

# Riding the Wave — everywhere

Avid fans follow their beloved Fresno State teams.

By Dave Childers  
Special to Imagine Fresno

For Frank and Dorothy Hunter, it started 15 years before Tyson Scott was even born.

But, as a group, they prove that in Fresno it really doesn't matter how young, how married or how connected you are to California State University, Fresno — the Red Wave is as strong on the road as it is at home.

They have traveled by plane, car and motor home. They have crossed the Pacific and the Mississippi. They have seen the Fresno State Bulldogs play in nearly every possible time zone.

"It's just something we have always enjoyed," says Frank Hunter of the more than 40 years that he and his wife Dorothy have spent following the Fresno State football, basketball and softball teams all over the state — and country.

Scott, on the other hand, hasn't even seen his 40th birthday yet — and won't for several years. While the Hunters got hooked as fans, Scott got hooked as a Fresno State student — and he hasn't stopped traveling to support the Bulldogs since.

The pivotal year for Scott came near the end of his academic tenure in 2000. In March, he and a friend drove more than 700 miles to Salt Lake City to watch the Bulldogs men's basketball team compete in the NCAA Tournament. Then, just six months later, he flew with another friend to Columbus, Ohio, to see David Carr's first start for the football team.

"I didn't even have a ticket," remembers Scott. "So I buy one from some guy outside and I end up sitting on the 50-yard line in the middle of the Ohio State fans. That crowd was just incredible." Even though he had attended plenty of Fresno State home football games prior to that, Scott had never been one



Dorothy and Frank Hunter are avid Fresno State fans, willing to go anywhere to cheer on the team.  
Photo: Bob Marcotte

of 96,583 fans for a Bulldog game as he was that day at the legendary Horseshoe.

“We didn’t do very well, but just being able to play against the big boys like that, I really liked what Pat Hill was doing,” says Scott. “I had so much fun that I just decided to make it a regular thing.”

### Decades under the influence

To get an idea just how long the Hunters have been avid Fresno State sports fans, consider that when they attended their first home men’s basketball game it wasn’t at the Save Mart Center. Or Selland Arena. It was at the North Gym.

“A bunch of friends from work wanted to go, so we decided to give it a try,” remembers Dorothy Hunter. “I guess you could say that we liked it.” For many years the Hunters specialized in Fresno State basketball, and that is where the road trips actually began.

“We had a motor home, so we would take that thing wherever we could for games,” says Frank. “We had great fun.” That fun included early Fresno State football games, too — at Ratcliffe Stadium and on the road. Those early days consisted of mostly California road trips in the old PCAA Conference — places like San Jose, Stockton, Long Beach and Fullerton.

The Hunters were well on board by the time the team moved downtown to Selland Arena. When the Bulldogs first played there under coach Don Gregory, things worked a little differently.

“I remember going downtown early and putting all the coats I could find on seats to save them,” says Dorothy. “There weren’t that many people going to games back then.” Eventually that changed and the Hunters — and others — got to be much more enthusiastic in the heyday of Boyd Grant. Not only were home games filling up, but so were a lot of road games — especially the postseason tournament.

“Back then it was played at the Convention Center in Anaheim,” says Frank. “There were incredible numbers of Fresno State fans all decked out in red. We took the place over. It was a great party.” Like Grant, Jim Sweeney came along and energized the football team — and the Hunters along with them. Fresno State football became such a way of life for the



The Hunters show off their Bulldog pride on their license plate.

Photo: Bob Marcotte

Hunters and their three children that it took some pretty momentous occasions to keep them away from the football field.

“One time some friends of ours were getting married, and the wedding was on a football game day,” says Dorothy. “And during the toast they thanked us and the Fresno State football team for allowing us to be there.”

Lately, however, it has been Fresno State softball that has been the primary focus of the now-retired Hunters. Dorothy has been a past president and current board member of the Diamond Club. She was even in Oklahoma City for one of the fondest memories of her many Fresno State travels — the softball National Championship in 1998.

“I was so happy for the girls,” says Dorothy. “They really deserved it. They were such a great group of girls to watch and support. They were so much fun.”

### The next generation

Frank and Dorothy Hunter have been married 52 years and have enjoyed all of their Fresno State athletic adventures — or at least the vast majority of them — together.

Tyson Scott and his wife Kelly have a ways to go to catch up — around 50 years to be exact — which means that Kelly entered the picture quite a few years after Scott had made Fresno State football part

of his fall regiment.

“She actually went on one trip with me, to a game at Hawaii,” says Scott. “But since then she has wanted nothing to do with it. She understands that it’s more of a guy thing and she supports it. I guess she pretty much knew what to expect coming into the relationship.” What Kelly quickly learned was that few things could get in the way of Scott following the Fresno State football team to the biggest and highest-profile road games. The list is long and distinguished — USC, Washington, Texas A&M, Oklahoma, LSU, Ohio State and Tennessee, to name a few.

“It’s not just about the football, it’s about the excuse to travel and see different parts of the country,” says Scott. “Those are places I probably would never have seen if not for Fresno State football.” Scott has been known to rearrange work schedules to be able to attend the road trips, often times shunning consequences for the time missed. He even used his powers of persuasion at work to be present for a pivotal road game at Colorado State during Carr’s magical 2001 undefeated run in the early season.

“I saw the schedule, so I convinced my work that I needed to be at our Colorado location that week,” Scott says. “They flew me out there and put me up in a hotel and I just had to take care of the rest.” Unlike the practical Hunters, Tyson never purchases tickets ahead of time. He calls hunting for tickets “part of the adventure,” and those adventures have included some of the largest stadiums and most passionate football crowds known to college athletics.

“It’s just cool to see the different big-time environments and the different fans,” says Scott. “And to be able to go there and be a fan and support your own team.” Even with the success of Fresno State football during the last decade, Scott has still found himself on the wrong cheering end of most of the road trips. But that has done little or nothing to dampen his enthusiasm.

“It’s not just about getting the win, it’s about the whole experience,” says Scott. “It’s about having fun no matter what. It’s better when we’re at least competitive, though. It’s not much fun getting blown out.”

The stadiums have been meaningful stops as well. On the way to the Tennessee game in 2003 Tyson made his first visit to New Orleans — which became somewhat of a bittersweet memory after watching Hurricane Katrina ravage the historic city just two years later. There was also a trip to the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial during the trip to the Oklahoma game that same season.

“Those are experiences you don’t forget,” says Tyson.

### Close to home

Oddly enough, even though they have never met, both the Hunters and Scott pointed to two of the same trips as being the most memorable. All three had nothing but nice memories of that trip to Knoxville, Tenn. — aside from the 24-6 final score.



A birdhouse showcases the Hunters’ love of Fresno State softball.  
Photo: Bob Marcotte

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“By far the nicest fans I have ever seen,” says Frank Hunter.

“I couldn’t believe how friendly they were, how well they treated us,” says Scott.

They both also remember trips down south — Southern California that is — very fondly as well. The Hunters rank the 1993 Freedom Bowl win over USC as their favorite experience.

“We actually had lousy seats, way up top, under an overhang,” says Hunter. “But when it started raining we were actually thankful, because we were the only fans who didn’t get wet. And it was an awesome win for the Bulldogs.”

Scott also counts a USC among his most cherished memories, but he preferred the meeting two seasons ago — even though Fresno State just missed the upset that time around.

“It was probably the best Fresno State game I have ever seen, just really exciting and dramatic,” says Scott. “And we rented an RV for that trip and just had a blast. We were just hanging out on the RV all weekend with friends and family, it was great.”

And as the Hunters push toward 55 years of marriage and the Scotts wrap up the proverbial honeymoon period, it is a safe bet that Fresno State sports will continue to be a constant in all of their lives.

“We only have one big time college program in town,” says Hunter. “So we might as well give it our full support.” ■



Even the cookie jar in the kitchen of the Hunters’ home represents the Fresno State Bulldogs.

Photo: Bob Marcotte