

Harold Arthur Trosky, Jr. was born on September 29, 1936, in Cleveland, Ohio, to Hal and Lorraine Trosky. Between 1937 and 1940, the family spent the baseball season at home in Shaker Heights, where Hal was a standout first baseman for the Cleveland Indians, and then returned to Norway, Iowa and their farms between October and May. Hal started first grade at age four in 1940 - at St. Michael's in Norway - immediately following the conclusion of the Indian's season. Because the school followed a 'farming' calendar, he was able to finish the school year in time to return to Cleveland with the family the following spring.

There were no organized youth baseball programs in the town at the time, but almost every morning that snow didn't cover the ground, the younger boys would meet up and start playing, and the games would continue until dark or dinner time, whichever came first. The rules for the daily games might be adapted each day in order to accommodate the number of available players, but it was always baseball.

That languid lifestyle continued until the autumn of 1945, when the Troskys moved Hal to St. Patrick's school in Cedar Rapids. During his last year of high school, in addition to academics, Hal worked part time for the railroad as an unskilled laborer, but spent most of his time excelling in baseball and basketball.

Trosky's baseball career at St. Patricks was prolific. Under head coach Joe Kenney, he never endured a losing season. As Hal's hitting skill became more widely known, the number of scouts at his games grew. The Sporting News (June 9, 1954) reported that twelve major league clubs were scouting Hal, attracted by his .667 batting average as a high school senior and his corner-infield skills, along with his performance as the top hitter on the Cedar Rapids American Legion team, a squad that had recently won the Iowa state title.

Hal Sr., with his background as star player, former White Sox scout, and devoted father, screened the various offers. According to "The Sporting News", Hal Jr. told the local papers that he planned on attending Notre Dame in the fall unless there was an offer "too good to turn down".

With so many interested scouts, and given his father's baseball prominence, Trosky had been introduced to various team executives during the recruiting process. Hal instantly liked Charlie Comiskey, Jr, so in 1954 he signed a contract with Chicago White Sox scout Johnny Mostil (who, as a White Sox player, is still the only centerfielder to ever catch a foul ball in a major league game). Trosky was told when he signed that the White Sox would send him to the Class 'A' Sky Sox in Colorado Springs to permit manager Eddie Stewart to evaluate him for two weeks. After that, the organization told him, he would be placed at an appropriate level.

Hal said of his June 22 debut, "I took hitting practice my first night there, and my manager, Eddie Stewart, put me in the starting lineup. Hit a homerun in my first at-bat in pro ball. In my second game I was hit on my left hand by a 'bean ball' and it broke three fingers. I was on the disabled list for about 3 weeks."

After returning to the team, Trosky resumed his torrid hitting, keeping his average at just over .300. The injury bug bit again, later in the season, in Denver. "I was doing the splits, fielding a throw. The runner, Rocky Ippolito, ran into my left hamstring and tore it up pretty badly. The next day, after consulting with the Sox home office, the general manager at Colorado Springs told me they wanted me to continue to play. I did, and by the end of the season my batting average dropped about 60 points." By the end of his first year in professional baseball, his average had fallen to .252, but the fifty-nine games only whet Chicago's appetite.

During the offseason, on Valentine's Day 1955, he married Ellen Mae Gibson at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Cedar Rapids. As with his parents, the Troskys eventually had four children: Daughter Dawn Marie, sons Michael Lynn and Gregg Allan, and daughter Tracy. Trosky worked moving sheet metal that first off-season but, on the recommendation of a friend from Norway, he earned his insurance license the following year.

The new husband opened 1955 with the Class 'C' Duluth-Superior Blues of the Northern League, and almost immediately Hal was injured while fielding a throw that was low and up the baseline. The runner inexplicably came inside the line and ran into the forearm on his glove hand. The result was a quarter-sized chip on his left elbow that made him unable to flex his left arm. The team physician said, "...not to play at all as it could cause permanent damage, and to get some physical therapy for a couple of weeks and we'll evaluate after that time". Chicago said, "Play him."

After a mere forty games, his second season was over, and he returned to Iowa to rehabilitate the arm. His orthopedic physician advised Trosky that surgery might permanently restrict his arm movement, and instead recommended that Hal spend the off- season exercising daily with a five-gallon bucket of sand.

Trosky was disciplined in his therapy. By the first day of spring training he had regained over 90% of his flexibility and range of motion. He reported to spring training with the White Sox, and was batting .345 with the 'AA' team, when a coach approached him one morning. "Have you ever thought about pitching", the coach asked? He added, "We think that the little restriction that you have remaining in your left arm will keep you from hitting big league pitching. But we've noticed that everything you throw has natural movement on it and we want you to try pitching." Trosky was 6'3" tall, and weighed 205 pounds, so size was not an issue for the White Sox.

His father had advised him to try anything the big league club suggested, within reason, so Hal worked on the position throughout the rest of the spring. When he returned to Superior, it was as a sidearm pitcher. After two games pitching coach Ray Berres told him that he'd never get any big league hitters out throwing in that manner. Trosky changed his arm slot to a "3/4" delivery, and used his fastball and 'nuckle curve' (today called a slider) to earn nine wins and post a 3.95 earned run average (ERA) in his first season on the mound.

In 1957 Trosky was promoted to the Davenport (Iowa) Davsox of the Class 'B' Three-I League, and lowered his ERA to 3.66 while logging a 14-10 record. His progress was so dramatic that The Sporting News, over the winter, speculated that Hal might crack the Chicago staff in 1958.

Trosky stayed with Chicago until the end of spring training in 1958, but the team (one year away from winning the American League pennant) had sufficient depth that Hal was assigned to "AAA" Indianapolis (American Association) to start the year. After some organizational maneuvering, Hal found himself again playing with Colorado Springs in June. When the Sky Sox came to Des Moines for a series, Hal Sr. and Lorraine drove out from Cedar Rapids to spend a few days with their son.

Hal Trosky Sr. had been a legitimate star during his playing career, and had seen all types of pressure, both on and off the field, but he was unable to watch his son play once the younger turned professional. Hal Jr. (or "Hoot Junior", as he was often called) had pitched nine innings in the game before the team arrived in Des Moines, so the elder Troskys felt safe that they could visit without their son being at risk to pitch.

On Father's Day 1958, Colorado Springs and Des Moines were halfway through a double-header when Hal and Lorraine decided to head back to Cedar Rapids in order to return home before dark. After their 'goodbyes', the Colorado Springs manager, Frank Scalzi, came over to Hal Jr. The scheduled starter had injured himself while warming up, so 'could Hal pitch the nightcap'? Trosky took the ball that afternoon and, while his parents were navigating State Route 30 back to Cedar Rapids, threw the only no-hitter of his life. His parents were thrilled when Hal called them later that night, but Hal Sr. was still glad that he'd missed the stress of the game.

Hal posted a 13-9 record in the minors that year, and in early September he was called up to the White Sox. Hal made his major league debut on September 25, against the Detroit Tigers, and threw an inning of shutout relief for Dick Donovan. Three days later, in the final game of the season, he relieved Stover McIlwain in the fifth inning against Kansas City at Comiskey Park. Trosky pitched only two innings, but picked up the victory after a late White Sox rally and an 11-4 win. Three days later, Trosky pitched one more inning in relief, and then the season ended. Those three innings proved to be his entire major league career.

Norman Macht, recounted the situation in the 1989 "Baseball Research Journal":

"A 6-foot-3 inch right-hander who had started out as a first baseman, Trosky again pitched a scoreless fifth this day. Chicago scored three in the last of the fifth for a 6-1 lead. Taking the mound for the sixth, Trosky looked around his infield and took comfort from the steady presence of (Nellie) Fox. Then a rare series of events occurred. Three ground balls were hit to Fox. Two went through his legs and one bounced off his chest. All three were scored as hits. Trosky walked a couple, and Suitcase Simpson, who had hit Trosky hard in the minors, roped one into center field for the only solid hit of the inning, and three runs were in.

In the last of the sixth Jim Rivera batted for Trosky and struck out. Bob Shaw finished up. The win was credited to Trosky. He was twenty-two the next day. He never pitched another big-league inning."

The next year, 1959, Hal stayed with the Sox until the final day of spring training, but was again sent to Indianapolis to start the season. After a 3-2 start, and pitching in eight straight games, he was sent to the Memphis Chickasaws of the 'AA' Southern Association, to play for his father's old White Sox teammate Luke Appling. Trosky had no idea why he was sent down, but the move proved providential.

He had developed some calcification in his right (pitching) shoulder, which may have prompted the transfer, and one night an opposing coach, Mel Parnell, observed Trosky's throwing motion and diagnosed him on the spot. Parnell, an outstanding pitcher in his day, had suffered the same malady, and recommended his treatment to Hal, a protocol

that included visiting a physician who happened to practice in Memphis. After a series of radiation treatments, though, the shoulder responded.

Now healthy, Trosky was recalled to Indianapolis over both his and manager Appling's protests. The two had developed a healthy working relationship, and both felt that Trosky's development and quality-of-life would be better in Memphis. Ellen was preparing to deliver son Gregg, however, so Hal drove the family back to Iowa and then flew out to join his new team. After an uneventful remainder of the season, the Hal began looking forward to 1960.

In the fall of 1959, however, Ellen became pregnant with daughter Tracy, and doctors discovered unexpected complications during a pre-natal visit. There were blood compatibility issues between Ellen and her unborn daughter, so Hal advised the White Sox that he would remain home (without a contract) until he was certain that both mother and child would be healthy. Unfortunately, that 'clearance' never came.

Tracy was born in late July, 1960, but by then Hal's chance to play professionally that season had passed. He had been playing with *Iowa Manufacturing* in the local Manufacturers-&-Jobbers (M&J) league in Cedar Rapids, while awaiting the birth, so he would be in shape for 1961, but when several contracts arrived from the White Sox, he returned them unsigned.

A year earlier, former Yankee pitching coach Jim Turner had told Trosky that he'd have been in the major leagues "two years ago" with any other team. That morsel of awareness, coupled with his own assessment and the fact that several other teams had been in contact with the White Sox seeking to acquire the pitcher, had convinced Hal that he had no future in Chicago.

The White Sox asked if his contracts were being returned due to a salary issue. No, Hal assured them, all he wanted was his release. The team stopped sending contracts, but did not comply with the player's request for over a decade, until 1972, after he had turned 36 years old.

Trosky had earned his insurance license in October 1955, and he had developed his clientele over each off-season since. In 1961, Hal became a full-time insurance agent in Cedar Rapids, a job he still holds in 2010. Even after the devastating floods of 2007, water that erased over fifty years of business and client records, Trosky remained on the job, working for, and with, his neighbors. His professional baseball career was relatively brief, but his professional life has been lustrous.