

Chuck Eisenmann

Baseball, War and
the Littlest Hobo



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Many years ago, when I was conducting research for my first book, *Baseball in World War II Europe*, the name Chuck Eisenmann kept coming up. Many WWII vets told me to contact Chuck because he was at the heart of wartime baseball in Europe. They also told me he was the guy that trained the dogs for the Littlest Hobo TV series. Chuck sounded like the man to speak to, but he was a challenge to locate. I found an address in Superior, Wisconsin, and wrote a letter but never got a reply. This was before the Internet became the "go to" resource that it is today, so I had to do a little more digging and eventually located an address in Roseburg, Oregon. Another letter was sent and this time I got a reply. Chuck sent me details of his lifetime in baseball and a stack of photos, many of which appeared in my book. Chuck also invited me to give him a call to discuss wartime baseball in more detail. It was an offer I couldn't refuse and led to a lengthy conversation that filled so many gaps in relation to what happened with US Army baseball in Britain and France between 1943 and 1945.

Since that initial contact, which was 20 years ago, I've continued to be fascinated by Chuck. He was a guy that knew no boundaries and gave his heart and soul to everything he did. Chuck lived the life he wanted to live. He was able to be involved in baseball while in military service and played the game at the professional and then semi-pro level into his 30s. Once he was

no longer able to perform at that level, he turned his attention to dog training and made a good living from something he loved to do.



The following pages are the story of Chuck Eisenmann. He lived a long life, passing away at 91 in 2010, and it's as complete as I've been able to get it, piecing together his life from our written correspondence, phone calls, newspapers, magazines and official records.

Gary Bedingfield

Don't forget to visit my websites!

www.baseballinwartime.com

www.baseballsgreatestsacrifice.com

Chuck Eisenmann

Baseball, War and the Littlest Hobo

Chuck Eisenmann – 12-year minor league veteran and owner/trainer of the German Shepherd dogs who appeared in The Littlest Hobo TV series, was one of the most important figures in American military baseball in Europe during World War II. Player/manager of the top team in England in 1943 and 1944, Eisenmann went to Paris, France, after D-Day where he organized all athletic activities for Army personnel in the area.

In front of a packed house at Hartwell Field on a hot summer afternoon in 1950, 31-year-old army veteran Chuck Eisenmann, pitching for the home team Mobile Bears in a Southern Association contest, looked to his catcher, Ray Dabek, for the sign. At the plate stood 18-year-old Eddie Mathews, the Atlanta Crackers left-handed slugging third baseman. Eisenmann adjusted his grip on the dusty baseball, wiped the sweat from his brow, and began his long, exaggerated wind-up. Favoring an overhand delivery that was the result of a wartime injury, Eisenmann dropped a tantalizing breaking ball just outside the strike zone that was chased with a mighty swing by Mathews before it hit Dabek's glove. The wily veteran had saved the day as the outwitted young slugger slowly returned to the dugout. While Eisenmann was in the twilight of a minor league career plagued with bad luck, Eddie Mathews was just starting a journey that would reach almost unimaginable heights in a major league career lasting 17 seasons, including 12 all-star game appearances and two trips to the World Series before being elected to the Hall of Fame in 1978.

Charles P. "Chuck" Eisenmann was born on October 22, 1918 in Hawthorne, Wisconsin, a rural community of about 1,000 in Douglas County, 20 miles southeast of Superior. His parents, Richard and Marie (Mary), were immigrants from Germany, arriving in New York in their early 20s in 1907, and moving to Pennsylvania and Illinois before reaching Wisconsin around 1917, where Richard worked as a farmer. Although Charles was born in Hawthorne, the family moved to Kimball, Wisconsin, shortly afterwards then returned to Douglas County, settling in Parkland.

Charles was the seventh of ten children. His oldest brother, William, joined the Navy at 17 in 1926, and brother George (a year older than Charles) also served with the peacetime Navy. Charles chose a military life, too, but instead joined the Army. On November 13, 1936, the 18-year-old left Fort McDowell, California and set sail on the USAT St. Mihiel troopship bound for Hawaii.

Private Eisenmann was stationed at Schofield Barracks in Honolulu, with the 8th Field Artillery, and in January 1937 began an intensive 6-month course at the Radio and Telegraph School.

A naturally gifted athlete, Eisenmann was pitching for the 8th Field Artillery Gunners baseball team in the Schofield Barracks league in the spring of 1937. After winning his first three starts, the right-hander ran into a streak of bad luck and was 5-3 with 58 strikeouts in 61 innings by late August. He finished the season striking out 14 and scattering 6 hits in a 3-2 win against the 21st Infantry Gimlets and earned honorable mention on the All-Schofield team.

Pitching for the Gunners in 1938, Eisenmann beat the 13th Field Artillery Clan, 7-1, on June 6, but for much of the season he lived up to his title as the league's hard luck pitcher. On June 18, he struck out 17 hurling a 14-inning, 3-2, loss against the 3rd Engineers Beavers. On July 13, he pitched 11 innings, struck out 15 and was beaten, 4-3, by the 27th Infantry Wolfhounds. On August 20, Eisenmann finished the season by striking out 17 over 11 innings against the 3rd Engineers, but lost, 1-0. The 8th Field Artillery Gunners finished bottom of the Schofield Barracks League with a dismal 8-19 record, although Eisenmann again made the All-Schofield team. "Eisenmann was outstanding on the hill for the Gunner ball club," noted the Honolulu Advertiser on November 16, 1938.

Despite playing for a last-place team, the youngster's potential attracted the attention of professional baseball scouts and it was the Texas League's Beaumont Exporters – farm club of the Detroit Tigers - who made an offer, agreeing to buy him out of military service. On November 18, 1938, Eisenmann boarded the SS Lurline passenger ship for the journey back to California and the beginning of his career in professional baseball.

After playing winter league baseball in California, Eisenmann went to the Tigers' St. Petersburg, Florida, spring training camp in 1939, but hurt his arm while trying to impress the team. He was assigned to the Beaumont Exporters of the Class A1 Texas League, where he roomed with Virgil Trucks, but never appeared in a regular season game. Later in the year, he was assigned to the Henderson Oilers of the Class C East Texas League where he made 16 appearances and posted a 4-4 won-loss record with a 4.44 earned run average. Eisenmann finished the 1939 season with the Lake Charles Skippers of the Class D Evangeline League, making five appearances for a 1-3 record.

In January 1940, Eisenmann found himself a free agent as baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis released 91 players from the Tigers' organization. In the opinion of Landis, these players had been kept in "cold storage" and not given a chance to progress through the minors.

LOS ANGELES BASEBALL CLUB 1940 ROSTER							
Players Name	Club in '39	Ht.	Wt.	Bts.	Thrs.	W.	L.
Pitchers							
Joe Berry	Los Angeles	5'10"	150	L	R	8	7
Paul Erickson	St. Joe	6'3"	185	R	R	14	13
John Fallon	Oakland	6'4"	185	R	R	13	13
Jesse Flores	Los Angeles	5'10"	175	R	R	9	9
Floyd Isekite	Tacoma	6'3"	187	L	L	18	12
Edward King	Bisbee, Ariz.	6'1"	170	R	R	24	6
Emil Kush	Los Angeles	5'11"	175	R	R	0	1
Ray Prim	Los Angeles	6'	173	R	L	20	17
Louis Stefani	Tulsa	6'2"	175	R	R	—	—
Lee Stine	Los Angeles	5'11"	185	R	R	13	15
Fay Thomas	Los Angeles	6'3"	200	R	R	17	13
Gene Lillard	Chicago	5'10"	175	R	R	3	5
Charles Eisenmann	Henderson	6'3"	190	L-R	R	5	3
Catchers							Bat.
Salvador Hernandez	Milwaukee	6'	160	R	R	—	207

Following his release, Eisenmann signed with the Los Angeles Angels of the Class AA Pacific Coast League (PCL). He looked good in spring training, but a hip injury prevented him from making the team's regular-season roster for 1940. He started the season with the Vancouver Capilanos of the Class B Western International League, and in late July, was signed by the Yakima Pippins of the same league. He faced his old Vancouver teammates on August 27, taking a 5-4 win over the Caps pitching ace, Tex Goldman. "Eisenmann, always a flinger with plenty on the ball but lacking in control when he was with the Capilanos, had the pill going exactly where he wanted it last night," noted the Vancouver Sun the following day. The 21-year-old pitched 26 games for the year with an unimpressive 6-10 record and 5.66 ERA.

Eisenmann remained with Yakima for 1941 for his best pre-war season. He made 33 appearances on the mound, including 17 starts, recorded a 3.40 ERA with 12 wins and 13 losses, and led the league with 204 strike outs in 201 innings. He also beat the Oakland Oaks of the PCL, 3 to 1, in a non-league game on May 26, striking out eight.

An injury-free season had shown what the 22-year-old could do, and his contract was purchased by the San Diego Padres of the PCL in November 1941. A month later, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese and the world would never be the same again.



Despite the country being at war, it was business as usual for professional baseball at the start of 1942. Impressed with his abilities in spring training at Imperial Valley – including a 3-1 win against the Pittsburgh Pirates and a 7-inning, 1-0, one-hitter in an intrasquad game, the Padres kept Eisenmann on their roster for the start of the season. He made his first appearance in the Pacific Coast League on April 4, throwing three innings of shutout relief in a 4-2 loss against Portland. Eisenmann was on the mound again the following day but lasted just one third of an inning in a relief role. His next appearance for San Diego was on April 9, pitching the last three innings against Seattle and allowing one run in an 11-2 loss. It was to be his last game of the season as he re-joined the Army in Los Angeles on April 11, 1942.

Eisenmann, having previously completed a radio and telegraph course with the army in Hawaii, attended officer training school and graduated as a second lieutenant before being sent overseas. He was based in London with the 827th Signal Service Company of the Central Base Section (CBS) with offices in Goodge Street, London. "I got to England the latter part of '42," he recalled, "Right in the bombings. I saw an opening in the Special Services Division, so I took charge of the athletics department."

He wasted little time organizing CBS athletes into baseball and softball teams, with 10 baseball teams competing during the summer of 1943. Eisenmann led the Signal Monarchs baseball team and among the players at his disposal were Lou Kelley, a semi-pro outfielder from Massachusetts; Bobby Korisher, a second baseman from the sandlots of Scranton, Pennsylvania; and Richard Roberts, a third baseman who played in the California industrial leagues before the war. The Monarchs entered the London International Baseball League (LIBL) in the spring of 1943 – a highly competitive eight-team circuit consisting of five US Army teams, two Canadian military clubs and a British civilian side. Eisenmann won 14 out of 16 games for the Monarchs, 13 of them in a row, and was credited with 174 strike outs.



The 827th Signal Service Company Monarchs in England in 1943. Eisenmann is back row, third from left

The Monarchs were leading the league by June and drawn in a three-game playoff with the second place First Canadian General Hospital for the LIBL first-half championship. Eisenmann pitched the Monarchs to a 4-2 victory in the first game at spacious Stamford Bridge Stadium, allowing just five hits with 19 strike outs. He clinched the championship for the Monarchs three days later with a 14-0 victory.



Eisenmann pitching for the Monarchs against the First Canadian General Hospital at Stamford Bridge Stadium, London in 1943

Price 2d.

BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

AMERICA v. CANADA

FRIDAY, JUNE 25th

R.F. SUMMERELL C.F. KELLY 2 B. KORISHER S.S. FARRELL 1 B. STODDARD C. PARTYKA P. EISENMANN L.F. BRANDT 3 B. ROBERTS U. FERRANS U. MCGOWAN U. KULSCAR	R.F. RICHARDSON C.F. EBERLIN 2 B. CLELLAND S.S. FIRBY 1 B. RANGER C. MACDONALD P. CURTIS L.F. THORNE 3 B. POLLACK U. LETT O.F. JACK U. GUYETT
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Official Scorer : Sgt. REGAN

Umpires : (Mr. MOFFETT (Eng.)
 Mr. MCKENZIE (Eng.)
 Cpl. SHEARER (U.S.))

Managers : (Lt. EISENMANN (U.S.)
 Major QUINN (Canada))

Commentator : Capt. WILLIAM STERNES

AMERICANS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
HITS									
RUNS									

CANADIANS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
HITS									
RUNS									

Result of First Game : Americans 4 ; Canadians 2.

Knapp, Drewett & Sons Ltd., 39, Victoria St., London, S.W.1.—1943c.

In addition to the Monarchs, Eisenmann put together an all-star team to represent the US Army Central Base Section. The CBS Clowns – as the team became known – was to be one of the most formidable service teams in Britain during WWII. Playing against military challengers as far afield as Blackpool, Liverpool and Scotland, the Clowns compiled an outstanding record of 43 wins and just 4 losses. By the end of the summer of 1943 they had defeated every top-level team in the Army, Navy and Air Force, and had successfully toured Northern Ireland. The Clowns' line-up in 1943 included George Burns, a big first baseman from Sylacauga, Alabama; Pete Pavich, a flashy minor league shortstop who was with the Jersey City Giants before the war; and Amey Fontana, a semi-pro pitcher from Wampum, Pennsylvania. When

asked why he named the team the Clowns, Eisenmann replied: "I had a group of guys that were characters, so I just called them Clowns."

Eisenmann, who pitched almost every game for the Clowns in 1943, was faced with one major problem. Few, if any ball fields in Britain had a pitcher's mound, and many games were played on soccer and cricket fields where the erection of a mound was not permitted. So, to overcome this, he set about constructing his own portable mound. Eisenmann built a wooden framework that was then layered with turf, and the unusual creation, which met all baseball regulations, journeyed everywhere with the team.



The CBS Clowns in London in 1943. Eisenmann is front row, fourth from left

In July 1943, Eisenmann had to undergo an emergency appendectomy that robbed him of his chance to play in the highest profile baseball game staged by the American armed forces in Britain during the war. The All-Professional game between the groundforces and Army Air Force was held at London's Wembley Stadium on August 3, 1943. Eisenmann would have undoubtedly been the Army's starter. He had recovered sufficiently to help coach the team but was helpless to prevent the Army Air Force winning the game in front of 21,500 fans, on a no-hitter by airman Bill Brech, a New Jersey semi-pro.

In September 1943, the CBS Clowns were entered into the ETO World Series – a four-day event held at the Eighth Air Force Headquarters in Bushy Park, London. The event included teams from across Britain and Northern Ireland representing the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. The Clowns were firm favorites from the outset.



Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain, Clement Atlee, is introduced to the CBS Clowns by Eisenmann in 1943

In the opening game against the Signal Hounds on September 27, Eisenmann – fully recovered from the appendectomy - got off to a flying start striking out 19 in the 4-2 win. The following day he defeated the Air Support Command Eagles, 7 to 1, with eight strike outs to advance the Clowns to the semi-finals. Pitching for the third successive day, Eisenmann was beaten, 3 to 2, by the 78th Fighter Command Thunderbolts to bring the Clowns' bid for the championship to a shocking end. He had struck out 15 in the loss. Minor leaguer Mauro Duca was the winner for the Thunderbolts.

On the last day of the tournament the 116th Infantry Regiment Yankees went on to clinch the ETO World Series title with a 6-3 win over the 78th Fighter Command Thunderbolts, while the Clowns beat the 901st Engineers, 3-0, to take third place. Eight months later, many of the 116th Infantry Regiment players were among the first to go ashore at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. Pitchers Elmer Wright and Maurice Williams, centerfielder Frank Parker, and third baseman Lou Alberigo, were killed in action that day. Carl "Chubby" Proffitt, a semi-pro first baseman from West Virginia, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry.

BASEBALL
In aid of H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross and St. John Fund

CHALLENGE MATCH
American Army v. Canadian Forces

Followed by
ALL PROFESSIONAL GAME
U.S. Air Force v. U.S. Ground Forces

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7th
AT 2.30 p.m.

AMERICAN ARMY BAND and MASSES PIPE BANDS OF CANADIAN ARMY

PRICES:
 Reserved Seats (Unnumbered) - 5/- 2/6
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BASEBALL

In aid of H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester's
Red Cross and St John Fund.

SOFTBALL MATCH
(5 Innings)

CANADIAN MIL. H.Q. v. C.B.S. SOLONS
(U.S. Army)

followed by

BASEBALL GAME
(7 Innings)

U.S. 9th AIR FORCE v. U.S. GROUND FORCES
(The Niners All-Stars) (C.B.S. Clowns)

BOTH TEAMS WILL INCLUDE MANY
FIRST-CLASS PROFESSIONALS

SATURDAY, JUNE 3rd 1944
at 2.45 p.m.

BEFORE THE GAMES AT 2 P.M.
U.S. ARMY BAND
86 Performers—Directed by Capt. THOMAS DARCY

Reserved Seats (Unnumbered)	-	5/-, 2/6
All Allied Services in Uniform	-	3/6, 2/-
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Unreserved Admission (Seats and Standing)	-	1/-
<small>Admission at all prices at turnstiles on day of matches.</small>		
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THE EMPIRE STADIUM
WEMBLEY

Printed by McCorquodale & Co. Ltd., London, S.E.

In 1944, the Clowns continued their winning ways with Eisenmann at the helm. On June 3, just three days before the Normandy landings, a second Wembley Stadium baseball extravaganza was staged with the CBS Clowns taking on the Ninth Air Force. A crowd of 18,000 witnessed a combination of mastery and showmanship from Eisenmann as the Clowns blanked the Air Force, 9 to 0. Eisenmann allowed just three hits and struck out 15.

In July 1944, his bad luck returned when Eisenmann was blown through the wall of his office in London by an exploding V1 buzz bomb. "That bomb didn't make the slightest preliminary buzz," he later joked, "and the only warning I had was when I heard a guard on the roof shout 'Jump!' I instinctively did and was actually in the air when the explosion came. It blew me backward right through the wall of the room –

fortunately, the wall was crumbling with the explosion, however."



Eisenmann spent around seven days in hospital with an injured hip and back, and almost lost the index finger on his pitching hand. "I refused the Purple Heart," he later joked. "I figured I wasn't damaged enough."

When Eisenmann resumed mound duties with the Clowns he favored the finger and used an overhand release rather than his usual three-quarter style. The result was an even more effective breaking ball that was almost unhittable for his service team opponents.

Late in 1944, Eisenmann's unit followed the Allied advance through Europe and relocated to Paris, France. One of the first things he did was bring baseball to the liberated people of Paris. "I am astonished that in France, you do not play baseball which is, as you know, the national pastime in our country," he told a French newspaper in late-September 1944. "We will, therefore, demonstrate the game for you."



Eisenmann on the mound with the Clowns in Paris, France in 1945



Figure 1 The Seine Base Section Clowns in the dugout in France in 1945. Eisenmann is wearing the jacket

On October 2, 1944, Captain Eisenmann organized what was probably the first baseball game on French soil in World War II. Held at the Parc des Princes in Paris, before a crowd of 6,000, Eisenmann presented a 20-minute demonstration of the rules of the game, followed by a softball game and then a baseball game in which Eisenmann pitched the Clowns to a 3-0 victory over the US Army Polar Bears. Eisenmann went on to arrange many exhibitions of American sports for the Parisians including football, basketball and volleyball.

The renamed Seine Section Clowns continued to play at the Parc des Princes with many of the existing players joining the team from London, England. A new addition to the team was Lieutenant Lyn "Buck" Compton, UCLA catcher and a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division, whose combat exploits have been seen in the HBO television series "Band of Brothers."

Compton was in Paris recovering from the wounds and trauma he had recently suffered in combat, when he spotted Eisenmann's name on a list of people working in a military command center building. "I had played against him [Eisenmann] a few times when I was in college," Compton recalled in his autobiography, *Call of Duty*. "I hadn't seen anybody I knew for some time, so I took the stairs to his office and knocked on the door."

Compton was due to return to the 101st Airborne, but Eisenmann persuaded him to stay in Paris and help provide athletic facilities for troops on leave. "Eisenmann was one of those Sergeant Bilko types who knew how the system worked," said Compton. "[He] was a captain but was somehow living in a hotel where colonels were housed."

"I had fictitious orders published and kept him [Compton] with me for two years," said Eisenmann. "Lyn was a slow talking guy, nose bent over from playing football. I had a German prisoner that did my chores and he [Compton] would follow this guy around and say to me, 'Ask him why they shot at us when we were parachuting down,' and the poor, terrified German would hide behind me."



*Figure 2*The Seine Base Section Clowns. Eisenmann is front row, fourth from left. To his right, in catcher's gear, is Buck Compton

With the war in Europe at an end, competitive baseball began to heat up in the ETO. But, just as it had in 1943, the European Theater baseball crown eluded Eisenmann's Clowns. This time it was former Pirates' pitcher, Sam Nahem and his Oise All-Stars who knocked the Clowns out of the 1945 ETO championships in the regional rounds in August. Nahem's integrated team - which included Negro League stars Leon Day and Willard Brown - went on to clinch the ETO World Series title in Nuremberg, Germany in September, defeating the powerful 71st Infantry Division (representing the Third Army) in five games.

Throughout 1945, Eisenmann had taken charge of all US Army athletic activities in Paris, and was promoted to the rank of major in June. With the help of Buck Compton, he organized exhibition games for the local civilians, and oversaw the running of servicemen leagues for all sports. Eisenmann was instrumental in ensuring the American servicemen in Paris had plenty of opportunity to watch and participate in sports while eagerly awaiting their return home.

Bad luck reared its head again while Eisenmann was in Paris. He came down with infantile paralysis, an infectious disease, more commonly known as polio. Affecting his neck muscles, it resulted in him having little control of his head and he was hospitalized. "I got some wonderful care in my two months in that hospital," he recalled. "And they brought me through fine, with full control of the neck muscles restored."

Eisenmann returned to the United States aboard a "Victory" transport ship in December 1945. He had been away from the professional game for almost four years and must have wondered if he still had the ability to pitch at that level. Joining the San Diego Padres for spring training in 1946, his impressive assortment of pitches and undoubted athletic maturity earned the 27-year-old a spot on the Padres' regular season pitching staff. But there was another side to the story. "I had been a major in the Army and a lot of the players at San Diego were enlisted men," recalled Eisenmann. "They put up a sign in the dugout that said, 'Enlisted Men Only.' It was done kind of in jest, but I think there was some truth behind it."

In his first start on April 10, in the newly classified AAA Pacific Coast League, Eisenmann beat the Los Angeles Angels, 2 to 1, allowing just five hits and striking out seven. "Eisenmann, former Army major," wrote To McGwynne in the San Diego Tribune on April 11, 1946, "who has a fireball and a world of stuff, uncorked some dazzling mound work, and save for one shaky inning, looked like the real goods."

A week later, on April 18, Eisenmann spoiled the Seattle Rainiers' home opener before 12,000 fans at Sicks' Stadium, winning 3-2 and striking out 10. But Eisenmann would only spend half the season at San Diego. A bad spell saw him lose five out of the next six decisions. In 17 games he posted a 3-6 won-loss record despite a respectable 3.62 earned run average before being assigned in June to the Tulsa Oilers of the Class AA Texas League.

Unhappy with being sent to Tulsa, Eisenmann threatened to go and play in Mexico, but eventually joined the club and made 18 appearances for the Oilers, including a 13-inning marathon against Fort Worth on September 6, in which he lost, 3-1. He was 6-7 for the year with a superb 2.12 ERA and struck out 82 in 102 innings.

The 28-year-old was back with San Diego for spring training in 1947. On February 16, he made a 2-inning relief appearance in the annual benefit game between the Minor League All-Stars and the Major League All-Stars. The minor leaguers, skippered by Casey Stengel, won the game, 6-4, in 10 innings.

After a sixth-place finish in 1946, the Padres got off to a good start in 1947, but Eisenmann suffered from bouts of wildness. In 14 relief appearances he walked 30 batters in 31 innings. San Diego sold him to the Memphis Chicks of the Class AA Southern Association on June 4 – beginning a three-year association with the Tennessee team.

Eisenmann had a decent year in 1947 with Memphis under manager and former big-league catcher Jack Onslow, making 19 appearances, with an 8-5 record and a 4.13 ERA. With his pitching under control it was only his temper that was occasionally prone to wildness. On August 5, Eisenmann was ejected from a game for firing the ball into the stands when umpire Frank Girard asked to inspect it.

During his time at Memphis, Eisenmann earned a reputation as the world's slowest working pitcher, and it became a custom at Russwood Park for fans to bring their box supper whenever he was pitching. "How can people say that I'm a stall artist," he told the Memphis Press-Scimitar. "When the batter steps out of the box, he's the one holding up play. When he does that, I always step off the rubber and then it's a battle of nerves from then on."

Eisenmann was 29 years old when the 1948 season came around, and it proved to be his best year in professional baseball. It didn't get off to a great start, however. He again pitched in the Minors and Majors benefit game on February 15 and this time the major leaguers won, 4 to 3, when Gene Mauch raced home from third with the decisive run on Eisenmann's elongated wind-up in the eighth.

During the regular season with the Memphis Chicks, Eisenmann made 34 pitching appearances. He threw 17 complete games, posted a 16-11 won-loss record, struck out a league second-best 152 batters and had an earned run average of 3.52. He beat New Orleans, 11-2, with a three-hitter on May 26, was selected for the league all-star team in July, and threw back-to-back five-hitters in August.

On September 14, in the Southern Association's semi-final play-offs, Eisenmann pitched 10 innings against Birmingham and allowed six hits but lost the game, 3-2, bringing to a disappointing end an otherwise very satisfactory minor league season. That same month he received \$250 from a Memphis packing company as runner-up player of the year, but more importantly, he was called up to the Chicks' parent club - the Chicago White Sox.

A decade after starting his professional career, not forgetting a four-year interruption that sent him six thousand miles around the world to serve his country, Chuck Eisenmann had made it to the major leagues. Although he never appeared in a regular season game for the White Sox, Eisenmann finished out the season on the bench at Comiskey Park and was still with the team for spring training at Pasadena in 1949, when his former manager at Memphis, Jack Onslow, became the new pilot of the White Sox. "I really feel that I've acquired the know-how and can make the grade," Eisenmann told the Superior Evening Telegram in December 1948.

But the dream was not to be. Eisenmann was back with Memphis for the regular season, albeit with an option to be recalled by Chicago at any time. He had a reasonable year in 1949 but was not able to repeat his performance of 1948. Eisenmann again made 34 appearances, he posted a 9-13 record and had an earned run average of 5.24. And, again, he got a September recall by the White Sox as they struggled to build their major league pitching staff.

October 1949 signified the end of Eisenmann's dream of pitching in the major leagues. He was traded to the Brooklyn Dodgers as part of the deal that brought Chico Carrasquel to the White Sox. "Frank Lane came in as general manager [of the Chicago White Sox] from the American Association," recalled Eisenmann. "He brought five pitchers with him and they're the ones that stayed because he's not going to be made to look a fool. So, they traded me and my roommate Chuck Connors to Brooklyn. Well, Brooklyn had about 18 starting pitchers, so they bought me really for fodder."

Eisenmann spent the 1950 season with the Mobile Bears of the Southern Association. It was a miserable season for the 31-year-old, pitching 18 games for a 2-11 record and a 3.59 ERA. He didn't win his second game until late August.



Eisenmann with the Ottawa Giants in 1951

At the end of the season he was purchased by the New York Giants and split the 1951 campaign between the Ottawa Giants and the Syracuse Chiefs in the Class AAA International League. On May 13, pitching for Ottawa, he was credited with a one-hit, 4-0, victory despite being pulled by manager Hugh Poland after walking the first two batters in the sixth. In 36 appearances for the season, Eisenmann was 4-7 with a 3.80 ERA.

Eisenmann remained with Syracuse at the start of the 1952 season. He made 19 relief appearances for the Chiefs and had an inflated ERA of 5.40 when he was sent to the Birmingham Barons of the Class A1 Southern Association. After just two relief appearances for the Barons, he was on the move again, this time to the Tulsa Oilers of the Class AA Texas League, a team he had previously played for back in 1946. Eisenmann made 11 appearances for Tulsa, pitched 22 innings and had an ERA of 3.68. One memorable performance was on August 17, when he pitched the last inning of a marathon 22-inning contest against Houston, and singled in the winning run to give Tulsa a 6-5 victory. The Oilers released the 33-year-old at the end of the season.

As a free agent, Eisenmann was at the Pacific Coast League San Francisco Seals' spring training camp in Riverside in February 1953. He remained with the Seals when the season started and made three relief appearances before being released on April 10. He was picked up by the Oakland Oaks and made a further five appearances. On April 29, 1953, Chuck Eisenmann was released by the Oaks when PCL rosters were reduced to 21, marking the end of his professional career as a player.

"If there had not been a war, I probably would have made the major leagues," Eisenmann reflected. "I could throw hard, but I really didn't know how to pitch. There were years when I would have the arm shot with novocaine and I took heat therapy on it. Today, in the major leagues you got two or three pitching coaches. I would just blow the ball by people although I also had a tremendous curve."

He spent the remainder of 1953 with the semi-pro Kearney Irishmen in the Nebraska Independent League. The start of a three-year association with the team and the town. On the mound for their season opener on May 24, Eisenmann beat the Superior Knights, 16-2, scattering seven hits and striking out seven. On August 13, he beat the McCook Cats, 9-8, to clinch the pennant for the Irishmen - their first since 1946. Eisenmann struck out 14 and singled three times, driving in two runs.



Eisenmann with the Kearney Irishmen

In 1954, his highlights with the Irishmen included a 13 strike out performance against the Holdredge Bears, on June 15, and a 7-2 win over McCook on July 20, allowing four hits and striking out 16.

Eisenmann, 36, served mostly as manager of the Irishmen in 1955, but hurled a 6-0, three-hitter against the North Platte Plainsmen on July 25. In August, he joined the Plainsmen line-up as they travelled to Wichita, Kansas, for the National Semi-Pro tournament. In the opening game, on August 19, Eisenmann hurled an 8-1 victory against the Peoria Caterpillars before a crowd of 6,800. He struck out 11 and the only run scored against him was the result of a ninth-inning fielder's choice with two men out. North Platte finished third in the tournament.



The incident that sparked to so much controversy and led to the national recognition of Eisenmann's dog, London

For the last few years, Eisenmann had been seen everywhere with his trusted German Shepherd dog, called London. The dog would perform tricks including retrieving foul balls and delivering gloves and jackets to the players. On June 26, 1955, in the fifth inning of a 1-1 game with Kearney's bitter rivals, the Lexington Minute Men, Kearney pitcher Fred Kipp singled, Eisenmann was managing and instructed London to trot out with Kipp's warmup jacket, but he got mixed up and went to the mound before winding up at first

base. The crowd cheered, but the Minute Men complained that London was delaying the game. The umpires ordered the dog and Eisenmann off the field, which led to a lengthy protest and the umpires forfeiting the game to Lexington after a 48-minute delay. The fiasco was big news in the area. The umpires recommended Eisenmann's suspension, which the league president refused to uphold and that led to the umpires threatening to strike. The story continued to be featured in the local paper for days after the event. One reader wrote to the Kearney Daily Hub on June 29, stating that, "London could be made into a better umpire than the ones at the Lex-Kearney game....Teach London to wag his tail to sweep off home plate and we won't need Manley [the home plate umpire that night]. That's the only job I've seen him [Manley] do real well."



Eisenmann and London were both ejected from the game at Kearney in 1955

Life magazine got hold of the story, together with photos and ran a two-page spread in their July 25, 1955 edition, which led to national recognition for Eisenmann and London.

"The thing that really moved me from baseball is my dog," recalled Eisenmann. "I had a nightclub [Tobacco Rhoda's in North Park, San Diego] and the dog started showing signs of greatness. When I was with San Diego and Los Angeles, instead of flying with the team I would drive with the dog. Then Life magazine did a two-page spread, so I moved from baseball to the dog even though I was still a pretty decent pitcher."

After three years at Kearney, which included serving as sports editor of the Kearney Daily Hub newspaper from December 1953 to January 1956, with a daily column fittingly entitled, "The Doggone Truth," Eisenmann decided, at the beginning of 1956, to turn his hand to umpiring and attended the Bill McGowan School for Umpires at Daytona Beach, Florida. He was now 37 years old and worked minor league spring training games in Lakeland, Florida. "London gets into the picture quite often here at Tigertown, where I'm working one or two games per day," he told the Kearney Daily Hub on March 24, 1956. "For there surely is no better asset for a blind umpire than a seeing-eye German Shepard."

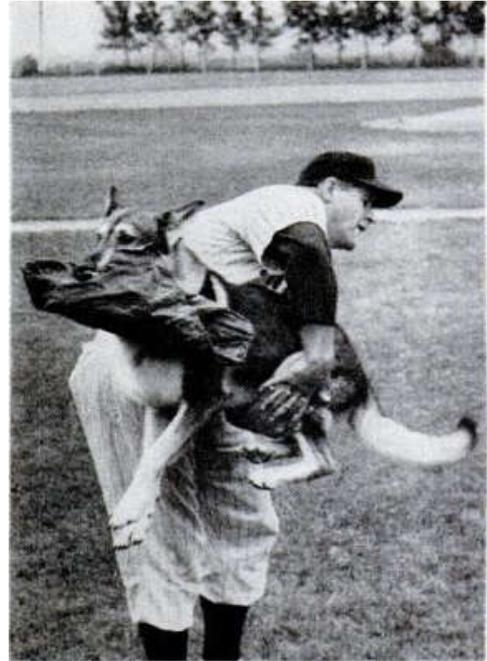
When the regular season came around, Eisenmann was working games in the California League. Maybe umpiring was not the thing for Eisenmann because he didn't even last a single season. On June 13, 1956, he was involved in a curious incident that took place during a Bakersfield-Modesto game. Eisenmann - behind the plate - thought a ball had been fouled off by a Bakersfield batter and threw another ball back to the pitcher. Meanwhile, the runner at second headed for third because the pitch had not actually been fouled off but had got away from the Modesto catcher. Needless to say, Eisenmann heard a great deal of abuse from Modesto manager Al Lyons.



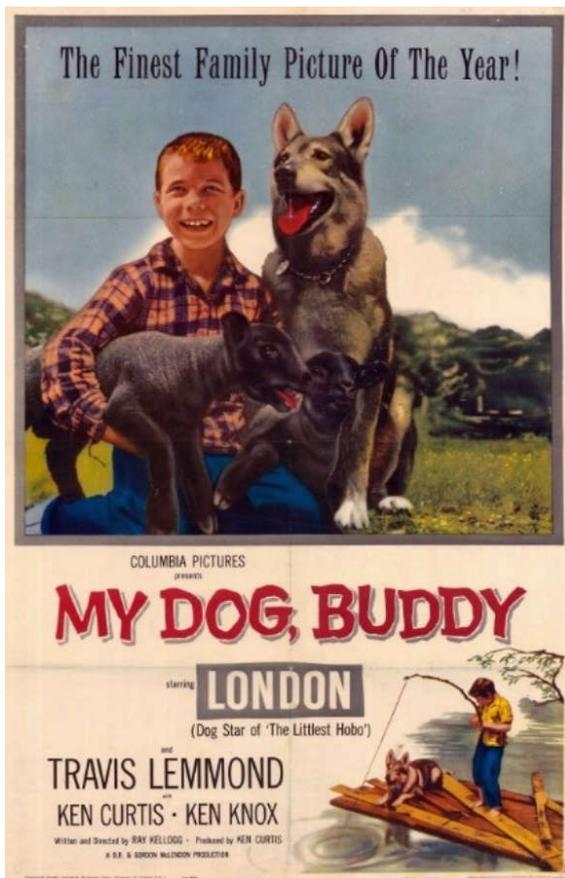
Eisenmann was back on the mound in July 1956, joining the Basin League semi-pro club at Huron, South Dakota. In August, he joined the Bismarck Barons in the independent Manitoba-Dakota (Man-Dak) League as they made every effort to retain the pennant. Bismarck was in second place behind the Williston Oilers when the 37-year-old Eisenmann pitched and won his first game of the season against the Dickinson Packers on August 13. Bismarck then advanced to the semi-final playoff series with the Minot Mallards. Eisenmann made

relief appearances in both games but the Mallards won both ending the hopes of Bismarck advancing to the Man-Dak League finals.

The real highlight of Eisenmann's short career with Bismarck was his dog. "Before the game, Chuck Eisenmann sent his German Shepherd dog 'London' through his paces," wrote the Bismarck Tribune on August 17, 1956. "The dog brought keys from Eisenmann's car, bowed to the crowd, brought a bat and a broom to the pitcher, ran the bases, brought a ball bag from the mound, told how old he is (five), imitated a kangaroo, closed a door, turned out a light, played dead, untied a boy, and did a little typewriting."



In 1958, London starred in an Allied Artists movie called "The Littlest Hobo." It was an old-time family movie that followed a very smart and shrewd stray German Shepherd dog (London) who moved from town to town by hopping boxcars and freight trains just like a hobo.



London appeared in another movie in 1960, "My Dog, Buddy," in which Eisenmann had a small acting part. Then, in 1963, came "The Littlest Hobo" television series. Another movie, "Silent Friends," was made in Romania in 1969. By 1971, he had four German Shepherds – London II, Venus, Raura and Hobo. Thorn, Toro and Lance were later additions. "The Billion Dollar Hobo" appeared on movie screens in 1977 and a second "The Littlest Hobo" series was launched on television in 1979 and ran for six seasons. In all, there have been more than 160 episodes of The Littlest Hobo, with TV guest appearances on Johnny Carson, That's Incredible, Mike Douglas, Dick Cavett, Steve Allen, Merv Griffin, NBC's Today Show, Wide World of Entertainment and Dinah Shore. The fame of Eisenmann's German Shepherds as dog actors is probably only exceeded by Lassie.



"They're amazing animals," he told Tommy Horton of the Memphis Press-Scimitar in May 1971, "and if they just had the physical attributes to go along with their mental capacity, one of them might be President."

When asked if he had formal dog training, Eisenmann replied: "None. I never read a book [about dog training] and now I have written four of them."

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Eisenmann's dogs was their command of the English language. "Everything that I have done with dogs contradicts what other people have done. I only have one dog left [this interview was conducted by myself with Eisenmann in 1995] but this dog has about a 2,500-word vocabulary. I did a lot of speaking at the psychology departments of universities because we're contradicting, in essence, what we're teaching. But they only know a dog to the conditioned stage, and I start out where the dog is already conditioned and then teach them."

Rumour has it, London first showed the ability to talk when Eisenmann asked the dog to go for a walk in the rain and London growled: "I don't wanna!"

But a collision between Eisenmann's car and a delivery truck in 1957 almost ended London's acting career just as it was beginning. London suffered a broken leg and a bumped head in the collision, prompting Eisenmann to sue the delivery firm for \$35,000 in damages in 1961. London even appeared in court in Los Angeles and demonstrated his abilities to perform and talk. Although the court reporter refused to transcribe London's guttural sounds, several courtroom observers thought he said: "Hello, how are you?"

When the jury rejected Eisenmann's damage claim, London had no immediate comment.

Eisenmann moved to Vancouver after his baseball career and seriously got to work with training his dogs, using his unique methods. In July 1972, Eisenmann demonstrated his results to an audience of newspapermen and members of the University of British Columbia's Psychology Club. When the 51-year-old asked London to jump, he did just that. Then Eisenmann said, "This time, London, when I say 'jump' it will mean lie down and put your paws over your eyes...London, jump!" The dog lied down and put his paws over his eyes. Four-year-old Hobo was then involved in the demonstration. "L-I-M-P," spelled out Eisenmann. Hobo limped. "This time, Hobo, when I spell L-I-M-P it will mean I want you to J-U-M-P. "Hobo, L-I-M-P." There was no hesitation as Hobo jumped.







Eisenmann moved from Vancouver to Roseburg, Oregon in later years. He umpired and coached Little League once in a while, with a hip and knee replacement limiting his ability to do so on a regular basis. Following a stroke, he resided at Manor House Memory Care Community in Roseburg.

Chuck Eisenmann, baseball pitcher, wartime baseball pioneer and dog trainer extraordinaire, passed away in Roseburg, Oregon on September 6, 2010, at the age of 91. He is buried at Roseburg National Cemetery.

Film and Television

The Littlest Hobo - 1958

My Dog, Buddy - 1960

Just Between Us - 1961

Silent Friends - 1969

The Billion Dollar Hobo - 1977

The Littlest Hobo TV Series - 1963-1964 (48 episodes)

The Littlest Hobo TV Series - 1979-1985 (114 episodes)

Related Books

London: The Dog Who Made the Team by David Malcolmson (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York 1963)

Stop! Sit! And Think by Charles P. Eisenmann (MacDonald-Redmore Inc, Syracuse, NY 1968)

The Better Dog: The Educated Dog by Charles P. Eisenmann (Gemini Graphics, CA 1976)

A Dog's Day in Court by Charles P. Eisenmann (Bryant Press, Toronto 1983)

Publications

Life July 25, 1955 – London Embroided: Ball club mascot touches off 1955's most incongruous rhubarb (pages 49-50)

The Vancouver Sun: Weekend Magazine July 29, 1972 - Canada's Smartest Dogs (page 18)

Audio Recordings

Educate Your Dog by the Eisenmann Method by Charles P. Eisenmann (Sight & Sound Enterprises 1975)



Chuck Eisenmann – baseball teams and statistics

Year	Team	League	Class	G	IP	ER	BB	SO	W	L	ERA
1937	8 th Field Artillery	Schofield Barracks	US Army	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1938	8 th Field Artillery	Schofield Barracks	US Army	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1939 Spring Training	Detroit Tigers										
1939	Beaumont Exporters	Texas	A1					Did not play			
	Lake Charles Skippers	Evangeline	D	5	20	-	-	-	1	3	6.75
	Henderson Oilers	East Texas	C	16	75	37	44	50	4	4	4.44
1940 Spring Training	Los Angeles Angels										
1940	Vancouver/Yakima	Western International	B	26	132	83	94	96	6	10	5.66
1941	Yakima Pippins	Western International	B	33	201	76	133	204	12	13	3.40
1942	San Diego Padres	Pacific Coast	AA	3	6	-	5	4	0	0	-
1943	827 th Signal Monarchs	London International	US Army	16	-	-	-	174	14	2	-
	CBS Clowns	US Army	US Army	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1944	CBS Clowns	US Army	US Army	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1945	Seine Base Clowns	Seine Base Section	US Army	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1946	San Diego Padres	Pacific Coast	AAA	17	72	29	51	62	3	6	3.62
	Tulsa Oilers	Texas	AA	18	102	24	58	82	6	7	2.12
1947	San Diego Padres	Pacific Coast	AAA	14	31	-	30	29	0	0	-
	Memphis Chicks	Southern Association	A1	19	122	56	73	80	8	5	4.13
1948	Memphis Chicks	Southern Association	A1	34	220	86	125	152	16	11	3.52
1949 Spring Training	Chicago White Sox										
1949	Memphis Chicks	Southern Association	A1	34	146	85	89	80	9	13	5.24
1950	Mobile Bears	Southern Association	A1	18	123	49	72	80	2	11	3.59
1951	Ottawa/Syracuse	International	AAA	36	97	41	60	66	4	7	3.80
1952	Syracuse Chiefs	International	AAA	19	25	15	20	13	2	2	5.40
	Birmingham Barons	Southern Association	A1	2	2	-	-	-	0	0	-
	Tulsa Oilers	Texas	A1	11	22	9	17	6	2	1	3.68
1953	San Francisco/Oakland	Pacific Coast	AAA	8	13	13	17	6	0	3	9.24
	Kearney Irishmen	Nebraska Independent	Semi-pro	14	109	-	56	135	9	4	-

Year	Team	League	Class	G	IP	ER	BB	SO	W	L	ERA
1954	Kearney Irishmen	Nebraska Independent	Semi-pro	-	88	-	-	107	-	-	-
1955	Kearney Irishmen	Nebraska Independent	Semi-pro	9	72	-	40	95	4	4	-
	North Platte Plainsmen	National Semi-Pro T'mnt	Semi-pro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1956	California League umpire (April to June)										
1956	Huron	Basin League	Semi-pro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Bismarck Barons	Manitoba-Dakota	Independent	1	-	-	-	-	1	0	-



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