

Jesse Owens

By Christine

Sylvester, Jesse and Josephine's older brother, is living with Jesse in Ohio. Josephine moved to California when Jesse was young. Now Josephine is writing to Sylvester for information of her family.

July 6, 1934

Dear Sylvester,

I haven't heard from James for a long time after I moved to California. How is he doing? What job did he find? I found a new job as a librarian. Well, I got to go check out books for my customers.

Sincerely,
Josephine

July 9, 1934

Dear Josephine,

That is nice that you found a job as a librarian. James is now a track runner. He is now called Jesse, because when he went to school after you left, the teacher asked what was his name, and he said J.C., but the teacher mistook his accent and thought he was called Jesse. So now we just call him Jesse instead of James (laugh out loud). Before, when we were in Cleveland, did you remember the time when he was a senior in high school~; he tied the 100-meter yard dash with only 9.4 seconds? He was fast. Now I work as a janitor in a school. Well, I will talk to you later.

Love,
Sylvester

July 15, 1943

Dear Sylvester,

Of course, I did remember when finished the 100-meter race in 9.4 seconds. He is a very speedy kid. Where did you move now? Do you like being a janitor? Well, I guess you do have to live with it. Did Jesse get a job now? I'm guessing it has something to do with track, or is he interested in something else? Well, it's

getting late now, and I have to head back to home, because it is a long way residence.

*Your sister,
Josephine*

July 22, 1943

Dear Josephine,

Jesse did get a job as a track runner, and we moved to Chicago. He was triumphant in the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash and a broad jump, a 400-meter relay team, and won a Gold medal all in one day. At the track on the Olympics, it was so amazing, and I was one of his fans, watching every step he ran. And on that day, all but all of the events, he set Olympic records. I could see the gold medal shining on his neck. It was such a good day for him. You asked me about my job and if I liked it or not. Well, it's not good or bad; I just need to earn money.

*Yours truly,
Sylvester*

July 22, 1934

Dear Sylvester,

So if Jesse is into all of these track activities, then he could earn money for you by winning track games, right? But I know it is hard to earn money like that, especially when you are a different skin color. You can tell him to give it a try, but will take some traveling.

*Sincerely,
Josephine*

July 26, 1934

Dear Josephine,

I told Jesse, and he said it was a great idea, and he left early the next day to find a job. He was just wondering around the city asking people about track, but barely anyone answered him. I wonder how our other brother and sister are doing, and what

they found a job as. Jesse is the youngest one of all in our family, and he got a job early, too. He just loves track running so much.

*Yours truly,
Sylvester*

July 29, 1934

Dear Sylvester,

I still remember all of the names of our brothers and sisters; the sisters were Ida, Lillie, and I. The boys were you, Jesse, Prentice, Johnson, Henry, Ernest, and Quincy. See? I still remember everybody's name after I moved away from them for such a long time. We used to all play together.

*Love,
Josephine*

August 4, 1934

Dear Josephine,

Back when we were a kid, we had a hard time feeding twelve people in the house. I remembered we at least planted corn and cotton. And when Jesse had spare time, he would run around the farm. But when he didn't have spare time; it was probably reading and writhing either in the school or at home. It was such hard days.

*Your dear brother,
Sylvester*

August 9, 1934

Dear Sylvester,

Don't forget, it is still a hard life now, but not as hard as the past, since we are separated. My job is hard here, because white people keep coming in, saying mean things to me, and not paying the amount that was due. Instead, they pay

less, which makes me mad, but I cannot do anything about it. I just hope this turns out different sometime.

*Your angry sister,
Josephine.*

August 13, 1934

Dear Josephine,

Please don't be angry, it's just how life goes. Jesse had to live of campus with other African American athletes, and was not awarded any scholarships to go to Ohio State, so he was required to work to pay for the school. You are not the only one having trouble, are African -American people are, including us. I have a hard time, too, because white people laugh at me, and walks away feeling proud. I just hate that sometimes, too.

*Your loving brother,
Sylvester*

August 16, 1934

Dear Sylvester,

Thank you for the loving letter that you sent me. Tears were streaming down my cheeks when I was writhing the letter about my job. When I read yours, it seemed like the tears magically dried up. Thank you.

*Your thankful sister,
Josephine*

February 15, 1979

Dear Josephine,

We haven't written for a while. I am sorry to say this to you, but Jesse passed away. He was only 66 when he died. But the good news is that in 1976, two years before he died, he was awarded the highest honor a civilian of the United States can receive. He earned a Medal of Freedom from president Gerald R. Ford. He died this

year of Cancer in Tucson. Before he died, his wife was Ruth Solomon. He married her in 1935. They had three daughters of Gloria, Beverly, and Marlene. I still remember when he was born, he was born in 1913, and time seems to fly, and suddenly, he is 66. I am so sorry about this incident.

*Love,
Sylvester*

The night when Josephine received the letter that said that Jesse passed away, the K.K.K. came and burned down her house, leaving her there alone by herself. She decided to stop writing letters to Sylvester until she can find shelter, and can catch up to her normal life.

Jesse Owens: The Official Website. CMG Worldwide. 12-15

03 <<http://www.jesseowens.com/jobio2.html>>.