

HARRISBURG'S SARAH JONES • FOOTBALL'S OFF-SEASON • AT THE MOVIES

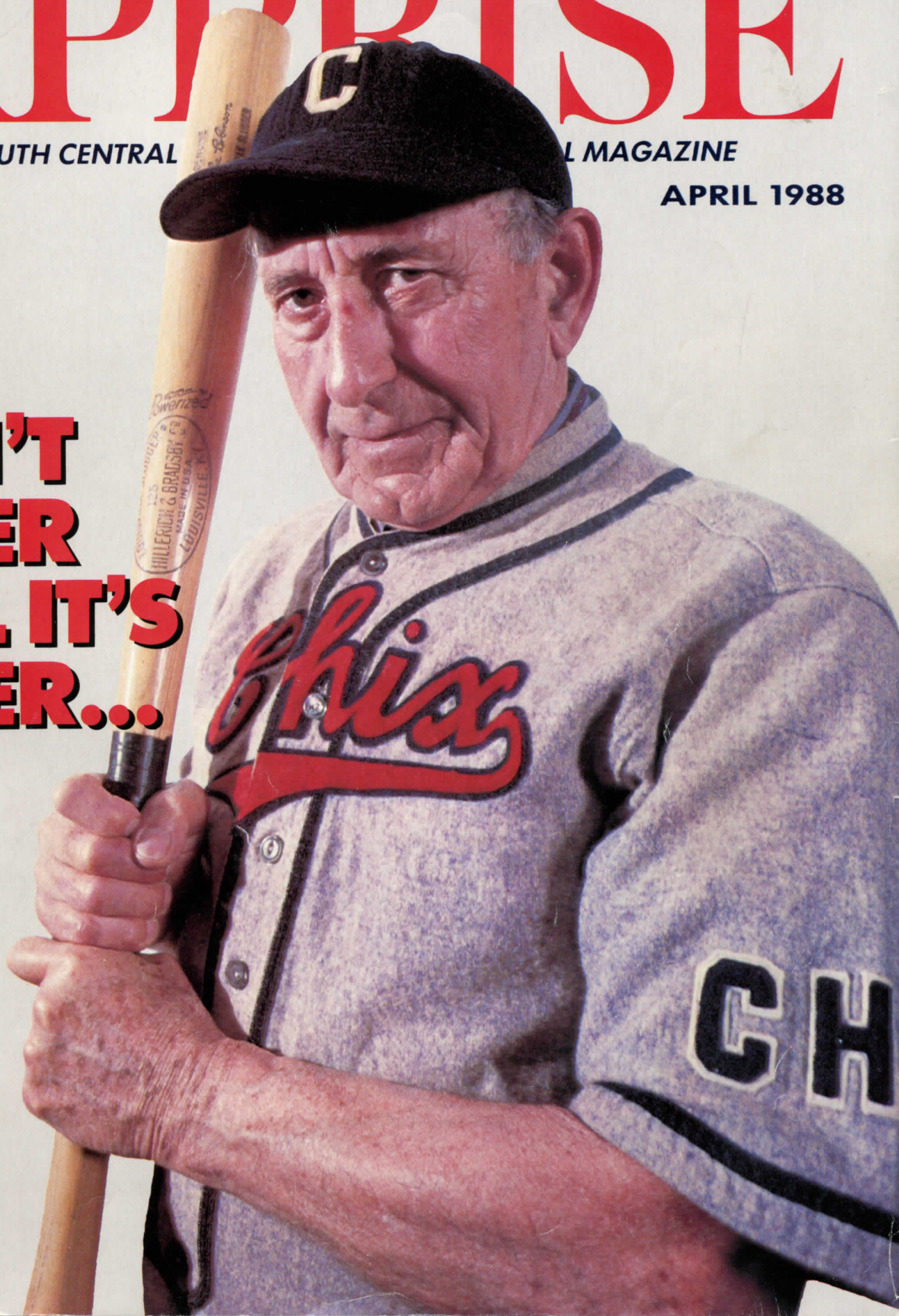
APPRISE

SOUTH CENTRAL

L MAGAZINE

APRIL 1988

**IT
AIN'T
OVER
TILL IT'S
OVER...**

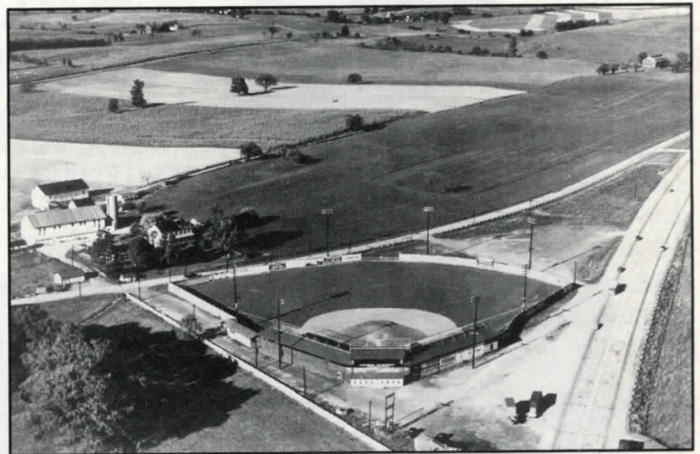


Photos by Jeffrey King. Archival photos supplied by Neil Grimes and Ray Deck.



DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

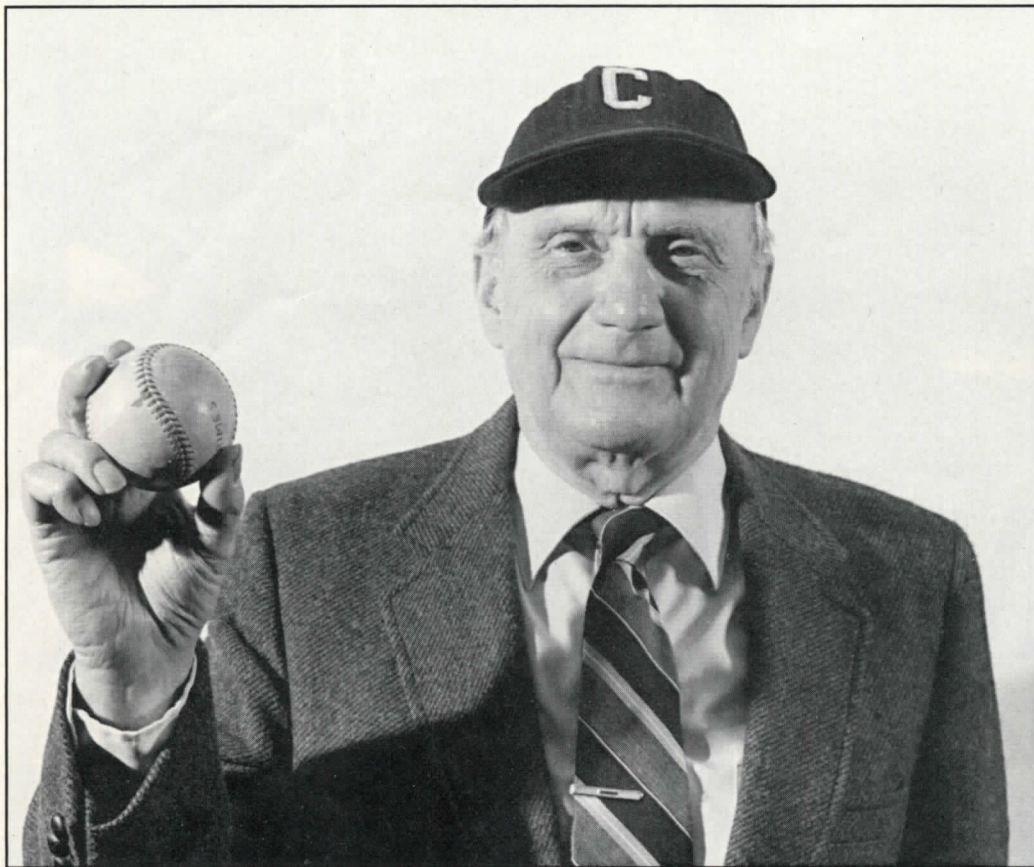
The baseball memoirs of the College Hill Chix



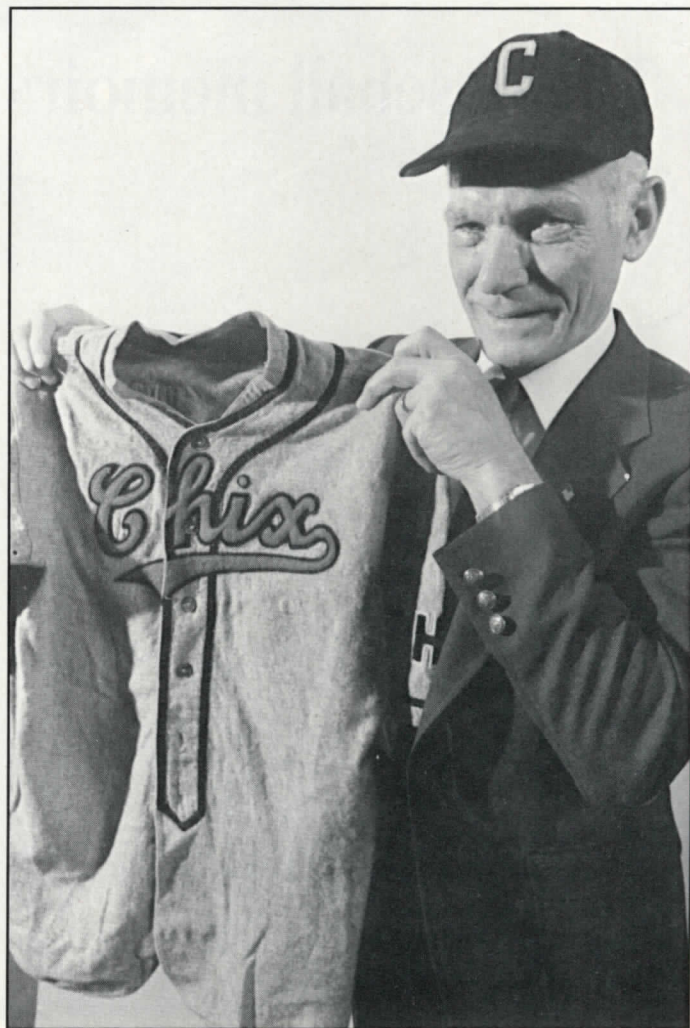
Coble Grimes Stadium now . . . and then.

Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball, the rules and realities of the game—and do it by watching first some high school or small-town teams.

—Jacques Barzun, God's Country and Mine, 1954



Jimmy Miller
Carlos Lucioiti Buck Fields



Hello, baseball fans, and welcome to Fredericksburg, Pennsylvania, for a banner night of baseball tales with the College Hill Chix. Your lineup for this evening's session is as follows.

In right field, at age 65, Buck Fields. A leadoff hitter with good speed, Buck played a big part in the Chix's 1948 state championship season, which culminated with a fourth-place finish at the national tournament in Wichita, Kansas.

Behind the plate, at age 71, Ray Deck. Ray played through the 1947 season, after which he says he just decided to quit—cold turkey. So cold, in fact, that he just took his spikes and his glove out to the fireplace and burned them. No ill feelings, it was just time.

At first base, 70-year-old Carlos "Lucy" Luciotti. A jovial character with an infectious laugh that rivals Santa's on his best day, he helped organize the Chix. Carlos quit playing in 1947 to become the team's scorekeeper. He loves to tell a good story.

Starting at second base, age 73, Jimmy Miller. An infielder who left home to play minor league ball at age 17, Jimmy's career included stops in Elmira, New York; Asheville, North Carolina; Greensboro, North Carolina; and Columbus, Georgia. Miller signed with the Chix in 1945 after he returned from the war in Europe.

And pitching tonight, at the age of 61, Luther "Lut" Soliday, who joined the Chix in 1947. Luther, a good pitcher, has one rather dubious claim to fame: giving up what's jokingly referred to as the "longest home run ever hit." It was hit by "Suitcase" Simpson of the Philadelphia Stars, a team from the Negro National League. In Luther's defense, he's not alone. Simpson later

Brian L. Clark is associate editor of APPRISE.

played for Wilkes-Barre in the Class A Eastern League. It's said that three of his home runs were the longest balls ever hit in three of that league's stadiums.

This evening's newspaper commentary is brought to you courtesy of the late Tiny Parry, former sports editor for the Lebanon Daily News.

The Chix history goes back to May of 1945. Germany had just surrendered, and it seemed only a matter of time before the war with Japan would be over. Meanwhile, troops were coming back to the area, looking for jobs and something to do. What they found were factories, farms, and a man interested in starting a semi-pro baseball team.

On May 16th of that year, a small article appeared in the *Lebanon Daily News* which invited local and county ballplayers to an open practice at Fredericksburg High School.

★ ★ ★ ★

BALL PLAYERS TO DRILL AT FREDERICKSBURG

... If the turnout warrants continued interest by the willing sponsor of such a team, efforts will be made immediately to draw up a season schedule for twilight and weekend games in this vicinity this season and baseball fans may be offered some attractive and interesting exhibitions of their favorite sport.

★ ★ ★ ★

The willing sponsors were Charlie and Coble Crimes, and the team was the College Hill Chix.

CARLOS: Charlie asked me one time, he said, "Carlos," he said, "I would like to organize a team." I said, "Charlie, sounds good." He asked if I would help. I told him, I said, "Charlie," I said, "you know, there's a lot of good ballplayers

in this town. And as they're coming back from the service," I said, "it wouldn't take them very long to get back into shape."

So the dream became a team. Charlie managed and ran it, and Coble [Charlie's brother] provided financial support. The first season was spent playing exhibition games against established semi-pro teams from other towns.

★ ★ ★ ★

June 11, 1945

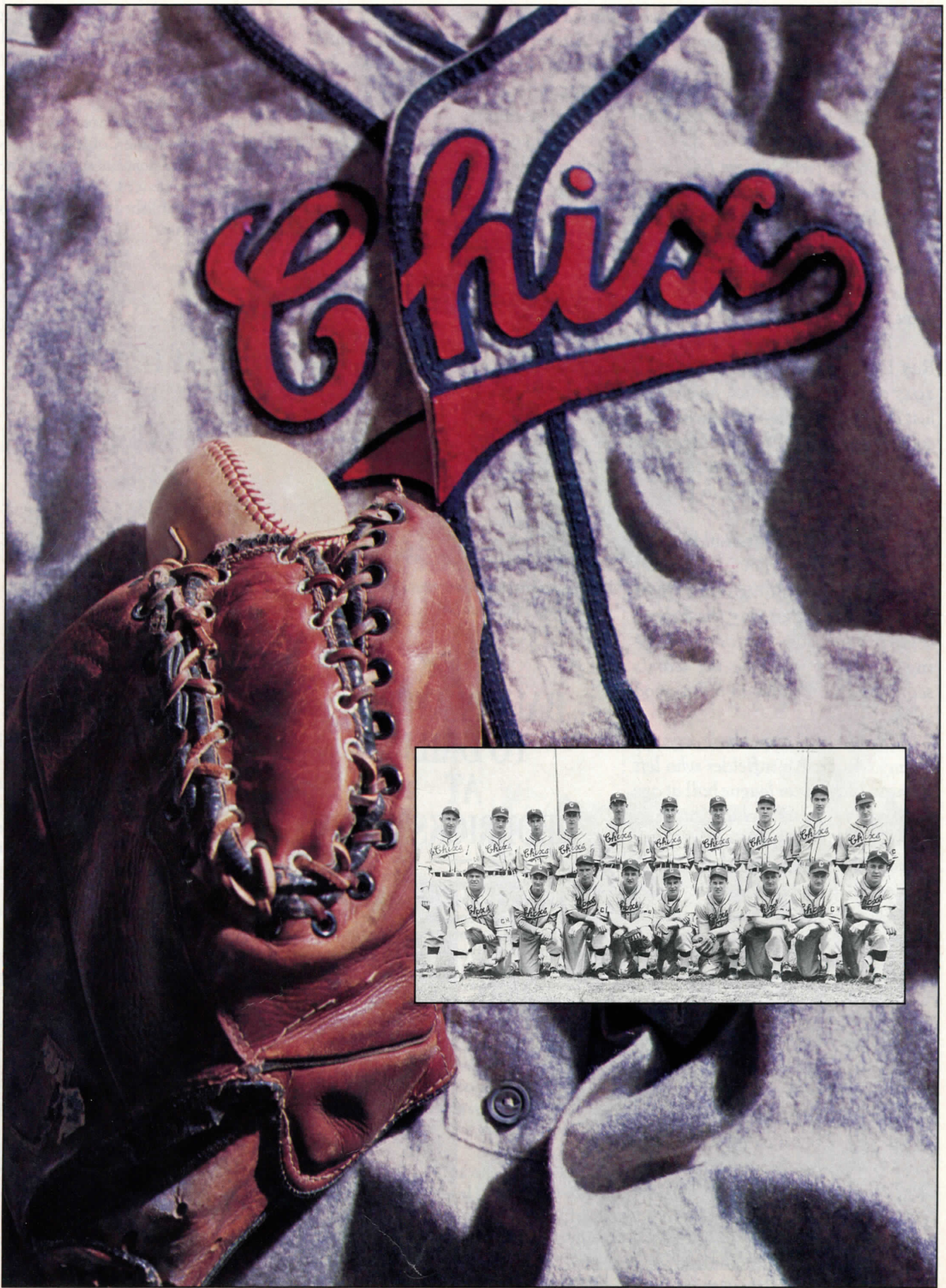
CHIX OPEN SEASON WITH 11-4 WIN OVER CRESSONA

Semi-pro baseball was introduced to local fans Saturday afternoon when about 500 of them turned out to witness the College Hill Chix come from behind to trounce a strong Cressona Ordinance nine, 11-4 on the Lebanon High stadium field

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That summer, the Chix continued on, winning more often than not. As the season drew to a close and the Chix began to gather confidence, they scheduled baseball "events" against the barnstormers—professional teams that traveled the country, looking for exhibition games. The Chix beat the two traveling teams they played in their first season; victories that were like icing on the cake for the semi-pro team from Fredericksburg, as they ended a very successful inaugural campaign.

The opening of the '46 season found the Chix competing in the Bi-County League with teams from Lebanon and Schuylkill counties. But the Chix's following had outgrown the facilities offered by the Lebanon High School Stadium, and people began to feel they needed a home of their own. So through the efforts of Tiny Parry, with the financial backing of Coble Grimes and the help of the Lebanon School Board, a stadium was built, and on June 16, 1946, the Chix moved in. The story went like this:



★ ★ ★ ★

CORNWALL TRIPS CHIX, 2-0 AS 3,000 THROUGH STADIUM

Brilliant Twelve Inning
Game Features Opening Of
New Coble Grimes Stadium
At Fredericksburg
On Sunday—
Miners Tie For Loop Lead
By Virtue Of Victory

Cornwall's Miners jumped into a tie with St. Clair for leadership of the hotly contested Bi-County League by defeating the strong College Hill Chix 2-0 in a brilliantly played twelve inning battle Sunday, as 3,000 rabid fans jam-packed the new Coble Grimes Stadium at Fredericksburg as the Chix dedicated their new home The partially completed stadium was officially dedicated to the national pastime prior to the opening of the game as both teams marched to the flagpole to the music of Cook's German Band who also entertained during the innings of the contest

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Except for the final score, it was a proud day in Fredericksburg when Coble and Charlie Grimes opened their brand new stadium—a home field with a real advantage.

RAY: It was quite a thrill.

CARLOS: You had the feeling of as though you were somebody of importance. Believe me, when you go from a cow pasture to a brand new home ...

RAY: But it was kind of a shame that we lost ... a good ballfield.

Today, the once-proud home of the Chix now sits quietly along Route 22 in

The Chix in '47
Ray Deck—standing, far left; Buck Fields—standing, second from left; Carlos Luciotti—standing, third from left; Luther Soliday—standing, third from right; Jimmy Miller—kneeling, second from right.

Fredericksburg, more like a shell than an actual stadium. It's inoffensive-looking—on the outside. Inside, it's a graveyard—for automobiles, and old baseball memories.

On the grounds, between deteriorating cars, the stadium's current inhabitants scamper through the tall grass. Packing the grandstand, rows of old automobile rims peer out through the rusty backstop onto what was the playing field.

The southwest corner of the stadium was the home plate area; the place where a moody sort, name of "Snowball" Klepper, pitched to hitters the same way he negotiated with owners—hard and fast. It's said that "Snowball" pitched whenever he wanted, for whoever paid the most that particular day.

It's the place where the brother of Carl Furillo (of the Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers) was "hired" by the Chix to pitch against Tremont, and had to leave early in the game after he took a pitched ball in the ribs while batting. Carl, also known as the "Reading Rifle," spent 15 seasons with the Dodgers. That day, his brother lasted about 15 pitches with the Chix.

It's the place where the local favorites from the Bi-County League were almost as popular as the big leaguers. They were "ballplayers." No plink of aluminum bats, no big contracts, artificial turf or rubber spikes here—just locals playing real, down-in-the-dirt baseball.

Lebanon Daily News editorial by Tiny Parry, September, 1947, during the playoff series between College Hill and Cornwall:

★ ★ ★ ★

The nearly 1800 fans who witnessed that overtime diamond tussle between the College Hill Chix and the Cornwall Miners this past Sunday out on Cornwall's Blue Bird Field saw baseball drama enacted right before their eyes repeatedly during that gripping epic As a matter of fact, it is doubtful if any fans anywhere, and that goes for those who take in the World Series classics, have seen any more gripping tussles than most of the games in the current College Hill-Cornwall playoff series

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"Do anything you can get away with." It's an old baseball axiom that a lot of players still follow. Some will do just about anything to gain that little edge.

Imagine everyone's surprise in 1974, when New York Yankee third baseman Graig Nettles had the butt end of his bat break off to reveal a barrel loaded with Super Balls. Just last year, Billy Hatcher of the Houston Astros was suspended when a bat he was using broke (it wasn't his, it was teammate Dave Smith's), and was found to be stuffed with cork. These little tricks, it is believed, make the bat more lively.

Cheating among hitters has encouraged cheating among pitchers—or vice versa. After all, pitchers have to make a living too, and they can't do it if hitters have an unfair advantage. So they "scuff" the ball. Hitters say "scuffing" makes the ball do funny things.

Every year, Mike Scott of the Astros is accused of "scuffing" the ball. And last season, pitchers Joe Neikro of the Minnesota Twins and Kevin Gross of the Philadelphia Phillies were caught red-handed with abrasive substances that "could have been used" to alter the smooth surface of the ball. Some say the effects are psychological.

RAY: We often talk about the big fuss in big league ball today about scuffing the baseball. What the hell are they talking about? ... We didn't know anything *but* playing ball with a scuffed ball.

JIM: We played the whole game with a scuffed ball.

CARLOS: Years ago we had to play with one ball during the Depression. And boy, all you did was taped it. Now if you wanna talk about scuffed. We taped it, and when the tape wore off, you got more tape and taped the same ball. It tickles me when I hear them say scuffing the ball. I don't know what they're talking about.

RAY: They say you can make the ball do something if it's scuffed. We had fellows around here that threw pretty damn hard with a scuffed ball and it didn't do anything.

CARLOS: We had people that threw real hard, too.

JIM: I saw some pretty good pitchers in my time.

In "their time," the Chix played a lot of baseball. In fact, days off from league games were spent competing against some of the best barnstormers in the country. And when lights were installed at the stadium in August of 1946, it meant the Chix would be able to overcome weekend scheduling conflicts, by playing these teams on weeknights.

CARLOS: The House of Davids, they used to have a terrific team. Understand. It was all young fellows who used to have beards, but clean, cut short, understand, nice and well shaved and neat looking. They always had terrific teams. Then we would play night ball with these guys.

★ ★ ★ ★
(1947)
**CHIX TURN BACK
HOUSE OF DAVID
BY 6-1 SCORE**

Overflow Crowd Witnesses
Entertainment
At Grimes Stadium

Scoring five runs in the first inning, more than enough, the College Hill Chix turned back the bewhiskered House of David tossers by a 6-1 score at the Coble Grimes Stadium in Fredericksburg last night in an arclight of entertainment. And an entertainment it was, too, as the bearded players first regaled the crowd with a rollicking exhibition of shadow-ball prior to the game to start off an evening of merriment and an interesting exhibition of the national pastime

★ ★ ★ ★
CARLOS: They would "shadow ball" out there in the infield, you know. In other words, like they had infield practice, only they'd do it without a ball. Believe me, they used to put on a good act. You don't see that no more, and

they used to put on a good show. The guy'd stand up there with a bat ... it was something different.

JIM: They might have had three or four different House of David teams. The one I played against out in Little Washington [Pennsylvania], they had Babe Didrikson as the feature pitcher. She always pitched the first two innings. And that was a first for me, too I had one hit. I only batted one time against her I tell you what, one fella hit a triple off her and she cussed him out for ninety feet, at least. Boy, she really left him have it The manager said take it easy, but fellas can't do that. That was in 1934

The season also featured games against the Birmingham Barons, the New York Black Yankees, the Philadelphia Stars, the New York Cubans, and the Baltimore Elite Giants—the finest teams from the Negro Leagues.

Players on these teams weren't allowed to play organized professional baseball with whites until April 18, 1946, the day Jackie Robinson made his debut with the Montreal Royals of the International League. It was the first time in 48 years that a black man played for a recognized minor league team. Robinson had four hits—one a home run—and two stolen bases.

The next year, on opening day, Jackie Robinson made his debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers. The color barrier had been broken; too late, unfortunately, for most of the players from these leagues.

RAY: There were maybe five or six on each one of those teams that could have been in big-time ball.

JIM: The major leagues ...

LUTHER: They would've been professionals. They were barred at that time.

A newspaper article from "that time" reflects the prevailing attitude.

★ ★ ★ ★
**ELITE GIANTS
SWAMP CHIX
BY 13-0
COUNT**

Romby Southpaws Chix
Into Submission With 4 Hits

FANS THIRTEEN

Baltimore Negroes Flash
Power Under Lights

Lightning, Black Lightning that is, struck the College Hill Chix stadium last night when the Baltimore Elite Giants of the Negro National League invaded the Fredericksburg baseball outdoor amphitheater. When the storm clouds finally cleared and the lights were extinguished, the College Hill Chix were crushed under a 13-0 deluge stirred up by the visiting bigtime Negroes. It was the second venture of the season against a National Negro League team for the Chix, but they were completely subdued by this Baltimore version of how bigtime Negro baseball is played.

★ ★ ★ ★
Bringing in "name" teams from around the country, combined with the intense rivalries the Chix had with teams in the Bi-County League, meant they received a great deal of fan support, first through collections at the games and later through ticket sales. That support proved financially beneficial to Charlie and Coble Grimes, who translated their fans' appreciation into something tangible for their players.

CARLOS: We started as amateurs, and as we kept playing, people kept comin' and comin' and comin'. Finally, Charlie Grimes said, "Hey, we're payin' you guys." ... When you got five dollars a game, you know, you drove a lotta miles. Today, these guys would light a cigarette with a five dollar bill.

RAY: We got five dollars the first year, the second year we got ten bucks.

JIM: Three games a week, that was thirty bucks.

RAY: Yeah. Some weeks you got five games.

CARLOS: Some guys were working 40 hours a week and didn't make thirty bucks—at that time. Hey, this is no baloney. I would make more money playing ball We used to play with the Chix Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. And then we would play in the Lebanon County Twilight League on Tuesday and Thursday. That's what I say. All we would do is work and play, that's all.

RAY: And then your wife would raise hell because you were away all the time.

LUTHER: I thought Carlos was gonna get a divorce there for a while. He was [also] coaching the high-school team.

CARLOS: I was coaching the high-school team, too. My wife used to bring my sandwiches there.

JIM: My wife didn't care so much as long as she got to the game at eight o'clock.

CARLOS: And after a ballgame, you didn't go home. You stayed there, right? Hey, they all gathered there. Then the wife, you know, I remember telling my wife ... [She'd ask] "How come you're so late when you get home?" You know. And I didn't know what to say, you know. "We played a doubleheader ... under the lights."

BUCK: Enos and I, we didn't drink in those days. We'd be sittin' down there in that Eagle Hotel ... We'd be sittin' down there on that damn front porch there waiting for these guys to come back from runnin' around Fredericksburg

The players had a good time, and others wanted to be a part of it. It didn't matter if you could play or not, you could go to the games and root for the team. Or *maybe*, you could be a coach.

BUCK: I played for Davey Light at Sand Hill. Davey was a farmer. You won a game, you could go over to his farm and drink all the chocolate milk you could drink. Davey didn't know anything about baseball.

CARLOS: But he wanted to be a coach, understand. And he put on the suit and he'd go to first base to coach and he didn't know what was goin' on. All he knew is when you got a hit you run. Go! Go!

BUCK: He'd pick up half the team in his milk truck. Take 'em to the game, take 'em out to the farm, drink chocolate milk, take 'em home.

CARLOS: But, it was always fun. There was a lot of love among all of us.

That love, on more than one occasion, took the unbridled form of practical jokes. Not even those members of the team who took their baseball very seriously were above being had—everyone was fair game. Like the time an intense outfielder for the Chix named Boop Leahy became a victim.

CARLOS: When he played, he was all baseball, you know.

RAY: We buried his bat one time ... dug a trench. And we put the bat in it and covered it up. And it was his turn to come up—and he looked for his bat and couldn't find it. Nobody had the guts to tell him we buried his bat. Oh, was he furious. We uncovered it when he wasn't around. Nobody knew [or admitted to knowing] where it came from.

CARLOS: We had pranksters then ... But to us, it was just a joke, you know. And in the end, you know, we'd all laugh about it.

Ray Deck was a catcher for the College Hill Chix. He always wanted to be a catcher—from the time he was a little kid. He worked picking boxes of strawberries for a penny a box so he could order a catcher's mitt from the Sears Roebuck catalog. And wouldn't you know it, "when the damn thing came, would you believe it, it was a lefthander's mitt."

It could have been a sign that Ray was not destined to be a catcher, but he persevered. And, like others who've donned the "tools of ignorance"—the mask, chest protector, shin guards, and the mitt—he's lived to tell about it ... in "painful" detail.

RAY: I tell you the ones that hurt you more than anything were the foul balls that would spin; that would hit the ground and come up between your legs. Those are the ones ...

CARLOS: There were no cups ...

RAY: Yeah.

CARLOS: Oh mercy.

And that's not all

RAY: You know, in all the years I caught, I was lucky. Only one time I was hurt. I split the finger and knocked it out of joint at the same time [with a foul ball]. It scared the hell out of me, you know, I knew that I was hit. Then I looked at it, I thought, "What the hell?" This thing was bent way back, you know. And it was in high school—Frank Brenner was the coach. And he came out and he looked at it—he got a hold of it, you know, snapped it into place. And we didn't have a first aid kit. Somebody in the crowd gave him a Band-Aid. He put that Band-Aid on and said, "OK, now you can play."

CARLOS: What he said is a lot of truth. In those days, you got hurt. Today, you get hurt, they don't touch you until after they get an x-ray. Everybody that was there was a doctor, when we played, you know. Pull on this, or you'd be laying down, he'd pick you up and put you on your feet, "Come on, let's go and play." You had to fall over again before you stayed down.

When the Chix organized in 1945, it was Charlie Grimes who managed the team. Coble provided the financial support—the money coming from his poultry business. Poultry farms are pretty common in the area surrounding Fredericksburg, hence the name "Chix." In fact, a baseball man for the Philadelphia Phillies, pitching coach Claude Osteen, used to own a chicken farm in the Annville area. And just up the road from the old Chix Stadium, there's Charlie Grimes's old poultry business, whose success eventually forced him to part company with the team. It's now Pennfield Farms.

But as much as Charlie Grimes loved to be in uniform, he loved to win

even more. That's when he realized that if the Chix were going to compete against the caliber of teams they were playing, they needed a baseball man to run the team. They found one.

CARLOS: Charlie Grimes. He was a chicken man. We coached ourselves. But Charlie was a wonderful guy and he knew a little bit about baseball, understand.

RAY: Until Jimmy Bucher.

CARLOS: Until Jimmy Bucher came [in 1946]. He was a professional man. When Jim came, then we were all going one at a time. He was bringing different people in.

James Quintner Bucher, from Manassas, Virginia, was a professional man. As a second baseman, third baseman, and outfielder, he spent seven years in the major leagues—1934-1937 with the Brooklyn Dodgers; 1938 with the St. Louis Cardinals; and 1944-1945 with the Boston Red Sox. He had his own agenda and knew who he wanted on the field to accomplish it. So the original Chix began to slowly disband in favor of a new crop of youngsters.

But baseball was still just a game, and even a "professional man" like Bucher was not above being the target of a practical joke. Like the time "the guys" developed a new steal sign before one of their games, told Al Krall—the unsuspecting victim—and "forgot" to tell their manager.

JIM: Krally was sort of ... he was gullible. You know, you always have one of those on a ball team The rumor around the dugout, you know, that the new signal was that when the light goes on, you get to first, that's the steal, you know. Old Krally, he gets on first ... the old light went on ... [Krally] took off and Jim Bucher said, "What the hell were you stealin' for?" He said, "Well, the light went on."

CARLOS: He was the new coach, and he didn't know anything about the "new" steal sign.

JIM: Yeah. Krally got thrown out that time That was a lotta fun.

And there are other stories about Al Krall.

CARLOS: Playing centerfield, we had a signal. When you see we're getting close to the fence, yell, you know, see, so we don't ... run into the stone wall. So, Boop was going back, back—and when he hit the fence, Al yelled, "Whoa!" He hit the fence—when he yelled whoa, he hit the fence.

JIM: Now they have warning tracks.

LUTHER: Ray Rist used to really work him over

CARLOS: How about the time he put his sliding pads on the wrong way? ... He couldn't run.

And Carlos now is laughing so hard he can hardly talk.

CARLOS: He said, "I don't understand why I can't run." He had his sliding pads on backwards. Remember that, I forgot that ... "I can't run! I can't run!"

LUTHER/BUCK: Krally was the one we picked on the most.

CARLOS: Well, he did the darndest things. You know, we'd come out here and we would dress at the clubhouse Al would come here with his uniform on, but he had his good garments over. This is true. And he wanted to hurry up and go on the field. He'd tell ya, boy. He was undressing himself as we were driving ... taking his shirt off and everything like that. That's how he would operate.

There were other characters, too. Some, like today's free agents, dangled their talents in front of team owners, wearing the uniform of the highest bidder. They could even be called the forerunners of free agency. And even though they didn't get millions of dollars for their talents, they did alright—financially speaking.

One such player was named "Snowball" Klepper, a pitcher who, it was said, "didn't have to back down from anyone."

CARLOS: I'll tell ya about Snowball, he pitched ... usually he pitched when he wanted to pitch. Now another time,

Snowball, he had gotten mad at the Chix and he quit. The Chix now were playing Cornwall, and Cornwall had a good team. So "Tippy" Karinch was the owner of the Cornwall team, and he financed it pretty good, and he was paying for players too. So he went to Snowball Klepper, and he said to Snowball, "Snowball, we're playing the Chix." He said, "I want you to pitch for us." Snowball said, "How much?" Tippy says, "I'll give you a hundred twenty-five bucks." This is true. This is true. A hundred twenty-five bucks. Snowball says, "I'll be there." Snowball came and ya know what, I believe he beat us one—nothing. We only had one hit.

Carlos's memory does not fail.

★ ★ ★ ★

September 8, 1947

SNOWBALL KLEPPER BLANKS CHIX 1-0, WITH ONE HIT IN OPENING SERIES UNDER LIGHTS IN MOUND BATTLE

Snowball Klepper, the West Lebanon mound ace, fresh from his triumphs with the title-winning Lebanon CIO Steeles in Chicago, gave the Miners the edge in winning the arclight opener on Saturday night at the Grimes Stadium.

The local righthander came up with a one-hit masterpiece as the Miners blanked the Chix 1-0

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CARLOS: One-nothing ... he could pitch So we played another game the following week or something like that. And believe me, the people came from all over So, Tippy went to Snowball Klepper. He said, "Snowball, we play the Chix," a certain date. "I want you to pitch. The salary'll be the same." Snowball says, "No it won't." He says, "Whad'ya mean it won't?" He says,

"Two-fifty." That's when Tippy said, "The heck." This is no baloney. This is true. I'm tellin' ya, he was a money pitcher.

When the "Snowball" was in his pitching stable, an owner could afford to be a little more confident—the odds were now in his team's favor. The "money pitcher" had accepted money from the right people, and the other team might as well not even show up. Why, an owner might even feel confident enough to make a little wager ... just a little wager.

JIM: Tippy and the fellows at Cornwall would bet the guys over here at Fredricksburg That's how they made up the salaries and stuff like that. They weren't the ballplayers, they were the owners, the spectators I'll betcha the night we lost that game, I bet you the fellas from Cornwall, I betcha they won 10-hundred, 15-hundred [dollars]

CARLOS: They bet like anything

Even though these guys played for the "love of the game," teams like the College Hill Chix and the Cornwall Miners were still "playing ball," and that was not to be taken lightly. Lest you think the fans felt any differently, think again.

★ ★ ★ ★

September 16, 1946

... Sunday's Donneybrook that threatened to develop into a Pier Five brawl at one stage of the proceedings saw both teams hit hard and often as the sluggers had their day in contrast to Saturday's pitching domination.

Slugging was the keynote of the occasion and it wasn't all done with bats, either. An overzealous Cornwall fan objected to an official decision and gave vent to his disapproval by dashing on the field to take a couple of swipes at the umpire involved

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But such incidents were the exception rather than the rule. Most times, the teams put on such a good show they saw nothing but fan appreciation. Sometimes that appreciation meant added incentives.

CARLOS: But, some of the fans, I'll tell ya what they did do. If you did something great—that's the type of people they were—if they'd see you on the side or something, they'd hand you a five dollar bill every once in a while. I saw a couple of guys get it.

RAY: That happened to me

CARLOS: That happen to you, Jim?

JIM: I got a few five dollar bills up in Palmyra.

CARLOS: I'm tellin' ya, that's how the people used to be

Old Mick Gallagher was one of the umpires who handled Chix games. The dangers of being an umpire then weren't too much different than they are today (see *Sunday's Donneybrook* ...). And neither are the prerequisites. An umpire must be able to make firm, snap decisions and move on to the next play—a short memory is of great value. Mick knew that. A favorite of the local ballplayers, he was thick-skinned and gave ample warning when his cork was about to pop. Mick was always confident that his decision was final, and even though he may have made a mistake or two during the game, he remained in charge—no matter who was playing.

CARLOS: The Phillies were down here playing at Indiantown Gap. And Mick said, "Carlos, how about going along to umpire." I said, "Mick, that's a big league team, I don't have the experience." "Don't you worry," he said, "you just umpire on the bases, and do the best that you can, and I'll umpire the strikes." And I remember, oh, it was about the third or fourth inning, Mick calls a strike on the guy, and the guy just looked at him, ya see. After a while the guy yelled at Mick when Mick called him out on strikes. And Mick says, "What are you yellin' about?" he says, "You missed two and I missed one, so what're you hollerin' about?"

RAY: Yeah. That was Mick.

Umpires usually take the brunt of the abuse if a call doesn't go the way a player or a fan thinks it should. But ballplayers, never ones to discriminate,

do not confine their comments to the men in blue. And once the "starting nine" steps between those white lines to play ball, everyone is a potential target.

RAY: Like [George] "Rinsow" Marquette—he used to do needlework and we'd "needle" him about that, ya know.

"Rinsow" is currently Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students at Lebanon Valley College. He's been there for 35 years.

★ ★ ★ ★

August 11, 1947

[Notes from a game vs. the Middletown Vets, August 10th]

... Still another crack picked up by eaves-dropping occurred when a pinch-hitter came up to the plate with one sleeve rolled up and the other at full length. One of the wise-cracking Chix promptly asked the pinch batsman if he kept his sleeves at different lengths like that to remember which arm he throws with

★ ★ ★ ★

The only year Ray, Jim, Carlos, Buck, and Luther really played together was 1947. The next year, the Chix won the state tournament and went to Wichita, Kansas, to represent Pennsylvania in the 15th Annual National Tournament sponsored by the National Baseball Congress of America. They finished tied for fourth place with four wins and two losses. But by that time, the original group had pretty much gone their separate ways, and only Buck, Luther, and Carlos, as the scorekeeper, went to Wichita—in style.

BUCK: You know that Coble, when we went out to Wichita, we had our own private railroad car.

CARLOS: Coble rented a car—a sleeping car. The whole team went out there; hooked on to one of the railroads and went all the way to Wichita, Kansas, and came all the way back.

BUCK: I know I made out better than if I'd a worked those two weeks We were at the nicest hotel in town. Most of the other teams ...

LUTHER: Flea bags. They were in flea bags.

CARLOS: The Dallas Hotel. It was a beautiful hotel.

BUCK: I believe they lost more towels that week than they ever did.

In 1949 the St. Louis Cardinals brought a farm team to Fredericksburg to play at Grimes Stadium. It signalled the end of the College Hill Chix as a semi-pro team, and the beginning of the Lebanon Chix, a minor league team that was to play in the North Atlantic League. The Cardinal team was a class D team, roughly equivalent to today's Instructional League. It's where Kenny Boyer, former third baseman and manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, got his start.

★ ★ ★ ★

May 9, 1949

CHIX OPEN NORTH ATLANTIC SEASON TONIGHT

Play Nazareth At Grimes
Field To Open Season

Professional Baseball
Returns To This Sector For
The First Time In Years

Professional organized baseball returns to Lebanon County tonight at the Coble E. Grimes stadium in Fredericksburg after an absence of more than four decades. The organized game will be revived in this sector by the College Hill Chix who represent this county for the holders of the Lebanon franchise in the North Atlantic Baseball League

★ ★ ★ ★

The Lebanon Chix played a 140-game schedule that first year; 70 of those games were played at Grimes Stadium.

"They brought the kids in!" Ray says. "We were the grandparents."

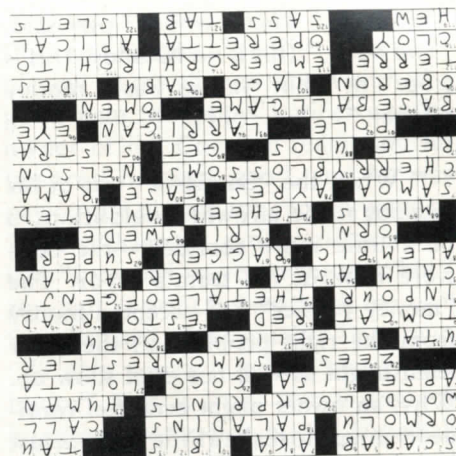
But the Chix, he swears, "were much better than D ball."

Carlos agrees.

"Oh, yeah." **A**

PUZZLER ANSWER

PUZZLE FOUND ON PAGE 100



Life seemed simpler in the old days...



James Liebowitz never worried about his financial future.

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