

Full Story of Browns' Near-Shift in '41

Los Angeles Missed A. L. Franchise by Day

Millions of Dollars, Five Clubs Involved; Plane and Train Schedules Worked Out

By J. G. TAYLOR SPINK

ST. LOUIS, Mo.

In the midst of controversies raging pro and con on the possibilities of moving the St. Louis Browns franchise to Los Angeles, Don Barnes, former president of the local American League club, agreed on August 25, to throw back the cloak of secrecy that for eight years has surrounded the move that lacked but 24 hours of making the St. Louis Browns the Los Angeles Browns in December, 1941.

Barnes, while admitting he had practically completed the transfer of his club to the Pacific Coast in an elaborate, fantastic series of transactions involving millions of dollars and five ball clubs, including the Browns, St. Louis neighbors, the Cardinals, as well as both major leagues, emphasized that conditions since have changed and the procedure, while not impossible, would be much more complicated if attempted today.

"The rules have been changed since 1941," he explained, "so that instead of simply paying \$5,000 to the league and damages to the club whose territorial rights are invaded, every club in the league, as well as the league itself, must be remunerated for damages so incurred. However, I understand an arbitration board, consisting of seven members, including representatives from the minor club involved, the major club, a seventh party to be selected by six other members, could be set up to rule on the matter." Only the



P. K. Wrigley

...bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japs on December 7, 1941, halted negotiations for the transfer of the Browns. Barnes added, and voided the tremendous deal that needed only an anticipated okay from the American and National League representatives at their session in Chicago one day earlier.

Then he unfolded details of the huge maneuver which began in mid-season, 1941, at a time when he had become utterly discouraged with the progress of the Browns, who had failed to click for him during the five years of his ownership.

"Harry Arthur, president of Fanchon & Marco Amusement Company and one of the Browns' important stockholders at that time, had approached me several times with the idea that our team could be turned into a going concern if moved into Los Angeles," continued the former club head. "I finally listened, then advised him to negotiate with a group of 'solid people' in Los Angeles who might be interested, from a civic standpoint, in bringing major league ball to the Coast.

"Meanwhile, I decided to change managers, appointing Luke Sewell, a move which later paid dividends as Sewell led my club to a pennant three years later.

All Set to Buy Angels

"Within a month, Arthur contacted me and I went to Los Angeles and met with the leaders of his group, including the late A. P. Giannini, co-founder of the Bank of America. I told these men I would be willing to sell them part of the stock in the Browns to finance a deal to purchase the Los Angeles club, a move that would be necessary to gain territorial rights before we could move our American League franchise. Everyone was enthusiastic and agreed to go along."

Then Barnes flew to Chicago, where he conferred with President Will Harbridge of the American League and held informal talks with other league executives on the "St. Louis situation," as the plight of the Browns was, and still is, called in baseball circles.

"At various times," Don went on, "I discussed the matter with Connie Mack, Clark Griffith, Tom Yawkey and other club presidents. All were concerned over the safety of their players should the shift of the Browns to Los Angeles require their clubs to make trips out there by air. But I eventually got the green light to go ahead and explore the possibility of moving the St. Louis franchise.

"In October, 1941, I met with Phil K. Wrigley, president of the Chicago Cubs, and his attorney, Paul Harper, in Chicago, for the purpose of purchasing Mr. Wrigley's Los Angeles club of the Coast League. After considerable negotiation, we finally agreed upon a price in seven figures (Barnes refused to divulge the exact amount, but said it was over a million) for the Los Angeles franchise. Wrigley Field in Los Angeles and players then on the Angels' roster."

Here Barnes reached into his desk and withdrew a huge file from which he brought a sheaf of typewritten papers. "This," he said, "is the optional agreement that was drawn up. Here's the list of players who were to become our property as soon as we signed the papers and closed the deal. Not much, some though, turned out to be pretty good, such as Jesse Flores, Joe

Barnes Says Cards, Not Browns, Should Be Moved Out of St. Louis

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—Eight years after he failed in an attempt to move the Browns, Don Barnes, former head of the local American leaguers, still believes St. Louis should be a one-club city.

"I don't wish to hurt St. Louis or either of its two ball clubs with this statement," he said, "but the people here are ultra-conservative and will support a club only if it wins. Naturally, they expect two winners if two clubs play here—and that's asking too much. On the other hand, other communities, such as Detroit and Cleveland, great industrial areas, are entitled to continuous baseball throughout the summer, because people there have the money to spend for entertainment.

"I believe the Cardinals—not the Browns—should be moved out of St. Louis. The Cardinals, if moved to Detroit or Cleveland, would give either of those cities a National League team they richly deserve. St. Louis might become educated to patronize the Browns if they were the only team here and showed improvement. However, to make such a move, all parties involved would have to make sacrifices for the good of baseball, instead of clinging selfishly to present rights."

Berry, Eddie Mayo and Phil Weintraub. "With this matter settled, pending the outcome of all negotiations and the final okay of the major leagues, I called in Arthur and told Harry the part that he, his brother and other interests on the Pacific Coast were to play as soon as the transfer of the St. Louis franchise was completed. They were to take charge of the Los Angeles club and move it to Long Beach. To that end, Harry conferred with civic leaders in Long Beach and had assurance that a ball park would be erected as soon as the city was awarded the Coast league franchise.

"You see, according to baseball law in those days, a major club could draft a minor league territory by paying the minor league \$5,000 and the club involved damages. And, since the Los Angeles Angels were to be our own club, there would be no need to pay ourselves damages. The Hollywood Stars? Well, they entered the picture in this way. We were going to put it up to them to decide if they wanted to continue playing in Hollywood or shift their franchise elsewhere. We would have co-operated with them in our schedule-making so that there would be no conflict. But actually, we wouldn't have been invading their territory, for they were operating under a 20-year contract giving them the right to divide Los Angeles' territory."

Moving along quietly, Arthur, in Los Angeles, reported that certain civic leaders in the Coast city were so enthusiastic over the proposed transfer of a major league franchise to their city that they agreed to assure the Browns an annual attendance of 500,000 for five years, according to Barnes. Should the gate receipts have fallen below that figure, this group promised to underwrite the difference.

Street Was to Be Condemned

"It was even agreed," the ex-Browns' president added, "and here's the correspondence to prove it, that a certain street would have had to be condemned to enlarge Wrigley Field, along the left field line. That sounded okay to me."

"You mentioned before, Don," we reminded the one-time head of the St. Louis Americans, "that this transaction would have involved five ball clubs. So far, you've mentioned the Browns, Chicago Cubs, Los Angeles Angels and Hollywood Stars. Which was No. 5?"

"Why," he responded, "let's not overlook the Cardinals. Taylor, they were to play an all-important part in the transfer of my Browns. That is, their president, the late Sam Breadon, who was a very close friend of mine, worked with me on the deal and we drew up a contract. Here it is. (He displayed the agreement.) By its terms, Breadon was to give the Browns \$250,000 for vacating St. Louis.

"In detail, here's the way we arrived at that figure. Breadon agreed to give us \$200,000 in cash in lieu of our investment in the Sportsman's Park lights, which we had installed a year or two before. We also were to receive two players, valued at \$25,000 each, or, if we could not agree on the players, then we were to get an outright sum of \$250,000. It was also agreed that the Cardinals would assume our lease with the Dodier Realty Co. for rental of Sportsman's Park at \$35,000 per year. It had five more years to run.

"Another very important part of the agreement was that Breadon promised to get the vote of the National League approving the transfer of the Browns out of St. Louis. Naturally, Sam was anxious to see us leave and we both felt sure he would have no trouble getting the blessing of the entire National League on that project.

"That left it squarely up to me to 'sell' the American League on the proposi-

Slashed Red Tape to Shreds



DON BARNES . . . reveals inside story

Theater Man Arthur Aided Barnes in Plans for Move

LOS ANGELES, Calif.

Harry Arthur, 52-year-old president of Fanchon & Marco, was a member of the board of directors of the Browns (1941) at the time he tried to help Don Barnes, then head of the club, move the St. Louis franchise to Los Angeles.

Now engaged in the production of a Vaughan Monroe film in conjunction with Abe Lyman and his son, Harry Arthur III, Arthur was always mainly interested in the movie industry and engaged in baseball only as a sideline, mostly as a fan. A close friend of Barnes, it was he who first presented the idea of moving the Browns to the Coast, for it was his belief that the people of Los Angeles were sports-minded enough to support major league baseball.

Arthur entered the cinema business at the age of 17, serving as film salesman and exhibitor for First National and other old time movie firms before he became general manager for Fox Theaters, with headquarters in New York. He also ran a group of 35 New England theaters, known as the Poli circuit, and later transferred his interests to the West Coast, where he became general manager of the West Coast Theaters in Los Angeles, a theater chain now owned by Charles Skouras.

On the board of directors of the St. Louis Amusement Co. at one time, he later became affiliated with Fanchon & Marco, the firm he has headed as president for the past ten years.

He divides his time between Los Angeles and St. Louis and calls both cities his home, though he was born in New York City.



Harry Arthur

...I kept the late Judge K. M. Landis, then commissioner of baseball, regularly informed on the progress I was making. He was quite interested and sympathetic toward the 'St. Louis situation,' though he never would express himself one way or the other when I asked him how he felt about the move that would transfer the Browns. That is a matter you boys (club executives) must settle among yourselves," he would say.

In order to conceal his movements, Barnes said he was referred to in all written meeting reports and negotiations simply as "MISTER X." He displayed a few of these documents, including the option with Wrigley for the purchase of his Los Angeles base-

...ball property, verifying his statement. "And while all of this was going on," he chuckled, "I had a new American League schedule for the 1942 season drawn up. I contacted Jack Frye, then head of TWA, turned over to him the information and he put his schedule-making crew to work on the project. Eventually, E. O. Croke, TWA vice-president of sales, flew into Chicago and met with Bill and Charley DeWitt, Sewell and me on December 6, 1941. The meeting ran into the morning of December 7. Santa Fe officials also attended the meeting and a very satisfactory schedule was presented us.

"At the time you will recall, Taylor,

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