

INTERVIEW WITH HARRY HOOPER

a few games with Alameda while going to school

I played my first professional ball in the California State League. 1907. Played a few games with Alameda before I went to Sacramento. As soon as I graduated and after the college season was over, practically the same time that I was going to school. I went to St. Mary's...graduated from there. Weren't very many college graduates in baseball back then, but there were some. I'd say ¹ out of 5 were college men. Collins, Gardner, myself, all started together. All college men. Larry Gardner went to University of Vermont. Corrigan went to Holy Cross. Don't know if he graduated or not, though. Ray Collins came right out of college and joined the club...never played any other professional ball!

I ~~major~~ ^{intention} ~~major~~ed in Civil Engineering. Never had any ^{prob.} ~~idea~~ of playing ^{base-}ball ^{as a career} ~~professionally~~ until my second year at Sacramento. ~~When~~ When I went to Sacramento I said I'd play with them if they got me a job surveying. ^{surv. for Western Pacific RR} So they did. One of the feds gave me a job. \$75 a month from that, and \$85 a month for my job in baseball! That was my bonus! Actually it was ^{McMinnamen} ~~McMillan~~, who had the Alameda club asked me to play with them and I told them I would until I got out of college, and then I wanted a release to go to Sacramento if I wanted. So ✓

he said all right. We got a percentage of the gate, at that time. So we played a game in Sacramento and ^{I did well + the} ~~I told McMillan that~~ Sacramento wanted to have me. ^{went to him + said wanted me} They respected each other's players. It was an outlaw league, but they didn't steal players from each other, just from everybody else!

^{McMillan came to me} So, ~~McMillan~~ says, well, If I got a chance to sell you to Sacramento,

^{+ if you don't say anything} ~~let's forget about this deal~~ we had to release you and I'll give you half ^{agreement}

of whatever we can get. So I says OK. Well, Charlie ^{Graham} ~~Grimm~~ told me after, he was manager of Sacramento at the time. He went to McMillan and says,

how much you want for Hooper. McMillan says, well, how about \$100. So

Grimm says, I smelled a rat right away. Oh, he says, I wouldn't give you that much for him. He says, I'd give you \$50 for him, though. ^{he said OK + he}

^{look at} agreed and I got half of it. Twenty five dollars.

^{I had 2 pretty good yrs at sac + Graham}

Well, one day Charlie ^d came to me at Sacramento and says, Well, How'd ^{the expr he used was}

you like to take a look at the big Indian. Well, I didn't know what he

^{What do you mean?} meant. So he says, Well, how would you like to come over to Boston. He

says, I'm a scout for the Boston ^{Red Sox, John R Taylor is gonna come out here +} Braves. I think I can get you a job

with them. Well, I says, I never thought really about playing ball. But

^{well} It'll be a nice trip anyhow. So I says OK ^{well} ~~I'll~~ talk to the guy next week.

What do you think you ought to get, he says. I haven't any idea, I says,

what do you think about twenty-five hundred? He says, well, that will be ✓

all right with me. ^{well} But, he says, suppose you ask him for \$3,000 and maybe he'll give you the \$2500. ^{So} Well, I went the manager of Boston at the corner of 8th and Jay in Sacramento and we went into a bar and had a glass of beer. Well, he says, how would you like to play for Boston. I wouldn't mind, I says. Well, we'd like to have you, he says. How much money do you want. Well, I says, how about \$3,000. I'll tell you, he says, I was thinking about \$2500, so how about \$2800? So we came to that agreement. Finished the season with Sacramento. 1908. Resigned my surveying job with the Western Pacific Railroad that fall and that's the last job that I had as an engineer!

Course I had never given baseball a thought as a career. I got interested in playing ball when I was 10 years old. Went to Penna. when I saw some minor league games. But it never occurred to me to think about playing baseball professionally. I wanted to be an engineer! But I went to Boston.

My father was a wheat farmer right where the St. Louis dam is going up. Used to ride my horse 6 miles to school when I was a kid.

When I was growing up, I'd heard a little bit about Cobb and Lajoie and all, but I really didn't pay attention to the big leagues. Didn't have any thought of being a ballplayer. ✓

I joined the P.S. at
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We trained at Hot Springs, Arkansas.

That's where we trained.

Got out there and sized all the other fellows up. I figured that I belonged on the team. The only outfielder there that looked any good was one. And he was Tris Speaker. Had some other outfielders, but ...either they weren't fast enough, or couldn't field, or couldn't throw. *nevertheless,* So that was my competition. After I'd been there for about two weeks, the Boston papers (we got the Boston papers down there) said "Well this young Hooper looks like a good prospect but it'll be *several years in the minor leagues* ~~many weeks~~ before he's ready." *That made me boiling hot.*

Then, after they 'd decided who was going to be on the team, why we hardly had a chance to get up to bat. The oldtimers *kinda had the thing* ~~would really take~~ *by the horns, you know.* So a couple of us ~~care of that.~~ We rookies used to take our bats to the outfield and a couple of balls hit out there and we'd have our own batting practice.

Opened up at Phila. Opening day of *Shibe* ~~Shay~~ Park, which is now Connie Mack Stadium. First modern stadium. Opened it in April 1909. I was there.

But I ~~h~~ Didn't even have a road uniform, wasn't eligible to play. *So* I sat on the bench and watched that series, but I wasn't *elig even* to play. Heard rumours that I was to go ~~over~~ to St. Paul. I was getting hot under the collar, cause I knew I was a better ballplayer than the outfielders playing there. So we went over to Washington (walked up to the top of the Washington monument just before gametime) and got out to the park *afterwards* ~~on time~~. Well, the manager ✓

Fred Lake

You know if I'd been bragged up to be a wanderer ^{or something} ~~fall~~, I'd prob have been a little shabby. But the way

comes up to me and says, Here's your uniform. You're going to play left ^{it was}

field today. Trick combination of circumstances! One of the outfielders had to go in and play the infield and another was sick and turned out they had to play me. Didn't have anybody else. Well, I went out there. Nobody

expected me to be any good, see. Well I went out there ^{determined} to show them. Had

to hit against a left hander, too. ^{Feller named Bill Burns} ~~Little~~ guy. Called him Sleepy Bill ~~Burns~~

Burns. Darned good pitcher. (Larry, this is Bubby, wasn't that the guy

Imixed up with the Black Sox thing? The bag man or something?) Anyway,

I remember ^{when I got up 1st time} we ^{had} got a chance to score, ^{there} Man on second base. Everyone's ^x

saying, Who's up, who's up. And then "Hooper's up. and I could see every-

one thinking ^{well,} Oh, that's too bad. Well, I went up there and I drove the

run in, see. To make a long story short, I got two hits of ~~the~~ four times

I awa up and I hit another one that if the pitcher hadn't have caught ~~would~~

have knocked his head off! ^{It was right at him, he just made one of those grabs, you know} I had two or thre e putouts and an assist, I

think, anyway, I had a ^{good} day!

old John I Taylor, The feller

Well, before the day ~~it~~ was over, the fellow who signed me up was

going around shaking everyone's hands saying, that's the boy I signed up

in California! So that's how I didn't go to St. Paul. ^{I had a good start,} You have to have

a little luck, you know.



we didn't get a proper opportunity.

They never wanted to give a rookie too much opportunity to make good, you know. You had to make it on your own or you didn't make it. They put me in just on account of a combination of circumstances. I'd have never got in the ballgame.

In general, I think the old timers on the club would ~~try~~ to keep away as much competition as possible.

In 1909 Speaker came back . Billy Carrigan was there. Gardner was there. We started to form the nucleus of what later was to become a great ball club. Duffy Lewis came in '10. and for the next ⁶ five years we were the outfield, great outfield, too. Larry Garner and Thomas, and ^{Humemaker +} Carrigan ^{+ Yerkes} and Yerkes and a whole bunch of young fellows came in between 1909 and 1911. Had the best club in the league in 1911 and would have won in '11, too. Won in 1912. Joe Wood won 34 games and Charile Hall ^{+ Hugh Beckwith} won a lot of games (California boy) and Ray Collins and ^{Buck} Cliff O'Brien (?). They had their one big year. Won it by about 14 games. Early part of that season, I don't think we lost one series! ~~We were just going like hogs.~~ But in 1913, we never got away from the post. Finished fourth or so.

even Fired the manager, Stall, in '13. I don't know the full story of that.

That 1912 series was a 7game series. Had 3 games won and 3 games lost and a tie game. So we had to play 8 games. The ballplayers figured that they



I remember that last game of the 1912 World Series. That's the game everybody wants to forget. Right after that Snodgrass ball, I hit a ball right practically over shortstop. Now Snodgrass had no business being over there, he was playing left center, but anyhow, I don't know whether he was hypnotized or dumbfounded or what, but he came in very close, and dang if he didn't catch it. Ought to have been a 3 base hit. 9 times out of 10 nobody'd even have got to touch it. Well, I saw him not long ago and told him that. Well, he says, nobody ever talks about that catch to me, they all talk about that muff. I don't know why he missed that one, he just must have been thinking about something else, cause it was just a routine, easy, fly ball.

After that, too, Speaker hit a pop fly and old Chief Meyers started down the first base line and Mabby started calling for him, thinking the wind was blowing it out. But if he had called for Merkle, it would have been ~~wx~~ right in Merkle's hands. But he hollered for Chief, cause Merkle had pulled that little boner, you know, and they didn't have too much confidence in him. Well, anyhow, ~~xx~~ poor old Chief, he run down there, lumbered down that line fast as he could go, and he stuck his glove out and it just tipped the end of his glove. Speaker came by Matthewson and says, well, you just called for the wrong man. He says, gonna cost you

you this ball game. Next ball he gave them went for a base hit and drove in the tying run. They went ahead of us in the 10thinning.

First man up, they put in Engle for Joe Wood. And he hit the ball the Snodgrass missed. And then I tried to bunt, but umpire said foul, then I hit the line drive that Snodgrass caught, see. Then Yerkes got a base on balls. And then Speaker hit the ball that drove in Engle from second base and put Yerkes on third base. Then they walked Duffy Lewis to get at Larry Gardner. Larry hit a ~~long~~ long fly out to right field. Little Josh Devore ran back on it and got it, hoping he might fall down and drop it or something, but he played the ball out and Yerkes scored.

We never did lose a World Series. We used to feel that they had no way to beat us. '15, in my opinion was the greatest ~~of~~ club we ever had. 1915 we had five of the greatest pitchers that ever ~~xxxxxxx~~ stepped on a ballfield. Ernie Shore, Georgie Foster, Carl Mays, Babe Ruth and Dutch Leonard! In that world series of 1915, Babe Ruth didn't even get to pitch a game. Well, we had Shore, Foster, Mays and Leonard playing and we used to pitch them every four days, you know, and it came up that George (!) didn't get a chance to pitch. He was a great pitcher.

When he came up he was a big rube. Weighed 198 lbs. in perfect trim. You probably remember that big belly he got later on. But he was in

perfect shape when he came up. Slim waisted. Big Biceps. Babe was a wonderful specimen! For a number of years with the Red Sox, he never drank anything except soda pop. But he ate too much. Used to have a tremendous appetite. He'd stop along the road when we were travelling and order up a half a dozen sandwiches and a half a dozen bottles of pop and think nothing of it. Whatever drinking he done, he done after he left the Red Sox. He was a green pea, as we called it, his first year. He'd go down to Hot Springs where we trained, you know, and that's an open town. Got all ~~xxx~~ kinds of games and races and anything you want, you know. Why he'd come out of there with more money than he got ~~xxxx~~ coming the rest of the year! Yes, I could tell you some stories about Babe that I wouldn't tell you with that thing on! But he had this natural faculty for hitting and for being a ballplayer~~s~~. Babe was easy to get along with. For a while they used to kid him, called him the Big Baboon. But that was a dirty thing to do and he finally challenged the whole club. Jack Barry was the one who used to pester him about that. But he was a good natured - great hearted fellow. He was the greatest long distance hitter...and he looked the part up there at the plate. Had all the earmarks of ~~xxx~~ being the great hitter. You know in 1918 Babe wanted to play regular. He liked to hit. Well, in '19 he came to me to intervene to put him in there. You

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know we had traded off all our ballplayers by that time and i was captain of the club. Well, I went to Farrell and so did Heinie Wagner and said why don't you put Babe in the outfield, we need his hitting. Oh, he says he's the best left hander in the league, I ain't putting him in the outfield. Well, he finally says, OK, you mark my words, though, the first slump he gets into he'll be down on his knees begging me to pitch! Well, we had a fellow named Drago Roth, another wild man, don't know if you remember him. Well, he was in the outfield and I was in the outfield and I, as field manager, you know, captain, put Babe in the middle, in centerfield. Sakes alive, I'd stand between these two fellows and they were really ~~wild~~ wild men, hollering all the time, running after every ball. So, that's when I was playing center field and I thought by golly if I stay between those two much longer I'll be killed, so I put Babe in center field, and he stayed there. Oh, we used to wonder at his hits. Longest things I ever saw in my life. He had a bat that he favored and would carry it out with him all the time. Boy, you wouldn't believe the balls he hit. Tremendous. Well, one day, in the middle of a terrific hitting streak, I went up to Babe and says, Babe, I want that bat when you get through with it. Babe Says, gee, I'm going to keep hitting as long as I live, see. If he cracked that bat a little bit of nicked it here or there

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he'd always nail it up or tape it around. But one day, he was so mad at getting a strike that he threw that bat down and everyone could hear that crack. So he comes back in the dugout and sits down next to me. And I says, Babe how about that bat. He says, take the son of a bitch, I don't even want to see it anymore. Well, that bat's up in Cooperstown ~~with~~ right now. I kept it for a while and then donated it.

Oh, yes, Barrow was a pretty tough character. Challenged Babe Ruth one time. He was 50-odd years old and big and fat, but he believed in himself, you know. Course, I got along with him all right. Now this will show you why I always think he was smart: He used to be a regular Simon Legree, you know. We had a fellow by name of Asco. Big, rough looking fellow, outfielder. Not Pasco, Asco...went to the Yankees later on and stayed with them. Anyhow he came with us one year. Could hit but he couldn't field. Couldn't field good. But, I nursed him along and when it came to the last day of the season, he was doing fine, getting along in everything. Barrow says, you know you haven't been playing that guy Asco enough. Why don't you put him in left field. Well, I says, he can't play left field, he don't know how to play left field. Oh, Barrow says, how do you know. If he's in there he'll have to play left field! Well, that was a terrible day. He misjudged a couple of fly balls and all. Wehn the game was over

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Barrow goes up to him and says, why you so and so who ever told you you could play ball? You dirty so and so, you big so and so, get that uniform off! That'll show you how tough Ed was.

Well, I used to run the club, you know, and I had a signal with the catcher. See, I ran the club on the field. This particular day, I used to have a sign for the ~~xxxx~~ catcher:; man up there and an open base, see. Well, you can do three things: you can walk him deliverately, you can pbtch to him, or you can pitch, but not give him a good ball to hit. The last is, in my opinion the real proper thing to do , but dsome cases call for an outfght walk, you know, set up the double play. So I gave this signal to Al Walters, who was catching...told him to give him bad balls, see. Well, this hitter ups and hits one over the fence. Well, I was mad as anything about that, but I knew that a pitcher can't always throw where you want him to. So Ed come in there and gives all hell to Walters. Well, Hooper give me the signal, says Walters. Who the hell is Walters to tell you, says Ed. Well, I don't know but he give me the sign to made him hit a bad ball, Walters says. Well, he raved on and on and finally I says, that's OK with me Mr. Barrow, from now on I'll just play my position out there, and you take over all the rest! Right on the bench, before everybody, I says it. So that evening, I was on e of the last ✓

to leave the clubhouse and Ed was right behind me. Well, he put his hand on my shoulder and says, Now let's forget all about this, you go on the way you was going! Well now, I played for two different managers who didn't know the game, see. He didn't know any of the finer points of the game, but he'd alwzys try to bluff it out. But he did have sense enough to let me run that club on the field.

The difference today, amazes me. Everybody up there, under all circumstances, looks to the manager or coach for a signla whether they're to hit, take one, or what Why we never had that. When I played ball, why I had a hit and run signal ^{with} ~~that~~ ~~was~~ everybody that hit after me or ahead of me. If I wanted to hit and run with him, you know. We had a steal sign given from third base, that was the only sign given. The hit and run play was always signalled by the batter himself. And they left it up to me always, might have told some of the other fellows, but I was always able to judge for myself. Every man on the bases had to know the signals of the man that was batting up there. All had different signlas, you know. Each had his own individual batting hit~~and run~~ sign.

Didn't never tell you what to do on every damn pitch. See, we used to almost always take the ball on the first pitch. But I remember, for example in the 1915 World Series, hitting against Grover Cleveland Alexander. Good pitcher. I remember that I went to Bill Carrigan, who was my manager and I says, Bill, I've got an idea that he's going to lay the first one in there and I'd like to take a crack at it. Well, he says, go ahead. So first pitch some in and went exactly like it said it would.

Course sometimes, when it looked like we were going to bunt, wuy we'd switch up and ~~throw~~ hit one back at them. McGraw was that kind of fellow. Told everyone how to throw, how to hit, how to field. All the time. But of course, I didn't play with him.

Now, there's one thing about Connie Mack. He didn't pay much money, but all the players that played for him, swore by him. They all thought he was all right. Didn't pay good salaries till he got Speaker and those fellows back again, you know, Cobb. I know those fellows got good salaries. But all of them, Eddie Collins, Jack Barry, Stuffy McInnis, they all thought Connie was fine.

Hal Chase was best fielding first baseman ever. No question about that. He was the most naturally gifted first baseman...course he could have played anywhere. He made plays then that they don't make today. He was

really good. One of his pet plays was when there was a man on second base nobody out. If they bunted down the first base line, he was down there like a cat and got that ball in his left hand, see and he'd look to ~~first~~ ^{third} base and he'd have that fellow out so far that they'd just stop, see, and he'd run up and get that man, ^{coming down, too} just like that ./ Double play. Had this fellow in the clinch. Now you never see that today. But it was routine for Chase. We had Charlie Doyle on our club, he knew this play, see. So one time he bunted the ball down to first base and we had a man on second. And sure enough Chase ran up and got that ball and had the man in between, see. And he was running in and looking at third, you know. and Doyle, who knew the play, ran right into Chase and knocked him flat, see. Well, Chase was really mad. Got up and uppercut Doyle right in the face with the ball. Doyle ^{to get to the clubhouse} Started out to the outfield/and somebody give him the shoulder and Chase come out and made a flying tackle and got him right on the outfield there. The crowd was going crazy. Well, they finally got a couple of officers and drove them off the field.

Next day, everyone said they were going to mod him and this and that. Oh, we had a big crowd come out.

Chase coached us in college, you know. Played against him in Sacramento, too. He was with Stockton. And in the American League, why he

was managing the Yankees. He was a fellow that just wasn't straight shooting you know. He was a penny thief and one thing and another, you know. Just crooked. And he had all the opportunities, managing, you know. He done lots of things, I can tell you. Steal cigars off the counter and things like that too. Just wasn't all there, I think. He was a local fellow, too. Used to live around here.

Was on the same team with Eddie Cicotte in Boston for years, before he went to Chicago and made such a great record as a pitcher there. Nice decent fellow and a great pitcher. Great storyteller and very likeable. Well, I'll tell you what was wrong there. Comiskey was another guy that was tight, you know. These fellows up there winning pennants and not getting nothing and I guess they just figured that here come along something they could have. That's the way I look at ~~it~~ ^{their} it, anyway. I do think that ~~they're~~ salaries were lower than anybody else's. I think they were lower, for the players, you know, were really great players. This Happy Felsh was one of the greatest. Could be rated with any of them. Fast and could cover ground and he could throw and could run the bases and was a great hitter. Oh, yes, Happy Felse, I would rate him up with the 5 or 10 best outfielders I ever heard of. Better than Joe Jackson. Better than Ty Cobb. But he never got credit for what he could do. And this fellow on third, Buck Weaver, he was

a great one too. Gandil, he was the crook of the bunch. And Wisberg, great too. They had a wonderful team there.

See, we beat them in 1918, but that was cause it was a war year and all the clubs were cut down so, see.

I went in to the White Sox to help fill ~~u~~ up the gap. First time I knew about it, Ed Barrow came to us and said, now I don't want any fraternizing. You know, we used to kid around with the boys on the other clubs and all. But he says, don't you talk to any of these fellows. Well, we couldn't figure out what he was talking about...and I wouldn't believe them when they told me. It never occurred to me...well, I don't know..you take so much pride in your winning that if your team lost....well, I never thought it was possible to bribe a club...and in a world series!

The very next year, you know , 1920, I went over there...no, I was traded in '20, but went over there in '21. Schalk was there and Collins and Kerr were still there. Faber, too. Good pitcher.

Yep, I got 24 hundred and sixty hits. Not quite 2500'. I could have stayed up there a couple of years more and made it , but I got independent when they cut my salary. Old Comiskey says, sorry.

Course I hated to leave Boston. In 1916 we had a great ball club. In 1917, they started selling these fellows all off and first thing you

they sent them all over there,
and just think of the players they got over there. In New York. They got
them all, and they were champions for years afterwards. Scott, Mays, Ruth,
Bush, Pennock, Jones, Wayte Hoyte, Wally Schang. Well, this fellow Frazee
was short of money and he had to have money to keep his nose above water
and he sold those ballplayers. Little crook, he was. Ruined the whole thing.
If he hadn't have done that we'd have been champions for years. We'd have
the same dynasty these Yankees have. They couldn't have stopped us. That
meant that they robbed us every year, each individual player, of four or
five thousand dollars every year. Well, I saw that and I said what the hells
the use of playing on this ballclub, they ~~gk~~ can't get anywhere now. So
in 1920, '21, fall of '20 I held out for \$15,000 a year. I was getting about
8 or \$10,000. He held out for \$15,000. And he sold me to the White Sox. Course
nobody was getting money then.

Well, the contract was offered me, by the White Sox. and Long, who
brought me the contract, says, Well, I think Comiskey was thinking about
\$12,00, but the contract's open, you fill in the figure. Well, I says, I
expect I'll be doing business with Mr. Comiskey for some years, and I don't
want to start off on the wrong foot, suppose we split the difference between
that and the \$15,000. Let's make it \$13,250. Well, that was good, for
three years. Now, I says, I want you to tell Comiskey that you told me I

could take the 15 , but I didn't tkae it.

So I had three damn good years with them. Best hitting years I ever hat. 321 one year and 327 another. Good years. So the next year he sent me a contract for six or seven thousand dollars! Well, I wouldn't go. Chance was manager, you know. But he got sick and he says, well where's Hooper, they says, well he's sick and holing up. Well, they says, we'll do better next year, don't worry. Well, the next year they sent me a contrat for \$7,000! Well, I wrote to Comiskey and told him that when I signed up It was pretty much a guarantee of sorts that I would be treated in the same way as the first year or so. Well, he wrote back and says that he never heard of anyone getting a guarantee for anything in this business and sent me my release along with the letter! And they really needed me that year, they had nobody to play right field.

Well, then , that was in 1926. I went into the Real Estate business. No business to speak of though. '27 I got with the Mission Club, out here, but that only lasted one year. Well '28, '29, '30 I just done the best I could in Real Estate. '31 and '32 went and coached at Princeton, but that wasn't much money. Then ~~h~~ they had a bad year, didn't do well in football either, and they cut expenses and cut me out too. Enjoyed that though, and still go back there every once in a while. Beautiful spot, Princeton.

Then I took a fill-in job. Postmaster. Spent twenty-four years at it! Supposed to be a fill-in job! Course I lost all the money I ever made in baseball. But I made it all back later, much later, in real estate.