

I REMEMBER PLAYING SUNDAY SANDLOT BASEBALL IN SEABROOK

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Seabrook Resident 1945 - 1962
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I remember playing Sunday baseball with the guys on the Seabrook School grounds. I remember Ricky Kunishima and family supplying the essential equipment - catcher's mask, chest protector, shin guards, a couple of bats, and an adhesive-taped ball that had to last the whole game.

I remember sharing baseball gloves after each inning because not every one owned one.

I remember dividing up teams, with us "youngsters" - Barney Sasaki, Kenji Nakai and Hide Nakai, Gary Sakamoto, Fumio Omura, Dickie Okamoto, Seiki Muroto, Seiji Fujimoto, Akio Taniguchi, Sam Mukoyama, Seiso Kono, Paul Noguchi, Fred Niji, Hidebo Matsuda, Yosh Hanzawa - playing the "oldsters" - Ricky Kunishima, Kashi Mukoda, Eisuke Muroto, Fred Enseki, Newell Noda, Leo, Skeeter, and Ken Sasaki, Corky Bano, Gary Ikeda, Ed Fujimoto, Harvey Morita, Chester Nakai, Henry Oshio, Art Nakashima, Tak Okamoto, Kaz Omura.

I remember savoring this playground rivalry that revived itself every July and August after school got out.

I remember the youngsters beating the oldsters at least half the time, sometimes by as much as five to ten runs, though they may choose not to remember or admit it now. I remember the continuous good-natured razzing and the two to three hours of hard, clean competition in 90 degree weather.

I remember each team at bat designating one of its own players to call balls and strikes and each team keeping its own score, an arrangement that produced surprisingly few arguments.

I remember peering through the chicken-wire fence of the wooden backstop and calling a strike when it was probably a ball.

I remember retrieving foul balls that cleared the backstop and rolled down the street to Chiari's General Store.

I remember playing the infield and going after foul fly balls almost into the lawn of Lloyd Baxter's house.

I remember trying to clear as many pebbles as possible before me to lessen the chance of a bad-hop single.

I remember base runners stealing second base without sliding to avoid tearing their pants or skinning their knees on the rock-hard ground.

I remember the oldsters pinning their pitching hopes on Kaz Omura, Fred Enseki, and Chester Nakai, and us on lefty Dickie Okamoto or righties Hide Nakai and Fumio "Greaseball" Omura.

I remember their battery mates Gary Sakamoto and Kenji Nakai bravely putting on the "tools of ignorance" behind home plate.

I remember trying to hit the ball over the trees in left field but gladly settling for a ground single up the middle.

I remember hitting a ball into right center and hoping it would split the fielders and roll to the prefab school rooms in deep right.

I remember watching more than once a teammate or an opposing batter hit a long, arching drive toward the grammar school building in left-center and hoping that the ball wouldn't break any windows of Miss Struthers' classroom, or else Mr. Miller, the school maintenance man, would hear about it and begin patrolling the schoolyard on weekends.

I remember seeing occasional spectators on their way back from General Store, with bags of groceries in hand, or perhaps after a haircut at Kiyoko Okamoto's barber shop, stopping and watching our games for an inning or two before moving on to their daily chores.

I remember Mr. Yamamoto coming over from his house across the street and viewing our games with quiet enthusiasm and, afterwards, rewarding both teams with slices of refreshing watermelon.

I remember walking home after the games and wondering when the next game would be.