

*Douglas Hawley*

## **Behind The Undefeated Portland State College Bowl Team**

**O**n January 31, 1965 The Portland State College Bowl team went to New York to compete. The GE College Bowl, which started on radio in 1959 and ran until 1970, featured four member teams from colleges across the country. The team captain was Jim Westwood and the other members were Larry Smith, Mike Smith and Robin Freeman. The fiftieth anniversary approaches

I believe that it was months before the Portland Team went on its record setting undefeated run that I got involved. It may have been because roommate, Mike Smith, became involved and later made the team.

A bit of context may help. Colleges were involved in cultural upheaval at that time because of the Viet Nam war (for those who don't know, The Bay Of Tonkin was the 1960s Weapons of Mass Destruction) and the increasing use of drugs (yes I did inhale – legalize it). Of the sex, drugs and rock and roll popular at the time, I was mostly stuck with rock and roll. Portland State was largely four buildings and students mostly either drove from their parents' homes or lived in run down apartments close to campus. I started at home and later moved to a series of hovels. The gag then was your apartment would be torn down for: Choose one – I-405, Portland State or urban renewal. At the time of the training for the team Mike and I lived in a building run by an old couple within a block of PSC. I think that three lived on the second floor; the couple lived on the ground floor, and as the last one in I got the dungeon in the basement. Chasing the mice at night was entertaining. In those days a bunch of guys would split about \$100 in rent. I suppose that it is more expensive now.

Besides Mike, I hung out with the pretend Smith brother Larry. Mike at least appeared straight laced, sort of a Buddy Holly type, whereas Larry was totally camp and bitchy. He was as flaming as his orange hair. An aside – one of the most important learning experiences at Portland State was losing my high school inculcated bias against the sexually different. I didn't know Robin Freeman too well, but he did hang out with the same underground group that I knew, and was funny and sophisticated. His father was an international banker, I believe. I have never gotten to know the token Republican Jim Westwood well. I didn't hang out with any of the other alternates at the time.

I was amused by an older guy from Vancouver being excluded because he didn't fit the image of a college student. Robin, in his twenties, was bald and had a perpetual five o'clock shadow. He looked twenty years older than the guy who was kicked out.

There are at least three reasons that the Portland State team was so successful. Obviously, the team members were well chosen. Because of the strange way teams were queued for their appearance, we had a very long time for training between the time that we were chosen to compete and the time that we went on the air. Possibly most important, was the coach Ben Padrow. He turned the team into a machine.

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There was a woman who was friends with a couple of the team members. I have it on good authority that she is still attractive and lives in the area. I'd like to hear from her.

Mr. Padrow was portrayed in the 2007 obscure movie "Music Within" - in which he is played by actor Hector Elizondo - who helps a Viet Nam era vet with hearing problems incurred during the war. It got a fairly high 7.3 on the movie website IMDB. Like so many on the team Mr. Padrow died early.

To over generalize, the team was split 3 to 1 on the cultural and political divide, with Jim being the 1, but I don't think that there were any personal conflicts. For the last contest, I had been scheduled for flying to New York with the team as the alternate, but Mr. Padrow and perhaps some others thought that a stronger alternate was needed because of the possibility that Mike might not be able to go on. One of the more gratifying moments of my life was when my friends on the team held out for me going.

Flying to New York was my first commercial flight, although when I was very young, I got very sick in a small plane. Ironically, it was one of the accompanying faculty that used up the barf bag on our flight. Once there, we saw the play "Incident At Vichy" by Arthur Miller. Mostly what I remember about it is that you didn't want to be circumcised in Nazi territory. As a very unsophisticated fellow I was intimidated by the subway and walking around New York in general.

I was present at the run through before the program. I was surprised that the host, Robert Earle, smoked - Salems I think. He had replaced Allen Ludden who had moved to another show, and is mostly known now as the late husband of Betty White.

Much to everyone's delight, Mike went on and Portland State finished undefeated.

After I graduated in 1965, the only team members I saw were Mike Smith and Jim Westwood. When I visited the campus a year later I ran into Mike. I had never known how serious his illness was. I had thought that cystic fibrosis was similar to asthma and just limited one's activities. He died shortly thereafter. After I moved back to the Portland area in 1997, I had a College Bowl reunion party with Jim and alternates Al Kotz and Marv Foust.

Larry Smith died as I was trying to get in touch with him.

I emailed Jim after I saw that he was a lawyer in a case in which he wanted to limit sex shows. His reply contained the only reference to "pudenda" that I have ever seen or heard in a written or spoken conversation.

Al, Marv and I make up the Lake Oswego Three alternates on the team. Various sources list different alternates to the team, but other than Al and Marv I've had no contact with the others in about fifty years. It is somewhat interesting and different that the Portland team and alternates were made up of a bunch of white guys, unlike most of the teams. We did have sexual orientation diversity.

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After our run was complete Governor and Mrs. Hatfield hosted us in Salem. The lucky alternates got to sit with Antoinette, who was much better company than Mark because she didn't have to be political.

Many, many years later after knocking around the country, I returned to the Portland area and volunteered at Booktique, a non-profit bookstore in Lake Oswego which supports the Lake Oswego library. Mr. Hatfield came into shop from time to time. One time I asked him if he remembered the celebration in Salem. His response was that I had gone gray. I told him he had also. I'm reasonably certain he had no idea who I was, but decided I probably wasn't gray in college, so it was a safe comment.

As a former actuary, I'm intrigued that the somewhat smart live longer than the very smart. At least based on a very small sample of which only one team members survives, but at least three alternates are above the ground (as this is written).

Although not a team member, my involvement in the GE College Bowl was one of the highlights of my life.

*Thanks to Alan Kotz and Jim Westwood for reviewing this article. Want to know more? Do an internet search on "GE College Bowl Portland State College".*