

ABSTRACT AND TRANSCRIPTION
OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
THELMA "TIBY" EISEN

FOR

THE FORGOTTEN CHAMPS:
THE 1944 MILWAUKEE CHICKS

PRESENTED TO
DR. MICHAEL GORDON
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE

BY

GINA RADANDT
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THELMA "TIBY" EISEN

INTRODUCTION

History of the All-American Girls Baseball League

The history of women in baseball goes further back than the A.A.G.B.L. but this was the first nationally organized effort to have them play "real" baseball. Started by Philip K. Wrigley in 1943, this league was created in part to answer the shortages in baseball left by World War II and to encourage continuing interest, entertainment, and profit. Wrigley wanted the women to play a hard game of ball yet act "like ladies" so he sent them to deportment classes and had them strictly chaperoned. The 1943 season saw four teams play and, in 1944, the Milwaukee Chicks joined the league. The Chicks in their first and only season in Milwaukee went on to win the championship that year and then were disbanded and moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan. They could not find a market in Milwaukee as they were competing against the minor league Brewers team. By 1954, the A.A.G.B.L. was on it's way to becoming a forgotten era in sports history. However, this project was conducted, in part, to show that the Chicks and all the players had a brief yet significant role in our social history.

Background

Thelma Eisen was born in 1922 in Los Angeles, California and grew up and attended school there. Thelma's father owned a trucking business and her mother was a homemaker. After she graduated from high school, she got a job on the railroads in California as a Harvey Girl and took some basic college courses. She played softball throughout her youth for the L.A. county leagues. She tried out as an outfielder for the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in 1944 and was placed on the Milwaukee Chicks. The 1944 Chicks won the league championship. She played eight seasons with the league and retired in 1952. Then, she went to work at various factories ending up at G.T.E. working in the switchroom. She retired from there in 1986. Thelma never married and has no children. She lives in California, plays golf, and is on the Board of Directors of the league's players association.

Interview

I interviewed Thelma "Tiby" Eisen for about an hour and forty minutes over the telephone from my home in Wisconsin and her home in California. The interview took place on March 15, 1995 starting at 7am(PST) / 9am(CST). Tiby could not recall many details about the Chicks and the League because it happened a long time ago, but the interview is very interesting nonetheless.

Eisen Interview

Abstract and transcription

These documents are an abstract and transcription of the taped interview. The abstract lists the topics covered on each tape in the order of their discussion. It also indicates, in the left margin, the counter number on a cassette recorder where each new subject begins. Thus, by consulting the abstract, the researcher can use a fast-forward button to find the portion of the interview he/she wants.

The abstract is designed to provide only a brief outline of the contents of the tapes. It is intended to help the researcher locate useful topics quickly. The transcription is a verbatim recounting of the entire interview designed to aid researchers in searching out information regarding the Chicks and the A.A.G.B.L. The abstract is first and the transcription follows.

Restricted Sections

There are no restricted sections.

Gina Radandt

Public History Student

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

April 19, 1995

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH THELMA "TIBY" EISEN

TRANSCRIPT

Gina Radandt: O.K. then. I have the tape running. This is Gina Radandt talking via the telephone with Thelma "Tiby" Eisen. Now Tiby, the first thing I'd like to start with is some biographical information and I'd like to ask you where you were born and when you were born?

Thelma Eisen: I was born in Los Angeles, California in 1922.

GR: O.K. and then may I have your father's name and occupation and your mother's maiden name and if she had an occupation?

TE: Uh, my father's name was David Eisen and he had a trucking business in the old days in Los Angeles here and my mother's name was Dorothy.

GR: O.K.

TE: She was a homemaker.

GR: O.K. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

TE: Yes. I had two brothers and one sister.

GR: O.K. And what were their names?

TE: My brother, who was older, his name was Milton Eisen. And my younger brother, I was five years older than he was, his name was Harry Eisen.

GR: O.K. Alright then.

TE: And I had a sister and her name was Adele.

GR: Oh, ok. Alright then, um, now you went to school? Did you stay in Los Angeles then?

TE: Yes, I stayed in Los Angeles.

GR: O.K. And that's where you completed... did you go through high school?

TE: I went through and took courses in college later.

GR: Oh, ok. Can you tell me about any hobbies that you had as a child, um, were you interested in baseball and softball even at that time?

TE: Well... as a child, I loved to run (laughter) and to play softball when I was about twelve or thirteen. I used to go to the playground all the time and play in the neighborhood and some people came up one time and said gee you run fast. And we used to play tennis there. He came up and said you have a pretty good swing. That's how I got started in softball.

GR: O.K. Alright, that's great. Um, let's see. Now I'm wondering, um, if you can recall... Now, you were born in the twenties so the Depression, you would have experienced some of that? Do you have any particular memories of the Depression years?

TE: Well, my father, as I said, he was in the trucking business. He had his own truck and he moved people. And did whatever he could, you know, to earn a living. Things were pretty bad at that time but he did manage to always have food in the house and to have jobs. So we ate very well because he knew where to go to do all these things.

GR: Oh, ok. Alright then, um, now I want to get back to yourself. You went... when did you graduate from high school then?

TE: In 1941.

GR: O.K. and then... did you go right on to college courses? Or was that even...

TE: No, from there I went out to work.

GR: O.K.

TE: Into... you know, it was the war years.

GR: Right.

TE: Almost (laughs). And I was one of the first Harvey Girls actually (laughs).

GR: Oh really!

TE: In Los Angeles they had built the new railroad station down there.

GR: Sure.

TE: And my girlfriend got a job down there in the soda fountain and she says there's a job if you want to come down . And I ran down there and worked there for quite some time. I didn't know anything about it. I told them I knew how to fix sodas (laughs).

GR: Right (laughs).

TE: We had a wonderful time too for, oh, probably a year or so.

GR: O.K. So, you stayed there until about 1942?

TE: I think so. Yes, somewhere in there.

GR: And at this time were you doing any type of softball or baseball activities?

TE: Uh, oh yes, I was doing... I was playing in the local teams. I was... I had been playing since I was about fourteen or fifteen years old.

GR: Oh, so it continued all the way through?

TE: We had a regular softball league here in the city.

GR: Oh, ok.

TE: It was very active.

GR: O.K. Now, I know when you were with the Chicks you were an outfielder, correct?

TE: Yes.

GR: Is that the position you played primarily when you were, you know, in Los Angeles?

TE: Yes it was.

GR: O.K. Alright, um... great. Well, this is leading us up to, um, to the Chicks and all that information. But, I did want to cover then, um, were you... did you ever marry?

TE: No, I didn't.

GR: No. O.K. And then, let's see. Now the next topic is occupational history and we've started to get into that. So, after high school, you went to work with the railroads as a Harvey Girl. Um, and then... let's see. And you were still playing with the Los Angeles softball league and things like that. Now, did you follow men's professional baseball at all? Were you interested in that or just what you were doing as a softball player?

TE: Uh, I didn't follow it so much until I got into the, you know, the baseball league.

GR: Right.

TE: Here in Los Angeles we used to have a lot of the major league ^{players} at that time that used to practice in the area. And they would sometimes practice at the same time that our teams would come out. We had these softball fields and also baseball fields at one of the big parks called Brookside Park in California. And some of the big league players would come out there and practice and you would pick up little pointers. So we did follow some of them.

GR: That's great. O.K. Now, did you tryout for the 1943 season? For the first season of the All-American Girls League or did you just come on board in 1944?

TE: No, we came on board... most of us from California in 1944.

GR: O.K. Alright. And did they hold, um, a tryout out in California? Is that how you heard about it or had you already heard about it from any press for the 1943 season?

TE: Well, one of the softball managers out here by the name of Bill Allington. Apparently they contacted him and of course he had access to (laughs) about ten different softball teams in the area. And so he had tryouts and six of us made it from California.

GR: O.K. Do you remember any of the other ladies that came out from California with you?

TE: Uh, yes, uh... Annabell Lee and Dottie Wilts was her name at the time. She's Dottie Collins now. And uh, let's see, Faye Dancer and Alma Ziegler and I guess myself. Is that five or six?

GR: I think that's five.

TE: I missed somebody.

GR: That's alright.

TE: It'll come to me.

GR: That's ok cause some of those names are certainly familiar.

TE: Yes, uh-huh.

GR: O.K. great, um, so they held the tryouts in 1944 or 1943?

TE: 1944.

GR: In '44.

TE: Well, lets see. I guess they had the tryouts in 1944 because it was just before spring training that we went back and they had the tryouts.

GR: O.K. And then from learning that you made the cut, um, where did you travel to then? What was kind of the sequence of events?

TE: The six of us took a train and went to... I think it was... spring training was held in Peru, Illinois. I don't recall if we went to Chicago first but we finally got to Peru, Illinois. And they had wonderful facilities down there for everybody. The whole league was there.

GR: Oh, right. So, that was kind of the basecamp so to speak?

TE: Uh-huh.

GR: O.K. and then that was where you found out... did you know right away you were going to be assigned to the Chicks?

TE: No, actually, it was quite a story. The girls that I went out with I would say were all Double A players in the softball league. And I was just an A or kind of a B player at the time. They weren't sure if I was going to make it or not (laughs) but I was sure (laughter).

GR: Good for you.

TE: And when we got back there, why I did make the cut. Thank goodness Max Carey, who was at the training camp too, was ^a wonderful father image and he certainly helped me.

GR: Wonderful. O.K. that sounds good. Um, now, how did your family feel about all of this?

Your going out, off to the big city of Chicago so to speak and...

TE: Well, of course, I was a little older by then and ah... they really were never that interested actually. Uh, I played softball and did the things I wanted to do but none of them were really fans of baseball or softball. They liked... my father when he was young was a wrestler. He enjoyed that. I understand my mother played tennis at one time but other than that why, I was was just, I guess (laughs), doing what I wanted to do (laughs).

GR: O.K. So they supported you that much?

TE: Yes.

GR: Just letting you go on and do your own thing. O.K. Um... and I assume you were very excited about the whole thing? Did you think it was, when you had first^{heard} about the league and everything, did you assume that it was going to be just a totally new world for you or did you kind of think about it when you first^{heard} of the league?

TE: Well, I thought it was wonderful because, uh, I wanted to travel. I had'nt really travelled very much. Just locally. I'm trying to remember if I had even been to San Francisco in those days. Young days and it was so exciting. It was a new experience going on the train, you know, to go back east was another big exciting thing.

GR: Oh sure, oh sure. O.K. um, now you went out to Chicago or to Peru, Illinois with the five other young ladies? And what, apart from the actual tryouts and the playing of ball, what else do you remember about the trip? Were you just excited about... about going in the first place? Was that pretty much the most memorable thing?

TE: Well, I remember a lot of things about being on the train. I think it was at that time... I'm not sure... there were some soldiers on the train when we went through, you know, at certain areas. Why, uh, they... the... some of the black soldiers, you know, always had to wait in line. Always had to be last and, of course, being from California I could'nt understand that you know. But that was a long time ago. But the scenery... the wonderful view... and being in different areas. It was just fantastic.

GR: O.K. and when did you reach Peru? Could you estimate how many young ladies were there for that 1944 start?

TE: Well, I would assume that there were at least a couple of hundred.

GR: Wow.

TE: It's been a long time but there were lots of women there.

GR: O.K. So you get there and you're playing and you're doing practice games I would assume and things like that?

TE: Yes, they had practice sessions where you would run, you know, to get your body in shape. And throw and we did that for... oh I would say three to four days trying to get in shape. And then they would have practice games. They would, ah... what they tried to do was allocate players to certain teams so that the league would be fair. Because it really wasn't owned by anybody and they did it that way. So if you had ten outfielders and some were good and some weren't, well they tried to put some of the players on a team that had maybe better infielders or not, you know, so it would be even.

GR: O.K. and how long did that actually last?

TE: Well, spring training, I believe, was about two weeks.

GR: O.K. and then from there you went right to Milwaukee?

TE: No, uh, well let me think now. Jeez. We did so many different things at different times (laughs). No, I think we... let's see... we were in Peru... I think we had some practice games on the way to Milwaukee. If I remember correctly, there were two teams that travelled together.

GR: O.K. So just to get the chronology right, you go to tryouts in Los Angeles and you're one of six to be picked to go to Peru, Illinois. And then you go through spring training there and when did you actually find out? Was it in Los Angeles or in Peru that you were actually going to be a part of the league?

TE: Oh, it was in Peru right after spring training. Why they allocated the players to the different teams.

GR: O.K. I see. So after those two weeks, you knew you were going somewhere?

TE: Right. We signed a contract.

GR: O.K. Alright then... we're going to talk about the contract a little bit later. Um... and could

you tell me about your reaction then and your feelings on hearing that you were actually part of the league.

TE: Oh, I was thrilled (laughter) that I made it you know. And it was a whole new experience of course going through... going there. There was so much to learn but I picked up what I could quite fast.

GR: O.K. Good. Was Phillip Wrigley there at this time? Did you ever meet him along the way?

TE: No, I never met him.

GR: No.

TE: His righthand man, Mr. Tim Cassells, was down there in charge.

GR: O.K. Right. I'm familiar with that name, but Max Carey was there it sounds like from the start?

TE: Yes, he was the manager. One of the managers at that time.

GR: So, they were all down there kind of checking all the...

TE: Oh yes. They had all the managers there and they all got together and they picked the teams.

GR: O.K., ok good. Now, let's see... the next topic that I'd like to cover is the ... um... charm school and the issues of the chaperones and things like that. Um, in 1944, that was still very much part of the league. The image and how the ladies had to present themselves. When did they start those classes for you? Was that right when you began your spring training or did that come after you arrived in Milwaukee or how did they work that?

TE: I'm trying to remember. Uh... you know I don't think the charm schools really started until about 1945.

GR: Oh, ok. This was a little bit too early then?

TE: Yeah, I think this was a little too early.

GR: O.K. But did they impress upon you that you had to act a certain way?

TE: Oh yes. Definitely and if you didn't obey the rules, why you were out because we had a lot of young ladies that were underage also and the chaperones had to make sure that everybody was taken care of. Because they told us that you were on the road and there would be lots of people that will want to meet you and that you had to be careful.

GR: Right. And so I think... I would assume that everybody knew that they really had to tow the line?

TE: Oh yes.

GR: O.K., um, now the uniforms. Were you... is that what you wore when you were playing out in Los Angeles for that softball league? Was it similar? Was the new uniform with the shorts or skirt?

TE: No, the uniform was a completely different uniform. In Los Angeles, everybody played in the satin shorts, you know, the Jockeys. And they had these beautiful colors. Why I... when we went back there, it was like a one piece tennis dress. And uh... apparently, you know (laughs) we were shocked (laughter). But that's what they wanted you to play in and if you tried to slide you know, that was another problem because you're sliding on your bare legs (coughs). Excuse me. But we managed. We learned how to slide mainly on our socks, you know, we had the knee-high socks which would protect you a lot and you learned how to hit the ground and just not hurt yourself all the time. But at first it was awful (laughter).

GR: But you just got used to it and learned how to adapt your play just a bit?

TE: That's right.

GR: Do you think that the uniforms, um, influenced the fans perception of the league? Do you think that was an important part of maintaining that image of femininity and that the fans reacted, um, good or bad to that?

TE: Well, I think they reacted good to it once they got used to us (laughter). Because, you know, I think they came out just to see what was going on at first. But the quality of play improved so much, you know, that first year that the fans were coming out to see good baseball or softball. Whatever they called it in those days.

GR: Right, right. You guys... did you guys... what, how did you classify yourselves? As just ball-players or softball players or baseball players?

TE: Well, the league was called All-American Girls Professional Ball League in '44. They had changed the name two or three times through the year because they changed the game. And we considered ourselves that first year as we were playing a little in between because of the... the field was longer. We could lead-off where you can't do that in softball.

GR: Right, ok, right. That's good. Um and then for the appearance... you guys... I was reading that you had to, when you were in public, you had to wear skirts and lipstick and your hair had to be made-up. Is that something that you guys had to follow in '44 or is that a little bit later yet?

TE: No, in '44 they didn't want anybody to... is the word... the word is today raunchy (laughter). The girls, they wore skirts. In those days, you had bobbysocks and, uh, what is his name? Boone, you know, the singer?

GR: Oh, Pat Boone?

TE: Yeah, the white shoes and the bobbysocks. That's what we wore. A lot of us.

GR: O.K. Alright. So, from spring training then you recall then going out on the road for some games and do you remember exactly when you arrived in Milwaukee then or around abouts?

TE: Well, I think the season... well let's see... we went back probably in April. I think the season was in May sometime. I don't remember exactly the date.

GR: O.K. So then possibly May 1944 is when you first sort of arrived? And did you... all the girls... well if you were playing games on the road on the way up, everybody was together including Max Carey?

TE: Right. Everybody was always together when we were playing.

GR: O.K. And your chaperone, Dorothy Hunter, she was there right from the start as well?

TE: Uh- huh.

GR: O.K. Now you... let's see. If you arrived in Milwaukee in May, did you start playing right away then in May?

TE: Uh... yes. I don't think we were there much longer than a few days and the season started.

GR: O.K., ok. And then when was the championship held? Was that October like the World Series or was that a little bit earlier?

TE: Oh, I don't ... it's been so long. I don't think we played any longer than September or the early part of October. I think we played 125 games. So, we... no I don't really recall.

GR: O.K. That's no problem. So about 125 games and would you say half the games were on the road and half were at home?

TE: Yeah. Just about that.

GR: They tried to divide it up. O.K. Did you... did you play... at what time of the day were the games scheduled for the most part? Was that evening or early evening or afternoon? On the weekends type things?

TE: We played in the evening, you know, about 7:30, 7 o'clock. That was normal.

GR: And that was at Borchardt Field when you were in Milwaukee?

TE: Yes.

GR: O.K.

TE: I think on the weekends there were afternoon games too.

GR: Alright. Now, I'd like to talk about your contract for just a few moments. Um... you signed that in Peru then once you found out you made it? Then they asked you to sign the contract?

TE: Yes, if I remember correctly, that's how they did it.

GR: Do you remember any of the terms of the contract?

TE: No... I really... I really don't recall.

GR: Was it a couple page thing or one page?

TE: Uh... let me think now. You know I have that some place but it's buried... I could'nt find it. I just think it was maybe two pages. And you know, I was reading recently about our ball league and it did say at the beginning in one of the magazines in books that they had written

at the time called "Major League Baseball- 1945". It's facts and figures and official rules. And in that book they had major league baseball in the front and then in the back they had our baseball league in it. All the girls names and the teams they played for, and it was saying in that book that the contracts at that time were something like the entertainment field, you know. The movie stars, you know, would sign certain contracts and they said ours was like that.

GR: O.K. I see. Right. What was your salary then? Your starting salary?

TE: Well, if I can remember correctly, I think that mine was about \$65 a week and I didn't care what anybody else got. I wanted to go back. I would have gone for nothing (laughs).

GR: Oh, that's wonderful to hear. So, does that jump for you from what you were making with the railroads, on the trains as a Harvey Girl?

TE: Oh, there was a big difference on the railroads. On the trains when I first started, it was \$18 a week.

GR: Oh my goodness.

TE: And that wasn't bad considering people were making 80-90 cents an hour. And that was pretty good money in some places (laughs).

GR: Wow, that's great.

TE: Well, the local bread, you know, was 15-20 cents. There was a big difference.

GR: Sure, in the prices. How often were you paid?

TE: Um... I was going to say a month but I don't know if it was a month or not. I don't... maybe it was... I really don't recall.

GR: O.K. Alright. When you did get paid, what did you do with the money? Did you have a savings account or at a bank or did you keep it on you or send it home? What was...

TE: I had a bank account that I put the money in and saved all I could so that when I went home I wouldn't have to work (laughs).

GR: Right. I see... so that was... was that a bank in Milwaukee that you had arrangements with?

TE: Yes, at that time.

GR: Alright. Did you... that covers everything I kind of wanted to touch upon with the contracts. Back to the league then and lets see... did you... in 1944 there were changes. Did you experience any changes that made the game more like baseball? For instance, did they lengthen the base distances or sidearm as opposed to overhead pitching? What were you guys playing?

TE: Well, when we first went back it was... I think it was completely... the pitching was underhand. And then it started to come sidearm and then it little by little went up. I liked the overhead pitching the best and the sidearm. Some of those ladies could really whip that ball I tell you and you didn't know where it was coming from. The ones (coughs) that did pitch sidearm, you know, they did well too.

GR: How did you feel that those changes affected your performance on the field? Did you think that you improved as a result of that or did it hamper you in any way?

TE: Well... I think it improved because, you know, they lengthened the bases and, as I said earlier when I was very young, I loved to run. And I had a pretty sharp eye and Max Carey, of course, who was my idol at the time, he, you know, led the National League in base stealing for many, many years.

GR: Right.

TE: Next to Ty Cobb.

GR: Right.

TE: And he showed me so many wonderful things, you know, on how to outsmart the pitcher and I loved it (laughter).

GR: I see. A little cat and mouse.

TE: Right.

GR: That's exciting.

TE: It was exactly that.

GR: That does kind of naturally lead into the next topic that I wanted to cover was your manager Max Carey. You mentioned earlier that he was like a father figure and became somewhat of an idol for you. Um... how else did his previous baseball experience affect your team and your attitudes toward play? Was he a very gregarious person or was he more... was he quiet and kind of laid back about it all? What was his actual coaching style?

TE: Well, you know, Max was manager of the Dodgers in 1932 and 1933 so he wasn't a quiet man (laughter). He knew how to get up and give good speeches and talk to people you know. And he was very good at that. Myself, I was always... I listened to everything he had to say because he was so interest^{ing} and the way he presented it and showed you the difference from point to point. If it was a better way than another way. And I liked him very much for that and I think that of course we won the championship. And it was... a lot of it was our ball players that did it. But a lot of it was because he was a pretty smart man.

GR: Right. Good. Um... lets see, I'm getting to the end of this side so I'm going to turn it off now.

TE: Alright.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

GR: O.K. And just to finish up with Max Carey then. He actually sounds like a very exciting person, and did he control how often the Chicks practiced or was that set up by the league? Do you recall?

TE: Practice?

GR: Yes, uh-huh. Did he have you out there?

TE: Well, as a team, once we were in Milwaukee why, he was in control of everything. We had a board of directors so to speak. But he controlled as far as the players were concerned. He was in charge.

GR: And so how, how often did you practice when you were home-based in Milwaukee there?

TE: Well. We could practice everyday if, you know, if we needed it.

GR: Oh, I see. So it was a judgement call?

TE: Yeah, once the season started, you know, we'd go out there early and warm-up and practice or if we had a day off or it was the weekend, we'd also practice.

GR: So, he was not only an effective coach but he was also an effective manager?

TE: Well I thought so, yes.

GR: O.K. Good. Any other memories or experiences that you can recall about Mr. Carey? Anything that stands out in your mind?

TE: Well, he was a... the people in Milwaukee would come down because they remembered him as a major league ball player. I remembered we had a couple of people that are now in the Baseball Hall of Fame. They came down and he introduced us around and I was thrilled to death. I didn't want to wash my hand (laughter). Some major league ball player that Max Carey knew.

GR: Who? Can you remember some of the...

TE: I'm trying to remember. I can't think of what his name was now. It's left me but I'll never forget. And of course Bill Veeck. He was in the marine corps at the time and when we opened the season there, why he was there in his uniform.

GR: Oh wow!

TE: I don't think he owned the ball team at the time. I can't remember if he was the owner but he had something to do with it there. And they opened the season and he was there and I remember that too.

GR: That's great. O.K. Now, I'd like to talk a bit about your chaperone, Dottie Hunter, and that whole experience. How did you and your family even feel when you found out that there would be a chaperone for each team? Was there any reaction to that? For you and your family?

TE: No.

GR: Nope?

TE: Well, when I say no, I meant that there wasn't any problem because like I said there were some youngsters there also. And, of course, I was a couple of years older than some of them

GR: So you understood (laughs)?

TE: Right. There was no problem. I thought the chaperones... it was great because we always had a woman to go to for, you know, female things. Which, you know, in those days you didn't even speak about it to men.

GR: Exactly (laughter). Right.

TE: So that was nice, but Dottie Hunter was great. She and Max got along just great with the team.

GR: Oh wonderful. For the younger girls I would maybe think the relationship with her was more of a mother-daughter type feeling? Did you consider her a friend, a colleague, a teacher? What was your personal...

TE: Well, somebody that was in charge. She wasn't much older than I was you know. She was what, maybe five years older but she was very mature and she was Canadian. And the girls just loved her. We always had a good time and she was right there to take care of all of our needs. To make sure the girls were there when they should be.

GR: How did she handle it if there were any violations of the rules or regulations? Do you recall any instances of that? Or was everybody pretty good (laughs)?

TE: Well, I can't say because I always kept out of trouble. I wanted to make sure I stayed on the team. So, if there were any, I don't know. I'm sure there were some (laughs).

GR: Right. O.K. And you mentioned that Dottie Hunter and Max Carey did get along quite well. Did you feel that the relationship had any type of affect on the team?

TE: Yes, I do because we were like a family. Max, he used to preach, you know, that this is a team. It's not I,I,I. It's we, we, we (laughs). And he impressed that on us from the first day.

GR: Very smart.

TE: We had to work as a unit in order to get things done and that's something that I've carried through (laughs) most of my life, you know, from remembering that as a unit.

GR: Right. So there were lessons well learned?

TE: Oh yes. Definitely.

GR: O.K. Now, when you were in Milwaukee and on the road. Well, I suppose we should start with Milwaukee. What was the social life like? Did you... were you guys able to go out? Was it just on the weekends or were you just always playing and practicing and that was about it?

TE: No. One thing that I always enjoyed doing when we went to a town when we first started. We used to love to sit in the lobby and watch people go back and forth in the hotel (laughter) There was always something to do. You could always shop and there were times when we could go out on a date but you had to be very careful, you know. You had to let the chaperone know whom you were going with and what time. You had to be back at curfew.

GR: I see.

TE: And if you weren't, you'd run into trouble (laughter).

GR: What time was curfew?

TE: Well it was probably about 10 or 11 o'clock if I remember correctly.

GR: O.K. Did the team go out together quite a bit or were there more individual, you know, girls or just a couple of girls who would hang around together? Do you have any remembrances of that?

TE: No, the team never went out as a group unless we went some place to eat maybe after a game or travelling on the bus. But you had... everybody had their own little groups, you know, after the ballgames to go eat or let's go have a bite. Everybody... you know people liked to do different things. But there was always a restaurant or someplace to go after the games to have some conversation.

GR: How did everybody get along with each other? Was it... did it really truly become that family and the feelings that go along with it or...

TE: Well I think it did on the ballfield you know. Off the ballfield you had different types of people and there was never any problem. Everybody got along well but we liked different things.

GR: Sure, that's understandable. Did you develop any strong friendships with any teammates?

TE: Well, I'll tell you of the six ladies that, including myself, that went back there. We're still friends.

GR: Great.

TE: Oh, I know who I forgot to tell you was Dorothy Doyle. She played for the Rockford Peaches. She was the sixth person that went back. I've known Dorothy since she was 11 and I'm 12 or 13 (laughter). And I still see her.

GR: Great! That's really neat. That's just... you know I would think that it makes it all the more special?

TE: Oh, it does. And I still see Alma Ziegler when I'm up north or when she comes down here every once in a while. We're always talking about the good old days like most people do (laughter).

GR: Sure, sure. Now, your... (problems with the tape). Let's see how that works. O.K. Alright. And you mentioned earlier that you were allowed to go on dates as long as you checked with the chaperone. O.K. Let's see. How often did you talk with your friends and family from home when you were with the Chicks both in Milwaukee and on the road?

TE: Oh, I would write home.

GR: There was a lot of letter writing?

TE: Yes, there was a lot of letter writing back and forth.

GR: What was the most difficult change in your personal and social life that you had to deal with when you went out to tryout and then when you found out you made the team? Was there anything that you had a particularly difficult time adjusting to?

TE: Well, let me think. No, there wasn't too much difficulty. If I were with certain individuals that, let's say, weren't warm people, sit down have a nice conversation with, it would be different. Sometimes it was uneasy because at that time I was not an outgoing person and that's what baseball did for me. To learn how to sit down and talk to people. It took a long time. I could display certain feelings out on the field, you know, outsmart everybody. Do the things you're supposed to do but then off the field, you know, you just sit back and don't

know what to say to anybody (laughs). So, that was the most difficult thing for me at the time. As I say, I was introvert not an extrovert. But I have changed some.

GR: Great. It was very worthwhile in lots of ways. O.K. The next topic I'd like to turn to is Milwaukee itself. Do you remember how the Milwaukee fans and the press, or the people of Milwaukee I should say, and the press received the Chicks? Do you recall any... reading any like articles, newspaper articles or things like that when you came to Milwaukee and throughout the season then?

TE: Well, when we first came there, they advertised in the newspapers quite a bit. They called us the little... I'm trying to think of the name... shnits or shnitzels. Little beers you know (laughter) and of course they changed the name immediately to the Chicks (laughter). The newspapers, you know, were saying the little shnitzels. I can't even remember the name now. It was in the newspapers. Of course, they changed it to the Milwaukee Chicks as I say and that was our name. But... no the fans were great. The ones that we knew that were coming out. I do remember there was a young man there. He was, oh, I would say about 35 years old and, you know, I'm 20 (laughter). He wanted to take me out on a date and was saying how wonderful he thought that the women were there and so on. We did go out. I got permission and he took me to a very fancy restaurant. We had lobster and I'd never had that before. I'd never had anybody bring a live lobster to me at the hotel restaurant and I nearly died thinking I was going to eat that (laughter). I didn't want him to know that I was from Los Angeles- Hollywood that I wasn't used to that sort of thing (laughter). Anyway it was little things like that. I liked Milwaukee. The people were nice but we didn't have even people coming out to support the team.

GR: That's right. That was part of the problem.

TE: Yes and they even had I guess, you know, an orchestra on Sundays. The Symphonic Orchestra.

GR: Yeah, I read about that.

TE: And it still didn't work. They just weren't used to it. I think if they'd stayed another year, they may have been able to do it.

GR: Yes, if they maybe could have stuck it out.

TE: Yes.

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TE: Yes.

and that could have been another reason I think that the fans didn't come out because the field was much smaller than regular baseball. They had to put, if I remember correctly, they had a fence they had to put out there so it was a regular... our game that we were playing so the dimensions were proper.

GR: O.K. I see. How did the Chicks... how did you feel about sharing Borchardt Field with the minor league Brewers? Were you excited about that or was it different? I don't know about scheduling. How they scheduled all of that but did you have to compete with them to get on the field to practice or to play?

TE: No, we never had a problem because when they were on the road why then we were at home. They scheduled it that way at the beginning of the season.

GR: Oh, so they coordinated it that way.

TE: I never really saw them play.

GR: O.K. Alright. And you said of the 125 games or so, about half were in Milwaukee and the other half were on the road?

TE: Right.

GR: Do you know what attendance would have been at the home games? Did you ever hear any figures?

TE: I don't recall in Milwaukee at that time.

GR: O.K. Did any... when you guys played the championship down in Kenosha... did any of the Milwaukee fans attend? Do you remember having a support... some support down there? Or

TE: I think that there were a few people that did come down. Yeah, but not very many.

GR: O.K. When you guys did win the championship, do you remember how the fans in Milwaukee, how the press reacted? Was there any ceremonies or anything?

TE: Well, it was a thrill, you know. It was in the newspapers but we came home... naturally there wasn't anybody there to really greet us. Because we didn't really have that many fans at the time. The few diehards that we had were maybe there, but other than that, no. That's why I think that's why they left.

GR: Part of it. Let's see. Now, how did you guys travel from city to city? What was the mode of travel to get to...

TE: Well, we travelled by bus.

GR: By bus. O.K. So the team had it's own bus. Where did you stay when you were in the other cities?

TE: We stayed in hotels.

GR Hotels, ok. And how were the fans in the other cities- the smaller cities, Racine, Kenosha, Rockford? How were the fans different from Milwaukee? Do you recall?

TE: Well, there were fans there (laughs).

GR: So just numbers (laughter). O.K.

TE: Yeah, they were great. They all supported their teams, you know, and when a different team would come that had'nt played there before, why the fans would come out and boo and harass (laughter). The usual ball fans.

GR: So it was really a different experience?

TE: Yeah, it was.

GR: What were the good things about being on the road?

TE: Well, I enjoyed being on the road. For one thing, once you're on the road, it's a unit. When you're living at home, it's not the same. When you're on the road, you're there for one purpose. To go to a place, you're all together. You eat together and you're in a unit. You're a unit and you see the people. Of course, you travelled so much, you were too tired to even talk afterwards at night. But it was still... you have somebody there to back you up.

GR: What were some of the more... what were some of the bad things? You mentioned like being tired and the schedule.

TE: It was... we had to play a ballgame, maybe a doubleheader, and get on the bus and drive back to our town. It was maybe a four-five hour trip and then the next day, why, we had maybe a doubleheader sometimes and it got a little tiring. but, of course, we were young (laughter).

Who cared at the time.

GR: Young and excited, sure.

TE: Yeah, but you had, you know, it was wearing on trips like that.

GR: Was there anybody that stands out as kind of a morale booster? Any teammates that were particularly good at that or did just all the girls...

TE: I think Alma Ziegler was quite a leader. She was always, lets get in there and do this. She was captain at the time, I think. She was good and of course all the other girls. I'm trying to remember. Well, Dottie... no, Dorothy...

GR: Lets see, there was... I have a photo of the team. Ernestine Petras.

TE: Oh yeah, Teeny. She was a hustler, that's right.

GR: Josephine Figlio.

TE: Yeah, Figlio and Pat Keagle. Merle Keagle. They called her Pat.

GR: Right. She's in here.

TE: She was a little fire. She was always hustling out there and doing things. Everybody had their own... I think that Connie Wisnewski, the pitcher, she was a great morale builder too. She was a fighter and always in there.

GR: O.K. And then I'm sure Max tried to do his part with keeping all the spirits up?

TE: Yes. I always remembered. I did want to comment about this. We had a pitcher by the name of Viola Thompson and she was such a lady coming from South Carolina. And she was a pitcher that I just could'nt believe that she could play ball (laughs). And she was a wonderful pitcher and a very beautiful young woman. She was one of the stars too. She was a good player.

GR: I've also got listed Vicky Panos.

TE: Oh gosh, yes.

GR: Dolores Kolsowski.

TE: Dolores- oh.

GR: K-O-L-S-O-W-S-K-I.

TE: I don't recall her.

GR: And then there's Merle Keagle.

TE: Yeah and, of course, Merle died many years ago. She died when she was 27. She had cancer and, of course, they didn't know anything about it then. They removed something on her back and she never recouped from it.

GR: That wasn't too long after playing.

TE: Right.

GR: Oh that's too bad.

TE: 27 years old.

GR: That's a shame.

TE: I know.

GR: I also have Alma and Clara Cook.

TE: Oh yeah. I have'nt seen some of these people.

GR: Sylvia Ronski. There's Connie and then Dolores Tetzlof.

TE: Yes. I have'nt heard from her in years. Betty Whiting had died too.

GR: Oh, ok. And then Dorothy Maguire.

TE: She also died.

GR: Oh my. Emily Stevenson is listed. Jo Kabeck.

TE: Kabeck. She died also.

GR: And Gladys Davis. So quite a few from the Chicks?

TE: Yeah, quite a few from the Chicks.

GR: Oh that's too bad cause this is a really nifty picture.

TE: Dorothy Maguire, when we first had our reunion after all these years in 1982, I think in Chicago. Her son, such a charming, wonderful young man, came to our reunion saying he had heard his mother talk about these women all of his life. He wanted to know who they were and do you know that each year that we've been together now, why he married in the meantime. He brought his baby to the reunion. He's part of our group now. Our players association. He's wonderful.

GR: Yes. We tried to contact him. Richard Chapman. We had tried to contact him last fall I remember. And I don't think anybody got much further. Well, our professor also felt that we really just needed to talk with the Chicks. So... but he was there to give us some extra information.

TE: Yeah, about his mother.

GR: O.K. Just to finish out with on the road. Where was your favorite place to play? Do you recall a city that really stands out?

TE: Well, I think I liked Kenosha and Racine because they were right along the lake down there and it was so pretty to come down into town there and see the water and the bridge in the town there. They were lovely little towns. Coming from the west coast here (laughs) and a big city. It's pretty different.

GR: I'm actually from Kenosha.

TE: Oh, are you?

GR: Yeah. But I'm way on the north side of Kenosha so I'm very close to. We did a lot of things in Racine so I know exactly where you guys used to play in Racine.

TE: There was a fan that I knew back there. She used to follow the ballplaying and when she moved to California, she got in touch with me and I'm still friends with her after all these

years. She still has family in Racine-Kenosha. I'm not sure which town but she always talks about it. Back home (laughter).

GR: Right. The next topic I wanted to move onto was the actual championship. What do you think about the quality of the season the Chicks played for 1944?

TE: The quality of play? You mean how we...

GR: How it was different from any other season that you had experienced either with your softball teams or just what you had heard. If you had anything else to compare it to?

TE: Well, as far as I'm concerned, I thought we had a great team that year. We had some great ballplayers and everybody played as a unit and we won. It was great because we had good training and everybody knew exactly what they were supposed to do. And the quality of play in the championship was very exciting and we won (laughs) and that's the point.

GR: During the championship in Kenosha, how did the Chicks team feel? Do you remember what it was like? The feelings, the atmosphere?

TE: After we won?

GR: Well, during the championship,

TE: Oh. Well, I can't remember now how many games.

GR: It was a seven game playoff. I know it went right down to the wire.

TE: Oh, that was it. I tell you the competition was great. And well, I don't want to say we were lucky. We did what we were supposed to do (laughter) and we won.

GR: O.K. How did the team feel about playing in Kenosha as opposed to playing it in Milwaukee? Did it make a difference?

TE: I think it made a difference. I think we had the fans there and regardless of whose fans they were, it's great to hear somebody cheering. You play your best and if you're in an empty ball-park, you didn't do so good.

GR: So, possibly playing some games in Milwaukee might have made a difference to either of the team's performances?

TE: I think so. I think we would have won anyway (laughs) but I think it made a difference, yes.

GR: Alright. I'm coming to the end of this. Well, it's kind of hard to see in the light. No, we can get a couple of more questions in on this side of the tape. O.K. Let me see. Now, as an outfielder, do you recall where you batted in the line-up? What was your place in the batting line-up?

TE: What Max tried to do because I was a fast runner. I usually was the lead-off. I was in Milwaukee too if I remember correctly. And it's because he had taught us that once somebody got on, what you had to do. The next batter was to push them ahead so they could get to the next. The third person up would drive them in.

GR: So, the power hitter.

TE: Right, so I did that lead-off for so many years. I was never a great power hitter but a fast runner and we scored a lot of runs.

GR: Do you remember what your batting average was off-hand?

TE: That first year... it was probably... I'm trying to think now... it was probably about 220, I'm sure.

GR: So, and that was possibly average? Pretty average?

TE: Yeah.

GR: Do you remember who was the big power hitter on the Chicks? Do you recall? Who were the strong batters?

TE: I think Pat Keagle was. She could really wallup that ball and I think Dorothy Maguire was a very good hitter too. We had a girl by the name of Gladys Davis on the team from Canada. She also was a power hitter.

GR: O.K. Good. What was your stolen bases? Did you have any stolen bases?

TE: That first year I think I did pretty well but I don't recall that year. I think a couple of years down the line I did very well.

GR: Good. Was that from being so quick? Stayed with you.