lost until this Glimco deal.

BM - That was a bad deal.

RO - That was very bad and I told him when he told me about it and I says Jesse you don't know the crooks in Chicago, talk to somebody before you take it and he said I guess I talked to the wrong people, so there you are. Jesse was headed for a very high state.

BM - Do you feel that his youth commission job, the loosing of it?

RO - I do. It ,a, never be known, the public, but I truthfully believe that this is it because Jesse had passed the fiscal year which is June, plus a raise in salary. And he has too many democratic friends who have said to him you don't have to worry about your job, we're going to keep you there. And you know those things can happen.

BM - Now that Governor Stratton will be running again, very soon conceivably will make the Governor's Chair, again do you feel that this will help Jesse to recoup this loss?

RO - Probably so because Stratton was very fond of Jesse. As I remember when we were, we went to Queen Elizabeth's Luncheons, you know, we were one of the VIP's that were invited. And Jesse and I were standing there and Governor Stratton was walking with the Queen and he pointed over, knodded over toward Jesse and said to the Queen that's Jesse Owens and she nodded at him. So Governor Stratton was very fond of him.

BM - So that will help to get Jesse back on the track again.

RO - I think so. But you know a lot is said about people doing this to you and that to you and the other thing to you but you can get so busy yourself that you can harm yourself. And I have told Jesse that you're too big now to make all your answers. You need an attorney, and a good attorney, to read the fine print that we don't take time to read. I mean it. He and I could do things together but it's getting too big for both of us, you see.

BM - You need something else, too, which I think you'll find amusing. He needs a good public relations man. That will say now Jesse this you must say, this don't you dare say, and here you go, but don't bother with that, it's not important.

RO - It's these little things that you take is what cheapens you. You don't need them. You'd rather do with out and then wait for something a little bit bigger. And that I've been trying to tell, but Jesse doesn't know how to say no. He doesn't know how to say no. Jesse will get in a squeeze and he'll say call my wife and I'll say no hell no.

BM - He's never learned how to say no comment. He speaks well, which is kind of unfortunate because he'll speak at the drop of a hat. And sometimes say the wrong thing.

RO - Of course, you know, he's like any other man. I don't know, I think that the day has passed when a woman should remain a dumb bell. I think that if you have a mind you should use it and I think that sometimes he resents my thinking.

BM - Well for a gal that remained in the background for so long, for you to emerge now as the other half of the thinking twosome, I think may be a little difficult for him to adjust to it. If I were in your shoes I'd darn well see that he adjusted to it.

RO - Oh yes, well that's for sure.

BM - The time is now.

RO - That's for sure.

BM - Jesse feels, I am sure

RO - I have the time now.

BM - Jesse feels that he lost a great deal of popularity with the Glimco thing. I'm not sure he did.

RO - He feels, I don't think so either he

BM - He did loose a couple accounts but accounts are very particular. They run off and on the band wagon at the dollar sign. But as far as the people, and I say that in quotes, I think they looked at that and said I've asked a lot of cab drivers lots of them. Every time I ride a cab I say, a, what do you think about Jesse Owens and the way he spoke out ---?

RO - I wanted to do it but I was afraid to.

BM - I do it and I've got some amazing answers. One fella says that's his opinion, say what he wants to say, I don't care he's still a great guy, you know, sure. Another fellow says, why he ought not of done that because that Glimco is a real crook, course that Abata is a crook too, and I don't know which ones the worse except I don't like that damn papa, you know, and Jesse he ought not really a done that. Another fella says to me, well he don't know nothing about it, he just got up there and shot off his mouth. He doesn't know nothing, you know, but kindly. Kindly, no one, even the one that said he shouldn't never said it, indictively or with hostility, it was all, oh, that guy, well you know, why doesn't he keep out of this business. He doesn't know anything about unionism. He should stay out of it. And politics the same way. This is not his field, you know. So I, from this point of view, I don't feel that he's really lost his image. And I think now that if he just doesn't say anything about it to anybody, no comment, shrug off the shoulders, and don't get into any of this anymore, I think that it won't take long before he feels the same way about himself.

RO - Yes, because it has done something to him. Well, you know, I have often told Jesse, of course, Jesse has never realized his greatness, which may be good sometimes and maybe it isn't, because he's too easy. Anybody could talk to him but he shouldn't be that easy to reach. They should have to come through somebody else before they reach him and if it's worthwhile then he can talk to them. But just any and everybody, a, it's pathetic. Like Mrs. Edwards said everything happens for the best. That's a secretary down at the commission. She says because if it hadn't, a, lasted we would have lost our minds because every Tom, Dick, and Harry, you know, looking for a job, looking for money, and this, that, and the other, and he'd go down in his pockets and he'd give it to them, you know, and just a good Joe you know and I said to him you have been good so long until you're getting to be a damn fool. And I said not too many people looking at you that well these guys that beg now, they been begging all their lives. They've begged, everybody else and they know you'll pay them so they got a new one now, So they come to you and then there you are. And our phone would ring continuously from morning till night. I would leave home to keep from answering it, the telephone way up in the night. Guys, some guy came by here two, three o'clock in the morning one night to borrow ten dollars.

BM - And he gave it to him?

RO - Oh, sure, well, he's a good guy. He lost his money, scared to go home to his wife so he gives it to him. And he's just too good. He's just, it's something that has to be stopped that's all. Maybe, if I tell them Jesse has a birthday next Tuesday and he'll be forty-nine and it's getting late.

BM - Are you doing anything special for the birthday?

RO - Just having the family in for dinner the children and the babies and the dinner, that's all. And we usually do that. He enjoys that. He doesn't get to go to their homes too often so I have them for dinner, you know, some Sunday afternoons when he feels like being bothered.

BM - Next Tuesday is what?

RO - September the twelfth. That's his birthday, so I'll have the children over for dinner and he'll enjoy that but other than that nothing.

BM - Has he saved any money at all?

RO - Yes, we do have some savings. I take care of that now, what he has I don't know.

BM - That's what I mean. Does he ever hang onto a dime?

RO - Well, if he does only he knows it. I don't, but I can say this, he does come to me for something. He won't go hungry and we will be able to live for awhile, I have seen to that.

BM - Now what about this new business, how do you feel about it?

RO - I feel that it's something that could be worked up into something, but it's going to take a strong hand, a stronger hand than Jesse to do it.

BM - And what about your helping?

RO - Well, I intend to help until he gets on a paying basis, because for someone to come in there and prepare the food, they'd probably charge him twenty-five, fifty dollars, you know, and he intends to do this every Saturday. It embarrasses him to have me do it, but I think it's good for the public.

BM - I think it's marvelous. I think it's about time you emerged.

RO - Yes, of course, as you say I remained in the background too long, that has been one of my mistakes being in the background too long. Well he didn't want me, see, so I'm not the pushing kind, so I stayed back, but then I say now it's getting late and unless I go out there and let them know that there is a Mrs. Owens who there is, somebody who is helping him, of course, the average thinking person, I

mean they've got to know a man who spends money in the streets like Jesse spends got to have somebody in the background who is holding on somewhere.

BM - But it isn't a mother, it's a wife.

RO - Well, that's one thing, he told me that once. You're not a wife, you're a mother.

BM - Well, that was you're cue.

RO - And it stunned me. I couldn't answer him right away. It took me a couple of days to answer him.

BM - I think this new business has great possibilities as you do. I also think that, a, he needs some direction. And I think you're just the gal to give it to him.

RO - Like today, and his talk with the lady. I want you to, I want you to do this. I want you to do that. You don't say that. I would like for you to do this. I would like for you to do that. So when he came out of the room I said to him you don't say that's a demand. I want you to buy so & so. I want you do this. He repeated it ten, twelve times. We don't say it like that. I would like for you, and a sort of way you know not pleading but you know what I mean I would like for you when you go into the store. I'd like for you to buy Libby products. I'd like for you to buy Meadow Gold butter.

BM - Well, certainly if he pointed out if they did purchase this merchandise, whatever it may be, that the luncheons can continue and can be a very social local point for the community and so forth, if he can make them a part of this.

RO - And they all seem to have a good time.

BM - A wonderful time.

RO - And of course it enables the companies to hire more Negro people. Because if their business grows then they know it's because of their advertisement which I say, I think it can grow to be a great thing and although I regret his dismissal with the Youth Commission, I think that on the other hand it is a good thing because it gives him more time to think about this business which is something that will be his.

BM - Well, let me ask you this, does Jesse think before he acts or does he go right ahead and act?

RO - Oh, he's a spur of the moment person. He's just like this all the time. He's too hasty.

BM - Now, he's got BR working for him. It seems to me these little speeches to the ladies should be written and memorized if not word for word

RO - He's not that type of a person.

BM - But they should be.

RO - And read it over. He would not, he wouldn't ever talk in his talks around the country, he can't talk from a paper.

BM - Well, if he's on a crusade words come easily. Now the thing he did this morning I felt was not good Jesse Owens. It was a hurry up and get this thing over with so I could go play my golf. This is where he's going to loose his ladies. Because they are going to have to feel that he

RO - Now why tell them that. I got to go that's it.

BM - Why does he have to say I've got to go at all? He's the cheese, he's the boss, he comes on, he makes an introduction and leaves. That's all.

RO - That's right. I feel that way too. I felt that was wrong.

BM - How do you feel? Do you get tired of discussing the Negro problem as such?

RO - I do, I do, I do. I think I am so sick of this race issue I could scream, and battling here and battling there and battling the other place, I am just plain sick of it. But I'm one person and if I say it I'll be beat down to the ground.

BM - No, there are more than you.

RO - Yes. So I just don't say a word, that's all. Up until, lets see about four years ago, I never worked with Negro organizations. I was always a crusader in white organizations. I was the Parent-Teacher. I was city-wide. I correspondence secretary for the entire central council of Parent-Teacher work. I was the only Negro woman. I was chairman of juvenile protection and safety for the entire central council and we worked on a project for the children. And then I got the name of being. you've heard this expression before. I'm sure white folks nigger you've heard that haven't you?

BM - No, I've never heard.

RO - You've never heard that expression. Because all my friends were white. I had no association with Negro people other than a few neighbors or something like that, so I says, well, maybe I am not that, but maybe I am too far over on the other side. So I gave up. I was with the League of Women Voters, with the American Cancer Society, I gave it all up and I started working with Providence Hospital Auxiliary. I

came closely associated with my church and president of the auxiliary there. But now I find that I got so much bickering all the time, you know, we're fighting all the time, although we have a project to work on, well I'm still fighting and I don't like it. If I'm going to give my time, I want to do something pleasant, and I want to feel that, a, I don't want, say, well, I've got to go to a meeting today. I want to, want to go to this meeting, see, just get up from the bed with vim, vigor and vitality, cause I've got to go to a meeting. It's enjoyable. We had our fights right there, you know, and we leave and you go home and you don't have to come home and soon as you get in the door your phones ringing so and so and so and so.

BM - I've think you've been very kind and very cooperative. I can't think of anything else right now that, a, I think we ought to discuss. I'm certain that there are many things that I have over looked or just don't know. Is there anything that you can think of that might help me to know your husband better, or you better?

RO - No, I can't think, cause I think that you had a lot of fictitious facts as I can say that there isn't a greater guy in the world than Jesse, and course I myself take no credit for anything. I am behind him win, loose, or draw. And as I, a lot of my friends have criticized me and they say this, that, and the other, and I says, well if this what he wants, like his business, if it takes our last dime then to make it go then we will do that because I have always had a feeling that Jesse, a very ambitious person, if there's a dollar in the streets to be made he will make fifty cents of it, and I am not person who to be partying with this person and that person and the other person. I'm like any other woman. I like nice clothes. I wanted the best for my children and that I got. I wanted them educated and when we go out I can look as well as the next person. I don't wear a mink coat, but I feel that what I wear I look as well as the next person in their mink coat, you know, what I mean.

RO - And so I really have no concern about, a, how what I name it. The fabulous things the folks are doing because I feel that we are invited to places that a lot of people would love to go and they can't.

BM - What has been some thrilling moments in your personal life of wonderful people that you have met or marvelous places that you have gone or something that has happened that has thrilled you personally? Or and above what Jesse has accomplished.

RO - Well I say that going to a the Queen's Luncheons. I thought that was just out of this world.

BM - Is she marvelous looking?

RO - No, very plain clothing looking woman. A you know, how they dress, you know, mature looking, but he is fabulous. He's just as handsome as he wants to be. Going to California, of course, I can say this anywhere we go, we are treated royal, just royal. Jesse and I, over the years, but things are different now, they've been

lifted, but over the years Jesse and I have lived in places that Negroes are just beginning to live.

BM - You and Jesse didn't really have the typical problems then?

RO - We have never been segregated against. I have never been refused any place. I've always said that if you act the part, looked the part, and had the proper thing in your pocketbook then you had no trouble.

BM - What about the show "This is Your Life"? How was the at set up? Were you approached originally?

RO - Yes, I was the one who made all the plans for the show. And you couldn't have been treated any nicer if you were King B, you just couldn't. We were just treated with royal. We were wined and dined from our arrival until we left and anywhere we go, Jesse and I we were in Minnesota, a, April, May, we were there for a week. And when we'd go to town, if they're Negroes in the town then they always get what they called the crop, social crop to entertain us, and if in Minnesota, where we were, there were no Negroes. So we were entertained by the society of the white people. We stayed in the motel, we could have stayed in their homes if we wanted to. Superintendent of Schools told us the people are that way cause he was there on graduation exercises. We could have stayed in their homes, but we preferred to stay in a motel, and we stopped by one place, I was to have stayed but I, my daughter, had her baby and I stayed with her until she got on her feet and got out of the hospital and he promised to bring me by, and we went by there about eight, eight thirty in the morning because we were on our way to some place else and she prepared breakfast for us and everything so everybody they were just wonderful to us and I enjoy going out with Jesse, away with him I'll say. Now in the home he's king pin you noticed, he likes lots of attention. You do this. You do that. You do the other. But when we're traveling he does for me like we do at home, so I thought we needed to stay on the road and never need to stop just keep going.

BM - Well at least fifty-fifty.

RO - So that's the way it is. So we, we have a nice life together, it's just my stupidity, I just didn't understand that's all.

BM - Well, through your ignorance you've raised three wonderful daughters and gotten them educated and given them a wonderful home and you've made a base for Jesse to come back to any old time, so I'm not so sure that, a, you did wrong.

RO - Well, I think it was good because I was up in Hartford, Michigan about three weeks ago with some friends, for instance my husbands always a topic of conversation everywhere I go. I get so disgusted sometime and I'm not as calm about answering to some people as I once have been because I feel I hate to be

picked. If you want to know something ask me, if I want to tell you I'll tell, if not I know how to answer you but don't pick me, you know. I think that you think well, I'm so smart, see, she's so stupid I'll get it out of her, you know, then those are things that bother me and then finally her husband said you don't have anything to worry about. He says you have three of the finest girls in Chicago. And you're so called big shots wish that they could accomplish what you have accomplished, said you don't have anything to worry about. And I don't, I really don't. Really don't. I'm very proud, very proud of my children and Jesse too. I mean I'm very proud of him

BM - I suggest that you would be proud of Jesse if he had gone into insurance and were now, a, well, a, salesman.

RO - Or he's working in a factory, he's my husband and I love him. I've known him since I was thirteen and we've come along together and we've had a beautiful life together and I'd be just as proud of him if he's working, I'd be happy if he's working eight hours a day, if you want to know the truth come home at night and we could do something once in awhile. About three weeks ago, and I said we went to see a medium rare, a, the poor thing he works hard all week, see, so once in awhile I'll mean, so, he'll come in from the golf course and dead tired. I know he is and I'll he'll say what's for dinner. I'm not cooking for dinner tonight, we're going out except for the theater, I'll announce the day before that I had made reservations and we're going to the show, see. Well, he doesn't like music, but everyone's been talking about this medium rare and how good it is, you know, act like you owe yourself something to see it. And I said all right we'll go, so I said I'm not cooking we're going to dinner first and then we're going to the theater. Fine, he never yells. His tongue could be hanging out. If I say I'm not cooking, OK we'll go. A lot of time he won't want to dress to go downtown, he'll say lets go to the Hut, well that's fine, all of the sudden he'll say call up and order, and I'll pick it up, you know, it's OK with me, just so I get part of my wishes. We went to dinner, and to see the musical, and it was so entertaining that otherwise he would have gone to sleep, but he didn't even go to sleep. It's one of these things, you know, you're in a theater and you mind just the way, you know, to what you're work or something at home, or the kids, or something, well you don't have time to think about anything. It's just a continuous thing and it moves so fast, you know, that he actually enjoyed it and so he said to me well we'll have to do something like that again. And my resolution the first of January was we're going to see a play a month and go to dinner at least once-a-month, that's all I ask, you know, during the winter cause I know he plays golf during the summer, and I try not to interfere with that cause I know how much he enjoys it. Well, this is the first time since January we were able to do it and it's almost January again. (Laugh)

BM - What are some of the other fabulous people that have entertained you or that you have met? Do you know the Mayor?

RO - Oh yes, we went to his dinner party that he had for Nehru. We were invited to that.

BM - How do you feel about Mr. Daley?

RO - He's a wonderful man just a plain ordinary Joe, that is just a wonderful man. I look at him on the no partism. I just look at him as a plain wonderful man. I think that anytime a man like Mayor Daley, or any other public figure, brings his family forward at all times in my eyesight, he's a grand man. And I think Mayor Daley is a fine man. He is not an educated man, but he's just a plain old Joe, that's all. I think he's wonderful and I would vote for him Democrat or Republican, really I think that much of him.

BM - That's a great thing to say.

RO - Yes, I really would.

BM - What are some of the other Chicago people that you know?

RO - That I like very much?

BM - Yes. Or disgust.

RO - Well, I'm very fond of Ralph Metcalf and his family cause they're friends of ours. Not so much that they are friends of ours, but I like him. I admire Olive Harvey.

BM - Do you know Judge Parsens?

RO - Yes, a wonderful man, I think. I only met him once. I heard him speak at one of the Y dinners and he impressed me very much. A very quiet sort of man even in his speech, he's very quiet. I introduced myself to him on the way out. He was standing by the door there and I was passing by and I shook hands with and told him who I was, cause Jesse wasn't with me, you see.

BM - Do you know Edith Sampson?

RO - Yes, I don't know too much about her. I've only been around her a little bit. I like Edda Molton very much.

BM - I interviewed Edda Molton ten years ago.

RO - I like Edda. I admire her. I think she's a very striking and charming woman. She does a lot of good work. Of course, she's interested Africa movement now and she goes all out for it, all out for it. And she decorated our tea for the Providence Hospital, we have a tea once a year. She decorated the tea, she loaned clothes for us, she just gave of her time endlessly for it and I am publicity chairman for the

Providence Hospital group. And I worked very close with her, and I'm very fond of her. A lot of the people I know on the social basis, but I don't know them as people, you know. But Jesse knows them a lot better, as I say my work is civic work and not so much socializing. And in civic work you don't get a chance to know the people as well as you if it's on a social basis. Civic work, I think that they're reaction is just a little bit different.

BM - I'm sure they're in the public eye. What about Governor and Shirley Stratton, do you know them?

RO - I, yes, I think they're very kind. I was at one of the hostesses in the receiving line to receive her, when during the campaign at the Parkway Ball Room, and she was very charming, very charming. Then I had a chance to talk to her after. I told her who I was and she chatted with me and I thought she was very charming, very, mixes very well, I mean her head isn't too high and she, a, just gets along well, you know.

BM - Have you been to the Governor's Mansion?

RO - No, I haven't. I have been in Springfield and saw the Mansion but I haven't been inside. Dawson, I've never met. I know of him.

BM - Dawson?

RO - Representative Dawson. I don't know him, I have met him and of course I have met any number of the people around Chicago, but to know them I don't. I just know of them.

BM - You bout all talked out?

RO - Yea. (laugh)