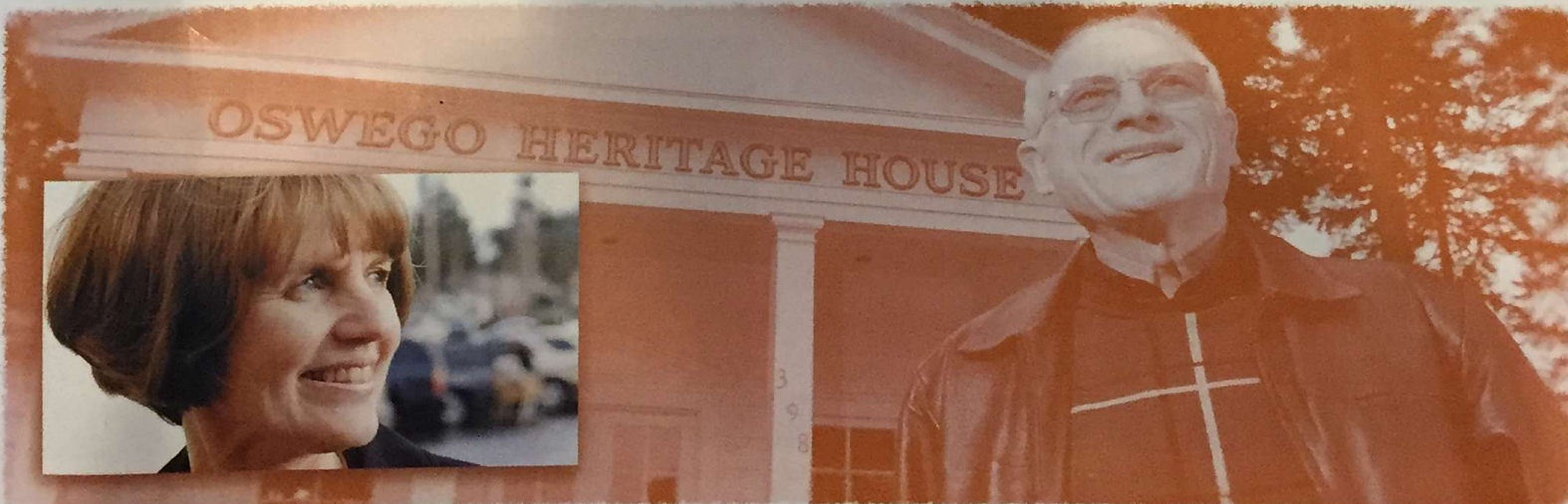


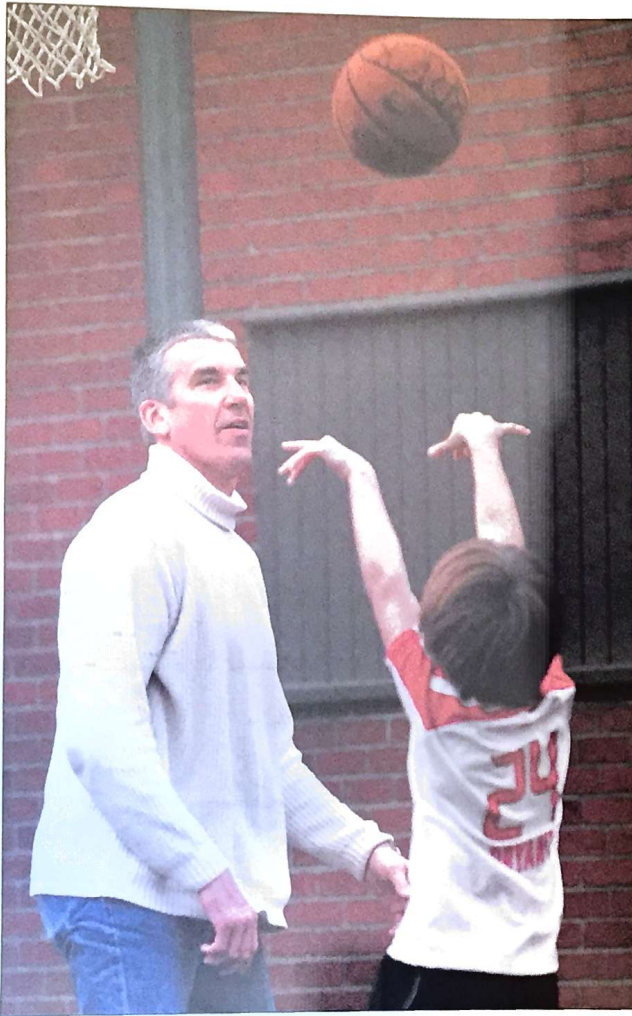


# Perspective

## Extraordinary People

A 2010 souvenir edition  
of the Lake Oswego Review  
and West Linn Tidings





Staff photo | VERN UYETAKE  
Frank Brickowski, a former Seattle SuperSonic, makes his home in Lake Oswego where he coaches his son Jack's basketball team

## From life on the court to life in the stands

Former NBA star and current Lake Oswego resident Frank Brickowski keeps his basketball ties

By SARAH HUTCHINS

Have you ever wondered what happens to former NBA players once they've said goodbye to life on the court?

If retired star Frank Brickowski is any indicator, they move to the suburbs to be with their families. Brickowski, who is most famous for helping the Seattle SuperSonics make it to the 1996 NBA Finals, now lives in Lake Oswego where he can be close to his son.

After playing college basketball for Pennsylvania State University, Brickowski played abroad in Italy, France and Israel before returning to the United States where he played for several NBA teams for 13 years. Out of all the cities in the world he's played basketball, Brickowski says Paris would probably be his favorite, even though playing the game is essentially the same.

"Once you get on the court it's still basketball," says Brickowski. "It's different to be in a different country. My mom was born in France and I'm half French, so it was fun in that sense."

Brickowski's favorite team to play for was the Seattle SuperSonics because he played his first two years in the league in 1983 and 1984 with them as well as going to the 1996 NBA Finals with them against the Chicago Bulls. Viewers often remember his on-court entanglement with Dennis Rodman during that series but it didn't leave much impact on Brickowski.

"I did it for 13 years," says Brickowski. "I mean it was the same old stuff. It didn't just happen that year."

The NBA Finals was Brickowski's most excit-

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ing period because a NBA player's ultimate goal is to win a world championship. Even though the Sonics lost that year it was still a memorable journey.

"It was a long road to the finals," says Brickowski. "It just got more intense and more important as it went. The finals were anticlimactic when we lost but it was pretty spectacular, it was the world stage. It was amazing how many people actually see and watch. I was in Amsterdam a couple months after the finals and people were recognizing me. It was pretty crazy to go halfway around the world and people recognize you, people yelling my name or talking to me in a coffee shop. I had no idea the magnitude of how many people watched basketball."

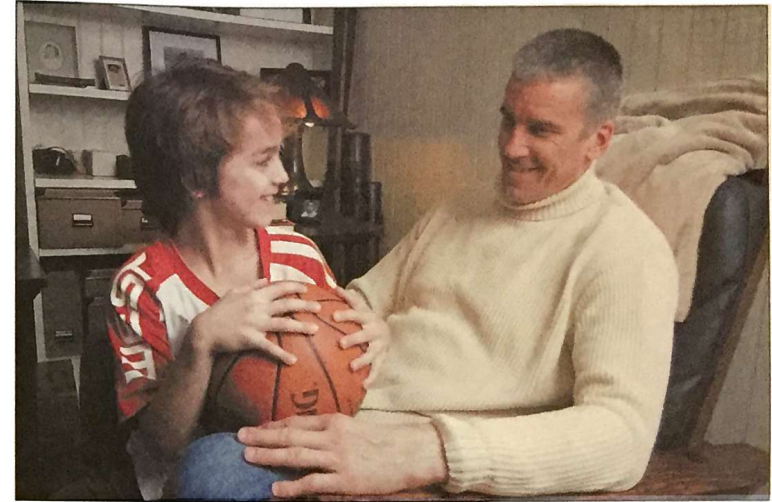
Shortly after the 1996 NBA Finals, Brickowski retired and moved to Lake Oswego where he shares custody of his eight year-old son Jack. He coaches his son's basketball team as well as Jack and his buddies every morning before school and on Friday nights at the gym. Jack plays a lot of basketball and hopes to follow in his father's footsteps.

The 6 foot 9 former forward remains an imposing figure as he moves around Lake Oswego, often stopping in at Chuck's Place in downtown for a cup of coffee and to exchange pleasantries.

"I enjoy taking my son to the games," says Brickowski. "I take him to all the Blazers' games and he knows all the players. He knows Shaq and LeBron. It's fun to include my son and have him learn a handshake from Shaq and go show his friends at school who think he's crazy and then he has to take a picture of him with Shaq to school."

Brickowski also keeps busy by working for the NBA Players Association as a regional representative for the five West Coast teams: Portland, Golden State Warriors, Sacramento Kings, LA Lakers and LA Clippers. Seattle doesn't currently have a NBA team because in 2006 the Sonics were sold to another group that moved the team to Oklahoma City. Many people, including Brickowski, think that they should have instead been sold to a group that would have kept them in Seattle.

As a regional representative, Brickowski



ABOVE: Jack Brickowski, son of NBA star Frank Brickowski, gets to attend all of the Portland Blazers games and has met today's NBA stars, such as the likes of Shaq. RIGHT: Brickowski, whose son Jack attends Forest Hills Elementary School, is a regional representative for the NBA Players Association.

acts as a liaison between the general director and the players. In addition to handling grievances, he helps solve challenges that players face both on and off the court. There's an educational component that teaches players about healthcare, finances, transitions, such as exploring what they want to do after basketball, and other life skills.

Brickowski says he doesn't miss playing basketball.

"I miss the relationships, but I'm still able to foster those relationships because of my job. I still follow basketball, but when you're done, you're done. It's a closed society, you're not allowed back in. You can visit once or twice but that's it. It's really tough on players but luckily I have a position still in basketball."

Sarah Hutchins is a freelance writer living in Tigard.

