

**PARKER** from B1

and mentor Bob Butler serving as the commentator, Parker was calling his first live games and started to really like what he was doing. With encouragement from Butler and the wise words of Rams' commentator Dick Enberg ringing in his ears ("If you can call a high school football game by yourself, you can do anything in broadcasting") Parker added JV football and varsity basketball to his slate of games.

"Those games with Cottage Grove were very valuable. All three sports, very valuable. And the opportunity to be in a town that had a radio station that did all the games and an opportunity to do them at a pretty young age was very helpful for me," said Parker.

While finding his footing as a broadcaster, Parker got to call some top talents including Sheldon's Chris Miller who went on to play quarterback at the University of Oregon, was a first-round pick in the NFL Draft and played in the league for 10 seasons. He also called the games of North Eugene's Danny Ainge an eventual two-time NBA champion who is now one of the top executives in the Association. In his senior season, Ainge hung 40 points on the Cottage Grove basketball team. The Highlanders went on to win their second title in as many years that season.

"I remember thinking, I'm calling a game for a pretty good player here right now. I wish I still had that tape. But that was tremendous training," said Parker.

After graduating from CGHS in 1976, Parker, the future Beaver broadcaster, became a Duck. While going to school at UO he continued to call games for the Lions as he earned his degree in rhetoric and communications. After graduating, he called games at Marshfield High School before bouncing around from the Eugene Emeralds, UO women's basketball team and then the Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League. The goal for Parker remained: get a coveted job as the voice of a university or a franchise. But those jobs weren't

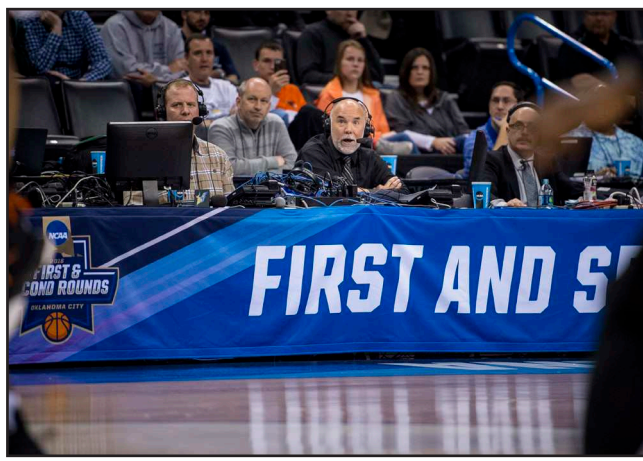


PHOTO BY OREGON STATE ATHLETICS

Mike Parker calls an NCAA tournament game in 2016. available.

"They're hard to get. The good jobs are hard to get. People get them and stay in them for a long time," said Parker. "A real long time."

In 1990, he transitioned from calling games to talking about games. KFFX in Portland was one of the first stations in the country to be all sports, all the time and Parker was there to fill hours. He talked all things UO sports before moving to KEX where he focused on the Portland Trail Blazers. After eight years in talk radio, he was let go by KEX to make way for a show anchored by former Blazer, and father of three-time NBA champion Klay Thompson who was eight years old at the time, Mychal Thompson.

With no job and no one knocking on his door asking him to call games, Parker had to make a decision. Friends reached out to him offering various jobs while insisting that it was time for him to move on.

"I was grateful for that kind of friendship and support from people but at the same time I didn't want to quite give up on the sports casting thing," said Parker.

But this was not the first time in Parker's life when he had been told to move on from sports. Growing up, he was reminded of the frivolous nature of his passion.

"As one of my uncle's said, 'That whole sports stuff, Mike, is a colossal waste of time.' And I remember there were times when I was beginning to think about, is it? He may be right," said Parker.

In those moments, Parker would then think of the shared experience of a game and how that was something the valued. He would think about the relationships and connections that can happen over the seemingly trivial hit of a ball. He would even recall the poem "Poetry".

Pulitzer Prize winner Marianne Moore writes: "I, too, dislike it: there are things that are

important beyond all this fiddle. / Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in / it, after all, a place for the genuine."

A place for the genuine.

"I just feel like I've had enough genuine moments of sweetness, sadness, elation, depression, misery, glory, joy, to believe those are genuine moments in the human experience and I loved hearing them conveyed on the radio when I was a kid," said Parker. "I approach this whole thing as appreciating this place for the genuine that I've always felt since I was seven years old."

Not wanting to move on to another profession but needing to make ends meet, Parker started driving taxis in Portland. Working whatever hours he could, and often from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., he drove the streets of Portland while in his spare time would send out his tapes and apply to various play-by-play positions.

Facing late nights with no riders, Parker, now 40, finally thought about moving on and finding a new profession. But then at the beginning of the Oregon State baseball season, the Beaver announcers faced a scheduling issue. Their broadcasters were unable to travel to Cal State Northridge and they needed someone. So they called Parker.

"I started following Mike in the early 90s during his work for the Portland Beavers. I thought [highly] of his work," said Mike Corwin, who served as the Associate Director of Athletics for OSU at the time. "He was my first and ultimately the only contact to find a voice for Beaver baseball at that time."

Parker hit it out of the park with his opportunity and now had OSU's attention.

"It wasn't long after he did a good assortment of baseball games for us that extra opportunities presented themselves," said Corwin. "His talent kind of took it from there. I know everybody in athletic administration at OSU, the athletic director at the time was Mitch Barnhart, was impressed."

When the job opened up in the spring, Parker's dream job of calling football, basketball and baseball, he was the top candidate. He submitted his tape, including some clips of him calling football games at CGHS, and after a lifetime of preparation, he got the job.

"I was 40 and was heartened by [the fact that] Bill Schonely, the great voice of the Blazers, was 42 when he got his Blazers job. And I was only 40. But it took until age 40. So 33 years from the time I first fell in love with sports on the radio," said Parker. "33 years later I was finally given the opportunity to really fulfill what had kind of been working in my heart and my mind for most of my life, really. I was grateful for it, still am. Still love the games and looking forward to my 20th year."

Mike Parker: voice of the Oregon State Beavers.

In his 20 years in Corvallis, Parker has lived a full-life as a play-by-play broadcaster. The

highs are as high as they come. There was the football team of 2000 that went 11-1 and ran over Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl. Then of course there are the three baseball national championships in the past 12 years. But the lows are also, quite low. The 2016-17 Oregon State basketball team that won five games over the course of the year or last year's 1-11 football team.

But through thick and thin, the six-time Oregon Sportscaster of the Year gravitates, as he has his whole life, towards the positive. He points specifically to the Bible passage Philippians 4:8 that reads: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think on these things."

For Parker, these are words to live by. "I just feel like, amidst an avalanche of negativity, and even for the Beavers last year going 1-11 in football and having some really tough years, the easiest thing in the world is to fall in and criticize and belittle and mock and derive and be negative about it," he said. "But we're told to take a different approach. It's what I aspire to try to do and how to live. Try to look for the best and look for those things that are lovely and virtuous and of good report and try to report on those things and think on those things."

This mentality of focusing on the positive is natural for Parker. His lifelong dream has become the reality that he has been living for the last two decades. While there are still good days and bad days and lots of days of things that aren't just calling the game, it stays the job that he had hoped and dreamed for. He doesn't have to fake his way through it.

"I feel as though it's expected of me - but it's a pleasure to at the same time - to be always an enthusiastic ambassador for Oregon State athletics above all. And then try to convey the games on the radio with a sense of pleasure and enthusiasm. Exuberance that everyone knows that this is the best place to be in the world right now is at an Oregon State game," said Parker. "And that's not feigned on my part in any way. It's how I felt for the last 20 years and how I hope to continue to feel. This is the best place to be and hope to try and convey that in each broadcast."

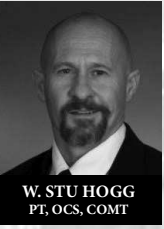
And so Parker will continue to do what he has been doing. He has no timetable for how long he will go but notes that his idol Scully went until he was 88.

"Whether Oregon State allows me to or not, that's another 28 years they would have to put up with me so it's doubtful," he says with a laugh.

But until that final call, he will be focusing on the next game. Football becomes basketball, which transitions to baseball before suddenly turning into football in a continuous loop.

"That's how I've been living life for the past 20 years and it's okay with me," said Parker. "I hope I can keep doing it as long as I can."

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LARRY This Week Stats:10-3 Season Stats:10-3



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Fill out the form below for your choice of winners. The TIE-BREAKER game is the Sunday night game. Guess the total points of this game. In the event of a tie-breaker tie, the winner will be determined by a drawing. Entries must be received by Friday, 5 pm at the Cottage Grove Sentinel, 116 N. 6th Street, (P.O. Box 35), Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424. Mailed entries must be postmarked by Friday. Employees of the Cottage Grove Sentinel and their families are not eligible to win. In the event of multiple winners, final weekly winner will be drawn at random from preliminary winners.  
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