



INTERVIEW WITH
RICHARD ERICKSON

Cal Football Team Quarterback, 1946-1949,
Executive Director of the California Alumni Association
1957-72 Campus Development Officer 1972-84

INTERVIEW WITH DICK ERICKSON

Version 3.2 (October 2010)

Interviewee: Dick Erickson, Cal Football Team Quarterback, 1946-1949,
Executive Director of the California Alumni Association
1957-72, Campus Development Officer 1972-84

Interviewer: Dan Cheatham, Drum Major, 1957

Date of Interview: February 19, 2007

Place of Interview: Courtyard of the Dollar Club House at Rossmoor, California near the town of
Walnut Creek

Transcriber: Tanya Kulp

In May 2007 and July 2007, Cheatham reviewed his remarks for grammar and accuracy.
In Spring 2010, Erickson reviewed his remarks for grammar and accuracy.

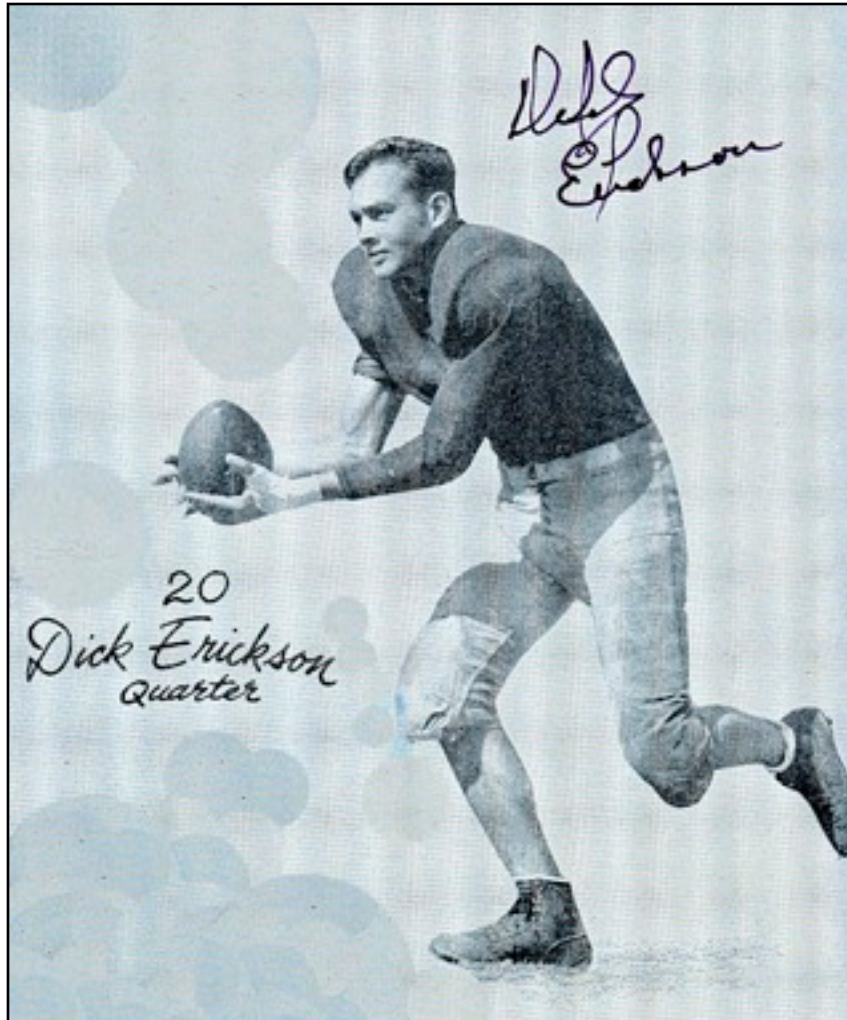
Keywords: The team and the Band in North Tunnel, Executive Director of the Alumni Association, Band/Alumni relationships, Traditional Big Game reunion night in San Francisco, Coach Pappy Waldorf, being on the football field, football player Jackie Jensen, Rose Bowl football games, Coach Waldorf's balcony speeches

Note: The book *Pappy's Boys: The Rose Bowl Years 1948 - 1949 - 1950* edited by Ron Frimrite, 1996, has a lot of backup material to some of the discussed in this interview.

ERICKSON: Good afternoon, my name is Dick Erickson. I am delighted to be here on a nice sunny day with Dan to talk a little bit about my relationships to the University of California. I came to the University of California very briefly, three of four months, in 1944 before joining the Navy. Prior to my return, I completed one semester at John Carroll University and returned to Cal in the fall of 1946.

My tour of duty with the Navy included Boot Camp and Quartermaster School in San Diego and a brief assignment to a LST in Norfolk, Virginia. This followed with a Naval Academy Preparatory School in Bainbridge, Md. And Williamsburg, Va., before returning to Cal.

At Cal I had the extraordinary experience of participating on the California football team in 1946, 1947, and 1948. The 1948 team under Coach Pappy Waldorf went undefeated during the season. As a result, we were invited to the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1949, where we played Northwestern University.



I was raised in Stockton, California, and felt there were only two universities I would really be interested in: one was Cal and the other was Stanford. Obviously, I selected the better one.

Following my education I went into the insurance trade association business and in 1957 returned to Cal as the Executive Director of the California Alumni Association. This was a position I held until 1972, when I went over to be with Chancellor Al Bowker and the Development Office, a position I held until 1984, when I retired.

CHEATHAM: How did you first become acquainted with the Cal Band?

ERICKSON: That's an easy one to answer. There is no question that when the team came down from the locker room into the North Tunnel and then made its way out to the field through the Band, which was in the tunnel awaiting its turn to come out on the field for its pre-game performance...with the Band positioned as it always was on either side of the tunnel making a path for us to run through...and you went into that passageway onto the field...it was both motivating and a fantastic thrill.

I am not sure, at the time, we really put this into proper prospective but there is no doubt that we went on the field much more motivated towards getting on and beating whoever the opponent was. It was fabulous to always have the Band there to support us.

CHEATHAM: Your next major interaction with the Cal Band was when you came on board as the Executive Director of the Alumni Association. Tell us about that.

ERICKSON: I came to the Alumni Association in 1957. This was a delightful, exciting and wonderful experience to particularly relate to a group like the Cal Marching Band who were always positive and always were there when asked. I cannot recall a first experience, but I do know that time and time again, in all Home functions where the Alumni Association had scheduled events, if we would ask the Band or a unit from the Band, they would always be there as requested. For games in Southern California, there was a strong commitment that you were aware of, that the Band responded to every request we made.

Shortly after joining the Alumni Association, I successfully recruited a gentleman by the name of Ralph Edwards¹ to become a member of the Alumni Council, which is the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association. Again, when we were able to make it possible for Ralph to raise even a small amount of money, it was a big deal.

There were a lot of people involved with the Cal Band membership drive. It resulted in a lot of people. Keep in mind that something like the Cal March was a big deal.

In the great days of the Bay Area, we always had a schedule that was usually held around and around. We would



¹ As an undergraduate, notably, 7

² See his oral history for direct help

the Cal Band and became an Honorary Life Member of the Cal Band. This oral history is a fantastic look into campus life in the 1930's and is a good read.

³ Sigh. It is sad to think that as of the time of this interview, 1959 was the last occasion for the Golden Bears to play in a Rose Bowl game. That's over fifty years ago. NHC May 2010.

⁴ This was a long-standing tradition that was practiced with great enthusiasm up to the days of the Free Speech Movement. Currently the classes are encouraged to hold their reunions during Homecoming Week instead. *SF Examiner* photograph 1947
Courtesy of Bart White

⁵ The Band would play at the Big Game bonfire rally in the Greek Theatre and then break into smaller groups. This was necessary because in those days, there were so many individual class reunions that night, that a single group could not get to all of them.



Jackie Jensen Bob Celeri Coach Lynn O. "Pappy" Waldorf Dick Erickson

SF Examiner photograph 1948
Courtesy of Bart White



**Coach Lynn O. "Pappy" Waldorf
Football Coach at Northwestern University
Circa 1942**

Photograph Courtesy of Bart White

Eggs Manske

Zeb Chaney

Bob Tessier

Wes Fry



?

Nibs Price

Coach Waldorf

Hal Grant

Doug Duncan ?

Photograph Courtesy of Bart White
Circa 1948



**Cal Coach Lynn O. "Pappy" Waldorf and
Stanford Coach Marchmont "Marchie" Schwartz
At Cal vs Stanford Big Game Banquet**

SF Examiner photograph circa 1948
Courtesy of Bart White

just after us, or vice versa. It was a long, interesting, and wonderful night. School spirit was in the air and the whole bay area was caught up in it.

CHEATHAM: Yes, Ralph Edwards provided an important role in getting the Band to the Brussels World's Fair in 1958. As a result of this, Ralph was made an Honorary Life Member of the Cal Band. I refer the reader to the oral history we have done with Ralph as well as those with then-Senior Manager Hugh Barnett and then-Student Director Larry Anderson.

Well, your big claim to fame on campus was your involvement with Pappy Waldorf's football team. Would you take a moment to give us some insight as to what it was like to play under Coach Pappy Waldorf?

ERICKSON: Playing on the team with Pappy Waldorf was a great experience and a real pleasure. Prior to my return to Cal, I had attended the University of Michigan in the Navy. I had the great pleasure to play on the Michigan football team in 1945. Fritz Chrysler was considered one of the top coaches in the country at that time. When I returned to Berkeley after military service, we had one year in 1946 under a wonderful person, but one who was not what I would call a first class Head Coach, Frank Wickhorst. The next year, 1947, we were most fortunate to have Pappy Waldorf join us as the head coach.

Playing for Pappy and his staff was a real delight. And, I might say that his supporting cast of assistant coaches was one of the reasons he was so successful. This, I think, is an extremely important ingredient in coaching success, and one of the reasons that Wickhorst was not a success. Pappy had an effective Backfield Coach in Wes Fry and a line coach, Bob Tessier, as well as Eggs Manske. He had several other assistant coaches but those three were so supportive and helpful that it was no real surprise that we had success.

And speaking of success, we had quite a number of ball players who were back after military service, as I was. Also there were 28 of us on the 1948 team who were married. So it was a little different atmosphere and way of life, if you could put it that way, for a football player, a student, and a husband, to carry on those kinds of activities and hopefully be somewhat of a success in them.

I was very fortunate to be able to play with what I considered the finest athlete that I have ever been associated with, Jack Jenson. Jack came from Oakland and was, without a doubt, the finest passer

we had, the finest runner as well. He was also our punter, and when things got tough on defense, the coach would put Jack in.

I can recall in the USC game in 1948, standing in that tunnel ready to go out onto the field. Jack looked out and around the tunnel and saw one hundred and three thousand people in the stands.⁶ He turned and said, "Well, if I am going to make All American, I guess this is the day to do it." And he played like an All American through the entire game including on defense, intercepting a pass. Jack went on to play professional baseball and was a VIP with both the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Socks.⁷

No offensive football team is going to be a success without a good line. We were blessed with players who were outstanding. Leading the pack was Rod Franz, Cal's only three-time All American, a guard by the name of Jim Cullum, a center by the name of Doug Duncan, and tackles Jon Baker, Gene Frassetto, and a couple of ends, Frank Van Deren and John Cunningham. In the backfield were Jack Swaner and Billy Main. We could run and we could pass--it was just an amazing combination.

And getting back to Waldorf again, the fact that Waldorf realized what he had by the way of talent, he was able, along with his assistants, to put together what I think was one of Cal's most successful football programs in its history.

CHEATHAM: And that, of course, led the team to the Rose Bowl in 1949. Would you like to tell us about that?

ERICKSON: Well, number one, we should have won. It was a good game and quite close for most of it. Unfortunately, as *The Los Angeles Times* showed vividly the next day, a run by Northwestern, the team we were playing against, was not a touchdown. Murakowski, their fullback fumbled a yard and a half before the goal line and we recovered in the end zone. *The Los*

⁶ That figure may be a bit exaggerated but remember in those days there were additional bleachers built up behind the stands on the east side. See old photos. Some especially popular games even had additional, but short, bleachers added at the edge of the field, against the wall. In those days the playing field was lower down than it is now so these additional, temporary bleachers were "taller" than could build now. The field level has been raised in recent year to accommodate drainage facilities for artificial turf as a result, the height of the wall around the playing field is not as "tall" as it was. That is, any temporary bleachers on the playing field today would hold very few people. Also, in the 1970's they replaced some of the seats and allowed for fewer people per row. In addition, the games were not on television.

⁷ Jensen was also a star on Cal's baseball team. The sports writers nicknamed him, the "Golden Boy".

Angeles Times had a fantastic picture which they put on page one the next day. Of course, we, to this day, still suffer from that memory. I think that one of these days we will bring suit against the Rose Bowl people in Pasadena and have them at least officially change the score to what it should have been—a victory for Cal.

CHEATHAM: That game was the first of three straight Rose Bowls that Cal went to, all coached by Pappy Waldorf.

Those three Rose Bowls played an an important role in the life of the Cal Band, resulting in the adoption of the high-stepping marching style it uses today. But this is another story.⁸

One of the memories I have of those days, when I was a 10-year old water boy for the Cal Band, was that when you were on the field, you played with your sleeves rolled up. I don't remember seeing any other football player of that era do that except you. Why was that?

ERICKSON: There were a couple of reasons why I played with my sleeves rolled up. One, and I felt fairly strongly about this, was that after handing the ball off to another back, a bare brownish arm flashing before a defender who is crashing in to try to get the ball might result in his missing the ball and hitting my arm and therefore creating a good "fake,"⁹ as it was.¹⁰

Secondly, the equipment back in those days was considerably different than you have today. Today they have these sleek, very thin rip-off sort of jerseys that, if they are caught, will rip and allowing the runner to get away from the tackler. Back in our days it was a much heavier thing, particularly in the warm September Saturday afternoons. It was much more comfortable to roll up your sleeves, so I did and, as has been suggested, I was about the only one who seemed to do that in those days.

⁸ At the second Rose Bowl, the Ohio State band totally out marched the Cal Band and set that scene for the Cal Band adopting the "high stepping" marching style. This was a major turning point in the history of the Cal Band. See oral histories with Bill Colescott, Bill Isbell and others.

⁹ A deceptive movement by the offensive player.

¹⁰ Basically he was camouflaging the ball with the bare skin of his arm. Erickson tells me this was his idea, not one of coach's.

CHEATHAM: My memories of intercollegiate football in those days is that the quarterback was more of a field commander than is the case today, with the coaches are constantly sending in plays and instructions to the team team on the field.

ERICKSON: The rules, as they existed at that time, were such that you didn't have free substitution. Therefore, a quarterback was expected to call the offensive plays and the coach could not. Neither could he have signaled in another play, or attempt to even send in another player. On rare occasions he could send in a substitute with a play, but that was unusual.

As a result, it was the quarterback's responsibility to be the field general. We worked hard. In my case it was with the assistance of the backfield coach, Wes Fry...in trying to guess or have some idea of what the opposition was likely to do in the way of defense on any given Saturday. Then we had to build a play that might be more effective against that, or those kinds of defensive formations. Again, we had an experienced group of teammates, offensively, who could put into play whatever we called. As I said, it was a much different type of offensive situation than one faces today. Not as fast, maybe, not as complicated maybe, but nonetheless it was more of a responsibility of the players to run the game than you find today.

CHEATHAM: I may not have had a technical insight into what was going on, on the field, but I knew enough about the role of the quarterback as being the field general that I really admire you and others of that era for the quality of the football games that you played. As a rooter, I miss those "good old days" when they were still "games" of inter-school rivalry rather than the contests of technical excellence that are currently called "games".

What are your memories after the game when the crowd would call Pappy out on the balcony?

My memories are that he always waited until the Band got there and he always included a player who distinguished himself on the field that day. If we lost the game, he always came out on his own.

It started as special activity between Pappy and the Band based on a really close relationship we had with each other.

After exiting the tunnel to the tune "O.B.R."¹¹ we would stop and face the balcony and start to chant for him to come out. The fans would join in and not realize that it was him paying honor to the Band just as we were paying honor to him.

The fans would take the lead

There was cheer...in no mouse game

What was it

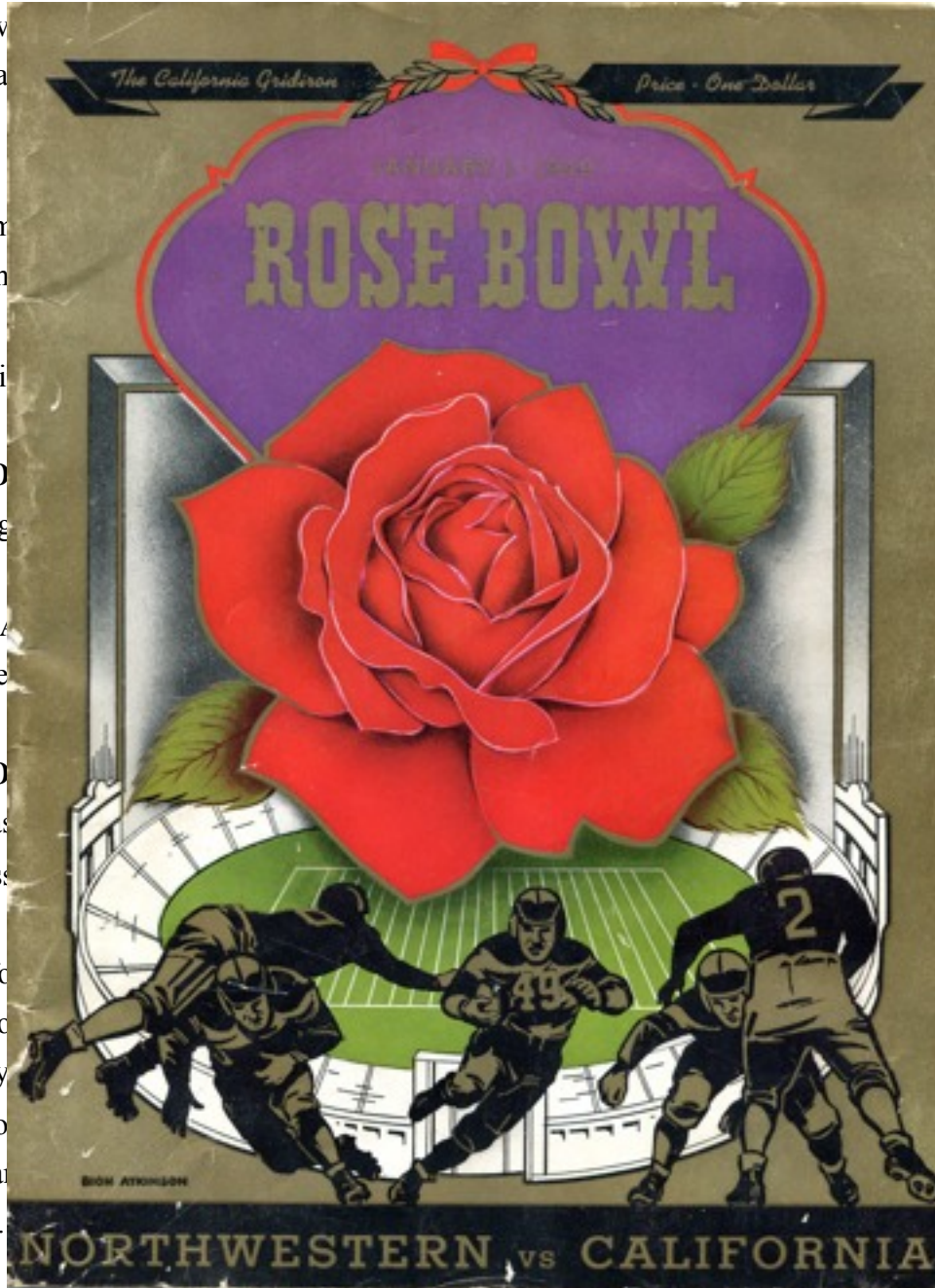
ERICKSON would be g

CHEATHAM any final re

ERICKSON privilege as Alumni Ass

As far as for the same to there every participation football game few words.

CHEATHAM: Dick, thank you very much.



the Band, had to

the crowd would sort of a cat and

game, that you

. Do you have

it was both a to head up the

today. But by we are all out fusion, that the far as making a chance to say a

¹¹ See other oral histories.





Comment: This was on the back cover of the Rose Bowl program. Frankly, I just stuck this in as illustration of the era when advertising cigarettes was allowed in publications and on the radio. For years the advertising slogan was, *I'd walk a mile for a Camel.*

The pleasure is worth it. There is no substitute for Camel quality and that mild, fragrant Camel blend.

The fellow who smokes Camels, wants Camels. That's because Camels have a smoothness, a fragrance and a mildness you can't get in another cigarette.

Don't let anyone tell you that any other cigarette at any price is so good as Camels.

Let your own taste be the judge. Try Camels for yourself. A few smooth, refreshing puffs and you'd walk a mile for a Camel, too.

