

Chapter 🏀4 - Greg Lott



Dr. Greg A. Lott, DVM

Personal

Gregory Lott was born in Oceanside, California on December 10, 1955, to Roy Lott (a Navy corpsman from Ohio) and Mary Huddleson (a Navy nurse from East Lansing, Michigan). They met in Oceanside at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, where they were stationed. They were married in February 1955 in the Navy Base chapel. Greg recalls:

I probably did not spend much time in the California sunshine as we moved back to my mother's hometown [East Lansing] soon after they were discharged from the Navy sometime in 1956. We lived in East Lansing on Linden Street.... We moved to Park Lake Rd. in 1960 or '61 and I lived there until I graduated from Veterinary School in 1979. While our mailing address was East Lansing, we lived in the Okemos School District. I attended Wardcliff Elementary School just a few blocks from my home (Greg Lott, personal communication).

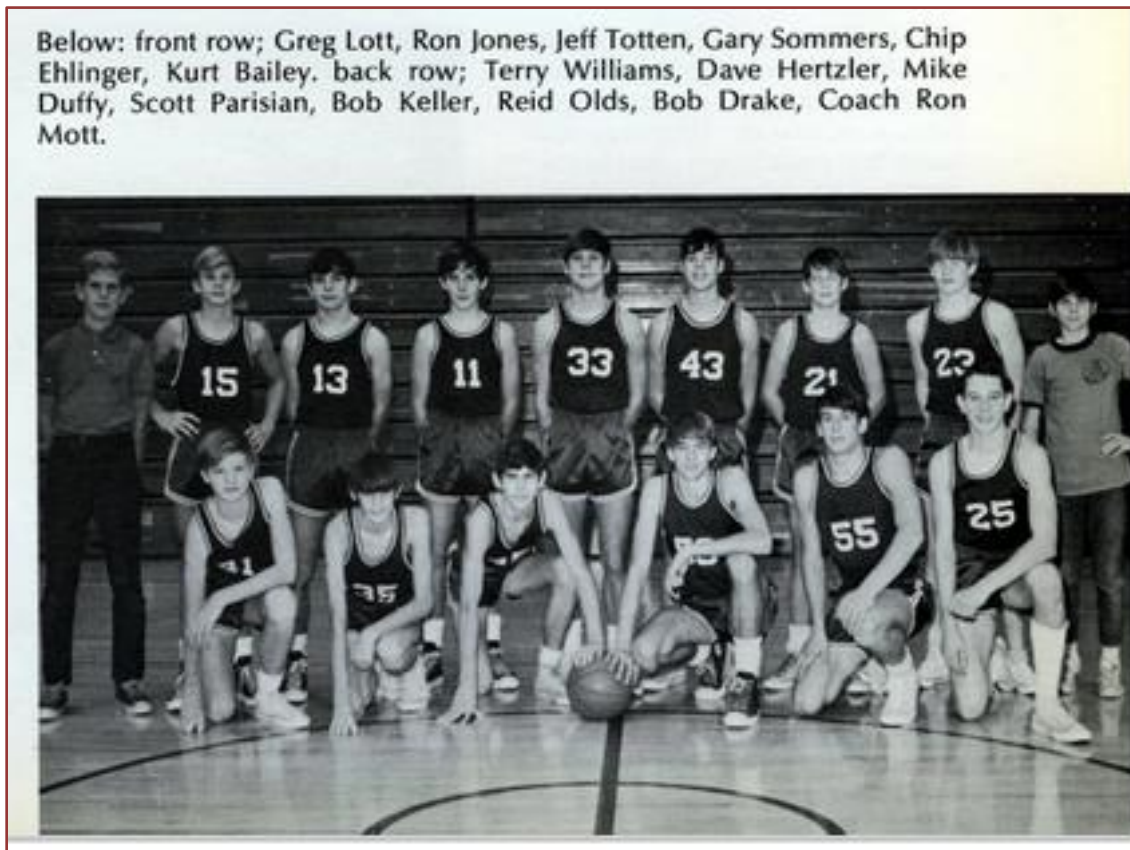
Greg then attended Kinawa Middle School, where for the second marking period he was one of six students making All A's ([Source](#)), though, Greg recalls, "I'm pretty sure I was not quite an all-A student entering high school." Greg made the basketball team in 7th grade but recalls contracting mononucleosis and being out of commission for most of the season.

My coach was Bill Jones who was a physical education instructor. I can't recall if we had any of our 7th grade games at the new Kinawa Middle School. By 8th grade, all of our games were at Kinawa. I was hampered by plantar fasciitis (I think) that season and was not participating in many games. I believe we had a decent team but cannot recall our record and I just don't remember playing much that season (Greg Lott, personal communication).

Okemos High School

1970-71

The freshman squad won all but one of its games.



1970-71 Freshman Squad (Greg Lott #41 on left in front row) (1971 *Tomahawk*)

As a freshman, Greg recalls, "I was coached by Ron Mott who became one of the most successful girls' basketball coaches in Michigan in later years."



I was pretty much 3rd string on a 15 player roster – I just wasn't very good. I can remember kicking my gym bag down the hallway of the gymnasium and out the door after I played about a minute in a 25 point rout of a team near the end of the season. I vowed I would never play again, coming pretty close to quitting the game for good that night.

I can't recall why I decided not to but I do remember coming to practice the next day with a different attitude ... and that was, I was not going to be stopped by anybody and I was going to stop everybody. I suppose I had decided it was time to assert myself. I got a few more minutes in our final game that season and felt encouraged they maybe I had a future in the game.

I'm not sure what changed my mind but I do remember taking on a whole new attitude in practice. I was not going to be stopped by anybody, and I was going to stop everybody I guarded. For some reason, I stepped up my intensity in practice and it paid off.

Though I have no recollection of the game, a Towne Courier article had me as leading scorer against Eaton Rapids with 17 points and we won big. Quoting Coach Ron Mott from that game, "Greg Lott can now start at forward with no trouble". I remember little but I do remember having to earn my stripes to get more playing time. Ron Mott was a great coach. He became a legend in Girls' Varsity basketball at OHS. My respect and admiration for him increased as the years went by. His most memorable words were "it's a contact sport." And, as time went by, I learned that it certainly is.

I don't remember too much about playing basketball my freshman year. I was on the team but didn't play that much until later in the season. Apparently we won our league with a pretty good record but I have no recollection of the games.

That summer of 1971 our "summer camp team" went to the Alma College Summer Olympics and won the championship game in our age bracket for basketball. That was a thrilling memory. We received a medal in the shape of the Lower Peninsula. Ron Mott had coached our team and I know I gained a deep amount of respect for him. I was no star but I had participated and contributed and we had won as a team. It was euphoric.

Coach Mott was a great teacher as well. I had a social science class with him that kept me on my toes. I have to credit him with starting a spark that lifted my game (Greg Lott, personal communication).

1971-72

Recalling his sophomore year, Greg wrote:

The first day of tryouts was a disaster for our expected starting center, Wally Rutherford. Wally was a big, tall guy and I looked like a toothpick next to him. He suffered a severe sprain or dislocation of his ankle that day (something bad for sure) and that ended his season as well as his basketball career at OHS. That left the center position open and I was designated to fill it. I had grown about 4 inches taller from the previous season but I was as skinny as a rail. I took on the challenge. Playing center suited me fine.

I'm somewhat of an anomaly in this game. While I shot right-handed, my strongest dribbling hand was my left. I was able to develop a pretty decent left-handed hook shot during my career. While I could shoot this and a right-handed hook as well, I was definitely more accurate left handed. I'm ambiguously ambidextrous for sure.

The summer before sophomore year, my father built a basketball support for a backboard and we placed it in the parking lot of the "old" Parkwood Branch of the YMCA which was immediately next door to my house on Park Lake Road. I worked on my game every summer with one on "imaginary one" drills, and several drills I either made up on my own or got from summer camp coaching. I had a large "court" to imagine many scenarios. It was this practice that improved my game.

I never played AAU ball or any other organized team ball while in high school. I'm not sure if it even existed then but it probably did. Other than the regular season, I did participate in team summer scrimmages but I don't remember much about them.

Junior Varsity season was a fun experience. Our coach was Norv Burgett, also a teacher at the high school. I believe we won most of our games. I was comfortable at center and led the team in scoring that season.

I don't remember losing many games that season but do recall losing to Holt on our floor December 10, 1971. I played miserably and it was my birthday. I recall getting my driver's license that day so I probably was too pumped up about that to concentrate on basketball like I should have. I vowed we would beat them in the return match in their house and we did so soundly later in the season. I just remember having fun playing that year. We won a lot of games by big scores so everyone got to play and that made me pretty happy. I don't remember much about the games we lost that season other than once to Holt. My goal was to win every game and in my role as center, that meant I had to score points. I was always happy to come out by the 4th quarter when we had a game well in hand. I had just as much fun watching teammates get to play. That meant we starters had done our job.

We were always disappointed to lose. Winning became a true Okemos tradition and this was exemplified the following season (Greg Lott, personal communication)



JV team with Greg Lott (40) fast break down the court (1972 Tomahawk)



Greg Lott (40) lines up for a foul shot (1972 *Tomahawk*)



Junior Varsity (above); Reid Olds, Terry DeMarco, John Easley, Coach Norv Burgett, Joe Chernycz, Walt Flamme; back; Scott Parisian, Kirk Brookhouse, Chip Ehlinger, Greg Lott, Jeff Totten, Kirk Bailey, Mike Duffy.

At the end of the JV season, I and two or three other teammates were brought up to varsity for the District Tournament. I was always in awe of the Varsity team that season. They were just so much fun to watch. Players I remember from that team: Paul Cryderman (Mr. Everything), Jon Wiseman (perhaps the purest jump shot shooter ever at OHS), Scott Wood, Greg Hebden, Dan Steketee, and John Wallach. It was a thrill to be on the same team with them (during warm-ups) for a few games

I remember winning the district title on our floor. I may have played a few minutes but don't remember. Our next game was played at the new Charlotte High School Fieldhouse. It was enormous; the largest gym I had played in at that time. I believe we won the first Regional game against Lansing Catholic Central. But we lost a close game to Battle Creek Pennfield in the Regional final. I think I may have played about a minute of that game. This was most likely Stan Stolz method of giving me a taste of the level of competition that I would be encountering in the future. A jammed packed gymnasium that held around 3,000 people and a decibel level that was deafening.

It was just a crushing loss for the Varsity team, but it was a harbinger of Okemos Basketball future. I remember being very sad watching so many guys crying. I joined right in. Only too soon I would find out what that hurt really felt like. Paul Cryderman and a supporting front line averaging 6'5" would be returning for the '72-'73 season. I was going have a hard time cracking that starting lineup. I don't think anyone would have predicted what transpired the following season (Greg Lott, personal communication).

1972-73



1972-73 Varsity Basketball Team (#41 Greg Lott) (1973 Tomahawk)



Greg Lott (Junior)

Regular Season

Clippings from the *Lansing State Journal* provide some highlights of the 1972-73 season for the Okemos Chieftains during Lott's junior year.

On December 5, Okemos topped **Grand Ledge**, 85-56, for the Chieftains second straight win, with "newcomer Greg Lott" scoring 14 points ([Source](#)). On December 8, Okemos sailed past **Holt**, 83-67, with Lott scoring 11 points ([Source](#)).



—State Journal Photo

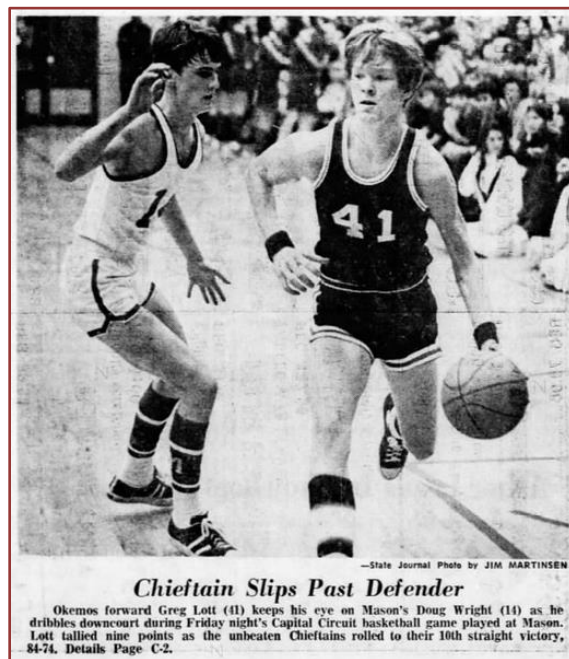
Underhand Shot Misses

Holt's Jeff Tropf (52) was on the defense while Greg Lott (41) of Okemos tries an underhand shot to no avail during Friday night's Holt-Okemos basketball game.

On December 15, Okemos routed **Eaton Rapids**, 92-46. “Greg Lott, who started in...place of regular center Jason Trautz, hobbled by a sprained ankle, joined guard Dave Bechard in contributing 12. ‘He moved right in and really did a job,’ [Coach] Stolz said of Lott’s performance” ([Source](#)). The win pushed the Chieftains record to 4-0 on the season and 2-0 in league play.

On January 9, Okemos defeated **Waverly**, 73-59, winning its eighth straight victory of the season, with Lott scoring 11 points, with teammates Ron Mitchell and Paul Cryderman scoring 14 and 22 points, respectively ([Source](#)).

On January 19, the Chieftains notched their 10th straight victory, defeating **Mason**, 84-74, hiking its Capital Circuit record to 5-0, with Lott (41) adding “some clutch baskets with six points to spark Okemos in the last quarter” ([Source](#)).



In late January, Okemos’ Coach, Stan Stolz, talked about his team’s depth, noting that “Greg Lott has really done a job for us.... He’s 6-4 and has a good outside shot and has started to really hit the boards. And, he’s only a junior” ([Source](#)).

On February 16, Okemos rolled **Haslett**, 85-35, with Lott scoring 10 points, upping the Chieftain record to 16-0 for the season and 9-0 in the Capital Circuit ([Source](#)).

On February 23, Okemos defeated **Mason**, 73-66, for the Chieftains 18th straight win, a 10-0 record in the Capital Circuit, and Okemos’ first undefeated regular season. Coach Stan Stolz “credited [senior Paul] Cryderman and 6-4 junior Greg Lott with providing the impetus for the Okemos triumph” ([Source](#)). Lott scored 14 points, second only to teammate Cryderman’s 29 points.

Districts

On March 6, the Class B district basketball tournament, Okemos held off **Mason**, 71-68, with Lott scoring the Chief's last basket (his only two points of the game) but in a victory preserving the Chieftains perfect (19-0) season ([Source](#)).

On March 8, Okemos' season came to an end, losing 69-61 to **Holt** in the Class B district tournament semifinal, with Lott scoring only four points.

The Chieftains began their 1972-73 season, as Greg recalls, with

high prospects according to the local papers and the team fulfilled that expectation. Our front line was huge. Tim Bass at 6'6", Jason Trautz at 6'5", Paul Cryderman at 6'3", Dave Burr at 6'5", and me at 6'4". Our guards were Dave Bechard, Terry DeMarco, and Ron Mitchell. Dan Stolz, Stan's son, played a limited role as a sophomore on the team that year. I was a spotty starter that season. I was sixth man for most of the season. It was just a hard lineup to crack as a starter. I had much less body mass than the other big guys.

Practices were strenuous and focused. As the season progressed, we realized we were on a mission. A regular undefeated season was within our grasp and we all worked extremely hard. Among the best drills in practice was "one on one" where when on offense you attempt to score on the defender. There was no "out of bounds" in the half court and two players would go at it until a score or defense took possession. Sometimes the two players would go at it for a few minutes. It was all out war and we thrived on it. The match-ups would be changed up periodically so that everyone would eventually battle each other among forwards and centers. Guards would go at it on their end. When you were done on offense, you were up next as the defender. The drill really built up endurance.

The other great drill was full court press. Our team ran it relentlessly. Most teams we played didn't know what hit them because we would start with full court press and call it off only when the game was in complete control.

I only recall starting a couple of games when Jason Trautz had sprained an ankle. I was a forward this season, never playing center the entire season. I was thrilled to get any playing time and contributed the best I could. Paul Cryderman was our leader. He was a natural leader; always pumping us up and encouraging us and coaching us on the floor. He, along with Coach Stolz, really instilled in us the desire to win. And win we did. We completed our regular season undefeated and won the Capital Circuit. We were ranked 3rd in Class B in the high school poll. We all planned on going all the way to the state title.

I recall scrimmaging East Lansing that season. They had Big Ben Poquette who went on to Central Michigan and played in the NBA with the Pistons, Jazz, Cavaliers and Bulls. They were a very good and tough team. I don't recall how we matched up with them in the scrimmage. I'm not sure we could have beaten them in a scheduled game. They were not on our schedule that year.

Paul had nicknamed me “Willard” because he said I looked like the character “Willard” in the latest movie of the early 70’s by the same name. It was about a psychopath training a bunch of rats to wreak havoc on his tormentors. To this day he still calls me that nickname. I averaged 7.5 points a game that year with my high being 14 against Mason in the last game of the regular season.

The adage of it being real tough to beat the same team three times in a season surfaced and bit us in the rear end less than a week later. We were hosting the District Tournament and drew Mason in our first game. It was a real barn-burner of a game and we narrowly escaped with the victory. Cryderman saved the day with his stellar play.

Two nights later, Holt was back for our third match-up of the season. We had beaten them twice but they had been tough games. It was a game that we never had control of. Holt just came in and got some great play from reserve players as well as their starters and they took it to us. I recall Cryderman playing with a high fever that night. He still led us in scoring but nobody else played well including me.

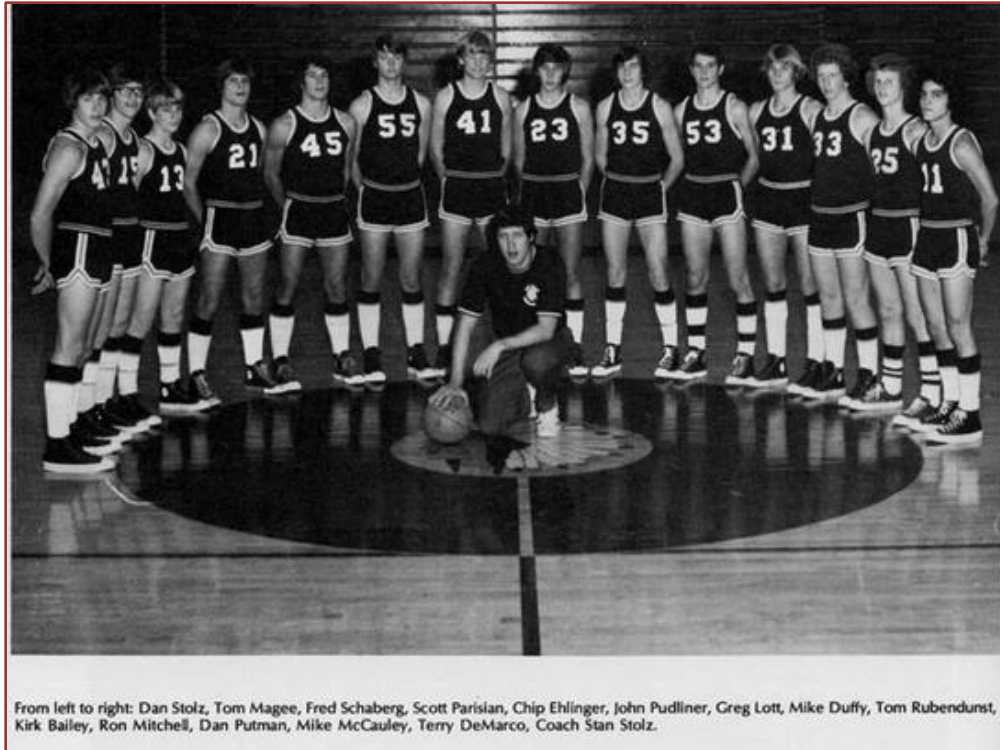
Our dreams had been dashed and it was just a miserable feeling. Holt won the district but didn’t make it much farther in the tournament that year.

There sure were a lot of tears in the locker room but I’ll never forget Cryderman coming right to me and giving me words of encouragement (while I was sobbing) about leading the team next season as a senior. Like I said before, Paul was a true leader (Greg Lott, personal communication).

1973-74

By Greg’s senior year, he stood 6’4” and weighed 170 lb. Coach Stan Stolz looked ahead to the upcoming Chieftain season, providing this assessment of Lott’s contribution to the team: “Lott has been doing a good job.... He has the outside and inside shot but he doesn’t have the long arm like a [Jeff] Tropf [of the Holt Rams]. He’s more a forward than center but since we lack good size he has to play the pivot” ([Source](#)).





Greg Lott (41)

Regular Season

The Chieftains opened their 1973-74 season on November 27 with a 70-64 victory over **Durand**. Greg Lott hauled in 17 rebounds and scored 22 points on ten baskets and two free throws ([Source](#)).

On November 30, **Holt** downed Okemos, 72-62, in spite of Lott scoring 26 points on ten baskets and six free throws ([Source](#)).

On December 7, Okemos downed **Mason**, 90-67, with Lott scoring 18 points ([Source](#)).

LOTT MANAGED to pick up 16 of his 18 points for the night in the first half as he set out most of the second stanza. The 6-4 senior center wasn't going to be kicked around the boards, either, as he kept Okemos firmly in command of the rebound department with 14.

OKEMOS DOMINATED from the start with Lott banging away from the inside and Stolz hitting on long jumpers from the outside, as the Chieftains cakewalked to a 44-25 lead at the half.

On December 11, Okemos toppled **Grand Ledge**, 80-62, with Lott scoring 9 points, respectively. Okemos improved its record to 3-1 ([Source](#)).

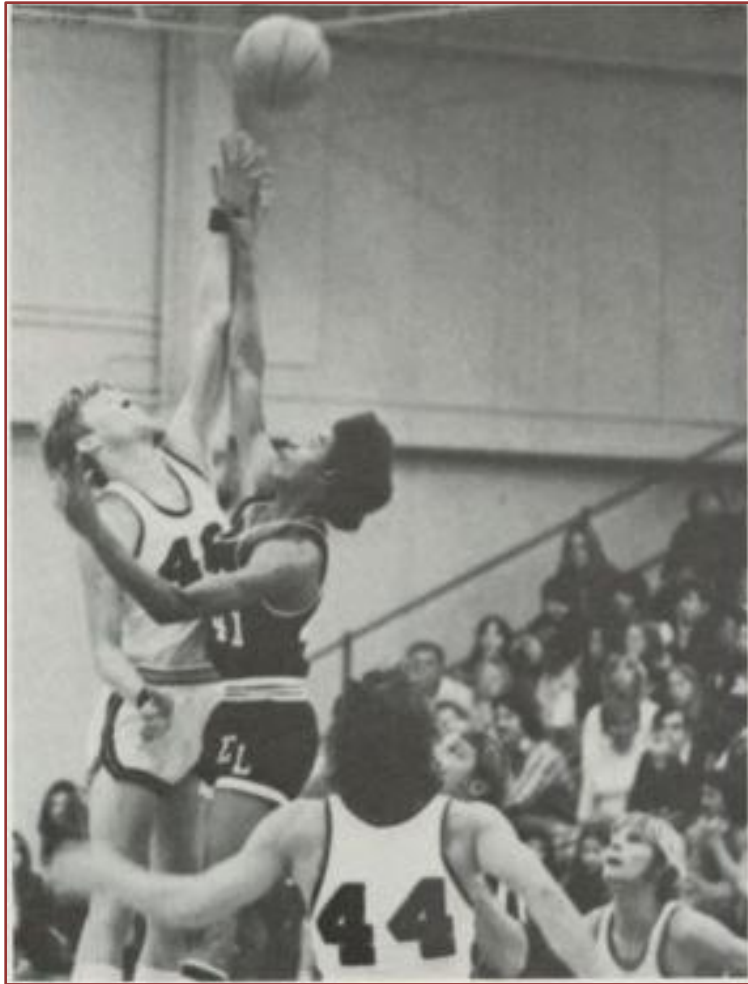
On December 14, Okemos beat **Lansing Catholic Central**, 75-64. “Okemos, behind 6-4 senior center Greg Lott, put its game together to leave the Cougars far behind. Lott had 20 first-half points. ... Lott picked right up in the third quarter, hitting for 10 points” ([Source](#)). By game’s end, Lott had sunk 12 baskets and seven free throws to lead all scorers with 31.

On December 18, Okemos crunched **Haslett**, 77-41, upping their record to 5-1 for the season. “Lott came through with another super scoring night, hitting for 23 points [on nine baskets and five free throws] and taking care of the boards for the Chiefs” ([Source](#)).

On December 21, Okemos narrowly lost to **St. Johns**, 66-68, in a game where Lott grabbed 17 rebounds and scored 20 points on nine baskets and two free throws ([Source](#)).



Going into a December 29th game against **East Lansing**, the *State Journal* wrote that Lott was “steadily improving at center which has been a new position for him this year” and was leading the Chieftains both in scoring with a 22.7 point per game average and in rebounding ([Source](#)). Okemos routed the Trojans, 76-60, in that game, with Lott scoring 20 points on eight baskets and four free throws. Chieftains coach Stan Stolz called the match “our greatest game of the year” ([Source](#)).



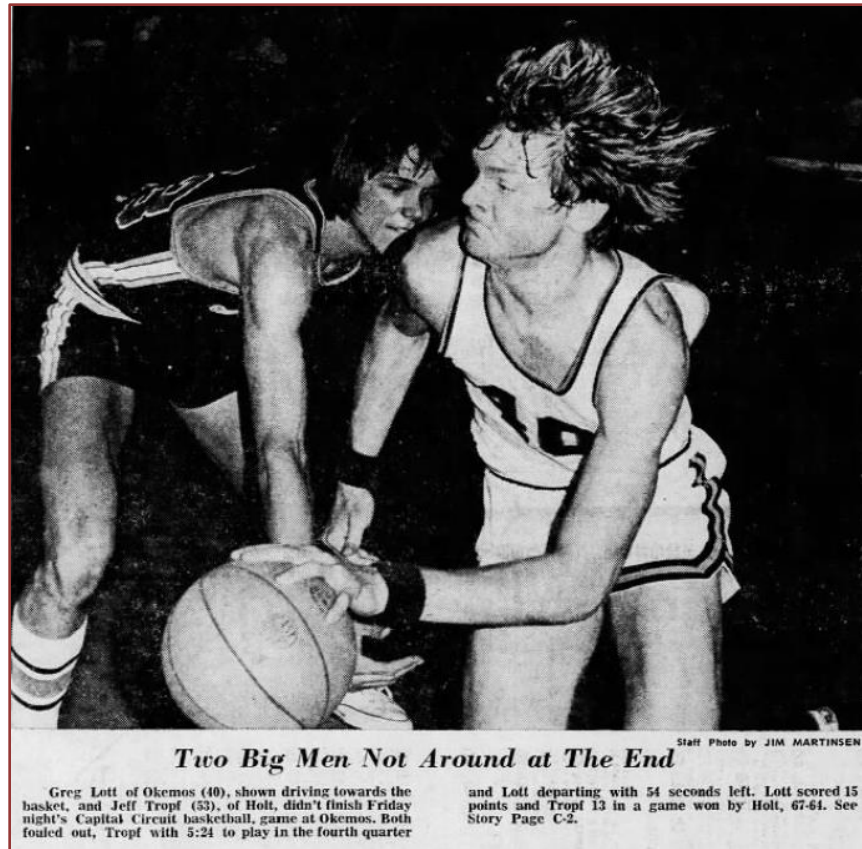
Greg Lott (#40) – Jumping Against East Lansing

On January 4, Okemos trimmed **Howell**, 66-61, with Lott grabbing 17 rebounds and scoring 14 points on six baskets and two free throws. The win lifted the Chieftains to a 7-2 overall record and a 4-1 record in the Capital Circuit ([Source](#)).

On January 8, Okemos defeated **Waverly**, 72-62, with Lott grabbing 13 rebounds and scoring 20 points ([Source](#)).

On January 11, Okemos beat **Eaton Rapids**, 67-43, upping their record to 9-2 overall, 6-1 in the Capital Circuit league. Lott led all scorers with 19 points on eight baskets and three free throws. “He’s the toughest inside kid I’ve ever had,” praised [Coach] Stolz of the 6-5 Lott. “He can shoot the jumper as well as go inside with anybody. He’s been super for us.” ([Source](#))

On January 18, Okemos narrowly lost to **Holt**, 67-63. Lott scored 15 points on five baskets and five free throws but fouled out with 54 seconds remaining in the game. The Chieftains loss put Okemos at 9-3 for the season behind Holt’s 10-0 record ([Source](#)).



On January 22, Okemos downed non-conference opponent **Durand**, 72-69, with Lott pulling in 14 rebounds and leading the Chieftains in scoring with 28 points on ten baskets and eight free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 25, Okemos beat **Mason**, 77-60. "Greg Lott had a big night for the Chiefs, collecting 13 baskets and three free throws to finish with a game high 29 points. Lott also had a strong rebounding performance that saw Okemos gain a 37-28 statistical advantage" ([Source](#)). On February 1, Okemos defeated **Lansing Catholic Central**, 77-66. Despite foul troubles that reduced his playing time, Lott netted 24 points on 11 field goals and two free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 8, Okemos increased its Capital Circuit record to 8-2 and 13-3 overall, defeating **Haslett**, 78-49. Lott led the Chieftains with 13 rebounds and 27 points on 10 baskets and seven free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 15, the Chieftains defeated **Howell**, 71-54, with Lott scoring 29 points, a win that gave Okemos its fifth straight Capital Circuit victory, upping the team's record to 9-2 in the league and 14-3 overall, two of the losses at the hands of **Holt** and the other in a non-league game with St. Johns. "Lott, a smooth 6-4 senior center, scored 10...in the first period and added 13 more in the third period," netting a game total of 29 points on 13 baskets and three free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 22, *State Journal* Staff Writer Bob Gross wrote "Chieftains Lott Proving Versatile":

OKEMOS —It was just a matter of time before Greg Lott became the kind of basketball player everybody knew he would be.

That includes his coach, Stan Stolz, who has enjoyed watching the rapid maturity of his 6-4 senior center.

"**HE WAS** just a spot starter on the front line last year but now that he realizes how valuable he is to us, he's one heck of a player," Stolz said.

Lott worked hard all summer on weights and played basketball whenever he had the chance. He is on the Okemos golf team and also a pitcher for the Chieftains. Greg is a member of the National Honor Society, carrying a 3.8 grade average.

While area cage fans are buzzing these days about Holt's 6-7 Jeff Tropf, Lott has stayed back in the shadows. He was never that much publicized and he isn't a flashy player.

BUT HE is a complete player for the Chieftains and the big reason why Stolz is looking forward to the Class B district tournament which will be played at Okemos. The field not only includes Okemos with its 13-3 record, but Holt, 17-0, Eaton Rapids, Mason and St. Johns are entered as well.

Lott has a 22.8 point per game average and gets 14 rebounds a game. He has always played forward but after Stolz lost heavily at graduation, he moved Lott to the post.

"Gregg is very versatile," says Stolz. He has a good outside and inside shot and drives well. I don't think a year ago he even thought about playing college ball but now he talks about it. I know he can play somewhere."

OKEMOS HAD a 20-0 record last year and had won three straight Capital Circuit championships. Paul Cryderman, now doing alright for himself playing at Albion College, was the sparkplug for Okemos a year on a team which had high hopes of going a long way in the state tournament but lost to Holt in the district.

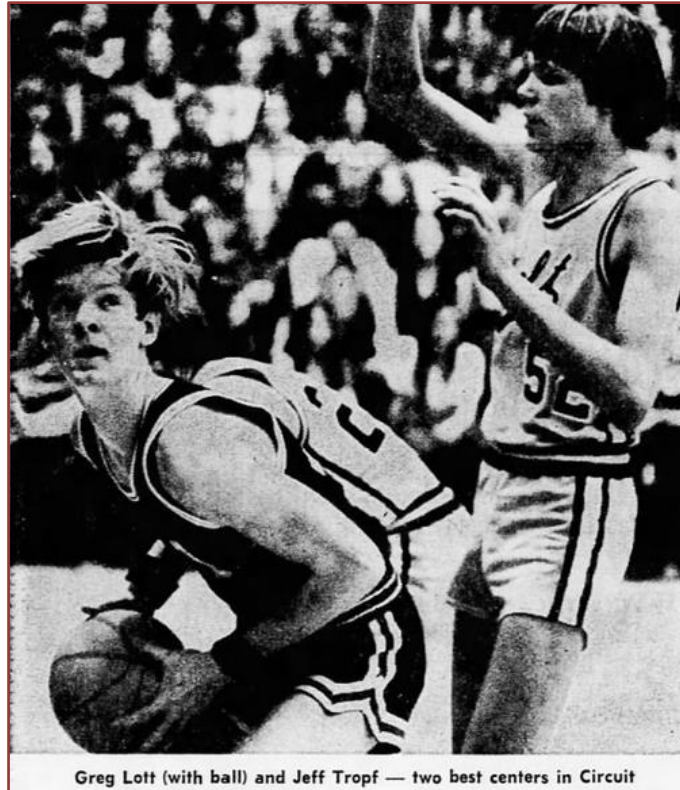
Stoll was asked one day to compare Lott with Cryderman.

"He has the potential to be as good but they're different type players. Greg has the good outside shot just like Cryderman but Cryderman was one who really put the spirit in us. He kept us fired up all the time I don't think Lott realizes yet how good he really is. He was a little scared at the first of the year because he had to take on the big guys from the other teams. But, he's handled it well and is a confident young man."

LOTT HAS had some big games this year. He poured in 31 points against Lansing Catholic and 10 times has gone over the 20-point mark. In his last five games he's scored 29, 28, 24, 27 and 29.

Tropf, who scored 31 points the first game against Okemos and 13 the return game which Holt won by three points, 67-64, complimented Lott earlier in the year when he said he was the best center he's played against so far. Tropf is averaging 25 points a game and leads the Circuit. Lott is second.

"I think what's made Greg so outstanding now is that he's not afraid to go out and mix it up," Stolz said. "He added about 20 pounds last summer and he's a completely changed player. He's aggressive and his personality has blossomed. He now has that take charge attitude which I like."



On February 22, Okemos closed out its regular season with a 15-3 record and a 10-2 mark in the Capitol Circuit, topping **Eaton Rapids**, 69-52. “Greg Lott...powered his team’s victory with 25 points” ([Source](#)).



Greg Lott (40) – Shooting Free Throw (1974 *Tomahawk*)

Districts

On March 5, the Chieftains season ended with a 15-4 record, after losing a 59-55 loss to the St. Johns Redwings in the Class B district basketball tournament. Lott scored 19 points on nine baskets and a free throw ([Source](#)).

Laurels

While taking “a back-seat as far as scoring and rebounding leadership in the [Capital] Circuit to Holt’s Jeff Tropf” ([Source](#)), Lott was “a solid scoring and rebounding performer” ([Source](#)) and “the second best performer in the league” ([Source](#)), averaging 22 points and 13 rebounds a game and being named to the First Team of the Capital Circuit’s All-Star Team.

Okemos, which won the league title a year ago with a 10-0 record and shared it the year before with Holt, finished the season with only three regular season losses (two to Holt) and the other to St. Johns.



All-Area Basketball

First Team

	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Year
Greg Lott, Okemos	C	6-4	170	Sr.
Jeff Beard, Ithaca	C	6-4	195	Sr.
Doug Woodhams, St. Johns	F	6-2	160	Sr.
Fritz Ordiway, Bath	F	6-4	200	Sr.
Dennis Wright, Leslie	F	5-10	150	Sr.

On May 31, it was announced that Greg Lott was one of 19 Okemos seniors named to the Society of Outstanding American High School Students ([Source](#)).

Looking back on his senior year season, Greg recalled:

I had become the designated leader of the team...and it was not a role I was real comfortable with. I was more introverted than [Paul] Cryderman as I was not a real rah-rah guy, nor could I admonish any fellow players. My self-practice regimen increased the summer before that season. I took all the encouragement and drills my coaches provided me and worked on them. I was going to be the center, the position I preferred. I know we played a few scrimmage games in summer basketball (not sure it was even camp) practices.

We began the season on the day after Thanksgiving, defeating non-conference foe Durand. We had Chip Ehlinger, Scott Parisian, and Mike Duffy at forwards, Terry DeMarco, Dan Stolz, and Ron Mitchell at the guards. John Pudliner and Kirk Bailey backed me up at center. We were pretty competitive that season. Holt was our nemesis in the Capital Circuit with Jeff Trops leading them at the center position.

I really enjoyed playing for Stan Stolz. He helped me to believe in myself as all of the coaches did through my senior year. I've always had difficulty with doing just that, even today. Winning was pure fun and we accomplished a lot of it. I couldn't wait to play the next game. I was pretty happy.

My goal was to win every game. I detested losing. I played hard. Most of my game success was from flat out desire to win with a little bit of talent thrown in. I knew the role of scoring and rebounding fell on my shoulders and I took on that responsibility averaging around 22 points a game and 13 rebounds per game. I never really cared that much about the stats. I just wanted to win. Once again, if we were in control of the game and I was sitting in the fourth quarter watching my teammates in action, I was happy.

We lost a total of four games to two teams that season. Holt beat us on their floor in the first match-up of the season. I think I scored more than Trops that game but we lost so it meant nothing. The return match on our floor was built up by the media big time. Neither Trops nor I played very well in that game. I think we both fouled out. We lost by fewer points this time but still lost.

The other losses that season came at the hands of St John's. We played them on their floor just before or during the Christmas break and lost by 2 points I believe. It was a very discouraging loss because we felt like we really should have beaten them. It wasn't a pleasant way to greet the approaching Christmas.

The victories over all the other teams came with ease as I recall; we weren't challenged too often except, perhaps by Lansing Catholic Central.

We hosted Lansing Everett in a scrimmage on our floor that season. They pretty much cleaned our clocks. It was my first experience playing against future superstar Earvin Johnson (he was a freshman sensation).

We hosted East Lansing in a regular scheduled game for possibly the first time in school history. I was real geeked to play them. Although I lived within the Okemos School District boundaries, I had an East Lansing mailing address. I always felt like they considered us 2nd fiddle to them. They had lost a lot of seniors to graduation (especially Ben Poquette) so they

were pretty young. I just wanted to pound them, and we did. My pre-game routine of blasting "Born To Be Wild" by Steppenwolf on my home LP stereo was played even louder and more often prior to that game.

The season came to a heartbreaking end against St. Johns on our own floor in the opening game of the District Tournament. I remember being eager to face Holt for a third time and put the same kibosh on them that they did to us the season before. Unfortunately, we forgot to take care of St. Johns. The Redwings came in and dominated us. Their star, Doug Woodhams, had a stellar game and I played a sub-standard game. It didn't seem like anyone could do anything right in that game and we went down. I felt helpless and I was crushed. As I had stated earlier, only too soon would I realize the true pain of playing the last game of my career. I could not put the loss out of my mind and I sulked for weeks, displaying some regretful behavior in class. I wasn't what I'd call a poor loser, (maybe I was) I just didn't deal with that loss very well.

Holt made it all the way to the State Finals in Class B that season. Coach Stolz invited me to attend the game with him with son Dan, and John Pudliner. We sat in the upper deck end-zone of Jenison Fieldhouse to watch the game. Holt put up a battle but lost to Muskegon Heights. I wasn't too emotional about watching that game. Little did I know I would be playing on the same floor within a year in a MSU uniform (Greg Lott, personal communication).



Greg Lott (left of player with towel on neck) (1974 Tomahawk)

Michigan State University

1974-75

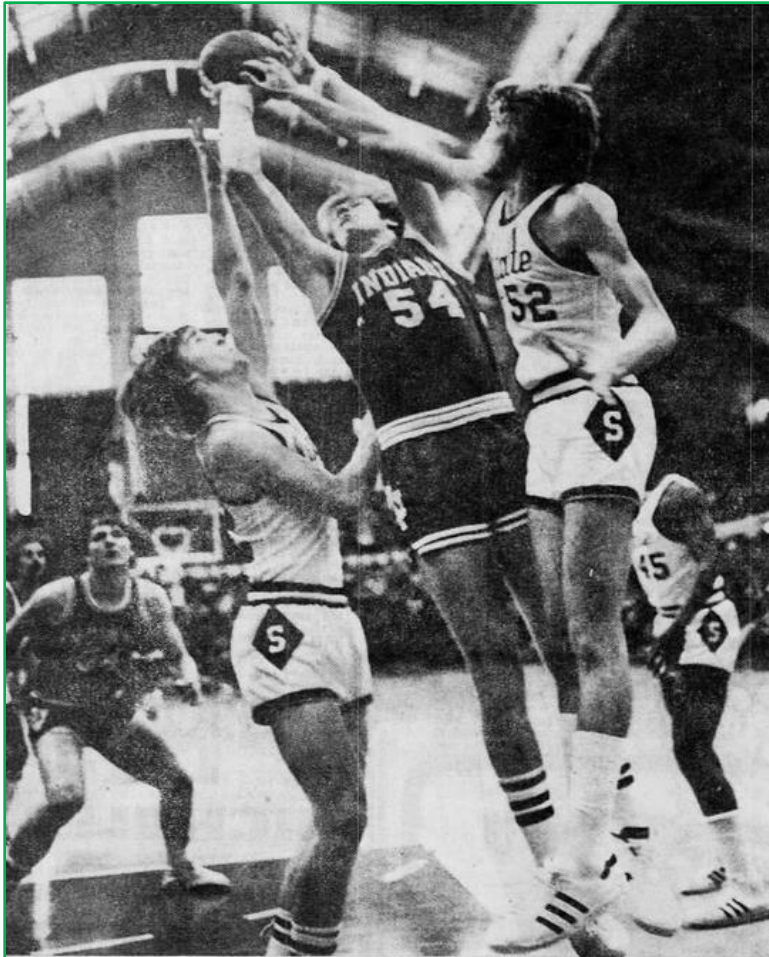
As a freshman, Greg Lott at 6'4" and 170 lb. played on the Michigan State Junior Varsity team. The story behind Lott not continuing to play basketball for Michigan State after his freshman year is recounted below. However, in the midst of his freshman season, Lott for one "shining moment" played in a varsity game for the Spartans.

On Saturday, January 4, 1975, the Spartans varsity squad was to play #2 Indiana. However, of the 12 varsity players, the team's 10 black players walked out of a pre-game team meeting at the Union Building "in protest of the starting lineup" for that day's game. Varsity coach Gus Ganakas charged junior varsity coach Pat Miller to round up ten players—and one of them was Greg Lott from the Spartans JV team, in order to have a 12 players "ready" for the game.



GUS ISN'T HAPPY — Michigan State basketball coach Gus Ganakas doesn't look too happy about sending his junior varsity squad out on the court Saturday to meet the powerful Indiana Hoosiers. Ganakas had no choice in the matter after suspending 10 varsity players when they walked out of a pre-game meeting in an objection to Ganakas' decision to start freshman Jeff Tropf. Indiana routed MSU, 107-55. UPI.

While the Spartans lost to the Hoosiers 107-55, the photo below shows that Lott (22) played in the game, the final box score showing that he scored four points ([Source](#)).



Staff Photos by BRIAN BURD

MSU's Jeff Tropf (52) and Greg Lott (22) try in vain to stop Indiana's Kent Benson (54)

Indiana			Michigan State		
	G	F T		G	F T
May	5	0-0 10	Lott	2	0-2 4
Green	5	2-2 12	Bird	2	0-1 4
Benson	6	1-2 13	Tropf	8	5-7 21
Wikerson	4	0-0 8	Talaga	3	2-3 8
Buckner	1	2-2 4	Flowers	2	0-0 4
Laskowski	5	0-0 10	Lockett	2	0-1 4
Abernathy	1	0-0 2	McGray	2	0-2 2
Crews	0	0-0 0	Vndnbsche	3	0-2 6
Radford	4	0-0 8	Antwine	0	0-0 0
Ahlfeld	2	0-0 4	Wolfe	0	0-0 0
Wisman	4	0-0 8			
Haymore	6	0-0 12			
Noort	5	2-2 12			
Kamstra	0	0-0 0			
Allen	2	0-0 4			
Totals	50	7-8 107	Totals	24	7-17 55
Halftime: Indiana 53, Michigan 51, 22.					
Total fouls: Indiana 15, Michigan 51, 11.					
Att. 6,500.					

To the extent that this was the only varsity game in which Lott participated as a Spartan, he would be the former Okemos High Chieftain basketball player having the shortest career playing at the varsity basketball level for the Spartans.

After Michigan State

After Lott graduated in 1979 with a DVM from Michigan State's College of Veterinary Medicine, he moved on to a professional career working as a veterinarian. When asked about his life after graduating from MSU, Greg replied that his

first (and only) job at Riverview Animal Hospital [in Riverview, Michigan]. I remain an associate veterinarian there today. I continued to play recreation basketball in Trenton, Riverview, Wyandotte, and Dearborn as well as playing on many YMCA teams. I stopped playing in my late 40's when it became apparent that it was becoming a risk to be able to work with bad knees and back issues.

I coached AAU Girls for three years, assisting my friend Rob Sauter with girls at the high school level and then my daughter Emily's AAU teams from age 10-14 for four more years. I coached YMCA teams and CYO teams when my daughters played.

I was an assistant coach alongside Coach Sauter at Gibraltar High School girls Varsity for two years.

I met my wife Kathy when I was just beginning veterinary school in 1976. She had moved here from Springfield Massachusetts to attain residency in Michigan and then apply to veterinary school. She graduated from the College of Veterinary Medicine in 1981 and practiced small animal (pets) medicine and surgery until retiring in 2015. I probably fell in love with her when she beat me at H.O.R.S.E. more than once in the IM gym. She has one heck of a shot.

My first trip to Massachusetts to visit her family was highlighted by a visit to the Basketball Hall of Fame, which, at the time, was located at Springfield College. On their small video recorder television screen running continuously, was the MSU-Indiana State 1979 National Championship Game, which of course, we had no problem watching the game again.

Kathy is one of the biggest "Magic" Johnson fans I know. While in veterinary school, one of her classmates gave her his season tickets because he had to study.

She went to nearly every game during the season that "Magic" and the Spartans won the first national championship.

I've been to all three Basketball Hall of Fames in Springfield, MA. The most recent visit was to the "brand new Hall" the day after "Magic" was inducted in 2000.

Kathy and I have two beautiful daughters, Rachel and Emily, now 32 and 30, respectively. They both were prom queens for their senior classes at Roosevelt High School in Wyandotte.

I was president of the Southeastern Michigan Veterinary Medical Association in 1993. I continue to organize a golf outing (26th year) for the same association each August which raises money for Leader Dogs for the Blind in Rochester Michigan (Greg Lott, personal communication).

Looking Back

In the course of interviewing Lott, he looked back on his basketball career at OHS, pursuing his university degree at Michigan State, his experience playing in that one “varsity game” against **Indiana**. Greg recalled:

Jeff Tropf [of the Holt Rams] had been recruited by Michigan State our entire senior season. I had contact with Mike Turner who coached at Albion College where [former Chieftain] Paul Cryderman was playing. I received no other contacts by any other colleges. I had not actively promoted myself to any colleges and I believe I was just unaware of the process. I believed that if a college wanted me they'd come asking. That never happened and I was somewhat discouraged that I wasn't being sought out. My career goal was to attend veterinary school at Michigan State University. I weighed the offer by Albion College, but it only amounted to an academic scholarship, which wasn't going to come close to covering tuition (approximately \$7,000.00 a year in 1974). Since no other offers of any kind ever materialized, I decided to concentrate on my academic career and my goal of getting into and graduating from veterinary school. I'm not sure if offers to play in college didn't come because I had not pursued the inquiry process, or that I didn't really have any great numbers until my senior year. Nobody would have ever considered me based on my junior year stats. While my senior year performance was considered outstanding, it didn't bring any colleges knocking on my door.

I applied to and was accepted to MSU and was enrolled in the pre-veterinary program. At that time, one could apply for and be accepted into the Veterinary College after two years only if all required classes and credits could be accomplished. I made this my goal and dropped any idea of playing collegiate basketball. I never regretted the decision.

I was pretty busy and somewhat overwhelmed by classes in my first term at MSU.

My home was just one mile from campus and I lived with my parents my entire college career. It was the most economical way to handle the expenses of college for our family.

A very small announcement in the State News regarding tryouts for the JV basketball team caught my interest in the fall of 1974. The biggest memory other than that in November was the stunning upset of Ohio State by the MSU football team.

As a freshman, I had purchased season “student tickets” for \$15.00. We sat at the top of the south end zone and I recall floating down the field in mere seconds after the clock ticked down to zero. That thrill would be surpassed a few weeks later.

I tried out for and made the 1974-75 MSU Junior Varsity basketball team. I have no memory of the tryouts. Our coach was Pat Miller, a former MSU standout from Menominee. He was

an assistant varsity coach under Gus Ganakas. I remember watching him play in games my father had taken me to at Jenison Field House. A guard named Steve Rymal also played on the team as well. He went on to become a renowned equine veterinarian in southeast Michigan.

Our JV team was made up mostly of players who were seeking a varsity position, but had not made it and a few other guys like me. Our practices were usually held on the third floor of Jenison Field House where the gymnastics team practiced. The floor was not in the best of condition. We played 12 games for the season. Two were on the road. Our "away" jerseys were in pretty pathetic shape. My jersey said "tate" missing the capital S. We lost on the road to St. Clair Shores Community College and the U of M junior varsity team. We had to drive MSU vehicles to St. Clair and U of M as there was no bus. We got stomped by St. Clair Shores and battled closely but lost to U of M in front of a crowd of maybe 50 people in Crisler Arena, which was pretty new at the time.

I'm not sure how our games were scheduled in general, but there was only one game that we played at home that was relatively close to the varsity start time, so it was rare for us to have much of a fan base. We were embarrassed by Lansing Community College on our own floor before a varsity game, one of their players scoring over 50 points against us. Nobody could stop him. His name was Paul Stoll and he made the MSU team roster the following season. In essence, we were a horrible team. Most players were out to prove themselves which left little hope for any type of a team concept. I can only remember starting in one game that I led the team in scoring with 19 points against Muskegon Community College. We lost that game too. We were 1-11 for the season. I don't recall who we beat. It was probably the only game in which I scored double figures.

In essence, I was pretty disenchanted with the Junior Varsity experience at MSU. I could only take 12 credits winter term because I couldn't fit the other class I needed into my schedule to accommodate basketball practice times. This put me behind in the schedule to complete all my necessary requirements to apply for veterinary school and my credit load was decreased which was an unfavorable factor for applying to veterinary school. I really wasn't going anywhere as far as advancing to a varsity level because I did not make that my focus and I didn't have the drive to do all the body building workouts they wanted me to do to even remotely have a chance of accomplishing advancement. I could see the writing on the wall. We scrimmaged the varsity one day and I remember junior Terry Furlow flattening me on a pick play.

I was pretty sure I was not Big Ten material after that day. I didn't have the physique for that level of play. It took me a few minutes to breathe again. I was more discouraged than encouraged. During one practice session, after I let one of the players on offense blow by me on the baseline for a score, Coach Miller shouted out "Did Stan Stolz teach you to play defense like that?" I wanted to shout back "He sure did!" but, of course, I did not. Instead I got riled up enough to try to not let that happen ever again, at least at that practice. I think that incident fired me up enough that I actually began starting some of the games.

My 15 Minutes of Fame – While attending college, I worked at Zeeb Animal Hospital, on old U.S. 27 north in Lansing, as a kennel cleaner and assistant. I worked Saturdays and Sundays most every week. We had not had any organized practices for our Junior Varsity team during the term break which was from about December 13th to January 6th. Coach Miller had told us all to practice with our high school teams to stay in shape and we would resume practice when classes resumed. So, I did just that. I practiced a few times with the [Okemos High] team then led by Dan Stolz and John Pudliner. It was a fun time again.

I got home from work on Saturday January 4th at about noon. I was to return later to do the night time kennel cleaning and hospital cleaning.

The phone rang. My mother answered and said my coach was on the phone.

Coach Miller asked me “what was I doing this afternoon?” To my recollection, I don’t know if I was going to attend the varsity game against Indiana University that afternoon or watch it on TV. I don’t recall having season basketball tickets. I told him I was going to watch the game. He told me to bring my shoes and to be at Jenison at 3 p.m. I asked what was up. He said “I’ll tell you when you get here.”

I arrived at the Jenison Field House parking lot at promptly 2:45 p.m. They asked who I was and let me in to park. When I arrived there were a few other players in the locker room getting their ankles taped. Among them was fellow freshman Jeff Tropf. Coach Miller approached me and informed me that I and others would be playing against Indiana in an hour. I’m wondering how pale I turned after that statement. It was the first time I’d ever had my ankles taped, which was required (I didn’t like the feeling). Coach had explained that the varsity players (other than Jeff Tropf) had been suspended by Coach Gus Ganakas for walking out of an 11:00 a.m. meeting. Apparently the black players, led by Lindsay Hairston, Bill Glover, and Pete Davis, were against Coach Ganakas’ decision to start Jeff Tropf (the only active white player on the team, Jim Dudley was injured). They got up and filed out. I’m not aware of the whole situation that transpired. It was labeled by the media as a racial situation. All I know is I was “forced” into a starting role for Michigan State which was beyond incredible. Coach Miller had tried to contact as many players as possible from the team. Everyone was still on the term break and most weren’t returning to school until the next day for classes starting on Monday. Several players made it back for the game, some not until after halftime. (Remember that there were no cell phones then.) The team was also formed with “players in the Intramural Building” so we would have enough to field a team.

Our “team” with Tropf as our leader came out to warm up in front of a mystified, unhappy crowd of 6,500. Instead of just forfeiting the game, the MSU Athletic Office decided to put whatever team out on the floor that they could comprise. Gus Ganakas was put into very perplexing situation. He had to do what was right and face the slaughter that would ensue, both on the floor and in the media.

Indiana University was loaded with talent and coached by Bobby Knight in his 3rd season.

When they announced the starting lineup, I was the first player announced, from East Lansing. (I had wished they had said Okemos, but they went by my legal address).

A photo that was in the Lansing State Journal shows the “deer in the headlights look” on my face coming out of the huddle next to Gus Ganakas. This photo is also in earlier editions of the book written by Lynn Henning called Spartan Seasons. There is no indication of who is in the photo in the chapter about “The Walkout”. There were no junior varsity players named in the book. A couple of years ago my wife and I were in East Lansing to attend a Women’s Basketball game with our goddaughter. We were in the MSU Bookstore and I found a Spartan Seasons in the book department. Unfortunately the chapter about the walkout was completely eliminated in later editions. Who can blame them?

How ironic that one of the darkest moments in Spartan Athletic history was part of my “15 Minutes of Fame.” We took a 4-0 lead which temporarily thrilled the crowd. This was short-lived as the Hoosiers methodically destroyed us. We battled pretty hard but had neither the talent nor size to match up with Kent Benson, Steve Green, Scott May, Quinn Buckner, John Laskowski, and others. We lost 107-55. (Interestingly, they defeated Iowa’s regular varsity team 102-49 a week later in Bloomington.)

I don’t remember too much about the game. I made a good pass to Tropf inside who scored on the play. I made a running (“prayer”) left handed hook shot from about the free throw line and got credit for a basket when Kent Benson pinned my shot against the backboard. I missed the two free throws I attempted. I do remember Bobby Knight coming in to our locker room after the game and giving us a speech admiring our courage. I’ve always admired him for that despite his troubled past.

When we were leaving the floor at half-time to head to the locker room, my father sought me out to greet me with a hug. He had been working that day delivering mail in East Lansing when he’d heard the news. He had to beg the ticket takers to let him in. That was a great moment for me and my dad.

Indiana was number one in the country on Monday morning. They went on to lose in the regional finals to Kentucky that season. But the following season, they were undefeated National Champions, defeating the University of Michigan in the final.

They were truly an amazing team led by a coach driven to win.

After That Game: *In the locker room, our ‘team’ was discussing practice on Sunday to get ready to play Ohio State on Monday night. Of course, the Indiana game was the last Varsity action most of us would ever experience except for Jeff Tropf. Some of the Junior Varsity team members were on the Varsity roster the following season.*

The varsity team was re-instated Sunday morning. They resumed their schedule with Ohio State Monday night and I was back to finishing the Junior Varsity season which, after a few more weeks, couldn’t end soon enough. When the season ended I had already decided that I would not play the following season. It was time to concentrate on school. The Junior Varsity team was dissolved after the ’75-’76 season. Gus Ganakas coached one more

season after that 1975 game. Jud Heathcoate took over for the 1976-77 season. Earvin Johnson arrived for the '77-'78 season and led the Spartans to the National Title in 1979 before leaving for the NBA.

I took a humanities class for four credits in the summer of 1975 to "catch up" in credit hours so I could get back on schedule to apply to veterinary school in winter term 1976. My strategy paid off and I applied for and was accepted to the College of Veterinary Medicine for the class beginning summer of 1976.

My basketball career did not end with that junior varsity season. I played on an intramural team called B.A.S.H. which stood for Best Athletes State Has. It was organized by another OHS graduate, Chuck VanDien. Charlie continued to take a few credits each semester so he could continue coaching basketball and softball teams in the MSU Intramural program. We had a very talented team and we played for the Intramural championship which we lost.

I played a lot of pickup ball in the IM building, often with former OHS classmates or teammates and others I met along the way. One great story from the IM days was when we were playing a bunch of MSU football players which happened to be comprised of Kirk Gibson and others. While lining up for a free throw, I'll never forget Kirk Gibson proclaiming to Jason Trautz (OHS '73) "I'm going to put you in Owen" referring to Owen Health Center on the MSU campus. Well, fortunately he didn't and we whipped them to hold to floor the entire day.

I played on more basketball teams while I was senior in veterinary school than I could count on one hand. I was playing for Mac's Saloon in the East Lansing city league, an intramural team or two, a veterinary school league team (brutal games), and a Lansing city league team that the veterinary school janitor talked me into playing on. His son was of course, the "star" which he wasn't (Greg Lott, personal communication).

More recently and having reflected further, Greg shared:

Wow, this has been difficult to assimilate. I've procrastinated writing this for months. Looking back at O.H.S. there no doubt that athletic competition was joyous (except for the losses) which were harder to deal with in basketball than the other sports I played (golf and baseball) because I became so passionate about it. The final basketball team loss my senior season in the District Tournament to St. Johns was crushing. But, eventually, I got over it and learned to deal with failure in several aspects of life. My teachers and coaches at OHS did a remarkable job preparing me for college and life in general.

One of my biggest regrets from high school was electing not to continue with Orchestra my junior and senior years. In fifth grade I started learning how to play the violin by the Suzuki method brought to the Okemos School District by Marilyn Kesler, who became the Orchestra Music Director for 42 years.

Trying to weigh basketball practice vs. orchestra rehearsal led me to a decision to give up orchestra. Looking back, this was a big mistake. If I had it to do over I would have figured

out how to participate in both. I apologize to Ms. Kesler for abandoning a talent that she helped cultivate in me.

Today, I'm actively playing the violin again, having joined the musician's group at my church. I have her to thank for sparking that initial desire to excel at music. I'm no superstar but I'm pretty decent.

Some of my closest friends are those that I went to high school with and none of them were on the basketball team.

I have been truly blessed with my family and friends I have made in the past and present.

I've enjoyed a satisfying career and have no regrets about my decision to become a veterinarian.

I feel that most of my teachers at O.H.S. and M.S.U. contributed to shaping my life in one way or another. How fortunate I was to have been a Chieftain and a Spartan basketball player.

I've kept in touch with Stan Stolz and Ron Mott intermittently over the years. They are both in their early 80's now. It is always fun to reminisce those O.H.S. basketball seasons with them. It's pretty incredible some of the basketball game memories we can recall.

How very thankful I am for all of the experiences that I've encountered in life! (Greg Lott, personal communication).