

RIVERFRONT

Friday, February 1, 2002

Owens Museum site of CNN show Documentary on Olympic great to air during Black History Month

From Staff Reports

OAKVILLE — A CNN television crew will return to the Jesse Owens Memorial Museum on Monday morning to air a live segment starting at 5 o'clock.

The crew filmed interviews at the museum Thursday with newscaster Eric Phillips to splice in and complement the live production.

Producer John Murgatroyd said the show is being done to coincide with the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City and Black History Month.

"The show will be offered to 650 CNN affiliate stations and it could run on any of them, from 5 a.m. to 11 a.m.," he said.

Including those interviewed Thursday were James Pinion, who helped spearhead the development of the museum and park along with Thurman White and others who still serves as treasurer of the park board; White, a 20-year Navy veteran and vice chairman of the board; Mose Jones Jr., District 1 Lawrence County commissioner; Randall Louallen, District 3 Lawrence County commissioner; sculptor Branko Medenica of Birmingham, who produced the 8-foot bronze statue of Owens that stands outside the museum; and DAILY reporter Ronnie Thomas.



CNN reporter Eric Phillips, left, talks with Thurman White, vice chairman of the Jesse Owens Park Board, during a series of interviews the network did Thursday at the Jesse Owens Museum in Oakville.

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In addition to writing articles about the museum, Thomas interviewed Owens in Birmingham in February 1970, when the Olympic track champion was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

"Ronnie is one of the few people around here who actually met Owens," said Pinion, "and CNN felt he enhanced the program."

Museum publicity

Pinion, who retired as a coordinator for the Lawrence County Extension Service in 1999, said CNN telephoned the museum last week after seeing it on the Internet.

"They said they'd like to do something on it and asked for help in lining up interviews," he said. "We were more than happy to oblige."

"We're talking about a million dollars worth of publicity here for the museum and park."

Besides serving as treasurer for the board, Pinion said he helps in the promotion of the museum in any way he can.

"We've just received approval for a \$3,500 matching grant from Alabama Travel and Tourism for production of 35,000 tri-fold brochures that will be widely distributed at rest stops to tell travelers about us and to give directions," Pinion said.

"We've been needing some nice promotional literature with



DAILY Photo by Gary Cosby Jr.

in a role reversal, DAILY reporter Ronnie Thomas goes before CNN cameras Thursday, recalling his interview with Jesse Owens in Birmingham in February 1970. At the time, Thomas was sports editor for the Florence Times-Daily.

professional color photos, which will hopefully encourage people to visit."

Meanwhile, White and Hosey Lee Taylor, who retired after 26

years as a janitor at Lawrence Baptist Medical Center, volunteer their time for mowing the grass and handling general maintenance.