

# Sam Chapman - Local Player Makes It Big Time

By Robert Harrison

The most notable major league player born and raised in Marin County was Samuel Blake Chapman. Chapman was born April 11, 1916 on Mar West Street in Tiburon. He attended Tiburon School and Tamalpais High School where he lettered in four sports: baseball, football, basketball and track.

His legend as the “Tiburon Terror” was born while playing on a rough ballfield in Tiburon known as the “Rockpile”. He hit a tape measure homerun off future New York Yankee pitcher Art Schallock that cleared a row of box cars parked in the Tiburon rail yard. According to the December 26, 2006 *Marin Independent Journal*, “Schallock said, chuckling, ‘I’ve never forgiven him for that’.”

Chapman enrolled at the University of California where he starred for the Cal baseball team and was ultimately named an All-American playing fullback for Cal’s 1937 national champion football “Thunder Team”. That year Cal beat Stanford in the “Big Game” and went on to best Alabama in the Rose Bowl. It remains the last Rose Bowl won by the Golden Bears.

Hall of Famer Ty Cobb had seen Chapman play ball at Cal and recommended him in a letter to Connie Mack, owner-manager of the Philadelphia Athletics (A’s). In 1938, on the day he graduated from Cal, Mack summoned him to come east. The December 30, 2006 *San Francisco Chronicle* reported Chapman later recalling, “I was planning to meet Mr. Mack and being assigned to the minors, but he said, ‘You’re my left-handed outfielder from California.’ I said, ‘No sir, I’m your new right-handed shortstop’. But he said, ‘You’re playing outfield today.’ “

Chapman’s career playing center field for the A’s was interrupted by his sense of patriotism. He joined the Navy in 1942 where he would serve as a flight instructor until 1945. His World War II military duty followed his best year in baseball when he hit for an average of .322, slugged 25 homeruns and had 106 RBIs (Runs Batted In). He returned to the A’s in late 1945 and was named to the 1946 All-Star team, but never regained his pre-war level of play. His eleven year major league career batting average was .266 with 180 homeruns and 773 RBIs.

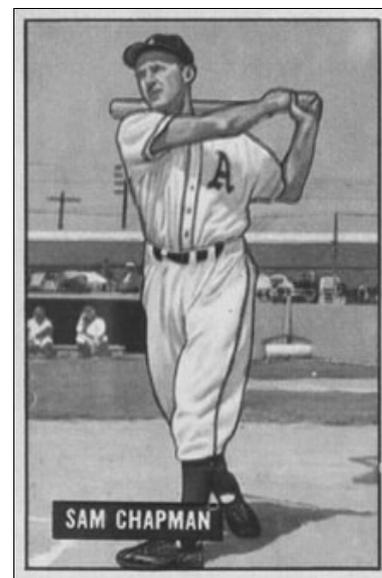
Following his retirement from major league baseball in 1951 Chapman played three years with the minor league Oakland Oaks. He later opened a plumbing business and worked for the Bay Area Air Pollution Control District. He died in 2006 in Kentfield at 90 years of age.

Chapman’s patriotic service during World War II, perhaps giving up his most productive years in the majors, reflects the contribution that he and many other players made to baseball’s legend and ties to the country’s history. It is not surprising that baseball became known as “the national pastime”, a term first introduced by the *New York Mercury* in 1856.



Chapman, second row, first on Lf.

Source: MHM



Source: Wikipedia.com