



Meredith C. Gourdine
Athlete, Physicist, Engineer

Born: September 26, 1929

Died: November 20, 1998

Birthplace: Newark, New Jersey

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Dr. Meredith Gourdine was born in Newark New Jersey on September 26, 1929, and grew up in the streets of Harlem and Brooklyn. He attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and received a Ph.D. in Engineering Science from the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, CA.

Dr. Gourdine served on the technical staff of the Ramo-Woolridge Corporation from 1957-58. He then became a Senior Research Scientist at the Caltech Jet Propulsion Laboratory from 1958-60. He became a Lab Director of the Plasmodyne Corporation from 1960-62 and Chief Scientist of the Curtiss-Wright Corporation from 1962 to 1964. In 1964, he served on the President's Panel on Energy. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Gourdine established and built a multi-million dollar research laboratory, Gourdine Laboratories, in Livingston, New Jersey, with a staff of over 150. The laboratory has continued to develop his ideas in the field of electrogasdynamics (EGD).

Meredith Gourdine pioneered the research of electrogasdynamics as a way to disperse fog and smoke. By applying strong electrical forces to either you can control those elements. He was responsible for the engineering technique termed Incineraid for aiding in the removal of smoke from buildings. His work on gas dispersion developed techniques for dispersing fog from airport runways. Gourdine also created a generator that allowed for the cheaper transmission of electricity. Using the principles of EGD, Gourdine successfully converted natural gas to electricity for everyday use. Additional applications of EGD include refrigeration, desalination of sea water, and reducing the pollutants in smoke. He holds more than 70 patents for various inventions.

As an interesting side note, Meredith Gourdine won the silver medal in the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki for the long jump. Dr. Gourdine was also blind the latter part of his life. He was serving as president of Energy Innovation, Inc. of Houston, Texas at the time of his death on November 20, 1998.

<http://www.princeton.edu/~mcbrown/display/gourdine.html>

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Meredith Gourdine, 69, Athlete and Physicist

By FRANK LITSKY

Meredith (Flash) Gourdine, the 1952 Olympic silver medalist in the long jump and later an engineer and physicist with 70 patents that deal with thermal management and the conversion of gas to electricity, died Friday at St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston. He was 69.

The cause of death was complications from multiple strokes, said his son, Meredith Jr. He had also been suffering from diabetes and had gradually lost his sight.

Gourdine's success in track and field was more than matched by his scientific achievements later. The companies he founded worked on purifying the air and converting low-grade coal into inexpensive, transportable and high-voltage electrical energy. They produced a commercial air-pollution deterrent, a high-powered industrial paint spray and a device to eliminate fog above airports. His sports career flourished at Cornell University, where at 6 feet and 175 pounds he competed in the sprints and low hurdles and the long jump. He won four titles in the championships of the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America and five titles in the Heptagonal Games. In 1952, he helped Cornell finish second to Southern California in the National Collegiate Athletic Association championships, in which Southern California had 36 athletes and Cornell 5. His greatest achievement and greatest frustration in sports came in the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland. Jerome Biffle, another American, won the gold medal in the long jump at 24 feet 10 inches. Gourdine finished second, an inch and a half behind.

"I would have rather lost by a foot," he said years later. "I still have nightmares about it."

Meredith Charles Gourdine was born Sept. 26, 1929, in Newark. He was raised in Brooklyn, where his father was a painter and a janitor. After classes at Brooklyn Tech High School, he worked eight hours a day on painting jobs with his father.

The son recalled: "My father said, 'If you don't want to be a laborer all your life, stay in school.' It took."

The youngster did not run until his senior year in high school and never won a race there, but his swimming prowess earned a scholarship offer from the University of Michigan. Instead, he went to Cornell and paid his way most of the first two years.

In 1952, after he had earned a bachelor's degree in engineering, Gourdine became an officer in the United States Navy. In 1960, on a Guggenheim fellowship, he earned a doctorate in engineering science from the California Institute of Technology.

After four years in private industry, he borrowed \$200,000 from friends and opened a research and development firm, Gourdine Systems, in Livingston, N.J. In 1973, he founded Energy Innovations in Houston to produce direct-energy conversion devices. He was the chief executive there until his death.

(Associated Press)
