

A memory of Jesse Owens

By **Karly Lusby**
Columnist

The highest price ever paid for a piece of Olympic memorabilia occurred in December 2013, a medal belonging to Jesse Owens that sold at an online auction for \$1.47 million. News of the sale brought to mind a story I was told by my dad — and it comes to mind again as the movie “Race” premieres.

My grandfather was a fire marshal in Munich, Germany before and during World War II. His work took him to Berlin in 1936 and he took his 8-year-old son with him; this man, Karl Eichner, was my father. It was a time when kids could run free and as Opa had meetings all day my dad made his way to the Olympic stadium and snuck in; he was always very resourceful. It was an especially auspicious day, as it was the day that Jesse Owens won his four gold medals and dad saw it all. He spoke about that day with awe and wonder throughout his life.

Following the war, my dad came to the United States as one of the first Fulbright Scholars.

This organization was founded by a bill in the U.S. Congress, and its goal was to heal wounds caused by the war through exchange students. Dad attended Cornell University, and a former Japanese soldier was his roommate ... which is another story.

At the end of the one-year program he returned to Germany, yet remained charmed by his experiences in the U.S. So he returned two years later.

Working as a handyman in upstate New York he was hired to help lay a kitchen floor. When he arrived he was surprised to find that the man that hired him was none other than Jesse Owens.

As dad worked they talked, they talked about the war and the Olympics. They were both taken aback that an eight-year-old boy that had seen Jesse’s glory was now laying linoleum in Jesse’s kitchen. Jesse shared that he had lost three of his gold medals and was terribly upset about it (the medal sold at the auction was the one he had given to his dear friend Bill “Bojangles” Robinson).

The U.S. Olympic Committee had been of no

help. My dad had an idea Jesse thought was crazy. What if Jesse were to contact the German Olympic Federation instead and ask them for help. Dad offered to write the letter in German; a skeptical Jesse agreed. The German Olympic Federation responded and Jesse was surprised and grateful to receive a full set of replacement medals.

Their lives took them in very different directions and they did not stay in touch except for a phone call made to thank my dad shortly after the medals arrived. Before Google and the Internet, a lot of information about the war and the days following it, and people’s stories, have been lost. Documents were misplaced or disposed of, tossed away never knowing their place in the future, and a paper trail is not easy to find. My dad was many things but I never knew him to lie or exaggerate, he was vehemently honest. A lot of different family members far out on the limbs of the family tree had often told me the same story and I have no

reason to doubt it. There is documentation that the medals were replaced and that is about all I have been able to find.

My dad died a few years back and I asked him about that, and other, stories he had told me about his life and he once again shook his grizzled head in amazement of those memorable days and the amazing coincidence of being a tiny part of Jesse’s story.

A former German soldier and the black athlete from America, a handyman and an Olympic champion, and a warped floor conspired to bring them together, and this former enemy combatant helped replace medals that had been lost.

The full set of Jesse’s replacement medals now resides at his alma mater, Ohio State University. I look forward to seeing them one day.

Reference: http://espn.go.com/olympics/trackandfield/story/_id/10101684/jesse-owens-gold-medal-1936-olympics-sells-147-million

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Kimberly Gorayeb of Metolius Property Sales has earned her principal broker’s license.

Becoming a principal broker requires substantial continuing education, testing, and licensing.

A principal broker is qualified to supervise other brokers in a firm, though that is not Gorayeb’s role at Metolius Property Sales. She told *The Nugget* the further education in the field will allow her to more effectively and efficiently serve her clients.

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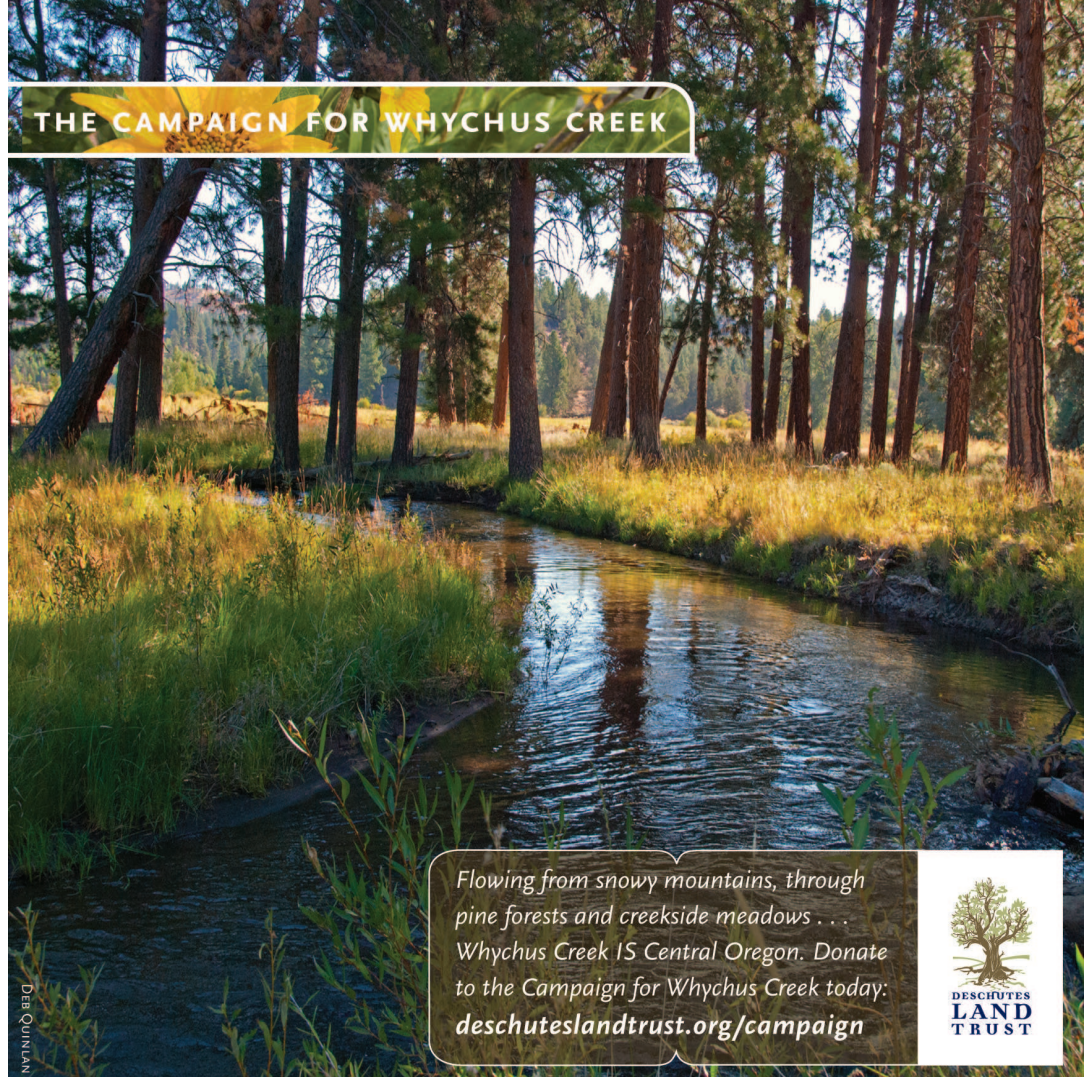
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