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Frankie Albert

This article was written by Matthew Keddie.

Frank Cullen Albert was the face of the San Francisco 49ers franchise in its early years of existence. Despite his size at 5'8" and roughly 166 pounds, Albert demonstrated a fascinating athletic versatility and uncanny speed as the team's field general.¹ Opponents were routinely faked out when Albert carried the football. They anticipated the play to one side of the formation, but Albert ran to the opposite side. He made them think it was a magic disappearing trick. He recalls, "I guess my ability to handle the ball made me effective. I was pretty good on a bootleg. I could hide the ball and run it if I had to."²

Albert paired his rushing fakes with an effective arm. In 1948 he set a franchise record with 29 touchdown passes that would stand into the 1960s. He also twice led the AAFC in touchdown tosses with 29 and 27 in 1948 and 1949, respectively.³ The late Jim Murray of the *Los Angeles Times* said of his play, "There might not be any 49ers today if there hadn't been a Frankie Albert."⁴ Albert played in an era where substitutions were rare, so he routinely assumed the punting duties and also spent time playing in the defensive backfield. He was a three-time All-AAFC choice (1946, 1948, 1949) by major selectors such as the Associated Press, *NY Daily News* and the UPI.⁵ Albert was also selected to the NFL's Pro Bowl in 1950, and more impressively, shared the AAFC co-MVP award with Cleveland's future Hall of Fame quarterback Otto Graham in 1948.⁶



San Francisco 49ers owner Tony Morabito handpicked the original 49ers club, mostly from the local talent pool of the San Francisco Bay Area schools such as Stanford



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University, St. Mary's College, the University of San Francisco and Santa Clara University.⁷ Albert was one of four Stanford alumni on the club, along with guard Bruno Banducci, end Hank Norberg, and fullback Norm Standlee. Morabito hired local hero Lawrence T.⁸ “Buck” Shaw as head coach. Shaw had experienced a great deal of success at Santa Clara, where he worked as head coach for eight seasons (1936 to 1945). His 47-10-4 record was outstanding, leading the Broncos to three one-loss seasons and one perfect season.⁹ It was his back-to-back Sugar Bowl wins over powerhouse Louisiana State University that was the crown jewel of his college coaching achievements.¹⁰

Albert garnered the nickname, “The T-formation wizard” because of his tutelage under his college head coach Clark Shaughnessy, who was best known for his T-formation offense.¹¹ Shaughnessy described his system as, “Instead of threatening a segment of ground scarcely wider than from end to end, we threaten continually the entire width of the playing field.”¹² Stanford put forth tremendous effort in 1940, posting a 10-0 record that included a Rose Bowl victory over the Nebraska Cornhuskers, 21-13. Albert played a large role in the victory, tossing a 40-yard touchdown pass, threw several key blocks and took care of the kicking duties.¹³ Nebraska head coach Biff Jones commented on his performance saying, “Go tell that [Stanford Coach] Clark Shaughnessy I'll buy him 120 acres of fine corn if he'll tell me where we can get a Frankie Albert. That kid had too much pass, too much kick, too much noodle for us.”¹⁴ Stanford claimed a national championship for that season, its most recent football national title.

Before Shaughnessy's arrival at Stanford, there was much speculation about whether he would lead the team to success due to his lack of success at the University of Chicago, his most recent position. Shaughnessy proved the doubters wrong, as he inherited Albert, who was the perfect leader to carry out his system.¹⁵ Including the Rose Bowl win, Stanford defeated five opponents ranked in the Top 25 Associated Press poll – the University of Washington, the University of Southern California, Washington State University, Oregon State University, and the University of Nebraska. They also handed Buck Shaw's Santa Clara team its only loss of the season, 7-6, on October 12.¹⁶ Albert was a unanimous All-American selection at seasons end and finished fourth in the Heisman trophy voting.

During these years he learned his ball faking techniques, according to Shaughnessy. He said, “[Albert's] talents were primarily those of a faker; he could fool people. He was a poker player if there ever was one and the T-formation gave him exactly the best opportunities to exploit those strengths of his to the utmost.”¹⁷ The success of the team earned it the nickname the “Wow Boys.” Albert would take this with him to the 49ers, and under Shaw, the team “wowed” Bay Area sports fans during the early years of the franchise as a member of the All-America Football Conference (AAFC).¹⁸



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In the four years of the AAFC, San Francisco sported the second-best record in the league at 38-14-2 for a .717 winning percentage. They also scored the most points in league history at 1,597 behind Albert, Norm Standlee, and Alyn Beals on offense.¹⁹ Albert's arsenal also consisted of bruising runner Joe Perry and the versatile Johnny Strzykalski.

In 1946, Albert threw for 14 touchdowns and rushed for four more. His favorite target by far was Beals, whom he connected with on 10 touchdown passes.²⁰ Roughly 40% of his completions (40 of 104) were to Beals. Albert said about his go-to guy, "Beals was my main receiver. Boy, did he have some great moves. He was a good faker. I can remember hitting him several times setting up to pass and watching the defensive back fall down after Alyn put a fake on him. The back would trip over his own feet. I'd look at the

- 1 "Frankie Albert," ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 2 Hession, Joseph. "Frankie Albert: 'Mr. 49er,'" *The Coffin Corner*, 1985, Vol 7, No 5.
- 3 "Frankie Albert," ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 4 Bush, David; Chapin, Dwight. "Legendary 49ers pioneer and quarterback dies at 82," sfgate.com, September 5, 2002, [Legendary 49ers pioneer and quarterback dies at 82 \(sfgate.com\)](#).
- 5 "Frankie Albert," ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 6 "Frankie Albert," ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 7 "1946 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees," ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1946 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 8 "1946 San Francisco 49ers Roster & Players," ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1946 San Francisco 49ers Roster & Players | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 9 "Buck Shaw," SportsReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Buck Shaw College Coaching Records, Awards and Leaderboards | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](#).
- 1 0 "Buck Shaw," SportsReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Buck Shaw College Coaching Records, Awards and Leaderboards | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](#).
- 1 1 Hession, Joseph. "Frankie Albert: 'Mr. 49er,'" *The Coffin Corner*, 1985, Vol 7, No 5.
- 1 2 Schexnayder, C.J. "The Reading Room: The Wow Boys," February 16, 2012, [The Reading Room: The Wow Boys - Football Study Hall](#).
- 1 3 Glick, Shav. "Frankie Albert, 82; 1st T-Formation Quarterback," Latimes.com, September 5, 2002, [Frankie Albert, 82; 1st T-Formation Quarterback - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#).
- 1 4 Glick, Shav. "Frankie Albert, 82; 1st T-Formation Quarterback," Latimes.com, September 5, 2002, [Frankie Albert, 82; 1st T-Formation Quarterback - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#).
- 1 5 Schexnayder, C.J. "The Reading Room: The Wow Boys," February 16, 2012, [The Reading Room: The Wow Boys - Football Study Hall](#).
- 1 6 "Stanford Cardinal School History," Sportsreference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Stanford Cardinal College Football History, Stats, Records | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](#).
- 1 7 Schexnayder, C.J. "The Reading Room: The Wow Boys," February 16, 2012, [The Reading Room: The Wow Boys - Football Study Hall](#).
- 1 8 Bush, David; Chapin, Dwight. "Legendary 49ers pioneer and quarterback dies at 82," sfgate.com, September 5, 2002, [Legendary 49ers pioneer and quarterback dies at 82 \(sfgate.com\)](#).
- 1 9 "San Francisco 49ers Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18,



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defensive man lying on his butt while Alyn was wide open.”²¹ The high-octane passing offense led the 49ers to a 9-5 record, good enough for second place in the AAFC's Western Division. It was a trend that haunted the 49ers as they finished in second place in each season from 1946 to 1949. Albert was second in the league in passing, while Beals finished second in receiving.²² The '46 season marked the beginning of a long-standing AAFC rivalry with the powerhouse Cleveland Browns, who boasted the top ranked scoring offense, won the division and the AAFC championship in all four seasons.

On playing the Browns Albert recalled, “When we played Cleveland, it was like the Stanford-Cal game here. It was a real big rivalry. Whenever we beat them, it was a big thrill for me.”²³ The 49ers and Browns split their two meetings in 1946, with each road team emerging victorious. In Cleveland, Albert had his strongest statistical output of the season, completing 14 of 21 passes for 180 yards and three touchdowns, in a 34-20 rout.²⁴

The 49ers took a slight step back the following season, finishing at 8-4-2. The offense regressed to the middle of the league, fourth in scoring. Albert improved to 18 touchdown passes and added five rushing touchdowns. Despite this, the team could not overcome the Browns or the New York Yankees.²⁵ Both clubs swept San Francisco during the regular season.

The 1948 campaign started out with tremendous promise, Albert put together dominating passing performances, throwing for 269 yards and three touchdowns in a 36-20 blowout of the Brooklyn Dodgers, and two weeks later tossing three more touchdowns in a 36-14 win over the Los Angeles Dons, as the team raced out to a 10-0 record.²⁶ Going into the final month of the regular season, there was much optimism in 49ers' camp. The club had a chance at the title if they could beat the Browns at least once. However, it was the same

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- 2024, [San Francisco 49ers Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 2 0 “1946 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1946 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 2 1 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 6.
- 2 2 “1946 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1946 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 2 3 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 6.
- 2 4 “San Francisco 49ers at Cleveland Browns – October 27th, 1946,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [San Francisco 49ers at Cleveland Browns - October 27th, 1946 | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 2 5 “1947 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1947 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 2 6 “Frankie Albert,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Career Game Log | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).



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old story as the Browns stymied San Francisco on November 14 at Cleveland Municipal Stadium, 14-7. Albert threw three interceptions and the 49ers lost three fumbles. Between a 63-40 rout of the Dodgers, they met the Browns for a rematch at Kezar Stadium.²⁷ Albert found Beals twice on scoring strikes to stake San Francisco to a 21-10 lead in the third quarter. It was three consecutive touchdowns by Cleveland that shifted the momentum, giving the Browns a 31-21 advantage. Albert found Joe Perry on a six-yard touchdown pass late in the fourth quarter but the 49ers fell short, 31-28.²⁸ The season was especially frustrating for Albert, who turned in a career season, throwing 29 touchdowns against just 10 interceptions and 1,990 passing yards. On the ground, he averaged over 5.0 yards per carrying, adding 349 rushing yards, and eight scores.²⁹ He was arguably the most outstanding player in the AAFC, on the league's top ranked scoring offense (35.4 points per game).

Albert continued his top form in 1949, leading the 49ers to a third top ranked scoring offense designation in four years. San Francisco topped the 30-point plateau in its first three contests.³⁰ In the fourth game against the Buffalo Bills, the team laid an egg in a 28-17 loss. The defense allowed the Bills to roll up 445 total yards, a sure embarrassment. Two weeks later, Cleveland visited San Francisco, and the team redeemed itself.³¹ Albert went off, completing 16 of 27 passes and five scores. The 49ers scored the game's first three touchdowns and never looked back, rolling up 56 points to double up the Browns, 56-28. On the next road trip, the Yankees shut down the 49ers, 24-3, at Yankee Stadium. The New York defense forced seven turnovers and the San Francisco offense was held to 186 total yards.³² A rematch with the Browns was next. Cleveland eked out a 30-28 victory, despite a solid effort from Albert, who played turnover-free football. San Francisco righted the ship to win its final three contests to finish at 9-3. Albert also averaged over 40.0 yards per punt each year from 1946 to 1949. In 1948, he led the AAFC with a 48.2 yards per punt average.³³

The AAFC eliminated its divisions and expanded the playoffs to the top four teams in 1949. The 49ers finished second and in the Divisional round the 49ers defeated the third seeded New York Yankees 17-7. Albert threw the clinching touchdown pass in the third quarter and the 49ers defense put the clamps on the Yankees. The victory earned San Francisco a championship game match with its nemesis, Cleveland.

2 7 “Frankie Albert,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Career Game Log | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

2 8 “1948 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1948 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

2 9 “Frankie Albert,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).



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The 49ers lost to Cleveland 21-7 for the final AAFC championship, as the Browns held Albert to 9 of 24 passes for 108 yards and one touchdown.

The 1950 season saw the 49ers transition to the NFL. The team picked up two key players in the 1950 NFL Draft in defensive tackle Leo Nomellini, a future Hall of Famer, and receiver Billy Wilson, who would turn into a solid pass catcher.³⁴ The team vastly underachieved at 3-9, sporting losing streaks of five and four games, respectively. Albert had a down season, throwing 23 interceptions. Despite that, he was named to the Pro Bowl, along with teammates Johnny Strzykalski, Norm Standlee, Visco Grgich and Leo Nomellini.³⁵

The next season the team drafted Y.A. Tittle from the Baltimore Colts, who folded following the 1950 season. He was brought in to compete with Albert for the starting quarterback role. Naturally, Shaw split their playing time, with Albert typically playing the first and third quarters, and Tittle the second and fourth.³⁶ On the quarterback situation Albert never had bitter feelings towards Tittle, rather it was all business-like. “When he [Tittle] arrived there was quite a rivalry for the quarterback position. Of course, he was already an established star. I guess you could say there was a quarterback controversy. Whenever I see him now, I tell him he sent me to Canada.”³⁷

From Tittle's point of view, “Frankie Albert was a big influence on me. Of course, we were intense rivals for the quarterback position, but I learned a lot just watching him play. His leadership qualities were unparalleled. He gave me another dimension. I never had been around someone who was such a loose quarterback and had so much freedom. I

3 0 “1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1949-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees/).

3 1 “1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1949-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees/).

3 2 “1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1949-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees/).

3 3 “1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1949 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1949-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees/).

3 4 “1950 San Francisco 49ers Roster & Players,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1950 San Francisco 49ers Roster & Players | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1950-san-francisco-49ers-roster-players/).

3 5 “1950 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1950 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1950-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees/).

3 6 “The flip of a coin: How Y.A. Tittle became a 49er,” sfgate.com, October 25, 2009, [The flip of a coin: How Y.A. Tittle became a 49er \(sfgate.com\)](https://www.sfgate.com/sf/article/The-flip-of-a-coin-How-Y-A-Tittle-became-a-49er-1017773.html).

3 7 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 6.



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was more of a coach's quarterback. I did what I thought the coach wanted done. Frank was unpredictable. I learned from him that being unpredictable can be a good quality, that nutty things sometimes will work. The bootleg is another thing I got from him. After I left the 49ers, it helped me win a championship at New York.”³⁸

Albert made 11 of the 12 regular season game starts, sporting a 6-4-1 record. The 49ers were close to making the playoffs, finishing one-half game out of a playoff spot.³⁹ Heading into the final week of the season, the Los Angeles Rams had to lose to the Green Bay Packers to make it possible. Instead, they routed Green Bay, 42-14.

Albert retired from the NFL following the 1952 season. He played in 90 career games, making 68 starts, throwing for 10,795 passing yards and 115 touchdowns. Albert also added 1,272 career rushing yards and 27 rushing touchdowns.⁴⁰

In 1953, he played one season for the Calgary Stampeders of the Western Inter-provincial Football Union in Canada. Albert said on playing in Calgary, “I was just getting into the car business and it was a little slow at first. The Stampeders offered me more money than I ever made in the NFL, so I went up there for a year. We played two games a week, one on a Saturday and one on Monday.”⁴¹ Albert was the team's primary passer, playing in 14 games, completing 104 passes in 225 attempts for 1,568 yards and 12 touchdowns. He also punted 48 times, averaging 40.1 yards per kick.⁴²

Albert returned to the 49ers in 1955 in a dual role as a scout and position coach. He was promoted to head coach for the 1956 season when Red Strader was fired. Unfortunately, a sputtering offense and a myriad of turnovers cost them games, as they started out 1-6.⁴³ San Francisco was on its way to 1-7 after falling behind 9-0 at Green Bay, but Tittle scored on a 1-yard touchdown run. Then, McElhenny darted, as he often did, 86-yards for a touchdown. Gordie Soltau added a 32-yard field goal, which proved to be the winning score as the 49ers eked out a 17-16 win.⁴⁴ San Francisco finished the season with an unbeaten streak, going 5-0-1 in its last six games.

The 1957 season finally produced a result that fans had waited for since 1949: a playoff berth. A season high five-game winning streak primed the 49ers into playoff position.⁴⁵

3 8 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 55.

3 9 “1951 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1951 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/1951-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees/).

4 0 “Frankie Albert,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Frankie Albert Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/frankie-albert-stats-height-weight-position-draft-college/).

4 1 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 6.

4 2 “1953 Calgary Stampeders (WFIU),” ProFootballArchives.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1953 Calgary Stampeders \(WIFU\) Scores, Roster, Stats, Coaches \(profootballarchives.com\)](https://www.profootballarchives.com/1953-calgary-stampeders-wifu-scores-roster-stats-coaches/).



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Tittle paced the offense, earning both Pro Bowl and first-team all-pro honors, often finding fellow all-pro receiver Billy Wilson, who caught 52 passes for 757 yards, and six scores – leading the team in all such categories. San Francisco finished 8-4, tied with the Detroit Lions atop the NFL West Division.⁴⁶ The teams split their two-game regular season series, so a one-game playoff decided who would play the Cleveland Browns for the NFL championship.

In front of over 60,000 fans, the 49ers led the Lions 24-7 at the half, and scored the first points of the third quarter. It seemed like a foregone conclusion they were to emerge victorious. A furious Detroit rally composed of three consecutive touchdowns and a field goal that erased the 24-point lead, giving Detroit a 31-27 win, despite a three-touchdown performance from Tittle.⁴⁷ The 49ers and their fans were stunned. Albert was completely deflated from the loss saying, “I still can't believe that game. We were ahead and started playing conservative. That's what killed us. They scored once, then they scored twice, and the next thing you know they are ahead. It was embarrassing. It just goes to show you how quickly things can happen on a football field.”⁴⁸

The 1958 season would be his final one roaming the sidelines. Having drafted quarterback John Brodie in the 1957 NFL Draft, Brodie split time under center with Tittle, yet again creating a position controversy. The duo each started six contests, with neither separating from the other on the field, as the offense ranked eighth out of 12 teams in scoring. The 49ers record ended up at 6-6, never winning or losing more than two games in a row.⁴⁹ Albert resigned at season's end, totaling a 19-16 record in three seasons. Not achieving the success he envisioned he still enjoyed coaching saying, “I liked certain aspects of coaching. I enjoyed teaching the kids.”⁵⁰

4 3 “1956 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1956 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

4 4 “San Francisco 49ers at Green Bay Packers – November 18th, 1956,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [San Francisco 49ers at Green Bay Packers - November 18th, 1956 | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

4 5 “1956 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1956 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

4 6 “1957 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1957 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

4 7 “Divisional Round – Detroit Lions at San Francisco 49ers – December 22nd, 1957,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Divisional Round - Detroit Lions at San Francisco 49ers - December 22nd, 1957 | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

4 8 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 6.



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Following his career in football he took an interest in real estate, working in the Bay Area and in southern California. He and his wife, Martha, raised three daughters: Nancy, Jane and Terry. Albert met Martha during his days at Glendale High School. The two matriculated together to Stanford University.⁵¹ Albert was born on January 27, 1920 in Chicago, Illinois, but spent most of his youth and years growing up in California. In high school, he was a stellar athlete, being named the CIF player of the year in 1937.⁵² Upon arriving at Stanford in 1938, the football team was on a recent decline, after having appeared in three consecutive Rose Bowl games from 1933 to 1935. Under Claude Thornhill, Albert saw playing time as a sophomore in 1939 on a team, often referred to as the worst in program history that went 1-7-1, scoring just seven touchdowns the entire season.⁵³ As a senior in 1941, Stanford turned in a disappointing 6-3 record, as many viewed them as national title contenders. An early season 10-0 loss at Oregon State University put Stanford out of the picture. Four consecutive wins over the University of Washington, the University of Southern California, and local competitors in the University of San Francisco and Santa Clara University, earned the team a top ten ranking.⁵⁴ They were unable to keep the momentum rolling as they lost their final two contests: a heart-breaking 14-13 defeat to Washington State University and a 16-0 shutout to the archrival California Golden Bears.⁵⁵

Albert was drafted tenth overall in the first round of the 1942 NFL Draft by the Chicago Bears. Before venturing into the professional ranks, he enlisted in the United States Navy during World War II. He spent over a year in the Pacific as a deck commander.⁵⁶ Following the war years, Albert signed with the Pacific Coast Football League's Los Angeles Dons for the 1945 season. After just one season, he embarked on his legendary career with the 49ers.

4 9 “1958 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1958 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1958-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees).

5 0 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 6.

5 1 “Martha Albert Obituary,” legacy.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Martha Albert Obituary \(2006\) - Los Angeles, CA - Los Angeles Times \(legacy.com\)](https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/losangeles/obituary.aspx?catid=10000000&obitid=10000000).

5 2 Glick, Shav. “Frankie Albert, 82; 1st T-Formation Quarterback,” Latimes.com, September 5, 2002, [Frankie Albert, 82; 1st T-Formation Quarterback - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/frankie-albert-1st-t-formation-quarterback-2002-09-05).

5 3 “Stanford Cardinal School History,” sportsreference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [Stanford Cardinal College Football History, Stats, Records | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](https://www.sports-reference.com/college-football/history/stanford-cardinal-college-football-history-stats-records).

5 4 “1941 Stanford Cardinal Schedule and Results,” sportsreference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1941 Stanford Cardinal Schedule and Results | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](https://www.sports-reference.com/college-football/schedule/1941-stanford-cardinal-schedule-and-results).

5 5 “1941 Stanford Cardinal Schedule and Results,” sportsreference.com, accessed May 18, 2024, [1941 Stanford Cardinal Schedule and Results | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](https://www.sports-reference.com/college-football/schedule/1941-stanford-cardinal-schedule-and-results).

5 6 Hegler, David. “Frankie Albert: The First Quarterback,” thegoldnuggett.com, October 9, 2020, [Frankie Albert: The First Quarterback \(thegoldnuggett.com\)](https://www.thegoldnuggett.com/frankie-albert-the-first-quarterback).



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Throughout his playing days Albert received high praise from his teammates. Beals said, “Frankie Albert was really something. He was a good team leader. What made him so effective as a quarterback was that he could do just about everything. He was a good scrambler. He could pass, run or kick the ball. He was probably the most famous athlete in the area at that time because he'd come from Stanford and got a lot of publicity there.”⁵⁷ Albert is also credited with the team drafting legendary running back Hugh McElhenny. Hession wrote, “... If not for Albert's acute judgment of talent and character, McElhenny might have played elsewhere. It was at the Hula Bowl in 1952 that Albert first laid his eyes on 'the King.’”⁵⁸ ... “McElhenny played in two games, made the All-Hula Bowl team and attracted Albert's eye. Frankie immediately got on the phone and told Buck Shaw he had to pick McElhenny in the upcoming draft. ...”⁵⁹

Praise for Albert was not limited to just his teammates. It also stretched to the Bay Area faithful. Longtime Bay Area resident and forever 49ers fan, Dawn Yates Black had a personal connection with Albert. She said, “Frank Albert and his wife were friends of mine. She was a very good bridge player and spent a lot of time in the desert. I remember watching him play at Kezar. I think he was innovative and smart.”⁶⁰ Like Albert, Dawn was a graduate of Stanford, and like many 49ers fans, consider Albert as one of the greatest quarterbacks in team history, along with Joe Montana, Y.A. Tittle, and John Brodie.⁶¹

Among the accolades and awards garnered by Albert include his induction into several Halls of Fame: College Football (1956), Rose Bowl (1992), Stanford Athletics (1954), Bay Area Sports (1991) and the San Jose Sports (2013). He was also inducted into the Professional Football Researchers Association's Hall of Very Good (HOVG) in 2007. He passed away on September 4, 2002 at the age of 82 from Alzheimer's disease.⁶² Albert was survived by his wife, Martha, three daughters and seven grandchildren.

5 7 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 10.

5 8 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 33.

5 9 Hession, Joseph. *Forty Niners Looking Back* (San Francisco, CA: Foghorn Press, 1985), 33.

6 0 “Dawn Yates Black, telephone interview, March 13, 2022.

6 1 “Dawn Yates Black, telephone interview, March 20, 2022.

6 2 Bush, David; Chapin, Dwight. “Legendary 49ers pioneer and quarterback dies at 82,” sfgate.com, September 5, 2002, [Legendary 49ers pioneer and quarterback dies at 82 \(sfgate.com\)](https://www.sfgate.com/sf/article/legendary-49ers-pioneer-and-quarterback-dies-at-82-101700000.html).