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Latino Baseball History Project: Newsletter

The Latino Baseball History Project is proud to announce the release of three more books:

**SOUTH TEXAS**
Mexican American Baseball in South Texas pays tribute to the former baseball teams and players from Edinburg, McAllen, Mission, Pharr, Donna, Alamo, San Juan, Harlingen, and other surrounding communities. From the late 19th century through the 1950s, baseball in South Texas provided opportunities for nurturing athletic and educational skills, reaffirming ethnic identity, promoting political self-determination, developing economic autonomy, and reshaping gender roles for women. Games were special times where Mexican Americans found refuge from backbreaking work and prejudice. These unmatched photographs and stories shed light on the rich history of baseball in this region of Texas.

Lead author is Richard A. Santillan, professor emeritus of ethnic and women’s studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Coauthors are Gregory Garrett, educational specialist, Institute of Texas Cultures, University of Texas San Antonio; Juan D. Coronado, postdoctoral scholar at the Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University; Jorge Iber, associate dean of the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and professor of history, Texas Tech University; and Roberto Zamora, assistant professor of organization and school leadership, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg. The foreword was written by Emilio Zamora, Department of History, University of Texas at Austin.

**VENTURA COUNTY**
Mexican American Baseball in Ventura County pays tribute to the legendary teams and players from Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Santa Paula, and other surrounding communities. From the late 19th century through the 1950s, baseball in Ventura County provided opportunities for nurturing athletic and educational skills, reaffirming ethnic identity, promoting political self-determination, developing economic autonomy, and reshaping gender roles for women. Games were special times where Mexican Americans found refuge from backbreaking work and prejudice. These unmatched photographs and stories shed light on the rich history of baseball in this region of California.

Lead author is Richard A. Santillan, professor emeritus of ethnic and women’s studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Coauthors are Gregory Garrett, educational specialist, Institute of Texas Cultures, University of Texas San Antonio; Juan D. Coronado, postdoctoral scholar at the Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University; Jorge Iber, associate dean of the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and professor of history, Texas Tech University; and Roberto Zamora, assistant professor of organization and school leadership, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg. The foreword was written by Emilio Zamora, Department of History, University of Texas at Austin.

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Latino Baseball and Fast-Pitch Softball in Kansas City

By: Gene T. Chavez, Ed.D, Bruce Mathews, and Steve Noll

Kansas City has always been a baseball town. Not only did a Major League team play here as early as 1886 (the Kansas City Cowboys in the National League), but Little Leagues, industrial leagues, the Ban Johnson League, 3&2 Baseball, and other organizations have also emerged over the years. Today’s fans can catch the action of many of these teams, in addition to the Kansas City T-Bones on the Kansas side and the World Champion Kansas City Royals at beautiful Kauffman Stadium in the Harry S. Truman Sports Complex on the Missouri side of the state line. Baseball brought a sense of community to the many Mexican American families who settled in Argentine, Armourdale, Rosedale and in Kansas City, Missouri’s West Side. Mexican immigrants came to the area to seek jobs with railroad companies, meat-packing plants, hotels, and restaurants on both sides of the state line. Families raised their children in the communities near their workplaces. As Gene T. Chávez, Ed.D., writes in his essay, “Pitch’em Fast Pauly: The Mexican-American Fast-Pitch Softball Leagues”:

“These communities engaged in hard labor, but they found time for family, friends, and entertainment. As Richard Santillán expressed in “Perspectives in Mexican-American Studies”, teams and contests were far more than games for boys and girls. They involved the entire community, and they often included both cultural and political motives.” Chavez reports that Mexican Americans formed their own baseball and fast-pitch softball leagues both before and after World War II. He further states: “Mexican Americans began to form their own baseball and fastpitch softball leagues. Many Mexican American GIs were attracted to fastpitch softball because it was very competitive, but easier to play and fit into the community lives as they endeavored to integrate into the American mainstream and yet retain their Latino identity.” Chock-full of talent, the teams were competitive and entertaining, but they achieved notoriety for another reason. Although many teams included players capable of playing on the same level as those in the all-white Major Leagues, the Mexican American players faced the same discrimination as the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League. Nevertheless, as Enrique A. Chaurand reported in The Kansas City Star, “In 1924, Kansas City saw the emergence of the Aztecas. The team would travel to other cities in the Midwest to play against other Hispanic teams. The Aztecas won the first Mexican-American Championship tournament held in Lyons, Kansas.”
The Argentine Eagles chartered American Legion Post #213 after they were rejected by a "whites only" post in the Argentine district of Kansas City, Kansas. Their post affectionately called the "Eagles' Nest" continues to operate in that Argentine community and is open to vets of all ethnic origins. Their ball field is presently under renovation and will be open for youth teams and tournaments in 2017. Many players in the league honed their skills and longed to play on the big stage. In a 1996 article appearing in The Kansas City Star, reporter Enrique Chaurand wrote about one such player, Paul "Pauly" Hernandez, noting that although he could have played softball in any Kansas City league, a sense of tradition and community pride attracted Hernandez to the fields where his father and other relatives had once played. "Baseball and softball at McNally Park (formerly Shawnee Park) in Kansas City, Kansas, became more than a recreational activity: it has become a way of life," Hernandez reflected. "I was raised with the game, and I knew that one day I’d be out on the same field that my dad played on. It’s just tradition." A Latino player with deep roots in baseball was Major League player, Diego Seguí, who pitched for the Kansas City Athletics in the 1960s. Seguí, who is Cuban American, married Emily Sauceda in 1963. Her family was composed of Mexican immigrants who boasted a long line of baseball and fast-pitch stars. The Seguís raised their four children in Kansas City, Kansas. Their son David made his debut with the Baltimore Orioles in 1990, continuing to play with various Major League teams until 2004. In 1965, Charlie Finley, the flamboyant, white owner of the Oakland Athletics, brought former Negro League star, Satchel Paige, out of retirement to pitch three innings. At the age of 59, he would play the final Major League game in his long and glorious career. After the third inning, Paige was relieved by Seguí. Diego had seen Paige pitch when he was a young man in Cuba and was amazed by his style and effectiveness at the plate. "When I relieved the great Satchel Paige in the fourth inning of his last professional outing, I felt so honored. It will forever be a highlight of my career in baseball," reminisced Seguí. On that memorable night, on a Major League mound in Kansas City, the paths of the Mexican American Leagues, the Negro Leagues, and the Major Leagues were intertwined. As Richard Santillán wrote, "The most popular sport among Mexicans in

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Generations of the same Hispanic families in the Kansas City area have embraced the game of baseball. For many it is a way of life and represents their community identity. The K.C. Indios are in their fourth generation of García family players.

Source: The Kansas City Star.

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neighborhoods. From the early 20th century through the 1950s, baseball in Ventura County safeguarded opportunities for nurturing athletic and educational skills, asserting ethnic identity, promoting political self-confidence, developing economic autonomy, and redefining gender roles for women. Outside the ball field, these players and their families helped create the multibillion agricultural wealth that relied heavily on their backbreaking labor. These extraordinary photographs and remarkable stories shed unparalleled light on the long and rich history of baseball and softball in this celebrated region of California.

The lead author is Richard A. Santillan, professor emeritus of ethnic and women’s studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Coauthors are Jose M. Alamillo, professor and coordinator of the Chicana/o Studies Program at California State University, Channel Islands; Ana Bermudez, curator of collections and exhibits at the Museum of Ventura County; Juan J. Canchola-Ventura, graduate history student at California State University, Channel Islands; and Al Ramos, historian at Rancho de Guadalupe Historical Society. The coauthors are also extremely grateful for the following individuals who wrote additional chapters for this publication: David Contreras Jr. for the Merced Region; Maria Garcia for San Diego; and Raymond Serra Jr. and Alicia Serra Stevens for Santa Monica. These three additional volumes represent the first comprehensive studies regarding the history of baseball and softball within their respective communities. The foreword was written by Jessica Mendoza, Olympic gold and silver softball medalist, four time first-team All American, and is currently a baseball analyst for ESPN’s coverage of Major League Baseball.

EAST LOS ANGELES

Mexican American Baseball in East Los Angeles highlights the unforgettable teams, players, and coaches who graced the hallowed fields of East Los Angeles, between 1917 and 2016, and brought immense joy and honor to their neighborhoods. Off the field, these players and their families helped created the multibillion wealth that depended on their backbreaking labor. More than a game, baseball and softball were instruments designed to promote and empower civil, political, cultural, and gender rights, confronting head-on the reactionary forces of prejudice, intolerance, sexism, and xenophobia. A century later, baseball and softball are more popular than ever in East Los Angeles. Dedicated coaches still produce gifted players and future community leaders. These breathtaking photographs and heartfelt stories shed unparalleled light to the long and rich history of baseball and softball in the largest Mexican American community in the United States.

The lead author is Richard A. Santillan, professor emeritus of ethnic and women’s studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Coauthors are Richard Pena, extraordinary East Los Angeles player and coach; Teresa M. Santillan, Los Angeles Catholic Archdioceses teacher for 25 years; Al Padilla, legendary East Los Angeles player and coach; and Bob Lagunas, outstanding player and coach in Los Angeles County. The foreword was written by Edward J. Avila, president, Project Restore in Los Angeles. The coauthors dedicate the book to Richard Pena, who died in April 2016.

The Latino Baseball History Project also announces that the project will submit two more manuscripts—one on Houston, Texas, and one on El Paso, Texas—will be submitted this December for future publication in late spring or early summer of 2017. Two more books—one on Kansas City, Missouri, and one on the San Gabriel Valley—are in progress.
Our Latino culture is rich in tradition. One of the many traditions where we honor our beloved dead is celebrating El Dia de Los Muertos/Day of the Dead. During the months of October and November we set up altars/ofrendas with pictures and other artifacts that celebrate their lives.

Our Dad’s altar is a tribute to him as a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and to all special aspects of his life. There is love a letter he wrote to his wife while on the road playing baseball. We placed baseball memorabilia on the altar including his Pirates hat (he was a pitcher for the Waco Pirates minor league); and a baseball card that we had made which represents his seven years of playing in the minor leagues. There is a picture of Roberto Clemente – his favorite baseball player. His medical officer’s case from WWII, veteran’s hat, American flag and dog tags represent his courageous service to our country. The rosary beads, crucifix necklace, communion pyx, and image of Our Lady of Guadalupe represent his great faith in the Lord and loyalty to his church community.

The Chevy cars and tools remind us of his more than 50 years of service as a mechanic under many dealerships. Dad’s salsa was everyone’s favorite so a molcahete is present. A single horseshoe is on the altar to represent his love of playing horseshoes. Dad had a green thumb and spent many hours outside building birdhouses and gardening, so there are plants, and of course, a birdhouse he made himself. His family creatively made and decorated calaveras/sugar skulls as part of his altar. A letter written from his great-grandson Noah is also part of the tribute.

Celebrating Dia de Los Muertos gives us hope that we will be reunited with Dad one day. It reminds us of the many wonderful memories we have of him and how he is reunited with his loved ones and friends in Heaven. We miss the conversations with him during the baseball season especially during postseason and the World Series. We remember calling him on the phone to remind him a game was starting on TV. We believe he is able to play baseball again in his Glorified Body and is enjoying good conversations with his siblings and friends about baseball. To honor his love for baseball, on his tablet-headstone we wrote “Strike em out!”

Thank you, Dad, for all the beautiful memories that you shared with us. We appreciate your existence! You will be dearly missed, but we all know that you will forever be present in our hearts.

Tommie Encinas, a right-handed pitcher, was signed by Bob Tafoya to a contract with the Boston Braves organization in 1946 and began his professional career in Leavenworth, Kansas, in the Class C Western Association.
On Jan. 10, 1944, Antonio Corral Lugo left his home in East Los Angeles, and said good bye to his two sons, Tony (12 years old) and Richard (9 years old). Antonio C. Lugo was reporting to the Naval Regional Training Center where he was recruited into the United States Navy in the midst of World War II. Like many Mexican men living in the United States, they found it a worthy cause to fight and defend the nation where they were raising their families and an opportunity for a path to citizenship. Unbeknownst to Tony and his brother, this was the last time they would see their father.

Antonio was sent into battle during the Pacific Campaign. During a furious battle in the island of Saipan against the Japanese Army in the Mariana Islands, Antonio was gravely wounded by a Japanese saber. The amphibious invasion, in which 71,000 American soldiers participated, was a costly and bloody battle. More than 10,000 of them were wounded and 3,426 killed. The Japanese Army suffered more than 24,000 casualties.

Facing the reality of the loss of his father, Tony filled the void by playing the game he loved—baseball. Tony Lugo grew up in the neighborhood of Eagle Street and Rowan in East Los Angeles where many of his cousins lived. The boys formed a neighborhood baseball team challenging other neighborhoods in sandlot games. Tony had the pleasure of playing catch with a teenager from Compton who would visit his grandmother in the neighborhood. His name was Edwin Snider, better known as “Duke” Snider, who later played for the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Los Angeles Dodgers and was later inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

As a teenager, Tony was on the Garfield High School Bulldogs team where he played as a left-handed pitcher and a first baseman. Tony’s high school team became the Eastern League Champs in his senior year. Later he played in the semi pro leagues where he played for Las Aguilas, L.A. Expos and company teams such as Helms and Wilson where he earned a salary.

While raising his children in East Los Angeles, Tony became the little league coach for his two sons, Richard and Raymond at Saint Alphonsus Parish where they played other ELA parishes in the summer baseball church league.

Tony always worked two jobs to put his children through Catholic schools. It was the Lugo tradition to play baseball and sports. Richard and Raymond attended Cantwell High School where they played various sports. Following the legacy of their grandfather, all of Tony’s five grandsons played the game of baseball. The most notables, Anthony the eldest grandson named after his grandfather, played for the 2002 Bishop Amat High School baseball team; they were the state champions, ranked as the number one high school baseball team in the nation. Anthony earned a sports scholarship to Iona Catholic College in New York City. His younger brother, Michael, who also played at Bishop Amat, also earned a baseball scholarship to the University of San Diego. During the off season in 2007, Michael played in the Southern California Collegiate Baseball League for the Palm Springs Power Team. As fate would have it, Michael’s teammate was Jordon Snider, grandson of Duke Snider. That year the team became the SCCB Champions. Both Tony and the Duke witnessed the success of their third generations’ of grandsons’ baseball endeavors.

Tony had three loves: God, family, and baseball. On Feb. 20, 2016, Tony Lugo passed away with his children at his bedside. Tony left the Lugo family with many fond memories as a great father and a fine baseball player. During the eulogy at the funeral service, Tony’s eldest son thanked the Lord for being good to the Lugo family. He also thanked the good Lord for picking a good man to be their father.
Richard Pena was born into baseball

After all, being the eighth son among nine brothers, you could say that the team was waiting for him. He was born in East Los Angeles in 1930, to William and Victoria Pena. William played baseball himself in Mexico, and instilled that love of the game into all of his sons.

Richard was an accomplished athlete while growing up in East LA. You could always find him playing in neighborhood games at Evergreen Park. He started as the varsity quarterback when he was just a freshman football player at Roosevelt High School. He got the starting nod when the older starting quarterback broke his leg. That quarterback was his older brother, John. Not long after that, Richard’s extraordinary baseball talent blossomed as his father created a baseball team made up of his nine sons. Richard was the standout. A speedy left-handed centerfielder, who could also pitch, the Pena brothers were a local draw, champions on the field, and heroes in the neighborhood. Some of them joined with other players to form the Carmelita Chorizeros, a semi-professional baseball team that captured city league championships for several years. Richard sometimes pitched both ends of a double-header, while hitting .400 for a season. His talent caught the eye of baseball scouts who eventually signed him to a professional contract with a team in Mexico. After several successful years of Mexican League competition, a different calling came along.

Richard had met Gloria Ochoa when he was 15. The love was immediate and they were married before Richard headed to the Mexican leagues. After his return to Los Angeles, his children were born: Linda, Richie, Dotti, and Ted. Richard turned his passion for baseball into work with young people. He became a respected coach at the Eastside Boys Club. He coached future professional athletes, Willie Davis and Mike Garrett. Richard not only taught his players about baseball, he helped them find themselves as people.

Two priorities shaped Richard’s life: family and education. He himself did not attend college, so he made sure that his children were committed to higher education. Three have master’s degrees, and one has a doctorate. Richard was extremely proud of the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren. He was always generous with his advice and his resources. Friends and relatives, would receive financial help seemingly out of nowhere, only to realize later on it was Richard’s gesture.

Richard’s later years centered around his grandchildren and he took great joy in seeing youth and high school athletics, as well dance recitals and theater performances. Family gatherings were special times for he and Gloria through 68 years of marriage.

In April 2016, Richard Pena passed from natural causes at the age of 86, leaving behind a legacy of love, family, fair play, and a life well-lived. At his funeral, his grandchildren joined in a tribute by wearing replica jerseys from the Carmelita Chorizeros. Richard would have loved it.
UPCOMING EVENTS:

Alhambra Historical Society
1550 W Alhambra Rd.
Alhambra CA, 91801

DEC. 17, 2016
11 A.M. - 4 P.M.
All 10 books titles will be on sale. These books, especially the East Los Angeles book, will make a great Christmas gifts.

For additional information please call Richard Santillan (626)375-9944

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