

“Working for the MLB Champion Oakland A’s - 1972 - 1974”

Yes, I worked for the A’s for 3 years and they won the championship 3 out of four of those years. I’ve never claimed any responsibility for the team’s success during my tenure as a ‘free-agent ‘ clubhouse boy’/janitor.’

However, I am a longtime believer in synchronicity ...that nothing happens as a ‘coincidence’ ... the coming together/‘formula’ for/of all of the individual parts of an equation/formula have a definite bearing on the events that transpire.

That job had a HUGE impact on my being able to transition into my career in music.

I’ve previously documented/chronicled much of my time/experiences/memories of working for the Oakland A’s & the Oakland-Alameda Coliseum.

There’s probably far more information than most folks might care to read.

I’m enclosing those memories for your possible interest, or possible future interest, or of no interest at all.

Perhaps way too much information enclosed:

- 1.) How I got the job with the A’s and it’s ‘synchronous’ impact on my life.
- 2.) Background perspective on the A’s 1979s championship years:
- 3.) A funny story/long anecdote about Charles O. Finley, former owner of the A’s.
- 4.) A surprising anecdote about a fellow A’s clubhouse employee who went on to become a world famous musician.
- 5.) How I acquired some valuable A’s memorabilia.
- 6.) On Vida Blue - sharing ‘common ground’ with an MLB great
- 7.) A’s clubhouse activities and observations
- 8.) My departure from the Oakland A’s & MLB

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- 1.) How I got the job with the A’s and it’s ‘synchronous’ impact on my life.

In 1972 I was struggling with working at various ‘temporary’ jobs while trying to get on my feet as a full-time musician, but the 9 to 5 day temporary jobs paid poorly and made it difficult for me to focus on improving my musical skills and seeking gigs in music venues. Deerfield, IL native/hipster good friend from the Midwest Ed Kennedy (RIP) had a really good-paying Service Employees Union job at the Oakland Coliseum driving a tractor for the maintenance division of the stadium. Ed knew I needed a steady job that would pay well, pay enough to allow me to save some money, included health insurance, and a flexible work schedule. Ed referred me for the job at the Coliseum.

I applied and got the job as ‘clubhouse boy’ janitor for the A’s. It takes about 50 janitors to keep the buildings and grounds clean, most of them sweep out the stands after the games and do general maintenance/janitorial work.

I was very fortunate to get a regular job assignment on the 5-man ‘detail crew’ responsible for maintaining the home & visitors locker rooms & dugouts, and the upper level press boxes.

Not doing general maintenance work like sweeping the stands.

My job was a “security” job because the management demanded that the same 5 member crew maintain the home & visitors locker rooms & dugouts, and the upper level press boxes because if anything was stolen or turned up missing from those secure areas where the team management and players worked the Coliseum management didn’t have to suspect and investigate all the employees, including 50 janitors, just initially suspect and investigate all those who had access to the secure areas, like the locker rooms and press boxes.

I only worked for Oakland A’s baseball.

I did not work the indoor arena for the Raiders or the Warriors.

I received union wages including health insurance.

I worked only when the A’s were at home, usually from midnight to 8 AM.

I had 14 to 20 days off work per month (!) as/when the A’s we’re on the road.

This allowed me a good income AND time to pursue my music.

I didn't have to work on the off-season from Nov. to April and I received unemployment insurance and this also allowed me an income AND the time to pursue my music full time during the off season.

I was also able to save enough to buy a new Martin D-18 guitar and a vintage '51 Chrysler woody-wagon that I eventually totally restored, drove as my everyday transportation, showed at vintage car shows, and even took my wife Willitte on an 8 week, 12,000 mile road trip from Berkeley, CA to Vancouver, BC, on to Jasper & Banff Canadian National Parks, on across Canada to Manitoba, down through Minnesota and over to Chicago, from Chicago to New York City, south to Washington DC, from DC southwest on the Blue Ridge Skyway, then further south to the Mississippi Delta, through southern Louisiana and west all the way across Texas to New Mexico and through Arizona to Southern California, and then north back home to Berkeley, CA. We took our time, stopped to visit family and friends along the way, enjoy the scenery and historic sights, we slept quite comfortably in the roomy back of our nicely privacy-curtained station wagon, or we camped out when the weather permitted. We stopped frequently along the way to hunt for old 78 rpm records at junk stores and thrift shops in many small towns and cities. I collected about 100+ good old 78 rpm blues, country, and jazz records. The car ran great the entire journey of 8 weeks and 12,000+ miles, no car problems and not even one flat tire in the adventure.

By 1975 I had honed my musical skills enough to leave the job with the A's & Coliseum and pursue a career in music full time.

Amazing to me that I've not had to work doing anything but music for 49 years, since 1975.

My employment with the Oakland/Alameda Coliseum and the Oakland A's, all thanks to my dear friend Ed Kennedy, was the "synchronous" stepping stone for my being able to transition into my long, happy, and most gratifying career in music.

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2.) Background perspective on the A's early 1970s championship years:

Blues Stories - My Working for the Oakland A's from 1972 to 1974:

The Oakland A's of the early 1970s were "one of the greatest teams in history."

They won three straight world championships, '72 '73 and '74, five straight pennants. They wore the first colorful uniforms, had the most colorful names, the most colorful - possibly insufferable - owner in Charlie Finley and had a club that looked like they were extras in "Easy Rider" - among those on the A's roster between 1972 and 1974 were three future MLB Hall of Fame members; Reggie Jackson, Catfish Hunter, and Rollie Fingers, the latter, Fingers, who had a mustache that could steer a motorcycle.

Other superb and memorable players of the roster were; "Blue Moon" Odom, Mike Epstein, Gene Tenace, Bert "Campy" Campaneris, Dick Green, Billy North, Sal Bando, Joe Rudi, Ken Holtzman, Paul Lindblad, Tony LaRussa, Darold Knowles, Dave Hamilton, Dave Duncan, Angel Mangual, Chuck Dobson, Bob Locker, Dal Maxvill, Glenn Abbott, Larry Haney, Ray Fosse, Manny Trillo, Gonzalo Marquez, Horatio Piña, Claudell Washington, and Phil Garner.

The Amazin' A's World Series Teams of the 1970's!:

<https://youtu.be/RTZzSHwV5OY>

The Oakland A's of the 1970s were legendary for their victories and their colorful demeanor. Scott Simon talks to author Jason Turbow about his book on the team, Dynastic, Bombastic, Fantastic.

NPR interview - (7 minutes)

<https://www.npr.org/2017/03/04/518461977/the-1970s-oakland-as-were-dynastic-bombastic-fantastic>

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3.) A funny story/long anecdote about Charles O. Finley, former owner of the A's.

In regard to my having been employed by the championship Oakland A's in the early 1970s as a 'clubhouse boy'/ Service Employees Union janitor was this personal favorite.

This story reveals the budget-minded/"tightness" of A's owner Charles O. "Charlie O" Finley, who was a multi-millionaire insurance company owner/executive.

Mr. Finley called the A's clubhouse early one morning while I was vacuuming the wall-to-wall carpeted floor onto which the players thoughtlessly/'piggishly' spit out their tobacco chaws, bubblegum, and sunflower seeds/shells. (One of my jobs was to keep three large glass punch bowls that sat on a corner table stocked with 1. Bazooka bubble gum 2. Red Man Chewing tobacco, 3. Small single cello packs of David's sunflower seeds. The players went through lots of that stuff, some even combining all three in their mouths at once. The evidence was everywhere in the clubhouse and dugout.)

I was vacuuming the floor with a large round upright industrial vacuum cleaner as I did first thing each day at work, and the clubhouse phone rang. It was definitely not my job to answer the phone in the clubhouse. My boss, clubhouse and equipment manager Frank Cienczyk was present in the clubhouse, and he picked up the phone, answered, and then he immediately turned to me while covering the phone receiver with the palm of his hand, and he yelled to me over the noise of the vacuum machine I was using, "Turn that damn thing off, it's Mr. Finley calling me!" I turned off the vacuum as instructed and seemingly busied myself by quietly filling the large glass punch bowls on the nearby corner table with gum, chew, and sunflowers seed packs, all the while I was covertly listening to Frank talk to Charlie-O on the phone. I couldn't hear what Finley was saying. I could only hear and see Frank's response out of the corner of my eye. It was a short conversation, maybe 5 minutes long.

As Frank listened intently to Charlie-O on the phone, Frank repeatedly punctuated his listening to Finley with, "Yes sir, Mr. Finley!" "Yes sir, Mr. Finley!" Over and over again for the 5 minutes of the conversation. With a final and demonstrative, "Yes sir, Mr. Finley!" Frank hung up the phone.

He had just been seriously chewed-out for 5 minutes and I was the closest thing to a whipping-boy nearby for him to immediately vent on. Frank turned to me standing about 15 ft. away, where I was innocently 'keeping busy' just doing one of my assigned tasks.

"THAT was MR. FINLEY on the phone!!!"

(I tried to act a bit surprised without saying a word.)

"Mr. Finley says that the players are using too many towels! The towel bill is usually \$250 a week, and he sees in the accounts payable that the weekly towel service bill has jumped up to \$325 per week due to the number of towels being used. Damn it! From now on, the players only get two towels each after showering, and that includes both home and away clubhouses!"

He gave me a red-faced serious look in the eye.

I silently nodded back at him in understanding and agreement.

He turned and went to his office next to the equipment room and slammed the door.

Clubhouse manager Frank Cienczyk had just 'vented' on me because I was the only person around at the time. I had nothing to do with the handing out of towels to the players. I was a clubhouse janitor. My job was usually completed before and after the team members were present, hours before and after game time. The locker room task of handing out the post-shower towels to the players was not one of the towel boys. The locker room towel boy's job was a 'special honor' and dedicated task done by teenaged high-school kids who were volunteers who were just happy to be able to be around and 'hang out' with Major League ballplayers. They did earn a small stipend (but no salary) from Mr. Finley and infrequent tips from the ballplayers for running small errands.

A's clubhouse manager Frank Cienczyk had just given me the first version of a 'speech' that he was going to have to give to the towel boys over and over again to make sure they complied with Mr. Finley's wishes regarding the 2 towel limitations on the players.

Can you imagine a 16 year-old high school kid/volunteer locker room worker telling (future MLB Hall of Famers) Reggie Jackson, Catfish Hunter, or Rollie Fingers that ("Mr. Finley says") you can't have 3rd or 4th towel? I'm glad it wasn't my job.

I don't know if the towel kids tried to enforce the Finley dictum.

I was not present to witness what may have transpired because my 'clubhouse boy'/janitor job was over hours before game time.

Also exemplified by this story is the fact that Charles O. Finley was a multi-millionaire, and he stayed so by keeping close attention to his accounts payable from top to bottom.

I quit the job in 1975 because the Coliseum administration wanted me to work for the Oakland Raiders, as well, and not take unemployment during the A's off-season. I was a Raiders fan at the time (until they moved to LA), but I quit the job after working for the Raiders in the clubhouse after only one game, 77 players all med. taped on their bodies, arms legs, ankles ... it took the 4 clubhouse boys 2 hours to pull all of that cutaway med. tape that was stuck to the carpeted clubhouse floor before we could start our regular job of cleaning and vacuuming the place. It was a Service Union Employees job, the pay was good, and with health insurance benefits, but it was physical labor and the job involved 'wear and tear' on my guitar-playing hands and my body, and by then, I was ready to apply myself to music full-time, which I did, and I have not worked in any other job other than music since 1975/76.

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4.) A surprising anecdote about a fellow A's clubhouse employee who went on to become a world famous musician.

True story and side bar, a bit more details than I previously wrote about my fellow A's clubhouse worker who later went on to become a very famous personality in the world of popular music:

A young teenaged Oakland black kid named Stanley Burrell used to street hip-hop breakdance to the music coming from his big boom box in the parking lot before and after the A's games and other Oakland/Alameda Coliseum events for spare change.

He was a good dancer and did pretty well making money busk-dancing. Mr. Finley saw Burrell do his busk-dancing in the parking lot after a game one day and Finley thought the kid was talented and quite resourceful for figuring out how to make money by busk-dancing in the Oak./Ala. Col. parking lot before and after events.

He hired Burrell to work in the clubhouse as one of the teens who had the dedicated and specific task of cleaning and shining all the players' game shoes/'cletes' using the large and long multi-wheeled shoe-shine/repair machine against one wall of the A's clubhouse.

Burrell was also, more over, hired as Finley's covert 'clubhouse snitch.' His 'job was to pass along any clubhouse chitchat, rumors, or gossip amongst the players that Finley might be interested in knowing, be useful, and have need to know.

Burrell also acted as a batboy a few times for A's games.

A few years later Stanley Burrell changed his name to "MC Hammer" and became a legendary and iconic early rap/hip-hop music super star with a career launched by his original song and music video "You Can't Touch This!"

If you look up/google MC Hammer's bio you'll see that he claims to have been "a batboy" for the Oakland A's" as a teenager. As far as I know, "Hammer" mentions nothing in his bio about how he got the job as a result of his busk-dancing for spare change to the music supplied by his 'boombox' in the parking lot of the Oakland/Alameda Coliseum parking lot before and after A's baseball games and other events,

Mr. Finley noticed him doing his hip-hop/break-dancing busking the parking lot crowd and admired his talent, energy, and ingenuity in regularly 'working' the crowd for spare change in the parking lot. So young Burrell was hired personally by Charles O. Finley to work in the clubhouse as one of the baseball shoe maintenance crew. What Burrell was really hired to do was to act as owner Finley's secret/covert and personal 'clubhouse snitch': to discreetly pay attention to what the players were talking about in regard to Mr. Finley and team 'morale.' It was sort of obvious amongst the clubhouse employees and players to keep mum around Burrell. After all, we all knew that none of the other clubhouse employees were personally hired by Mr. Finley himself. We all knew that

we were all hired by either the Oakland/Alameda Coliseum management/administration or clubhouse manager Frank Ciensczyk, not by owner Charles O. Finley himself.

So, we all suspected/knew that young Stanley Burrell had a 'special connection and job' that he was hired to do for Finley beyond his unassuming job in the clubhouse.

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5.) How I acquired the old KC A's baseball jerseys and other K. & Oakland A's memorabilia:

One day while I was working at the Oakland/Alameda Coliseum having my lunch break with one of the other employees, Ed Kennedy, who was responsible for my hearing about a janitorial union job opening at the Coliseum. Ed Kennedy's job was to drive a tractor that pulled the the huge trash gurneys from the immediate stadium area out to a staging area where Alameda County refuse/garbage trucks regularly pick up all of the trash excitedly told me that one of the huge trash gurneys just outside the A's clubhouse was filled to the brim with old KC A's uniforms and paperwork. After lunch he took me out to peek inside the gurney loaded with KC A's loaded memorabilia. I was amazed at seeing all the old wool uniforms, some of them pinstripes and others with the old A's elephant logo. Rather than trying to sneak/steal any of the 'artifacts' and risk getting into trouble or losing our jobs, my friend suggested that we go the A's clubhouse and equipment manager Frank Ciensczyk, who was the person who had thrown all the stuff away, and ask Mr. Ciensczyk if we could take some of the items home after work that day.

Mr. Ciensczyk said, "We toteshipped that old gear and stuff all the way from Kansas City to Oakland when the A's moved to Oakland. It's been taking up a great deal of room in the clubhouse storage area for years. I complained about the space the old stuff was taking up to Mr. Finley and he told me to throw it all away. So that's what I did. If you two want to take any of it home it's okay with me, just don't tell anyone else about it, try not to be seen doing so, and wait until after work to do so, not while you're 'on the clock.'

We were very excited about the opportunity, and digging through the huge gurney filled with old A's memorabilia. After work my friend and I drove our vehicles right up next to the memorabilia filled gurney that was now in the fenced staging area in the far corner of the Coliseum parking lot awaiting pick-up by the county waste/garbage truck the following day. I had an old station wagon and my friend had a pick-up truck. We lifted the lid of the gurney and climbed in. We started loading our vehicles with whatever we could; complete uniforms/jerseys/pants/hats/shoes, even only bats with players names on them. My friend also took some boxes of business paperwork. When our vehicles could hold no more we took off for home to see what we'd gotten. When I got home I unloaded the A's 'booty' to see what all I'd gotten/old uniforms and baseball gear.

Later that night my friend from work called me and we shared information about what we had. Amazingly, my friend told me that one of the boxes of office work from the KC A's years contained the cancelled checks for all the A's employees during their years in KC, and that included not just office workers, but players and coaches. For example; he found cancelled checks that were endorsed by the payee signatures Hall of Famers Joe DiMaggio, who had been an A's batting coach in KC, and Lefty Gomez, who had been a pitching coach for the KC A's, as well as legendary pitcher Satchel Page, who had finished his Major League career as a Kansas City A!!!! and endorsed paycheck/signatures of almost every other player who had been on the roster when the A's were in Kansas City.

My friend and I managed to find out the name and phone number of the most pre-eminent collector and appraiser of A's memorabilia living in the immediate Oakland Bay Area. We called him and we each made an appointment with him in hopes of his appraising what we had and our selling off as much as we could. The collector/appraiser came to my home in Berkeley to see what I had. I'd spread everything out on my backyard lawn for hi to look at. Needless to say, he was amazed at what had been trashed by clubhouse manager Frank Ciensczyk at the orders of Mr. Finley, especially since Finley was a well known to be a tight-wad and the items were of great value to baseball memorabilia collectors and could realize a great deal of money for Finley.

What my friend and I managed to salvage was a very small percentage of what the huge gurney had contained. The MLB gear/uniform/equipment appraiser was such an expert and so knowledgeable about the A's history that

he could look at any piece of equipment with a team number on it, like a jersey, bat, pair of shoes, and tell you what player had worn the gear and what year. For example, he pointed to a jersey, pants, and shoes that I had that all had the number 2 on them and he said without hesitation, "That's Tommy Davis's uniform." He said he was interested purchasing most all of the gear and asked me what I wanted to keep. I selected a couple of official KC A's team uniform wool jerseys in both pinstripes and with the elephant logo, a couple of pair of the earliest white kangaroo leather baseball shoes (the A's were the first team to wear shoes that were not black), and a couple examples of A's caps from over the years, and a couple of bats. I sold all the rest of the gear to the guy for about \$500+. Sure, it seems like I got 'ripped off' getting paid 'so little', but I did it because in '73 I was poor 'hippie musician/janitor' and that was a lot of money and my ability to try to sell the stuff was very limited, there was no internet in those day to get other appraisals and to reach out to interested potential buyers on a national or even local/regional level. This was my opportunity to get the money for all of it in one fell swoop, not have to parse it out to others over time whom I'd have to try and find to sell it to. I was quite happy at the time. Looking back, I understand that if I'd hung on to it all, that years later I'd have realized much more money, but for me, at that time, it was "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." I don't really regret my actions. The money was quite a windfall for me at the time.

The appraiser also looked at and bought much of the gear my friend had. My friend also kept some jerseys, gear, and he selected a number of the most famous of the signature endorsed/'autographed' paychecks, like DiMaggio, Gomez, Page, and a few others which he kept for himself. He was also quite happy to receive such a windfall.

I still have the shoes, few hats and jerseys that I kept for myself.

Regarding the couple of A's full team autographed baseballs that I have:

The A's team management gave out/gifted souvenir baseballs with the entire team's autographs on them to 'special guests' who were invited to visit the team in the clubhouse. The balls were stamped with the A's logo. All the team members were 'required to autograph each ball. Here's how that procedure was done in the clubhouse to insure thta all the players autographed all of the balls: The baseballs were first stamped with the A's logo, then they were all placed in a typical large plastic laundry basket. The laundry basket full of souvenir balls as placed next to the first locker in the long row/line of team lockers lining both sides of the clubhouse. The player who was assigned/occupied the first locker at the beginning of the row of lockers had to sign every ball in the basket, in his 'spare time,' and then place the laundry basket of baseballs next to the players locker that was next to his, for that player to sign in his spare time, and do like wise, autograph all the balls in the laundry basket, and move the basket of balls on to the next player's locker to sign, etc. etc., until the laundry basket of balls reached the end of the two rows of lockers, which meant that the entire team had signed all of the baseballs, and then the laundry basket of fully autographed baseballs was then picked up by the clubhouse manager and taken to his office where team members and A's executives could get them to gift to their friends and clubhouse guests.

That's how I managed to get a couple of fully team autographed A's souvenir baseballs.

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6.) On Vida Blue - sharing 'common ground' with an MLB great

I worked as a clubhouse janitor for the Oakland A's during their championship years from '71 to '74. Many memories surface when I think back on those days. In particular of my supplying/smoking/sharing a joint with the great Vida Blue.

I was part of an 'exclusive' 4-man crew that was charged with cleaning both home and visitor club-houses and dugouts, as well as the upper level press box in the Oakland/Alameda Coliseum.

A private employee's only elevator went from the clubhouse under the stadium up to the press box.

Vida Blue would come to the ballpark very early, a couple of hours before game time on the days he was supposed to pitch, and he'd take the private employee's elevator from the lower team-room/clubhouse level up to the empty upper press box level alone before the game to sit and stare/meditate on the view of the empty Oakland/Alameda Coliseum ballpark below and the scenic view of the Oakland hills in the background

On one of the days Vida was to pitch I was waiting for the elevator in the lower clubhouse level to go up to the press box and clean the area before the sports reporters arrived. To my surprise as the elevator door opened and I entered the elevator Vida Blue entered the elevator with me. As only the two of us rode the elevator up to the press box I said to Vida; "Hi Vida. How're you doing?" He looked me over and my long hippie hair and full beard, and he smiled a big smile and responded., "Well, I'm doing pretty good, but I'd be doing a lot better if I had 'something good' to get behind. I immediately assumed, by the way he checked out my hippie appearance and smiled at me, that he meant marijuana, so I responded, "Well if you meet me here tomorrow at the same time I think I can help you out." He nodded and said, "Okay, it's a deal. I'll see ya tomorrow same time same place."

We got off the elevator to the upper level press box together. Vida took a seat at the long counter of press-desks in the center of the press box and I proceeded to get on with my work of cleaning the area while Vida sat quietly alone looking out on the view of the empty field, stadium, and scenic view of the Oakland hills in the background.

I showed up the next day at the appointed time and location with a couple of big fat doobies in my shirt pocket. Sure enough, Vida was waiting for me on the lower level of the Coliseum outside the A's clubhouse in front of the elevator. We greeted each other cordially and the two of us rode up together in the elevator to the press box, at which time I passed/palmed the two fat doobies to Vida. He put the two joints in the chest-pocket of the sports shirt he was wearing. (He'd pitched the previous day when we'd first met, and he was not pitching on this day.)

When we got up to the press box we got off the elevator together and Vida took a seat at the long counter of press desks. He took one of the doobies out of his shirt pocket along with a book of matches and he lit it up, took a big long toke, and he handed the joint to me. I took a long draw on the joint and handed it back to him as he exhaled a big cloud of smoke and he said, "Thanks, man. That's some good shit." I said, "You're most welcome, Vida. Enjoy it. I gotta get to work before my boss finds me slacking off on my job"

As he took another long draw on the joint he thanked me again, we shook hands, said our good-byes, and I went back to the elevator to resume my work down in the clubhouse.

A fond and cherished memory of my personal 'high encounter' with the great young pitching phenom Vida Blue.

RIP Vida Blue - who, sadly, just recently (5/23) passed away at age 71 in San Francisco.

Cherished memories.

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7.) A's clubhouse activities and observations:

I did/participated daily in clubhouse activities that would blow some baseball fans' minds.

For example, while I was vacuuming the clubhouse, nobody present/around but me, I might stop to take a break and stretch briefly, perhaps right in front of Reggie Jackson's locker, and take a few swings with one of his many bats, and then carefully replace in the locker/stall exactly where it had been.

Reggie's locker was stacked 2 ft. high with his pairs of baseball shoes, all were A's white kangaroo leather.

If he, and/or other superstars on the team got the slightest cut in the leather or a serious unremovable blemish that the clubhouse shoe maintenance crew couldn't remove, the shoes would be thrown out or given away by the player to friends/fans.

After all, MLB is sports big business/"show business" and one's uniform/costume must be perfect for every performance.

Also, Reggie had an endorsement deal with Adidas or Nike, one of the baseball shoe manufacturers, and he kept the back seat of his always new convertible muscle car totally filled with a huge assortment of running

shoes and sneakers in various common sizes which he would give away spontaneously to kids on the street in the Oakland 'hood.

In contrast to Reggie's 'star shoe status', when young shortstop Manny Trillo was first called up from the A's AAA minor league farm club I noticed that his locker had only two pair of game/baseball shoes. He had a new white kangaroo leather pair that he had to acquire to play in 'the bigs' with the A's, and one pair of the standard black baseball shoes, kept available in case he got sent back down to the minors.

Keep in mind that the A's were the first MLB team to wear baseball shoes that were anything other than black, and that Mr. Finley's choice of white kangaroo leather shoes were cool/classy looking, but were prone to easily show damage, and even show grass staining. The clubhouse shoe maintenance small crew were kept busy, (and cursing Finley's choice of white shoes.)

It was the clubhouse maintenance crew's job to keep the three huge punch bowls that occupied a large oblong table in the center of the clubhouse filled: one punch bowl filled with single-wrapped Bazooka bubble gum, one filled with small single cello packs of David's salted sunflower seeds, and one punch bowl filled with single chaw/packs of Red Man chewing tobacco. The players could freely help themselves to these items. Some few players indulged in all three of these items simultaneously! Mixing the bubblegum and tobacco chaw (yuk,) was a more common choice.

We were to keep the locker room shower area multiple sinks/mirrors/shelves stocked with a broad variety of Gillette Inc. shaving and shampoo products provided free by Gillette. Needless to say, I kept my home stocked with bubble gum, sunflower seeds, and assorted Gillette products. (The Red Man tobacco/chaw, no thanks.)

The Spalding brand baseballs that were given to clubhouse guests and fans that were signed in advance by all the team members were in a couple of large plastic laundry baskets.

The clubhouse and equipment manager Frank Cienczyk was in charge of filling a basket with plain white baseballs that he ink stamped each with the A's team logo. He then placed the basket of unsigned baseballs at the player's locker closest to his office. The balls were signed by the first player and when he'd signed them all he placed the basket of balls next to the locker of the player's locker on his left, etc., until the basket of balls made it all the way around the locker room and back to the last player's locker next to Mr. Cienczyk's office on the opposite side of the locker room from where they'd started, having all been signed and having traveled in a U-shape around the room. The team-signed balls were a cherished item of guests and fans and it takes a while for each player to sign all those laundry baskets filled with multiple times during the season. The players had to sign the balls "on their own clubhouse time", so clubhouse manager Cienczyk had to frequently chide/remind players in "general announcements" to keep the basket(s) filled with unsigned balls moving around the room and get the baseballs signed, with no procrastinating.

"It's not easy work being in the big leagues."

I liked to take/eat my lunch solo in "Vida Blue's meditation spot" the upper level press boxes area where there were long formica tables and chairs facing out against a protective glass out toward the Oakland hills and down onto the playing field. A sheltered, lovely, and relaxing view.

Vida knew what he was doin' by seeking sanctum sanctorum/peace/quiet alone in the upper level press box with a great view of the Colosseum playing field/ballpark and the Oakland Hills and SF Bay as the backdrop.

Yup. Insurance-made-millionaire and A's owner Charles O. Finley was a real 'piece of work': Can you believe that to save on his financial overhead he sacrificed the team's best interest by directing his then A's manager Earl Weaver to bench Reggie Jackson late in the season/October so that Jackson couldn't/wouldn't have a chance to improve his batting average and use his improved batting statistics as leverage to demand/increase his salary in the upcoming winter contract negotiations with A's management/Finley.

"The bottom line always rules/ruled." in the world of 'Charley O.' Whether it's a player's salary or skimping on how many towels a player was allowed to use in the clubhouse.

Remember: Reggie didn't become known as "Mr. October" until he was traded to the Yankees and he carried that team to the World Series multiple times via his late season/October batting accomplishments.

Years ago I saw Finley personally "push" his day-glow orange baseball on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, and I recently saw a repeat of that show on a cable nostalgia TV channel. It was a good idea. It took years to catch on in any sport.

... but his idea about seeing the ball better gained traction with girl's and women's softball. Several years ago, they started playing with yellow softballs. I guess he was ahead of his time on that one."

I think he also came up with the idea of the balls for the umpire coming up out of the ground on a pedestal near and behind the ump's location behind home plate. He also instituted the concept of the "designated runner" and in 1974 hired track star Herb Washington to "run" for the A's.

Herb Washington – Society for American Baseball Research:

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/herb-washington/>

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8.) My departure from the Oakland A's & MLB

I was given an ultimatum by the Oakland/Alameda Colosseum after the '74 MLB season that if I didn't continue working for them as a clubhouse crew person for the '74 NFL season Raiders that I'd be terminated. I knew the difference between working maintenance in a clubhouse with a baseball roster of 28+/- players and a football roster with 50+/- players in the exact same locker room ... too much work: filth and tons of adhesive tape totally covering/sticking to the floor to pick up even before you could vacuum the area, plus, I'd been spoiled by receiving unemployment during the baseball's off-session.

No thanks and no interest in working for the Raiders.

So I was terminated.

Fortunately I'd saved my money during the 4 years with the A's, and I'd also bought a few guitars, bought an old car, plus I had worked hard improving my guitar/music chops and getting out and performing and establishing myself in the SF/Oakland/Bay Area music scene in the off-season and when the A's/team was on the road.

I made the transition to becoming a professional musician, and that became my career for the rest of my life.

Definitely many fond memories created, and definitely no regrets,

"The blues has been very good to me."

- Michael "Hawkeye" Herman

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The fortunate ones: regardless of the type of 'career' work one chooses in "making a living", work doesn't seem like work if one truly loves and is passionate about the their chosen path.

My job working seasonally '72-'75+ for the Oakland A's for 3+ championship years allowed me to make a living wage/union job w/health insurance, and the time to learn/build/exercise/develop my music skills and never have to 'look back'/do anything for a living but music ever since, the last 'straight job' I ever had in all the years since. I was fortunate to have built my entire future artistic career on the stepping stone of working for the A's for 3+ baseball seasons.

It was worth taking the risk of following the path of love and passion.

No regrets.

Michael "Hawkeye" Herman