

*Note: This is the narrative I wrote to nominate my brother, Allan, for the Oceanside High School Hall of Fame for “Athletics.” Though it is about my brother it is also a reflection on my life with him. It is a story of an intertwined relationship. Here I document the positive highlights for the nomination. This is so important to be told so they are not lost, even as we know there is more to be said about a complicated life and relationship. Thus, this narrative is a personal memoir of sorts, through the lens of my “big brother”.*

*Harlan Stelmach*

*April 2026*

## **REASONS FOR INDUCTING ALLAN JOSEPH STELMACH INTO THE OCEANSIDE HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME**

Allan Stelmach’s place in the Oceanside High School’s Hall of Fame for “Athletics” rests on his “triple threat” history. It was not just his accomplishments on the field or court of play but in his community service to youth athletics and how he represented his philosophy of sports in his numerous coaching roles: Field, Community, and Philosophy. The specifics of each of these areas are outlined in the “Achievement” section of this nomination. (Not included with this version of the narrative, but available if interested.) This narrative overview of each of these three “triple threat” areas will provide the story behind his achievements. I am aware of the numerous inductees for “Athletics” who had sterling high school, college, and pro careers on the field, either as a player or coach. What is praiseworthy about Allan’s history is how he remained committed to the world of athletics and a healthy role in all of his activities in the realm of sports—as a player, as a coach, and as a citizen. It is the story of a life that intersects with much of Oceanside and Carlsbad sports history, as Allan devoted many years to coordinating and coaching community baseball teams. Yes, as his brother I have a special interest in documenting his achievements, but also as his brother, I have been able to have a front-row seat to tell a deeper story behind the headlines, a story that

reveals Allan's devotion to a healthy approach to athletics, often behind the limelight—a commitment to the deepest meaning of “sportsmanship,” both on and off the field.

## **On The Field**

### **High School**

His career on the field, particularly in football and baseball while at Oceanside High School (at the time it was Oceanside-Carlsbad High School, OCHS) was outstanding by any comparison to some of the best players before and after his time at OCHS. His playing time was limited to 2 ½ years, as he transferred from St. Louis in 1954 in the spring of his sophomore year. He led the Pirates to two Avocado League Football Championships in 1954 and 1955—the first football championships in the history of the high school. (p. 17 in the “Achievement” section of this nomination) Allan was an All-League Breitbard recipient his senior year at quarterback, (Document 7, p.9) He was voted the captain of the team by his teammates. In addition, he was awarded the “Most Valuable Player” trophy by the Blade Tribune (p.23). This was a significant honor, given that his teammate, Otis Foster, was named the League's “Player of the Year” in 1954 and 1955. Allan was both the on-field and off-field leader. Coach John Simcox had confidence in Allan's leadership and knowledge of the game, allowing him to call his own plays. Simcox referred to Allan as an athletic genius, especially in his play-calling ability, which stemmed from his quick understanding and total recall of the whole playbook.

His sports exploits at OCHS included lettering in two other sports—three years in baseball and two in basketball. Arriving in the spring of 1954, he quickly signed up to play baseball. First assigned to the Junior Varsity team, his talents were quickly recognized, and he was immediately moved to the Varsity team as the first-string third baseman. He could also play catcher if needed. His strong throwing arm was notable, which also caught the eye of the football coach, who, in the summer of 1954, tapped him as his future quarterback.

The “Achievement” section largely documents his 1955 football season. With the 1950s in the non-digital age, I have had to rely on press clippings that were maintained by his family. The family in the fall of 1954 was still adjusting to the re-location to Oceanside. There was little time, I remember, to document Allan's sports history in 1954. The assembled documents tell a detailed and rich story of Allan and the achievements of his teams in the 1950s.

The “Achievement” section also documents his baseball and basketball career at OCHS. The numerous news clippings also help tell the story of his role on the baseball

field and basketball court. In baseball, he lettered for three years, largely playing third base. However, in his senior year, 1956, he moved to first base due to a shoulder injury that carried over from football. He was named to the First Team All-League his senior year at first base. He led his team in hitting, with a .367 batting average! Throughout his career, he always hit for power. The two home-run game documented in the news clips may best sum up his baseball career. The March 7, 1956, *Blade Tribune* article (p. 29) confirms his “prodigious pokes”: “Al Stelmach clouted two booming homers yesterday to drive in all his teams’ runs as the Oceanside-Carlsbad High School Pirates nipped El Cajon’s Braves, 5-4 in a seven-inning contest played on the winner’s diamond.” The Braves’ pitcher pitched a strong game, “but he couldn’t dispose of Stelmach, and that hurt more than any other single factor. The veteran third baseman powered a 350-footer in the first frame...and repeated the stunt in the third frame.” Again, the OCHS baseball team was also Avocado League champions.

Allan’s basketball career was also worthy of praise. The two articles assembled in the “Achievement” section give testimony to his importance on the team. In one article (p.25) Coach Barnes referred to Allan as his “top defender.” Another article (p. 26) bemoaned that the teams’ chances to win the title were in jeopardy because Allan was sidelined with a cracked ankle. I wish I had spent more time conversing with him about his basketball career, but it is clear from all the documentation that on the field and the court, Allan was a “triple threat,” excelling in football, baseball and basketball. When asked which sport was his favorite in an article for the school newspaper, as “The Pirate of the Week,” he said he could not choose, and so he listed football, baseball and basketball. (p. 30)

## **Post High School**

His football and baseball career continued at Claremont Men’s College where he was granted a full academic scholarship (p.2). The team was the combined Pomona College and Men’s College team at the time. He was able to adjust to a new system at Claremont, the single-wing formation. However, as the team’s “tailback,” he was again cast in the role as “quarterbacking” the team. The tailback not only called the plays but had the multiple roles of running, deceptive handing off, and of course passing. This was a NCAA Division III school. Yet the SCAIC was nationally known as one of the Leagues that produced many professional football and baseball players. Of some interest, Allan played with Kris Kristofferson, a great athlete and Rhodes Scholar, who attended Pomona College at the time. Given that he had suffered several knee injuries playing football, Allan’s football career was cut short after his sophomore year in college. When he transferred to UC Berkeley for a year, he caught the eye of the football coach at Cal when he was passing the football to friends for fun. The coach

wanted him to consider joining the team. His injuries prevented it, but it was a poetic ending to an outstanding high school and college career in football.

In the spring of 1957, he played baseball at Claremont and helped the team capture the League championship. His son David, a future student at Whittier College, has stories from Allan about his play on the Claremont team, especially his home run prowess when playing against Whittier College. He hit what he thought would be a home run, but Whittier had a left field fence that was on top of an embankment, making the fence 20 feet longer. He settled for a double. This is factual for I played for the Whittier College baseball team in 1967, and the left field was still the same. In some kind of interesting family lore, I also hit a ball that landed on the same spot. My Whittier SCIAC team produced five professional players, and two were major leaguers. It is likely that his Claremont team had a similar cast of standout players who went on to play professionally.

Returning home to Oceanside when realizing UC Berkeley was not going to be the best location to complete his college degree, baseball became his passion. He still had a desire to be on the field. For the next few years, he helped to unleash a fifteen-year experience of semi-professional baseball in Oceanside. There were no leagues available to play baseball for the older athlete. An American Legion team had disbanded. In 1960, he convinced our Dad, Joe Stelmach, to raise money to create a town team, the "Buccaneers," to play in the San Diego County Recreation League. Uniforms, equipment, and League fees were donated by many town merchants.

This was a League that allowed a small quota of former or even current professional players to be on the teams in the summer or winter seasons. Allan recruited his former OCHS teammates, and the team began playing. He helped his Dad manage the team, for Joe Stelmach, as a soccer player, had never played baseball. Allan was the catcher for the team. He caught many good pitchers, and some of the teammates were very talented baseball players who came from the local Marine Corps base. A former minor League player and local boy, Ken Meyer, became the main pitcher for the team for many seasons. At that time, Ken was still able to reach the mid-nineties in his pitching velocity. In many ways this was a highlight of Allan's baseball career and an example of his athletic ability to catch such an accomplished pitcher. The team became a powerhouse, winning League championships and 90% of their games. The Buccaneers evolved into a North County League that our Dad created. It included teams from Vista, Escondido, Carlsbad, The Pala Indian Reservation, and Camp Pendelton. Future major League star, Chis Chambliss, a sports hero of OHS, played on the Buccaneers before he signed with Cleveland, becoming the "Rookie of the Year" and eventually a World Series Star for the Yankees. The news article by Steve Schoufield acknowledges the importance of the role of the Buccaneers in Oceanside

sports history. (Document 41, p.45) For six years Allan created an OHS baseball scholarship to honor his Dad.

Yes, there were dreams of making it big in baseball for Allan. The Dodgers had just moved to L.A. in 1958, and scouts set up recruitment camps in California. One tryout was in Oceanside at the old recreation field with the big adobe wall in left field. Allan showed up with about two dozen hopefuls. During hitting drills, each player was allowed about ten pitches. Four of the pitches Allen hit bounced off the adobe wall. After some nice comments by the scouts, with no guarantees, the scouts left. No follow-up. This moment was close to the end of Allan's playing career. Again, his knees took a beating as a catcher. This tryout was another good memory to have at the end of one's playing career, one that spanned playing, leadership roles and helping to initiate the "Buccaneers," which became an institution in Oceanside, until our Dad retired in the 1980s from the League leadership. It was a good run for Allan on the field and also on the court.

### **Community Service**

After marrying Suzanne Cundiff and finishing his bachelor's degree in philosophy at the University of Texas, Allan and Suzanne returned to Oceanside in the late 1960s with their first son Roger, eventually moving permanently to Carlsbad. It was here that Allan played a significant role in youth sports, especially when his sons, Roger and David, became accomplished athletes. He was very supportive of their careers, volunteering to coach their Little League, Pony and Colt League teams. He also volunteered to play major leadership roles to help sustain and enhance sports in Carlsbad and the North County. Two examples give a sense of Allan's community service work in the field of sports. The news clippings give testimony to his service, which are outlined in the "Achievements" section of this nomination form.

Of particular note was when the Carlsbad Pony League ran out of funds and was on the verge of closing. He became the President of the League, soliciting donations for uniforms and equipment. (pp. 39 & 40) No doubt he channeled what he had asked his Dad to do for him. In this position, he hosted the Pony League All-Star Tournament in 1981. By stabilizing the Carlsbad Pony League, Allan gave Carlsbad the honor to host the tournament for the first time in 15 years. His contribution to the Pony League was not limited to the mechanics of the League. According to the Treasurer of the League at the time, Carol McKee, he was instrumental with her in desegregating the teams. In conversation with Allan's daughter, Kathryn, McKee said, "He thought that there shouldn't be so much segregation on the teams, and that was something important we

worked on to resolve.” In reviewing the diversity of the teammates on his various teams and the friendships he had and sustained over the years, it was no surprise that he was committed to racial justice—a commitment he often voiced, as I will document below in the “Coaching and Philosophy” section.

Community service, however, was not new to Allan, for he also chaired the MiraCosta College Advancement Council in 1978. According to the newspaper coverage at the time, “the 500 member council was designed to assist in uniting the residents of the Mira Costa District in various areas of college development and assist the college in special projects as well as to organize and sponsor programs that would benefit the college, its students, faculty and staff ... such as an annual medal of honor banquet recognizing student scholastic achievement.” (Document 38, p.41)

His support of sports also extended to youth football. As a member of the Carlsbad Rotary Club, he helped to ensure the success of the North County’s East-West Charity Football Game in 1981 as the Public Relations Chair for the Game. The leaders of the Rotary Club organized graduating seniors to display their talents to benefit local charities. The game attracted the top players and local coaches, such as Herb Meyer from El Camino High, who volunteered to coach a team, also a former OHS football coach. The robust attendance was a testimony to the publicity and good will engendered by the efforts of the Rotary Club. (p.44) I recall visiting on the occasion of the game and sitting in the VIP booth listening to Allan describe many of the players’ statistics and achievements and where they were headed to college. He had developed both knowledge and personal relations with many of the players, their coaches, and families. No doubt his professional life in sales gave him the skills and the personal touch to encourage participation in the game. His pride in the accomplishment of the Rotary club matched his passion for advancing the futures of many young athletes. His interest in supporting young athletes was most evident in his coaching career.

### **Coaching with a Healthy Sports and Life Philosophy**

Allan was the complete sports representative and diplomat, with accomplishments on the field, in the community, and with a well-developed philosophy of the appropriate role of sports in society, particularly for youth sports. The total athlete. Yes, for Allan there were competitive moments, but never just a focus on winning.

As a leader on the field, Allan exemplified the importance of sportsmanship being a team endeavor. He often deferred his own glory by give scoring honors to his teammates, especially at the goal line, often handing off the football so that Otis Foster or John Gomez could make the touchdown. In a brief oral history recorded by his daughter, Kathryn, he gave testimony to this philosophy: “I had the privilege of playing

with a lot of fine athletes. And sometimes you think of yourself as really being a great athlete, but great athletes will tell you that if it wasn't for the other guys around you who did so many good things not only for you but for the team, you would not be getting the recognition that you did.”

This philosophy was most apparent in his coaching in youth leagues. One moment is very personal. When he returned to Oceanside for a brief period before leaving for Texas, he coached my Babe Ruth Team with another OHS star quarterback, Keith Jenson. He took the lead in making it clear that baseball was just part of life, but it was the occasion to put in practice many values of sportsmanship, team play, and discipline. Our team won the championship. He held on to the trophy from that team as documented in a photo in the “Achievement” section of this nomination. (p 32) Many young athletes wanted to be coached by Allan. At Allan’s memorial service in January, a former teammate on that team made a special point to attend the memorial and give a tribute to the life lessons learned under Allan’s coaching. With more than coincidence, this person also played for the Oceanside Buccaneers, many years after Allan concluded his playing time. But he also was proud of the trophies he won during these years, also shown in the “Achievement” section. (pp. 31 & 33)

Allan lived his sports philosophy at times to the detriment of his personal self-interest. As a student at the University of Texas in Austin, he had decided to become a coach. Almost completing his requirements in the coaching track of his major, he was assigned a football coaching position in a Texas middle school. Texas is notorious for a fanatical approach to football. At the time, the Dallas Cowboys and major Texas collegiate teams influenced middle-school and high school teams to run the same programs as they did. This created a unified system to channel athletes in Texas to be ready for future play. The stories about Texas football also revealed that winning was often the sole purpose of the game. An obvious conflict occurred with Allan’s practicum. Without the support of his major advisors, he switched his major to Philosophy instead. The message was clear: athletics needed to be understood in the context of life as a whole. Philosophy was a natural shift for him given his bent for a thoughtful life that merged action and contemplation. The Philosophy Department at the time in the 1960s was becoming one of the most rigorous in the nation.

In the same oral history in 2022, Allan, with the prompting of his daughter Kathryn, a talented writer and journalist, reflected on his personal philosophy: “I think one of the biggest lessons I ever learned in my life is that you are who are not necessarily what you want to be, but you are who you are because of other people who surround you.” He further reflected on the world today: “Some want to ignore others or their ideas or suggestions just because they’re of a different race, different religion, different creed. Just listen. It may not be to your liking or your philosophical thinking or

religious thinking. Just listen ... One thing I learned a long time ago: if you shut people down and you don't listen, what have you done? If you don't listen, you don't ever learn." It is clear from his tenure as the President of the Pony League that he lived this philosophy when he worked to desegregate the teams. His 1981 commendation from the City of Carlsbad was no doubt the result of his efforts to use sports to support the common good (p. 43).

I will end this narrative with his coaching career in youth sports where his sports philosophy and personal philosophy merged. These are stories from his sons, that also reflect how important his family was to him.

Even though his dream to be a high school coach never materialized, he did have a distinguished coaching career in youth sports, largely surrounding his two sons, David and Roger. In all there were about eight years of coaching teams:

1. Coached my (Harlan's) Championship Moose Lodge team in 1961, Oceanside
2. Coached the "Oceanside Buccaneers" as a Player Coach in 1959-1962
3. Co-coached son David's 1970s Carlsbad Minor League team, "Guidotti Arco"
4. Coached son Roger's 1980/81 Carlsbad Pony League team
5. Coached son Roger's 1982/83 Carlsbad Colt League team

In every case he did not shy away from doing more than his share even beyond the coaching duties, both as a community leader and as a parent. Besides helping to found a team, or becoming a League President, he helped to gather sponsors for Little League teams in Carlsbad. Again, if his Dad could do it, so could he. In addition, he was a constant support and inspiration for his two sons. He rounded out his "athletic career" at "home base," so to speak. This story is best told in the words of his sons.

### **Son, David Stelmach:**

"It was a collective coaching effort [for his minor league team] since he was coming from [his job at radio stations] KSON (mid to late '70s) and KYXY ('80s) all the way from San Diego. 'Move up in the box and shorten your grip on the bat when you are behind in the count' (choke up) was his usual 2-Strike philosophy. 'Easier to put the bat on the ball,' and it usually worked. Breaking balls were easier to see and sometimes contact before they broke. When my Little League team, MacDonald's Pharmacy went 17-1 and subsequently won the Championship, he organized the party at That Pizza Place right after (another famous Carlsbad sponsor) and had 'We Are the Champions' pumped loudly over the restaurant's sound system."

“Essentially, he just showed up for all our events, in a dress shirt and tie, sometimes sport coat depending on the weather, and of course pressed slacks. And he never shied from giving us advice along the fence near the batter's circle. And it was always helpful. He taught Roger and me about using the scorebook in the San Diego Padre programs how to keep score, accurately tracking each batter's stats. He also showed up, he made the Saturday drive with Suzanne... to every Whittier College Poet football game on Saturdays and took me and a buddy on the team my sophomore and junior years out to eat, either before or after, and usually just listened to my “plan of attack.” Which was rather laid back. But he was intense. Roger can also attest to this, as a fan, you could see it in his eyes and definitely hear it in his voice from the bleachers.”

### **Son, Roger Stelmach:**

“Our Colt league team was filled with a number of future all-CIF players, and once my friends and players found out my Dad was coaching, we had a waiting list of players wanting to join and play for him. He never played favorites among the players, and I still remember him throwing batting practice for hours until every player on the team got enough swings.”

“Some off my greatest memories were listening to his stories about hitting along with sports in general during our weekend trips down to the San Diego school of baseball academy in 1983 and 1984 where I received private hitting and pitching sessions from professional players and coaches from the Padres. Tim Flannery, the third base coach of the Padres at the time was one of my instructors, and twice I had a young player as a guest instructor by the name of Tony Gwynn (yes, the future hall of fame player).”

“I cannot tell you the number of times he came down from the stands to the fence near the dugout and the on-deck circle to give me a subtle tip of something that he saw from the other team's pitcher that would help me in my next at bat.”

“Lastly I spent many years coaching my three boys in every sport imaginable for over twelve years in soccer, basketball, flag football, and of course many years of baseball, and I think back on all those years coaching my boys and I am so proud that I was able to spend the time with my boys just as my Dad was with me, and I attribute the fact that all my coaching skills and abilities started with my Dad, and I am so proud that I was able to share some of his knowledge and pass it on to all my boys.”

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Passing on knowledge of the game in the context of a healthy sports philosophy that extended beyond the field of play was perhaps Allan's most signature contribution as a “triple threat athlete.”

On another personal note, I believe I learned the confidence as an athlete and as a student of the game largely from my brother. This led not only to how I played

basketball and baseball myself, but what I accomplished for the sports careers of my two daughters, particularly in their softball careers. In the summer of 1981, the same year Allan became the President of the Pony League, I founded the Albany Berkeley Girls Softball League (ABGSL), that still exists today, with over 300 girls. It was founded to be healthy competition for young girls—character development along with advanced softball skills to allow the athletes to compete at the highest collegiate level. It is a League that is acclaimed in many articles and testimonials. It would have been impossible for me to create this League without the support and guidance of my brother's approach to sports. Of course, there are many other factors that contributed to the success of the ABGSL, but there is an essential kernel that was alive in my efforts that came from Allan, and no doubt our Dad too.

The measure of a total athlete, I believe comes from the legacy that they leave behind. Allan's legacy still lives on in the lives of the many athletes and coaches he touched. I think it is fitting to help add to this legacy by inducting Allan Joseph Stelmach into the Oceanside High School Hall of Fame, so that others may benefit by his story. It is a story that goes well beyond just him. The era of the 1950s deserves more attention—to tell the story of Otis Foster, John Gomez, Bruce Hake, and so many others.

Serendipitously, or maybe ordained, I recently began reading the autobiography of Hank Aaron, *I Had a Hammer*. The first chapter is a poignant reflection by Aaron. He recounted all the racism and hate mail he received in his playing career, even as he felt blessed to play in the major leagues. His experience made him vow never to let down what he and Jackie Robinson agreed to: never be content with the injustice in the world. In Aaron's words in 1991: "I should never allow myself to be satisfied with the way things are. I can't let Jackie down—or my people, or myself. The day I become content is the day I cease to be anything more than a man who hit home runs."

Perhaps the greatest baseball player, the complete person in the field of sports, could not have said it any clearer. The measure of the great athlete is his total contribution to sports and beyond. With the spirit of genuine "sportsmanship" extending throughout his life and his community, I believe that Allan truly exemplified this kind of athlete and person.