



The FBI Oral History Project

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**Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI
Horace Ashenfelter, III (1950 – 1959)
Brian R. Hollstein, Interviewer
Interviewed on September 1, 2008**

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Hollstein/

(H): My name is Brian R. Hollstein; today's date is the first of September, 2008. I'm talking to Horace Ashenfelter, and before we get started I'd like to mention that this particular interview is copyrighted by the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI. I have sent you a copyright form and I'd appreciate it if you'd fill it out and sign it and send it back.

Ashenfelter/

(A): Will do.

H: That goes with it. This does not mean that you can't write something in the future or be interviewed by somebody else but it does mean that this particular interview, the copyright is held by the Society.

A little extra, please do not mention any informants if you do, just give them some sort of an assumed name. We don't also we don't want the identification numbers of informants or any classified information. As I mentioned, the Bureau will be checking for classified information but I'd just as soon not get any in if we can avoid it.

So with that said, can you tell me a little bit your early life, where you were born and brought up and your education?

A: I was born on January 23, 1923 in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. We were farm folks. Our farm was between Phoenixville and Collegeville, this is southeastern Pennsylvania. We had an orchard. My father was a market man. I have two brothers, a sister, so I grew up as a normal farm youngster if you will. Our nearest neighbor was a half mile away but we were only thirty miles from Philadelphia.

H: Has Philadelphia flowed over that area now by this time?

A: Pretty much.

H: Yeah.

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A: The Ashenfelter property is now owned by Smith Kline Glaxo. Many of the other properties down there have been developed; you know four and five bedroom homes on them. It's gotten to be a suburb of Philadelphia. To a discredit I think but that's personal (laughing).

H: (Laughing) Things change.

A: We used to be able to take a rifle and go out and hunt groundhogs without any question that we were going to bother anybody, or anybody was going to bother us. We had a hundred and thirty acres so that we were right in the middle of it.

H: Well I've got a groundhog in my backyard that could use some shooting but I think the neighbors would complain.

A: Well they probably would. The little squirrels and things like that have sort of taken over the pest position that foxes and cats used to have before.

H: Yeah, yeah.

A: Feral cats, right now though, feral cats are really a mess in all areas. They kill the blue birds and the chipmunks and things like that; personal prejudice.

H: Okay. Just don't go shooting them, that's the main thing right now.

A: But we grew up. We went to Collegeville High School, a college named Ursinus is there. But my brothers and I were always active in sports. We were fortunate our parents had enough time that they left us take part, most of the kids in that area were farm kids who had to work.

H: Sure.

A: So we had the time to participate. We lived four miles from the high school so we rode our bikes. I did get a car when I was a junior in high school so we went by car then. Then gas was what about ten cents a gallon on the farm. I graduated from Collegeville-Trappe High School. I was one of about thirty five students that graduated in my graduating class.

H: Oh sure. We're on here and we're recording again. We were talking about rural solutions to pests and I think you were getting on into your education.

A: Yes, okay well it was Collegeville High School, 1941. I worked a year. My dad said, "Go out and go to college if you want but I think you'd be smart if you worked for a year." So I did in a 'war' plant and I shortly found out I wanted to go to college rather than work there (laughing). It was a good move.

H: Been the start of many an academic career, right.

A: You know I made enough money for one year at Penn State. I spent five hundred fifty dollars the first year at Penn State in 1942, that's all it cost. Can you imagine? That was room, board and tuition; the whole thing, amazing. But good first year and then I signed up on November of, let's see, forty-two I guess it was. November 11, 1942, I went into the Air Corps. They let me stay in school to the spring of forty-three and then said, "Come with me baby."

So I was in the Air Corps for three years. And a very interesting time. During that time though I started to run the "Burma Roads" that they had and I got pretty good at it. So I got in some inter-departmental "Burma Roads" and things like that. I flew P-40s, P-63s and had a very enjoyable time at it.

H: Now you were over in Asia then?

A: No, I was not. I was in the United States.

H: Oh.

A: But we had some old beat up P-40s that they brought back. We used them. I was an aerial gunnery instructor down in Florida. Panama City for the last, oh, eight months of my career, I guess. It was at Tyndell Field.

H: Well, what's a "Burma Road" then?

A: Well it's just what they called a part of the physical training.

H: Okay, okay.

A: It was a run, it was anywhere from two to five miles depending on where it was and it was a run, a cross-country run, in effect, and I got fairly proficient at it. Back to Penn State in forty-five and we were married then (June 25, 1945).

We were married in forty-five and back at Penn State. We couldn't find quarters so I was up there by myself and, with time, a little time to spare I was out on the cross-country course just running to keep out of trouble.

One of the chaps up there, Curt Stone, who was one of Penn State's older and better distance runners said, "Hey fella why don't you go out for track and the cross country team?" "Well, how do I do that?" Well he said, "That big fellow over there with the tie on, he's the coach, go ask him." So I went over to the fella and I said, "How do I get on your team?" He said, "What do you want to run?" I said, "Well I can do two miles." He said, "Can you run two miles?" I said, "I can run two miles." He said, "You're on the team." That's how simple it was then.

H: That's the try-out huh?

A: Right that was the try-out. But Curt Stone was a three-time Olympian. In forty-eight, fifty-two and fifty-six from Penn State and he and I ran together there for quite a few years; there and then also at the New York Athletic Club after I graduated and I was running for the club.

During that time, I got in the Bureau. I don't know whether it was fifty or fifty-one. I think it was fifty, the fall of fifty I got in, forty-nine. I'm not quite sure of the timing, either. Something like that.

H: I'm looking it up here in the directory. Now I don't know how accurate that is, it says fifty.

A: Yeah, okay. I was looking for work and was through school. I really didn't want, I was qualified as a teacher at that point and I have two degrees in education now.

But in the fall of fifty, I guess it was then, Fred Wilt called me. Now Fred Wilt was in the Bureau, he was an Agent and he and I had also run together for the New York Athletic Club and competed with each other quite a bit. He called from New York. He said, "Ash, if you're still looking for work, do you have a hat?" Of course I have a hat. He said, "Well get it cleaned and blocked and put your tie on and get down to Philadelphia and make an application."

H: (Laughing). Just a quick question, just so I get my head together here. You were running for New York AC. Were you in the New York area at the time?

A: No, at Collegeville PA. I joined the New York Athletic Club after I was transferred from Boston to Newark.

They transferred me. See my first office was Boston. I was in Boston for about six months. I "solved" the Brinks case and then was transferred to Newark for my second office. Everybody worked on the Brinks case.

H: Right.

A: And everybody had a lead now and then. But I was in the Boston Office and I worked "Appy", Applicant Squad. Then my wife was pregnant was with our second child and I wanted to see if I could get somewhere where she would be okay more than have to move right after a birth or right before a birth.

H: Sure.

A: So, you know, a year would have been up in like November of fifty-one, I guess it was, and I asked them to either move me now if you could or figure out that I could stay for, let's say, for a year and a half here, because my wife was pregnant now.

So they said, "Well where do you want to go?" And Hoover was, Hoover was approval if you did well in that sort of extracurricular activity. If you didn't do well, I don't think he would approve.

But anyway they moved me to Newark which was fine because I wanted to work on the indoor circuits, you say. They had a serious program of indoor track meets at that time and there were four or five in Boston, in Philadelphia, in New York, in Washington. So now I'm in the Bureau and they didn't look with askance on it because I was doing pretty well. Transferred me to Newark which really was fine. They had a nice SAC there, Sam McKee and I was able to both do the work of an Agent and train.

Now the training was mostly at night. You know, we didn't get extra time off for training. It's possible that I made a long lunch a couple of times and that sort of thing. I did. But mostly my training was at night.

Now we had a little park near where I lived and I built myself a hurdle to use in training. There were three parks nearby. One was called Watsessing Park which was a half mile from where I lived. Then they had a playground that was about a three acre playground that I could really use because there were enough lights from the street you know.

H: Uh hmm.

A: So I did that.

H: Now how did you, you switched over then from cross-country to hurdles?

A: Well okay. In the indoor season up in Boston one time there was an old coach. He's dead now and I can't come up with his name. But he said, "Ashenfelter, have you ever tried to hurdles, the steeplechase?" I said, "What's the steeplechase?"

H: Yeah.

A: And he explained it to me. When one came around that I could perform in I did. I was fairly successful at it right off the bat. So I did work on the steeplechase and it was an event, there weren't too many people that ran it here in the states, and I got to be the best one in the country.

H: Is it still an Olympic event?

A: It is, it is.

H: Is that what called high hurdles?

A: No, they're mid-range. They're three feet high. They're three feet high and there are five of them on each lap of the track you know. It's three thousand meters which is about a little less than two miles.

H: Okay.

A: A little less than two miles anyway. It's seven and two thirds laps around a regular track, okay.

H: Uh hmm.

A: So that would be a little less than two miles. And there are thirty-five barriers that you have to cross. Now there are five hurdles on each lap and, at one of the hurdles, there's a water jump which is twelve feet, six inches across, okay.

H: So you're sure to be jumping in the water?

A: You are. You could make it if you really are fresh and got a good head of steam. But what happens if you do that you're generally "blocking" yourself. It's better to hit in the water with one foot and keep your forward momentum going. That's pretty much how I won the race. In the last lap. The Russian sort of hit a little bad and he blocked himself and he just lost a great deal of momentum in the last hurdle because we were right together and I beat him by I don't know, forty or fifty yards in the last two hundred yards.

Anyway I had, as I said, run at Penn State after the war and gotten pretty good at it; at distance runs. I ran the mile, two miles and cross-country and I think I have fourteen AAU titles, if that's important.

H: Well, that was doing pretty good, I'd say.

A: Yeah, over the years. I never had any; one serious injury. I broke a bone in my foot by kicking the football so I was out of commission for about a month and a half. That's the only serious injury that I had so I was fortunate in that regard. It's kind of an event that you can train yourself that's why I was able to continue because I didn't have any formal training after I got out of college. I ran for the New York AC after they transferred me down to Newark from Boston in fifty-one.

H: Right.

A: Okay?

H: So the AC was always on the look-out for good athletes.

- H: So in, you're in the Newark Office, what type of cases were you working?
- A: Again Applicant Squad. I was on the Applicant Squad all the time I was in the Bureau.
- H: Okay.
- A: It meant that you weren't going to be out a lot at night.
- H: Right yeah. Not many emergencies, yeah.
- A: Control, control of my schedule. That was a consideration I think that I did get. As far as training time and time when you're away, it was all annual leave time, when you went to track meets and things like that. It was all annual leave. No exceptions except one time when I went to Australia I got a four day extension on my annual leave.
- H: To be made up next year, and it was.
- A: To be made up next year. Right, well I was lucky in that I the three years military service so I qualified for the thirty days annual leave right off.
- H: Right, right.
- A: So that was, that was the good part. But anyway Fred Wilt had been in, he was in the New York Office, and he and I had been at that point we were running together for the New York AC. He knew I was looking for work and I went down to Philadelphia, applied and in due course they did their due diligence and I got into the Bureau. At that time it was the Korean War and Joe McCarthy was the hot item.
- H: Right.
- A: They were very quick in getting, I think I was only down there six weeks. It was a very, very quick education at Quantico.
- H: And then right straight up to Boston?
- A: Right straight up to Boston. I was there for about six to eight months, I'm not sure what it was and we came to Newark and we were here for about eight years, something like that.
- H: Okay.
- A: And during that time I ran until fifty-seven. I think that was the last, I ran through the 1956 Olympic Games and ran in the spring of fifty-seven and then I hung it up.
- H: Okay, tell us about the Olympics, now, that was the fifty-six games?

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A: No, 1952 games.

H: 1952 Games.

A: That's when I was successful in the 3000 meter Steeplechase.

H: Oh I see, okay.

A: They were in Helsinki, Finland and both my brother, Bill, and I, we were first and second in the American try-outs.

H: Is that right? It runs in the family then.

A: Well three of us, three of us won the Penn relays one year at the four mile relay. My other brother Bill was one of them. He's the next oldest and our younger brother Don; we all got compressed at Penn State at the same time because of war.

H: Right, right, yeah.

A: My younger brother sort of stayed straight through and caught Bill, who was also in the service and ended up at Penn State for about two years together. So you know we had a group that knew each other and Bill was in the armed forces as well.

H: Sure. It's a formidable team.

A: For about four years, the New York AC's cross-country team just was almost invincible. We would win five of the first six places in a number of meets in the cross-country.

H: Did your brothers also compete for the AC?

A: My one brother did. Bill did. Don didn't. My younger brother only ran through college. He was a farmer. He went back and worked on the farm that we grew up on in Collegeville, Pennsylvania.

H: Right.

A: I remember I used to run a little bit on the farm. I'd run out to the end our driveway and back and that was a mile. We had a half mile driveway.

H: So that's sort of what got you started then in the distance running.

A: Yes, it did. I liked to run and I always liked to run. I still like run some. As a matter of fact, I ran and fell down the other day and broke a bone in my finger.

H: Oh no.

A: I think I'm okay.

H: Oh no. That'll happen. It's a good thing though if you'd a shorter driveway, would you have been a sprinter?

A: No (laughing). In relation to speed on the track, I am slow. I can just run a long way.

H: Okay. What's it like to, how do you go about getting into the Olympics? There are try-outs right?

A: There are trials. In 1952, the Olympic trials would take in two people from the military, then five or six from both the NCAA and the AAU. See these were the governing bodies of the track then. And there would be finals and then we could put three people in the Olympics steeplechase and there was myself, my brother Bill, and I think it was Browning Ross but I'm not certain.

H: So that would be the AAU?

A: That's right.

H: Yes, you would be the AAU representative?

A: Yes. The NCAA is the college group.

H: Right. And then take the first three?

A: Yes. And then they pick. They had one race that would pick the top three. Now that's the way the qualifications went and you know you'd qualified during the year in the AAU. You were in the top six of the AAU. You know what; I think it was the top five; top five in the AAU and the top five in the NCAA and then two from the military services. And these twelve went to the Olympic try-outs and they picked then the top three; one, two and three.

H: So the top three?

A: Each country at that time could put three people in the steeplechase. Now there are Olympic try-outs, there are Olympic times that you have to have, even the United States can't put three in each one unless all three would be of Olympic caliber.

H: Oh I see, okay.

A: Some tougher restrictions now because we got so many more people involved.

H: Right and these small countries, you know, I could probably show up and run for, do something you know.

A: That is correct.

H: Yes.

A: And they're allowed to enter one person, no matter what his capability is, they're allowed to put one person in every event if they meet Olympic qualifying time..

H: Oh is that right? Okay, yeah.

A: Yes. Now they don't do it because they know the quality, the caliber of the people they have and if they're not pretty decent they're not going to embarrass themselves.

H: Right, right. Although they had the Jamaican bobsled team, didn't they? (Laughing).

A: Yeah exactly, that's exactly right. A lot of times these guys they've got the Olympic so professionalized now that these fellows can go and compete for the Jamaicans and they don't even have to be Jamaicans. It's a dumb situation.

H: Yeah, it's very; in your time it really was amateur athletes.

A: Yes, it was.

H: In general.

A: It was, it was.

H: At least for the Americans anyway.

A: A few of the fellows were able to capitalize. Bob Richards capitalized who got on the Wheaties box and that sort of thing. There were a number of men that did well; but not very well.

H: Yes well. Nowadays you win eight Olympic Gold Medals and your futures pretty well assured, I should think.

A: Yes, you can make a lot of money.

H: Oh yeah, yeah.

A: The last time, and these sprinters, there is no distinction now. Track is a pro-program and they get money for this. They don't give you the money now. They put it in your account and from that account you could draw a certain amount of "living" expenses which can include renting a Mercedes and do all that sort of thing, you know.

H: Not bad. Thirty years and it could have been a different story, right?

A: Yes, it could have been, I guess.

H: (Laughing) No. I'm sorry fifty years now (laughing).

A: This is correct. Well TV has done all that.

H: Yes.

A: The TV programming.

H: Well and I think even at that time there were many professional athletes in the Olympics under the guise of being in the military or what have you. I mean there are certainly the Russians ...

A: Absolutely.

H: ... and Eastern Europeans, yes.

A: This is the way the Americans finally justified sending American basketball players over. You know they said the Russians do it and they did. And so you could say, "Okay these are the best in the world, let them go ahead."

H: Yes.

A: You can't; the logic, the logic and money go right together.

H: Yeah, unfortunately, but then again things do change.

A: Oh yes.

H: So once you were selected then to go to the Olympics to represent us in the steeplechase, what type of training did they do with you then?

A: Okay. I think they had a training program for the track team at Princeton. I think it went, I think it was about a month before the games and so Mr. McKee, in his wisdom, we had a field office in Princeton and I was down in the field office. So I was able to have breakfast with them, lunch with them if I was around, but mostly breakfast and dinner at the training table as it were, and worked out after my day was over.

H: And that?

A: And that worked out pretty well.

H: I won't say, well I'll say it, it just seemed like rather casual, doesn't it, in comparison to modern times?

- A: Oh yes. It was very casual, it was very casual. Now bear in mind I'm a twenty-three, four, five, six year old person and I can manage my time and my training pretty well on my own. That's the way; once you're through college, we didn't have personal trainers. We didn't have personal coaches and that sort of thing. The coach was more a manager. He arranged the meets for you and he got you the tickets. He arranged transportation or he had it done. That's why the New York AC was pretty successful because they were able to do that.
- H: Sure they, you know they were really well oiled right.
- A: That's correct.
- H: Yes.
- A: And they had, they still do, they support, I think they had thirty-one AC members that were Olympians this year in the many disciplines.
- H: Disciplines, yeah.
- A: In the many disciplines. You know the wrestlers, water polo, basketball, volleyball and things like that. They had teams. They had men and women in all of these things. Tai-kwon-do, whatever it's called ...
- H: Tai-kwon-do right.
- A: So, you know, they support a lot of athletes.
- H: Sure. Well, that's a great program.
- A: Yes, it is.
- H: But it's a whole different outlook.
- A: Right.
- H: I was just thinking of, darn it, what was that film that was so popular a few years back having to do with the Olympics? He's a hurdler, in fact, UK. The name of it will come to me in just a moment.
- A: Oh, oh the Chinese hurdler?
- H: No, no, no, from the UK. It had a famous theme song and what have you. Anyway that was the work-outs. The preparations for the Olympics were rather loosely set up. You know, they were drinking champagne and jumping hurdles.

A: Well originally sure. Originally back, you know in the thirties and the twenties when they held it that way, yeah. But it was a rich man's sport too.

H: Yes, absolutely.

A: It was a rich man's sport at that time.

H: So there you were in Princeton doing background investigations?

A: Yes.

H: For the Bureau and then working out in the evening and it's about a month before the Olympics started?

A: Right, that was for that month. Now, and bear in mind I got some privileges there. There's no question about it. They didn't push me if you will. I didn't have a heavy case load or anything like that, that was something I couldn't manage.

But, my training, during the years, only allowed, I had about an hour a day that I worked out. I call it intensively, during that hour. I did what I could do in an hour. I did it as hard as I could do it. And it worked for me. But I don't say it would work for everybody. And doing your training at midnight is not ideal. At that point, we had two children during that period.

You know, I can't tell you how important my wife was too to the success of it either.

H: Oh sure.

A: She was totally important because she's taking care of two kids at that point. We get to Finland and she says, "You know I got to tell you something. I'm pregnant again" (laughing).

H: (Laughing).

A: You know, she had our third, she was pregnant with our third and fortunately she had been able to go along.

So Howard Waldron is the name. I don't know that you know, but he was an Agent in Trenton and she went over with a group that he went with so, she had an escort as it were.

H: So was he another Olympian?

A: No, he was just, just an interested person, who was interested in track and had the time, and he was an Agent.

H: Oh okay.

A: And he had been, his family I think ran the *Trenton Times*, Trenton newspaper or something like that. So he came from a newspaper family.

H: So he would be interested in it from a variety of reasons.

A: Yes, he was.

H: What, so I suppose you took a boat over to Helsinki?

A: No, we flew.

H: You flew over?

A: That was the first use of planes, the forty-eight games they took a boat to London, but the fifty-two games flew. We took a DC-7, New York direct to Oslo which at that point was a long flight. These were big, this was a four engine, DC-7. One of the first of the DC-7s, I think it was.

H: Droned on for many, many hours I'm sure.

A: (Laughing) oh boy. Yeah. Now when we went to Australia, which is in fifty-six, I shared a seat with Bill Russell from Hawaii to Australia. He was, you know, he slept across the top and I slept on the bottom; across the aisle.

H: You actually appeared in two Olympics then?

A: Yes, I did. I also ran in fifty-six. Now in fifty-two there were two very, very good Russians. One was a world record holder and the other was just about as good. They had three trial heats. I won my trial heat in a new Olympic record. I beat one of the Russians. He was second in that heat. And then my brother didn't make the finals. But he ran later in London in a two-mile relay and they broke a world record. He and Mel Whitfield and two other good Americans on one of the tours that they took after they went to Olympics.

H: Oh I see. I didn't realize that.

A: He was a pretty good runner.

H: Yeah. So they would, they would tend to stay over there then and go to other meets?

A: And barnstorm, barnstorm.

H: Barnstorm a bit.

- A: I had another, I took about ten days after the Games and we barnstormed through Finland. Oh it wasn't ten days, about five or six days.
- H: Sure, sure.
- A: You know the Finnish people were outstanding hosts. It was nothing like this is, you know, you're in an old dilapidated American car that will hold you know the six of you in a car that should hold four, and you're traveling around Finland.
- H: And challenge the locals to run around the track?
- A: Exactly. You know you have a pick up team so you're not very good. I ran on a relay team with Milt Campbell. Now Milt Campbell is a good runner. He was the decathlon champion and he can run and he can sprint and I ran a hundred meters or something like that. He came in to me, and picked me up and carried about fifty yards. He was so big and so strong and so fast.
- H: (Laughing).
- A: But we got whipped. Now we ran against a team from Nigeria who had placed in the four by one hundred, you know, they were good. And they beat the beejabbers out of us. The Finns just loved it. Everybody had a good time.
- H: Oh yeah. This is early on in the television era.
- A: They were before TV.
- H: Actually in fifty-two was before then huh?
- A: Yes, fifty-two was before the Olympics were televised.
- H: Uh huh. What was it like to be there? What was the atmosphere in Helsinki?
- A: In Finland?
- H: Yeah.
- A: It was, there was a serious anti-Russian feeling there and by beating a Russian in Finland it was a major event as far as the Finns were concerned. I had, all the Finnish people were on my side as it were.
- H: Cheering you on huh?
- A: The last lap when I got ahead and there was a loud cheering in the stands.

H: Did many Americans actually go over there as visitors to see the Olympics?

A: I don't know, how you would say many. There were quite a few.

H: Well travel was expensive and difficult in those days.

A: I would say not too many. Most of them had either a relative or a close friend. Now there were a lot of newspaper people, of course. A lot of reporters and things like that were there. But you'd see them, the same ones every day.

H: Right, right and you'd probably seen them before.

A: Yes.

H: Elsewhere, yeah.

A: Yes. The program over there was very interesting in that I was there for about ten days before my race and I was able to train three times a day, get all the rest I needed or wanted and the food was good. I got down, when I finished the race in fifty-two I weighed a hundred and twenty-six pounds. And my normal weight was about a hundred and fifty.

I was able to train and really get in shape.

H: That's a big difference, yeah. Even Hoover would have approved of that right?

A: Yes, oh he'd say I was under-weight (laughing).

H: (Laughing) Got to beef up a little bit.

A: You'd see, I wouldn't even be able to get handcuffs on a guy. I had a half hour; I had almost an hour with Hoover one time. It was the day after he had dinner with Khrushchev in the White House. He said, "Ashenfelter, I want to tell you when that man takes his shoe off and bangs on the table and says, 'We'll bury you', he means it."

H: Yeah.

A: Hoover was convinced, Hoover was convinced.

H: Well somebody tells you they're going to kick your ass, you better be ready and not be thinking he's kidding around.

A: Yes. He believed it.

H: Did he, did Hoover want to see you after the Olympics?

- A: Yes, he wanted good publicity. I was at an In-Service program at that time and I indicated I'd like to meet the Director. I'd never met him. I said, "Hey I'd like to meet this chap." Have you met him?
- H: No. I don't know, he was busy that day we went through Training School so I didn't get a chance to go.
- A: He was, it was a very interesting half hour which was unusual. He was, he wanted to talk, and all I needed to do was listen.
- H: That's what lots of people have told me (laughing).
- A: Yes. Oh, you know, he was an egotist. There's no question about that. There he was, but you know it takes that kind of man to do the kind of things he did.
- H: Yeah.
- A: You know you can agree with him, you can disagree with him. I didn't agree with him all the time either but, heck, he did a magnificent job in managing what he did.
- H: Yeah. At the time you met him he was probably pretty high on his game too.
- A: Oh yes, he was.
- H: You know that, I came in sixty-seven.
- A: Words came up to Newark when we were there when McCarthy was down at Fort Monmouth then, raising hell down there. He said, "I must know everything McCarthy is going to get before he does." That was the way it came across to us.
- H: Sure.
- A: And we spent a lot of time down in Fort Monmouth at that time.
- H: I'll bet.
- A: And the Applicant Squad did have a lot to do with that sort of thing because a lot of these guys we'd had investigations on.
- H: Sure. And if they'd slip through why did, you know why didn't you get him type of thing?

- A: The worse part, there were three men down there with the same name. I forget exactly what it was but it's like Charles Cohen or something like that. And the three, the three, and the General down at Fort Monmouth, in his wisdom, just fired all three of them because they had some Communist petitions and things like that, that somebody had signed with that name. And so he takes them all out.
- H: Fix that.
- A: The commander fired them all. He did but they all three of them, I think sued him and two of them won.
- H: And the third one was the Communist (laughing).
- A: It was a mess.
- H: Yeah.
- A: McCarthy was not very good either.
- H: No, no, but when you look back on it, and I've been talking to some people who ran cases in that era ...
- A: I'm losing you. I'm on one of these little side cell phones. I don't know.
- H: Oh.
- A: Or were you sort of getting away from your phone?
- H: I don't know. I just looked away for a moment. How am I now?
- A: I can hear you now.
- H: Oh okay good. Yeah McCarthy did have some points it turns out.
- A: Oh yeah.
- H: But the way it was placed and what happened with it was a whole different story. Getting back to Helsinki then, tell me a little bit about the race and how it was managed. Is it much different from races that are run today?
- A: No, it was the same race. The physical part of it hasn't changed I don't think at all. And there were, I'm going to say fifteen people in the final, and that's a lot. But they were all pretty good people so that you know, there's no klutzes in there that are going to jam things up and create a real stumble.

A: And in the final the Russian, Kazantov, he was their number one man apparently was given instructions to stay right on my right shoulder and after about the third lap, he and I got into the lead. We were running one and two and he stayed right on my right shoulder. Now that's on the outside of the turns.

H: Right.

A: I ran, I was running as wide as I could run on every turn and so there were a lot of turns. So he really ran some extra distance but that was okay with me. And in the last lap he did take over for, oh maybe a hundred yards in the back stretch, and he hit the last water jump a bit ahead of me. But he stumbled a little bit and he came out of it badly and I came out of it, you know, to myself I said, "They'll never remember you if you're second." (laughing) I put it on and I was able to carry it all the way through and won.

H: (Laughing) So that was exciting and all of the people were cheering for you.

A: Oh yes, and then the people over there, they stand, most of the people in the stands were standees. They stand up. They have a rail that they could lean on because they didn't have seats and the stadium was totally full. My wife was there and I got, you know kissed by the flower girl that gives you the flowers and that sort of thing and gave me some flowers and I took them up, took a lap around the track and took them up to my wife. And that got some press too.

H: Oh I'm sure, I'm sure.

A: The Finns were delightful hosts. You know they couldn't do enough for you. At our camp, now there were two, three camps I guess; one with the Communists, one for the rest of us and one for the Asiatics because of the food difference.

H: Oh yeah.

A: And the Russians, the Communist camp kept very much to themselves. Now, you know there was Russia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, at the time. I don't know how many there were.

H: All Eastern Europeans. Yeah East Germany, yeah.

A: They had a pretty big camp. And some of our people were invited over. I was never invited over. I didn't go and we invited some of them over and some of them came, some didn't. But the food, the food service was excellent. There was more, you know, more food there than you really needed and it was good food.

A: And the Finns, soldiers, these are teen-age recruits that are standing guard on the gates and you know it was very casual. I had a navy blue jacket over there and my wife put that on and she looked just like the rest of the women that were there - right through. No problem.

H: Well how did they, did they play a recording of the National Anthem when, for the winners

A: Yes.

H: Is that what went on?

A: They played it.

H: Now the timing, the timing equipment at that time were they still using stop watches?

A: Yes. I don't, I don't know if they had any of the photo timers or not. They probably did. I think they had photo timers then. But they used stop watches too.

H: Yeah, now they're timing people within a thousandth of a second.

A: Oh yes and they are accurate.

H: Oh yes. But you wonder is this a real race or not?

A: Yes. Now you get to pick first. I'll tell you that's the easiest one to pick.

H: (Laughing) Prestige though too.

A: Oh yes.

H: Yeah. You won a Gold Medal in this particular ...

A: Right.

H: ... Olympics.

A: It's gold plated incidentally.

H: Gold-plated and you still have it I'm sure.

A: No, I don't.

H: Oh?

A: It's at Penn State.

H: Ah, okay.

A: It's in their sports museum.

I have four sons. We have four sons. What are you going to do with it?

H: Yeah, yeah that's a hard one, right. Yeah to

A: And so I figured there's only two places for it, either there or at the New York Athletic Club.

H: Yes.

A: And so I gave it to Penn State with the provision that any grandson, great-grandson, you know that needs it for show and tell, can get it.

H: That's great, that's great.

A: I think that's the best way to do it.

H: Yes, well it's always; it's always a problem dividing these things up and especially the very personal things like that and very distinctive. So, after the Olympics then, you went on a little ride around then in Finland

A: In Finland. Yes, I would say it was probably about four to five days something like that and then I came back to work.

H: Back to reality.

A: Sure.

H: What was the reaction when you showed up in the office the first time?

A: Well, it was pretty laid back really. There was you know, everybody, everybody that I knew congratulated me and that sort of thing but, you know, the daily grind has to go on.

H: Oh sure.

A: And it was, it was low key. It was low key, as it should be.

H: Oh sure.

- A: You know, it can get, you can get carried away with that. The boss had me in, had coffee with me and that sort of thing and I told him all I could tell him about the Games.
- H: Well I don't know how many Bureau Olympians we've got. The only one I know of is you.
- A: Fred Wilt had made the team in forty-eight and in fifty-two in distance. He was a five thousand meter, five or ten thousand meter runner. I'm not sure which.
- H: Uh huh.
- A: He was an Agent. He's dead now and there was one before, a hurdler. I think he's still alive and he's in Philadelphia. I can't come up with his name. But there, I think there were those three, myself and Fred Wilt and one other one.
- H: I'll have to do some research then.
- A: They didn't, they weren't, they didn't medal. Neither one of them medaled.
- H: But just getting that far is a wonderful thing.
- A: Well, it is.
- H: Yeah, it is really something. Then
- A: There's a lot of bad luck. There are so many good people that have been at the top at the wrong time. Glenn Cunningham for instance was the best miler for six or seven years but during an Olympic year he was hurt or something like that. They gave him a bye onto the team but he still didn't do anything in the Olympics either. He got beat.
- H: Well that Chinese fellow that was supposed to be so wonderful in this Olympics.
- A: This is right.
- H: What a terrible thing. He pulls a tendon.
- A: Poor guy and you know he feels it. You can't imagine the pressure that was on him.
- H: Oh yes.
- A: You can't imagine the pressure. The pressure, there was no pressure on me, because nobody expected me to do anything in particular.

A: One of the coaches from Southern Cal was on the plane with my wife, and he was heard to say that the Americans didn't have a prayer in the distance events. You know he pontificated on that respect ...

H: (Laughing)

A: ... and my wife heard it and she was mad. But she said, "I kept my temper."

H: (Laughing) So then back to normal life. Then you were still in the Bureau?

A: Oh yeah. I was in the Bureau until, actually I stayed in the Bureau until fifty-nine.

H: Right, for the fifty-six Olympics, you were there?

A: Yes, fifty-six, all the same programs were similar in that we went, we spent a couple of days in Hawaii. On the way over they had a little more money then and then we went to Australia.

And again the hosts are outstanding. They're awfully, awfully nice to you. They'll wine you and dine you forever if you let them.

You know in Finland, in Finland, the hosts, the drink over there you know is vodka and it's heavy-weight vodka. It's about a hundred and forty proof. So, and it's down the hatch and ...

H: You could get in trouble pretty quick.

A: Yes, I had a couple of interesting evenings.

H: (Laughing). I'll bet.

A: I still like my vodka (laughing).

H: Well then in Australia they're loading you up with beer ...

A: Yeah.

H: ... and it's tough to get enough down to

A: But the Australians, we had an interesting time in Australia as well. I was older. I had the status of a Gold Medalist from the first Olympics, the Olympics before so I got a little attention over there.

H: Sure.

- A: And in the trial heat over there I ran exactly the same time that I'd run in Finland which was a new Olympic record. And I didn't even qualify.
- H: Wow.
- A: So that's how things had changed. Now bear in mind I was not getting any better. I was getting older.
- H: At this point how old were you?
- A: Well, in Australia, I was thirty-two. I was born in 1923. I think was twenty-eight in 1952 in Helsinki.
- H: Well actually for distance runners being older, isn't too, bad right?
- A: No, you could, I think I was thirty-two in Australia. I was over the hill really. And I'd not been able to get the kind of training I needed. I was holding on as it were. I was still the best America; no I wasn't even the best American. There was an American that beat me in the trials here. But I made the team. But I was on the way down hill. I wasn't improving and the fella that was last in Finland, won in Australia. Chris Brasher of England won in Australia.
- H: Interesting.
- A: An Englishman.
- H: He was on the way up then in terms of his athletic ability.
- A: And he was a younger person and he became an MP over there. They, a couple of them that were runners became MPs, you know, in the government.
- H: So you finished out your Olympics career then?
- A: That was in November of fifty-six. Right, November of fifty-six and then I ran through the winter season, and I ran the AAU again for the club in fifty-seven in the spring, and that was the end.
- H: That was the end.
- A: That was when I quit.
- H: Of your competitive career anyway.
- A: Yeah.

H: You kept it up though?

A: I ran, I ran a few races after that; local races you know, that was for fun. I ran in a couple of these Manny Hanny things that they have over in Central Park. I ran in two of them. But that was just; just to go through the motions.

H: Sure, sure.

A: And I ran with a team and, I can run, but I was not, I was not competitive as far as winning goes.

A: And what happens in those races, the front part of the race gets filled up with the people that lie about how good they are and they get in there and they clog it up so that you really are, you know, you're twenty minutes getting started.

H: Yes. That's, you can see that with the long distance races.

A: Yes, right, right, the marathons.

H: The marathons, yeah. It's amazing. Continued on in the Bureau in Newark Office to fifty-nine?

A: I had interviewed a man at Engelhard, which was one of the big precious metal houses in the world actually in Newark and he and I had gotten along well. He said, "Are you happy where you are, young man?" And I said, "I am happy where I am, what do you have in mind?" He said, "I don't have anything in mind, but once in awhile we need people, young people that are eager and hard-nosed and going to work, and if you're interested, why let's keep in touch." So I said, "Well okay, I'll keep in touch."

So he and I had lunch about twice a year for about two or three years. Finally they made me a couple of offers but they were not something I wanted to do.

And finally they formed a new division, the diamond division, and Engelhard became DeBeers here in the United States and with industrial diamonds. They hired me and another bunch of chargers to be salesman.

Well it turns out that the industrial diamonds that I could have sold in my territory wouldn't have paid my expenses. It turns out there are only three major buyers of industrial diamonds in the United States at that time and I didn't have any one of them.

So another boss asked me one day, about six months into this job, he said, he was Greek, he said, "Ashenfelter, is you makin' any money for the company?" I told him, "If I had every sale in my territory I wouldn't make my expenses." He said, "I thought so." "How would you like to work for me?" He was in the refining division.

A: You know that was a different division. It was a division that, it was a good division, we had an established division in the recovery of precious metal, stones, from industrial use.

H: Oh I see.

A: And so I was with him for about, oh, about twelve years.

His wife called him to remind him of an appointment.

A: Yes, we're getting ready to do a few things. But that's no problem. I have an infected finger. That finger I broke has gotten infected.

H: Oh my.

A: I've been taking some infusions every day and well I don't know what you call it anyway. It's an infectious disease place where they put people for dialysis and that sort of thing.

H: Oh boy.

A: And I go in there every day for a treatment and it takes about twenty minutes so that's why I'm probably around the house more often than I would be.

H: Yeah sure, sure.

A: I fell down. I was running actually and I stubbed my toe on a curb and I went ass over tea cup and caught my finger on a cement slab.

H: Ouch.

A: Got three breaks in the bone, in one of the bones in my finger and it got infected. That's what happens when you get in the medical, where they get infected.

H: Yeah you got to keep on top of all that though.

A: We're doing that now. (Laughing). Well you know what, you get less stable, less agile. I'm eighty-five now and I'm lucky I'm still able to run.

H: Sure.

A: And I do run. I run about three times a week, not very far, not very fast, you know, but I have fun.

H: That's important. Let me turn off here.