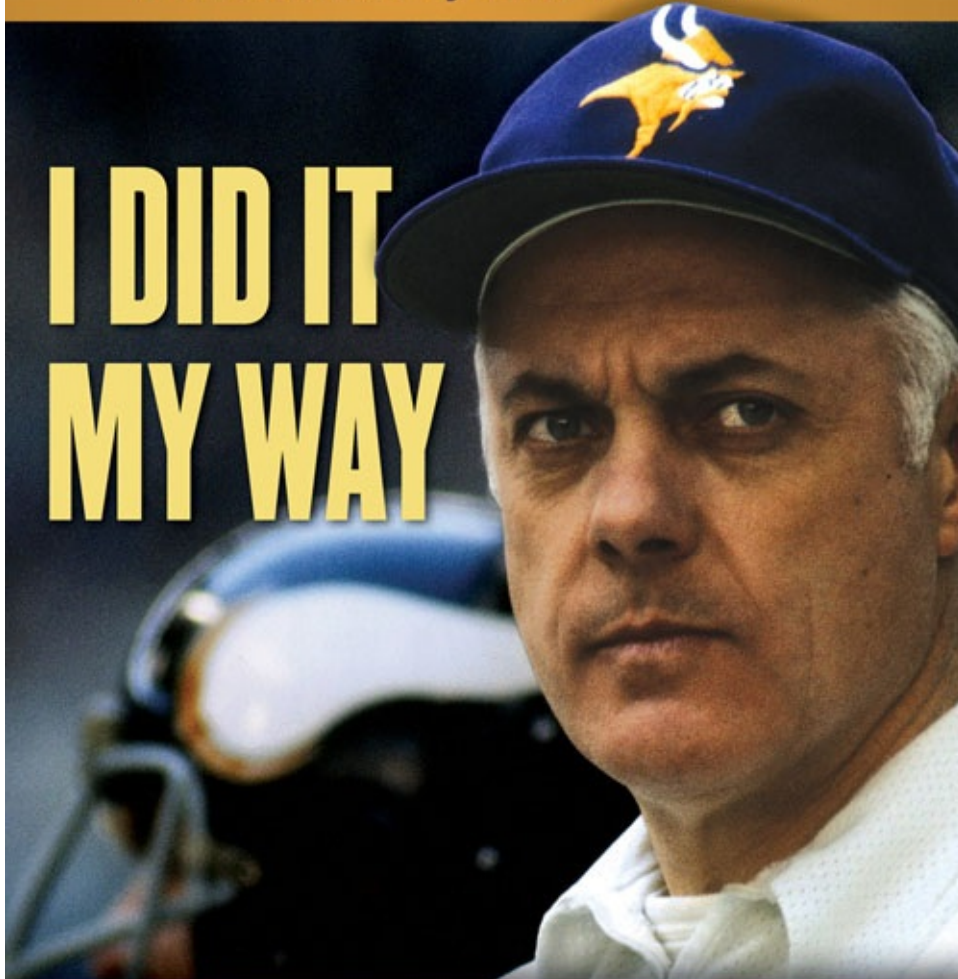


Foreword by **SID HARTMAN**  
Introduction by **FRAN TARKENTON**

**I DID IT  
MY WAY**



A Remarkable Journey to the Hall of Fame

**BUD GRANT**  
AND JIM BRUTON



# I DID IT MY WAY

A Remarkable  
Journey to the  
Hall of Fame

Bud Grant with Jim Bruton



**TRIUMPH**  
BOOKS



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*To my wife, Pat. Couldn't have done it without you.*

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# Foreword by Sid Hartman

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Bud Grant and I formally met on the first day he attended college at the University of Minnesota, which also happened to be my first day assigned to the Gophers sports beat. But I had first introduced myself to him when he was a member of the Great Lakes basketball team that had played the Gophers at Williams Arena in 1945. Fortunately for me, I got a good introduction from his coach, Wee Ewbank, who was the basketball coach at Great Lakes and later coached the New York Jets football team in the Super Bowl.

For Bud and me to become best friends seemed unlikely. He was one of the best athletes ever developed at Superior Central High School; I was a rookie reporter who never graduated high school and never went to college. But we hit it off right away. For a good part of four years, we had many of our meals together during the school year and spent a lot of time together.

In the summertime I occasionally drove him to baseball games. Bud was a great athlete. He once pitched two games in one day—at Gordon, Wisconsin, in the afternoon and at Rice Lake in the evening. I traveled with the Gophers football and basketball teams, so we saw each other then, too. When he finished his three-sport career at Minnesota and was ready to graduate, I was running the Minneapolis Lakers. He made his debut with the Lakers on Christmas night, 1949. His very first basket was from half court, right before the end of the first half. He went on to play on the Lakers' NBA championship team.

Remembering Bud from his football prowess with the Gophers, the place came apart. Anyone who saw him will never forget it. Bud played two years with the Lakers before turning to pro football as a first-round draft choice of the Philadelphia Eagles.

Considering his college career, I think he and David Winfield were the two greatest all-around athletes ever to play for the Gophers. Bud was an All-American football player playing on both offense and defense as a wide receiver and defensive end. He pitched for the baseball team and he was a starting forward on the basketball team. Bernie Bierman, former Gophers coach, once told me that Bud was one of the smartest players he had ever coached and that he didn't recall him ever making a mistake. As a basketball player, he was very physical, and as a Laker he made one of the most important baskets of his career. Bud scored with only seconds to go in a playoff game, sending his team into overtime against Syracuse. The Lakers went on to win the NBA championship that season.

Grant had a reputation of being a very stoic person who wouldn't pull tricks on people, but he was just the opposite. There was the time he put a pet squirrel in my glove compartment when we were driving to spend a weekend at his home in Superior. There was another time, while driving on a highway, when I felt something crawl up my knee, and it was that pet squirrel again.

One year Bud and I went to Bud's home on New Year's Eve and left after midnight to return to the Twin Cities. We had a flat tire and spent part of the night in the car keeping warm while we strategized how we were going to make it home. It all worked out eventually, but it wasn't a good start to the new year for the garage mechanic who helped us out in the early morning hours of New Year's Day. It was just another of our adventures—this time in a car I had borrowed with no spare tire.

The last career I would have thought Bud would pursue was coaching. He never talked about it during his college career. Being the great hunter and sportsman that he is, I always thought he would have a career connected to the outdoors.



He was 29 years old in 1967 when he got the Winnipeg job, coaching the Blue Bombers. Unfortunately, his father died in Pasadena, California, never knowing that Bud got the job. Another secret that few people know is that Bud was the Vikings' first choice as head coach of the expansion team, but he decided to stay up in Winnipeg after taking the job. It turned out to be a fantastic decision, as he coached the team to six Grey Cups, winning four of them, before joining the Vikings.

Many people in the media couldn't understand how we could have a relationship while he was coaching the Vikings and I was a columnist covering the team. The truth is, I wrote several stories—especially about players being added to the team and players being cut—before he released that information to the press. I didn't get them from Bud, but from other sources I had. He understood that I had a job to do, and I understood that he had a job to do. In fact, he favored another writer—a young man named Ralph Reeve, who covered the Vikings for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*—and likely gave him a lot more tips than he gave me.

I made one great contribution to Bud's long coaching career: I helped him sign Kenny Ploen, a former Iowa All-American who went on to lead Bud's Blue Bombers to several Grey Cups. I had a great relationship with the Iowa coaching staff, especially head coach Forest Evashevski and Jerry Burns, who later became a longtime assistant and then head coach of the Minnesota Vikings. They helped convince Ploen to play pro football in Winnipeg, when he had other plans to become an engineer.

Bud did give me one big scoop when he decided to retire from coaching the first time. He and Mil Lynn asked me to join them on a trip to California. They told me they were going to make a big deal with Al Davis of the Oakland Raiders. I joined them on the plane, and finally they admitted they just wanted me to go to Hawaii with them. They would see Max Winter, president of the Vikings, to break the news to him personally, and I would write the story from there. I broke one of the biggest stories ever to appear in our paper. When Bud decided to come back to coaching, I wasn't as fortunate. The news leaked, and Dark Star, a local media personality, broke the story.

Probably one of the biggest honors of my life was when Bud called me and asked me to be present at his induction to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. I never expected that. In my opinion, it was unfortunate that they didn't put him in the Hall of Fame the year before; it could have gotten a lot more local attention, since the Super Bowl was held that year in Minneapolis.

At the Hall of Fame, it seemed as if every honoree cried when they made their speech. I was sitting next to former Dallas head coach Tom Landry, who was a presenter like me, and I made a friendly bet with him that Bud, being as stoic as he is, would not cry. But like others on the platform, he broke down, too. I'll never forget when he remarked what his father would have said had he been there: "The kid made it. The kid made it."

Personally, we have long been close. After many home games, I would be a guest at the Grant home in Bloomington, where his wife, Pat, would cook goulash as good as any cook ever made. After not going to Pat's house for a long time for her special goulash, she kept on insisting that I come over. The night I finally showed up was the last goulash she ever cooked. She went to the hospital the next day and died shortly thereafter. She was an unbelievable mother who raised six great kids and was a perfect wife for a coach, which takes a certain type of person. She will be missed.

Bud's and my relationship hasn't changed much over the years. I often consulted with Bud to get his opinion on various decisions that I had to make. That included buying my home on the St. Croix; I went out and took a look at it and gave it his okay. We still make some trips up to his cabin in Gordon

Wisconsin—which he and a friend originally bought for \$100. Today it is a beautiful lake, and there is a second lake that is completely private.

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In my career as a sportswriter, I've had a chance to meet thousands of people, but I've never met anybody with the common sense of Bud Grant. That is how he coached—with his common sense. It is how he makes nothing but the best decisions, and that's one of the many reasons I have more respect for him than anybody I know in the world.

—*Sid Hartman*



# Introduction by Fran Tarkenton

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I spent seven years as Bud Grant's quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, and they were the best seven years of my life. They were certainly successful years. We went to three Super Bowls—and if the stars had aligned just slightly differently, it could have been four or five. But my years with Bud Grant at Minnesota weren't just about our accomplishments on the field; they were important years in making me the man I am today.

During my life, I've been fortunate enough to have been around a lot of great thinkers. I've known some of the most legendary football coaches in history. I've known very successful businesspeople who taught me a lot. Learning from all of them was a great privilege that I have never taken for granted. But I learned more from Bud Grant than from any single person I have ever known. Whenever I wasn't on the field, I made sure I was right there next to Bud, watching him and listening to what he said, learning how he thought and how he saw the world. It was an unbelievable experience.

Bud Grant never did anything halfway. He was a world-class basketball player in college and with the Lakers in the NBA. He was a world-class football player with the Eagles and then in Canada. And to top it all off, he was a great baseball player, too. When he became a coach for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, all he did was win. When he moved to the NFL in 1967, he took over a struggling franchise and ran it as a world-class organization.

But really understanding Bud is about more than a list of his achievements. It's about who he is—because he is one of the most unique individuals I have ever met. They really broke the mold when they made him! Everyone saw him standing stoically on the sideline during games. He never yelled, he never screamed. In fact, he was never demonstrative at all. In seven years, I never heard him cheer anyone out, and (what might be the most remarkable thing) never once heard him talk badly about an official on the sideline. And that's in a league where the officials take abuse from everybody (myself certainly included)!

He was always in complete, total control. It didn't matter what the situation was. While others followed their emotions and yelled and screamed, Bud was always quietly thinking. He was always a few steps ahead of everybody else, and I found that terribly intriguing. When it comes to personality, Bud and I are total opposites—but I knew right away that he was a man I could learn from, so it didn't matter. During my entire career, in both football and in business, my greatest asset has been my ability to think analytically. I got that from Bud Grant. I got so many things from him.

I stayed close to Bud at all times because everything he said just made sense to me. It might be a comment here, a conversation there. Sometimes he was talking to me specifically, sometimes to others, but I always found things to learn no matter who he was talking to. His understanding of coaching and leadership was different from Vince Lombardi's. It was different from Tom Landry's, different from Don Shula's—but it was just as effective, if not more so, than any of them.

One thing I noticed was that Bud looked at things nobody else was looking at. It went way beyond X's and O's with him; if anything, those X's and O's were secondary to everything else.

He also has a particularly uncanny ability to predict the weather. One of my favorite memories was a game against the L.A. Rams. With the skies still blue, Bud told me that it would storm in the second half—and not just any storm, a big one. "The field's going to be sloppy in the second half," he said, and the time for aggressive play would be right away. We came out extra-aggressive, on all cylinders in

that first half, took the lead—and then sure enough, the second half was a mess. But since we already had the lead, we never had to look back. And when it came to practice, Bud also was known to end a little early some days, knowing that even though there wasn't a cloud in the sky at the moment, it would be pouring rain as soon as we'd all gotten inside the clubhouse.

Of all the figures from his period of NFL history, Bud surely stands out. No one else had his team standing on the line at attention during the national anthem. No one else banned heaters from the sideline in subzero temperatures. Bud instilled discipline and smarts in his teams like no one else. He demanded more than any coach in the league and knew how to get us to live up to that high standard. He demanded smart players—team players—and never, ever compromised that.

Being around Bud Grant and getting to know him so well has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. And now with this book, the world has a chance for the first time to really see who Harry Peter Grant really is. It's a rare treat. Enjoy it.

—*Fran Tarkenton*



# Coauthor's Note

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There are very few people in sports who are immediately recognizable by only their first name. Mickey, of course, was Mickey Mantle. Willie, Willie Mays. Arnold, Arnold Palmer. And Bud, Bud Grant.

Just the name “Bud” to the sporting public resonates as the man who led the Minnesota Vikings to four Super Bowls. He was the coach, the leader, the general, the mainstay.

Bud was the man on the sideline with the cap, headset, and gray Vikings sweatshirt with the large “V” on the front. He was the commander of the Purple, the epitome of success, the cornerstone of excellence.

As a youngster, I had heard about him. He was the former Minnesota Gopher who starred on the gridiron, the court, and the diamond. He won several Grey Cup championships as coach of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. And then he became the coach of our beloved hometown Vikings.

In 1967 and again in 1971, I was fortunate enough to sign professional football contracts to play for the Minnesota Vikings. I was cut by Bud Grant in both training camps. A friend of mine asked me years while back, “Did you ever think you would work on the autobiography of the man who cut you *twice*?”

Unlikely as it is, the experience has been rewarding. Bud has been absolutely wonderful to work with in every respect. He has been charming, witty, passionate, humorous, and extremely gracious. We worked to capture the totality of his legacy. We have sat for endless hours at his Bloomington home and his lake home in Gordon, Wisconsin.

We have eaten together, fished together, and ridden the trails of his wooded acreage in northern Wisconsin. I have watched Bud clean fish and cook dinner in some of the more interesting moments of this wonderful journey. Each step along the way has been enjoyable, almost as if it were scripted.

Bud has shared with me his utmost private moments and his passion for his family, the outdoors, his menagerie of pets, and life. The stoic, relatively silent figure on the sideline and the television screen has come to life and revealed so much mystery about his life. I am deeply honored that I have the opportunity to help him share his story for the first time.

—Jim Bruton





# 1. Superior Kickoff

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I almost missed out on coaching the Minnesota Vikings to four Super Bowls. I may never have played sports at the University of Minnesota, been a member of the Minneapolis Lakers or the Philadelphia Eagles, or played and coached with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. I'm only here because of a change of luck, according to my dad.

"Kid," he told me one day, "your mother and I were planning to get married and we had saved \$200 for the wedding. I took the money and went gambling with it and lost all but five dollars. Fortunately for you, my luck changed. Had it gone the other way, you might not be here!" Over the years, I have thought about that more than once.

I was born in Superior, Wisconsin, which sits at the western edge of Lake Superior in the northwestern part of the state. Today, the city population is approximately 27,000, about 10,000 less than when I lived there as a boy.

Superior is bordered by two bays—Saint Louis Bay and Superior Bay—and sits within the two rivers—the Nemadji and the Saint Louis. Its neighboring city across the bay is Duluth, Minnesota. The two cities form what is called the Twin Ports and share a harbor, one of the most important on all of the Great Lakes.

Growing up in Superior, our home was down in the low end of the city. Duluth was up above us to the northwest and, of course, in Minnesota. I used to look up the hill at the city of Duluth, thinking *That's where the rich people live*. We were what I called the "grubby people" of the area; they were the more fortunate. They lived above us, up there on the hill in Duluth.

My ancestors came from Scotland. There is still a Grant clan there. My mother was a Kielley, which is Irish, so basically I am Scotch Irish, although my mother's mother was a Swede, so there is some Swedish blood in there, too.

The name Grant goes back to the Spanish Armada, and somewhere in there is a little Spanish, too. We didn't keep any records to verify the claims, but I did find out some of our family came from Scotland across Nova Scotia in through Canada. Some journeyed through Wisconsin at Sioux Falls, Marie, Ontario.

My dad was born and raised on an Indian reservation in northern Wisconsin called Odanah, which raises the question of whether I have any Indian blood in me. My uncle always called me a "blue-eyed Indian." My heritage never has been very clear to me, but I do remember that my family always had a lot of Indian friends, mostly Dad's. They came to our house from Odanah on a bus or train and visited us often in Superior.

When we lived on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, I remember they would come and sit on the back steps. My mother would open the door in the morning, and there they were. They never knocked on the door; they just sat there. Sometimes it would scare my mother half to death.

I was never quite sure exactly why they came, but they would always stay to say hello to Dad. To my mind, it seemed as if they came all that distance to get one of two things: either an egg sandwich or a quarter. If my dad was home, they would visit with him, but if he wasn't home, they would be gone—eggs or a quarter, and then off they went. I can remember them sitting on those steps just as clear as if it were this morning.

It's funny how the memory works. Some things of the past just vanish and are lost forever, and

others never fade. The geography of Superior remains instilled in my memory after all these years. There was a 1<sup>st</sup> Street, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, and as Superior grew, the streets grew. This Street was the main route from the lake, and that's where the town of Superior really began. Beyond that, toward the water, were the wharfs on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. In order to move uptown, you had to move up in the street numbers, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> and so on.

I was too young to now remember when my family lived on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, but I know where our house was located because I used to run that part of town as a kid. We moved to 6<sup>th</sup> Street when I was in the first grade. We were more fortunate than many of the other people in town because of my dad's job; he was a fireman. It was during the Depression, and although he never made a lot of money, it was enough for us to live on. He worked hard and had a good reputation around town. I really looked up to him.

My dad was about 5'10", athletic, and took pride in his physical appearance. He used to throw open his chest and take deep breaths. "Do this. It's good for you," he would say. He had an easy way about him that everyone liked. He was also very good at remembering people's names and knew everyone in town. He had a real presence about him and was well liked. When my dad walked into a room, everyone noticed. There was just something about him that stood out. He had a wonderful personality.

When he got to be captain at the fire department he got a uniform, and he was very proud of it because he came from nothing. He liked the status that the uniform carried, and he wore it everywhere. He would go to games, and of course he always got in free with that uniform.

One of the scariest moments of my life was watching my dad get carried out of a building during a fire. It was one of the biggest fires ever to occur in town, at the Hotel Superior in the center of town. It was a spectacular fire that ended up burning the hotel to the ground. The fire started in the afternoon, and I remember spending the entire night on the roof of the building across the street watching it burn. I never will forget it; it was one of the most incredible sights I have ever seen.

It was difficult for the firefighters to get any water to the building because the smoke was so thick and so horrific. Dad led the team of firemen who went into the building and was overcome with smoke inhalation. He was very fortunate to come around quickly and turned out to be all right. In fact, he eventually returned to fight the fire.

The whole episode was horrible for me to watch. I will never forget seeing my dad carried out of that building, the fire blazing around him. I cannot begin to express what I was feeling at the time. To see him in danger was devastating.

My father was my hero, but personality-wise, I took more after my mother. She had two brothers about my size, but she was only about 5'5" or so. She came from a poor family and had a very difficult life growing up. Sometimes when she talked about her past, she would cry because things had been so tough for her. But she never complained. She was a very good mother, and I knew she always worried about me. She always wanted the best for me, and I never doubted her love.

I didn't date any girls in high school, and I suspect my mother thought I might be gay. I mean, I never dated. I never brought any girls home and never went out. I didn't have a car and spent most of my time playing sports, in the woods, or at the pool hall with my friends. Those were my priorities at the time. There were dances, but I never learned how to dance. My mother was always concerned about that. "Aren't you going to the dance?" she would ask. "Don't you want to see any of the girls? What about the mixer, aren't you going? Why not?" This concerned her, but it was never a concern for me. I had other things to do.

Once a girl gave me a scarf as a Christmas gift. It was about 10 days before Christmas, and obviously the girl wanted a present in return. "What are you going to get her?" my mother asked. I could still hear the question. "I'm not going to get her anything," I told her. "What do you mean? That's a nice scarf, and you have to get her something," she told me. I said, "Mom, if I get her a present, she will think we are going together or something like that. So because I'm not interested, I'm not going to do it."

Well, my mother went out and bought a present for the girl from me. It's what mothers do, and she was a good mother.

I had two brothers, Jim and Jack, both of them quite a bit younger than me. When I was in high school, they were in grade school. Jim liked the outdoors but was not very athletic. Jack was much younger, so we didn't spend much time together as children.

When our family was able to move up from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street, that put us about six blocks from the lake. It was a little better area of town. There were railroad tracks near our house that went down to the lake, and I spent a lot of time playing on and around them. The track beds were filled with crushed rocks. I loved to throw rocks and I threw them at everything. I threw at telephone poles, I threw at cans, I threw at bottles in the water, I threw at trees and signs. I bet I spent half of my youth throwing rocks. I walked up and down those tracks thousands of times throwing rocks at anything and everything I could.

As I think back, it is likely the reason I could seemingly throw a baseball forever and never get a sore arm. I built my arm up as a kid throwing rocks. I would carry certain ones, good throwing rocks in my pocket, so I was always prepared. I made games out of it. I used to toss a can out on a porch nearby and throw and throw at that can, and see how many times I could hit it. Or maybe I would be throwing at a telephone pole and I wouldn't go home until I had hit that pole 10 times in a row. No supper for me until I had hit it 10 times. I threw for accuracy but also for fun. There's no doubt it was a major factor in my later success as a pitcher.

Moving to 6<sup>th</sup> Street was a big move up in status for our family. Although I suppose we were never really considered poor, the fact was that we really didn't have anything much to speak of. Then again, everybody else we knew was that way too. It seemed that no one really had any of the extras, but we all got along. We had good friends and good neighbors.

As I got older, the Great Depression came—everyone was poor then. When my dad got paid, he didn't get money or a check to cash; he got paid in what was called "script." The city didn't have any money back then, so he and others would take the script, which was basically an IOU, and some of the stores in town would let you buy what you needed with the script. Eventually, the city would come up with the money for my dad and he would pay his bill. The problem was, a lot of the stores didn't take script, so that often made things difficult. But we got by, as did most of the people we knew.

Even though there was always food on the table, I vividly recall a hungry feeling. Maybe it was just being an adolescent, but I was always looking around for extra food. I'd look for anything that might have been left over from meals, things like that. If I could find something, I would eat it. Generally, though, there was never anything left over, so most of my years growing up, I was hungry. My stomach always felt empty.

I had a lot of great experiences growing up, for a kid who never had much to speak of. But then again, I never knew anyone who had much of anything back then. I can recall at the beginning of each week my mother counted out the food on the table. She would have one, two, three, four potatoes and

all the carrots and other food all laid out, everything we would eat for the week. When it was gone was gone. We always ate carefully and never had many leftovers.

She would go to the store and buy just enough to get by. We would get one piece of corn and half of this and half of this and half that. And we rarely had any meat. Later on, at training tables, I got all the meat I could ever want. I rarely eat meat anymore for that reason.

I was always happy, but there were certainly things I just did without. Money never seemed to be a major problem, and it was not something I dwelled upon, but the fact was I never had any. I would try to earn money whenever I got the opportunity, because I never got any money from my parents. Whenever I went anywhere I would walk in the street rather than on the sidewalk because I had a better chance of finding some change.

There was a little corner store in town near where we lived, and I would go there with, if I was lucky, a nickel to spend. I must have been about seven at the time, and I recall being excited about having that nickel. But I would never spend all of it. I would go to the store and spend a long time figuring out how to part with three cents. I always wanted to come home with two pennies' change in my pocket. I remember saving the money even more vividly than the joy of getting that candy.

Later on, I remember it was a big deal when a Bridgeman's Ice Cream Parlor was built in Superior. I love ice cream. After basketball practice I would walk by Bridgeman's and stop for ice cream. That was again, it wasn't just for ice cream; the girls who worked there were from my high school. I would get a malted milk worth a quarter for a nickel and drink that malted milk while I walked home. That was a big thing. I can remember going into the store and first looking around all the seats and on the floor for any loose change.

My dad never had any money either, so it was a huge deal to me whenever I had anything to spend. I guess that's why I was so careful with it: I never knew when I was going to have any money again. I never had anything like an allowance. Any money I had I earned from doing something for someone. On rare occasions, my grandfather would give me a small amount of money. Once in a while, he might give me a quarter, which was huge for me.

Looking back on my childhood, it's hard to determine for sure whether those things I experienced as a kid impacted my life, but I think they did. For example, growing up we lived in very small two-bedroom houses, and we never had enough space. I grew up sleeping on a couch in the main room of the house all through high school. When I got married, it was very important to me that each of my kids had their own room, because I never had one of my own.

As a kid, we had to make our own entertainment. I remember getting a BB gun when I was around 10 and spending a tremendous amount of time sneaking up on squirrels, pigeons, and rabbits. I would crawl through the weeds, hunting with my gun. A fellow that lived behind us had a chicken coop, so there were a lot of sparrows around all the time, and I would shoot sparrows. Also nearby was a neighbor with a two-story barn that housed pigeons. Sometimes I would sit there for hours waiting for those pigeons.

I also made slingshots. Someone told me once that the best slingshots were made from willow branches. So every time I walked by a willow I would look for the perfect slingshot branch. If I found one, I would make sure to cut it out. With the branch in hand, I would then find an old inner tube from a tire and cut the rubber to attach to it. And I have to say, even to this day, if I see an old shoe, I look at the tongue and think, *Now that would be a great pouch for a slingshot.*

All those rocks I used to keep in my back pocket were perfect ammunition for my slingshot. I g

pretty good at using it. Then, when I got the gun, I thought I was a big-game hunter. I went out hunting every chance I could.

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That was basically my recreation, except for baseball.

We kids did play a lot of neighborhood baseball. It was the only sport where we could find a place to play. There were no basketball courts in town, and football was not as popular as it is today, so we played baseball. A lot of it was just playing catch, though at times we would play “pepper”—hitting the ball back and forth to one another—if we could find some sort of backstop to keep the ball in play.

One day, when we were playing ball in the streets, the ball rolled into a storm sewer. We were pretty sure we could get it out by raising this huge manhole cover. Well, the cover fell on my finger. I can't begin to explain how much it hurt. My finger was squashed under that cover, and we couldn't lift it again. So I sat there with my finger mangled and hollered at my friend to go get someone to help. It hurt like crazy. I didn't know if it was smashed or broken or what. Luckily, a car came by and a man stopped and lifted the cover.

There was a hospital nearby and the man took me there and the doctors put a little tape on it. They didn't even take an X-ray. They just told me it was likely broken, so they put a couple of Popsicle sticks on my finger to splint it, and that was it. I was shocked. It hurt so bad I thought they would have to cut it off. But I survived. It was a part of being a kid, I guess.

The biggest problem was finding enough kids to play a real game. If there were only two of us, we would be limited to playing catch. If I was by myself, I would throw a baseball up on top of a building and catch it when it came off the roof. I wasn't much for sitting around, so I always seemed to find something to keep me busy.

There were no real recreation departments in town, although on occasion there were some organized neighborhood events. I remember winning a marbles championship once. I was pretty good at shooting marbles. I had coffee cans full of them. But other than that, we kids provided all of the recreation for ourselves.

It is amazing what you can do to entertain yourself when you have nothing specific set up to demand your attention. We didn't have television, and going to the movies was really a big deal. Playing outside was my chief occupation.

The most traumatic thing to happen to me in my life at that time centered around a shoe store downtown Superior called Kinney's Shoes. When school let out in June, they put a bicycle in the front window. It was a big, fancy bike. I remember it was green, and it had every possible accessory. It was gorgeous. If you bought a pair of shoes at the store, they gave you a number and put it in a barrel. And then before school started in the fall, they would draw a number out of that barrel, and whoever had that number would win the bike. I didn't have a bike, and I can't even begin to say how badly I wanted one. I would walk by that store window a thousand times thinking, *Boy, if I could ever have a bike like that, wouldn't that be something!*

The drawing was scheduled for a Saturday morning. I told my dad that I wanted to be there, I wanted a chance to win the bike. He thought that was okay and said he would take me. This was big. I really wanted that bike. Now, my dad worked for the fire department and his schedule had him working 24 hours on and 24 hours off. So he would get off work at 8:00 in the morning and come home after working 24 hours.

We had to be at the store at 9:00 and I wanted to be sure we got there on time, but there was a problem. Dad always wanted a big breakfast when he got home from work. This was really important

to him. He would have bacon, eggs, leftovers, coffee—the whole deal. So on the Saturday of the drawing, Dad got home about quarter after eight. I was sitting there waiting, but he had to eat breakfast. This made me nervous because we had to be there by nine.

I told him, “Dad, we have to be there by 9:00 for the drawing. We can’t be late.” And I remember him saying, “Well, we’ll get there. We’ll get there. Don’t worry about it. We have plenty of time.”

I don’t know what happened, but we got there late, about quarter after nine, and the guy from the store came running out and told my dad, “Harry, Harry, where have you been? Where have you been? Your kid had the winning number! I waited as long as I could. Your kid has been walking up and down here all summer long looking at that bike, and now his number is drawn and you’re not here! I had to give the bike to someone who was here!”

Well, I just about died right there on the spot. I was absolutely crushed! All this because my dad was late in getting us there. As bad as I felt about losing that bike, I felt almost as bad for my dad. He was devastated. “I mean, what were the chances of winning?” he kept asking.

That was the fall, and by spring I had a new bike. Now, it wasn’t that beautiful green bike from the window at Kinney’s, or anything like it, but it was a new bike nevertheless. I found out later that Dad had gone and purchased the new bike for me with five dollars down and five dollars a month until I had paid for it in full.

If baseball was the most popular sport at the time, then boxing was second. I was a huge boxing fan and I remember when Joe Louis knocked out Max Schmeling for the heavyweight championship of the world. I used to listen to the fights on our “trusty” radio, which worked about half the time, depending on how you turned it or held it.

I can still remember being at my friend’s house, listening to sounds coming over the radio as the legendary fight announcer Don Dunphy voiced the knockdown and the count. “And Schmeling is down,” came the call as we listened. My friend and I jumped up in the air and we were hitting one another in our excitement. In the celebration, I got knocked over, hit my head on the corner of a door and cut it wide open. I bled everywhere; it was quite the mess. Afterward, I went home and told my dad about Joe Louis and what he had done. Louis became my hero, and I gave some serious thought to becoming a professional prizefighter.

It didn’t take too long, though, for me to change my vocational dreams. But Joe Louis knocking out Max Schmeling was really something. Had I stayed with my original thoughts on boxing as a career, I suspect the cut from the door corner would have been the least of my worries. I have to laugh at the prospect because not only wasn’t I good at fighting, but I had a tendency to get mad when hit, and the more I’d throw all caution to the wind—not a good habit as a fighter. But I was a great fan. I used to listen to all the fights I could.

Billy “Kid” Conn was someone I followed. He was a great light-heavyweight fighter who won more than 60 professional fights. He became famous for his fights with Joe Louis. I remember when they went into the service; we waited for almost four years for them to get out and fight.

Conn had almost knocked out Louis in their previous match, so we waited on pins and needles for the big rematch to take place. Unfortunately, when they finally did fight again, Louis ended it quickly so it wasn’t quite the rematch it was cracked up to be.

I never missed a chance to go to a boxing match when I could. Many of the local Catholic high schools had boxing programs, as did the University of Wisconsin in Superior. Although I didn’t participate, the sport fascinated me. I loved the spirit and the passion. Later, I followed boxing at the

University of Minnesota and on television on *Friday Night Fights*.

I never went anywhere without a jackknife in my pocket. Really, my only possession was this knife—until later on when I made my slingshots and got my BB gun. I carried that knife to school with me every day, and no one ever said anything about it. We used to play the game mumblety-peg in the schoolyard. It was a great game requiring significant skill, and I got to be pretty good at it.

I wasn't the only one who carried a knife. In fact, most of the kids had one. But I don't recall any danger from them, even though we used to fight a lot as kids. We would have fistfights, get bloody, and be mad at the time. Then, by the next day, it was over. Once I was in a fight in the back of the school at lunchtime when the dean of students came by and saw us. I had a bloody nose and the other kid had a bloody nose, and all the dean said to us was, "Okay, come on now. Go in and get washed up and get to class."

We never had to go to the principal's office. We didn't get referred for a psychological evaluation. My parents didn't have to come to the school. It was simply, "Go get washed up and get to class." It was quite different than it is today. Nowadays, they probably would have had us in for counseling, trying to get to the roots of where our anger was coming from.

I lived on the north end of town for the most part growing up, and my family gradually moved from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 12<sup>th</sup> Street and finally to 15<sup>th</sup> Street, which is also known as Highway 2. The highway ran through town and was kind of the dividing line, everything above it being really uptown. By moving up to 15<sup>th</sup>, you were viewed a little differently. And if you ever got to 21<sup>st</sup> Street, well, you were the real elite. We never did.

At the time there was a lot of community separation, and we used this in playing baseball against each other. I would call someone in another area and have them get a team together, then we would meet and play them. It's how it all worked. Two teams playing from different neighborhoods in town made it very competitive.

I'd call this guy and he would call some guys and we would play ball. We might not have a full team, but we would play five-on-five or four-on-four or whatever we could do. We just played. There were never any umpires or anyone that officiated the games. We just played.

We found places to play. There were no manicured baseball fields or anything like that. Sometimes finding a good place to play was a problem. We might hit a ball up against a house or through a window, so we had to be careful. In the summer we could use the schoolyards, but during the school year, we had to find other places—church lawns, the courthouse lawn, and so on.

The advantage that we had that kids don't have today is that we had our own rules, and officiated our own games, and we learned how to get along with each other. We couldn't spend our time arguing if we wanted to play. We figured that out rather quickly.

The catcher would call the balls and strikes, and that's just the way it was. If the batter didn't swing at it and the catcher thought it was a strike, then it was a strike. If we argued the strikes and balls, the catcher would cut in on our time to play, so we accepted his judgment.

We made our own schedules, our own rules, and we resolved any problem that arose during the game ourselves. There was no adult there to make the decisions for us; there were no team sponsors. We had to come up with our own baseballs and our own bats. We had no uniforms. We played all the time and we loved every minute of it.

We were 12, maybe 13, and we played for the fun of it. When someone showed up, he went on our team or the other, and we just kept playing continuously. Sometimes we would play all day long.

We each had our own bat and glove. If it broke we put screws in it until we could afford to buy new one for \$2.00. The balls were often taped together with black friction tape to keep them in play. Eventually they wore out, but we always got the most out of everything we used. We didn't have choice.

We also enjoyed watching games. My dad had a concession stand at the local ballgames. The Northern League had a team in Superior that played against Duluth, Eau Claire, St. Cloud, Fargo, and some other towns in the region. With his job at the fire department and the schedule of 24 hours on and 24 hours off, he had time to do the side job.

Dad ran his stand, and I worked there, too, doing whatever needed to be done. We had hot dogs, candy, and other snacks. I filled pop cases and did all sorts of odd jobs. We rented out cushions for a nickel apiece, and afterward I would pick up the cushions from the stands.

Because of Dad's stand, I was connected to baseball all the time during the season. If I wasn't playing it during the day, I was working for my dad at the games at night or on the weekends. I was around the game all the time, and I loved it.

If someone hit a home run, I would go out and retrieve the ball. I did what a kid did at the ballpark. When I was a little older, if a ball was hit foul over the grandstand, my job was to get it. Sometimes this meant a fight was going to occur because someone had beaten me to the ball and they were going to keep it. But I was motivated. I used to get 50 cents a game for retrieving the foul balls, and I got most of them back.

Sometimes there might be a seven- or eight-game home stand. I wouldn't get paid until it was all over, and then I would get maybe as much as three or four dollars at one crack. That was really good money back then.

Dad would make hot dogs there in a great big kettle. When the games were over and everyone had left, we might still have a dozen or so hot dogs in the kettle. Dad would then take them out, wipe them off, and save them for the game the next day. I ate so many hot dogs as a kid that I got really sick of them. I never, and I mean never, eat hot dogs anymore.

Another food that I never eat is macaroni. My mother was a good cook and she used to make a lot of different kinds of meals, but many of them included some form of macaroni. She also made a lot with white bread. Those are the three things I do not eat: white bread, hot dogs, and macaroni.

Besides playing baseball and working the concession stand, one of the things I used to do was chase rats. Near the railroad tracks and behind our house were storm sewers. The water would run off the streets into the storm sewers and on to Lake Superior. The sewers were about six feet in diameter so you could walk inside them. They had openings to provide for ventilation, and rats would live in the storm sewers. Well, my friends and I used to go into the sewers and go after the rats. One guy would chase them to the end, and some of us would be waiting for them with hockey sticks and—well, you can guess the rest. Some of our group wouldn't go into the sewers with the rest of us. They were too squeamish, probably a little afraid of the rats, I suppose. But we thought it fun at the time.

Later, as we got older, we used .22 rifles to go after the rats in a garbage dump nearby. We would wait for them in the dark and then turn car lights on them and pick them off with our rifles. That was part of our recreation when we were in high school.

I used to hunt and fish whenever I could. I didn't have a car or any kind of transportation to get out of town, but I used to go as far as I could down the railroad tracks to the outskirts of town. Out there I could fish a little around the lakeshore or go into the woods to hunt.



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