

Behold the Bushers

The Last of the Rooneys

By VINCENT F. STANICH

"The first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

This passage from Holy Scripture can well apply to Joe Rooney, chief of detectives in the local police department, as he is the last of the second generation Rooneys and O'Neils, but the first of that celebrated Irish gang to become an officer of the law. It is traditional in all centers of Irish population to have at least one member of an Irish family join the police force.



VINCENT STANICH
Sacramento Police Department
in April of 1936.

THE START of the Rooney-O'Neil gang of boys emanated from the Rooneys. There were James Rooney, Peter Rooney, Steve Rooney and Minnie Rooney. Minnie married Tom O'Neil, Sr., and was the mother of Joe, Jack, Paul, Tom and Steve. James Rooney was the father of Jim, Franz, Paul, Leo and Joe. Peter Rooney sired Ed, Pete, Pierce and Clem, while Steve Rooney had but two sons—Steve, Jr., and William. *OK*

As local bush history has it, this group of first cousins banded together and formed one of the most colorful baseball teams in local history. Each and every



JOE ROONEY

to his size and his scholarship was cancelled.

As luck would have it for Slip Madigan, Leo enrolled at St. Mary's College, where he reached great heights in his senior year as a halfback.

Leo's great playing paved the way for Joe to receive a scholarship and the tall redhead turned out for football in 1925.

Joe made the varsity squad in 1926 and it was a harbinger of good things to come for Madigan. Although Joe was not a potent factor on the football club that year, his presence, evidently, was inspirational to his brother, Leo, who had a great day to give University of California its worst defeat in the long grid series between the two schools.

ST. MARY'S on that September afternoon annihilated the Bears by an overwhelming 28 to 7 score. It broke a 10-year drought for the Gaels as their only victory prior to that time over California occurred in 1917 when they eked out a one-point victory. In the same season St. Mary's also defeated Stanford. The two schools have not met since that time.

In 1927 and 1928 Joe was on the varsity squad, but his playing was somewhat limited as the Gaels had the greatest collection of players ever assembled at the school. Punting duties were entrusted to the local lad, but he divided the chore with Mack Stennett, who has since been judged an all-time St. Mary's great.

Joe received his sheepskin in 1929 and took up coaching at the Brothers' school the following year. However, his baseball ability as a pitcher began to manifest itself and he was signed to a San Francisco contract in 1931. He was farmed out by Ike Cavey, manager of the Seals, to their club at Globe in the Arizona League, along with Augie Galan, Johnny Babich and Jack Wilson.

The following season he hung on with the Seals until he was released in late August. His teammates on that club were Art Garibaldi, Hank Oana, Jerry Donovan, Ernie Sulik, Curt Davis and Bill Henderson.

THE DEPRESSION years in the early 30's had already set in and Joe began to ready himself for the police examination and received his appointment in 1936.

In 1943 he started a 30-month hitch in the Army, spending 19 months in Puerto Rico. He returned to the police department in the fall of 1945 and was appointed captain the following year. In 1947 he moved up to become chief of detectives.

Joe is still in pretty fair shape and still dabbles in baseball as a member of the police baseball club. He has since given up pitching, but still concentrates on hitting the ball, both on the field and on beats in the city of Sacramento.

one of the boys played on the club some time or other. That is, with the exception of Joe. He was too young to compete, but the ability of the older boys to play baseball, apparently, was deep rooted, as Joe turned out to be quite a ball player himself when he reached his majority.

Joe started high school at Christian Brothers School at the corner of 12th and K Streets, where the present Weinstock-Lubin store now stands. In the fall of 1921. His brother, Leo, was two years his senior, was a star halfback under Coach Peter Mitchell, who donated his services to guide the small Brothers' squad in its football campaign.

JOE MADE the varsity in his freshman year, as there were only enough players turning out for football to form a team.

Leo, who subsequently received honorary mention on the Walter Camp All-American team, received a scholarship to Santa Clara University in 1923 for baseball and football. Arriving at the campus, Leo, who weighed 145 pounds soaking wet, did not impress the football coach, due