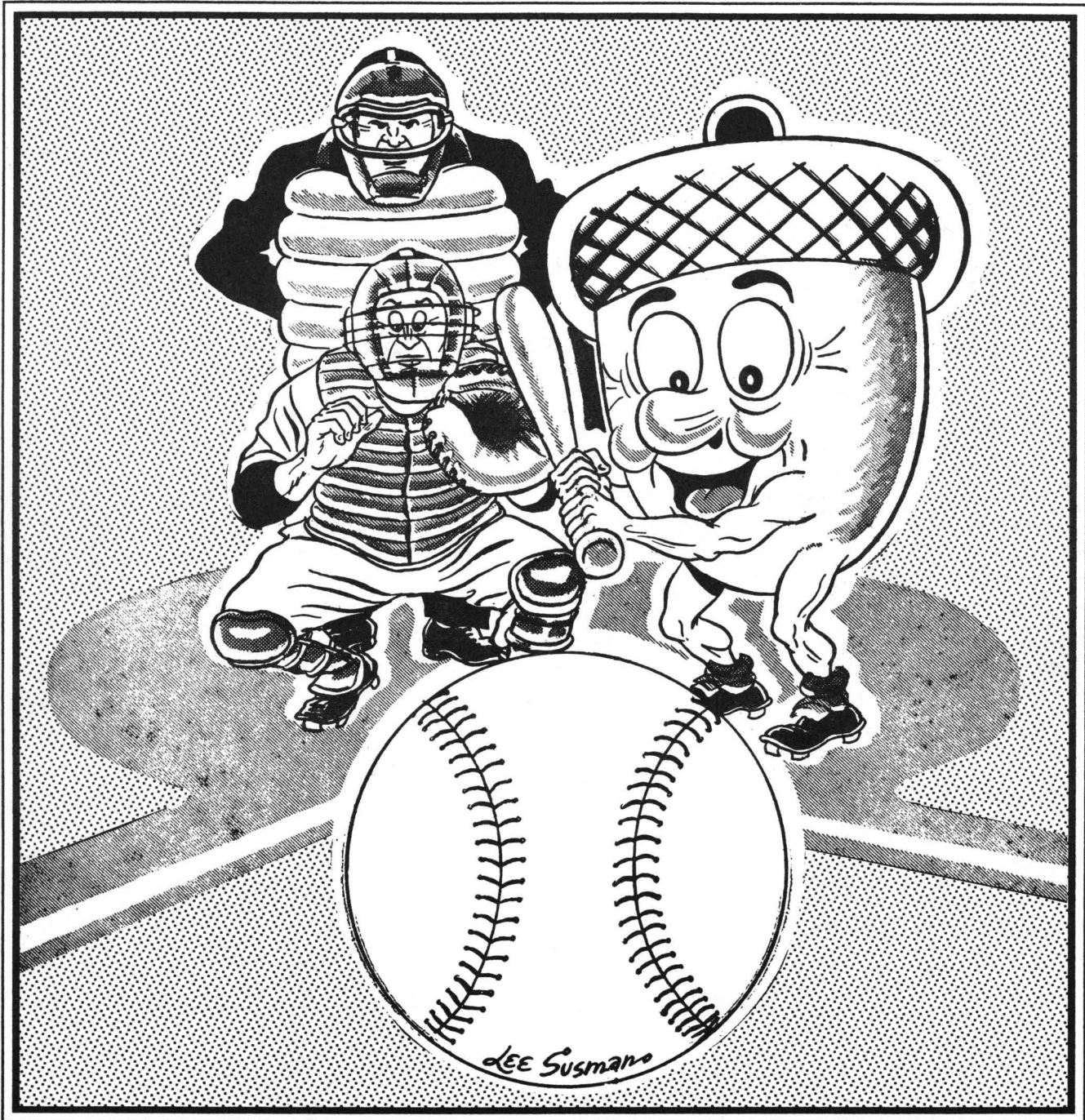


The

OAKLAND OAKS

and their fabulous ballpark



Journal of the Emeryville Historical Society

Vol. IV, No. 1 – Spring, 1993

**A Special Issue Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Oaks' Ballpark
And the 90th anniversary of the Pacific Coast League**



Journal of the Emeryville Historical Society

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Historical Exhibit at Oakland Library

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Oakland Oaks' splendid ballpark in Emeryville.

In commemoration, the Emeryville Historical Society will present an exhibit of Oaks photos and memorabilia at the Oakland History Room of the Oakland Public Library.

The exhibit will open with a reception on Saturday, April 17th (10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) and will run for two months.

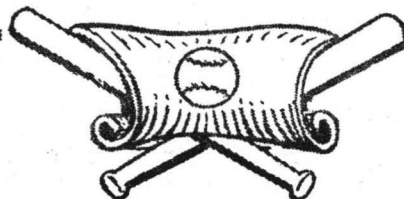
The Oakland History Room is on the 2nd floor of the Oakland Main Library at 125-14th Street (at Oak Street).

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This issue of the Emeryville Historical Society Newsletter is a companion and guide to the Oakland Library exhibit. This article will trace the Oaks' evolution; highlighting their successes, noting the several locations they played prior to the opening of their own park in Emeryville in 1913; and finally, noting the events and circumstances leading to the team's leaving the area after the 1955 season.

Ray Raineri, the author of our history of the Oaks, is a lifelong fan, who as a boy shagged home run balls on Watts street, behind the Oaks ball park. His collection of Oaks memorabilia inspired and furnished the exhibit.





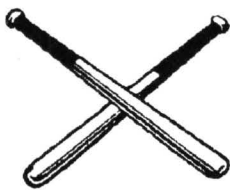
THOSE OAKLAND OAKS AND THEIR MAGNIFICENT BALLPARK

BY RAY RAINERI © 1993

Spring is springing... and American hearts are turning once more to thoughts of baseball. With the big league season commencing April 5, (A's vs. Detroit at the Coliseum), it's an appropriate time for historians to historicize, and recall the early days of our national pastime in the bay area.

This spring marks the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Oaks ballpark in Emeryville — bringing to mind those seasons of long ago, when the Oakland Oaks squared off with seven other teams to provide local fans with forty-three seasons of rock 'em, sock 'em Pacific Coast League baseball.

To commemorate this significant anniversary, the Oakland Public Library will host an exhibit of photos and memorabilia for two-months, beginning on Saturday, April 17th. The exhibit will be presented in the Oakland History Room located in the Oakland Main Library at 125-14th Street (at Oak Street), under the direction of Librarian William Sturm.



The history of baseball on the West Coast begins in the late 1850's and early 1860's, when several teams were organized under colorful names such as "The Eagles" and "The Pacifics" to promote businesses in San Francisco.

Baseball as we know it had began around 1839, and was established on the eastern side of the country as an organized sport and a significant pastime by the 1860s. Like most things cultural, it took a while to reach across the Rockies and catch on in the west.

It took a professional team from the east to generate interest and hasten development of the game in California and adjoining states.

The Cincinnati Red Stockings, sporting stylish uniforms and equally impressive mustachios and side chops, paraded through San Francisco in 1869 and caught the fancy of hopeful ballplayers and adoring fans. Soon, rudimentary baseball diamonds were appearing on flat patches of land all over, as interest in the game picked up.

Local teams emerged from a primordial stew of public interest, the need for recreation and entertainment, and available open space. Baseball's blend of teamwork and individual performance appealed to the Californian mentality, and the game's potential as an advertising medium was not lost on west coast entrepreneurs. The earliest teams were sponsored by well-known merchants and businessmen — and by those who desired to become well-known.

The progress of the game's popularity was natural and predictable. The earliest

teams pitted neighborhood against neighborhood — then district versus district — and eventually city rivalries were established. By 1887, the California League was organized, with member teams playing for hometown glory in Oakland, San Francisco, Stockton, Los Angeles and Sacramento.

In those early years, local games were played on a baseball diamond located at 13th and Center Streets in West Oakland. There were in San Francisco several parks devoted exclusively to baseball — the most often used being Recreation Park at 8th and Harrison Streets.

The local game experienced a severe, but thankfully not fatal setback in 1893, when the California League disbanded over issues of administration and management. Not much ball was played during the following three years, but in 1897 full play resumed, only to end on a bitter note when the league failed once again from internal issues. Subsequently, stability and balance were restored, and organized baseball proceeded in a businesslike manner.

In 1902 the Oakland Baseball Club (not to be called the Oaks for another year) won the pennant in the reorganized California League — winning 108 games, and topping San Francisco, Los Angeles and Sacramento (in that order).





Freeman's Park (on 59th St. just east of San Pablo Ave.) was originally Klinkner's Park, Charles Klinkner having sponsored an early team — pictured here surrounding the Great Realtor (wearing his customary top hat). This photo dates to around 1886, when semi-pro players, mostly working men, were paid to play on weekends by local entrepreneurs.

(Photograph Courtesy of the Oakland Museum)

The Pacific Coast League

In 1903, the Pacific Coast League was formed, including, with the newly named Oakland Oaks, teams from San Francisco, Seattle, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Portland. (Teams from Hollywood and Sand Diego joined later) Los Angeles took the first PCL pennant with an admirable won/lost record of 133/78.

From the turn of the century through the 1912 season the Oaks played their home games in a beautifully laid out field located at 59th Street and San Pablo Avenue. It was called Freeman's Park and like most diamonds of that era, it was more of a playing field than a spectators' stadium. Its seating facilities were primitive at best, and limited to about eight thousand seats.

In those days the Oaks played two home games a week — one on Sunday morning and the other on Wednesday afternoon. The remainder of the week had the team catching a ferry for San Francisco and battling the Seals at Recreation Park at 15th and Valencia (the eventual site of Seals' Stadium).



During this colorful era, the Oaks owner, J. Cal Ewing, (Mr. Baseball in these parts) worked hard to generate a vigorous rivalry with the the San Francisco team. Old-time fans recall that the simmering feud between the Oaks and the Seals would boil over each season in several healthy expressions — illustrating that many ballplayers could quickly change sports,

performing crude but credible imitations of their athletic brethren, the boxers.

As baseball's popularity spread, there were an ever-increasing number of talented athletes eager to play ball, and the Oaks established a formidable club. In 1912 they brought glory to themselves and the town by winning the pennant in a fight to the very end with second-place Vernon (L.A.'s version of Emeryville).

Baseball madness swept over Oakland, thrilling the hearts of hero worshiping men and boys, and filling the hearts of the Oak's owners with entrepreneurial ambition.

After the Pennant – “A Fabulous New Park”

This ambition was expressed by their investment in a state-of-the-art stadium. In December of that same year, work commenced on a fabulous new park in Emeryville. The clearing of the grounds at San Pablo and Park Avenues began on December 15 — at which time five houses adjoining (but not including) the old Emery mansion, several barns and sheds, and over 50 eucalyptus and cypress trees were removed.

The building of the grandstands, fences, clubhouse, and offices commenced on February 1, 1913, and was concluded in an amazingly quick six weeks by tradesmen from five local firms. When finished, the

THE GREENHOOD MORANS

The predecessor to the Oaks was started in 1885 and originally called the J.T. Moran Clothiers. They were better known, however, as the Greenhood Morans, reflecting the names of both owners, Max (Darby) Greenhood and James T. Moran, who were in the clothing business. They were first called The Oaks when they became Oakland's representative in the Pacific Coast League in 1903. (This information courtesy of Greenhood's grandson, Ed Greenhood of Los Altos.)

In the earliest days, they played at 13th and Center against such San Francisco teams as the Haverly Team and the Pioneer Team. Their most famous player was George van Haltren, a left handed pitcher “with a wonderful curve”, according to his catcher Fred Lange.

Van Haltren was a former catcher, who had changed positions due to hurt hands. Lange caught him from 1885 to 1886, until hand injuries ended his career. (Baseball mitts were still in the early developmental stages, which added to the macho luster of the sport.) He lived to a ripe old age in Oakland, with sufficient use of his hands to write a memoir of his playing days, filling the self-published volume out with a history of California baseball.

grounds were 465 feet square, with lawn covering all but a 60-foot wide strip in foul territory. To keep the lawn green through the sunny east bay summers, a sprinkler system powered by a Kewanee Electric Automatic Pump was installed instead of the water tower that was customary for large public facilities.

Shortly after the park's completion, Chicago White Sox manager Mike Callaghan inspected the buildings and grounds and declared it to be "the finest minor league park west of Chicago."

Baseball Cards Introduced

About this time, a new form of promotion began to influence local baseball fans, boosting the game's popularity — especially with the youngsters. In 1911, the Collins-McCarthy Candy Company of San

Francisco began issuing cards picturing Pacific Coast League players. The cards were included in the company's top three candy products, "Zee-Nuts", "Home Run Kisses", and "Ruf-Neks," and were issued for the next 27 years — through the 1938 season when the war put professional baseball in limbo.

The Oaks went on to open the 1913 season to a full house, but for the next fourteen seasons they watched as teams such as the San Francisco Seals, the Los Angeles Angels, and the Seattle Rainiers took the pennant.

Finally — in 1927 — the Oaks won the flag with an enviable record of 120 wins against 75 losses for a .615 percentage. The Seals put on a strong battle and finished second, led by the powerful slugging of Smead Jolley and Frank "Lefty" O'Doul.

Oakland's run producing strength came from the long-ball hitting of Buzz Arlett and West Oakland-born Ernie Lombardi. Balancing their strong offense in '27, the Oaks had a near flawless infield combination of Lyn Larry at shortstop and Jimmy Reese at second base.

Both Larry and Reese were later signed up by the New York Yankees (as a pair, for \$125,000!), as was often the case with outstanding Pacific Coast League players in the earliest years of the league. The major leagues had not developed minor league franchises in the west yet, but they knew where to look for top talent.

An aerial view of the Oaks' ballpark circa 1950. Park Avenue is on the right, San Pablo is seen at the top side of the field, Watts St. is on the near side.

(Photo from the collection of Ray Raineri)





A great vintage photo of the Oakland Oaks team of 1915., taken with a "circuit" or "banquet" camera. The players are, from left to right: Top Row, Elliot, Kuhn, Pruitt, Boyd, Litschi, Mandorf, Johnston, Middleton, Bromly and Klawitter. Bottom Row, Prough, Ables, Gardner, Lindsay, Koerner, Manda, Marcan, Christian, and Ness. Among the players on this team who had been part of the pennant-winning Oaks team of 1912, was hard throwing pitcher Harry Ables. (Photo from the writer's collection)

Baseball Rules!

The 1930's were to see local baseball become an all-consuming interest in the Bay Area. The Oaks games were heard everywhere, thanks to the pioneer radio programming of Station KLX, which had begun broadcasting them in 1924.

With Preston D. Allen at the mike (Bill Andrews took over in later years), the excitement of the Oaks games filled virtually every home in the East Bay. Adding momentum to baseball mania, the California State Semi-Pro Championship Tournament was established in 1933 — linking a collection of dozens of semi-pro teams whose season would end with a championship playoff in the Oaks Park.

The foremost promoters of the Semi-Pro Championship were the Oakland Tribune and the Northern California Baseball Managers Association. Also, a number of

dedicated individuals and families began to provide generous and steady support to younger ballplayers — who in many instances would move up from factory and business-sponsored semi-pro teams to Triple-A teams like the Oaks, and even to the Majors. The Bercovich family, along with local sportsman Charlie Tye and former sporting goods businessman Abe Rose, assisted countless local ballplayers who were starting their careers.



West of Market Boys

During this era of intense baseball activity, another group deserves mention as prominent Oaks boosters — The "West of Market Street Boys Club" — founded by longtime Oakland fireman Jess Church.

This association was made up of local ballplayers and businessmen who shared two common elements — an ardent love of the game, and having been born and raised in West Oakland.

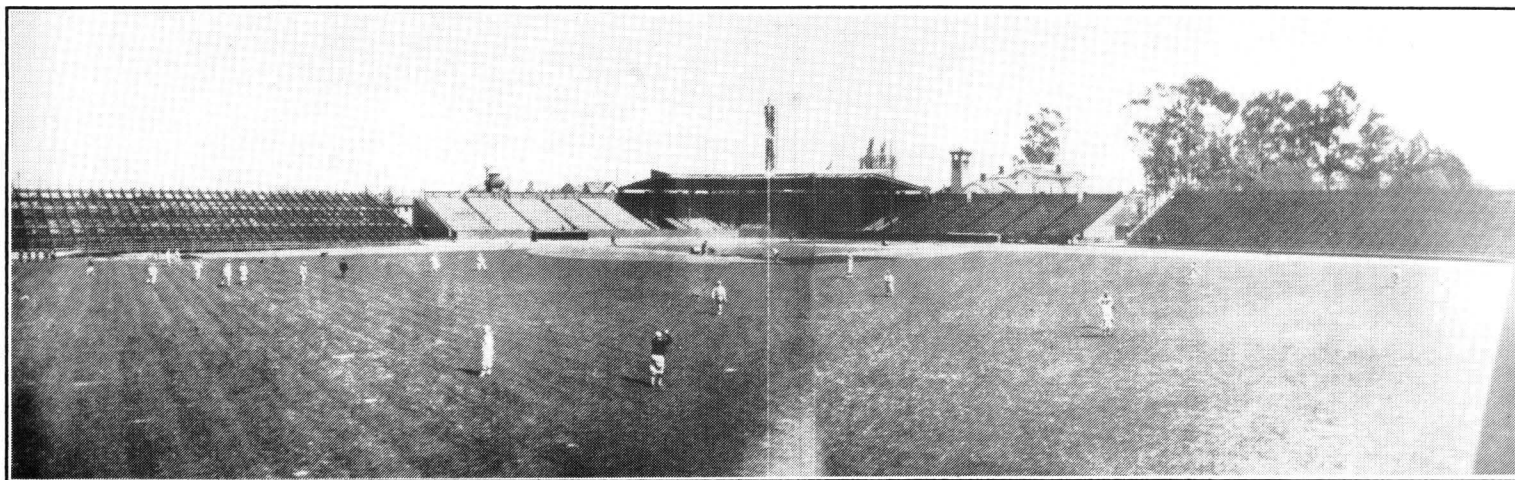
Always fanning the heat of team rivalries, the gang from West Oakland generated large crowds whenever the Oaks and Seals met.

Not to be outdone, a compatible group from San Francisco formed the "South of Market Street Boys Club," and needless to say, much good spirit (and spirits) flowed whenever these two organizations met.

However, all of this vigorous support

View of the grandstand and bleachers from the clubhouse. An extremely rare photo showing the just-completed Oakland Oaks Baseball Park in Emeryville in 1913. In later years, the open sections in the grandstands would be filled with seats and a bleacher section and scoreboard added in center field.

(Photo from the dedication program for opening day, 1913, and used through the courtesy of William Sturm, Librarian, Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room).



couldn't put the Oaks into first place in the 30s, as the Seals and Portland led the league, each with a pair of pennants.

Postwar Boom

As baseball moved into the the 1940's, the stage was set for the sport's popularity to peak in the East Bay as several significant developments unfolded.

In the fall of 1943, Clarence "Brick"



could now hold 12,500 spectators, including some who would stand in a roped-off area in the center and left field areas. Another addition to the Oaks' lustrous image was the smooth voice of radio announcer Bud Foster, who called the games over KLX, ably assisted by the clubowner's son, Bill Laws.

The "Nine Old Men"

Following a disappointing fourth place



Benteviglio "Pete" Poncini, head groundskeeper for the Oaks from 1919 to 1949, seen here grooming the mound before a Saturday afternoon game in 1949.

(Photo courtesy of Brian Poncini)



Vintage baseball cards: (clockwise from top left) Zee-Nut 1916, Remar Baking Co. 1948, Signal Oil 1940s, Mothers Cookies 1952. (R. Raineri Collection)

Laws and his partner, Joe Blumenfeld bought control of the Oaks. The new owners sensed correctly that baseball would boom once the war was over. How accurate they were was shown in the 1946 season, when well over 600,000 fans packed the park in Emeryville. That was the year that Laws had hired a new manager to put some gusto into the team's performance. He was Casey Stengel and he ignited the Oaks to a second place finish.

In the spring of 1947, the park reopened after extensive remodeling of the stands. It



finish in 1947, the Oaks came out battling in 1948 with their strongest team since 1927 — a team which included one veteran of the '27 Club — Ernie Lombardi. This team was affectionately called "The Nine Old Men", and it also included: Harry "Cookie" Lavagetto, Billy Raimondi, Les Scarcella, Mel Duezabou, Nick Etten, Brooks Holder, and George Metkovich. Making his debut was a young second baseman from West Berkeley who was showing the brilliance and drive that would propel him to a great career as both



Lee Susman & The L'il Acorn

If Bud Foster was the Voice of the Oaks, the image of the team belonged to cartoonist Lee Susman, who drew the Oaks' print mascot, the "L'il Acorn."

In the days before high-powered

photography took over the sports page, the sports cartoonist reigned as media superstar, and the versatile Susman was the Oakland Tribune's main weapon against the competition of four other local dailies. With his "L'il Acorn", Susman produced a phenomenally popular daily barometer of the team's fortunes and foibles.



'HERE I AM AGAIN, FOLKS!'

As a postwar newcomer to the Oakland Tribune staff, Lee's first assignment had been the Oaks' 1946 spring training at Boyes Springs (near Sonoma). A conversation with sportswriter Abe Kemp turned to team mascots and the great publicity device of Tacoma's Tiger. "Too bad you couldn't do something like that with an oak tree," said Kemp, and in response, Susman drew on the team's nickname of "the Acorns" to design the sturdy figure that graphically informed

readers about their team's current situation. Many fans kept track of their team with scrapbooks dedicated to Susman's daily output of L'il Acorn drawings.

Lee Susman retired from the Trib in 1983, after drawing almost 10,000 sports cartoons and "putting three ball teams out of business" — producing cover drawings for their final game programs. (Like the one on the cover of this newsletter.)

Today, the 75 year old Susman enjoys an active retirement in Oakland, happy to have traded his pens for golf clubs. His living room still holds two television sets, a reminder of the days



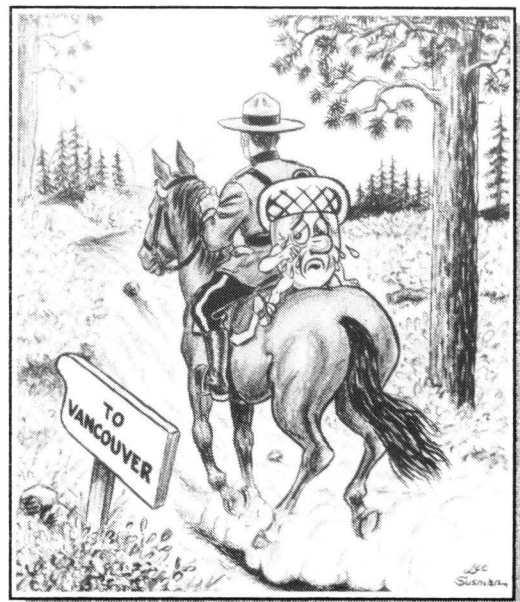
when tight deadlines caused him to draw at home while following ball games on two TV's and two radios. His wife, Eileen, having put up with the craziness and deadlines of newspaper life is enjoying an equally active retirement, occasionally dressing up in sequins and top hat to play piano in a ladies-only jazz band, "The Hot Flashes."

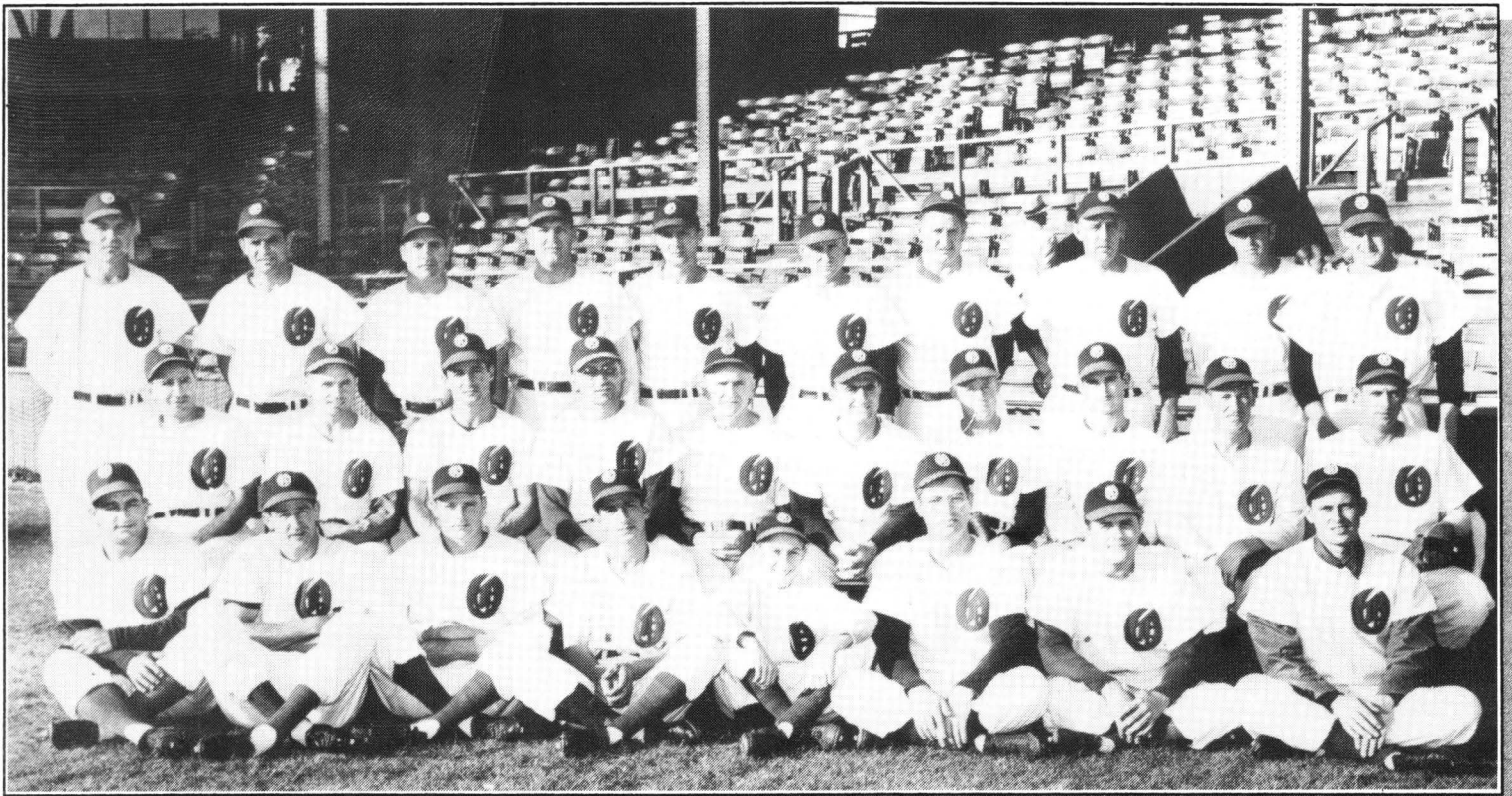
Lee very graciously came out of retirement for just long enough to ink our 90th anniversary Acorn. He warrants the L'il Acorn's aged state to be authentic, because he posed for it himself!

Thanks, Sus! Paul Herzoff



Lee Susman relaxing in his Oakland home, holding the original of the final L'il Acorn (reproduced below) (Photo by Paul Herzoff)





A classic team photo of the 1948 Pacific Coast League Champions — the Mighty Oaks. Photo was taken just to the right of home plate in the Oaks ballpark at San Pablo and Park Avenues in Emeryville. L to r.: Top Row, Lou Tost, Harry "Cookie" Lavagetto, Les Scarcella, Jack Salvesson, Nick Etten, Les Webber, Ernie Lombardi, Thorton Lee, Lloyd Christopher and Will Hafey. Middle Row: Billy Raimondi, Brooks Holder, Mel Duezebou, Johnny Babich (coach), Casey Stengel (manager), Dario Lodigiani, Ralph Buxton, Merrill Combs, Aldon Wilkie and Floyd Speer. Bottom Row, Ed Fernandes, George Metkovich, Ray Hamrick, Billy Martin, Chuck Simmonds (batboy), Maurice Vanrobays, Earl Jones, and Charlie Cassaway.

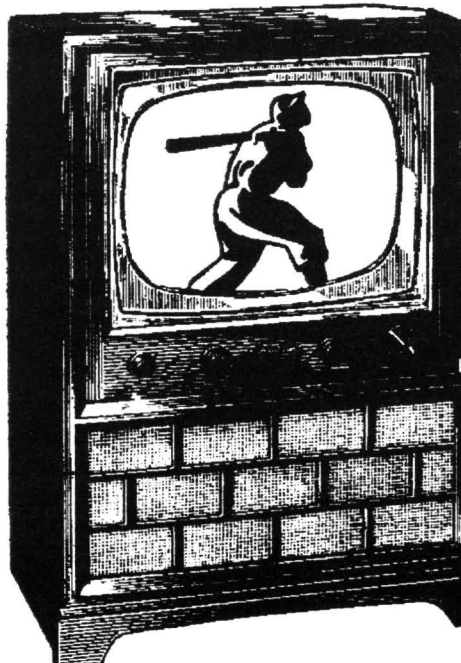
(Photo from the writer's collection, Identification facilitated by Dave Gray and Bob Buckman.)

player and manager — Alfred "Billy" Martin.

The '48 Oaks' pitching was strong and deep, with the likes of veterans Charlie Gassaway, Ralph Buxton, and Aldon Wilkie, and with good relief from Earl Jones and Floyd Speer. This club won the pennant — the first since '27, and the town went bonkers. The Oaks' victory parade through downtown Oakland culminated at city hall, where various notables addressed the crowd, including that Horatio of baseball, manager Casey Stengel. (The text of Casey's speech is lost to history, possibly to history's advantage...)

After a seven year absence, baseball cards featuring the Oaks had reappeared in 1946, and were grabbed up quickly by fans of all ages. The cards were issued up into the early 50s by the Reemar and Sunbeam Baking Companies, the Signal Oil Company, Mother's Cookies and Smith's Clothiers. Collecting and trading these cards (which were issued on a weekly basis

during the season) was an activity engaged in by young and old alike. [The Emeryville Historical Society used to have a complete set of PCL cards, but our mothers threw it out. Ed.]



Following the 1948 season, Casey Stengel and Billy Martin moved up to the New York Yankees and proceeded to win five world series in a row! Meanwhile, Oakland grabbed hold of Charles "Chuck" Dressen as their new manager and he led the Oaks to another pennant in 1950, paced by the stellar pitching of ace Allen Gettle, who hurled 23 wins to lead the league.

Hard Times for Baseball

The 1950 season marked the start of a dramatic decline in attendance for the Oaks — a slide that continued for the next five years, until they were gone. Explanations for this trend point to several developments. First, television had begun to replace baseball as America's favorite pastime; and second, the Pacific Coast League went to a split week schedule. The fans never really accepted the change from a season of seven game homestands to one that had the Oaks at home for three games

and then on the road for a short series. Add to this the bay area weather's unsuitability to night games, the obsolescence of the 50 year old Emeryville facility, and a recession leading to a shortage of recreation dollars, and you're looking at the last inning for the Pacific Coast League.

Faced with this decline, the owners of the Oaks formulated plans that were to lead to the club's moving to Vancouver, B.C. after the 1955 season. Just in time, too. In their last year, the Oaks drew only 175,000 fans.

Their last home game at Emeryville was played on September 4, 1955, before a sad-faced gathering of loyal fans.



Oaks Manager Charles "Casey" Stengel relaxes against his brand new Cadillac during "Casey Stengel Night" in 1948. A young Billy Martin is visible among the players admiring the car (he's second to the left of the man with the microphone).
(Photo from Ray Raineri collection.)



SAN FRANCISCO
April 2, 1, 7, 10, 11, 12,
13-15
PORTLAND
April 28, 30, May 1, 2,
4, 5
LOS ANGELES
May 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,
25-27
SAN DIEGO
May 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,
25-27
SACRAMENTO
June 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8-9
SEATTLE
June 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,
22-23
HOLLYWOOD
July 1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6
PORTLAND
July 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,
13-15
SAN FRANCISCO
July 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,
27-29
LOS ANGELES
Aug. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16,
17-19
SEATTLE
Aug. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
HOLLYWOOD
Sept. 1-1, 2, 3
SAN DIEGO
Sept. 16, 17, 18
SACRAMENTO
Sept. 19, 20, 21-21

Baseball Hangouts:

What did ballplayers do when they were off the field?

During their week-long series', the visiting teams (and many Oaks players) resided at the California Hotel on San Pablo Avenue. These

socially active young men found it easy to amuse themselves in old Emeryville, as the neighborhood had a lot to offer in the way of entertainment in the 1950's.

Across the street from the hotel was the El Rey Burlesque, where off-duty athletes could take a gander at Tempest Storm and other exotic dancers. First-run movies were offered at the Gateway and Rialto Theaters, on San Pablo at Stanford and 27th Street, respectively.

The blocks around the ball park were loaded with bars and restaurants, and legal card clubs lined San Pablo Avenue.

Photos of baseball players (and jazz headliners at the Zanzibar Room in the California Hotel) lined the walls of restaurants like Ravazza's Diamond Cafe, Al's Place, Angelo's, Emeryville Cafe, Key Cafe and Lindy's on San Pablo Avenue. Other ballpark feeding spots were the Horse Collar and Dugan's Cafe on Park Avenue.

San Pablo Avenue bars included Bloomheart's Club, Grand Central Cocktail Lounge, New Ritz Bar, Corona Club, Rumpus Room and the ABC club.

For players inclined to gamble, a card game could always be found at Conger's Inn (later called the Oaks Club), the Avalon Club, the Santa Fe Club, and the Key Club.

With all these distractions for visiting players, it might be surmised that the Oaks enjoyed a wicked home field advantage, but apparently the home team wasn't immune to the lures of the neighborhood, and the playing field remained reasonably level.

Don Hausler



Across the Bay, the San Francisco Seals, in similar circumstances, lasted only one more season, ending their equally spectacular playing days by disbanding in the fall of '56.

About a dozen years were to pass before the huge sports void the Oaks left in the east bay was filled. With the arrival of the Oakland Athletics in the late 60's, the sounds of the greatest American pastime once again filled the east bay air from April to October with the tradition, hustle, and spirit that belongs only to baseball.

While we're thankful that the boys of summer have returned to the east bay, there is no joy in Emeryville, since we are no longer at the center of pro ball action.

Although almost four decades have elapsed since the Oaks left town, a large following of devotees in the east bay still cherish the rich collection of memories they generated, and continue to celebrate the talented ballplayers who were the heroes of the era.

Two annual old-timer gatherings bring together a sizable number of former Oaks and their followers. These luncheons are an opportunity for players and fans to reminisce and renew the bonds of friendship forged in a time when baseball was played in small towns by home grown heroes.

The San Pablo Park gang (under the capable leadership of Helen Lumpe Gerner) meets every fall at Spenger's Restaurant, and the West Oakland crowd has a spring lunch at Francesco's on Hegenberger Road.



Oaks Old-timers at the dedication of the ballpark plaque: on April 6, 1992. (l to r) Oakland A's exec Bill Rigney, Former Oaks: Emil Mailho, Tom Hafey, Mel Duezabou, Bill Raimondi, Pete Mailho, Dario Lodigiani. (Photo by Paul Herzoff)

A more concrete recognition of the Oaks and their ball park was dedicated on April 6, 1992. On that afternoon, the Alameda County Historical Society and the Berkeley Parlor #150 of the Native Daughters of the Golden West placed a bronze plaque embedded in a sturdy bench near the location of the old park's entrance on Park Avenue.

The event drew a hundred or so enthusiastic fans and a half dozen former ballplayers, all of whom looked like they could still drag a bunt and beat it to first. Ballplayers, historians and Emeryville officials spoke in glowing terms of the sweet memories of professional baseball in our town and the pride and spirit it contributed to local life.

And while it's been thirty-eight years since the Oaks left, it is still possible, when those of us fifty years of age and up wander past the site of the old park — usually on a Sunday afternoon as the crisp breeze comes in from the bay — to hear the faint but distinct sounds of a game in progress — “the batter...”, the CRACK! of ash on horsehide, a distant crowd's roar, — those beautiful echoes of the past...



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Tales of Two Young Fans



Most natives of the east bay who are over the age of 50 have a story or two about going to Oaks' games in Emeryville. Two old friends who grew up in the area tell it like it was for them:

Jim “Truck” Cullom (born in 1925) remembers going to games in the late 30s, riding his bike (“just a big old heavy American cruiser with fenders”) down 42nd street with a few friends. They played ball all morning at Havens Playground and then rode about 20 minutes down to Emeryville. They left their bikes unlocked outside the ballpark and never gave it a thought.

In the 40's, as a star athlete at Cal, he was thrilled to meet his heroes from the Oaks when they came over to train at the University's excellent gym.

Jim Appel is a few years younger and a native of San Francisco. Of course he was a Seals fan first, but when his team was on the road he'd make a day's excursion to Emeryville to watch the Oaks play in their “smaller and friendlier” ballpark. The pre-teen Appel would ride the muni to the Key System, starting in the morning and getting home around dark. At that time (during the war) Seals Stadium was the superior facility, being 20 years newer, but the Oaks ball park was “homier” and a spectator felt closer to the field. Also, the east bay weather was better.

The Oakland Oaks
Pro Baseball in Emeryville — 1913-1955



This was baseball — up close and personal — a warm summer afternoon in the late 1940s with a full house watching the Oakland Oaks in action in Emeryville.

**1st Annual General Meeting to be held 4:30 p.m., Sunday, May 23, 1993
at Emery Bay Community Center, 160 Emery Bay Drive.
Presentation, Discussion, Plans for Uncertain Future (RSVP 658-5038)**



The Emeryville Historical Society

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Address Correction Requested

