

# Entertainment

## BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

GREATNESS OF SOUL NEVER GROWS OLD

**NYORK CITY:** At the annual Jesse Owens International Athlete Award event, William E. Simon, president of the U.S. Olympic Committee, uttered words about the immortal track and field athlete, whose embarrassment of Adolf Hitler was as complete as the Nazi's defeat by the Allies, which we feel deserves the permanence of the printed page. With his permission we bare those words for your eyes.

As he said, "The lesson from his life remains before us. If you would aspire to success in life, strive for excellence in all things. Do more than is required or expected. Do the best you can do, and let others say of you as, Pericles would have said of Jesse Owens, "It is greatness of soul alone that never grows old." Actually that was the end of Bill Simon's verbal love affair with the memory of the immortal Jesse, not the beginning. However, since this is the "Year of the Olympic" and it will touch all our imagination, and some of our eyes and ear from Tom Bradley's governed City of Angels let us dig deeper into the laudable words he used to buff the character, the track and field prowess of the

eternal human accomplishment of a long ago Olympic event. "One fantastic day in 1935 Jesse Owens probably fashioned the most brilliant fete any track athlete will ever have in the history of the sport. This human rocket broke 5 world records and tied a 6th, all in the span of 70 minutes. Almost 50 years after, men and women all over the world know and honor the name of this humble sharecropper's son.



Jesse Owens

They remember those splendid days in 1936 when Jesse Owens, in the great Olympic Stadium in Berlin, bested the pride of Nazi Germany, and of all the world, and four times stood with his hand upraised in victory, a gold medal around

his neck. And they remember how Adolf Hitler stalked mortified out of the stadium, rather than stay to hear the vast crowd cheer the young Black American who symbolized excellence on the track and excellence in manhood. Though Jesse has passed away, those memories will remain with all who love athletics until the end of time. But there was much more about Jesse than his brilliance on the track.

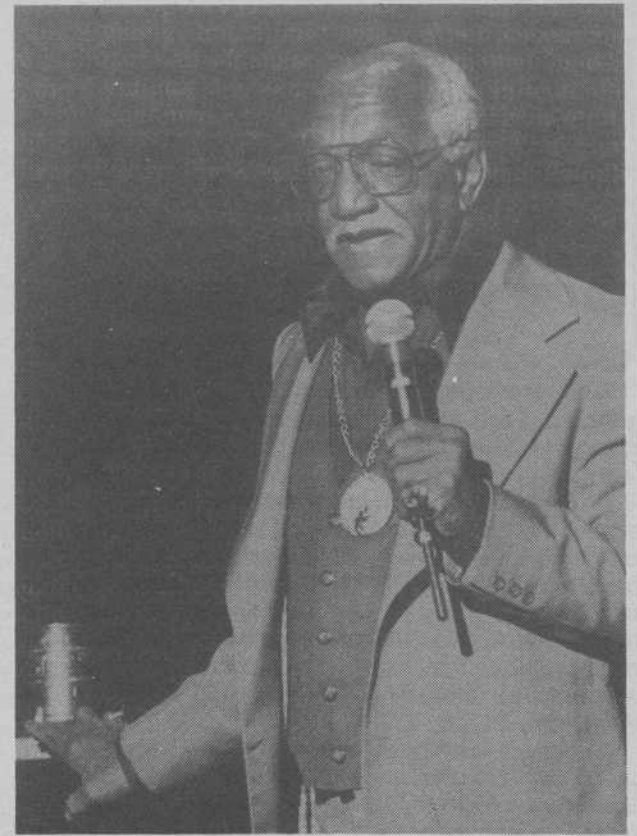
There have been many great athletic champions in this century. Their names are inscribed in the record books. Their deeds are remembered where sports fans gather to reminisce. Today some of their faces are seen selling products on TV. Everything from beer to coffee makers to deodorants to roach powder. But few, if any, of the great athletes of this past century have had such a powerful and continuing hold on the American mind as Jesse Owens. It was not because he was never beaten on the track. Eulis Peacock and Ralph Metcalfe did; but no one ever sped to the finish line of life and broke the final tape ahead of Jesse Owens.

There was about Jesse Owens a rare quality, common to the finest men of every age and every culture. It was the quality observed by the great statesman Pericles, in his address to the people of Athens in 431 B.C., at the end of the

Peloponnesian war. In that celebrated oration is a thought that perfectly fits Jesse Owens. Said Pericles on that memorable occasion, perhaps the finest moment in all history of the Athenian people, "It is greatness of Soul Alone That Never Grows Old, Nor is it Wealth That Delights in the Latter Stages of Life, so Much as Honor." The Sterling quality which set Jesse Owens apart from other great athletes and champions, the quality which made him not only a champion, but a legend, the quality which causes us to say what we say, can be summed up as greatness of soul.

How was it that this son of a sharecropper, poor in every sense of the word, became a legend? One thing is certain. He did not become what he was wholly by himself. Throughout his life others, even in small ways, set examples, lifted his aspirations, fortified his resolutions and helped to shape his sterling character. Many of those who helped are remembered in his own book, "Spiritual Autobiography." The most important were his parents, Henry and Emma Owens, poor sharecroppers of Oakville, Ala."

At this juncture of his heart touching speech about the great track blazer, Bill Simon wondered who among us could imagine how poor was poor in rural Alabama in 1913, the year James Cleveland Owens came into the world? He pointed out that "the



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man" owned everything and that things were so hopeless some of Jesse's parents' neighbors hung themselves.

The mule was theirs, but the 40 acres belonged to the "man," so they sold the beast, cleaned up the old shack, though they were not coming back. So it was off to Cleveland for the Owens. "In Cleveland," said Simon, "Jesse, who was in the Vth grade, met a person, Charles Riley, who had a great influence on his life. He was the high school track coach, and taught gym class at Jesse's elementary school as well. Though Jesse wasn't the fastest or the strongest kid in his class, Riley saw something special in him, courage, deter-

mination, the capacity for self-discipline, and above all, the special quality that is recognized as "Heart." So the coach asked this spindly 5th grader if he would be willing to work to become a great runner. Inspired by Riley's faith in him, Jesse said yes. The rest is history!" On March 10th, William E. Simon, he who inspired this column, Mrs. Ruth Owens, her daughters, Gloria, Beverly and Marlene, Herb Douglas, Edwin Moses, Wilma Rudolph and several Olympic athletes retraced the path of Jesse Owens to the '36 Berlin Olympiad. The street was renamed Jesse Owens Strasse ... **STAY LOOSE ...** Billy Rowe is a syndicated columnist.



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