

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AL PITCAITHLEY

My Mom (Bonnie) and Dad (Harry) came from Lincoln, Nebraska to the Oakland "East Bay" area in the early 1950's. My Mom was a professional singer and dancer and toured with the Jimmy Joy Orchestra. My Dad was a medical doctor who specialized in obstetrics (OB/GYN). He served on board a U.S. Navy medical hospital ship in the Pacific. I was born in July 1948 at Lake Merritt Hospital in Oakland, California. By age 16 my family (two brothers and a sister) moved from Oakland, to San Lorenzo and then to San Leandro in the hills just above the football stadium at San Leandro High School. My Dad, along with several other doctors built and then worked for many years at Doctors Hospital on San Leandro Boulevard. I attended San Leandro High School from 1964 to June of 1966.

My first love was football although I played basketball and baseball as well. When I was just a young boy my Dad used to take my brother Dwight and I to Kezar Stadium in San Francisco to watch the S.F. 49er's. When the Raiders came to Oakland in the early 1960's we fast became Raider football fans.

My time in the sporting world, *as a participant*, was remarkable not because of my individual talent and statistics which were, by comparison, far from extraordinary. Instead, I was extremely fortunate to have had the privilege of playing with (and against) so many other great players that are now icons in the long history of sports in America.

San Leandro High School (1964 - 1966)

I played varsity football at San Leandro H.S. during the fall of 1964 and 1965 under head coach **John "Biff" Crawley** and his assistants **Woody Daley, Cas Munoz and Ben Shorum**. I was the quarterback. Coach Crawley was a great man and a great coach. Our team was jam-packed with superior talent on both offense and defense - guys like **Andy Shubin, Rick McCaffery, Mike Candalerio, Bob Brow, Jerry Skaggs, Keith Depolo, Phil Bayless, Steve Pring, Ron Lorenzen, Keith Meitz, Mike Lucia, Dennis McClure, Cliff Wilson, Jack Stokes, Larry Podesta** and many others. We had at least 6 or 7 players that were selected All-League First Team both years. We went undefeated in league play for two years straight. Our only loss was a non-conference game to Bellarmine Prep School in San Jose (Bellarmine was rated

#1 in the State in 1965). We would have beaten Bellarmine except that an end-zone touchdown pass I threw to Jack Stokes was called out of bounds late in the fourth quarter. What made our teams truly special those two years was our team discipline and toughness. Many players, myself included, played both offense and defense during almost every game. Again, I was lucky to be playing football on a high school team that was loaded with talent.

During the summer of 1966 (after graduating from San Leandro) I played for the North All-Star Team in the High School Shrine Game in Los Angeles at the LA Coliseum. This was a great experience and I made some great friends. Other members of the West Team included football great **Jim Plunkett** (out of high school in San Jose who went on to Stanford and was MVP of the Super Bowl for the Raiders in 1981). I went on to quarterback a University of Oregon Ducks team against **Jim Plunkett** in Autzen stadium in 1968. Another player on the Shrine All-Star West team was **Mike Holmgren** (out of San Francisco who went to Southern Cal, played quarterback, and had a long history of coaching in the NFL including with the Green Bay Packers winners of Super Bowl XXXI). My old acquaintances Plunkett and Holmgren are now NFL legends and of course they deserve to be.

During those same two years at San Leandro, we had an exceptionally good baseball team coached by one of the greats – “**Cas**” **Munoz**. Our baseball team was in the top of the league both years. One of the better players, shortstop **Gerald Metevier**, later played pro ball. In 1966 I was contacted by the Detroit Tigers (MLB) to see if I was interested in playing professional baseball. I decided instead to attend college and play football at the University of Oregon in Eugene in the fall of that same year.

One of my best memories of playing baseball at San Leandro under Cas Munoz was a non-conference game against the same Bellarmine school that was the only team to beat us on the football field. This was May of 1966. Bellarmine was ahead by two runs going into the final inning. Bellarmine’s shortstop **Dan Pasterini** (who later starred as quarterback in the NFL playing for the Huston Oilers and Oakland Raiders), hit a home run to put Bellarmine ahead. In the bottom of the final inning, with two outs and the bases loaded, I hit a 410 drive over the left fielder’s head for a grand slam home run (see attached newspaper article from the Sunday May 8, 1966 Edition of the Oakland Tribune).

San Leandro also had great basketball teams in 1964 and 1965-66 and I was fortunate to be a member of those teams coached by Ed Collins. Once

again, I was lucky to be surrounded by many talented players, guys like **Ken Elston, Jack Earl, Boris Pesa, Dan Ditto, Steve Molle, Ron Lorenzen** and **Gerald Metivier**. These guys were really good, and we did very well in a very tough conference.

I have to say that my best years in sports were probably at San Leandro High School. Following my junior and senior years of playing football (1964-1966), I made the Alameda County All Star Team at quarterback two years in a row. I was selected by the East Bay Prep Writer's Association to the East Bay Football All-Star Team and I quarterbacked the very first Alameda County All-Star Team against the Contra Costa County All-Star Team. In this game, the very first between the two counties, I had the privilege of teaming up with players like **John Shew** (running back, Iowa); **Seaburn Hill** (wide receiver, Arizona State); and **Jesse Mims** (running back at New Mexico State, CFL, Calgary, Grey Cup 1971). I was also named to the Prep-All-American Football Team by *Coach And Athlete Magazine* in 1965. I was selected as one of three players who were named Top Scholar-Athletes in the East Bay (the other two were also quarterbacks named to the North squad along with me in Shrine Football Game in Los Angeles – **Jim Plunkett** and **Mike Holmgren**).

University of Oregon (1967-1970) – Eugene, Oregon

In June 1966, I accepted a college football scholarship to the University of Oregon after being recruited by most of the top schools in what was known back then as the PAC-8 Conference (it's now the PAC-12). This included UCLA, USC, Stanford and Cal. I chose Oregon because I loved the campus and I felt I had a better chance of starting as quarterback at Oregon. This was back before there was an NCAA rule regulating the number of scholarships given out by each college team. For the three years I played varsity football at Oregon, we had but a single winning season. USC, went to the Rose Bowl all three years I played varsity football at Oregon. USC had a pretty decent running back named **O.J. Simpson**.

But, once again, I had the good fortune to learn from and play for some really good coaches at Oregon. This included **Len Casanova, Jerry Frei, John Robinson** (later head coach at USC and L.A. Rams), **Bruce Snyder** (later Arizona State and Cal head coach); and **George Seifert** (S.F. 49er's Super Bowl head coach). Because my running skills were better than my throwing skills I was initially assigned to play as a running back at Oregon which I did my sophomore year. I also returned punts and was the team's punter for the

next three years. My junior year I was put back at the quarterback position and had some success at that position.

As noted above, in 1968 I started at QB against Stanford and its future Heisman award winner **Jim Plunkett**. That same year, I started as QB in a nationally televised game at Ohio State in front of 104,000 fans (Ohio State was No. 1 in the County under **Woody Hayes** and their QB **Rex Kern** later won the Heisman). We barely lost to this great team. In 1968 and 1969, I returned punts for the Ducks alongside **Ahmad Rashad**. In 1969 I ran back a punt 60 yards for a TD against Oregon State. In my final game as a senior at Oregon against Hawaii in 1969 I had a 72-yard punt with no return.

At Oregon I was very fortunate to have played with some truly great players including Bobby Moore (later **Ahmad Rashad** who was an All-Pro NFL wide receiver for 10 seasons including with the Minnesota Vikings); **Andy Maurer** (All-Pro NFL guard for eight years with the Falcons, Vikings, Saints and 49er's); **Gunther Cunningham** (linebacker and kicker who later served as an NFL coach for the L.A. Raiders, S.D. Chargers, K.C. Chiefs, and now Detroit Lions); **Claxton Welch** (NFL Dallas Cowboys running back, Super Bowl VI Winner); **Tom Blanchard** (NFL punter, 8 years, N.Y. Giants; New Orleans Saints); **Bobbie Newland** (NFL wide receiver, 4 years with the New Orleans Saints); **George Dames** (1967 College All-American); **Tom Drougas** (offensive tackle, 4 year NFL veteran with the Baltimore Colts and Denver Broncos); and **Tim Stokes** (offensive tackle, 9 year NFL veteran with multiple NFL teams). **Dan Fouts** (NFL Hall of Fame Quarterback – San Diego Chargers) played as a freshman at Oregon when I was a senior. Dan went on to have a terrific career as a quarterback in the NFL with the San Diego Chargers.

In June of 1971, I graduated from the University of Oregon with a B.A. Degree in Journalism. At that time in my life I aspired to be a sportswriter but that never came to pass.

Just a year ago, in October of 2015, I was invited by the University of Oregon's Athletic Department to be Honorary Co-Captain at the University of Oregon vs. Washington State football game at Autzen Stadium in Eugene. It was a great introduction before the game at mid-field. At that same game, another San Leandro superstar, who also attended the University of Oregon, **Tim Stokes**, was honored. Tim played offensive tackle at Oregon with me (he was an up and coming sophomore at the time; and later was protecting for quarterback **Dan Fouts** during the years 1971-1973). Tim went on to play for

9 years in the NFL (LA Rams, Washington Redskins, Green Bay Packers and New York Giants). Tim was an exceptional football player.

New York Giants 1970

If my final year of football at Oregon (1969-70), notwithstanding my lack of production in college, I was scouted by **Bobby Beathard**, who, over the course of his 38 years in the NFL as scout and general manager, competed in seven Super Bowls (winning four times), beginning with the Kansas City Chiefs in 1966, Miami Dolphins in 1972 and 1973, Washington Redskins in 1982, 1983, and 1987, and the San Diego Chargers in 1994.

I will never forget the time when Mr. Beathard came to visit me in my home in San Leandro and asked me if I could run a 40-yard dash in the street out in front of my house. I did, in street clothes with no warm up. I ran it in 4.5 seconds. Two months later I was the six player drafted by the New York Giants in 1970. I went back to Long Island for training camp during the first NFL "strike year". This was the year **Alex Webster** was head coach, **Y.A. Tittle** was assistant coach and **Fran Tarkenton** was quarterback. The star running back was **Ron Johnson** out of Michigan. The Giants went on to win the division in 1970. Sadly, I never got to play in a game and was resigned to the practice squad until I was injured and later released by the team. That was a sad day for me. But what a great experience I had. During training camp, I was chosen as one of the players to make a commercial for Coca-Cola. It later became a national running ad during football season that year. I got my Screen Actors Guild card and made more money on the television ad than I did playing football with the Giants. But my playing days weren't quite over.

CFL (Canadian Football League) - Edmonton Eskimos / Ottawa Roughriders (1970-1971)

When I returned to San Leandro from New York, I got a call from the Edmonton Eskimo football club in the Canadian Football League. In September of 1970 I flew up to Edmonton and in less than a week I was the primary running back for the Eskimos. I finished out the season at the end of October and returned the following year for another 8 games before being traded to the Ottawa Roughriders where I played in the latter half of the 1971 season. Due to cumulative injuries to my left shoulder, neck, and ankles, I decided to end my football career and eventually go back to school.

During my time in the CFL I was able to travel to every major city in Canada. The Canadian people loved Americans. It was a fantastic time to play football up in Canada and Canadian football was growing ever more popular during the early 1970's with emerging players such as quarterback Warren Moon. My roommate in Edmonton, **George McGowan** (Kansas University wide receiver in 1970), played for eight seasons from 1971–1978 in Edmonton. During his career with the Eskimos, he set CFL league records for most catches in a game (15) and most catches in a season (98) and won two Grey Cups before his career was cut short by knee injuries. George was elected to the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 2003. George and I remain good friends to this day.

San Diego, California 1973 to Present Day – San Diego Lawyer For 40 Years – Family Life

Professional Life

When I returned to San Leandro after playing in the CFL I decided to take some time off. I spent the next 6 months in Hawaii (Oahu, Maui, Kauai) working part time and, for recreation, swimming, body surfing and playing tennis.

In 1973, I moved to San Diego and that fall I attended law school part time (Western State University College of Law) and worked part time (retail sales / contract painting). In June of 1976 I took and passed the California State Bar Exam. After working for a year in Lincoln, Nebraska in a family-owned photo-finishing business, I returned to San Diego and was sworn in to practice law in July 1977. I have been actively practicing law in San Diego ever since – now just short of 40 years.

After passing the Bar Exam I worked for a time in the San Diego Public Defender's Office under the mentorship of Attorney Norbert Ehrenfreund who later served as a judge for 30 years in San Diego. In the early to mid-1980's I worked for several national based insurance companies as an insurance defense lawyer. By 1985, I decided to specialize in plaintiff's personal injury litigation where I was able to provide ordinary consumers (injured plaintiffs) access to the judicial process by offering legal services on a contingency fee basis. I have continued to work in this specialized area of personal injury law for the past 32 years. As of 2016, I continue to work part-time as a lawyer and I maintain a small office in Mission Valley, California.

Family Life

After taking the California Bar Examination, in September of 1976, I married Barbara Jane Bass from Raleigh, North Carolina. We lived for many years in Mission and Pacific Beach (ocean front in San Diego), and later in La Jolla, California. We had two wonderful children, a daughter Katelyn, now 36 years of age, and a son Kevin, now 33 years of age. Katelyn and Kevin were both born and raised in Pacific Beach and later in La Jolla, California. They both attended and graduated from La Jolla High School. Both Katelyn and Kevin were active in sports, Katie played water polo and was on the swim team while attending University High (before transferring to La Jolla). Kevin was a pro-sponsored competitive skateboarder and participated in track.

Katelyn went away to college in France (ESSEC International Business School at the Aix-En-Provence campus, and the campus in Paris) for a combined 2 years. Katie graduated from San Diego State University in 2003 with a degree in International Business and Finance. In 2006, Kevin graduated from San Francisco State University with a bachelor's degree in the Radio and Television Arts (Journalism).

Growing up Kevin worked with and learned from his mother who was an accomplished real estate agent in Pacific Beach and La Jolla. After spending time working in the food and beverage industry, Kevin started managing residential real estate properties. For the past four years starting in 2012, Kevin has worked for and done very well as a real estate salesperson for Harcourts Prestige Properties and the Brennan Real Estate Group in La Jolla, California.

After graduating from college, my daughter Katelyn worked as an employee recruiter for three different firms, AMN Healthcare, Conde Group, and Modis. In June of 2013, Katelyn married Pete DeSpain in San Diego, California. Pete graduated from San Diego State University in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in communications and public relations. For the past six years, Pete has served as Vice-President of Investor Relations and Corporate Communications for MEI Pharma in San Diego.

On February 27, 2014, Katelyn and Pete had a beautiful baby girl – my first grandchild – named Avery Jane DeSpain, now 2.5 years old. Katie is preparing for the birth of a second child (my second grandchild) in January of 2017.

I have an older brother Dwight who continues to reside in San Leandro. Dwight played varsity football at Arroyo High School in San Lorenzo in 1962 (undefeated season) and 1963. Dwight, now in his early 70's, is a retired musician. During the period 1965-1968, Dwight was the lead guitar player and singer in a band, "The Baytovens", that played on the same bill as many other highly popular bands at the that time who performed in Bill Graham's Fillmore East Playhouse and the Cow Palace, both in San Francisco, and the Oakland Auditorium (Bill Quarry Events) including The Byrds; Van Morrison, Paul Revere and the Raiders; Them; and the Vegetables. Dwight continues to play music, teach music, go sailing on his sail boat, engage in local charitable efforts, and dabble in local politics.

I have a younger brother Bruce who has, for the past 29 years, served as a worker's compensation insurance defense lawyer in the Bay Area. Bruce is a former UC Santa Barbara graduate. He is a former letterman rugby player for UCSB. His son Eric attended Long Beach State on a golf scholarship. Eric recently graduated with a degree in manufacturing engineering. Bruce's daughter Lisa attended and graduated with a degree from UCSB (like her Dad). Lisa was a star player on the UCSB's ultimate Frisbee team. Lisa currently plays Ultimate Frisbee in national and international competition.

I have a younger sister Ann, who for the past 30 plus years has worked as a nurse and lived in Oahu and Maui where she has competed as surfer and wind surfer for years winning several wind surfing competitions in her age bracket. Ann earned a Master's Degree in nursing (Ph.D.) from the University of Hawaii. Ann has worked as a nurse and in nursing administration at nearly every level possible in the hospital setting. Ann is currently teaching college level nursing classes at the University of Hawaii - Maui.

Sadly, both of my parents have passed on. My mother Bonnie (who never missed a single game I played in at San Leandro), passed away in 2001. My father Harry, who was the team doctor for the football team at San Leandro, passed away in 2008. He is greatly missed not only by his children and grandchildren. but by his professional colleagues and by his many former patients.

On another very sad note, in 2010, my wife Barbara passed away. Barbara is survived by a whole group of Bass family members in Raleigh, North Carolina and is missed by a great many including her family here in San Diego.

In December of 2012, I married a second time to my wonderful wife Cyndi Ybarra. Cyndi's background is in the development, operations and leasing of retail shopping centers. For many years she has served as the lead consultant to Cagney Enterprises LLC in Encinitas, California.

Cyndi and I now live a short walk to Moonlight Beach in Old Encinitas, California. Old Encinitas, (one of the few small beach towns left in California), is about 12 miles North of La Jolla. It is a wonderful place to call home. Cyndi and I love to travel. We love to golf and be with our many friends. Both of my adult children; my son-in-law and my granddaughter; all live a short distance away.

San Leandro Sports Foundation Hall Of Fame 2016

I recently learned that the promoters of the new San Leandro Sports Foundation have elected me, along with a select list of other athletes in the San Leandro area, to be inducted into the Foundation's Hall of Fame on October 14, 2016, *the inaugural year of induction*. When I saw the list of other athletes chosen for this induction ceremony I was truly honored.

I am so proud to be selected to the Hall of Fame alongside two other San Leandro H.S. football players that ultimately went to the University of Oregon (like myself) and who had great success, in college and in the NFL. These players had success far beyond my own in college and in the pro game.

I am referring to **Tim Stokes** (mentioned above, whose brother Jack I played football and basketball with at San Leandro); and **Dennis Dixon**, who has achieved success in the game of football at extremely high levels - in high school, college and in the pros.

Dennis Dixon, as most know (certainly most Duck alumni and fans know) was the quarterback who, after graduation from San Leandro High, accepted a football scholarship at the University Oregon. At Oregon, in 2007, Dennis quarterbacked the Ducks to No. 2 in the Nation (No. 1 in the Pac -10). Dennis was All Pac-10 twice and a College Honorable Mention All-American. Had Dennis not been injured his senior year, he would likely have won the Heisman Trophy (he finished 5th in the voting in 2007). Dennis went on to play for 5 years in the NFL including being part of two super bowl teams (XLIII and XLVII).

At San Leandro High School, Dennis threw for a record setting 79 touchdowns and 5,951 yards. Over a three-year period, Dennis compiled a 39-3 win-loss record – *truly amazing*.

Of course, all of the exceptional athletes selected for the inaugural Hall of Fame induction are special, but these two football players are, to me, what makes it really extraordinary. I am incredibly fortunate to be part of this group of fine athletes.

I want to thank the Sports Foundation for starting what I hope becomes a long tradition of honoring sports programs and participants in and around the City of San Leandro.