



## Monument unveiled

A crowd of about 500 gathered Sunday afternoon at Oakville for dedication ceremonies of a monument in honor of Olympic track star Jesse Owens. Above, state Rep. Thomas Reed, Macon County, who also serves as director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, unveils the monument. Left, reporters interview Harvey Gance, a track star and Alabama native.

# Crowd gathers for dedication

By Luke Slaton  
Editor

The weather decided to cooperate for a Sunday-afternoon dedication ceremony for the long-awaited monument to Lawrence County native Jesse Owens.

The sun was shining for the 3:30 p.m. event, a welcome relief after the day began with overcast skies and drizzling rain.

About 400 people turned out for the dedication of the monument in a newly-prepared park in Oakville, where the Olympian was born and spent his early years.

The stone and bronze monument was dedicated to the man who won four Olympic gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. A good number of the late Owens' relatives who still live in the area were on hand for the unveiling.

The crowd at the ceremony represented a mixture of black and white people. They heard a number of speakers praise Owens for his accomplishments and character.

Out-of-area speakers included Delores Pickett, who is a special assistant to Gov. George Wallace for minority affairs. She represented the governor at the event. Also speaking was State Representative Thomas Reed of Tuskegee, who also represented the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, on whose national board of directors he sits.

Former U. S. Olympic team member Harvey Gance, who is preparing for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, was at the ceremony and spoke briefly. Gance, a former Auburn track star, said Owens had been his idol since 1972.

In an interview before the ceremony, Gance said Owens meant more to him as an individual than as an athlete. "He was always giving his time to charitable organizations, such as United Way," Gance said. "He did everything he could to set a good example for today's youth, because he realized they would be tomorrow's leaders."

Gance is following in those footsteps, working closely with several volunteer organizations, including the Alabama Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

State Representative Roger Dutton, who obtained funding for the monument from Gov. Wallace, spoke just prior to the unveiling.