



Hugh Harrison Class of 2009

1940 is a historical date for Oroville High School. James Chester Nisbet hired Hugh Harrison that year. It signaled better things would soon happen on the Bridge Street campus. A profoundly influential counselor, his coaching excellence was also a renowned feature of the Orland native.

According to a newspaper report, Hugh brought OHS its first basketball championship since 1892. In his second year, Hugh started a string of league winners. The victorious varsity teams continued with Hugh guiding the Tigers to championships throughout his entire 18 years as coach and athletic director.

Hugh brought ability as a leader when he came to Oroville High. As a young competitor, he played and coached Hamilton City High basketball for four years.

While a student at Chico State, he coached the freshman basketball team through a season marked by only one loss. As a Wildcat baseball player, Hugh pitched and played first base, where it is likely he earned his nickname, "Scoop." In four years on the diamond, he was a league champion each season.

During college, Hugh and Dorothy Crum were married, and following graduation in 1928, the couple embarked on their long journey as coach, spouses and parents of two boys.

The couple stayed in Marysville for three years, where Hugh taught elementary school P.E. and shop. Summerville High in Tuolumne, signed him as athletic director and coach from 1931-1940. During that span he produced 14 league championships while coaching every boys sport.

Hugh is well-remembered for his stay there. Marlen Routen, former athletic director, wrote, "Summerville was a big part of his life, but of more importance was the influence he had on those students he coached." That comment mirrors what local people have said about the man. Writer Bill Talbitzer wrote, "With him he brought a blazing competitive spirit, a sharply defined sense of fair play and a real working desire to turn out highly skilled and well-disciplined athletic teams."

In 1964, the OUHSD issued a resolution of appreciation. On it was a comment from legendary OHS coach/administrator John R. Johnson reading, "He has a deep interest in youth, exemplifying for so long the most positive aspects of competitive athletics—sportsmanship, citizenship and competitive desire. Oroville High School has reached a pinnacle enjoyed by very few high schools. Only boys who could meet these high standards were accepted on Hugh's teams. We will never forget him for the contribution he has made to students of Oroville High School and the people of Oroville."

Previously paid tribute by Chico State, Summerville High, the Northern California Sports Association, as well as having Harrison Stadium named in his honor, Hugh Harrison will not be forgotten.

Hugh said with gratitude in 1980, "I do not know how deserved I am of the honors given me. I can only say that I tried very hard to do a good job at everything I attempted to do. The close friendships that were the result are ample payment. I feel very humble and extremely grateful."