

Skillicorn boys formed only all-brother baseball team in country

"A game is a game, no matter what the score. But what kind of a game, is another question. The game of ball on Memorial Day was a "scream" from the girls for the Skillicorn family who were out in force to root for the family, which, of course, was appreciated by them, for they certainly tried hard to get into the lead. Superior playing by the opposite side beat them however. The best they could do was by their champion base runner, little Elmer, the midget whose height is about 4 feet 5-inches." (They lost to the Watsonville team 14 to 3) — May 31, 1922, Evening Pajaronian.

Watsonville has had many fascinating stories from the past but one of the most interesting was the Skillicorn baseball team which played exhibition games in the early 1920s. It started out as a joke when one of the nine Skillicorn brothers told the manager of the Watsonville Pippin baseball team that he and his brothers could whip the hometown team.

Most of the Skillicorn boys worked on the railroad and came all decked out in overalls for their first games. The team was managed by their father, George "Pop" Skillicorn and the four girls in the family provided for a strong and loud rooting section. The girls were Alice (Freiermuth); Emma (Swift); Catherine (Tuttle) and Mona (Stewart). Alice is the only one left of the 13 children.

The boys came to the field with new uniforms in 1922 — tan with gray stripes; red and white socks; the players' numbers on the sleeves and "Skillicorn Bros." printed across the front of their jerseys.

Naturally, there had to be substitutes and these included: Tommy Rowan, Stork Novacavich, Dizzy Rubas and Sam Limburgh. The team only played exhibition games in Santa Cruz County though they had



Betty Lewis

That was
Watsonville

several offers to tour the United States — but they had good jobs and there wasn't much money playing baseball in those days.

The Skillicorns' were the only all-brother baseball team in the United States. In 1961, their picture was placed in the National Baseball Hall of Fame located in Cooperstown, New York.

"What the team needs, is for the fans to organize a Skillicorn encouragement society, take the team in hand and bring about a good club. It would mean a good advertisement for Watsonville and the opportunity should not be passed up... Can you point to another family of nine boys, sticking together as they are at present, who would not be an asset to any community? The name of Watsonville and the Skillicorn family baseball team linked together would make the town famous, and a combination hard to beat. The advertisement of such an aggregation is self-evident." — Evening Pajaronian, May 31, 1922.

The Skillicorn baseball team only lasted for a few years but it was certainly one of a kind and provided a lot of memories for the community and the Skillicorn family as well. The accompanying picture of the team hangs in the office of attorney Tom Skillicorn whose father, Thomas, was a member of the team.

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Skillicorn baseball team 1922: Top row, from left, Bill — third base, George, first base, George Sr. — father and manager, Clarence — catcher and Archie — left field; bottom row, from left, Amos — second base, Eddie — shortstop, Kenneth — center field, Thomas "Harry" — pitcher and Elmer — right field.