



Tuesday, September 18, 2001

Harwell details career highlights in OU lecture

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Legendary Detroit Tigers broadcaster Ernie Harwell spoke of his career highlights in his address, "My Life in Baseball," at Oakland University's **Meadow Brook Theatre** on Monday, September 17. The program was the first in the 2001-2002 Student Life Lecture Board Series.

During the lecture, Harwell told many colorful stories about his career as a baseball announcer, from his early days as the voice of the Atlanta Crackers minor-league team for station WSB in the early 1940's to the present day Detroit Tigers.

"I've got the best job in the world," he said. "When I was growing up as a kid in Atlanta, I hero-worshipped the Crackers. It was a thrill when I eventually became their broadcaster when I came out of the Marines. But Michigan has been the best place to work for me. The Tiger fans have been loyal and warm and given me much support."

Among the great players he has seen in his long career, Harwell cited Brooklyn Dodgers second baseman Jackie Robinson, New York Giants outfielder Willie Mays and Detroit Tigers outfielder Al Kaline.

"Jackie Robinson's breaking baseball's color barrier was the most significant thing that ever happened in the sport," Harwell said. "I was very lucky to see Willie Mays break in as a rookie in 1951. He could hit, run, throw and had power. He played with a verve very few players have ever matched.

"Al Kaline was the best Tiger player I ever saw. He was a fine hitter, a great team man and did everything right. In my mind's eye, I'll always see him dig a shot out of the right field corner in Tiger Stadium, pivot and make a strong throw to second base - and that batter had better not try to make it to second!"

Harwell, 83, closed with a reading of his famous essay, "The Game for All America," first published in the Sporting News in 1955, before answering questions from the audience.

Jennifer Banasiak, an OU freshman, said she enjoyed Harwell's speech even though she doesn't follow baseball closely.

"I heard about the event and wanted to learn about something different that I didn't know much about," she said. "I learned a lot about his career and baseball's past. He's certainly had a nice, good career."

OU senior and Communications major Nathan Razzaq enjoyed Harwell's human portrayals of some of baseball's biggest stars.

"It was interesting to learn about baseball history and the human facts about some of the players like Willie Mays," Razzaq said. "Harwell's career has been amazing, too. He mentioned how his family was poor when he was growing up, and he struggled but eventually worked his way to the top. He's a very special, down-to-earth man."

The next Student Life Lecture Board program will feature Lech Walesa, the former President of Poland and Nobel Peace Prize winner, on Friday, October 26, at 3 p.m. in OU's **Meadow Brook Theatre**.

SUMMARY

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