



Mr. Les Haney

Class of 1942



While at Taft High Les was A.S.B. President his senior year and was named All Valley in baseball in 1940, 1941, and 1942.

At age 12 Les drew a circle on his garage door and began practicing pitches. Three years later he pitched with the Belridge Oilers in the National Championships in Detroit.

For more than 65 years, when one speaks of fast-pitch softball in Taft, the first name that surfaces is “Les Haney.” He had 17 no-hit games in a season and once struck out 43 batters in a 20-inning game. He earned a citation in Ripley’s “Believe it or Not” by striking out all 27 batters he faced (two foul tips) in 1945.

In the summer of 1948, he led the Taft Merchants to the World Softball Championship. Les’s rising fastball was clocked at 115 mph, and he used it along with a drop which curved in two directions to overwhelm batters. Les played for such teams as the Peacock Dairies, Inc., Hanford Kings, and The Long Beach Night Hawks. In one year pitching for Hanford, he averaged 21 strikeouts per game for 43 consecutive games. He was named to the All-American Team by the Softball Congress of America in 1948, 1950, 1951, and 1953. He is a member of the Bob Elias Kern County Sports Hall of Fame and was inducted into the International Softball Congress Hall of Fame in 1972.