

At 82, Bailey still slugging away in business world (August 15, 1980)

The score was tied 1-1 early in 1923 when a lanky Tulsan went to bat in the bottom of the 10th inning.

Larkin Bailey, the University of California baseball team's pitcher, drove a long ball between two outfielders to knock in the winning run against the Olympic Club of San Francisco, which included several major league players as they awaited spring training.

Today, Bailey, 82, is still hitting and pitching six days a week in the field of business where he is one of Tulsa's best-known figures.

But few things in business have given him the thrill of his 10-inning victory over the Olympic Club – in which he pitched the entire game.

The 6'1" Tulsan with a shock of white hair is owner of Tulsa Abstract and Title Co., but is identified with several other businesses as well, including land, purebred Angus breeding, banking and an occasional fling at the stock market.

Bailey's life has been filled with vim, vigor and interesting experiences.

Born in 1898 in Niles, Michigan, his family moved to Broken Arrow in 1907 and to Tulsa in 1910.

Tulsa was a city of 18,500 then, so Bailey has seen most of the city's growth.

He graduated from old Tulsa high. In 1917, when the United States entered the war with Germany, he enlisted in the Marine Corps.

As a member of the Sixth Marine Regiment, he was overseas for 14 months and saw action at Chateau Thierry, Belleau Wood, Soissons, San Mihiel and Champagne.

A young lieutenant in the Sixth Regiment, Clifton B Cates, later became commandant of the Marine Corps, "I knew him well" said Bailey.

The Germans fired mustard gas on June 18, 1918 and all members of Bailey's company were ordered hospitalized.

"Six of us didn't go to the hospital. We didn't get enough of the gas."

Following the war, Bailey pursued his education from 1919-21 at Iowa State University and the following two years at University of California. He received a bachelor's degrees from Cal in 1923.

"I seriously considered a professional career in baseball, but I didn't have a blazing fastball and knew I could never be a winner in the majors, so I gave it up and studied law," he said.

He has contented himself with being an avid fan and Tulsa area major league scout, first for the old St. Louis Browns in 1937; Brooklyn Dodgers, 1941-45; and Milwaukee Brewers, 1954-55.

He spent a year at each of three law schools – University of California, University of Michigan and Yale University.

“I was admitted to practice law in California in 1927” he said.

Meanwhile, his family had moved to California and his father, W. S. Bailey, attempted to retire but returned to Tulsa to enter business with Larkin.

Father and son purchased Tulsa Abstract in 1927 and the elder Bailey retired in 1936.

He had been in the abstract business in Broken Arrow and Tulsa, and had owned Title Guaranty and Trust, which he sold before moving to the West Coast. He merged 10 abstract firms to form Guaranty, Bailey said.

Now there are four abstract firms in Tulsa and Tulsa Abstract is one of the largest.

Larkin Bailey owns extensive land. His biggest tract is 2,000 acres adjoining the city of Owasso on the West.

Banking investments are a large part of his securities portfolio. He owns 26 percent of the stock of Peoples State Bank, and lesser amounts in these banks; Western National, Union National, Utica National, Forth National, Brookside and Commercial, of Tulsa; First National of Jenks and Arkansas Valley of Broken Arrow.

He is married to Elsie Schlegel, whose parents were Tulsa pioneers, and they have a daughter, Florence Ann Caraway, who is associated with her father in Tulsa Abstract.

Bailey has a brother, W. S. Jr., who heads Tulsa Royalties Co.

Larkin Bailey has been a Rotarian for 52 years and in 1956 was president of the Rotary Club of Tulsa. He is prominent in national affairs of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity.

A member of First Presbyterian Church, Larkin gives the Lord full credit for his healthy and successful life.

“I haven’t been in the hospital since an appendectomy in 1927. Retire? I enjoy my work so much I come to the office on Saturdays.”