

Baytown Historical Tape, made July 18, 1975

Betsy Webber, Baytown Sun reporter, is interviewer.

In the early days of Exxon's Refinery in Baytown, recreational opportunities for employes in the new town and new refinery were limited.

Sports provided recreation for both participants and spectators and a baseball team was organized early in refinery history. It became increasingly important to the town between the years 1920 and 1954.

The refinery was not Exxon then, but Humble and the team was the Humble oilers.

As many as 3,500 spectators lined the playing field in the hey day of the Baytown Oilers as the team became known widely for their fine ball playing.

Four former Oilers are here to tell us about baseball in Baytown and the Exxon refinery.

Longtime Baytonian J. W. (Jimmy) Carroll was on the original team organized in 1920. He played only three years until, he says, professional and semi-pros started coming in.

Jimmy, we need to get a little background on you. Where were you born?

south of
CARROLL: I was born about 20 miles ~~xxxx~~ Houston on the Alameda Road, one mile off the Alameda Road ~~xxxx~~ in the Brazos bottoms.

I: Where did you grow up?

C: I stayed there until I was 17 and then I went to Houston, stayed in Houston 4 years, then I went to the army, I came out of the Army after having ~~x~~ stayed there two years and came to Baytown in 1919.

I: Wasn't that a sugar plantation you lived on?

C: Sugar and also cotton and grain.

I: Did it have a name?

C: Houses Plantation. And the company was the ARCO Sugar Co.

I: Where do you live now?

C: I live in at 108 Arbor Street in Wooster Addition, Baytown, Tex.

I: When you were growing up, where did you go to school?

C: I went to a Catholic School in Waco known as St. Basil's College. The Brazilian fathers operated that school and they now operate St. Thomas University.

I: What is the name of the woman you married and when did you get married?

C: We were married on the 5th of July in 1917. Her name was Lucille Gibbs.

I: Wasn't her father a rice farmer out near Deep Water somewhere?

C: He farmed all the land from the La Porte Road to the bayou from Pasadena to Deer Park to Deep Water was all in rice farm and he controlled ~~x~~ all that land down there farming it.

I: You were in World War I, weren't you?

C: Yesmam.

I: What was your unit?

C: I was in the headquarters company ~~xxxxxxx~~ 360th, 180th brigade and the 90th division.

I: When you got of the service you came back to Houston and then to Baytown. ^{Why did you} When did you come to Baytown?

C: Well, I went to see the man I had worked for and he told me he didn't have a job for me. And my brother was living there. He was living next door to a man who was driving engineer's st stakes out here. He asked him if he'd give me a job and he gave me one. And I came down here the following week.

I: What y When was that?

C. I came down here on the 30th of June in 1919. And went to work on the 1st of July in 1919.

I: What happened when you arrived in Baytown?

C: Well, I got off the model T Ford ~~xxx~~ touring car after about a four-hour trip and I got off at the depo and asked the man where the refinery was and he told me it was right down ^{that} those tracks about two milesⁿ.

I asked him how to get there and he ~~xxxx~~ said, Count the ties and it will take you right to it. Just about that time a man came along on a railroad velocipede and I thumbed a ride and came to work, twelve o'clock in the daytime. The man wouldn't hire me that day. Said I got there too late. So I went to work the first of July.

I: What was loaded on the (velocipede)?

C: Lunches. He was bringing lunches from the kitchen that was located in Baytown at that time. at that particular time They were bringing lunches out to the refinery on this railroad velocepede.

I: Wat What Railroad was it?

C. Well, that was the Dayton-Goose Creek railroad.

I: Who built it?

C. I think a man by the name of Mr. Kerr, and Mr. Sterling and a fellow by the name of Balrac, I think they were the three principal in the building of that railroad.

I: What did that refinery look like when you got here?

C: Well, there was nothing there except a lot of material and just a few foundations were being laid and there wasn't anything that was in any stage of completion at all. It was just practically a mudhole, that's all it was.

I: Where did you live when you came here?

C: The first place I lived was over on Humble street. I lived there about two months and then I moved to Pelly then I moved back to Baytown. Then in 1920, 1921 I moved out to the Baytown refinery site. I lived there until 1936. And then I moved from there out to Wooster.

I: You built a home out on Arbor Street where you live now?

C: Well, we bought a place out there.

I: You still live there?

C: Yes, mam.

I: What was your job at the refinery?

C: I was materials checker when I first went to work and then I transferred to the distillation department and stayed there until I retired in '60.

I: What recreation was available at the refinery or in town?

C: Well, the refinery built a big community house pretty close to where the main warehouse is now. We used to have dances out there and other than those dances and this baseball game the only other amusement around here was the picture show at the Oiler. The train used to leave out there about seven o'clock in the evening and ~~XXXXXX~~ and come to Baytown and you could ride in and see the picture show. The train stayed there until the picture show was over and then you went back home. And when you got off the train out there you just walked home. That's about all there was.

I: You remember that first office building at the refinery?

C: Yes mam. I remember the first office building. It was over about 200 yds. from west of Airhard Drive and pretty near ehrt where the phenol plant is now.

I: What was it used for besides an office building?

C: Well, they had a first aid station there and a telephone operator and that's all there was there.

I: Is that where they used to have the wrestling matches?

C: No, they had the wrestling matches -- that was the first office in the refinery -- where they had the wrestling matches that I spoke to you about was over in the old farmhouse that sat right where the old post office in Baytown is sitting now. That was the first office. This other one was the second one. But when I came here they weren't using this old building for an office any more. They had gone back up there and were using that second one when I got here.

I: When was the refinery baseball team organized?

C: I had a friend that I was working with by the name of Claude Burton and he suggested that we organize a ball team. He said all the people in Houston had them, Admiration Coffee, Ineeda Laundry and the Southern Pacific, American Legion. So we talked to the powers that be and they consented for us to start a ball team so we fielded a ball team in the early spring of 1920.

I: Did you have a name at the first?

C: Well, I thought we called ourselves the Baytown Oilers, but when I looked at this picture, I don't see any name on the suits so I don't know what we were, but I'm sure that's what we called ourselves./

I: Why did you organize that team?

C: Well, there just wasn't anything else to do around here and we had to have some sort of amusement. So we were all young and we needed to play ball and that was what we did.

I: Do you remember the name of the man who was manager?

C: We had Mr. Brummel ~~was~~ was the business manager and Joe Burk who had come down from NJ to take charge of the stills, he was the field manager.

I: What position did you play?

C: Centerfield.

I: Who were some of your teammates you can recall?

C: Well, we had a man by the name of Sid Dodson and he was a carpenter. ~~was~~ He was a pitcher. Harry Karkowski was a clerk in the main office and Bill Patton was ~~was~~ in charge of the acid plant. Willie Cox was a clerk in the main office. I was checking materials. Claude Burton was storehouse man. Dewey Reeves worked in the office. Clyde Rodecape was a clerk. Josh Wells was a clerk. Ross Jolly was a clerk. And Jack Hogan was a clerk. And Mr. Burk, Joe Burk, who was the field manager, was and he was the distillation superintendent at that time.

I: Where did you play your games?

C: We had a ball park just inside the refinery at the south very southeast corner of the refinery. We had a ball park there. We had a grandstand there, just a makeshift grandstand.

I: Who came to those ball games?

C: Everybody who could get here came here. There wasn't any way to get here but automobiles -- Fords -- and they came in from Baytown, from Goose Creek and Pelly and everybody came to the games. Always played them on Sunday. Everybody from all three towns were out there.

I: What teams did you play?

C: Played all the teams out of Houston -- Southern Pacific, Ineeda Laundry, then Gulf fielded a team. They had a bunch of college boys that came down here in the summertime and they played. Then later on they got a team from Barbers Hill that was comparable to the Gulf team. And those are the teams we played most of the time.

I: Were there any special games that you remember?

C: Well, I remember having played one game out here. The Gulf diamond was over about where Lee College is now. I was playing out there. We were playing the Gulf. It was in the last of the ninth. Two men on base. Somebody hit one out to me. I don't know who it was. I made a pretty good sized run and I caught it and I never did stop I just kept going right on ~~to~~ Home. And we won the game.

I: How long did you play on the team?

C: About three years the first time. Then I played one year later on.

I: Why did you give it up?

C: It got too fast for me. I couldn't compete.

Thank yo

I: Thank you, Mr. Carroll.

I: Another longtime Baytonian, B. B. Williams, arrived on the scene during those first three years. B. B., where were you born?

BB: I was born in Montgomery County. Place they called Dark Corner.

I: Where do you live now?

BB: 305 Forrest Street.

I: How did you happen to come to Baytown?

BB: We were farming up there, we got washed away, well, we just couldn't break our habit of eating, so we just had to come down here to get something to do to eat.

I: Describe the area here when you got there.

BB: Well, it was very small. The main drag when I first came to Baytown was on East Wright. And it was only three or four buildings on Texas Avenue at the time. Herrings Drug Store was there and Woods Drug, E. C. Woods Drug Store. And Jon Joiner Grocery Store, I believe they called it. And Pete Gonzales a little later built a restaurant called the -- I've forgotten the name of it, Gonzales' REstaurant, I guess.

I: What year did you get here?

BB: The early part of 1921.

I: Who did you marry and whom did you marry?

BB: I married in ¹⁹²⁹ 1928 1919 and I married a girl, Doris Zamora.

I: Where in Baytown did her family live and where did yours live?

BB: Her family lived up on Gulf Hill, which I thought was one of the prettiest places in Baytown at that time. And that was the other side of Pelly on the road going out to Pelly. They call it Goose Creek Street now, or West Main Street. And I lived up on Wright Street. H However when I married, I lived up on 202 W. Sterling.

I: When did you start work at the refinery and what was your job there?

BB: I went to workout at the refinery in the early part of '23. I went to work in the engineering department.

I: When did you join the Oilers?

BB: That spring of '23.

I: What position did you play?

BB: I played second base.

I: Who were some of the men that played on the teams with you?

BB: I remember some of them. Si Holt was the manager of the ball club. Chili Craig was playing left field. I thought that Jimmy Carroll that just talked was playing centerfield. Jeff Royder was playing right field, and first base.. Blaze Allman

was playing second base and I just can't think of the name of the man's name that was playing shortstop. He had a brother that alternated on second base with me because I wasn't ~~x~~ too good at hitting those left handers like Big Boy Brown back in those days, so they'd run him in there. He was a right hand hitter and I was a left hand hitter. And I remember Brown was one of our pitchers. I hit against him and I'd play with him. Then Jack Ward was pitching for us too. back in those days. He used to be mayor of Baytown.

I: Were these men pros or semi-pros?

BB: Some of them had played a little pro ball. Si Holt had played pro ball, Chili had played a little pro ball, Class D Ball, these Class D leagues. One other ~~man~~ ^{bpu we boy we had} player we had on ^{on our club} our team -- Brown had played pro ball, he played pretty good pro ball.

I: What teams did you play?

BB: We played then just nearly anybody that would play. Port Arthur had a pretty good ball club then. I thought about them. They had a good ball club in those days. We played with them. Humble office had a good ball club. They had one of the best chunkers. He was -- some of them were pro ball players, come down from the big leagues. One of them particularly was Izzy Glenn, one of the ~~a~~ best pitchers I've ever known. And they had a good ball club. Southern Pacific had a good ball club. We played them. Had to hit against a good pitcher there. Threw spit balls and chewed Slippery Elm. You could watch the spit fall off when the ball come up there and we had to hit against him and we didn't have any hard hats on either.

I: Did you play on the same playing field in Baytown that Jimmy played on?

BB: One year.

I: What about the new, well, I guess it's not new any more. The ball field that was built down there close to the railroad track.

BB: That winter I was sent into the Buff Stadium in Houston. They were in the Texas League and had one of the best turtleback

diamonds. That's what they all went in for in those days.

I took the topography of all that ~~down~~ ^{and brought it back} diamond and laid it out

where the old ball park was when it was torn down.

I: How did you get your engineering training?

BB: By working at it and studying an ICS course, International Correspondence course.

I: Do you remember some of the team managers?

BB: Yes. Sil Holt was managing when I joined the ball club, but I think the year before was Buddie Currie. Let me say just a little something about Buddie Currie. And I believe all these men that are here and knew him would agree with me. I think he was one of the greatest semi-pro ball players that ever put on a uniform. The only thing that kept him out of the big leagues was his disposition. That man could play any place you called ~~in~~ on, He could do anything. He could hit 400 in any league I ever saw him play in. And I played under Six Holt, then the next time I played under Big John Henry, who ~~in~~ two years previously to that caught Walter Johnson in the big leagues with the Washington Senators. Then I played under Dick Humphries. He came out of the Texas League down here to our ball club. He and his brother, by the name of Chink. Chink's still here and Dick got killed. Next manager I played under was Jack Shires. That was in '28 and that's when I left here, in '28.

I: Do you remember any business managers?

BB: Yeah, I remember when ~~John~~ Josh Wells was business mgr. And I remember when Lopez was business manager. And also Roper, a man called Jack Roper. come down and was business mgr.

I: When did you say you left the team? Did you leave the plant

BB: '28 I;
~~BBzz~~ that same year?

BB? Only on a leave of absence, I got a leave of absence to go out into professional baseball to see if I could try to bring my arm and play regularly, because I had signed a contract with a farm club of the Boston Red Sox and if I could bring my arm around I could get a chance to go to the big league.

I: Did you come back to Exxon?

BB: Yeah, I come back to Exxon and worked about a year.

I: And then what, did you retire or did you leave or what?

BB: I got married in 1929. Doris took a long time to talk me into the notion of marrying her. I was a bird hunter and a ball player and I just couldn't hardly give all that up.

But any way I got married in '29 and decided I'd lay off a little while

baseball. But Barbers Hill was organized at that time.

That was before Barbers Hill had the good ball club they had.

Before old Bob Kalbits, three or four more, Buck Buckels, and

one other guy played center field, What was his name? Lee

Schulte. That was before then. Tom Pile, Red Bege Biggers.

That was before they all come down.. The manager then at BH

was Big Slim McGrew, who used to pitch for the Philadelphia

Athletics. And he got me over there to work out and play on

the ball club. And I stayed there about a month and decided

that I didn't have any insurance and they were all working for

the company. If I got hurt, I'd better quit. So I quit that

year, that was in '32. IN '33 I played on a ball club in

Conroe for Fred Edgar and we played 22 ball games and lost 1

ball game to an All-Star team out of Houston.

I: After you left Exxon, what businesses have you been in?

BB: First, I went in business with my brother in the cleaning

business. After then I went back into the engineering business

with the county. I stayed with the county a year. in the 1935

bond program and set up the flood control department with two

other fellows at that time. I left there and

was Mrs. Massey's maintenance engineer for Precinct

2 for a year. Then I opened a contracting business and engineer-

ing business for myself, and real estate business and started

developing real estate.

I: When did you retire?

BB: Well, honey, I haven't retired. I'm just tired.

I: What are you doing now?

BB: Well, I'm trying to take care of some duplexes, I've got and satisfy my wife about moving things around the house. I'm fixing to go this afternoon and build some shelves.

I: You have a little thing going called the Baytown Taxpayers Association, too, don't you?

BB? Oh yes. That's taking up quite a bit of my time. I have devoted a lot of my time to helping people. Because if I had a monitor on my telephone I could have showed you I got about 25,000 calls from everything in the world, mostly taxes, people call me about. Yesterday I got about 5 calls from people's taxes going up and I try to help them. Try to help the city out. I was city engineer for eight years and I realize I know what's going on and what it takes to do to ^{lower} avoid these taxes, but I don't seem to be making too much progress.

I: Back to the Oilers, tell me some of the best games you can remember.

BB: WELL, I can remember a lot of games, but one game stands out more in my mind than any other.. We were playing for the championship against New Gulf. Jack Shires was playing first base. I was playing second base. Bugs Howard was playing shortstop, Buddy Currie was playing third base, Chink HUMphries was catching. Chili Craig was in left. YiYi Cheetle, an INdian, fullblood INdian, was in centerfield. I don't guess I know of anybody that could outrun him but Jimmy Carroll over there. Loy Williams who isn't any kin to me was playing right field. A fellow by the name of LIGHT HORSE Harry Lee was chunking for us. The game was tied in the ninth inning and I think everybody in Baytown, Pelly, Cedar BAYou and all this territory was out there. We roped off third base line and right field line. During that ball game there was a fellow that worked in the refinery, good friend of mine, and a fellow with him got drunk and stood on the sideline and razzed Jack Shires and needled him finally got real nasty about it. So about that time the eighth inning, Jack eased up to me and said, 'I'm gonna whip that guy when this thing's over. I want you to keep that other guy off of me.' Well, the other guy was a close friend of mine, we were running around together. So in the ninth inning there was a man in

scoring position and we were up, Jack come to the bat. And there was only one hole in the right field fence. And I don't think it was over about 10, 12 inches long. He hit a line drive that rolled under that fence for a home run and won the ball game. So he was in the glory wagon. He just threw his glove down and ^{walked over} hit this fellow under the chin and the fight started.

The other boy that was a friend of mine started to jump on him and I grabbed him. and he said "What in the world's the matter with you?" and I said, "What in the world's the matter with you?" This guy has been riding him all during the ball game and I want you to lay off of him." That's one thing that stands out more to me than anything else in the ball game

I: That's good. Thank you, BB.

I: Melvin Berry became business manager for the Oilers in 1927. To Melvin people are what made baseball and he has lots of stories to tell about his days with the team. Melvin, you've been quiet over there a long time. Now it's your time to talk. Where were you born and where do you live now?

Melvin: I was born in Thorndale, Tex., in Milam County on Feb. 16, 1898. 1897.

I: Where do you live now?

M: I live at 4904 Burning Tree Drive.

I: Where did you go to school, Melvin?

M: High school in Thorndale in 1917

M. I finished high school in Thorndale in 1917.

I: Were you in the armed services?

M: No.

I: When did you come to Baytown and why did you come?

M: I came to Baytown on Feb. 21, 1920, hired in at refinery and went to work on Mar. 1, 1920. I came to Btn. looking for a job. I had been fired from a job with the Humble Pipeline Co.

I: Where?

M: Over at Gate City. Pappy Reese fired me by telephone and until today I have no idea why I was discharged.

I: Were you married when you came to Baytown?

M: No.

I: Who did you marry and when?

M: In 1922 I married Margaret Goodhue.

I: Was she your first wife?

M: She was my first wife. She is the mother of. We had three children. tow boys and a girl.

I:

I: Were you married again?

M: Yes, later on after she passed away I married again.

I: I married Fay Frazier.

I: And when was that marriage?

M: in 1943.

I: When you started work at the refinery, what was your job?

M: I started in the labor gang. I was in the labor gang about 30 days and then went to work in the old commissary. The company had a commissary, drug store, filling station, meat market, and a wood yard. That was about the only stores there was out there. And that was about the only way you could get groceries. because at that time the roads were so terribly bad that if you were to drop off in them, well, you might not get out.

I: What did you do at the commissary?

M: I was a clerk.

I: Do you remember the tentcamps for Exxon employes when you first came here?

M: Yes. They had four camps.

I: What were they and were they grouped in any special way?

M: No. 2 camp was right down close to where the old post office is now. There was a two-story house there. Rice farmer's house. No. 2 camp there. No. 3 and 4, No. 4 was the big camp. And it was just across the track on between San Jacinto Street and Finley. That's where the white men lived. They had mess halls. Other two camps, a camp for colored folks and a camp for Mexicans ^{They} were up on the northeast side of the refinery right about where the phenol plant is now. Right against the fence off Airhart drive.

I: Was there a mess hall there then?

M: They had three mess halls. The soft collard guys as we called them lived in Camp No. 2 and they had a mess hall there. and then they had a big mess hall at No. 4 camp and a lot of us ate at No. 4 that worked in the commissary because it was more convenient. We worked, commissary worked through noon hour, from 12 rto 1 and then we closed up at 1 o'clock and would go to lunch. Most of the time we could get a good steak buy the best steak for about 25 cents a pound. We had access to the meat market and they'd give us anything we would want to eat down there and there was a down at what used to be the east gate, the Red Front Cafe, run by Mr. Meadows who also had a what they called a jitney then, and we'd go down there, we knew the cooks, they were colored cooks and they were real good people and they'd fix our steaks for us any way we wanted them. We lived high on the ^{as long as it was} hog. in the commissary.

I: Do you remember the dormitory and the community building?

M: The dormitory, I believe, was completed in 1921. That's where, in 1920 though they had the first Humble Day cener centered around the old commissary. jAnd that's the first ball game that we had, played down there close to the east gate, the east side. And Jack Ward, ~~was~~ later on, at that time Jack came down here from Cisco. He worked in the refinery but He pitched that ball game and it ~~was~~ went ~~17~~ 17 innings against the Houston office and Jack won it 1 to 0. That was the first Humble Day and that was on May 1, 1920.

I: Where did you live when you first came to Baytown?

M: I lived in Camp 2 for about 4 months and then the company built a bunch of stucco houses and Johnny Mackey, who passed away a couple of years ago, and I were working together and we were roommates.. We lived on 8th St. then just a block out of the refinery.

I: When you retired, what was your job?

M: I was rated as a chief clerk in the traffic department.

I: When was that?

M/ That was in 1962.

I: When did you join the Oilers and in what capacity?

M: In my high school days, I was what you'd call a fair athlete, I was a track man, I played baseball, ran track and I was a basketball player. Naturally I was interested in all kinds of sports and I still am. And I don't know how I fell into this job as what they called business mgr. I was a flunky. I did everything no one else wanted to do. That's what a business manager usually does.

I: To what extent did Exxon support the Oiler team?

M: Exxon was known then as Humble Co. They still are to me. I can't say Exxon. And they were one of the best companies to work for that I ever worked for or ever will. They were good to the men. They were more humanitarian then than they are now.

I: Where did most of the financial support come from to buy uniforms, equipment, transportation?

M: They organized the Humble Club. And the Humble Club backed the ball club.

I: That must have been pretty early.

M: They did.

I: When the Humble Club was organized?

M. As far as I know, of course I don't know much about the team up until I took over ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ the managing of it. Humble Oil never did support the ball club. they got the advertising from it, but they didn't give us any money. The Humble club supplied the money for our expenses, all of them. Road trips and everything else.

I: Jimmy said he dropped out when they started getting the pro and semi-pro players. How were these players recruited for the team?

M: Some of them were sent down here and we needed ball players especially when Mr. Farned took over ^{after} ~~the~~ ^{that} ~~plant manager~~ ^{superintendent's} job.

He was a great baseball fan. A working man could approach anywhere any time and if he saw you anywhere, he knew you. Didn't make any difference what your color was. or what your

official capacity was, he knew you. He helped us get a lot of ball players down here and give them jobs. I would like to go on record here as saying that out of all the ball players we hired during 20 some odd that I managed that ball club we never had but one ball player that was really off color. He didn't stay with us but one year. We were the only semi-pro ball club that could get reservations at the RAleigh Hotel in Waco. We'd go up for tournaments and we'd get reservations. But they didn't cater to baseball teams. Grand Prize had a ~~xxxx~~ great ball club. We played them up there several times in tournaments. They stayed at the Roosevelt Hotel. That's where all semi-pro clubs stayed but the Baytown Oilers. We felt like that was an honor and this one man that I told you was a little off color, real comical in a way. He had his traveling bag and filled it up with hotel towels and bedspreads and set it down in the lobby and drove off and left it. And we had to do a little talking to get to go back there again.

I: Didn't you tell me about one man who had a SS class and he would play and come back on Sunday to teach his class?

M: Yes, We had some great ball players and we had some great men, I mean good men. I' One of the best men in the ball field one was Bob Kalbitz, the other was Doc Hudson. We went to Sinton for a 2-game series on Sat. and Sun. Doc was a left hand pitcher who weighed about 150 lbs. , maybe dripping wet he would weigh 160, but he was a mone of the best men, except Bob Kalbits. I would put him in a class with Bob. We used him on a Sat. night to pitch a ball game and he won that ball game and got on the bus that night and rode all night long to get back to his Sunday school class the next morning. He belonged to, I believe, the Eastside Baptist Church, at that time. And he was a perfect gentleman.

I: You were telling me about a series in BAton Rouge where th Oilers did pretty well. Do you want to run over that series again for me?

M: Well that was in 1938 and I think that was one of the best 4-game series semi-pro ball games that I ever saw played anywhere. Baton Rouge Essos had ~~won~~ lost 3 ball games and won 22 that year. when we went over there. They had been playing some of those semi-pro ball clubs in that Cotton States League and they trimmed them pretty regular. Red biggers pitched that first ball game and beat them 8-1. Johnny Pfardrescher pitched, Johnny pitched the third game and beat them 7-3. Lamar Evans pitched the ~~2~~ Sat. night ball game and Red came back ~~the~~ 4th of July Monday and beat them pitched the second game and beat them again. xxxx

I think maybe they got a couple of ^{runs} ones off him. I'm not sure how many. But we had a good ball club. We had those boys after that second game they were fussing at us and we beat them that last game and they were fighting among themselves. And that was one of the best series I can recall in anybody's ball park.

I: You told me about a player, I can't remember his name. He didn't do very well in a game and got made at himself and walked all the way from the baseball field to the hotel in his baseball shoes. Tell me that story again.

M: Well, I'll tell it to you, but I might get killed. That was Herman Cholcher. He's here in town now. He lives here. We were playing Grand Prize that night in Waco in the Waco tournament. they had a Katy Park there where the series was held that had a bunch of tin around it. First time Cholker came up, we were playing Grand Prize and Heine Schuble was playing second base. Cholker hit one and you could just see the smoke coming off of it and old Heine grabbed that thing like it was an apple. There were 3 men on base that time. The next time Cholcher came up, he just pooped one right over the ~~the~~ infield. Two men on base that time. Well, he threw his cap over the fence. You had to be full dressed in that tournament. He got my cap. . Came up 3rd time. Three men. He left 8 men on base that night, there were three men on base again, hit another little popup to the ~~the~~ infield. He w

He went out to right field, he was playing ^{we heard something} right field, out there and it sounded like a mule in a tin barn. I looked out there and it was old Cholcher. He was just standing there, first one foot, then the other, kicking that tin. And that's just what it sound3d like, a mule. Well, after the fourth time, It was in August and it was hot. Streets were and we were two blocks from the hotel. I checked up the ticket sales with their business manager, whose name was Airwood, a real gentleman, started back up to the hotel in my car and I passed about half way up I ran into Tommy and Cholcher and I don't know who the third one was and I said //Come on and I'll give you a ride to the Vesta Hotel. They were barefooted, had their shoes off, they couldn't walk with those spikes on that hot stuff and Chochoer said, //Naw, Anybody plays ball like I do gol darned don't need a goldarned ride.//

And they suspended him 3 days and fined him \$25. That's what liked to have killed him.

I: Give me the names of some of the players that you remember the best.

M: John Henry came down here from the Houston office and John Henry had played in the major leagues as BB said before John Henry caught Walter Johnson when Johnson was in his prime. His thumb was all broken up and fingers were where he had caught that fast ball. Izzy Glenn played a lot of pro ball. We had some great ball players. We had some great semi-pro ball players. Bob Kalbitz played. Bob came out of the St. Louis Cardinals system. We had the two Greer boys, Noisy and Eddie, one was a second baseman and the other a thire baseman. They were here early. We had so many great ball players I'm afraid to mention them. We had so many semi-pro ball players that had played some pro ball that I hate to mention too many becaus I'm afraid I'll hurt somebody's feelings. Humpy Thomas was a third baseman. He played great ball. I think one of the better semi-pro ball player, he's still here. ~~Could have~~ Out fielder could have been a great

ball player or a greater ball player than he was was Buck
bonds. Buck had a tryout with Dallas, the White Sox signed
him. Buck went out there to try out with Dallas came home
but he was a great ball player. There 's just so many of
thos great ball players back there --p

I: We'll have a free for all. Whendid you leave the team
and why?

M: We disbanded in '53. Lawrence Reilly at that time was
had a lot to do with the Humble Club and he ahd told me 2,3
times, Melvin if you'd give up out there, that ball club
would fold up. They decided they weren't going to support
us. Semi-pro baseball began to die along about 48, 49, grad
ually got worse and worse until we decided to give it up?

I: When did you retire from the refinery?

M: In 1962.

I: And what have you been doing since?

M: Oh, I garden a little, fish a lot. Have got so old now
& I've just about quit fishing, but I raise tomatoes, few
vegetables around my house, I do some visitation, go to
Green Acres every week, for four years. I have about 8, 10
people I visit every week, go to hospitals. I've just
about quit fishing. Have got rid of all my fishing equipment.

I: Looks like you manage to keep busy anyway.

Let's talk to Bob Kalbits a little bit

I: Bob Kalbitz was a pro player who came to Baytown to work
at Exxon and play with the Oilers. Bob, you played on the
Barbers Hill Gushers team before coming here. Where were you
born?

Bob: I was born in Chicago, Ill. These three Texans are goinf
to think I'm a yankee. But I feel I'm a Texan inasmuch
as I had my spiritual birth in the state of Texas. So I feel
this qualifies me with the rest of them. I'M a native.

I: When were you born?

Bob: In 1912, NOV. 3.

I: Where do you live now?

Bob: I live at 114 Park here in Baytown.

I: Where did you go to school?

Bob: I just stayed in Chicago for 10 months. My parents moved to St. Louis, Mo., and I went to Beaumont High School. I think I earned 13 letters while in high school there and also played professional soccer one year up in St. Louis

I: So you started playing baseball when you were in high school?

Bob: Well, really up there they had baseball in elementary school.

I: You started down in elementary school, mhh?

~~Bob:~~ Who did you marry and when were you married?

Bob: I married a Houston girl name of Myrtle Butcher lived out in the west end of Houston. I ~~xxxxxxx~~ met her when I was playing with the Houston Buffs. We were married in 1935.

I: What teams did you play for while you were in league playing and what leagues did you play in?

Bob: You won't believe this first one. I quit high school in my senior year to go off to play in the Miss. Valley League but a team by the name of Keokuk Iowa. Bill Kircham who was a real fine catcher for the Humble Oilers was also on that same ball club.

I: Are those the leagues you played in?

Bob: No, No. That was the first one. Then I went to Springfield Ill. in the BI league, played in Asheville, N. C. in the Piedmont League and I played at Houston in the Texas League.

I: When did you start work at Exxon?

Bob: It was 1938.

I: Now you played on the Barbers Hill Gushers team. Were you working for Exxon at that time?

Bob: No, I was working for Texas Gulf Production Co. in Barbers Hill and I played there in '36 and '37.

I: And you left league playing to come to Barbers Hill to play on the Gushers team?

Right

Bob: I left professional baseball. I was only 22 years old. But I'm sure these fellows will all remember one of the big

reasons. To me it was a big reason. Jim Bottomly and Ripper Collins and Johnny ^{Mize} ~~Myes~~ were all in the Cardinal organization the same time I was. These were real great big league ball players.

I: Well, weren't you a big league player, too?

Bob: Well, no I didn't ever get to the big leagues and they probably were the big reasons I didn't get there.

I: How were you recruited down here in the Gushers and how did you transfer to the Oilers?

Bob: Well, when I realized that it was going to take some time or maybe never for me to reach the big leagues I felt like it was time to do something else and I had been told that semi-pro ball was very strong in this part of the country. Of course my wife came from Houston and one of her brothers told me there was an opportunity to go to work at Barbers Hill so that's where I came to work.

I: Well, tell me about transferring from the Gushers to the Oilers.

Bob: Well, I played there in 36 and 7. Texas Gulf Production was not a large enough company to take care of all these ball players and they were told they would have to disband their ball club but at that same time the Oilers were looking for more ball players. So it was just a matter of just moving a few miles.

I: Did you ever live in BH?

Bob: Yes, I sure did. Both years I played there.

I: When you moved to Baytown, I suppose you moved to Baytown when you got a job at the refinery, what was your job at the refinery?

Bob: First job was in the pipe fitting crew and from there I went into the boiler house.

I: Where did you live in Btn. when you first moved here?

Bob: I lived close to Melvin Berry, our business manager.

I lived just down the street -- Michigan, wasn't it? Michigan Street. In a duplex, next to Tommy Schuble.

I: What position did you play on the Oilers?

Bob: First Base.

I: You want to name off some of your team mates?

Bob: I've got a lot of them in mind and I'm like Berry, I'm not going to purposely miss any of them. But there were so many of them that played over the years that I played that perhaps I may miss some, but I'm sure not going to try.

Buddy Didrickson, and I will add if they played pro ball.

Al Simmons played pro ball; Red Biggers played pro ball;

Tommy Schuble, Bob Chase, Bob Jansig, Ott Butcher who is my brother-in-law, Heine Schuble of course played with the Detroit Tigers in two World Series and was a very fine ball player.

Tony Costa, George Binder who was one of our managers and a professional baseball player. I played with him one year, in fact, in Houston. Watty Watkins and Herman Cholcher. Herman

was a professional ball player. Clarence Pillow and Buck Bonds as you heard Mr. Berry talk about him. Johnny Pfardrescher

Johnny ~~Realtin~~, I understand was one of the best pitching prospects that ever hit the university of Texas under Uncle Billy Dish.

Chuck Hostetler played centerfield for us. for several years.

And you remember during the war years he played with the Detroit Tigers and he was in a World Series. -There was Phil Kircham

There was George Mills, Tiger Bell, Paul Patterson Pat Marshall,

Pop Shires and I know that there's a bunch of them that I am

forgetting, ~~KRR~~ Lee Schulte came over and played some with us.

~~from~~ ~~from~~ ~~from~~ Barbers Hill. And Lenny Mott who was a third baseman for the Gushers also came over and played with us.

I: That's pretty good to remember all those. Are there some outstanding games that you remember that we haven't already talked about this afternoon?

Bob: No. I don't remember any one particular ball game.

I always enjoyed playing against a good ball club. I really enjoyed playing the Halliburton Cementers, the Grand Prize ball club, Rosenberg was made up of a bunch of University of Texas boys. And the Waco army airfield team during WWII had a

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tremendous ball club. They were loaded with professional ball players, Birdie Tevets, Buster Mills, Hoot Evers, a bunch more I can't think of right now. Popovitch who played with the White Sox. Practically every one, all but 2 or 3 were big league ball players that were in WWII at that time..

I: What do you feel were the best years the Oilers had while you were playting?

Bob: Well, I believe it was 38, 39 and 40. In 41 of course that started the war years and took some of our ball players away..

I: When did you leave the team nad why?

Bob: I left the team in 1945. TLhere was two reasons. It did keep me from attending church on Sundays like we'd to to Rosenberg, say we'd have to leave BAYtown around X 8:30 or 9 o'clock in the morning and that would knock us out of that. And then another reason was we played a lot of night ball and at that time I was working in the ~~mix~~ boilerhouse and it was hot as mischief in there. We'd like to to Alvin and play a night game and we wouldn't get home a lot of times u:ntil around midnight. then had to be up ready to go to work the next morning. And it was just getting a little too tough on me.

I: When did you leave Exxon?

Bob: In 1955.

I: Did you go into business for yourself?

Bob: Yes I went into the insurance business.

I: Are you still in that business?

Bob: Still in it, in the insurance business.

I: Thank you, Bob, that just about covers that. There are a couple of things here that we need to finish up on.

I ~~nd~~ understand the ball park was finally dismantled in 1959. BB, do you know what happened to the ball park? Can you tell us what happened to the equipment over there and the stands?

BB: Betsy, let me first tell you how we got all started in the Ball club. Baytown had quit playing and the ball park was just sitting there. It was grown up, some of the lights were out and everything was in bad shape. I had these young boys around here and I had a son, you know, I had these boys around here training them to play baseball. IN fact, Bob's boy played with me. Bobbo, Bobbo. I had Gary Herrington, and I had a left hander that went to Texas A&M. I had all those boys.

I: When was that, BB?

BB: I suppose it was about 1958, I guess it was because Johnny graduated from high school in 58.

I: They weren't called the Oilers were they?

BB: No no, That was just my ball club running and I had some of those kids since they were little boys. The Optimist Club organized and I was a charter member of the Optimist Club and they needed a project So I suggested we take on this teen age baseball, because we had little league baseball and when the boys finished the * LL they had no place to go. I didn't think that was right. I thought they ought to have a little further place to go than just the little league. Some of them looked pretty good. So I said

The Optimists wanted to build a ball park, but it was costing too much money. So I said if you'll leave it to me I'll get the ball park. So they said OK you're the president. So I appointed Fred Ditman and Dick Wilson, Bickerstaff who was with the sheriff's department. I called out to the refinery and Gordon Farned answered the telephone and I said, ~~hey~~ ~~redner~~ I've got a little committee wants to come out and talk to you. We went to his office and introduced them. Tom Fuller. Farned said, now what can I do for this gang?

I said, We want the Baytown ball park. And we want it 5 nights a week I want you to furnish a grounds keeper, fix all the lights, build a concession stand, fix the grandstands.

He said, that's a big order. I'll have to talk to the Houston office about it.

I said I know it's a big order, but lots of these boys dads work at Humb.e And as Berry said a while ago Humble used to go out of their way to do a lot of things for the ball players. Next morning at 9 o'clock, Farned called me and said Everything is OK, you can get everything. Do you know Lacy Lusk? And I said Yes. He said well meet Lacy out there and tell him what you want. I met him and told him and that's the way the teenage league got the ball park.

Then our next meeting was we had to have managers

JohnnySavage (a ball player) Former Oiler players agreed to help with the teenage team.

I: This was a long time after the oilers team was dissolved?

BB: This was after the Oilers was dissolved.

I: Do you know when the Oilers team was dissolved?

Melvin: 1953.

I: What ever finally happened to that ball park. It was d torn down wasn't it?

BB: I got ready to move to Austin. And in the OPTimist Club something came up about they were going to give the ball park to the school I called B Gordon Farned. Wjould you provide that if the company give the ball park to the school that tvey will let the teenage ball club use it? and I think he did that. I don't know. But I think the teenage team still uses it.

I: Melfin, did you tell me the school used part -of that ball park?

Melvin: They are part of the stands right now in Memorial Stadijm. Right on the east end of memorial stadkum.

BB: The real man in the Baytown refinery that called it his refinery and it was his refinery -- his name was R. E. Powell. And I want to tell you he ran that refinery.

I: When was that?

BB: It was when Berry came down here, when all of us came down here. I'll tell yu yhow strong he was for baseball. If we were losing a ball game and he was sitting up in the stands he would get out of the stands and come and sit down on that

bench and say 'What in the Hell's going wrong around here? You guys are not hustling. And brother everybody started hustling and playing ball out there.

I: What was his job?

BB: He was superintendent of that refinery.

Before Gordon Farned. But I do think in those days he had more power with the Humble Co. than Gordon. Jimmy said it about right, He had more power than Hitler did.

I don't think Humble office really dictated too much to Mr. Powell. He was a fine old man if you knew him.

Carroll: You know, when Mr. Powell first landed here I went over to the main office one night to check out, drop your brass or whichever way we did, and there was a steamer trunk over there and it was addressed to R. E. Powell, Baytown, Tex. Everybody was wondering who that R. E. Powell was. Well, it wasn't long until Mr. R. E. Powell came in and he walked through the refinery and he'd ask questions from everybody, ask them a lot of questions that he already knew and he'd just find out how little other people knew. Well, everything went along all right and everybody was wondering about it. And one morning we got a notice from all the units over there that Mr. Powell was the superintendent. I want to tell you the fur really flew from then on until he straightened that place out.

I: Sound like people knew each other pretty well in the plant at that time.

LBB: The refinery did all their own construction work. I was supervisor, engineer out there. The biggest job they ever did is the cracking coil, they built two cracking coils. You remember the first one there close to the office? That's the one I went to work on. AND I got a lot of experience. When they built the second cracking coil, Bill Revbe Reber had come in as the engineer from the Colo. School of mines. I spent two solid years laying out and building the cracking coil.

I laid out the treating units. One sludge kettle to 5.

I: Melvin, roads were pretty bad? What kind of horsepower did they use in the refinery back then?

Melvin: Well they had mostly Fords and Mr. Powell's car was a Dodge Roadster,

I: Did they have any mulepower?

Melvin: Oh yes, they had that's what they used mostly. Big corral down there by the rr trac. D. E. Boozer was head of that dept. 50, 60 head of mules, maybe more.

Carro: When I went to work ther 1/2 ton Model T pickup and a one ton Wichita chain drive truck

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