

1968 U.S. Olympic Team Oral History Project: Transcript of Interview

Interviewer: Thomas M. Hunt

Subject: Tom Lough, 1968 Olympic Games, Modern Pentathlon

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[begin recording]

[Thomas M. Hunt:] If you could just introduce yourself so that we have a recording of your voice, your name, and where you are from.

[Tom Lough:] Okay. My name is Tom Lough, L-o-u-g-h. Full name, Maurice Thomas Lough, M-a-u-r-i-c-e Thomas. Nickname, Tom. I was born July 14, 1942 in Harrisonburg Virginia, and I am currently living in Murray, Kentucky, M-u-r-r-a-y. At the time of the 1968 Games I was in the U.S. Army. I was stationed in Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, and I trained there for about two-and-a-half years before the '68 trials.

[TMH:] This is Tommy Hunt who is conducting the interview from here at the University of Texas at Austin. I think a good way of starting may be to go over sort of your larger background, where you grew up, how you got in to athletics, your first inkling of what the Olympic Mission was and how that affected you; things like that.

[TL:] Okay, well in High School I wasn't much of an athlete. I made the track team, got shuffled around and ended up running the 880 and the mile. And then I went to West Point and tried out for several teams there. I was on the gymnastics team for a while, track and cross country team for a while. I wasn't much of an athletic success there until I ended up on an intramural team for what was then called triathlon. We did swimming, running, and pistol shooting. I'd never shot a pistol before in my life but they had some really good pistol coaches there and I actually ended up winning the corps intramural pistol championship. And then my swimming wasn't all that great 'cause all I could do was Red Cross Lifesaving swimming but I was, you know, a fairly good runner and by the time they added up all my scores I ended up being one of the top competitors in triathlon which totally stunned me. I had never had any success in athletic competition before, mainly because I wasn't good at anything, but in triathlon I didn't have to be good at a single sport. I was competing against others, though, who were really good shooters or really good swimmers or really good runners but I was sort of average or maybe a little above average in everything and it suited me just fine. I found out that there was a triathlon club sport there at West Point so I applied for that and made that team. This was something that was not a varsity level sport but I did do intercollegiate competition so I got to compete in triathlon with a few other universities and went out to Air Force Academy and competed with them and so forth. By the time I was a junior or sophomore at West Point I was getting a lot of encouragement and found out that this could be a feeder sport for an Olympic event called modern pentathlon.

Modern what? About that time I lucked out because Warren Dow who was on the 1936 Olympic fencing team, got the great idea to restart the West Point fencing team. So, he started to come out to West Point and give lessons. Fencing started out as a club and I joined that and so I picked up the epee, which was the weapon used in the sport of modern pentathlon, pretty quickly and to my amazement I represented West Point at the NCAA championships at the national level two years.

And, so, that was pretty interesting.

Summer before my sophomore year I was able to get an invitation to an Olympic development clinic in San Antonio, Texas. So, I went down there and trained at the United States Modern Pentathlon Training Center that was administered by the Army for about three or four weeks. And then we had a competition that amounted to a national championship and I won the national championship for the novice division, meaning people who had never competed in it before. Again, I was stunned. I mean, I had never experienced anything like that in my life. I said, This is great; this is something for just a regular person. Okay. And it's in the Olympics. Really? So, by the time I graduated from West Point I was pretty excited about the idea. The training center in San Antonio said, Why don't you come down for a little while and let us at least look you over and see if you might have the potential for '68?

In the army we have branch management services where each branch manages the career development of the officers. I was a professional officer, graduated as second lieutenant and engineer from West Point. So, I had to follow, you know, just like with a tenured professor, you have to follow rules to advance your career and so forth. So, they set it up where I could go to San Antonio for about three or four months from September to December and train with the folks there and the coaches could look me over. And then I went to Airborne and Ranger school. And then they said, Well, he's got potential; maybe he can make the team. They said in order to do that and advance your career you're going to have to have troop assignments and command assignments. So, I had to agree that if I would have an overseas tour in Korea I could come back and train for the Olympics and whether I made it or not, I would have to agree to go Viet Nam immediately afterwards. I said, okay. So, that was my sandwich.

[TMH:] You know, you sometimes read about these stories. There will be surveys where they ask an athlete, Would you die in four years if you could win an Olympic medal? And they all say yes. In your case, you actually had, in some ways, that decision or at least the threat of it. Interesting.

[TL:] Just about. Yep, yep, yep. And actually in Viet Nam I almost did. So, anyway, I went to Korea and got good line duty and staff duty and was Aide de Camp to a general for a few months and came back in July '66 to San Antonio and started training there and did a few army duties and everything but mainly had a chance to work out in all the events and started really at the bottom of the ladder. I was so horrible in swimming I had to do double workouts with the "Rock Squad." I was the only one there I think that was not an expert in at least one of the five. I was very, very general. It all depended on when you asked me, What's your best sport? You mean today, this week? In May of '68 we were in Florida at the national fencing championships. They sent us to all these national competitions, you know. I went to Beaumont, Texas to do horse shows and everything and then went to pistol matches and all this other sort of stuff, and running, you know.

So we were fencing in the national championships, open championships, in Miami, Florida and I suffered a severely pulled muscle. I could barely move; quadriceps. They flew me back to San Antonio and put me in the hospital with forty pounds of traction for about three weeks. The Olympic trials were coming up and I was in the hospital after two-and-a-half years of working out. It was a real test of my faith. Because of my faith, I really tried to have sort of a positive attitude and tried to keep working out in the hospital. My teammates helped me out by bringing in a golf ball on a string and my fencing sword so I could hang the golf ball on a string from my traction frame and practice picking at it. I took a weight out of my traction bag and held it up, practicing raising and lowering my pistol. The nurse rigged up a pulley system over my head so I

could practice swimming. I took my crutch apart and I wrapped it in some ACE bandages and squeezed it between my knees and ankles and sort of did imaginary rides over the jumps and everything and did sit-ups and stuff. I did everything I could. I couldn't run but by doing all that I didn't deteriorate all that much and in the same ward with me were wounded men from Viet Nam. I really got inspired from them. They cheered me on and everything. "Go get 'em guy!", and everything. It was really a very emotional time for me.

I got out of the hospital about two months before the trials and started getting back in shape very gingerly. Of course the running was the toughest part. You know, trying to get back endurance and not pushing the injury so it wouldn't re-injure the muscle and all that sort of thing. So here come the trials and we find out we're going to do double trials. Oh, my gosh. So, we'll have two, five sport trials back to back. So, we went through the first one. We do it in order of uncertainty. So, the horseback riding is first, then the fencing, then the pistol shooting, and then the swimming, and then the running is usually, you know, pretty much what you can do. You know, you can replicate your run pretty easily. I did really well in everything. I fenced about the best I'd ever fenced. I ended up in second place after the first round and went directly into the second round and I ended up in second place again and second place overall. Between second place and third place there was several hundred points. I was significantly up there. I can't believe this!

This is really amazing!

[TMH:] Was your leg hurting at this point?

[TL:] I don't recall that it was. My run wasn't up quite to par with what I'd done in earlier competitions but by the time I got to the run, I knew sort of what I had to do. I didn't really want to push beyond that. So, what they said was because this is high altitude, we need to do altitude training. We want to just verify that you all can still perform under altitude conditions. So they took the top six to Colorado and said, Okay, we're going to let you all workout here for a couple weeks, then we're going to have another run and swim competition. And that would decide the final order, finally for us.

[TMH:] That seems somewhat unfair. What was going through your mind?

[TL:] Oh, my goodness. Well, whatever! So, they had sort of an innovative approach for us.

Most of the teams that went out there, the wrestlers, gymnasts, and track, they just sort of started training at high altitude and everything. Well, they took us, our little squad, up to Pikes Peak, and we lived in a Department of Agriculture research trailer for about a week with a doctor and every day he gave us iron pills and took our blood and every day we threw up. Oh, it was unbelievable. So finally we got to where we could walk without getting a headache and we finally got to the point after a week where we could very carefully jog without getting dizzy or whatever but then we came down to the relatively rich oxygen atmosphere of Colorado Springs and I don't know if it did it for me physiologically, but it certainly worked for me psychologically and that was really pretty cool. So then we worked out a little bit there and at Air Force Academy and other places and then we did the running and swimming again and again I finished in second place. There was a little bit of shuffling in the other positions but Jim Moore, the guy who was in first place ahead of me, stayed there and I stayed there and then there's a little bit of adjustment as I said.

So, then we made the team and in late September we flew down to Mexico City. I am flying on the plane with people I read about in *Sports Illustrated* magazines. There's Jim Ryun. My gosh, that's Dick Fosbury, my gosh, that's me! This little guy from Shenandoah Valley; it's just unbelievable. I just drew a lot of inspiration from those moments. Gosh, if I can do it— and I tell this story to young people, too— you've got to look inside yourself and be willing to try different

things; just peck away and see what you can do. Push your limits a little bit and see. So anyway, that got us down there and we ended up in the Olympic Village. There was a little bit of shuffling in our room I can recall. It was like a suite and then some rooms off to the side and we were kind of getting set up and then here come the weightlifters!

[TMH:] Uh- oh.

[TL:] Yeah! So we quickly realized we'd better move to the outside rooms because they set up in there with all their suitcases of this and that and everything, you know. But it was fun. We got to know them fairly well. But then we were able to have two to a room on the outside there. That gave us a little bit of privacy and a bit of focus. So that was good.

[TMH:] How were the hosts? Did you have any contact with the local population at all?

[TL:] Yeah, I didn't have much until after my event was over. What happened was —. Let's see; there are two levels on which I can answer that. Let me go to the second level first. Second level was the modern pentathlon started the day after the opening ceremonies so after five days we were done. That was really neat. After that I could relax and go out on the town a little bit, hang out, go to restaurants or whatever. That was kind of fun in a general way. Now in the most specific way, on the first level, while we were working out, we did some workouts prior to the competition and through that we came in touch with volunteers.

A huge part of the volunteer staff in Mexico City was the Boy Scouts and this one little patrol of boy scouts kind of adopted me. I can't remember how it happened but I guess they were there at the place I was working out and I said, Hi, or something then somehow they showed up at the other place I was working out and all the sudden they were just there all the time. They came to all my competitions; a little private cheering section, you know, five or six little guys. After the competition was over, I had interaction on that other level I was telling you about where they invited me to come to their homes and meet their families and their parents. They took me to their neighborhood; they took me to the movies, and everything. I got to see a side of Mexico city that very few people didn't see as well as what they could see. Wow look at all the lights!

Let's go in here and have dinner or whatever. That was really fun for me.

I have a picture of me with them and I had them sign their names and addresses and when I went to Mexico City back in 2007, I passed the picture and names and addresses around. The hotel staff did their very best to find these guys. They just couldn't find them. I'd really love to find these guys. That's another project of mine. I think if you'll check with some of the other teammates you'll find that there will be lots and lots of stories like that because the Mexican people were —I could characterize them —they were so ecstatic and enthusiastic about coming to the games there. They just reached out to everybody, especially, anyone who had a USA uniform. You could see that they welcomed the whole world. Just walking down the street, anybody that looked like they were an Olympian, they'd just say, Hero, and everything. It was really kind of fun. There was always a group around the Olympic village. We'd come out of the gate and — they didn't care if you were famous or not— they'd want your autograph and, Can I shine your shoes? And all this sort of stuff.

[TMH:] You mentioned something a minute ago. I remember in the 2008 games there were athletes who competed shortly after the opening ceremonies that chose not to go through the opening ceremonies because they had to be on their feet for so long. Did you consider that?

[TL:] Yeah, I can speak to that. In fact, that was a contentious moment there for everybody, especially those that were competing either elsewhere or the next day. For example, very few of the rowers marched in the opening ceremonies because they had competition the next day. There were a few track athletes, who, for one reason or another, didn't want to march in the opening

ceremony. We had to ride the next day. In fact, on the day of the opening ceremony, that morning we inspected the riding course and then that afternoon went through the opening ceremony. Then the next day, competed in the riding. Because it was competing in the riding where we didn't have to be on our feet all the much, all of us in modern pentathlon chose to go ahead and march in the opening ceremony. I think I would have chosen it anyway because it was one of the most remarkable events of my life.

[TMH:] Can you tell me about it?

[TL:] The one moment was coming through the tunnel into the stadium. I think if you will interview any teammate, that's one of the most incredible moments that they just don't forget. In the dark of the tunnel, and then you break out into a little ramp that goes down; there's the ABC camera over here, Hi mom, hi dad. And then as soon as the crowd saw it was U.S.A, the loudest cheering I've ever heard. It was surround sound forty years early. I had never heard a sound like that before. It was just an amazing moment. We marched around the track the whole time and then marched again halfway and then marched to the middle and took up our place. Now, before that, I think it was a day or two before that, they formed us up by height and then there was a marine or somebody that tried to help us learn how to march. All the teammates in the military already knew, so no problem for us, but it was fun to watch our civilian colleagues try to get it; but everybody wanted to learn and make us look good and all so they basically cooperated. The day of the opening ceremony itself, we all had busses to get on that took us to a staging area which was a series of athletic fields or something and then we waited around there for quite a while. While I was there, I took a few pictures and looked at some of the uniforms from other countries and that sort of thing; so, it was kind of fun. I found out from some of my teammates that lots of other things happened during that time, too. Anyway, finally, our time came and we formed up and marched along a little sort of canyon type of roadway. We weren't marching, just walking along, walking along. Then we split into two columns to come in through the fence then one column again as we approached the tunnel. By the time we got to the tunnel, then we sort of straightened our lines and got in step and started marching. You could hear the music and everything so we got marching in. At the very front was a Mexican military academy cadet carrying a standard that says — I don't know whether it was in Spanish or French— but it says whatever for the United States. Jan Romary, one of our fencers who was a grandmother, carried the flag. There's a story behind that, too. And then, there was a row of USOC officials, I guess, and then the eighty or ninety women and then the couple hundred men behind that; just an amazing thing. Once we got out onto our place on the main field, nobody could see very much. You could hear a little bit and everything, so we sort of wondered around just a little bit but we mainly stayed about where we were. We were pretty polite, actually. The opening ceremony was a blur but I do remember seeing the smoke from the torch as it went around the track. It was remarkable to watch. It was the first time, I think, a woman had carried the torch in the opening ceremony and to watch her run up that flight of stairs without missing a step and just keep going. Oh, my gosh; (cheering) and she was trying to run on up there! And pause for a moment, yeah! (cheering) And then lit it. And then, of course, everybody went wild again. So, that was really kind of neat. In fact it was that opening ceremony emotion, I guess, that started me on this whole re-assembly thing. And I don't know if you want me to cover that. I can cover that pretty quickly right now if you like.

[TMH:] Sure.

[TL:] In February of 2007, I had the opportunity to go to Mexico City for a business meeting with this educational foundation I was working with and the meeting extended over a weekend.

And so, on Saturday we were off and I said, Well I'm just going to go down to the University and see if the stadium is there, you know, what it looks like. So, I went down there and it was all, you know, closed off and with barbed wire and everything, a guard. Nothing was going on so I showed the guard my little Olympic identification card and he wouldn't let me in, wouldn't let me in. And, so, I just kept gently pestering him and everything. I said look, five minutes, cinco minutos, whatever. So, he finally let me in for five minutes and I ran in and sat in the stands and sort of replayed the opening ceremony in my mind. It was just amazing. I took photos and made a little video. And, in those moments was when I realized I missed my teammates. I really missed my teammates. So I said, Well, when I get back, maybe we can find a few teammates or whatever; and I started calling around and all of a sudden realized, you know, we could—. Let's all get together, okay. So, it wasn't too long after that we were able to get volunteers in each of the sports: I'll help. I'll find the swimmers. I'll find the gymnasts. You know? And after about a year of effort we had found all but about 30 or 40 out of the original 475 and we're down to about maybe 10 now that we— that either we don't know where they are or they won't respond. But, anyway, so, that's sort of the aside, aside on that. So the opening ceremony stadium played a very important part in our lives for the opening ceremony and of course for the track and field events, and everything, and then for the closing ceremony, but also played an important part in my life in getting motivated or getting the idea to get the band back together, so to speak; sort of like the Blues Brothers type of thing.

[TMH:] How wonderful!

[TL:] Oh, it's been terrific, yeah, yeah.

[TMH:] You mentioned the story of the grandmother and I got to hear it now.

[TL:] Well, I think this was her fifth Olympics and she was a national champion in fencing all these years and she was just so highly respected; but, uh, this is third hand now, so, I don't know if it should be part of the official history yet or not but I understood that it was actually Hal Connelly who was elected to carry the flag and then for, uh—. After some discussion with him it was learned that perhaps he felt he would be obligated to dip the flag and so there was some discussion and negotiation and stuff. I'm not privy to any of that information. Like I said this is only third hand from what I've seen and heard. But, um, either he was asked to resign or he offered to resign from the flag carrier and then Jan would take it. Both he and Jan are deceased now. There's no way to verify this from either of them personally but there may be some other information around for that.

[TMH:] Sure, sure. While we're on sort of, individuals, did you become particularly close to anybody there? Was there, you know, your buddy through the competition?

[TL:] Well, it's kind of funny. You know I was close to my pentathlon teammates for sure but I really decided I needed to take advantage of the situation so I really went out of my way to meet people from the other sports and because of the nature of the pentathlon, it was easy for me to do. I could go to the horse— equestrians and talk horse. I could go to the shooters and talk shooting and, you know, all that sort of thing. So, it was really funny that you would ask that because I did range, probably, a lot more widely and personally than maybe some of the others, especially those who had events toward the end of the schedule. You know, because they would have to remain in training and remain focused and really couldn't kind of bum around. But after my competition was over, I just sort of—. I'm going to these events, you know? So, at the time, the Mexican hosts had sort of the procedure in place that if you had Olympic credentials you could get in through the athlete's gate to any of that, and that was really good. But then, at some point they said, Well this is getting too much. So, only the athletes with the sport's credential

could get in to the sport's gate. And I remember this one that I really wanted to get into was swimming. And so I talked to some of my swimming buddies and Charlie Hickcox, who was about as tall as I was—he was much better looking than I was—but any way, he said, "Listen, listen. Let's just trade IDs. Use mine." So, he loaned me his ID and I went in as Charlie Hickcox that night and got to watch the swimming; got some pictures of swimming, and everything, so it was kind of fun.

The three-day equestrian event was held offsite. I think it was a place called Avandero, or something like that, several miles outside of town, thirty or forty miles away. One of my riding friends took me down to see that event. Three-day has cross-country, the jumping, and then it has a long distance, and then a dressage component, something like that. And the day of the cross-country over the jumps, it rained severely and there was a lot of problems with the competition because several horses, like dying, and you know, and several riders were injured seriously. This is top world—. This is world level people. And so, there was a bit of worry about whether the competition should have been curtailed or postponed or modified in some way so that it would have been a little more safely done. But that's the nature of that particular aspect of the three-day, too, that there is an edge of danger to it. But, I got to see that, and to this day, I can still go to my teammates and, Man, you remember that? It was so rainy and everything. And it was really neat that I was there to be part of that. You know? It was really pretty cool.

Then, on the fencing side, we worked out with the fencers. And doggone it, a couple of the fencers came to our pentathlon fencing event and supported us. There's this guy, Dave Micahnik, an epee fencer who eventually became the fencing coach of Penn State or University of Pennsylvania — I better get that straight — University of Pennsylvania. And so, he helped me host a team dinner back in April, I guess, after the Penn Relays. When I went through some of my photos, I saw him in the photos that someone had taken of me in the fencing event— that he was sitting over there in the background. "Dave, did you know you came to the pentathlon fencing event?"

"I did?"

There was incontrovertible evidence, you know? There he was! That was pretty cool.

And with the divers— he doesn't remember this, but— Bernie Wrightson, who won the gold medal in diving, ended up being a real fan of modern pentathlon and he gave me so much encouragement. And he said, "I just admire you guys for being able to do all those things so well!"

I said, "Bernie, (laughter) good grief, look at you! You're just a fantastic athlete and you could be a gymnast with all your skills and stuff."

But it was so amazing to be admired by someone like that, a gold medal winner.

And then, while we were waiting at the opening ceremony, I wanted to get a picture of me with one of the women in uniform, so Sue Gossick said, "Yeah, I'll stand for a photo with you."

She ended up winning the gold medal for the platform diving. That was pretty cool.

In the track and field, I met several of the people there but I don't think I really hung out with anybody in particular in track and field but I knew several of them. There had been a pre-Olympic competition in 1967 where they took a plane-load of folks down so that—.

The way it was explained to me was that they wanted to run the athletes through, both to give them a little extra international experience but mainly to give the officials and the systems—the control system, an accounting system, and a scoring system—and everything a chance to run. It was a run-through of the administrative side of the Olympics. And so, I got selected for that, which is very encouraging, and that's when I

first met some of these interesting track and field folks like John Carlos. He was on the airplane with us going down there. What a character! Oh, he was so colorful, and so outspoken, and so interesting and just fun to be around. It was amazing. And then I met Mamie "Stix" Rallins who is the hurdler and she and I sort of hobnobbed a little bit and in '68 as well. But the sweetest person I met was a high school student named Maren Seidler, a shot putter. She and I ended up on the plane together to Mexico City in '67, and so, we just sort of, you know, hung out together and became pretty good friends, actually. And we both made the team in '68, so we ended up on the same plane again and she introduced me to Carol Moseke, the discus thrower, and so the three of us sort of hung around together and it was really kind of fun to do that. That was pretty cool.

It was especially neat when we reassembled and I got to call them on the phone, Oh! Tom Lough! (laughs) And see what they'd done with their lives. And then, they kind of get caught up. We still haven't seen each other face to face but we're really looking forward to that, the three of us. Yeah, Carol is a teacher in Nebraska and Maren is a real-estate agent in Arizona, I think.

[TMH:] I'm curious whether you met—or even if you didn't—how you felt about the guys from the other side of the Iron Curtain? This is the height of the Cold War.

[TL:] Well actually, it's an interesting question that you ask because in 1967 I was selected for the military championship team, called CISM, that competed in Bordeaux, and some of the Soviet team members were sent to that as well. So, I got to kind of meet them there. Now at West Point, I studied Russian for two years so I was about, you know, 10 or 15 percent conversant, so I could chat with them just a little and got to know them a little bit. One of the same guys was on the team in Mexico City that I had met earlier and so he and I chatted and everything and he actually ended up coming to my room. I brought him to my room at one point so we could sit down and talk. He had halting English. I had even more halting Russian but—. Well, we communicated a little bit and we exchanged a few odds and ends, you know, items and everything. And then, I got to see him both in Munich and in Montreal, where I went as a spectator. He was still competing there. I think he ended up getting three individual bronze medals. So he was a great athlete but for some reason he couldn't quite get to that top part of the podium.

[TMH:] Yeah. Is your sense that there were relatively few connections, few instances like you had, uh, in meeting the other side among your teammates?

[TL:] Well, I really don't know. Um, I know some of the walkers made a lot of overtures toward the Soviet, uh—. I would say if there were exchanges, the majority of them would have been among the track and field folks because just before that time they had had several U.S.A-U.S.S.R track and field meets, and so they already knew each other, you know. So, I'd say. If you want to explore that, that would be very fertile field among the track and field members.

[TMH:] Okay. Great.

[TL:] Yeah.

[TMH:] Did you feel pressure? Pressure—you know, if we think of the '80 hockey team, certainly they felt pressure to beat the Soviets. Did you feel pressure to that scale in Mexico City?

[TL:] Speaking for me as an individual, I didn't feel pressure to beat the Soviets. I didn't feel like I was in a Cold War or anything. I wanted to represent my country to the best of my ability and I wanted to do the best that I, the individual could do under the circumstances. The most pressure I felt, I guess, was on the day of the shooting.

[TMH:] Uh-hmm.

[TL:] Where, you know, umm. Well, let me just—. Just for the benefit for whoever may be listening, pentathlon shooting had changed since then, but back when I was shooting we had to shoot four rounds of five shots each. Okay? And each round, the targets were turning targets. And so, they would be down there like what? What was the distance? Twenty-five meters or something like that, and the edge of the target was facing you and your hand had to be down by your side. So then, the line judge would announce the firing has started or, "Fire", or whatever the command is. And then ten seconds later the targets would turn toward you suddenly for three seconds and in those three seconds you had to raise the pistol, steady it, squeeze off one shot and hope the bullet arrives before the targets turn away. Then you have to bring your arm down and wait for the next one. Now, this is after a day of fencing. And when I say a day of fencing, we had to fence about sixty other opponents. So, it was a full day of fencing competition.

[TMH:] Your arms had to be whipped.

[TL:] Right. There were one or two people who were experimenting with learning to shoot left handed and fencing right handed. But I hadn't gotten to that point yet. So, I was still there with my right arm. So the mental pressure was immense to be just as low key and unemotional as we could possibly be and steady and everything but then not to think about missing the target, not think about shooting late or shooting wide or whatever. And, you know, you've heard this little exercise: Don't think about an elephant. And then, all the sudden (makes elephant trumpet noise). Don't say that! And I just had to call all my mental discipline into play not to think in that way and that was so difficult. Oh, my gosh. But I shot moderately well, about my practice average, and I was so happy to have that over with because after that I could relax. I swam really, really well and ran fairly well and finished, so that was really good.

So, while we're speaking of emotions and everything, the day of the fencing was really frustrating for me because, you know, the riding and the fencing and the shooting, those are the more uncertain events as far as a daily basis go. And so, for the fencing, it was not a good day. And you could have good days and bad days. Some days, whatever you do works and you try the same thing the next day and that doesn't work. It's just—. But generally if you're a good fencer you can usually do fairly well. And I didn't do all that well on that particular day. I couldn't, somehow, get it all together. These Europeans who've been fencing all their lives—you know, you can make all kinds of excuses. I'd only been fencing seriously a couple of years—three years. But anyway, that was sort of frustrating. And that was added to the pressure of the shooting day, you know, (aarrgh!); so, uh, but after that, I could just relax and do what I knew I could do and bring it home. As it turns out, we still go back and say, Oh, could we have squeezed another ten points out of anything? Because, uh, we ended up—well, I told you there was a—. A Swedish guy was eliminated on doping from the shooting because he drank alcohol and as far as I know this may be the first documented doping disqualification in the Olympic Games. I'm not sure.

[TMH:] I think you are right. There were—.

[TL:] But that's something to look in to.

[TMH:] Yeah.

[TL:] But anyway, we found out about that after the fact. But that moved France into the third spot with 13,298 points and U.S. was in fourth spot with 13,280; nine points out. And the funny part was that in the practice Olympics the year before, we had beaten France for third place by about the same margin.

[TMH:] Wow.

[TL:] So, I got a fake bronze medal from that Olympics, you know, that they gave us in 1967.

And then they got the real one, so— (laughs) But anyway, you know, you do your best and you got to let the scoring take care of itself. You just have to let it go.

[TMH:] Yeah, that's what I was curious about. How much did this get you down? Did this haunt you in anyway? Or is it—

[TL:] Well, sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. I really don't let it bother me because I know I did my best. I can be accountable only to myself. I can't account for any of my teammates. I can't account for any of my opponents. But I'm very happy for them if they were able to do their best. There were a few people that were really frustrated because one German in particular drew a really, really, really horrible horse and, uh—

Oh, yeah, let me take a side note to tell about the modern pentathlon riding at that time. Well, I think they still use the host country's horses but this was a cross-country ride over jumps, similar to the three-day but somewhat scaled back in length and in height. So, the theory is that you set up a good cross-country course with a combination of fixed jumps and non-fixed jumps. So, the fixed jumps, if the horse hits them, the horse and rider go down. If you hit the mobile jump the rail drops off and you can keep going. So, that's a little safer. You get thirty points taken off or something. So anyway, the theory is that a host country for a competition with fifty athletes, they would take one-hundred horses and the stable crew would ride the horses through the course, then evaluate the horses and take the top twenty-five and send them home. Then take the bottom twenty-five and send them home. And then, assign the middle fifty identification numbers and put these numbers into a hat. So then, the athletes, at the beginning of the competition draw a number out of the hat that corresponds to the horse they will ride. They can look at it. They can watch it walk from the line of horses over to the paddock area but that's it until twenty minutes before your assigned riding time. Then you can mount your horse, warm him up in any way you want, make sure they can jump, turn, stop, whatever you want to do, and then you ride.

[TMH:] How interesting!

[TL:] So, it's really a mixed bag of what you get.

[TMH:] Yeah.

[TL:] And so, they try to make it a test of the rider but once in a while like the horse this poor German guy drew—. He was a superb pentathlon athlete and the German team was just so bitterly disappointed that this particular horse just was a dud. It should have been in the bottom twenty-five and somehow it had a good day (laughs) when they rode it in front of the delegation.

All of us did fairly well on the ride. I think we were in third or fourth place at the end of the ride. We dropped down after the fencing and then came up a little bit in the shooting. I totally stunned myself with my swimming. I was the best swimmer on the US team that day. I finished in twelfth place overall in the swim, my gosh! Then with the running, we dropped back down, mainly because I don't think I still could—. Well, the oxygen took its toll on all of us and I don't think—. Well I did what I could. I gave it my all. We all collapsed at the finish line with oxygen masks and all that stuff. You know, that's the way it is. But anyway, yeah, it is kind of fun

But the thing that is sometimes a little frustrating or kind of sad is when I give talks at a school or something and the children always want to ask, Did you win a medal? (laughs) You know, the newspapers have to sell newspapers and the television stations have to sell ads and so they're going to concentrate on the winners and that's rightly so, but sometimes, people don't realize that there's a very tiny percentage of all the thousands of athletes at the Olympics that ever make the medal stand.

[TMH:] What do you tell those kids? This is something—

[TL:] Yeah, I said, "No, I wasn't a medal winner but I was there. I competed. I represented you

and I gave it my best." Just the other day, I heard a line from somebody in another context and I think I'm going to adopt it because they were at some point like the Olympics, I don't remember what it was. It was a semi-unfortunate situation like maybe a shoelace broke, or I don't know what it was, but something unfortunate was going on. And so, the one athlete said to the other, "Listen, you're a winner, already, because you got here."

[TMH:] Yeah.

[TL:] I said, well, okay, I'll take that. (laughs)

[TMH:] Yeah, you know, when I watch the Olympics—. And I was not a good athlete so I had no hope of ever going as a competitor.

[TL:] Well, you never know. (laughs)

[TMH:] I'm always sort of thrilled by the combination of America's image, this national feeling. At the same time there's an international sort of pageantry about it. Did you reflect on that when you were there?

[TL:] Yeah, somewhat. Somewhat. There is pageantry and a tradition and so forth that was sort of meaningful. On one side, I'd come up through West Point, and all the parades and pageantry and stuff. You know, it was, oh, golly, when is this going to be finished up and everything, you know? And on the other hand, you had this heritage since 1896 and this was the top of the heap, you know? Oh, my gosh! I better soak this in. And so, it was sort of a, for me, personally, it was that bipolar type of thing where I could look at it askance a little bit from the—. Can we get back to the dorm now or whatever? Or, man, this is so neat! And there's somebody going up to take the oath for all the athletes. And maybe that's Avery Brundage up there and what's he going to say, and all that sort of thing, you know? Having the flame come from Greece and having the torch and the flag, all that stuff. It worked. It was suitably impressive and I was totally awed. (laughs)

[TMH:] I can't imagine.

[TL:] Yep, yep, yep.

[TMH:] I have a related question.

[TL:] Okay.

[TMH:] Can you identify a single most meaningful moment or set of moments?

[TL:] During the time in Mexico City?

[TMH:] Yeah.

[TL:] Meaningful? Hmm.

[TMH:] Or that became meaningful, later, after further reflection?

[TL:] Well—(long pause). Well, I've already talked about the interest at the opening ceremony and that's going to remain the number one, but I can talk about another one that is right up there as well, and that was at the closing ceremony. As I understand it, in the Olympics up to Mexico City, the closing ceremonies were conducted with the athletes marching in, all mixed up en masse. I thought that was just so cool, that you could show a unified whole, all mixed up, the whole world together, and blah, blah, blah. Well, then, by the time the closing ceremonies rolled around in Mexico City, it was announced that this time they would be curtailed and the only thing they were going to do was to bring in the flags of the various countries and maybe two or three, or four athletes from each country, or whatever. That didn't go down really well with me and I think it didn't go down well with lots of teammates either.

[TMH:] What was the reason?

[TL:] I don't remember anything about the reasoning. I don't really know. I'll have to look into that. But what they did do was set off a section for the athletes in the stadium so we could watch

our closing ceremony. And so, we were taking stock of the situation, okay? So there we are and then there's the police a ways down, and there's a little walkway for people to walk around and then there's a wall with a rail, then there's a moat and some barbed wire and then there's a row of boy scouts with baseball bats and then there's the field. Okay. So we're looking at this and we say, well, hmmm, what are we going to do here? Toward the end, we had already figured out, okay, we're going to storm the field. We're just going to go out there. So I don't remember this first part but I got this from my diary, that evidently, there were two surges. One surge went a certain point and got beaten back and then we regrouped and surged out again and got out onto the field. Those are the notes in my diary and I don't really remember it that way. I just remember getting out there, but, you know, maybe my contemporaneous notes were a little more accurate than my feeble memory. But at any rate, this is at the end of the thing, and all of us just want to get out there and hook arms and run around and demonstrate to the world our unity like the other—like '64 and '60 did. You know, just bunching all together and running around. So that was the feeling I had that what had happened, well, as part of the preparation for one of our reunions, I was able to view the ABC footage that was broadcast of the closing ceremony and somehow, or another, I think that the broadcasters completely missed what we did.

[TMH:] Really?

[TL:] It just showed a few athletes trickling out on to the field and then more, and the announcers didn't make any big deal about it. And to me, to us, I think I can say, it was a real big deal to fight our way over that moat past the boy scouts and link arms and run around. So, I'm going to have to go back and look at that footage again and see if maybe I'm missing something or whatever. I do remember my girlfriend, now my wife, was back home. She told me she was saying to herself, Tom, you better be out there on that field. (laughs) And I sure was. I was out there yelling and hollering with everybody else. That was a meaningful moment because it was when the athletes understood what the Olympics was all about and wanted to make sure the world did, too, and we were prevented from doing so.

[TMH:] It must have been so disappointing.

[TL:] Well, not once we got out there! (laughs)

[TMH:] I mean, disappointed in that decision.

[TL:] Yeah, yeah. Well, see, those were the days though, where there was sort of an iron hand management and a "them and us" mentality between the management and the athletes themselves. Of course, not too long after that, with Steve Prefontaine and some of the other athletes, brought matters to a head and really got things better aligned with relationships. But back then, it was pretty much a dictatorship.

[TMH:] How did everybody feel about that? Did you have an image of Avery Brundage and the rest of the cohorts?

[TL:] Yeah, but only from a distance. See, we were sort of sheltered being in the military. All we had to do was deal with our training. I think our coaches took care of us very, very well when we traveled under military funding and so forth. It wasn't like our coaches got a hundred dollars a day or whatever per diem, and they had all the pins to give out and the athletes had to get by on two dollars and seventy-five cents a day, whatever the per diem was and had to stay in sleazy motels or whatever. We didn't have to do that. But I think, for example, the track teams, maybe the swimming team, and maybe some other teams might have had to do something like that. That would be something to explore, actually, with other teammates. It was very clear, though, that there was more or less a dictator-style management in place throughout. Sometimes we did wonder, Who are these games for? (laughs) But having earned the spot, we all knew pretty much

that we were there to do a job. There were lots of other things that were distractions there and some of them were important and I think each individual made a decision how to focus on what they had to do at the moment and what they could do later.

[TMH:] When you mention that, maybe we could talk about a few of the things that were going on. The protests happened before, in the lead up to the games. Were you aware of those and was there discussion about that on the team?

[TL:] Well, a little bit. We had heard that there were some student riots and at one point, somebody did start a rumor among our group that the Olympics might be cancelled and then that rapidly died away. We were all, Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh! Then we said, well, must not have been serious. Well, years and years later, we find out that it really, gosh, was serious, and that there were quite a few people, young people, killed in that protest. Several teammates actually have asked to find out how can we look into that. How can we learn more about this? And is there some way to get more involved with disseminating the information or whatever. Well, I don't know but I think there's some stuff on YouTube about it now or maybe on the Internet about it now.

[TMH:] And then, of course, as the games went on—. Before we get to some of the really spectacular moments that could have been a distraction, you mention the alcohol testing positive. I can imagine going to an Olympic Games now and being paranoid about what everybody else might be using, what you're going to be tested for. Was there any sort of feeling or thought along those lines in '68?

[TL:] As an individual, no. In fact, I was sort of the joke of the team because during our Olympic trials they did urine testing regularly but it was random and well, I'm a sort of clean type of person. But what happened was I would draw the stupid test every time and I was the one that got tested more than any other athlete in the whole trials and so at the end when they gave the little awards and everything, they gave me a gold-plated urine collection jar, which I still have. (laughs)

[TMH:] You still have that! Oh, my gosh.

[TL:] Now in Mexico City, I don't remember any of the testing for doping, but I do imagine that they had all the winners, the high performers, tested, and I can't remember if I was tested for urine in the shooting or not. But it was urine. I don't remember any blood testing or breath testing. It was just, probably, all urine testing.

[TMH:] And I didn't so much mean that you be concerned about your own tests but were you paranoid that others might be?

[TL:] We heard rumors, you know, nothing substantiated, but we heard rumors that the east—. The Soviet Bloc countries had skilled scientists and specialists with them that knew their athletes intimately, exactly how many ounces of which wine they could consume and how many hours before the shooting so that the benefits would still be there but the evidence would be gone by the time they do their urine tests. I said, I'm not going to worry about that. I'm going to just focus on what I can do. They're going to have to take care of themselves. Most of us, I think, felt that way. We were just not going to worry about anybody else. We just got to do what we can do. There was certainly talk about that, and this would be, again, third or fourth hand.

[TMH:] For readers of this later on, who might not know how alcohol can be a performance enhancing substance, how, why was it so in your sport?

[TL:] Well, only in the shooting, because, like I said, after a day of fencing—. Your mental attitude in fencing has to be very intense, on edge, nervous. You want your reflexes on high alert so that if somebody does something (ba- bam!), you're just right there, back, or you know what

you're going to do and you're just like a coiled spring ready to (crr-agh!). And then the next day on the shooting you just got to be the opposite. And to those that drink alcohol, they feel that this can help with that attitude or that feeling of okay, let's just take it easy, bam, there's a shot. It's not that they would be inebriated, I think, it would just be that they would be a little looser or more relaxed than perhaps they normally would be if they had not drunk any wine or beer or whatever it was.

[TMH:] Well, that leads me—it's not exactly related but, the civil rights protests. What are your memories and what were your feelings then and what were people saying and did those change over time? You know, it's a large topic.

[TL:] Yeah, it's a huge topic and it has become the identifying icon, actually, of the '68 Games. My memories of it, unfortunately, are somewhat hazy. But like I said, I knew John Carlos from '67 and by the time '68 rolled around, all these other things were in motion so I never really had a chance to renew my friendship with him but we were aware that there was a lot of concern among the black athletes, particularly on the track team, about this Human Rights Project. I think Harry Thomas was the guy who was organizing everything. I don't think he was in Mexico City but I guess from what I've read, he had helped to promote the project. Again, this is all from third hand but there were some meetings. I think I do remember being at one meeting. Maybe where— Let's see. Hmm. I think Jesse Owens spoke at a meeting for all of us. I'm not sure. We could check on that.

[TMH:] I do know that he had some involvement.

[TL:] Yeah, he was there and I think he spoke to us at a meeting but I can't remember what he said, of course, but I would guess he would say, "Okay, we're here to do a job," and so forth and so on. But I didn't have much contact with the black teammates but I was certainly in sympathy with them because being from Virginia—. And I had my grandmother in North Carolina we visited. I was aware of the black water fountains and white water fountains. I had never been comfortable with that. I just felt sort of powerless. What can I do? I'm here to do my job. I'm here to compete and do the best I can in my sport.

I do remember the day after the protests, there was some sort of a press conference at our building. And I can remember looking down. Our room faced the front and I can remember looking down and seeing this huge crowd of reporters standing around outside. I actually held my camera outside the window and took a picture, down, on the crowd out there. It was as they were dispersing, I guess. So, I remember that much of it. I didn't really get involved much more than that.

[TMH:] Did you have feelings about it?

[TL:] Well, yeah, like I said, it was sort of a mixed bag because I was there to compete and everything and I really felt kind of helpless. You know? What else can I do? I can't hold up a sign or anything. That's not really going to change anything. So, I just didn't know what else to do. I did read later that the members of the track team had several meetings and I think, very wisely decided that instead of doing something in an organized way, they would do something with each making their own individual decision. I think that was extremely mature, given the horrible pressures and political ramifications of everything, you know. I guess, generally speaking, the Olympics is an opportunity to do something with the world's attention focused on you. You can do anything outside what the event is organized for and sort of take advantage of it. You know, the ends sometimes justify the means, they say, but that's why people want to do that. Certainly '68 was not the only time something like that has happened.

[TMH:] Were you offended at all at the time? Some people were and some people weren't.

[TL:] I don't remember that I was offended. I think I was concerned that it happened. I think there was something like, Oh, rats. I'm sorry something like that happened here. I hope it doesn't mar the reputation of the games or something. But at the same time, I could understand that my teammates were sincerely motivated. They lived a very different life back home and they certainly had every reason to be dissatisfied with the way they were being treated back home.

[TMH:] Did anybody around you—? Did you have interactions? Were they talking about it? Do you remember what they felt? Not specifically, but—.

[TL:] Not that I recall. Not that I recall. During the first five or six days we were pretty much focused on our events. Then, after that, I was going to other events in the stands, you know? Then, out on the town with my Boy Scout friends and everything. I didn't have any direct involvement or direct contact with anyone that had something to do with that. But since we've reconnected I've certainly had a chance to talk to several teammates about that and kind of get caught up on what happened with them and their perspective and everything. I think they're going to add a wonderfully rich chapter to what we're doing here.

[TMH:] I think so. I think it will be particularly interesting how people change over time and having the opportunity to—.

[TL:] Well, one example I can mention, too, in looking back—. Because I had to go to Viet Nam right after my Olympic experience, I had time to come home, propose to my girlfriend, and then got on the plane.

[TMH:] Immediately!?

[TL:] I just threw all my stuff in the trunk. In fact, yesterday was November 16 and that's the day we celebrate as my return from Viet Nam. So, I shipped out November 16, 1968. I was on the plane. In doing all this reassembly stuff, I dragged out my trunk and started going through my things. I did not even remember I had this. I found in there a letter hand-addressed to me at one of the motels in Colorado Springs. So, somebody had found my address, my training address, and sent this letter to me. It turned out to be a member of the rowing squad. The Harvard crew decided that they wanted to be more than sympathetic; they wanted to actually be a little pro-active in helping with the Human Rights Project. There were three teammates in particular who decided, well, here's what we want to do: Let's write letters to our teammates and give them the information about the project, some background, and some things to think about. So, I found this letter; it was a two page letter and a three page addendum or something like that. I did not even remember that I had received it. I read it again and I thought it was so well written and sensitively written about a very controversial topic. You know, here's the situation and so forth and so on. I think that document will be a fantastic contribution to the archive. It's historical in nature. I scanned it and then found the three teammates who had written and signed it and got in touch with them and sent them copies of it. That was really pretty interesting.

[TMH:] Interesting. This will kind of get us off topic, but I'm struck by, in your sport, having to be such a utilitarian, having to be so good at different things. Do you think your military background, going to West Point, the training you have to go through, Airborne, Ranger School; these are sort of utilitarian training points. Do you think that helped?

[TL:] Well, in a way. In looking back at my modern pentathlon upbringing, I've come to regard it as a classical physical education, if there is such a thing. It just developed me completely in a well-rounded way. It helped me to develop my mental, physical, emotional skills, endurance, small motor skills, and large motor skills, just everything. I really felt I could do anything after I finished that experience. So, from that perspective, I think it's just a wonderful event. However, if you go back to the heritage of the event, in the early 1900's, Baron de Coubertin, the founder

of the modern Olympic movement, evidently was either persuaded by others or decided himself that there should be an event in the Olympic program that would appeal to the military athlete. So, there is a military heritage to the modern pentathlon. So, what he did was take the model of a Napoleonic courier. So, you got to imagine, the general is in his tent, produces the orders for battle, then the aide goes outside, then there's the couriers standing beside their line of horses. So, you have three orders of battle to the three regiments over here, so you give them to the couriers. The courier runs and takes a horse at random from the line, rides off to deliver the message. Of course, the horse gets shot out from under him and then he has to fight his way through the enemy lines with a sword and pistol, then swim the river, and run up the hill and deliver the message with his dying breath. That's a romantic picture of the heritage of it; however, it matches perfectly with the swashbuckling persona of the first American Olympic pentathlete: George S. Patton in 1912. That was the first year the modern pentathlon was in the program, I believe, and he was our first pentathlon athlete. I think he finished fifth or sixth or something. He was a pretty good athlete.

[TMH:] Yes. You could not picture a better exemplar of that history. I think it's also sort of important to talk about what came after the games. Part of it is personal interest. What was the transition like away from elite athletics and into this other thing that became, I'm sure, a very scary place in the world?

[TL:] Well, we can take a short slice, like me immediately going to Viet Nam. I remember in Mexico City our pentathlon alternate was Paul Pesthy. I think his family emigrated from Hungary, just before the Iron Curtain came down. He was real good friends with the Hungarian athletes. I remember one night, we were running around Mexico City; Paul and one of the—. I think it was the guy who eventually got the silver medal in pentathlon, and then me. This guy, I think he ended up getting the bronze. He got the gold medal in Munich, actually. But anyway, we were running around and Paul is translating for me and we were having a conversation back and forth in a taxi. The guy asked me about that because Paul knew I was going to Viet Nam afterwards and the guy says, "I just can't believe that your country is sending you to Viet Nam. You're a world-class athlete and they're sending you to Viet Nam?"

I said, "Well, yeah, my career, my job is to be a soldier."

And he says, "Our job is to be an athlete."

So, they were professional military athletes or professional athletes and they just couldn't understand that. That was sort of interesting.

Well, anyway, in Viet Nam, you know, I was in very good physical shape and everything. I was a combat engineer and I was in the 101st Airborne Division. It was a very active division and lots of physical stuff to do. And I got a few awards and medals and stuff. One of the generals made the comment, "You know, it doesn't surprise me, Captain Lough, to see you standing here with this award," and so on and so forth.

[TMH:] For the readers, can you tell me a few of the more major awards?

[TL:] Well, okay. I got a Soldier's Medal, which is the highest non-combat medal you can get for saving soldiers' lives. A helicopter got into trouble and we rushed down to get the crew and everybody out before it burned or exploded or whatever. And then I have a Bronze Star with V and a Purple Heart that I received for action in Hamburger Hill. I was in a helicopter. Combat engineers go into battle zones and cut down trees so that the medi-vac helicopters can come in and take out the wounded. But in order to do that, we have to hover above the battle field, you see, and slide down ropes with our chain saws and dynamite and all that stuff; so, very active. So, we drew a little bit of fire and our helicopter went down. I was thrown out and all that stuff.

Miraculously, I was not wounded seriously and I could kind of get the men organized and got the LZ [landing zone] cut and everything. So, then they sent me back to the hospital on the second ship. The Bronze Star for V was for Valor under Enemy Fire and all that sort of thing and then the Purple Heart for being wounded or whatever. Then I got some medals for number of hours in the air and other odds and ends like that, a service medal and so forth. But anyway, I remember, as the helicopter was going down, I was sort of curious as to my mental state, because, you know, the helicopter doesn't just drop; it auto-rotates. So, you've got a little bit of time to think about the impending collision with the earth. So, I've got one hand on the passenger's seat and one hand on the pilot's seat back here. I said to myself, So, this is what it's like to die. And I was very calm and alert, just looking around. Then the next thing I know, somebody's pulling me out of a tree. I guess I was thrown out and then hit a tree and I got stuck in it or something. So then they pulled me out of the tree and got me back awake and kind of checked out; no broken bones. I was coughing up blood and stuff; had huge bruises and a few cuts and stuff but nothing—. It was a miracle! Thank you, Lord! So, let's get to work. And got the LC cut and got everybody out of there. But anyway, I feel that in addition to my spiritual beliefs and faith, my athletic training stood me in good stead, you know, because I had performed athletically under stress and something like that would certainly help in that regard. We had several other teammates who served in Viet Nam, as well, under even more strenuous conditions. You'll get a chance to interview them, too. So they'll have, they'll have—. No, this is mild.

But anyway, came back from Viet Nam, got married, and then went to graduate school and I thought, well, let's just see, you know, maybe while I'm at graduate school, I can still work out. So, the Army sent me to Ohio State for a Master's Degree and I got to do a little bit of competing there and, actually, was doing pretty well. They had a fencing club I could work out with and ROTC shooting range and then the pool and running around or whatever; not much horse riding. But then, the Army said, Well, you need to get another troop assignment, so we're going to send you to Germany. So, I ended up going to Germany in the spring of '72 and got to go to the Munich Olympics as a spectator. So that was kind of neat because that helped start me, kind of, on a transition as an insider athlete participant to an outside spectator still associated with it in some way or another, and then further out. So we got to watch the opening ceremony and a few of the pentathlon performances and then a few other events. Then we went back to the base. A few days later, the massacre came so we missed that. I guess I'm fortunate not to have been there for that.

Then I left the service in '74 and started teaching at my old High School and got in to race-walking, of all things, and did a lot of running and so forth, and got the idea to connect the 1976 Olympics with the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial. So, I created a thing called the Bicentennial Olympic Project and I got the backing of the U.S. Olympic Committee, the Modern Pentathlon Association, White House, National Park Service, and Bicentennial Commission. And the concept was to solicit letters to the U.S. Olympic Teams signed by the Governors of the fifty states, put these letters in a baton, start a relay with the baton that left from the White House lawn on July the third then had a special hand-off on the steps of Independence Hall on the morning of July fourth, 1976; continues up the east coast to Plattsburg, and hands off these letters to the U.S. team as part of their send-off, you know? And it was just amazing! We had a small group of runners and some athletes from our sister sport of biathlon and everything, and we did all that, and that helped me with the transition a little bit, too, you know, that I could still be related to, or affiliated with, or associated with the Olympic movement and still not be an athlete. Once we finished our run to Plattsburg, we said, Let's just keep running to Montreal. So,

we ran all the way to Montreal, got a youth hostel, went to some stuff there, then came on home, you know? Said, what the heck.

So then after that, I was really, seriously into race-walking and I actually ended up being in the top ten in the United States at the twenty-kilometer. And that's an Olympic event. That was in 1978, I think. So, I got excited and said, Wow! Can I make the '80 team in race walking? Well, then I was at the University of Virginia for a physics graduate program and I really had this—. My academics suffered so I really had to just quit working out and buckled under that. And as it turned out, you know, that was the boycott year, anyway. It would have been so—. Oh, I would have been so bitter! Oh! I don't know what that would have done to me if I would've worked out and got it and did not go on. Oh! I cannot imagine what those—. I still feel for them. Anita DeFrance wrote an open letter a little while ago. She was on the '76 team that competed and then she made the '80 team that did not compete and she tried to express the feelings of her teammates in this open letter, recently, about how bitterly disappointing it was for such a wonderful group of people to be denied the opportunity because of political reasons, you know? But anyway, so about that time, you know, I just said, well, I guess my days of glory are over so I really didn't do a whole lot more after that.

So, anyway, in the eighties, I had a sort of hiatus. I did a little bit of running and stuff, but toward the end of 1988 I graduated from the University of Virginia and got called to the LEGO Company of all places. They'd just created a position there and they said I was the one that everybody said should be there, so they hired me. That was pretty demanding but it was very fulfilling. About all I did up there was train for a—. They had a little mile run every summer in town and I trained for that and did well on that. That was enough to kind of keep the weight off and everything. That's sort of what I'm doing now. I've been at Murray since 1997 and ran in the Main Street Mile for a while there. But then, all the sudden, one year I had a breakthrough of some kind. I still cannot explain it. My times just got so dramatically better. I said, What's going on here? So, I signed up to compete in the National Senior Games and actually started doing really, really well. So, I ended up being ranked like tenth in the nation for my age group for 1500 and then, when I turned sixty-five, I had one or two problems. I had three major medical crises within six months of turning sixty-five. So, I was able to get batch processing. You know, get this taken care of. It included heart disease; I now have a pace-maker. It included prostate cancer; I now have seeds implanted that take care of that. And then, an almost ruptured Achilles tendon which is pretty much healed. So, I'm back on course. I'm running the 1500 as well as I ever have in the past ten years. In San Jose last year at the National Senior Games, I finished sixth in my age group. Then in a workout recently, I did an 800 as part of my repeats and I turned in a time, in the middle of my workout that would have almost got me into the finals at the National Senior Games. I said, Where did that come from?

So, in my state games, I tried out for the 800 and 1500 and qualified in both. So, in Houston, in 2011, on June the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th, I will be running the 800 and 1500. So, I finally got in to a glamour event.

What I failed to mention to you is while I was at Ohio State and at Fort Belvoir, right after I got married, I got into the sport of orienteering, which is map and compass cross-country racing. I got to be really good at that, too.

[TMH:] I'll bet, after the Army, yeah.

[TL:] And I actually represented the United States in international competition for the Army and I competed in the first National Orienteering Championships in Carbondale, Illinois. All these weird things I do and I finally enter, oh, the 1500! I know that event. I have to explain everything

else I've done but the 800 and 1500, everybody knows. So, I'm really excited about that. I know my days of glory are over and I'm not going to go much past—. While I'll run through discomfort; I'll run into pain a little bit, but I'm not going to go close to injury. It's just for fun. If I end up in the top three, that's great. I'll be happy to just hold my time or even beat my time.

Typically, you see about a ten second decline every year in the 1500 meters at my age and my time is hanging in there or even improving a little bit. So, I just don't know if I've reached my potential yet.

[TMH:] There you go. While you're talking about this, I was thinking that, you know, you've taken the lead in—. You involved yourself. You kept yourself involved in the Olympic movement.

[TL:] Yeah, I did a lot of speaking at schools and stuff so I could inspire young people. If I can do it, you can do it, that type of thing, you know?

[TMH:] Yeah, and the send-off, and you've headed this effort and I'm curious, what was the driver for you? Your teammates for example could have done it.

[TL:] Yeah, well, the emotional driver was sitting in the stadium in February of 2007 and just saying, you know, I miss my teammates, can we get together?

[TMH:] Did you have these feelings before you went there or was this an epiphany?

[TL:] No, this sort of brought it into focus, you know? And I'd stayed in touch with my pentathlon teammates and maybe one or two other people. Micki King, diving, she lives there in Kentucky, so I kept in touch with her and everything. But I came back and started talking to the pentathlon teammates and Micki and, "Well sure! That would be kind of interesting to do." So I started talking to a few more and getting a few more contacts and everything, then Cindy Stinger from the U.S.O.C., I started talking to her about it: "Yeah this is cool! And I don't think any other team has ever done this," and so forth. She gave me about forty or fifty names that she had. Turns out that people move so often and change their phone so often that not all of them were valid but there are enough in there now that we could find people in the different sports and they were willing to step forward, Yeah, this is a great idea! Let's do this. Let's do this. You know, once you get these guys cranked up, get out of the way!

[TMH:] Oh, yeah.

[TL:] So, now today, let's see, we've got—. We think there were about 475 athletes and credentialed coaches that are in the yearbooks. So, that was sort of our criteria. Who are we going to do there, and include the alternates and everybody. If you were outfitted and credentialed and went to Mexico City. So we sort of have a semi-formal definition of "who are we?" We know that there were several other coaches there who came on their own and were not credentialed, so I really haven't involved them and nobody's really petitioned to involve them. But did they have a uniform? Did they have credentials? And you were there? Yeah. Okay. That's fine. And there were a few people not in the yearbook in that category. Then there were one or two, maybe, in the yearbook that didn't go because they got injured or something like that, so I don't know really what we did with those. But anyway, approximately 475. About a hundred are new deceased. We lost three this year. Charlie Hickcox, the swimmer. And Hal Connolly - it was very sudden. And then Smitty Duke, a very dear volleyball player. Then we've got about ten or twelve, like I say, we don't know where they are or they won't answer the phone or reply to email or whatever. And then about 360 who we know where they are and have contact information for and of those 360, about 330 have email.

[TMH:] Wow, that's surprising.

[TL:] Isn't that great that these geezers have email? And so I send them a little newsletter about

every couple of months on what's going on and who's doing what and everything and they seem to enjoy that. We started a private Facebook group and as of last night, 119, almost a third of these guys are on Facebook in that group. [Note: As of Feb 28, 2011, there are 129 teammates in the 1968 team Facebook group.]

[TMH:] Incredible.

[TL:] And they're uploading the photos and we have a couple teammates that have volunteered to make video slide shows, you know, with music and everything. It's just, you know, people are really picking up on this thing. So, it's really kind of neat.

[TMH:] Absolutely. Yeah. I remember you telling me that you kept a diary. Was this a habit, a lifetime habit or—

[TL:] Back then it sort of was. I need to find that thing. I found parts of it. I found—. I've reconstructed—. I found—. Based on my comments that I've said in this interview on what I found on the date of the opening ceremony and date of the closing ceremony because I think I transcribed those into print at some point. But I really got to find that thing and find what some of the more daily things were like, you know? Going to the dining hall, you know, who came to my room or whatever. And I'm sure I kept daily accounts of my competition and workouts, because well, my habit then, and a lot of athletes were and probably still are. To record every workout and then I discovered that if I wrote down what the coach told me, the coach wouldn't tell me quite so often because every weekend I would review: Oh, yeah, I got to remember to focus on the front side or keep my elbow up when I recover my stroke or whatever. So that really kept the coaches off my back a little bit. Paul Pesthy, in particular, was the one who showed me the value of a system of workout diaries and logs and I really appreciated that. So somewhere in that trunk is all this stuff and I just got to take time to go through it. Having contemporaneous, handwritten logs like that might be interesting archives things, you know. Paul Pesthy died in 2008 or 2009 but I'm sure his wife still has all of his workout logs and stuff. Wouldn't that be fantastic? Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh.

[TMH:] Yeah, those would be wonderful.

[TL:] Yeah, so we can talk about all these things because I'm just thinking about future historians and sport history students and everything.

[TMH:] Priceless. Priceless.

[TL:] To have access to what athletes of Olympic caliber were writing down when they were still striving and struggling and learning their craft. Oh! My gosh. (laughs) Yeah, I'll look around for that.

[TMH:] I have sort of an unedited version of the final product where my voice needs to be minimal but I have sort of an observation. I'm curious about how you feel about it or whether it has some merit.

[TL:] Sure.

[TMH:] When I think of my grandfather and what he was like, he reminds me very much of you. When we look at today's sports scene, I see very few people that I can consider a hero that I can look up to. They may be great athletes. Talking to you—. And I think probably the late sixties was—. There was a transition going on, you know, that culminated in what we have today. I get the feeling that there were—. It wasn't just you who was sort of the, in many ways, the American Hero that kids can look up to: A clean life, a life of service. Have you ever thought about that transition? When you look at sports today, are you disappointed? Are you—?

[TL:] Yeah, let me kind of trace through something like that. When I was in the hospital with my leg in traction, one of the books I carried—. I carried three books with me: my Bible, a book

that had just come out called *Psycho-Cybernetics*, I'm sure you're familiar with that, and then *Heart of a Champion* by Bob Richards. Now, Bob Richards was sort of my hero. And he came up in 1956. He was like the clean-living, all-time guy and everything. And he was so inspiring and encouraging through his book to me and I just took his book to heart, literally. And so, if I emulated anybody it would have been him and my high school track coach who by the way was Bob's roommate at Bridgewater College when he was just learning to pole vault. And so it's sort of interesting that their two lives intertwined. His name was Don Glick. But anyway, so I sort of felt I wanted to be in that mold. And for the most part, I think the people around me were sort of like that as well. Not necessarily starry-eyed or anything but were wholesome people that believed in the goodness of sport for its own sake, that there was worth in effort and attempting to improve continuously and really exploring the full potential of our mental and physical capabilities and after that, to inspire and support others in a similar struggle. I think that's why so many of our team, and you'll find this out, have ended up in professions of extended coaching and teaching; tons of coaches and teachers in that group, and just superb ones! We talked about the dictatorship of the management and all that sort of thing. I think that sort of stuff happened about the same time that professional athletes first discovered, Gosh, if I ask for money, I can get it, if we all band together. So, I don't know how that happened. Was it baseball or something? [TMH:] Yeah, '72, I think.

[TL:] Something happened around that same time. I don't know if there were related events because the Olympics would be more related to amateur athletes at that time because if you accepted a seventy-five cent payment for playing a softball game when you were in the Church league, then you were out, buddy! I think they were happening all at the same time. I'm not a sports historian so I don't really know that much but I can probably speak at least emotionally and how that seemed to affect it.

[TMH:] I think that's the important thing.

[TL:] But I do feel today's professional athletes are quite a bit different from the caliber of athletes that we had back in my day. I don't want to pick on the basketball team in particular but our basketball team in '68 was made up of just ordinary college athletes. I said to somebody, not too long ago, "I'm just an ordinary Olympian." And they, "What!?! Get off of your—! You're not! There's no ordinary Olympian!" But we were. We were just ordinary Olympians and they were just ordinary college players. You know, we're all pretty good, and the top of our game, but we were still ordinary, ordinary folks. And then if you bring in to the sport the top paid professionals, that's literally their life. That sort of has the potential to change the tenor, the ethos or whatever of the games, of the movement. To some extent, that needs to be defended. But then, to another extent, I think that we need to kind of keep our feet on the ground in reality. That's the reality of today's world, especially in professional sports. So it's sort of a mixed bag for me right now. When I have the chance to encourage young people, I always do it from my old time stance, you know? I figure, well, if they can get into sports for the love of the sport and for the thrill they feel about exploring their potential and being surprised by what they can do and then appreciate that, they can then help others. That's really wonderful for me. And then one in maybe ten or twenty thousand might break through and get a farm league contract in something, you know? That's okay, too.

[TMH:] Yeah.

[TL:] But I think where I have the most problem is where I have a false hope established for groups of people that feel that sports are their way out, as far as making a living, and that's sort of unfortunate, that that message is there.

[TMH:] Um-hm. Yeah, and I'm struck. When you were at the height, your employment, your position was in something different. You were going to go back to it after a break in having this opportunity.

[TL:] Oh, yeah.

[TMH:] And that's just not the—. It's not the way it's done now.

[TL:] Yeah. Yeah, there are whole careers in just about every sport there is, you know, so—. So, yeah, and it's just not the Soviet Bloc anymore or the east European countries or whatever. That's pretty much the norm it looks like. And to some extent, you know, the level of competition now is so much higher that unless you can literally dedicate your life and every breath of your day to it, it's pretty difficult to get up there.

[TMH:] Yeah. Yeah.

[TL:] And that story was told by Al Oerter, that Cathy would say, "Al! It's an Olympic Year!" "Okay! Oh, I think my discus is around here somewhere."

And he'd dust it off and throw and make it and throw and win and get back to work the next day, you know? Well, those days are gone I'm afraid (laughs).

[TMH:] Well, if you had advice, a piece of advice or a series of things to tell Olympic hopefuls or people who aspire to the Olympics, what would it be?

[TL:] Yeah. Well first of all, I don't know if it would be wise to suggest to someone that they could aspire to the Olympics but I certainly do encourage young people when I talk with them that, you know, I think it would be important to try as many different things as you can because I literally backed my way into my sport. I had no idea it existed. I tried all these different things. I got cut from more teams than I can name and the reason I ended up there is because I just kept trying stuff, you know? So try all these crazy sports. Try these different sports. Try anything you like, you know? Who would have thought that snowboarding was going to be an Olympic sport, for Pete's sake!? You know, so there you go. And don't be impatient with just incremental progress. You know, it takes a long time to improve many things and then sometimes there'll be a little plateau and then you'll get a jump in your performance or whatever, so don't be discouraged with a lack of progress over a period of time. Just believe in yourself and keep your eye focused on what it is you're trying to do or want to do and believe me, the scores will take care of themselves. If your destiny has the Olympics in it, you'll get there.

George Foreman sent me a little note the other day, that I think really sums it up. He sends out these little gems of wisdom on his iPhone from time to time. He said, "It's important in the boxing ring that every time you get knocked down, you get up. And it's that way in life, too."

And I sent him a note back saying, "George, I think that's the most important lesson I ever learned is to get down one more time—. Get up one more time than you're knocked down."

(laughs) So, just keep at it. Persistence! And uh, and uh, you know, I guess that would be that. Um, yeah, those are some of the things that entered my mind.

[TMH:] That's sort of, for me, a good place to stop in my questioning.

[TL:] Um-hm.

[TMH:] But do you have anything that you'd like to add, that you—.

[TL:] Yeah, I would like to add that, just speaking for me, personally, my spiritual faith was a very important component of all of my athletic endeavors. And for each athlete, I think this would be a very personal and sensitive topic. But I know many teammates who share this perspective. Right now we have a group of about sixteen or eighteen teammates that have sort of spontaneously formed a prayer support group and so when there's another teammate who requests prayer or prayer support, we send that out to them. We have some real spiritual leaders

in our team. When I went through some of my Olympic stuff I told you about, I found a copy of a church program, an Olympic Chapel Program, dated the day after the opening ceremony. So, evidently, I competed in the horseback riding the day after the opening ceremony and then I went to church. I can't remember it but it was really kind of neat to have that program. Then I made copies of it and gave it out to my teammates at our little chapel meeting after our first reunions. My spiritual faith really sustained me through my downtime, especially when I was in the hospital. I think that's very important and to the extent that would be something a listener or a young person would find beneficial or helpful, I would heartily commend that to them, as many different flavors and denominations and everything. Again, you know, try things out. Just see what will be suitable because to me, that was one of the greatest blessings of all, that I felt I was fulfilling what I was put here on earth to do, sort of a hokey sounding thing but it was very real to me. It meant a lot to be able to do that. I remember the character of the Scottish runner in *Chariots of Fire*. Remember the movie? He said something like, "I feel God's pleasure when I run." Something like that. That's not too far off the mark. So, anyway.

[TMH:] There's a um. And of course, we may be at a pretty good stopping point.

[TL:] Yeah. Yeah.

[TMH:] And you know, and everything. But I'll have you—.

[TL:] We were talking about Gerald Ford's 1973 article in *Sports Illustrated* and I wanted to mention that there's a very strong connection between Gerald Ford and some of the members of the 1968 team because I think there was an Amateur Athletes Act, or something, that came out in '72 and as a basis of that, there were a lot of changes made and one of the changes, I think, was the first formation of something called the—. I think it was originally called the Athletes Advisory Council or something like that. Micki King, Bill Toomey, and maybe two or three others were instrumental in helping establish that concept and getting it started. Micki King, in particular, I think, was one of the real movers and shakers that worked directly with Gerald Ford, if I understand the history correctly. I'm very proud of that heritage for our team. We helped to kind of get that along. Not long after that, the U.S. Olympians Association was formed and U.S.O.C recognized that and Bill Toomey served as the first president of that. Right now, 1968 has three vice presidents on the board and 1968 also has a person who is serving as the World Olympians Association president, Dick Fosbury. Our team has infiltrated like that into many areas and it's really kind of cool.

[TMH:] Taking your example.

[TL:] Well, no, they did this on their own. It wasn't my example, believe me. They were doing all of this way before I came on the scene as far as putting this whole organization together. But they've all been very enthusiastic and supportive. In fact, Bill Toomey, in particular, I remember one night, prior to our Saint Louis reunion in 2008, I had a particularly down day and was so discouraged that I couldn't get whatever I was working on organized or something. Maybe it was something at the hotel, or something, or trying to get more footage or whatever. Out of the blue, here comes a call from Bill Toomey. He said, "I just wanted to call you. I just felt motivated to call you tonight and tell you what a great thing this is you're doing and I want to encourage you and I want to push you and tell you that you need to get going and take the initiative. Whatever is facing you, just push it out of there. Push it." (laughs) Have you been reading the script or something? Just perfect timing. And I told him later, "I don't know what caused you to make that phone call, but that was exactly what I needed at the right time." Boy, the next day, get out of my way. Grrrr! (laughs)

[TMH:] Interesting quirks of—.

[TL:] Yeah. The whole thing's like that. So, that was really good. A lot of our teams are continuing service. For example, Madeline Manning lives in Tulsa Oklahoma now. She is establishing a credential program for sports chaplains. She has been instrumental, not only in getting it credentialed through Oral Roberts University but she will be their first credentialed chaplain, as I understand it. She's actually been credentialed sort of informally, I think; I'm not really sure, for several Olympics. She was in Beijing supporting the athletes there. She's been through several international track and field championships. I think it's just tremendous, the program she started, and I hope it will attract a lot of candidates that can be of further service in the world of sport. I remember, we were watching the Olympic trials for Beijing and then the competition for Beijing and many of the track members were coming to the microphone after they won the race and some of them would say, It's just a blessing to be here; we're so blessed to be blah, blah, blah. And we looked at each other and said, What is going on? And we found out that Madeline was having bible study with these athletes each evening. So, they had a very firm scriptural grounding there. And so, these were some of the thoughts that were foremost in their mind. I thought, Well, that's good to see, at least from my personal perspective.

Yeah, so. Anyway, and then Jim Ryun, a very powerful Christian, he and his wife are very active in ministry and he has running camps that have a very strong spiritual component. He's written several books that are inspirational. Of course, George Foreman, minister, and all the other things he's doing. We've got some really terrific, and fairly well known people out there that are still kind of doing something like that, you know?

[TMH:] This has all been fascinating.

[TL:] Oh, thank you. I think it's such a wonderful thing that you're here. This is the start of your professional career and here you have the opportunity to be the dad.

[TMH:] Yeah.

[TL:] You really are. (laughs)

[TMH:] Well you're the papa and I'll be the dad.

[TL:] So, this is really good. I told Cindy that we could actually wane—. We could wax philosophical here and just throw out a very aggressive timeline.

(knocking on door)

[TMH:] I think it's Cindy.

[TL:] We're going to stop it for just a second.

(knocking)

[TMH:] And I think I just heard Cindy—.

[TL:] Yeah. I was just saying that last night I gave Cindy a very aggressive timeline, sorting of waxing philosophical and kind of throwing it out there that 2018 will be our team's fiftieth anniversary. If we can get this thing going, whatever we have, it gives us time enough to both organize our fiftieth anniversary as a real blowout event. Blowout event: B-l-o-w-o-u-t.

Blowout event. And put this archive thing into practice so that it's already up and running by then. But then, in October, what, fourteen? Whatever the date is for the opening ceremony, have an official ribbon cutting to proclaim the gates open for this thing and then at the same time have as many teammates as we can get, even with some support if we can garner it, to be here in Austin for the fiftieth celebration of our Olympic opening ceremony. Woo-hoo! I think we can set the bar pretty high.

[TMH:] Yeah. Yeah.

[TL:] So anyway, that's the dream! (laughs) It's a long way to go and lots of good papers, maybe even a book or two and lots of good interactions with other teammates before then. So,

it's very exciting.

[TMH:] Well, we should turn the—.

[end of recording]

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