

Barquilla de la Santa María

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March 17: St. Patrick

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A Most Striking Character: Pat Murnan of Columbus by Donald M. Schlegel

But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins. - 1 Peter 4:8

On the second weekend of May, 1937, long lines of mourners paid their respects amid cascades of flowers at the Egan Ryan funeral parlor on East Broad Street in Columbus. "They who paid tribute were not of any one walk of life. They were young and old, well-dressed and shabbily garbed, but it was noticable how many of those who came to bow their heads wore the plainest clothing. There were a number who passed his bier leaning on canes."¹ On Saturday a Solemn High Requiem Mass was offered at St. Joseph Cathedral. The funeral procession to St. Joseph Cemetery was the longest up to that time in Egan Ryan's long history. One might hesitate to present the story of Pat Murnan in these pages, but the outpouring which took place at his death in 1937 indicates that this often wayward son of Columbus and son of the Church in the end had done right by both.²

Family

The Columbus Murnans or Murnanes came from Cappamore in northeastern County Limerick, Ireland.³ In early real estate and probate records here the family name was spelled Murnana and Murnina. The family quickly dropped the final 'a', most substituting



Pat Murnan at the age of about 70. (*Ohio State Journal* photo, courtesy of the *Columbus Dispatch*)

an 'e' but Pat and his mother and brother used the spelling "Murnan."⁴

James and Thomas Murnana (whether brothers or cousins is not known) came to Ohio from Ireland about the early 1850s. James, Pat's father, was married to Julia Mahony, who was the mother of his first five children. She died in the Columbus vicinity on September 25, 1859. Two years later, on November 21, 1861, James married a young widow named Margaret Ready at Columbus St. Patrick Church, before Father Edward Fitzgerald. Margaret had been born on

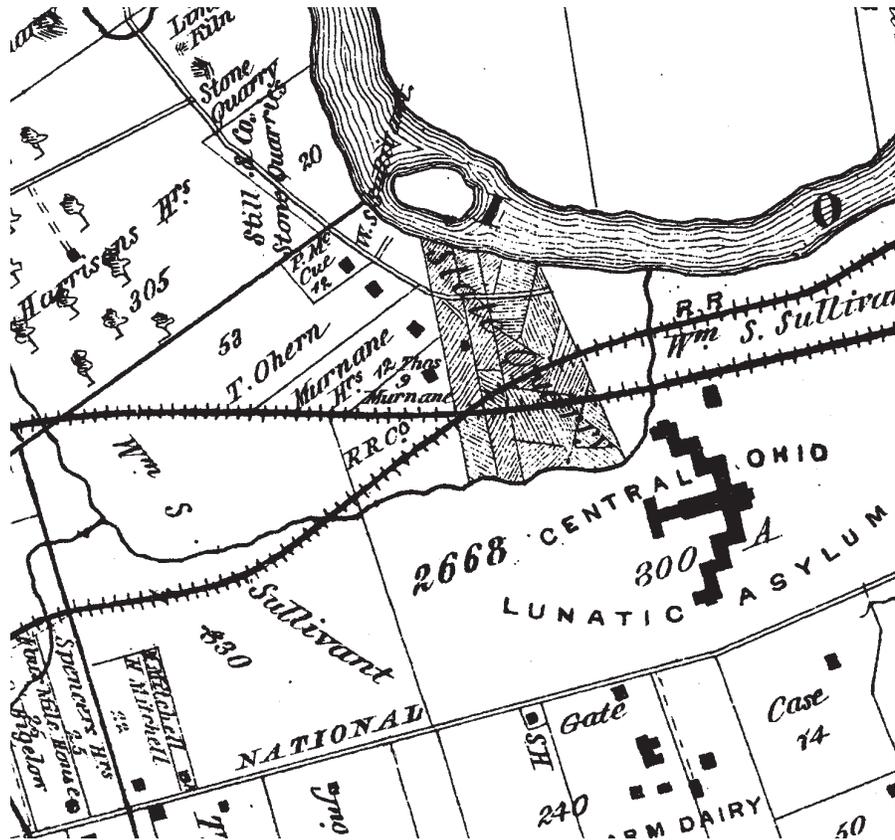
January 1, 1836 in County Kerry, Ireland, a daughter of Maurice Minahan, and came to Columbus about 1850. She brought to the Murnan household her young daughter, Katie Ready, who had been born in Columbus and baptized at St. Patrick's.⁵

Margaret became the step-mother of James and Julia's five children, namely John, Michael, and Timothy, all born in Ireland, and Margaret and William, both born in Ohio. She bore to James two sons: Thomas and Maurice Patrick or Pat.

James Murnana lived near the State Quarry in Franklin Township, west of Columbus. He bought a 5 acre plot from William S. Sullivant on March 20, 1862; this land was on the southwest side of the Scioto River and what now is McKinley Avenue, just west of Harper Road. He added 6.85 acres to the little farm on April 21, 1864, extending the property southwest to the railroad. The house site now is beneath the interstate highway. The rear of the property is crossed by Scioto Harper Drive. Thomas owned a 3 acre adjacent plot, a triangle bounded on the northwest by James's land, on the south by the railroad, and on the east by the State Quarry.⁶ The family still owned this land in the 1940s. James and Thomas both were "quarrymen."

Maurice Patrick, "Pat," was born on July 9, 1865 and was baptized on July 10 at St. Patrick Church by Rev. John B. Murray. Sponsors were Dennis Murphy and Margaret Murnane.⁷

Pat never knew his father, for James died shortly after his birth, on September 30, 1865.⁸ The



The original Murnan homestead west of Columbus, from the 1872 county atlas.

family was not well off, but neither was it entirely destitute. Besides the land, house, and a stable, James left his family with a wagon used to haul stone and gravel, three horses (one of them blind), a sow with five pigs, a sow with eight shoats, a cow and a heifer, fifty bushels of potatoes, nine hundred pounds of barreled pork, a half-barrel of flour, and \$224. The furnishings of the house were a cook stove, bureau, table, clock, and three beds (for ten persons). Within a few months of James's death, the heifer wandered onto the railroad tracks and was killed.⁹

Twice-widowed Margaret with her three children soon moved to the north side of Columbus. In 1873 Pat gained a step-father when she married Michael Galvin at St. Patrick's, on July 6 before Bishop S. H. Rosecrans. Mr. Galvin also had been recently widowed. He was a stone worker who had lived in the area for some time and had been one of the appraisers of James Murnana's

estate in 1865. Michael and Mary and the two boys lived at 97 East University St. (the first street north of Goodale) and Katie and her husband Larry Fallon lived next door. Of all Pat's relatives, Katie and her children were always the closest to him.

Michael Galvin apparently was a very religious man. He rented a pew at St. Patrick Church. In his will he made bequests to Sister Mary Francis Clare of Kinmare, Co. Kerry, the Sisters at St. Francis Hospital, those at the Orphan's Home (St. Vincent's), those at Good Shepherd Convent, and St. Patrick and Sacred Heart parishes, all for Mass to be offered for himself, for his first wife Mary Conway, and for his deceased parents. He left bequests to his siblings, but he also was solicitous for Margaret. He instructed his administrator, "I want you Thomas Bergin to see justice done to my present wife I don't want her disturbed from her rights as I want her to have her share (She has that now) and more..." His will was proved on March 11, 1879, when Pat Murnan was fourteen years old.¹⁰

Margaret Galvin was a founding member of Sacred Heart Parish¹¹ and Pat attended the parish school and as "Morris" received his First Holy Communion and Confirmation at Sacred Heart Church with his class in 1880. It is said that he also attended Ohio State University, though the school cannot confirm this.

The Business - Early Years

Pat and his older brother Tom were both carpenters at the Panhandle Railroad car shops, until Pat found a more lucrative career. The story was told that he once sat in a poker game with such luck that nobody could beat him. He won more than \$400 and a lease on a bass fiddle that belonged to one of the other players. That evening changed his whole career. He decided to go into the 'business.' His first place was a saloon and gambling house at 449 North High at Vine, which he opened about 1887, at the age of twenty-two.¹²

"The problem... was to conceal his operations from his old Irish mother who, he said, would kill him if she knew he was a gambler. So for many months Pat would dress in his railroad garb, go to his new business for the night, then return in the morning, once again wearing his railroad garb. This went on for quite a while..."¹³ The problem was not only his sainted mother. Ohio had laws against gambling that were essentially unchanged all through Murnan's adult life. Keeping a gambling place was punishable by ten to thirty days in jail or a \$30 to \$500 fine or both. Keeping or exhibiting for gain a gambling device, such as a faro or keno bank (but not a billiard table) was punishable by ten to ninety days in jail and a fine of \$50 to \$500. Keeping a public house where gambling was allowed was punishable by a fine of \$50 to \$200. None of this deterred him, because the laws were seldom enforced.

About 1894 he took on a partner and moved his operations to 234 North High near Long streets. Shortly after this Pat finally moved out of his mother's house. (Several years later Margaret moved to 96 E. Eighteenth Avenue, her residence until her death on February 13, 1925. Her funeral was from Sacred Heart Church. She left her estate to her granddaughters, Katie's daughters Margaret Fallon Lunn and Mary A. Fallon, along with small bequests to Fathers Raymond Bauschard, S. P. Weisinger, John J. Murphy, A. M. Leyden, and John H. O'Neil.)¹⁴

Around 1900 Pat and a partner opened a saloon at 108 S. High, with a gambling hall upstairs. This was the third door south of State St. and the Ohio Statehouse and a half-block west of City Hall. In the spring of 1902 "Margaret Murnan" leased this four-story building from the Rickly family for five years. The lease was renewed for another five years in 1907 and "Margaret" sub-let the upper two stories.¹⁵ After that era the saloon business, if it continued, went underground with the gambling rooms. Pat's public face was his taxi business, though he was listed with a real estate office at 11 1/2

West Broad in 1923, presumably a front for the gambling rooms.

Murnan Taxicab Company

The Columbus Dispatch of December 3, 1910 carried a page-one photograph and caption headlined, "Another Step in the 'Metropolitanization' of Chris Columbus's Hustling Namesake." "The first real automobile taxicab to parade its splendors up and down High street. It is the genuine, save that it has no taximeter. It seats two people, with room for four in an emergency, and has a special compartment for luggage. Pat Murnan is the owner." The car pictured had an open cab and a sloping, low-fronted hood, giving it the look of a Renault product. The earliest city directory listing for the company was in 1911-1912: "Taxicab Company and Auto Livery, M. P. Murnan manager, 108 S. High." This, of course, was the address of Pat's saloon. By 1912 the cab business was housed in a garage at 108 South Wall Street and Murnan registered two Croxton-Keetons and four Packards.¹⁶ Headquarters were located in several other buildings as time went on, all in the vicinity of Broad & High. Murnan's had a respectable clientele, including at least one member of the Ohio Senate. And it was profitable. At one time Pat claimed lost income of \$10 per day when one of his cabs was put out of action by an accident. But it also caused headaches: cabs and tires occasionally were stolen and a total of six accidents and suits against the cab company were noted in the newspapers up until 1924. By the latter year Murnan had taken on two partners in the taxi business and his own involvement was winding down.

Carrie

In the 1890s Pat took up with Carrie Travers and in 1905 they were married before Father William McDermott, who at that time was pastor at Danville.¹⁷ Little is known of her. She suffered from diabetes and Bright's disease, and

apparently because of her afflictions they moved to the 18th Avenue home of Pat's mother. Carrie died there on February 12, 1913. Her funeral was at Holy Name Church and Pat had her buried at Mt. Calvary Cemetery, in a two-grave lot near the south fence, possibly thinking the empty grave next to her would be his own.¹⁸

Grace

Some time after Carrie's death, Pat began to pay his respects to Grace Daugherty Backenstoe, whom he called "Shorty." They had similar backgrounds in some respects. Both were born of Irish immigrant parents. Both had lost their fathers at very young ages. Both had older half-brothers and -sisters to whom they apparently were not close. Both ran illegal businesses, but both were acknowledged to be unusually honest.¹⁹

Grace's mother, Sarah "Gavagy,"²⁰ married Michael Devaney about 1854, while still in her teens. They lived in Washington County and had children Mary and James. Mr. Devaney apparently died during the Civil War. Sarah then married Irish-born Patrick Daugherty in Athens County on September 28, 1864. Grace (Bridget in the 1870 census) was born to them in 1865. Mr. Daugherty apparently died before 1870, when Sarah and the three children were living within a community of Irish railroad workers in Canaan Township, Athens County. Mary E. Devaney married John W. McDonough in 1875 and James Devaney married Lucy Owen in 1878, both in Athens County. Sarah and Grace then moved to Columbus.

In 1895 Grace married George Backenstoe, a saloon keeper, in a civil ceremony before a justice of the peace²¹ -- a marriage the Church would not have recognized for a baptized Catholic. She obtained a divorce from him in Cleveland in 1912. Grace lived at her saloon and "boarding house" at 41 West Town Street, just a short block from the police headquarters and city prison.

In June of 1915 Pat took Grace on a trip to the Pacific coast and the California Exposition. The trip was made in a large Packard along with a chauffeur/mechanic and another man, a former employee of Murnan's. During the stay in California Grace was sick and hardly able to attend the Exposition. They started back in the latter part of July. "When they reached Barstow, California, Pat and Grace, on account of the latter's sickness, took the train to Flagstaff, Arizona, arranging that the chauffeur and his helper would drive the car through the Great American Desert. The arrangement placed Pat and Grace in Flagstaff a day or so ahead of the chauffeur. ...it was during this day or two's stop in Flagstaff that she and Pat were married. The marriage took place before a justice of the peace." Pat made all the arrangements and gave the justice a tip of \$20, instead of the regular payment of \$1.

The two men with the Packard soon arrived in Flagstaff and the four of them continued the return by car and were in Colorado Springs on July 27, where they ran into Charles Schaefer from Columbus and a group of some 150 Shrine members.²²

That year Grace bought a house at 140 South Front Street and Pat went to live at his mother's house on Eighteenth Avenue. No public announcement of the marriage was made, but many of their friends were told of it. It was Pat's view that a public announcement of any connection between him and Grace would be injurious to his taxicab business. This sounds not quite believable, given Pat's own association with saloons and gambling, but the taxi company had some high-class customers (and the court of appeals in 1942 considered this an authentic reason).

We are given a glimpse of Grace's house later this same year. A young man who was a page at the Ohio Senate later related that he knew Grace and late in 1915 "was in this house of Backenstoe's on Front street with another girl, and the three

of them were in the recreation room, drinking, [when] Pat walked in and joined them. [He] said to Pat, 'What is this that I hear about you two being married?' Grace then spoke up and said, 'We can trust Louie', and the four of them then proceeded upstairs to Grace's very beautiful bedroom; ...she went to a safe or a panel in the wall and got out a paper and showed it to him, and ...it was the marriage license of Maurice Pat Murnan to Grace Daugherty. ... Pat asked him to get in touch with the diamond merchant from whom Grace had been buying her diamonds, which he did, and it resulted in Pat buying her a seven-carat diamond..."²³

(To be concluded)

NOTES

- 1) *Ohio State Journal*, May 15, 1937.
- 2) In addition, the sensationalized account of Murnan in *Columbus Unforgettables* needs to be rectified. The only other known account was a short one by Bob Albrecht in the *Columbus Dispatch*, January 8, 1996.
- 3) Thomas Murnane family account at www.murnane.org/limerick/trmain.htm
- 4) The name is thought to have come from O'Murnain. In Ireland the most common pronunciation is 'mer-nun,' with the emphasis on the first syllable. Chicago area Murnanes pronounce the name with a long second syllable, rhyming with 'her name' (per Ed Murnane of Chicago at www.murnane.org). Those in Columbus, and some elsewhere in the United States and in Australia, pronounce the name 'mer-nan,' rhyming with "her man," with the emphasis on the second syllable. This pronunciation is explained by the presence of the third syllable in the early Franklin County records, which the family dropped.
- 5) St. Patrick Parish burial record. St. Patrick and Franklin County (7/670) marriage records. Thomas Murnan's marriage record at Sacred Heart. Margaret Galvin record at St. Joseph Cemetery and death certificate (1925, #8117). *Columbus Citizen* Feb. 14, 1925. Catherine Fallon death certificate, 1930, # 8749. Catherine Ready baptism at St. Patrick's.

- 6) Franklin County deed records 75/448, 80/257, and 73/448.
- 7) In 1937 his birthplace was said to have been "a small farm in Prairie Township north of Columbus" (*Columbus Citizen* 5/13/37), but Prairie Township is west of Columbus; the birthplace almost certainly was James's farm in Franklin Twp.
- 8) Franklin County Probate Court, estate 05841, Thomas Murnina administrator; Administration Docket 5/527.
- 9) The heifer's hide was saved and was sold at a public auction of James's goods in January. Franklin County Probate Court, Inventory Record 15/36-38.
- 10) He left \$100 to his sister Bridget and the remainder of his estate, if any, to his sister in Ireland, Mary, wife of William Cotter. Franklin County Probate Court, Will Record G/522.
- 11) *Columbus Citizen*, February 14, 1925.
- 12) *Columbus Citizen*, May 13, 1937
- 13) Thomas, Robert, ed., *Columbus Unforgettables*, Columbus, 1983, pp 69-70
- 14) Franklin County Probate Court, estate 48328
- 15) Franklin County Recorder, lease records 13/289, 19/113, and 19/116.
- 16) Franklin County Genealogical Society, *Franklintonian*, January, 1992, p. 16
- 17) Franklin County Marriage Record 37/187.
- 18) Death certificate, 1913 #8564; Holy Name parish record; tombstone at Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Cathedral Section, lot 26-E.
- 19) *Ohio Cases Reported in North Eastern Reporter Second Series and Ohio Supplement*; St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1965; Vol. 46 (hereafter referred to as NER), page 654.
- 20) per the transcribed record of her marriage to Patrick Daugherty in Athens Co.
- 21) Franklin County Probate Court, marriage Record 25/111.
- 22) *NER*, 655-656
- 23) *NER*, 657

Calvary Cemetery, West Jefferson, Madison County, Ohio

(*Southwest side*)

Continued from Volume XXX, No. 2

T4L3

{James McDonald a native of Scotland died Aug. 8, 1897 aged 84 years
{Ellen his wife a native of Co. Mayo, Ireland
{Ellen Gillespie was my name
{Ireland is my nation
{The Catholic Church is my belief
{And Heaven is my expectation.
SSJ: 1904, Jan. 1, Ellen McDonald, born Ireland, age about 90
metal plate: James McDonald Co K 26th O.V.I.

age 62, heart trouble

{David Kehoe 1870-1914
{Anna Kehoe 1864-1939
SSJ: 1914, Nov. 17, David James Kehoe, age 45, born in Ohio, parents born in Ireland
SSJ: 1939, Sept. 29, Anna Kehoe, born Madison Co., age 35, diabetis, no relatives
Paul A. Kehoe 1906+1937
SSJ: 1937, Sept. 1, Paul Kehoe, born Madison Co., age 31, accident
WJV: 1937, Aug. 1, Paul A. Keyhoe, age 31

T4L4

Frank Kinney 1861+1929
WJV: 1929, Dec. 7, Francis Kinney, age about 60, born in Ireland
SSJ: 1929, Dec. 6, Frank Kinney, born Ireland,

T4L5

{Jennie Kehoe his wife 1870-1911
{Frank J. Ernst 1873-1911
WJV: 1911, June 17, Jennie Ernst, age 41, parents born in Ireland
SSJ: 1911, June 17, Geneve Ernst, born

Madison Co., age 40
 WJV: 1911, June 17, Frank J. Ernst, age 38,
 parents born in Germany
 SSJ: 1911, June 17, Frank Ernst, born W.
 Jefferson, age 43
 1900 Genieve Ernst Stevens 1922
 SSJ: 1922, Sept. 9 in Sharonville, Jennie
 Stevens, born W. Jefferson, age 25,
 tuberculosis

T4L6
 (Mother) Marg. Endres 1844-1911
 {KAISER: Frederick J. 1856-1931
 { Rose H. 1866-1944
 { (Daughter) Marguerite J. 1901-1933

T4, L7 and 8
 (Dad) Joseph H. Frey 1890-1953
 SSJ: 1953, Feb. 19 [or 14 or 17?], Joseph
 Frey; lived and died in Columbus
 (Mom) Elizabeth Frey 1900-1964
 SSJ: 1964, Mar. 28, 1964, Elizabeth Frey
 Dineus, 63
 (Son) Carl F. Frey 1911-1952
 SSJ: 1952, Apr. 6, Carl Frey, born W.
 Jefferson, from St. Mary of the Lake, Chicago
 +Charles Joseph Frey US COAST GUARD
 WORLD WAR II APR 20 1917 NOV 22
 1990
 (Daughter) Mary E. Lohr 1915-1984
 (Son) Allen R. Frey 1920-1965
 SSJ: 1965, July 4, Allen Richard Frey, 46

T 5 and 6, L1
 {WILLIAMS: Christopher C. 1857+[blank]
 { Mary McNeal 1862+1916
 SSJ: 1932, Aug. 14 in St. Anthony Hospital,
 Columbus (there 3 years), Christopher
 Williams, born Columbus, age 73, myocarditis
 WJV: 1916, Dec. 2, Mary Ann Williams, age
 63, born in Ohio, parents born in Ireland
 SSJ: 1916, Dec. 2, Mary Williams, born
 London, O., heart trouble
 Mary K. Williams 1920-1926
 SSJ: 1926, Mar. 9, Mary C. Williams, born W.
 Jefferson, age 5, pneumonia
 WJV: 1926, Mar. 9, Mary Katherine Williams,

age 5, born in Ohio
 + William Williams Ohio PVT. 1 CL 51 INF 6
 DIV January 6, 1925
 SSJ: 1926, Jan. 7, William A. Williams, born
 W. Jefferson, age 24, apendicitis; convert
 WJV: 1926, Jan. 7, William Williams, age 26,
 born in Ohio
 + Robert Williams OHIO PFC 2 FIELD SIG
 BN 1 DIV WORLD WAR I PH DEC 11 1896
 APRIL 1 1952
 SSJ: 1952, Mar. 31, James Robert Williams,
 born W. Jefferson, age 56; from Holy Cross,
 Columbus
 John Henry Williams PVT US ARMY
 WORLD WAR I JUNE 17 1890 + JAN 7
 1957
 SSJ: 1957, Jan. 7, John H. Williams, born
 Columbus, age 67

T5L2
 {WRIGHT: (Father) Theodore A. 1902-1973
 { (Mother) Helen M. 1909-1988
 Robert D. Bayliss Nov. 15, 1956-May 6, 1974
 SSJ: 1974, May [buried on the 9th], Robert
 Donald Bayliss, 17

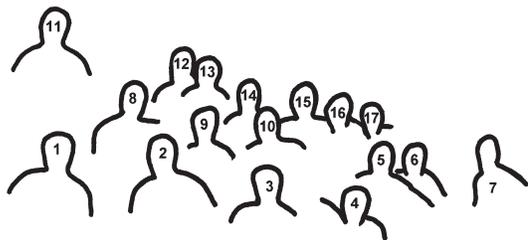
T5L3
 {FEDDERN: Bernice M. July 4, 1895-May 1,
 1988
 { Robert J. Sr. Jan. 3, 1890-July 27, 1974
 footstone: Robert J. Feddern PVT US ARMY
 [same dates]
 SSJ: 1974, July 27, Robert J. Feddern Sr., 84

T5L4 "S"
 1923 Jack Smith 1987
 {SMITH: Philip A. Nov. 12, 1883-Feb. 3,
 1967
 { Imo July 12, 1902-July 25, 1979
 SSJ: 1967, Feb. 3, Philip Smith, 83

T5L5
 {ERNST: Elizabeth E. 1888-1963
 { George B. 1884-1969
 SSJ: 1963, Mar. 22, Elsie Elizabeth Ernst, 74
 Our little mommy: Jennie T. Ernst Aug. 13,
 1916-Nov. 6, 1999



This photo was given to the Society by Holy Cross Parish, and so in the *Illustrated History* of the Diocese was said to be that parish's baseball team. In fact it depicts the St. Mary High School baseball team in the Spring of 1943. Father Linus Dury, on the far right, at that time was assistant at St. Mary Parish and coach of the team. He apparently took the photo with him when he transferred to Holy Cross. Leo Thurn of St. Mary Parish was able to contact some of the long-time members there and identify most of the team members: 1 Dixie Dimel, 2 Charles Holt, 3 Joseph Naegele, 4 Mario Macioce, 5 Frank Williams, 6 Carl Rau, 7 Father Dury, 8 Walter Scholl, 9 Leo Sullivan, 10 perhaps Tony Yoli, 11 Bones Lyons, 12 Jim Jander, 13 Clem Lang, 14 Herman Leidinger, 15 Pete Gleich, 16 perhaps Ed Kelly, 17 Frank Macioce. Mssrs. Scholl, Lang, and Holt are still living.



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