



196
EUNICE TAYLOR
 catcher

Born: 2/12/34
 Kenosha, WI
 Height: 5'4"
 Weight: 140
 Batted: Right
 Threw: Right

Before joining the AAGPBL, "Tuffy" went on tour in 1950 with the Chicago Colleens. While on tour, she had the chance to play at Griffith and Yankee Stadiums, and to meet Connie Mack. The following year she played for her hometown team - Kenosha. She's proud to have had the opportunity to play in the AAGPBL.

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Lifetime Batting Record	
Games	85
At Bats	302
Runs	25
Hits	55
RBI	25
Bat. Avg.	.182
Fielding Record	
Putouts	80
Assists	18
Errors	9
Ave.	.916

March 1st of the summer from one of the Saltes

In a League of Her Own

written & new photographs by Glenna Burch

Eunice's dad, determined his 15 year old daughter could finally be the family's ball player, would take off work and drive Eunice sixty miles three times a week for team practice (which functioned as the tryouts for the league teams). Eunice didn't make it that first year, but she showed potential. The coach told her father she was too young, "She needs more experience. Take her to Milwaukee, get her lots of play with the locals, then bring her back next year."

Eunice earns her spot on the team

In 1950 Eunice earned her spot as a catcher, at age 16, on the farm team known as the Chicago Colleens. She had to leave school a month early to make the "tour." The Colleens traveled the Midwest, Northeast and Canada on a bus tour that summer of 1950, along with the Springfield (IL) Sallies. They played exhibition games against each other in city after city. Although Eunice was a Colleen, she sometimes played for the Sallies if they needed a spot filled.

There were 30 girls in age from 16 to 22, with the average age 18. "We traveled with a business manager, baseball manager, 2 chaperones and our bus driver Ed." Eunice went on, "Games were usually at 8 pm. We couldn't eat after 4 pm as they wanted us on our toes and running. We'd always have a big meal about 11 pm after the games." They were paid \$55 a week, got their board but had to feed themselves, "You could eat for a week for ten bucks." She showed us a menu she had taken from a restaurant with grilled pork loin or lamb chops for \$1.50.

I asked her how the teams got their names. "In those days if not enough people turned out for games, the team moved on to another city, or sometimes just the uniforms moved on. I was from Kenosha, Wisconsin, home of the girls Comets ball club. The Chicago Colleens and Springfield Sallies uniforms were what were available. So, we got them."

Fortunate to play Yankee Stadium

It was a thrill for Eunice to play Yankee Stadium where she met Connie Mack, then the commissioner of baseball and the grandfather of the Connie Mack who would later become the governor of Florida. She also met Yogi Berra. "We were playing ball that night and Yogi was the ump, I was catching. The ball came right across the edge of the plate, but Yogi called it a ball. 'BALL,' I yelled swinging around, 'What's a matter with you ump - you blind!' The crowd went wild roaring and cheering for the young girl who stood up to Yogi."

Meet "Tuffy." For us her story starts in 1949. It was a time when most fathers only wanted their daughters to get married and have children. Eunice Taylor's father was different. He loved and lived for baseball. His brother had tried out and actually made it to a Nebraska big league farm team. Then a motorcycle accident ended the family's dream of Uncle Oscar being their star ball player. Eunice's brother was guided in the same direction, but playing great ball was not Donald's forte.

Eunice had always played sandlot ball. Now with the men in the family eliminated as baseball candidates, Eunice became her father's one hope. *How refreshing*, especially in 1950, for a father to dream of making his daughter a professional athlete, let alone a professional baseball player.

Philip Wrigley, the chewing gum mogul had created a league for women baseball players in the Midwest in 1943 to provide entertainment for those left at home during WW II. For many of us, what we know about the league and players was popularized in the film "A League of Their Own." It was the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AA GPBL), and it operated from 1943 to 1954; the only time in our history that women played "hardball" (well, with a baseball).

PHOTO LEGENDS

On the covers: The Sallies team from 1950

Back cover: Eunice Taylor's baseball card, and Eunice today in Mount Dora

Page 4 Right: The Colleens, 1950. That's Eunice in the back row, second in from left

Page 4 Background: Eunice in uniform, 1950

Page 5 Top: Mr. Wrigley, the league owner, insisted the girls always wear skirts or dresses when in public. That's Eunice on a tour stop

Page 5 Bottom: Dad with Bebop and Betty. Newspaper article, Eunice on right. Very bottom are menus, programs, clippings and momentos from Eunice's scrapbooks from 1950

Page 5 Background: Eunice with her first cat Dreyfus, now 12-years old. He has five toes



"There were 4 girls to a room. Some of the girls would sneak out for dates and drinking. You could smoke. There would be chaperone checks, and if you were caught 'missing' you were off the team and sent home. Mr. Wrigley had very strict rules. If you were not in uniform you had to be in a skirt or dress, *at all times*, when in public, even crossing the hotel lobby."

"I wonder now how they kept those uniforms clean. We had white uniforms and green uniforms. They were in a heavy heavy cotton fabric. You'd wear one color one day, while the other was being cleaned. Each day they would give you a crisp, clean uniform."

TV ends the League in 1954

When you look at the scrapbooks Eunice put together back in the summer of 1950, a little worn on the edges now, but with each picture lovingly captioned, you just know she had a wonderful time. She talked often in the conversation about Tippy, Isabella and Lefty who also played on the tour. About ten years ago the 'Girls of Summer' had a reunion in Clearwater. "Oh, everyone looks about the same with just a few more wrinkles," she tells me. Eunice played professional ball for two summers until she was 17 and graduated from high school. The league officially ended in 1954 when TV became the major form of entertainment and the place where most people watched ballgames.

Eunice got her baseball card after "the movie" came out. My prized autograph used to be one my sister got for me years ago of Martina Navratilova and Renee Richards entering a hotel in New Jersey. Now, my favorite autograph is on the baseball card Eunice gave me last year after someone told me she was a famous ballplayer. I'd gone over to Eunice's store, Hobscot Pet Supplies in Mount Dora, to ask her about it and discover her story.

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In a League of Her Own

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Left, Eunice shares her scrapbook and memories with Marsha, Chris and Glenna (taking the photo) in her home in Mount Dora. Eunice says she'll probably donate the scrapbooks to the Baseball Hall of Fame where she already has a spot of honor



Above, Eunice's mother. Baseball was very much a family affair for the close knit Taylors

I asked Eunice how she got from Wisconsin to Florida. Her "folks" went on vacation with friends to Ft. Lauderdale a few years after Eunice (and the girls ball league) stopped playing. When they came home they announced, "We're moving." Eunice who was living in Milwaukee at the time, went down to visit her family and fell in love with the Florida sunshine. "Bye bye winter," she announced and went home, quit her job in a factory and moved to Ft Lauderdale where she lived for many years, operating Hobscot Pet Supplies. In Lauderdale, Eunice continued her love for baseball by managing a couple of girls slow pitch (softball) teams. On one she coached a "young pip of a kid" still in high school...Rita Mae Brown.

A customer at Hobscot in Lauderdale, nearly 12 years ago, told Eunice and her partner Diana about Renningers Extravanzas. They attended one, fell in love with the charm of Mount Dora and ended up buying a home here three years later high on a bluff overlooking Lake Dora. After a few years of weekend visits, they decided to sell the shop in Lauderdale, move to Mount Dora permanently, and open a shop here (also Hobscot). Eunice says she really enjoys living here where "things are not so overbuilt."

Both Diana's parents and Eunice's father made the move to Mount Dora with them. Eunice's and Diana's fathers were great buddies. Diana's dad went first, then Eunice's in 1995. Trudy, Diana's 89 year old mother and a lovely lady, asked me to please put this in the article, "Eunice is my angel and takes very good care of me, and she's not even my daughter." They have all been a family for nearly 40 years.

Martha the Frisbee dog

Eunice is very low key about her time in the League, as she is about most of her life. She takes her pleasure from the simple things in life: her pet cat (5-toed Dreyfus), her 4 dogs (especially her "pal" Martha), and the 21 animals that live in her spacious home, including 8 rescued abused African Gray parrots, one of whom makes a sound like a falling bomb exploding. At Hobscot, Eunice (on probably too many occasions) takes in special-case abandoned and abused animals to foster (or find foster homes for) until she can find permanent homes for them and the many others she hears are in need of a new home.

Eunice names her pets to match their personalities. If you don't know "pal" Martha, Eunice's dog, stop in Hobscot to meet her (and the others who are in residence there). Take your pet with you for the visit.

"Martha's a ham, always performing. She lives for Frisbee. She's a catcher. It started as a lark in the store in Lauderdale. The place was enormous. We could play Frisbee indoors. One day a guy came in and said he was a talent agent for Ringling and wanted to buy Martha to use in a circus act."

Needless to say, Martha's kept her act with Eunice. There's a great lifesize wood cutout of Martha in the air catching the Frisbee at the store. A local artist made it a few years back and had it out front trying to sell more like it. One day, he told Eunice he needed to take it back to retouch it. She always wanted that cutout back, but couldn't find the artist who'd moved. A few weeks ago, she ran into the artist at the local computer store. She hadn't seen him or the cutout in years. On the spot she negotiated to get it back. There is definitely a special bond between Eunice and her "pal" Martha.

Eunice Taylor enjoys talking with people...another one of life's simple pleasures. If you don't know her, get to know her. She is definitely a very special person, and in a league of her own. —

