

SAM CHAPMAN TIBURON'S TWO SPORT ALL-AMERICAN

By Dave Gotz

Samuel Blake Chapman (1916-2006) was born in Tiburon to Katherine and Charles Chapman who kept a boarding house on Mar West Street. His father ran a general store on Main Street and served as Tiburon's Post Master from 1915 to 1941; young Sam worked in the store and delivered mail. Showing baseball promise at an early age playing in the sand lots near the Tiburon rail yard, blasting home-runs over the parked freight cars, Sam went on to be captain of the varsity baseball team at Tamalpais High School, lettering in baseball, football, basketball and track. In 1934, Sam enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley, building up his body during the summers as a welder's helper on the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge. At Cal, Sam became known as the "Tiburon Terror" as one of the star players on the "Thunder Team." His All-American talent for running, kicking, and playing defense carried the team to new heights, including the last Rose Bowl victory by a Cal team on New Year's Day 1938.

Turning down a pro football career, Sam was scouted by baseball legend Ty Cobb and signed by the legendary Connie Mack to the Philadelphia Athletics as an outfielder. He played 11 seasons for the team, taking a break in 1942 to join the U.S. Navy where he served as a pilot and flight instructor for three years. Returning to the A's in 1946, Sam hit three home runs in a single game against Boston and was named to the American League All-Star team with Ted Williams and Joe DiMaggio. After a

year with the Cleveland Indians in 1951, Sam returned to the West Coast to join the Oakland Oaks for his final three seasons, hanging up his cleats in 1954 with a career .266 batting average in 1368 games including 180 home runs and 773 runs batted in.

Sam Chapman has been inducted into the Marin Athletic League Hall of Fame, UC Berkeley Hall of Fame, Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame, Phillies Wall of Fame and National Collegiate Hall of Fame. He is still considered by many to be the best all-around athlete to ever come out of Marin County. For much of his post-baseball career, Sam worked for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District as an air quality inspector, retiring in 1982. He appeared many times over the years to throw out the first pitch for the Season Opener of the Tiburon Peninsula Little League.

Sam's good friend, former Tiburon fire Chief Frank Buscher (1934-2010), actively lobbied to have a seated statue of Sam erected in downtown Tiburon at the Ferry Plaza. That effort ultimately failed due to lack of community and Town support, however a brick monument with two plaques was dedicated June 2012 at the Point Tiburon Plaza where you can see it today.

Help Landmarks Society preserve our local history and keep it accessible for the community and visitors. To become a member, or volunteer, visit our website at www.landmarkssociety.org or call 415-435-1853. "The Tradition Starts With You!"



1. Autographed photo from the late 1930s.
2. Sam at bat in the "Old Timers" game circa 1955 at Judge Field. The cars behind are parked on Mar West Street. Tiburon Little League was played on this field from 1950 until 1965 when the Tiburon Peninsula Club turned it into tennis courts and a parking lot.
3. Sam Chapman throws the first pitch to start the 2004 Little League season.



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