JESSE OWENS

by Kathleen Wiley

Jesse Owens was a runner
He could think of nothing ‘funner’
Than to run for America...
The fastest man on the earth

He ran to prove a person’s worth
He ran to overcome prejudice....
The Nazi skies had darkened
White Supremacy was threatened...

But nothing broke his concentration
He was many things that Hitler hated
But soon hate would be abated
Jesse ran just for fun!!

Go Jesse!! Go Jesse!
Go Jesse for the gold!!!
He ran for self and country
But he showed the world while running
That the gold of friendship is the best thing
That we all can hold.

The 1936 Olympics
Jesse Owens was a whiz
Prejudice had been out-shone......
The 100-meter dash had ended
Tension had just been suspended

Jesse stood tall on the Olympic throne.....
As Jesse faced Adolph Hitler
Knowing he was now a winner
One triumph had just been scored...
And with the 200 meter dash, the high jump and the relay
Jesse set 4 gold Olympic records...

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But the greatest triumph of all
As prejudice now took a fall
The German jumper, big Luz * Long
Had befriended Jesse in the high jump
Raising Jesse’s hand in triumph
Friendship had now grown so strong....  
As the world looked on in wonder  
And as prejudice was cut asunder  
Greater than Olympic gold....  

Was Jesse’s friendship with the German  
Showing that we all can learn  
Acceptance of each other’s soul.....

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Go Jesse for the gold!!!  
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But he showed the world while running  
That the gold of friendship is the best thing  
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* Luz is pronounced Loots, rhyming with boots.

The 1936 Olympics...the showcase to prove Hitler’s theory of White Supremacy was being threatened. An American Negro, Jesse Owens, already the winner of one gold medal for the 100-meter dash and another for the 200-meter dash, was competing against the German high-jump champion, Luz Long, a tall, sandy-haired, blue-eyed supreme example of Aryan perfection....

To qualify, each man had 3 attempts to leap the 23 foot 5 inch mark. Luz qualified in one attempt. Jesse’s 26 foot 3 1/4 inch jump, the world’s record from the year before, still stood, so this should have been a snap for him.

It wasn’t.  
First, he made a practice run...which counted as an attempt!!!  
Then, he overshot the mark....2 tries gone and he hadn’t even jumped yet!!!  
Panic set in..  
Suddenly, Luz Long appeared...."What has taken your goat, Jazze?"

Knowing that Jesse would put everything he had into the last jump and would probably over-shoot the mark, in the spirit of friendly competition, Luz laid a towel down, 6 inches from the take-off board and told Jesse to aim for that. That way, Jesse could still give 100% and not step beyond the mark.

Jesse sailed into the air...setting a new Olympic record..  
Luz came along and equaled it.  
Jesse was the first to congratulate him, rushing over to hug him.

Then it was Jesse’s turn.  
26 feet 1/2 inches....3 inches higher than Luz’s best.  
Now Luz’s turn.  
The crowd got so quiet, flags could be heard flapping in the breeze.  
With all his energy pouring forth, Luz Long raced to the take-off board…  
and over-shot it.

Jesse had won...but he had one turn left.  
"I’m going to fly!! I’m just going to stay in the air and not come down..." he thought to himself.  
And he very nearly did...26 feet 5 1/4 inches...a mark that would stand for 24 years.....

Long was the first to congratulate Jesse.  
He ran over to Jesse, and grabbing Jesse’s hand  
he raised it in triumph in full view of Adolf Hitler....  
and the two walked off the field arm in arm...
By nightfall, the two had become inseparable...
They had much in common....Both were 22 and poor...
both were unsure of their futures after the Olympics...
and both were appalled at racial prejudice rising in both countries....

As the two sealed their friendship, the newspapers reported the story...
and said that the most memorable part of the 1936 Olympics
was not the fall of Hitler’s White Supremacy....
nor was it the 4 gold medals won by a black American.
It was the special friendship formed between two competitors....
each of whom had shown not only integrity... but nobility....
in their performance of a lifetime.