

Jesse

An autobiography of Jesse Owens (1978)

James Cleveland Owens (J.C. or Jesse) was born 12Sep1913 in Oakville, AL & died 31Mar1980 in Tucson, AZ of lung cancer (due to smoking) at age 66. His family was poor sharecroppers. He almost died after his mom cut out a lump in his chest at age five. They moved to Cleveland, OH in 1919. His mom maid 30 cents/hr as a maid. The kids made 5 or 10 cents/hr as laborers or house help. His dad had a hard time finding a job since he couldn't read or write.

His junior high track coach saw something in him and asked him to join the track team. He took him to see the "desire to win" in race horses while they ran. He improved and went on to college at Ohio State. Where on 25May35 he broke two world records & tied another (long jump, 100 & 200 yds).

Hitler hated him because he was black & was named the fastest man in the world. The 1936 Olympics were in Berlin & Hitler wanted to show the world their supremacy. Jesse had three qualifying jumps & messed up the first two. He was not focused. Germany's best, Luz Long, came up to him & calmed him down. He went on to beat Luz and they became great friends.

He came back from Europe with 4 gold medals & a national hero. There were parades & parties, but no job offers. He struggled. It wasn't until WWII broke out that he got a break when the US government offered him a job. He did well enough to pay off a business debt.

He became a public speaker & was paid well, but was away from home too much. During his struggles later in life, he found God.

Quotes: "The only victory that counts is the one over yourself." (Jesse Owens)

"I have to reach into myself & find the strength to make it do my best." (Jesse Owens)