

Chet Haliski Memorial Scholarship



Chet Haliski taught and coached at Marshfield High School from 1949 to 1982. He grew up in a blue-collar area of Portland during the Great Depression and became the first college graduate from a family of European immigrants. He considered himself extremely fortunate to have had many adults guide him out of a rough and tumble environment towards college and eventually to a successful teaching and coaching career in Coos Bay. He honored those adults who had a major impact on his life by convincing hundreds of Marshfield students that they could achieve quality lifetime goals no matter what their family and economic upbringing might be.

Haliski's mother, Mary, entered the United States in 1907 at Ellis Island, New York. She settled in the St. John's area northwest of Portland, Oregon where Chet Haliski was born in 1918. The St. John's area was predominantly a blue-collar community, similar to the environment of Coos Bay when Coos Bay was a thriving lumber and shipping town. His family made ends meet to get through the Great Depression. However, his family could not afford to send Chet to

college, the aspiration of most European immigrant families.

Fortunately, several college football coaches had their eye on Haliski, who was a star athlete for Roosevelt High School. He received offers from several universities to play football, including Stanford, Notre Dame and the University of Oregon. Haliski decided to play at Oregon so that he could remain near his mother in Portland.

At Oregon, he played for the legendary Oregon football coach, Len 'Cas' Casanova. Cas was the most influential of many father figures Haliski had while attending college. It was Cas who instilled in Haliski the belief that a person's background should not hold them back. Cas stressed the notion that hard work and the ability to get along with others would result in a rewarding life.

In 1941, Haliski was drafted in the third round of the National Football League's draft. But he passed up the \$500.00 contract and joined the service at the beginning of World War II. He wanted to be a pilot, but his lack of depth perception made passing flight training difficult. On his final flight for certification, he successfully completed the flight, but while taxiing back to the hangar, he went through a puddle, splashed the lieutenant in charge and was washed out of the Air Force and into the Marines. The retelling of the fateful flight story during health and PE classes, with the "whooshing" sound effects, earned Haliski the nickname of "Chet the Jet" among the Marshfield High School student body.

Haliski moved to Coos Bay in 1949 to teach and coach. He teamed up with fellow Pollocks Pete Susick, Walt Paczesniak and Tony Koreiva, who along with Dean Sheldon guided Pirate football to three consecutive state football championships in the 1950's. The coaches and community were very proud of the school's athletic accomplishments, but the coaches also felt that the most important aspects of sports were that each individual could learn how far they could push themselves and that all players would learn the importance of working with others to accomplish group goals. To give students more opportunities to learn these skills, Mr. Haliski started a very successful intramural program, and started the wrestling and baseball programs at Marshfield.

Mr. Haliski passed away in 2002. In December of that year, two former Pirates, Joe Shank and Jim Theiring, honored Mr. Haliski by funding and opening the Chet Haliski Fitness Center. The Chet Haliski Scholarship is one more way that Chet the Jet can honor those adults who helped guide him to a full and productive adult life. Hopefully, the scholarship will help students who otherwise might not feel they have the opportunities to succeed in life reach further and attain wonderful and rewarding goals.

