

A Step Back in Time By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

There was an estimate that four billion people watched the Opening Ceremony for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, China on August 8th. The opening ceremony for the Olympic Games is the biggest live production of its kind. There's pressure to perform, pressure to be imaginative and for the host country, it's like inviting the world into your living room. So for the next two weeks, the world will be guests of Beijing, watching extraordinary athletes exhibit years of training and the best, awarded for their hard work and dedication.

Just how far back in history, organized athletic contests were held, remains a matter of debate. Of all the games held throughout Greece, the Olympic Games were the most famous. Held every four years between August 6 and September 19, they occupied such an important place in Greek history, that the late antiquity historians measured time by the interval between them—an Olympiad. The Olympic Games, like almost all Greek games, were an intrinsic part of a religious festival.

The modern Olympic Games are named for athletic contests held in ancient Greece for almost 12 centuries. They were banned in AD 394 but were revived and made international in 1896. The Winter Games were added in 1924. World War I and II forced cancellation of the Olympics in 1916, 1940, and 1944, but they resumed in 1948 and are held every four years. In 1986 the International Olympic Committee voted to change the schedule of the Olympic Games so that the Summer and Winter Games would be held in different years. After 1992 the Winter and Summer Games were no longer held within the same calendar year. To adjust to this new schedule, the Lillehammer, Norway Winter Games were held in 1994, the only time that two Games have been staged two years apart. The Winter Games were played after only a two-year interval and every four years thereafter. The Summer Games were scheduled for 1996, and every four years thereafter. The following is a list of location and year of the Olympic Games; Summer Games since 1896 and Winter Games since 1924.

Summer Olympic Games

- 1896 Athens Greece
- 1900 Paris France
- 1904 St. Louis Missouri USA
- 1908 London England

- 1912 Stockholm Sweden
- 1920 Antwerp Belgium
- 1924 Paris France
- 1928 Amsterdam Netherlands
- 1932 Los Angeles California USA
- 1936 Berlin Germany
- 1948 London England
- 1952 Helsinki Finland
- 1956 Melbourne/Stokholm Australia
- 1960 Rome Italy
- 1964 Tokyo Japan
- 1968 Mexico City Mexico
- 1972 Munich Germany
- 1976 Montreal Canada
- 1980 Moscow Russia
- 1984 Los Angeles California USA
- 1988 Seoul Korea
- 1992 Barcelona Spain
- 1996 Atlanta Georgia USA*
- 2000 Sydney Australia
- 2004 Athens Greece
- 2008 Beijing China

Winter Olympic Games

- 1924 Chamonix France
- 1928 St. Moritz Switzerland
- 1932 Lake Placid New York USA
- 1936 Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Twin Bavarian Cities)
- 1948 St. Moritz Switzerland
- 1952 Oslo Norway
- 1956 Cortina d'Ampezzo Italy
- 1960 Squaw Valley California USA
- 1964 Innsbruck Austria
- 1968 Grenoble Germany
- 1972 Sapporo Japan
- 1976 Innsbruck Austria
- 1980 Lake Placid New York USA
- 1984 Sarajevo Yugoslavia
- 1988 Calgary Canada
- 1992 Albertville France
- 1994 Lillehammer Norway
- 1998 Nagano Japan
- 2002 Salt Lake City Utah USA
- 2006 Turin Italy
- 2010 To be held in Vancouver Canada

* In 1996 when the Summer Olympic Games were held in Atlanta, Georgia, our small community played a part in the pre-game events. On June 26, 1996 a record crowd of people gathered in our highly decorated little town, Eagleville, to watch the Olympic Torch be escorted through downtown by the Eagleville Police, Rutherford County Sheriff's Patrol and the Georgia

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State Police. It was estimated as many as 2,000, possibly more, watched and cheered as a caravan of Olympic vehicles and the torchbearer was ushered through town. The Olympic torch entered Tennessee from the Carolinas and spent the night in Knoxville before moving to Nashville. It was guarded by Georgia State Patrol troopers that evening. The following morning, the torch continued its cross-country trek en route to Atlanta. After passing through Nashville and Franklin it made its way into Eagleville, which was the only city in Rutherford County that had this honor. The Olympic flame began its 84-day journey in Los Angeles on April 27th. Since that time, the flame traveled by several methods, the most unusual being by train, steamboat, crop duster airplane and horseback.

To show Eagleville's appreciation of being on the torch route, the businesses as well as homeowners decorated windows, poles, mailboxes and almost any available space for two miles along Main Street, from the city limits on the north end to the city limits south of Eagleville. Red, white and blue were the colors of the day. A small parade, complete with the Eagleville High School Color Guard and several law enforcement vehicles and guests preceded the torch.

The centennial Olympic Games opened August 4th, in Atlanta, Georgia with 10,318 athletes from a record of 197 nations in attendance. The opening ceremonies, which

began 16 days of athletic competition, featured a tribute to the ancient Greek games and slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Former world heavyweight boxing champion and Olympic gold medalist, Muhammad Ali, lit the Olympic torch, which completed a 15,000-mile trek across the United States.

The games featured 28 delegations that were participating for the first time. Tight security and Atlanta's hot and humid August weather were major concerns for Olympic organizers and those attending the games. In spite of security precautions, a homemade pipe bomb loaded with nails and screws exploded at a late-night concert in Centennial Olympic Park, killing one person and wounding more than 100 others.

Atlanta, Georgia was chosen for the location of the 1996 Olympic Games over Athens, Greece, Belgrade Yugoslavia, Manchester Great Britain, Melbourne Australia and Toronto Canada. It took 47,466 volunteers to assist in all aspects of the 16 days of events. I don't know if anyone from this area attended the Olympic Games in Atlanta but everyone who was in attendance in Eagleville, Tennessee on June 26, 1996 when the torch passed through, participated in the pre-games by cheering the torchbearer and the Olympic caravan through our town, an experience that may not ever happen again.



Main Street in 1996 as the Olympic torch was being escorted through Eagleville.