



B. Cox SFSU

Sammy Lee
Korean American
Olympic Diver & Doctor

Sammy Lee (1920-2016) saw colorful Olympics flags in Los Angeles when he was twelve years old. He knew then that he wanted to be an Olympic diver. Sammy could do somersaults, but he had nowhere to practice. There was prejudice against Asian Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans. They were allowed to use the pool only one day a week just before the pool had to be cleaned. Sammy's coach knew that Sammy needed to practice every day, so the coach dug a sand pit in his back yard and filled it with water. Sammy had to practice diving into the water-filled sand pit. Because Sammy's father saw how hard it would be for his son to become an Olympic diver, he wanted Sammy to become a doctor instead. Sammy did both. He became a doctor and also won Olympic gold medals in diving in 1948 and 1952.