

# Point Richmond's Brothers of Baseball

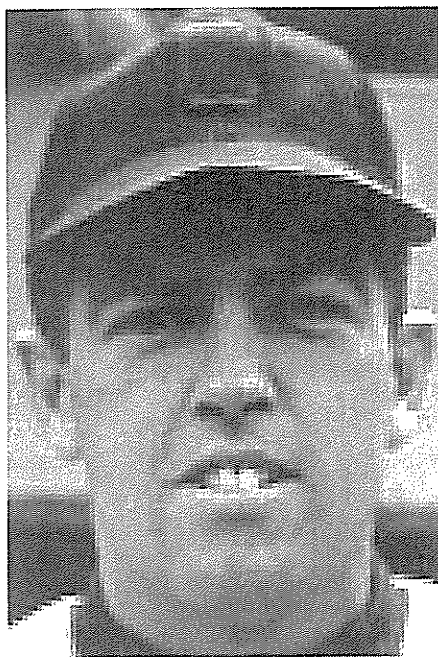
By Caitlin Harvey

It's been a long dark winter, but the wait is nearly over. By the time this article reaches you, pitchers and catchers will be about to report, ballparks will be getting spruced up for the season, and you might even begin to smell mustard-slathered sheboygans and garlic fries on the wind in Oakland and San Francisco. To tide you over until Opening Day, enjoy this interesting bit of baseball history from right here in The Point.

Ballplaying brothers, Russ and Loyd Christopher, were born and raised in the house at the far northern end of Golden Gate Avenue. Their father, Frank Christopher, was the proprietor of an upholstery shop and older brother, Frank Jr., was a pipe fitter at the Standard Oil refinery. Russel Ormand, was born in 1917, while the younger Loyd Eugene was born two

years later. Both grew up in the Point and attended Richmond High School. The brothers likely had an early passion for baseball and countless hours of playing under their belts, and Loyd lead the way onto the professional stage. Accounts suggest that when he was approached with a professional contract, he refused to sign until Russ was given a contract, too. Thus the brothers took the field.

Russ began his career in 1938 with the minor-league Clovis Pioneers and within a year transferred to the El Paso Texans, a farm team for the New York Yankees. A promotion in 1940 took him to the Wenatchee Chiefs and another the following season made him a Newark Bear. At the end of the 1941 season, he was the top prospect and first pick in the Rule 5 Draft, which pulled players up from the minor leagues rather



Loyd Chirstopher



Russ Christopher

than from high schools and colleges.

Subsequently, Russ made his major league debut in the 1942 season as a pitcher for the Philadelphia Athletics (twenty-six years before they'd become the Oakland A's). Bestowed with the nickname "Daddy Russ," he had a noteworthy career, continuing to hold down the A's pitching staff when many of his team mates went off to serve in World War II (he presumably stayed home due to health issues). In fact, Russ made the 1945 American League All-Star Team, but never played because the game was canceled due strict wartime travel restrictions. In 1946, Russ considered retirement due to declining health and an inability to gain and maintain the weight he needed to play, but he held out for one more season as a relief pitcher with the A's. In 1948, Russ was purchased by the Cleveland Indians for his final season. He again specialized in relief pitching, as he had for the A's, and his career culminated in pitching in game 5 of the 1948 World Series, helping his team clinch the championship over the Boston Braves.

After retiring, Russ Christopher settled in San Diego and underwent surgery to remedy heart trouble he'd suffered since having rheumatic fever as a child, and which had been hampering his pitching talent for many years. He then attempted a come-back by joining the Padres, but was released after a few weeks of training. He went on to work at an aircraft plant and eventually returned home to Richmond, where he died in 1954 at age 37.

Despite being the one to pull his older brother into professional ball, Loyd Christopher had a more low-profile career. Signing a professional contract the same year as Russ, at the young age of 18, Loyd kicked around the minor leagues for seven years, playing for numerous teams including the El Paso Texans, Joplin Miners, Akron Yankees, Wenatchee Chiefs, Oakland Oaks, Kansas City Blues, Newark Bears, and Seattle Rainiers.

Loyd finally broke into the major leagues in 1945, playing outfield for the Boston Red Sox. Lasting only sixteen games with the Sox before being put on waivers, he was picked up mid-season by the Chicago Cubs. Loyd's 1946 season was spent back in the minors, with the Los Angeles Angels, before he was drafted for one last

major league season with the Chicago White Sox. Loyd continued to play professional baseball until 1952, but spent his remaining years in the minor leagues with Oakland Oaks.

Unlike his brother, Loyd continued in baseball after his active playing years. Although his on-field career was somewhat unremarkable, he knew the game and could spot talent. He became a successful Northern California scout for the Cincinnati Reds, Kansas City A's, Cleveland Indians, Montreal Expos, and California Angels and was responsible for signing a number of players who would go on to become All Stars and Hall of Famers. Loyd died in Richmond in 1991, at the age of 71.

### Sources:

Jennifer Germen, Christopher brothers' great-niece

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