
MIZZOU

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Around the Columns

Growing victories

During the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, individuals and teams that won events received not only gold medals but also year-old oak seedlings as a gift from the German people. The pots carried the inscription, "Grow to the honour of victory! Summon to further achievement!" Many of the trees fared poorly during the trip back from Berlin and quarantine in the United States.






Enter Don Holst, MS Ed '57, who coached the men's decathlon squad for the 1968 Olympics. In 1986, he attended a 50-year reunion of the 1936 Olympic track team, where some of the athletes had mentioned the trees. "Not long after that, I woke up one morning wondering happened to those trees. I tracked down as many as I could, and I found only five still alive." He wanted to be sure the line of trees survived for future generations.

He discovered that the tree given to 800-meters gold medalist John Woodruff of Connellsville, Penn., was still alive. So Holst drove from Lebanon, Ill., where he taught physical education at McKendree College to Connellsville. It was a bad year for acorns, so even though he climbed the tree in search of the nuts, he came home with only a dozen or so.

Holst managed to raise several of the Olympic oaks, which he gave to various schools, organizations and children of Olympians. In 1987, he won an award from the International Arbor Day Society for the project. His latest project is a book of interviews with former gridiron greats, *Famous Football Players in their 4th Quarter*.

Holst is happy to talk about oaks, track and field, or football with all callers at 308-432-4508. He lives in Chadron, Neb., where he grows Olympic oaks in his garden.

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