

## **DAVE PARKS**

**By Joseph Hession**

Excerpted from Forty Niners: Looking Back

It didn't take long for Dave Parks to become John Brodie's favorite receiver.

Just six games into Parks' rookie season, he established a 49er record when he caught an 83-yard touchdown pass against the Los Angeles Rams. It was the longest reception in team history. A week later, he caught an 80-yard touchdown pass against the Minnesota Vikings, the second-longest in team history. And two weeks after that, he caught a 79-yard touchdown pass.

Dave Parks, the first player chosen in the 1964 college draft, had clearly established himself as the premier deep threat in the NFL. His records for the longest receptions in team history stood for 13 years.

"After that first season the defenses tightened up on me," he said. "I didn't have any more 80-yard receptions. They covered me pretty good."

Opposing defenses may have stopped the long bomb but they didn't stop Dave Parks. In 1965, he caught 80 passes for 1,344 yards and 12 touchdowns. He led the league in all three categories.

That was the year the 49ers lit up the scoreboard everywhere they went. They led the league in scoring in 1965 with 421 points, an average of 31 points a game. Unfortunately, the defense was giving up points faster than the offense could score them. They lost games with final scores of 42-41, 61-20, and 39-31.

"My feeling was, if we had the ball last, we would score and win," he said. "Brodie could always get the ball into the end zone.

"The number of balls I caught was never really a big factor. I didn't think about statistics. Neither did John Brodie. I remember a game against Pittsburgh where I could have caught 20 balls. No one could cover me effectively. John only threw me three passes. We just did what we had to do to win."

The offensive line of Walter Rock, Len Rhode, Bruce Bosley, Howard Mudd, and John Thomas played a big part in the 49er scoring show of 1965. Each of them played in at least one Pro Bowl.

"We had the best line in football at the time and the best quarterback," he said. "All they had to do was give Brodie a little time and that was it. As a receiver it was simple. John just had to throw it to me."

"I don't know how they choose people for the Hall of Fame, but John Brodie was the best quarterback I was ever around," he said. "I don't think anyone even came close. I know I wanted him in there at quarterback. There may have been others that were just as good, like Bart Starr, but I was more than satisfied with the man I had."

Like so many good passing combinations, Brodie and Parks were able to detect what defenses were doing and react to it. They were able to spontaneously adjust to each other on the field. Despite facing double coverage for most of his career, Parks had an uncanny ability to find the open area in a secondary. And Brodie had the talent to find him. Good communication played a vital part in their relationship.

"Me and John always thought along the same lines," he said. "If we saw something with the defense that we could take advantage of, we were able to adjust accordingly. If I saw something that I thought would work, I told him about it and if he wanted to use it he did. He had a great knack for adjusting and getting me the ball."

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During his ten years of professional football, Parks caught 360 passes for 5,619 yards and 44 touchdowns. His ability to catch the ball is well chronicled but his blocking ability stands out as well. It is a rare receiver that combines both of those talents.

"I always liked to block," said Parks. "The way I figure it, the back had to pick up a linebacker and throw a block while I was catching a ball, so it's just as important for me to block for the running back when he has the ball. The point is, we were a real close team back then. That's how we got it done. We didn't have the individual player that could break open the game. We had to count on each other."

Although San Francisco had some potent offensive teams with Dave Parks at wide receiver, the team's best finish while he was on the roster was 7-6-1 in 1965. The mediocre records are a reflection on the 49ers' porous defense at the time.

"People scored a lot of points against us, but they never went over to Jimmy Johnson's side," he said. "He was the best damn cornerback in the game but nobody ever heard of him until the end of his career. The reason nobody heard of him was that nobody challenged him."

Parks played out his option during the 1967 season and left for New Orleans. With the Saints he wasn't as successful statistically, but he says he was just as effective.

"At New Orleans we didn't have Brodie at quarterback or the great line they had at San Francisco," he said. "I was open just as much but they didn't have the time to get me the ball. "I get together down here (Dallas) with some friends that played on the Dallas Cowboys and they get to talking about big games they played in. When they do that, I really don't have anything to talk about. In New Orleans, we were just another team on everybody's schedule. I didn't like it but that's the way it was."

Although Parks ended his career at New Orleans, it was his days at San Francisco that were the highlight of his 10-year career. Three times he played in the Pro Bowl from 1965 through 1967. He recalls with laughter some of the memories of his days in San Francisco.

"I remember going to Kezar on game days," he said. "That was when the hippies were coming around. Sunday was the big day for them out there by Kezar. We'd go down Haight Street on the way to the game looking at all the hippies. That's kind of a funny thing to remember, but that's what I remember most about the place."

Like almost all of Ken Willard's teammates, Parks has a favorite story about the talented fullback. This one occurred at the 49ers' training camp.

"Someone, I won't say who, ran a garden hose up the side of the building to Willard's room. It was on the second floor. He stuck the hose at the head of the bed so when it was turned on it would spray on Willard's head. When the water was turned on, Willard came running out and knocked on my door. He thought I did it. He was mad because he just bought some new shoes and they were floating around in his room. To this day he still thinks I did it.

"I think about those years with the 49ers a lot. That was the best bunch of guys I played with. That's what I hated most about leaving the team. There was a lot of comradeship. New Orleans was fun too, but San Francisco, well, they were a class bunch of guys."

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## DAVID WAYNE PARKS

Born December 25, 1941, at Muenster, TX

Hgt: 6-2 Wgt: 207 College: Texas Tech

### DAVE PARKS' RECEIVING RECORD

<u>Year</u>	<u>Team</u>		<u>LG</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YDS</u>	<u>AVG</u>	<u>TD</u>
1964	San Francisco	N		36	703	19.5	8
1965	San Francisco	N		*80	*1344	16.8	*12
1966	San Francisco	N		66	974	14.8	5
1967	San Francisco	N		26	313	12.0	2
1968	New Orleans	N		25	258	10.3	0
1969	New Orleans	N		31	439	14.2	3
1970	New Orleans	N		26	447	17.2	2
1971	New Orleans	N		35	568	16.2	5
1972	New Orleans	N		32	542	16.9	6
1973	Houston	N		3	31	10.3	1
10 years				360	5619	15.6	44