

Organized Sports
from Pacifica's 50th Anniversary Yearbook
by Horace Hinshaw

The foundation that prepared us for our sports activities as we know them today in our community was established long before Pacifica became a city.

Yes, there were sports in Pacifica in the 1940s and 50s, although very limited. There were no non-school organized sports. The youths of those days entertained themselves by riding their bikes, going to the movie, spending their days at the beaches, going to Jefferson High School to swim.

At school they played baseball and basketball. It wasn't until the late 1940s that Pacifica had its first organized baseball team.

The Coastside Merchants team was formed in 1948 and played semi-pro baseball until the mid 50s. The Merchants played on a field where the Pacifica Moose Lodge stands today. This was the first baseball field in the community.

The players on the Merchants team were mostly Jefferson High School athletes. Ironically, one of the Merchants sponsors was Nick's Rockaway Café. Today, 50 years later Nick Gust is still sponsoring baseball teams.

"The team disbanded after five years. Everybody went their own way, and many of the boys went into the military," said Lorraine Ragan, who served as bat girl for the team. "When you're a teenager you're not thinking about history, but that team was the closest to what you could call an organized sport in the town."

"I went to the Merchants games, as did many people, and I started picking up the bats so they let me be the bat girl," laughed Lorraine. "I knew everybody's bat and who used which bat. I was always shagging balls. When the players got a hit I was running to get the bat. It was a great experience."

There were very few playing fields for youths and adults in the 1950s. And those fields that were available were unplayable. A field adjacent to the then Sharp Park School (now Ingrid B. Lacy School) was the major field. Students at Sharp Park School played teams from other schools but the teams from other cities refused to play on the fields, feared they would be injured. Thus Pacifica teams were always traveling.

As Pacifica celebrates its 50th anniversary, so does our Little League. Fifty years ago this June, the first Little League teams were formed. Both the Pacifica American and National Little League associations held opening day ceremonies dedicated to the memories of the early league organizers. Until 1970 our community only had one Little League team.

In 1982, two former Pacifica Little Leaguer teammates made history when they faced each other as professional baseball players. The World Series that year featured Bob McClure, pitching for the Milwaukee Brewers, facing St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Keith Hernandez.

In the late 1950s, a group of Linda Mar men who organized an adult softball league began building fields on White Field – the site of the Alma Heights Christian Academy today. Four fields were built there – a softball field, a Babe Ruth field and two Little League fields. This was a fantastic sports complex.

Boxing was a popular sport for boys who lived in Vallemar. These boxers represented the Vallemar Boys Club. The boxers traveled throughout the Bay Area for matches.

In the early years our children attended Jefferson High School. When Westmoor was built in the late 1950s, the students moved to that school. Later in the early 1960s, the students attended either Terra Nova or Oceana.

We salute all those pioneers who paved the way to make our sports programs today possible. Our community has a rich sports history, one of which we should be very proud, and one which is the foundation for the annual City of Pacifica Sports Hall of Fame.

The Pacifica Sports Hall of Fame was born out of a need to recognize the achievements of our local athletes who were unique in their specialty and who took their skills to the next level.

Many of the athletes are known throughout the country – some even internationally –not just in Pacifica.

The PSHOF is a way of saying thank you to those special people who have brought recognition to our city.

The PSHOF is dedicated to preserving and honoring the city's sports heritage. These men and women contributed to the welfare of sports by performance, time, effort or financial support whether that sport be amateur or professional.

This year the PSHOF held its 17th annual induction ceremony. With the induction of five new members this year 102 Pacificans are now members of the PSHOF. Plaques depicting the honorees are on display at the Pacifica Community Center, located at Crespi and the Coast Highway.

The PSHOF awards dinner is sponsored by the Pacifica Sports Club, an organization that has recognized annually local athletes for their achievements for the past 22 years. Two athletes played for National Football League Super Bowl champions. Kevin Gogan anchored the offensive line for the 1992 and 1993 Dallas Cowboys champions, while Derek Loville was a running back for the 1994-95 San Francisco 49ers. (Horace Hinshaw is a former Pacifica Tribune sports editor and current President of the Pacifica Sports Club and a 38-year resident of Pacifica)