



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

Historical Archives  
Olympic Studies Centre

## Avery Brundage

### *Fonds list*

Overview of the content of the archives concerning his biography, mandates and activities from 1908 to 1989

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**Reference:** CH CIO-AH A-P05

**Dates:** 1908-1989

**Level of description:** Fonds

**Extent and medium:** 1.51 l.m. Text documents and microfilms.

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**Name of creator**

International Olympic Committee (IOC).

**Administrative / Biographical history**

Avery Brundage was born in 1887 in Detroit, Michigan (USA). He came from a modest family, of which the father, Charles Brundage, was a stonemason. His secondary education took place at the Crane Manual Training School in Chicago. He then went on to the University of Illinois, where he obtained a diploma in civil engineering in 1909.

As well as being an outstanding student, Brundage was also an accomplished athlete. A follower of athletics, he practised several sports throughout his studies and alongside his various professional activities. In 1912, his passion for athletics led him to the Olympic Games (OG) in Stockholm, where he represented the United States in the pentathlon and decathlon events, finishing in sixth and 16<sup>th</sup> place respectively. Furthermore, two years later, he obtained the title of American national champion in "all-around", a discipline similar to decathlon, but where the events take place on a single day. He went on to win this competition twice again, in 1916 and 1918. The fame he gained through this throughout the American sports world was not unconnected to his later involvement in the Olympic Movement.

Brundage added professional success to his sporting success. In 1915, after having worked for two architect firms, he founded his own company specialising in construction, *Avery Brundage Company Builders*. Profiting from the post-war building boom, this company enabled him to accumulate a lot of capital. He continued his activities at the helm of this company until 1947. In 1927, he married Elisabeth Dunlap, a musician from Chicago.

In the 1920s, Brundage held numerous administrative positions within the American and international sports movement. Besides participating in the administration of numerous sports associations, he was, among others, President of the American Amateur Athletics Union from 1928 to 1934. He was also President of the US Olympic Committee between 1929 and 1953, and, in 1930, he was appointed Vice-President of the International Amateur Athletics Federation, which was then led by J. Sigfrid Edström. As from 1940, he also presided over the organisation of the Pan-American Games.

Brundage made his official entry into the Olympic Movement in 1936, when he was elected as an IOC member in the United States. A decade later, he succeeded Edström as Vice-President of the organisation when the latter became President. When, in 1952, Edström retired from this position, Brundage once again succeeded him, being officially appointed fifth IOC President. He occupied this function until he stood down in 1972, after which he was appointed IOC Honorary President for Life.

Brundage's route to the presidency of the IOC was marked by several controversies, during which he sometimes had to support difficult decisions. This was the case regarding the contentious issue of the participation in the Olympic Games by the Chinese, German and Korean teams in the stormy context of their internal political conflicts. It was also the case regarding his decision to continue with the Olympic Games after the terrorist attacks on 5 September 1972 at the Munich Olympic Games. Several people criticised Brundage for being somewhat intransigent in his positions and in his way of leading the IOC during these crises. However, everyone agrees that he was always faithful to his convictions and to defending the two major Olympic ideals, i.e. amateurism and the non-politicisation of sport.

As the author of several articles on amateur sport and the Olympic Movement, Brundage also accumulated several distinctions during his career. He died on 8 May 1975 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, but he was buried in Chicago. He bequeathed an impressive collection of Asian art to the *Asian Art Museum of San Francisco* in the 1960s.

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Last update: mars 11

**Immediate source of acquisition or transfer**

The fonds was received by the IOC Historical Archives in 1993, following the construction of the new Olympic Museum in Ouchy.

**Scope and content**

The fonds contains information on Avery Brundage's participation in the activities of various American and international sporting associations between 1908 and 1975, mainly his involvement with the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The fonds addresses Brundage's activities first as an IOC member (1936-1972), then as Vice-President (1946-1952), President (1952-1972) and finally Honorary President (1972-1975). This President's correspondence, of which the main part of this fonds is composed, provides information on many subjects, from amateurism to the IOC's relations with the International Federations (IFs) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs), as well as the organisation of the Olympic Games (OG), including the controversial 1972 edition in Munich. The fonds also bears witness to the various sporting themes addressed in Brundage's writings – amateurism, for example – and even recounts several trips made by the President linked to Olympism. Finally, the fonds contains bibliographic information on this President.

The fonds mainly contains the correspondence produced or received by Brundage in his functions within the IOC. There are letters sent to various NOCs and IFs, as well as to IOC members, including Angelo Bolanaki and the IOC's seventh President, Juan Antonio Samaranch. The fonds also includes bibliographic texts and press articles on Brundage, his writings, especially circulars, and some speeches and reports of his trips to Greece, Hungary and South America. Finally, the fonds contains microfilms of the archives preserved in the *Avery Brundage Collection* at the University of Illinois, USA.

**Accruals**

No

**System of arrangement**

The files are classified by subject, by document type or by activities in alphabetical order. The documents in the files are classified chronologically, from latest to earliest.

**Conditions governing access**

The documents are freely accessible, subject to the provisions established by the IOC to this effect.

**Language / scripts of material**

The documents are mainly in English. Some of them are in French, German and Spanish.

**Related units of description**

An Avery Brundage Collection is preserved at the *University of Illinois' Urbana-Champaign Archives* with the series number 26/20/3.

**Notes**

The content of this fonds, including the Olympic identifications, are the property of the IOC.

**Rules or Conventions**

Description complies with ISAD(G).

**Date(s) of descriptions**

August 2006