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John M. Pfau Library

LATINO BASEBALL HISTORY PROJECT:

NEWSLETTER



A League of Their Own

On March 19 an exhibit titled *Mexican American Women and Softball 1930-1959: A League of Their Own and the Struggle for Gender Equality*, opened in the library of California State Polytechnic University at Pomona. The exhibit will run until June 23.

On May 29, the Cal Poly Pomona campus will host a series of events paying tribute to the surviving players from these leagues. The address for the campus is 3801 West Temple Ave., Pomona, CA 91768.

May 29 Schedule of Events:

11:30 – 1 p.m. Luncheon in honor of the players from the Mexican American Women’s Softball Leagues of 1930-1959. (Location: 4th floor of the Cal Poly library.)

1:15 – 2:45 p.m. Panel discussion by the players on their playing days and on how the game changed their lives. (Location: 3rd floor of the Cal Poly library.)

3:15 p.m. First-Pitch Ceremony at Cal Poly’s Scolinos Field, where the women of these leagues will participate in front of their friends and families. (Location: Scolinos Field.)

Come out and support the women of our communities! While you’re at the Cal Poly library take a look at the exhibit – it is going to be fantastic! At some point on this day there will also be a book signing event on the third floor of the library for *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire*.

The celebration of the community will take place with these events on May 29. On May 31 there will be a panel discussion of the current research on

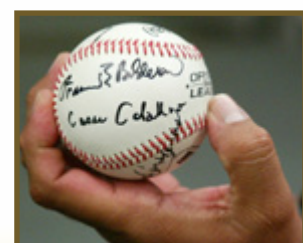
Mexican American women, softball, and issues of gender.

May 31 Schedule of Events:

1 p.m. Dr. Terri Gomez, professor of ethnic and women’s studies at Cal Poly Pomona, will moderate a panel discussion. Panelists include:

Amanda Magdalena, doctoral student in history at the University of Buffalo, the State University of New York; and Sandra Uribe, professor, Westwood College, South Bay Campus, Torrance, Calif. The respondent is Lucy Soriano, a Cal Poly Pomona student.

(Location: 3rd floor Cal Poly Pomona library.) During this day there will also be a book signing event on the third floor of the library for *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire*.



Orange “Tomboys,” Champions of 1947

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Mexican American Women and Softball 1930-1959: A League of Their Own and the Struggle for Gender Equality

When you hear the word baseball, what are the first things that come into your mind? Usually it would be names of teams, a baseball, a bat, and the men who played the game, right? Have you ever stopped to think about women who played baseball? Now picture this: going back to the early 1900s, can you visualize any women baseball players? Wait! To that image add Mexican American women baseball players!

Believe it or not, women have been involved in the game for a long time. "Base Ball" was played at Vassar College in 1866, and in 1875 the "Blondes" and "Brunettes" played professionally. (Not well - the final score was 42-33, yet there were only 4 earned runs, but the players were paid, so it was professional.) We do not know whether they pitched underhand or overhand. While the college players played for the love of the game, those first professional players were, for the most part, variety show performers and did not seem to have much experience with the game.

Mexican American women lived complicated lives during the early 1900s. They struggled with discrimination, gender inequality, and stress in their communities, such as the effects of the wars. During this time, the children of immigrants were forced to attend segregated schools.

Wages for immigrants were low, and children often helped support their families by taking jobs to earn money. Children, especially girls, were also expected to help out in the home. Family came first. Playing and practice had to fit in around caring for siblings, helping at home, work, and school.

In the 1930s, with men away at war, women stepped into jobs that had traditionally been held by men. More than four million women went to work in manufacturing and other industries. As women became accepted in positions outside of the home, women's softball gained in popularity.

This broke the norms of expectations for women. The young ladies who played baseball performed two roles previously filled by entirely different people. As women they were expected to act like ladies. The expectation of society was that they would stay at home, cook, and clean. They would wear dresses and they would behave in a gentle, quiet, "lady-like" manner. When they stepped onto a softball field,

their roles changed. They became players, they were part of a team.

It was difficult to flout society's expectations of women. Women softball players were seen as unladylike. The question of what they would wear on the field was treated as if that was of overwhelming importance. At first women had to wear uniforms with long skirts and long-sleeved blouses when playing. As women ball players became more accepted, the uniforms changed and women could wear shorts. Off the field, the team managers ordered the players to wear feminine attire, have their hair styled, and wear make-up. It was considered essential that they fit society's expectations of femininity when they were not actually playing ball.

Society's expectations of women played a big role in the naming of women's softball teams.

Teams were given names that had a feminine touch, such as "Maids," "Cuties," "Los Tomboys," and "Las Debs." Players were local celebrities; the press would write about them and they were recognized everywhere in their neighborhoods, but everyone took care to emphasize their roles as women. Every story included their roles as housekeepers, daughters, wives, and mothers. For example, an article would feature a photograph of the woman playing ball and right

next to that photograph there would be another of her in her home. The

captions would focus on her role as a housewife and her dedication to her family and home. Men also had families and homes, but stories about male ball players didn't focus on those aspects of their lives.

Women played softball for many reasons. It was a way to build friendships, to become known in their communities, to earn money.

many played for the sheer love of the game.



Las Columbians 1950-51

Based on an essay by Venessa Diaz, and on "Playing a Man's Game: Women and Baseball in the United States 1866-1954" by Debra Shattuck in *Baseball History from Outside the Lines, a Reader*, ed. John E. Dreifort (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001) 195.

'Neighborhoods of Baseball' a Hit in Burbank

By Terry Cannon

The Baseball Reliquary hosted an intimate look at community baseball in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic Los Angeles on Sept. 17, 2011, at the Burbank Central Library, which was attended by a capacity audience of nearly 150 people. Titled "The Neighborhoods of Baseball," the program examined amateur and semi-professional baseball in post-World War II Los Angeles from the perspective of the Mexican American, African American, and Japanese American communities, where baseball created a unique sense of shared values and fostered community identity and pride.

The festivities began with a lively panel discussion, moderated by professor Richard Santillan and featuring former players who provided insights into the importance of baseball in Los Angeles as an activity critical to our understanding of community, particularly in terms of how the sport was used to build ethnic cohesion and identity. Panelists included Richard Peña, Al Padilla, John Young, Dan Kwong and Bobby Umemoto.

Richard Peña graduated from Roosevelt High School in Boyle Heights and starred as a center fielder and pitcher for the legendary Carmelita Chorizeros baseball team in East Los Angeles. Fellow Roosevelt High grad, Al Padilla played baseball for the Evergreen Rangers and Ornelas Food Market in East Los Angeles, and later coached baseball and football at Roosevelt and Garfield High Schools and at East Los Angeles College. John Young grew up in South Central Los Angeles, played professionally with the Detroit Tigers, and became baseball's first African American scouting director when the Tigers promoted him to the post in 1981; in 1989, he founded RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities), which has grown from a local program for disadvantaged youth in South Central Los Angeles to an international campaign encompassing more than 200 cities and well over 100,000 male and female participants each year. Dan Kwong is an award-winning solo performance artist, playwright and director, who played for 40 years for the Li'l Tokio Giants of Los Angeles, one of the oldest continuous teams in Japanese American baseball history. Bobby Umemoto, a legend in the Japanese American baseball leagues of Los Angeles, has been a player and manager for the Li'l Tokio Giants since 1961 and a board member of the Nisei Athletic Union since the mid-1960s.

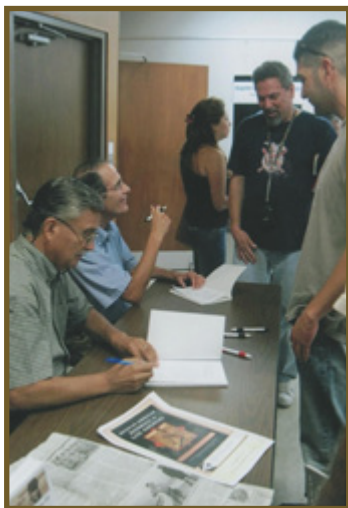
The players spoke passionately about the importance of baseball to their respective ethnic communities, and how interethnic baseball promoted better interracial relations. They discussed how baseball had personally impacted their lives, who inspired and mentored them when they began playing the sport, and also recalled their fondest memories in baseball.

Following the panel discussion, Richard Santillan introduced a screening of a work in progress, *Mexican American Baseball in Los Angeles*, his documentary film companion to his book of the same title, co-written with Dr. Francisco Balderrama, which was published earlier in the year. The film captures the spirit of Mexican American baseball in post-World War II Los Angeles and features



Panelists participating in 'The Neighborhoods of Baseball' program at the Burbank Central Library included, from left to right, Richard Peña, Al Padilla, John Young, Dan Kwong, Bobby Umemoto and Richard Santillan (moderator).

Photo courtesy of Lucy Pedregon.



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First Pitch Ceremony to Honor LBHP Players

On May 5, 2012, Cal State San Bernardino's Coyotes will play CSU Dominguez Hills' Toros at Fiscalini Field. The Coyotes stated that they would be honored to host players from the Latino Baseball History Project for a first pitch ceremony. In the first LBHP first pitch ceremony we will pay homage to these players; they were legends in the Inland Empire from the 1930s to the 1950s:

- Richard Peña from Riverside
- Al Vasquez from Cucamonga
- Sal Valdivia from Beaumont
- Amado Briones from Chino (his son, Chuck Briones, will pitch in his father's memory)
- Tito Cortez from Corona (his son, Richard Cortez, will pitch in his father's memory)
- Carlos Uribe from Corona
- Al Villanueva from Claremont (his son, Al Villanueva, will pitch in his father's memory)
- Victor Reyes from Palm Springs
- Ernie Benzor from Riverside (his son, Ernie Benzor, will pitch in his father's memory)

***Come out and support our compadres!
Come out and enjoy the game!***

Date/Time: Saturday, May 5, 11 a.m.

Location: Fiscalini Field in San Bernardino's Perris Hill Park, 1007 E. Highland Ave. (on Highland Ave. between Waterman and Del Rosa).

Sneak Preview



**Donated by
Henry Mendoza.**

San Bernardino-Colton Centrales catcher's mask from the 1930s used by Henry Mendoza's grandfather.

Would you like to see more of the LBHP collection?

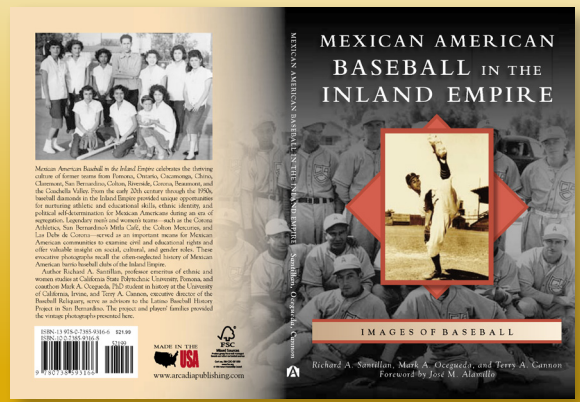
We'll have an exhibit up in May so that everyone who comes to the book signing at Pfau Library can enjoy the collection!

You are Invited!

Date/Time: May 30, 2012 (Wednesday), 5:30 p.m.

Location: California State University, San Bernardino, Pfau Library, Special Collections (4th floor, PL4005)

Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire by Richard A. Santillan, Mark A. Ocegueda, and Terry A. Cannon will be published in May. The Latino Baseball History Project Planning Committee agreed to hold the annual Reunion in August so that we can devote May to celebrating Latino baseball with a thank you event for our community – a book launch and signing! Please come to California State University, San Bernardino on May 30 (Wednesday). The festivities will begin at 5:30 p.m. in Pfau Library Special Collections (4th floor). We hope that the players, the students who worked on the oral histories, and the authors will come together to celebrate this landmark publication. We will have many photographs and artifacts from the LBHP collection on exhibit. We hope to see you there. (Tell the attendant at the parking kiosk that you are here for the event to get free parking.)



Preserving the Memories Neighborhoods **The Next Book in the Latino Baseball in Southern California Series**

Continued from Page 3

The Latino Baseball History Project is currently working on its third publication titled *Mexican American Baseball in Orange County*. Between June and December 2011,



Donated by Alvert Escoto

the project sponsored several community events where people brought their priceless baseball photos to be scanned. Communities that participated included Fullerton, Santa Ana, Orange, Westminster and Placentia. As a result,

nearly 400 Mexican American baseball photos were collected. In December 2012 a planning committee composed of distinguished community historians was established to work on the manuscript. The planning community met at the Santa Ana Public Library on Jan. 28, 2012, to select the first set of photos and to write captions for the photos. The second planning meeting was held at the Orange Public Library on March 24. The planning committee's goal is to have a draft of the manuscript completed by July 2012. The four authors for the Orange County book are Richard A. Santillan, Susan Luevano, Luis F. Fernandez, and Angelina F. Veyna. The projected publication date for this book is summer of 2013.



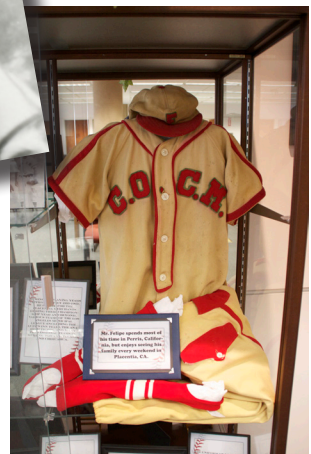
Donated by Maria Lavalle

interviews with many star players, their family members, and historians, in addition to historic game footage and excerpts from special player celebrations and reunions.

The festivities concluded with a book signing of Santillan and Balderrama's *Mexican American Baseball in Los Angeles*. In addition, Ralph Padilla, CEO of Carmelita Foods Inc. in Monterey Park, distributed "Carmelita Chorizeros" baseball caps and complimentary pens to many of the attendees. Carmelita still sponsors youth baseball teams in the East Los Angeles area; several of the youngsters were in attendance, proudly wearing their Chorizeros uniforms, making the event a true multi-generational as well as multi-cultural experience.



"The Neighborhoods of Baseball" was made possible, in part, by a grant to the Baseball Reliquary from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.



Pfau Library Special Collections is hosting an exhibit on one of the great baseball players of Southern California: Jose 'Lupino' Guadalupe Felipe

One of the most versatile players to come out of Placentia, Calif., was a high-leg-kicking, split-finger fastball and breaking-curveball pitcher named Jose "Lupino" Guadalupe Felipe. Standing at 6'4", he was literally one of the biggest baseball players of his time. Lupino was born Oct. 14, 1920, in Placentia and he started his baseball career early, in the eighth grade. He played outfield and pitcher. He began as a player; later he also helped manage the team.

Lupino travelled all over Southern California playing baseball. He was in great demand both as a pitcher and as an outfielder, and he was picked up by many different teams. In his time, he played for the Placentia Merchants, Lupe's Inn team and the Anaheim Tigers. He even played for professional teams in Mexico, playing for Tijuana, Tecate and Chihuahua. In Mexico he could play as a professional. In the states, during the years he played (1933-1965), he could not play professional baseball. Those years were before the expansion of Major League Baseball and before the breaking of the color line in the United States. The Majors in the states lost out - he was a phenomenal player and the audiences in the minor league parks were the ones who were fortunate enough to see his skills.

The C.O.C.M. uniform (the Camareros and Camareras) on display is from one of the many teams that Jose G. Felipe was on. He now spends his time in Perris, Calif. and reminisces about the days when he was pitching strikes from the mound. He loves to visit his family in Placentia every weekend.

THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF BASEBALL EXHIBITION: COMING IN SPRING 2013!

by Tomas J. Benitez, Co-curator, The Neighborhoods of Baseball, 2013

The late, great Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill once declared, "All politics is local." He could have been talking about baseball. It seems that everyone knows someone who played, whether on high school or college teams, factory teams, in the American Legion, the park leagues; or even in the U.S. Army. People who know nothing else about baseball know that they had an uncle who played here, a cousin who played there; that's the way it is with baseball.

The impact radiates outward, first with personal narratives and memories, then family stories, myths and legends, and finally, a community's rich legacy. True baseball fans know where the treasure is buried - the well-known unknown, and the pearl in the oyster. We know our own territories and are the most adamant memory bearer. That kid that played for so and so, greatest shortstop you never knew about, or that fellow who could hit it out of the park and onto the roadway; the team from that year.

We treasure our hometown heroes, local wunderkinder and the good old days; "He may have played for the Chicago White Sox, but I saw him when he was still here in Colton." It is part of the character of the game, to remember the past and compare it to the present. In remembering our baseball history, in the small towns of a statewide expanse, and, away from the glare of the "show," we find pride and loyalty for our beloved neighborhoods.

The Latino Baseball History Project is marching on and picking up steam. It may have started in East Los Angeles, but dozens of home towns and hundreds of former players throughout Southern California have come forward with their stories. The second book from the project will soon be released, a further exploration of the impact of the game in the Mexican-American communities of the Inland Empire, and already, new endeavors in Orange County and San Diego are underway, piling onto the growing tower of the legacy and history of our communities, as seen through the lens of baseball. Also, women's voices are adding to the cacophony of joyful storytelling and remembrance.

A comprehensive exhibition of artifacts and photographs will narrate the progress of the project next spring, "The Neighborhoods of Baseball." The show will provide current documentation of the ever-expanding honor roll of players, teams and communities in a diverse field of Mexican-American barrios and neighborhoods throughout the Southland.

But you see, that is only part of the story. The exhibition will be presented at the Old Boathouse Gallery at Plaza de

la Raza in Lincoln Heights, East Los Angeles, a more than 100-year-old historic building within the campus of the venerable arts and cultural center, now in its 42nd year. Plaza is one of the oldest such destinations in the United States, born out of the wild and wooly Chicano Movement of the 1960s and '70s, but a local treasure and as good a starting point as there can be. Long before Plaza was built, they played baseball in the very same location, at the turn of the century, the previous century. Plaza de la Raza stands upon hallowed ground - an old neighborhood ball field!

The "Neighborhoods of Baseball" will travel throughout Southern California following a long run at Plaza de la Raza, touring all the communities that are represented in the show. But there is more. The exhibit is being hosted at a nationally known arts center, a home and sanctuary to thousands of artists over the years, and the artists have responded.

The exhibit will feature a full array of art created by local artists that reflect their love and passion for the game. Oh, you can talk about that rock on the road to the museum, but mention baseball and most of the time the artists are just as vocal about what they know, who they saw, when they played, and, well --- they're baseball fans too. The show will also host a night of films on baseball, a comedy night about baseball, and a night of music and song, celebrating, yes, baseball. The artists have responded indeed. Details will be forthcoming, and more surprises are sure to come, but for now, know that in "The Neighborhoods of Baseball," artists and ballplayers have but one voice, and it says to all,

Play Ball!

Other Book Signing Dates for *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire:*

Schedule:

June 23 - Claremont

June 24 - Alhambra at the house of
Richard and Teresa Santillan

July 14 - Modesto

July 21 - El Monte

July 22 - East Los Angeles

July 29 - Cucamonga/Chino

August 4 - Carpenteria (tentative)

*Both Mexican American baseball books will be
sold on the signings.*

For more information contact
Richard Santillan at rsantillan@earthlink.net

KEEP SWINGING!

by Jill Vassilakos-Long



The third annual Latino Baseball History Project reunion took place on July 6, 2011. Alex Montoya, born in Medellin, Columbia, now manager of Latino Affairs for the San Diego Padres, gave the keynote address.

job and the next, until he was hired into the front office. He likened that first rejection to striking out – you go up to bat again and again; you keep swinging no matter how many times it takes. In his own life he hit the ball right out of the park! His job now is the one he dreamed of, serving his community and the sport that he loves!

He spoke about the parallels between his experience – the struggles he faced and the determination he had to have to overcome them – and the experience of Latinos who wanted to play baseball. He said,

“I was amazed that teams have been formed in barrios, and in times of war, and as a means of keeping communities together. But I was not surprised at our level of passion, and perseverance, and pride. It’s in our blood. It’s in our DNA.”

Thalidomide was prescribed to calm Alex Montoya’s mother’s morning sickness. The drug caused Alex to be born without arms or a right leg. The journey he took from that beginning to his current job in baseball took drive, determination, and a love for the game. At four years old he immigrated to the United States for medical care, and was fitted with prosthetic arms and a prosthetic leg.

Mr. Montoya stressed the importance of keeping the history of Latino baseball alive. He spoke of this history as a legacy that must be passed on. He urged us all to:

“... use baseball as your inspiration, your catalyst, your fire. Embrace adversity. Embrace struggle. Dream large. Overcome. And always, always –

Mr. Montoya inspired the audience with his description of being a young child in a culture that was unfamiliar to him, and falling in love with baseball. He was determined to find a job in the sport he loved. He graduated from college and took a job in public relations, but he moonlighted as an usher for the San Diego Padres. When a full time job opened up with the Padres he applied, and did not get the job. That did not stop him, he applied for the next



Keep Swinging!

LATINO BASEBALL HISTORY PROJECT REUNION: PANEL DISCUSSION: HOW MEXICAN AMERICAN BASEBALL IMPACTED PLAYERS, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY.

(July 6, 2011, California State University, San Bernardino)

Richard Santillan, author of several books on Chicano history, community, and politics, and co-author (with Francisco Balderrama) of *Mexican American Baseball in Los Angeles*, moderated a panel discussion with players who lived the history of Latino baseball in Southern California. The players were:

- Al Vasquez (Chino/Cucamonga)
- Al Padilla (East Los Angeles)
- Danny Carrasco (Inland Empire)
- Jose Felipe (Placentia)
- Marcelino Saucedo (Catalina Island)
- Jim Segovia (Placentia)

In response to questions about baseball, community, and memorable moments, players spoke about both talent and a love for the game that had been passed down through generations: fathers and established players supported them in their love for the game, and they in turn supported their children, grandchildren and students. They spoke about the times when everyone came out and played on Sundays, how Sunday was the best time of the week, a time to relax. Memories included everyone in the community coming out to the games, parents watching from the stands, good food and music, how baseball brought the family together, playing ... winning! People talked about the sheer talent in the community, how there was too much talent there for players to sit idle. Mr. Segovia summed it up when he said:

“Aren’t we blessed? Look where we are now ... Thank you, Lord.”

THIS YEAR, INSTEAD OF HOSTING ONE REUNION, WE WILL COME TOGETHER FOR MANY EVENTS:

The goal of the Latino Baseball History Project to preserve and disseminate information about the history of Latino baseball is in full swing! This May we have a variety of events in several locations:

March 19-June 23 exhibit at the library of Cal Poly Pomona: *Mexican American Women and Softball 1930-1959: A League of Their Own and the Struggle for Gender Equality*. All day parking \$5.

May 5, 11 a.m. at Fiscalini Field in San Bernardino: The ball players of today honor the history of Latino baseball through throwing out the ceremonial first pitch.

May 29, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at Cal Poly Pomona library: luncheon honoring the history of Latino women softball players. All day parking \$5.

May 29, 1:15-2:45 p.m. at Cal Poly Pomona library: panel discussion of Latino women who played softball in the Women's Softball Leagues of 1930-1959. All day parking \$5.

May 29, 3:15 p.m. at Scoiinos Field (Cal Poly Pomona): First Pitch Ceremony including women from the Women's Softball Leagues.

May 30, 5:30 p.m. at Cal State San Bernardino library: book launch/signing for *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire*.

May 31, 1 p.m. at Cal Poly Pomona library: panel discussion of current research on Mexican American women, softball, and issues of gender. All day parking \$5.

August 1, 5 p.m. at Cal State San Bernardino: Latino Baseball History Project Reunion! (We'll send out more information in July.)

John M. Pfau Library
Cal State San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407

Latino Baseball History Project Membership

Player- \$50

Coach- \$100

Manager-\$250

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Iwona Contreras at 909-537-3447, e-mail icontr@csusb.edu or visit our website.

