

00:00 - 14:33 Early life, baseball career

Oscar T.

I go by O.T.

You go by O.T. Harstad

Bill is my son.

Bill is your son. He's a dentist here in town, isn't he?

Yeah.

Now, you were born in Parkland what year?

Yeah. I was born on May the 24th, 1892, in Parkland just below the hill by where the Gymnasium is now.

Oh, I see.

And I left there, though, about 1916, never been back to live.

Left there in '16, you went away to school, isn't it?

Yeah, I got married in 1916 when we went down to Portland to the dental college.

When did you start going to Pacific Lutheran for school? That's when you were born in '92. Did you go to grade school there at the school at Pacific Lutheran?

No, we went to Parochial School down there in Brookdale.

Oh, yeah.

And, of course, I stayed out several years working on the small dairy farm we had in the old home place. Dad always kept a dozen cows or so. I stayed out and ran the farm for three or four years.

How old were you then?

Oh, 14, 15.

14, 15, after you finished. So then you went to high school after that?

Then I went to high school at Pacific Lutheran.

What years were you there, do you remember?

Well, I probably took the eighth grade there and then laid out a few years and went back and probably 1911, '12, '13. I graduated about 1914 from Pacific Lutheran Academy.

And then after you finished the Academy, what did you do in 1914? Is that when you went to play baseball?

Yes, I played baseball with Vancouver, British Columbia.

In the old Coast League?

In the old Northwest League.

What year was that, do you remember?

That was the last part of 1913 and 1914.

You were a pitcher, weren't you?

Yes. Then the following year, I went to Cleveland, American League.

And you went, in that'd be 1914, 1915, then, did you?

1915, and I was with Cleveland.

Were you a regular pitcher for them?

Well, a rookie is never a regular pitcher. I believe I was relief in 32 games there.

What kind of a record did you have?

I had a 3.4 earned run average, which wasn't too bad.

For a relief pitcher, that's a real good average. How about won/lost, do you remember?

Well, I won three and lost five. Cleveland finished with a seller. And I lost one to Philadelphia, one to nothing, one of those I lost. Another one, the team voodoo blown away for me. Cleveland had a very poor team.

That's years when the Athletics were real great, wasn't it?

No, the Athletics had broken up.

What kind of a salary did you get in Major League Ball then?

Oh, very poor. I think the last contract assigned was for \$2,400. That was for six months, of course.

By today's standards, that isn't very much money. Even then, it wasn't very much though was it for the amount of work you had to do?

Well, I could have a \$45 a month job doing pick and shovel work.

Well, that was quite a boost then, from \$45 a month to \$400 a month.

You could make \$0.20 an hour in those days to pick and shovel. That's what I was doing. So that was pretty good money for six months' work.

How many seasons did you play for Cleveland?

Just one.

You had to quit because of a bad arm, was that it?

Yes, they sent me down to Youngstown to a drug doctor who was supposed to correct all trouble with pitchers' arms. And he did something to my arm that didn't help. It really crippled me up. So I could see then that I didn't have any future in baseball, so I started dental college in Portland.

That was in 1916?

1916.

You played the 1915 season, and then you came back '16?

Well, Cleveland traded me to Portland in the Coast League. And North Pacific Dental College was in Portland at that time. So that fall I got married, and we went down and entered dental college.

Did you play for Portland at all?

Yeah, I played for them after school was out.

In the summer of '16 or '17?

'17, '18, and I was there in '19.

Oh, you played for them for three seasons?

Off and on.

Off and on. How was your arm then?

Oh, not too good.

Not too good. When you first went into baseball, what was the reaction of your parents? In those days, how did they feel about you playing ball and playing ball on Sunday and things like that?

Well, Dad was against it. He was very much against it. But of course, I had my own ideas. He was in Mexico at one time on some kind of business trip down there, and so I had an offer from Chehalis in the old State League to go down there, so I just took off and went. But he never said anything at that time about it, and one time I heard that... I think it was when I was with Cleveland that there was a meeting of several of the preachers there in Parkland, at our old home, and he made a mention how sad he was that his son was a baseball player. The other preachers took him to task for it.

They did, huh?

They were in favor of it, but he wasn't. But he never did say anything very much to me about it.

Well, Oliver was telling me that your mother told you that when you were going to sign up to go with Vancouver that you better go up and tell your dad that you were going to play baseball. You remember that?

No, I don't remember that.

Oliver remembers that.

I never did. I never did go tell him.

That's what Oliver said. Oh, yeah, it was Oliver that when he signed with Victoria, he went up and talked to... Your mother told him, you better go tell your dad that you're going to play baseball.

Well, Oliver was with Vancouver too.

Vancouver too, yeah. He also said that when you went back to the majors to Cleveland your dad started reading the papers and the box scores to see how you were doing. So he was interested to a certain extent anyway, even though he didn't say too much about it.

I have a book that my daughter gave me. [TAPE CUTS] that ever played. Here is my picture.

Oscar Harstad, Cleveland. Yeah, three wins in 1915. Three wins, five losses, 375, 3.40, 32 games, 7GS, whatever that stands for. And 4CG.

Earn run average.

You pitched 82 innings. You allowed 82, 81 hits. 35 bases on balls, 35 strikeouts. 1-1, lost one in relief rule, I guess. In relief, you had 500. You had an ERA of 3.48 in relief, and you pitched in 25 games, 41.1 innings in relief. So you got a lot of work up there.

That 1-1 in relief was against Walter Johnson.

You beat Walter Johnson. The Big Train.

Of course, I only pitched four innings. I went in relief there to pitch four innings. But in the meantime, we went ahead, I got credit for the win.

Did you play with Tony Brottem in professional baseball?

Not with him.

You played with him in Parkland for the school, didn't you, on the school team?

He caught the first game I pitched. I think I pitched the first game he caught.

What year was that?

That must have been about 1912.

Was that for the school team?

Yes.

Do you remember who you played against?

Well, it could have been... We played the University of Puget Sound and Whitworth College and Tacoma High School.

Did you do pretty well?

Well, we didn't have any trouble beating the University of Puget Sound. In fact, Puget Sound was coached by a fellow named Russ Hall, former Major League ball player. He didn't even go to the trouble of coming out with the team. He thought they could win so easy he didn't have to be there. We beat them without any trouble. Of course, at that time, we didn't have very many boys in school.

No, I suppose not.

We had to take a picture of everybody and put them in the outfield.

Did you have anybody that taught you how to pitch?

No.

You just picked it up yourself? Didn't have any coaches or anything like that. Did you pitch most of the games for the school team, or did you have other pitchers, too?

Well, Tony Brottem's brother was a pitcher, and he was pitching for the school team. And he got sick. He got tuberculosis. And Oliver was managing the team, and he said, you go in and pitch. I didn't know a thing about pitching.

Were you playing infield before that?

[TAPE CUTS]

Pretty good pitcher, too, at one time.

He didn't say anything about his pitching. He said he played infield.

He played infield when he was back with Luther College. He played shortstop.

But you'd just play wherever you were needed when you played on that Pacific Lutheran team. This Brottem who got sick, what was his first name?

Goodwin.

He was older. He wasn't going to school. He was just a ringer.

He was a ringer that you used on the team?

Tony was going to school. But we had to do that. We kind of had to pick up town boys in order to fill up the lineup. We didn't have enough boys to make nine.

There weren't enough of you in school, I mean, who were sports-minded? You had some of these Norwegian newcomers, none of them could play ball.

They didn't know anything about baseball.

You fellas had picked it up since you were little tots, I suppose.

Oh, that's how we did when we were kids. We'd make our own baseball if we had to.

You and the Brottem boys there in town. Did you participate in other sports yourself? Did you play basketball?

I played basketball at PLA.

Did you play there in 1911, 1912 at PLA?

I think so.

You were on that team that played against the University of Washington?

No. We played against Whitworth and the College of Puget Sound. Of course, they weren't at the schools then either that they are now.

Was Stuen in there when you played basketball?

He was, I think he was ahead of me. He wasn't playing then.

He was probably up at the university then, then he came back.

Yes. He studied law. Is he still living?

No, he died back in 1952. No, '53.

The minister over here is named Husby, you know?

Yes, I know him.

Well, there was a Husby at school when I was there. I wonder if he's related to this Husby.

I don't know. Reverend Husby over here is from Los Angeles area. He may have had some relatives up here. Of course, his wife is from up here. Of course, I suppose you've known her for years.

Oh, yeah. She lived out in the country there.

The Helberg family.

Want a coffee or a tea or 7-Up or something like that?

Well, 7-Up sounds good. I'm dry.

[TAPE CUTS]

And this is a baseball encyclopedia. Tony Brottem is also mentioned. His name was Anton Christian Brottem, B-R-O-T-T-E-M. Born April 30th, 1892 at Halstead, Minnesota, and died August 5th, 1929 in Chicago, Illinois. He was 6 feet 1.5 inch and weighed 176 pounds. He played for St. Louis in the 1916 season. He was in 26 games at bat 33 times at 6 hits. One two-bagger. He's 3 runs, 4 RBIs, 3 bases on balls, 10 strikeouts, and a 1-82. He's a pinch hitter, 7 at bats, 4 hits. He also played in two games in 1918.

And then he played in 1921. He was with Washington and with Pittsburgh. His all-time average was in 62 games. He had 135 at bats, 29 hits, 3 doubles, 10 runs, 13 RBIs, 9 bases on balls, 22 strikeouts, 1 stolen base, 215 overall average, and an essay, whatever that is, 237. He's a pinch hitter, 4 for 9. That's his record.

So after you got out of Portland, did you set up practice here back in around 1920 or something like that?

I came here in 1922.

Oh, I see. So you've been here 50 years?

Oh, yeah.

Do you practice at all now or are you completely retired?

Well, I do a little work.

How about sports? Did you engage in any sports activities in this community, like baseball, town team, or anything like that?

I did when I first came here. But if you're interested in the different teams I played with in professional baseball, you know, when I was a child, three or four years old, we lived in the basement of Old Main. You know how the basement of the windows are about this high?

And the ground's right level with the windows. I was sleeping in, see it would be the southeast corner of Old Main. And I heard an awful racket and shooting out in front of the window. I jumped out of bed and looked out the window and a black bear ran right by the window. And here come a neighbor just pumping shells and shooting. And that was Tony Brottem's father that shot that bear. He ran right by the window, scared me to death.

How old were you then?

I think about three. My son thought that was funny.

That's a real good story.

But he finally got the bear. That was Tony's father.

We don't have any Brottems left around Parkland. Babette Brottem is living around there.

Louise Brottem, her name is Sales.

Louise Sales, yes. She's still there. We used to live across the street from her.

You did?

Yes. It was called Grant Street then, now it's 123rd.

She's quite a gal. She's 85 years old, just as young as it could be, I thought.

She's got a lot of life yet. You were going to tell us about what professional teams you played at.

The first team I played with was Chehalis in the old Washington State League. And then I played with LeGrand and the Western Tri-State League.

LeGrand, Oregon?

LeGrand, Oregon. Then I went to Vancouver BC in the Northwest League. Went from there to Cleveland in the American League. Went there to Portland in the Coast League. And the last year I played in Regina in the Canadian League.

Oh, I see. What year was that?

That was 1921.

And you were still in dental school then, weren't you?

No, I was a graduate. I took the dental examination up there. I thought I'd stay up there, but I didn't like it.

Are you still active in any type of sport? I understand you used to play a lot of golf.

Oh, yeah, I still play golf. I play at it. Gives me exercise.

Well, it's a good game and it's nice. I play at it myself. I'm not very good at it, but I like to golf.

Oh, the funny thing, the older I get, the worse I get.

You do, huh?

Of course, I'm about 80 years old.

Yeah, you're no spring chicken. You're certainly well-preserved though. You've taken good care of yourself through the years.

Well, I've had two heart attacks. I'm not in too good of shape.

You're saying about your children. You have a son here and a daughter in Portland, Mrs. –What's her first name?

Helen. Her name is Helen. Dorothy lives in Corvallis. Her husband is an attorney in Corvallis.

What's his name then?

Fenner.

And Strickler, what does he do?

He's an engineer. Mechanical engineer with a firm in Portland.

Was your wife from Parkland originally?

Well, she was, you know, when we were kids, my folks took in boarders. She was originally from Tacoma, but she boarded at our place for a while. We met each other.

[THIRD VOICE] *In Harstad?*

No, in their house. You just lived in Harstad a little while. You just lived in Old Main for a short period of time.

Oh, yeah, that was before. Later on, Dad bought that home place. You know where that is.

Yes. Yeah, I knew your dad. You see, my dad was a pastor in Seattle. We came out here in 1922. From Chicago, so I knew your father when I was younger. I mean, I went to the Pacific Lutheran when I was in junior college in the '30s.

Oh, you did?

Yeah, in the early '30s.

24:05 - 27:21 Sports at PLU now

Yeah, we've got basketball team there now, don't we?

Yes, we've had good basketball. For 25 years, we've had a winning season. 25 straight years, we've won over 500.

They've never done anything much in baseball, though, I think.

No, we have hopes this year that we might have a good season. We've got a couple of fairly good pitchers. I think it was '48, we won the conference championship in the old Winko League, you know, baseball. We had a couple of good pitchers, a fellow by the name of Merv Allen. He was a good pitcher.

You take in Willamette and Linfield down here in Oregon.

Yeah, we do now. We're in that league with Willamette, Linfield, and Whitman's in our league. And Whitworth joined the league this year. See, we were in the old Winko League, and then we became the Evergreen Conference. Then we left the Evergreen a few years ago, about 65, I guess it was, and went in with the, or 66 somewhere in there and went into the Northwest Conference with all private schools before half-private and half-state. But we've liked this affiliation real well. It's an eight-team league now, it's a good league.

But we've added quite a few new sports and swimming. We've got 11 people going to the Nationals next week in the NAIA. And we have crew, we race out on American Lake. We have our shell house out there. Then we have skiing. We finished fourth in the Northwest this year amongst the league of college, large and small schools in the Northwest. And we have hot golf and tennis.

You have a golf team?

Yeah, we have a golf team, tennis and wrestling, basketball, baseball, soccer.

What have you got for the girls?

The girls, we have field hockey in the fall. We have basketball and volleyball, tennis, crew. They've got a girls' crew. We race against other schools in the Northwest there. They have a regular league, University of Washington, Washington State, University of Oregon, Pacific Lutheran, University of Puget Sound, Western Washington, Central Washington. And I think Centralia, a junior college, competes in some of these sports.

It's this Physical Ed that this K. Strickler is interested in?

Well, there's quite a bit for her there. It's a long time there, we didn't have girls' sports, but now we started them up again. But years back in the, I guess when you were going to school, you had some girls' teams, didn't they?

They had girls' basketball.

They had girls' basketball until up in about 1933 or 34 somewhere in there, and then it kind of dropped out.

27:21 - 31:11 Old basketball rules

Would you like to open the center? If we could get the tip off, we could win.

What kind of signals did you have?

Do you have fingers? One, two, three?

The center would, he'd get different signals to right or left or where he was going to tip off.

He'd put his hand behind his back and point?

Well, yeah, out of different positions.

Well, in those days, when you lined up for the center jump, you couldn't be on, you had to be on one side of the floor, didn't you? On one side of the center stripe, or did you?

There weren't any rules at all.

There weren't any rules?

You could roam at will. Yeah, there wasn't much of a – I don't understand basketball now.

You don't?

It's a different game.

Yeah, it's a lot different game. Of course, after a basket, you take it out right underneath your own basket and come down the floor again.

When I made a forward then, wow, you could charge in there and try to take it away from them.

Now you don't dare do that. No, you can't, no body contact. You could have body contact in your day. Take the ball away from them, huh?

Try to take it away from them.

Several of them. But you had to dribble though, didn't you? No, we couldn't dribble.

You couldn't dribble then.

You had to pass it, huh?

It was all passing. Could you run with the ball?

No.

You just passed to where you were standing and then you had to stay right there and pass it to somebody else. Somebody else could run.

There was a way they could dribble, but we never practiced. You had to dribble with one hand. If you started with your right hand, I think you had to dribble with your right. You could dribble down to the basket, but you couldn't shoot. You had to pass it before...

Before, and somebody else could shoot it then.

Yeah. And if you dribbled with it, you changed hands while that was a foul.

How many officials did you have? One or two?

Two. A referee and an umpire?

On baseball, would you have a couple of umpires?

One umpire. He stood behind the pitcher. They even had that in the Old Northwest League.

They did, huh? You didn't have two umpires until you got the majors.

That's right. They had two umpires. Well, I had two umpires in the Major League.

That's all. One on first and one behind the plate, I suppose. If a man would get on, he'd move to second.

One behind the plate stayed there. And then there'd be a man on first until a man got on first. Then he'd move over to second. He'd move around. But usually the umpire would stand behind the pitcher when we had one umpire. He'd call.

So you could see the bases, too. You played basketball in the new gym. Well, the gym that was built in 1912 at Pacific Lutheran, you played in that, too, then, I suppose?

Yeah, I played in that. I helped build that one.

You helped build that, huh?

I wheeled concrete for that. A wheelbarrow.

Did you work for a contractor or did the school do that themselves?

I don't know. I don't remember. I think the school did it. I don't think that was a contractor.

In those days, of course, your dad was...you were living in Parkland and then, but your dad wasn't connected with the school. He just taught some classes after about 1898, didn't he?

Well, far back as I can remember, he never taught in school.

He didn't teach, huh?

[TAPE ENDS, BROKEN]