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CARL A. FINLEY

By: Nancy H. Finley

He ran the Kansas City Athletics from 1962 to 1967, and the Oakland A's, 1968 to 1980, and mentored the new owner's executives from 1981 to 1984 for 22+ years.

He has been referred to as the 'other' Finley. The Finley 'behind the scenes', who kept everything running with the team.

Good friend Andy Dolich said he wore many different hats for the team.

His name was Carl A. Finley.

Carl A. Finley is why Charlie O. Finley could appear to run the team from afar, 2,000+ miles in his Chicago Insurance office.

Carl Augustus Finley (who shared a middle name with Jim 'Catfish' Hunter), was born March 23, 1924 in Dallas, Texas. Carl's father, Carl Augustus Finley, Sr. and Oscar A. Finley were brothers. Both were sons of Randolph D. Finley and Emma Caroline Skates of Tuscaloosa, AL. Randolph D. Finley was born November 17, 1867 in Tuscaloosa, AL, and died August 10, 1922 in Birmingham, AL, with his maternal lineage traced to SAR/DAR at Valley Forge.

Carl A. Finley, Sr. chose to move to Dallas, TX from Birmingham, AL after serving in WWI with his brother, Oscar. Carl was a good salesman, and thought the cosmopolitan city of Dallas, TX would be a better place for his craft.

In 1922, Carl A. Finley, Sr. married Ruth Marie Hartman in Dallas. Ruth Marie was a native Texan, whose brother, R.F. Hartman was in education, and who has an elementary school named for him in Wylie, Texas. Charlie enjoyed visiting his uncle Carl and aunt Ruth at their Dallas home.

When the Birmingham steel mills closed in 1933, Oscar Finley took a job in Gary, IN. Carl, Sr. offered to let Charlie stay with them in Dallas. Charlie liked this idea, since he did not want to move so far away.

On July 24, 1934, the family matriarch, Emma Caroline Finley, passed away in Ensley, AL. Oscar travelled to Birmingham to sign the death certificate.

It was around this time that Charlie's mother, Burmah Emma Fields Finley, aunt Burmah to me, wanted Charlie to come home to Gary, IN. Aunt Burmah took the train to escort Charlie home. Charlie was needed to help with chores, according to aunt Burmah.

Carl Finley, Jr. attended Adamson High School in Dallas, which is where he would teach History in the future.

Carl was in a Student Business Club at Adamson when he graduated in 1941. He served for three years in the Air Force stationed at Davis, California during WWII. His main duties consisted of work in linguistics for the South Pacific with various codes.

Carl attended Southern Methodist University earning a B.A. in History in 1948. He received a B.A. in Journalism from North Texas University in 1950. He attended Southern Methodist School of Law while teaching History at Adamson High School from 1952 to 1959.

In January 1960, he received an offer to be Assistant Principal at Thomas Jefferson High school in Dallas.

In December 1961, He was promoted to Principal of Thomas Jefferson High school.

On December 28, 1948, Carl Finley married Helen Hinchliffe, who served as a Lt. Army Nurse in the South Pacific during WWII in 1944-1945. Helen was working as a nurse at Parkland hospital in Dallas when she was introduced to Carl by her cousin, Marvin Hinchliffe, Carl' SMU roommate. Marvin and Carl worked together as part time Juvenile Probation officers in Dallas.

Carl was a Mason.

Carl and Helen's interests were Ancient Greece, Egypt and Rome. The house was filled with these books. Both knew Latin, and belonged to two neighborhood Bridge clubs.

Helen obtained a B.A. in Education from Southern Methodist University, 1957.

In early 1961, the entire family knew about Charlie's new baseball team.

Charlie was often on the phone with Carl, Sr. to discuss his accomplishments. My grandfather would then announce this to everyone else. I have heard how excited everyone was for Charlie.

Charlie had a difficult time with his illness, TB, after working in a Gary, IN steel mill. He was frustrated at not finishing his four-year college degree. He could not enter WWII because of his health.

This made it difficult for him to play sports.

What Charlie had was the ability to sell. He started selling insurance for Sears when he left the hospital. He did so well that he found a way to start his own insurance company.

Insurance allowed Charlie to finally purchase a baseball team.

A Sports Illustrated article, June 5, 1961, titled "Charlie Finley and Bugs Bunny" by Rex Lardner, should be required reading for anyone who wants to know our history in the first season of 1961. This article describes Charlie's mania after purchasing his own baseball team.

The article mentions the \$500k that Charlie paid of his own funds to renovate the Kansas City Municipal Stadium. This included dyed sheep grazing on the grass above the Bleachers, a mechanical rabbit named Harvey that rises from the ground to provide baseballs and a petting zoo for families to visit.

From August 1961 and after, things started to slide downward for Charlie.

This started when Charlie fired GM Frank Lane for making a trade with the Yankees. Charlie told Lane not to trade, especially to the Yankees, without consulting him first. Even though Lane signed a four-year contract, it didn't matter when he did not follow Charlie's wishes.

Lane was interviewed by Ernie Mehl, sports editor of the KC Star, in August 1961, and said he believed Charlie "was thinking of moving the team." The KC Star jumped on this and the negative press started. Charlie wanting to move the team was a constant theme in news articles afterward.

In December 1961, Charlie traveled to Dallas to meet with Carl. Charlie confided how he felt like he'd been put through a grinder. He had a long talk with Carl. He needed guidance and advice.

Charlie said if the team ever had to move, he would choose the Dallas, TX location. He asked Carl to join him with the team. Carl declined at that time.

After this meeting, Charlie started leaving a round trip plane ticket at Love Field airport waiting for Carl. The ticket was for Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. Charlie was trying to convince Carl to join him in running his team. This continued every weekend from January 1962 to May 1962.

In May 1962, Carl finally agreed to join Charlie and the team. Carl gave his resignation to the high school. He believed he would be back within two years. Neither he nor Charlie had experience in baseball administration or as athletes.

In 2012, I heard from a Thomas Jefferson Class President for the Class of 62. This person invited me to their high school reunion since dad would be honored. This is when this former student said dad never told anyone why he resigned. It was only during the World Series that this former student found dad's name associated with the team.

Carl's agreement with Charlie was that Carl would reside where the team was based. This meant living in Kansas City for the Athletics. This meant our house needed to be sold. Charlie would purchase us a residence in Kansas City. Dad would have the freedom to oversee each department.

Dad would coach Charlie on how to talk to the press.

It always seemed like a reporter knew how to push one of Charlie's buttons, and make Charlie start ranting. This often resulted in angry words between Carl and Charlie.

Dad wanted to be able to say what department he was in charge of as the need arose. He would review the 'small print' for Charlie. Dad would be in charge of background checks and administration. Charlie would let dad know about any new idea, including P.R. tickets, depending on the event.

Dad was a minority owner. The other minority owner was aunt Shirley, Charlie's wife.

Charlie did not like the title of GM. Charlie said Frank Lane gave him a bad taste for this title.

I didn't move to Kansas City with mom until our house sold the summer of 1963.

While dad was in Kansas City from June 1962, mom and I traveled to see dad every weekend.

I remember sitting with aunt Shirley during games. The seat on the other side of us was Harry Truman, past U.S. President. Truman was a season ticket holder. I remember how nice and patient Truman was with me. If my cousins weren't in town, I often became bored. I would wander over to former Pres. Truman who would let me sit on his knee.

Carl and Truman belonged to the same Kansas City Masonic Temple.

I remember hearing about the Kansas City Chiefs. Later I heard the Chiefs' had a deal with the city to only pay \$1.00 per year. Later, I understood why this made so many angry. Charlie would threaten to move the team, hoping this would help his cause. Instead, the K.C. Star could point to Charlie's remarks and say this is proof he intends to move the team. This became a vicious circle.

Carl mentioned hearing from other teams who thought Charlie was serious. One team included Oakland, which touted a new stadium. California was the last place anyone wanted at this time. Oakland was too far away.

Charlie felt he could not move his family to Kansas City because they were firmly settled in their Indiana town of La Porte. Charlie brought his family to Kansas City often. We spent two summers at Charlie's La Porte, IN place.

In November, 1963, Carl persuaded A's scout, Joe Bowman, to have the team's front office in his Kansas City residence while Charlie thought about signing a lease renewal for the KC Stadium. The KC lease renewal was signed at the end of Jan. 1964.

In 1964, Eddie Robinson (a fellow Texan) worked for the team in P.R. and stayed lifelong friends with Carl.

One day, I was seated in the Stadium when a helicopter came in, blowing my hair all over, which landed on the field. Satchel Paige walked out with a nurse. There was a rocking chair set up outside of the dugout. Carl said they wanted to make an impression on the fans by bringing Mr. Paige in this way.

I referred to Jim 'Catfish' Hunter, Johnny 'Blue Moon' Odom, Sal Bando and Dick Green as my guys. I perked up when I saw them play on the field.

In 1964, the Beatles performed inside the Stadium. I remember the song "I want to hold your hand" playing constantly. Charlie gave Helen the LP to prepare me for the performance.

I caught measles the day the Beatles were scheduled to perform. Helen wanted to see this performance. I was quarantined in an office with Helen. I could hear the fans screaming while I laid on a sofa. I'd never heard fans sound this way.

The Beatles sat with Carl and Charlie in the reception area before the performance. Dad said they were a "polite group of young men." Spoken like a school Principal.

In 1965 Bert Campaneris played all positions in one inning.

In 1965, our 'Up & Coming' players were listed with names: Tony LaRussa, Dave Duncan and Joe Rudi.

1965 is when the Governor of Missouri gave the Kansas City Athletics a mule. The mule was named: Charlie O. and was made the new team mascot, replacing the longtime elephant mascot from Philadelphia and the Kansas City Athletics 1955 to 1964.

At this time, Carl, along with Charlie played a role in judging the talent and value of incoming players into the majors. Future Baseball stars like Rick Monday, Reggie Jackson and Vida Blue were added to the roster. Many came out of the Rickwood Field in Birmingham, AL.

In Sep. 1967, when the team learned it had to move because of the increase in rent, the only location with a ready-to-move-into Stadium was Oakland, California. Carl had responsibility for making all logistic arrangements and completing the transfer within the few months before the start of the 1968 baseball season in Oakland.

Carl arranged to personally move to Oakland per his agreement with Charlie, which permitted Charlie to remain in Chicago, Illinois, and manage the insurance business which funded the operation of the baseball team as needed.

After the team's arrival in Oakland, much work continued because tasks needed to be performed in conjunction with officials of the Oakland Alameda County Coliseum in addition to the routine work that was required by managers of front office personnel.

Player Rick Monday offered to help Carl by moving to Oakland in Oct. 1967 with Carl to promote the team in the Bay Area. Carl Finley and Rick Monday made the early morning rounds speaking to business groups about the new baseball team.

Most of the staff in Kansas City did not want to leave the area for Oakland, with the exception of Broadcaster Monte Moore. It was up to Carl to recruit this staff. Carolyn Coffin, the switchboard operator in Kansas City, was offered the job

of Charlie Finley's personal secretary if she agreed to move to Oakland. Carolyn agreed, and would also be in charge of recruiting clerical staff.

Carl and Charlie invited Joe DiMaggio, a San Francisco resident, to be a consultant for the team. Carl talked about the Italian dinners DiMaggio would make for the two of them on a Friday or Saturday night. Both were bachelors. Carl and DiMaggio understood one another and kept a deep connection.

Carl still didn't have a replacement for Groundskeeper, George Toma (author of 'Sodfather'). Carl once said without George, he wasn't sure the team's mechanical rabbit would remain maintained. Carl turned out to be correct. Harvey seemed to suffer several breakdowns in Oakland.

The Oakland Coliseum was not in the "turn-key" condition the Coliseum Board promised. The front office floors and walls seemed unfinished. It had a depressing feel to it. This front office still needed to be finished.

Charlie said he hoped Oakland didn't expect him to pay for this finishing. After the \$500k Charlie paid in 1961 to have the Kansas City Stadium upgraded, he wasn't about to do the same.

Charlie depended on Carl to manage every aspect of the team operations that Charles could not perform, because a majority owner cannot perform (or really even control) every action involving the management of the team. Charlie enjoyed making it sound like he was in charge of everything. He wasn't. He couldn't be, with the distance, as well as handling his Chicago office.

Carl coordinated and updated owner Charlie about the status of ongoing actions every day (and often more than once a day) during the season as well as during the off-season.

Carl performed every task that was conducted by the Oakland A's front office. Also, using his law degree, he handled player contracts, owner-player mediations and assisted in interpreting the rules disseminated by major league baseball. Former Hon. Justice J. P. Stevens, once team counsel for the A's, stayed in contact with Carl, and remembered him working long hours.

When the Oakland A's started playing in Oakland with Carl in effect leading the front office and managing administrative actions of the team, the record improved each year. In 1968, the A's (82-80) record was above .500 for the first time since the team was in Philadelphia. This progress continued with more regular season wins in subsequent seasons as Carl (along with Charlie) discovered and signed future stars like Roland Fingers, Gene Tenace, Ray Fosse, Billy North and Ken Holtzman.

In June 1970, Carl gained sole custody of his daughter, Nancy Finley, an only child, who was living with her mother, Helen in Dallas, Texas. In late 1966, Helen had filed for divorce when she became fed up with sports entertainment and Charlie Finley. Helen did not like Charlie's late-night phone calls at their residence. Charlie thought Helen looked down on him. He seemed intrigued by Helen's background, since she was in the Philippines when the worst fighting occurred.

Helen's IQ was around 144. Helen preferred visiting museums over attending sports games. When Helen and Carl argued, Helen did not hesitate to remind Carl she was a higher rank than him.

Helen started making comments she thought Carl made a mistake by joining the team.

She moved back to Dallas after the divorce. She hoped Carl would follow. When this didn't happen, she became bitter and angry.

The time was bad. Helen wouldn't allow communication between Carl and Nancy.

CPS had to get involved, which ended with the court granting sole custody to Carl.

Within 48 hours of the call from Dallas CPS, Carl was at the DWF Airport to take Nancy to Oakland.

At that time, Carl was living on the top 25th floor of a high rise building leased by the team. This is where A's Broadcaster, Harry Caray, stayed when he was in town. Mr. Caray had family photos all over the living room furniture.

The following day, Nancy was in the front office conference room, with front office staff lined up to say 'Hi'.

This Coliseum became Nancy's 2nd home.

Carl liked to stay busy. In 1971, Carl received his credential to teach at Laney Community College during the off season.

The Credential shows:

- Carl A. Finley
- The California Community Colleges
- Community College Instructor Credential
- Subject Matter Area: Business and Industrial Management; in the subject matter areas of History and Communication Services and Related Technologies.

- Issued: January 25, 1971 Valid for Life

When Charlie purchased the Seals Hockey team, then the TAMS Basketball team, and expected Carl to manage both teams the same as the A's, Carl was angry. He reminded Charlie their initial goal was to focus on the baseball team.

Carl quit. He wrote a book about his time in baseball up to 1970. He received an advance payment from LIFE Magazine of \$8,000 (maybe \$9,000) for a percentage if it is ever published. He also received a \$3,000 advance from a Kansas City businessman.

During Carl's time away from the coliseum, the phone rang constantly. Carolyn was the only one who was halfway familiar with how things ran.

Charlie couldn't work with any staff on the other teams. Charlie was angry when the calls kept coming in.

After an eight-month period, Charlie pretended to call the wrong number with Carl. Charlie used different accents or whatever it took to make Carl laugh.

Carl reminded Charlie he was taking too many people for granted, and not following through with promises unless hounded.

Charlie said he put the Hockey and Basketball teams up for sale. This was a start. In the end, Carl promised not to have his book printed.

In regards to how the team was built from the late 1960's, the result was the Oakland A's winning five consecutive American League titles from 1971 to 1975, and winning three consecutive World Series in 1972, 1973 and 1974. which was a remarkable feat given that no team in the history of major league baseball at that time (and still to this time-2024) had accomplished a string of post season victories before winning the World Series.

During this time, Carl approved the starting line-ups and handled all public affairs and events involving the Oakland A's. He managed employees and handled all personnel actions. With the A's World Series, he coordinated championship ticket sales at an off-site, private location.

In 1974, Charlie's wife, aunt Shirley, filed for divorce.

In 1975, the Oakland Tribune asked Carl to be one of the 10 Most Eligible Bay Area (California) Bachelors. Carl asked the writer if Charlie could have his place. Carl wanted to boost Charlie's confidence at this time. This would need to be kept confidential, without Charlie knowing how he was chosen.

The writer said the paper wanted a local person instead. Dad asked again.

Finally, the writer said they would include Charlie in this category. When Charlie heard about being chosen for this category, he was on "Cloud 9" as the *cliche* goes.

Carl was correct. When Charlie's confidence is up, things run smoother in Oakland.

Soon, Carl was preparing a photo shoot near the Coliseum for a TIME magazine cover. Charlie would be on the cover of TIME. Ron Kaplan was the photographer.

Charlie planned to bring a date for the first time since his divorce. He insisted on wearing the 'green 'Finley' cowboy hat. This was Charlie's new look-post divorce.

Jim 'Catfish' Hunter had recently won mediation against Charlie at the end of 1974.

Carl often warned Charlie he needed to pay on the due date, instead of waiting until the last day of a two week extension.

When the team lost the 1975 Playoffs, Carl thought the players looked exhausted with only one day of rest. Carl would say at least we made the Playoffs.

Carl was the point of contact and spokesperson for the team. Charles had so much confidence in Carl and relied on him so much that he appointed Carl to attend the annual MLB winter owner's meetings starting with 1975. Carl attended these meetings prior to 1975 with Charlie. This time, Charlie asked Carl to attend solo.

In 1983, Carl heard a rumor that some MLB owners thought Carl would make a great Commissioner, and possibly his name should be considered for appointment. (This was word of mouth only).

Free Agency was a topic discussed between Carl and Charlie many times before the vote. It seemed certain free agency would be approved. The question was how to introduce free agency.

After free agency was introduced, Carl agreed to rebuild the team with Charlie. This would need to be in private to avoid being under the media microscope.

In December 1976, Charlie O. The Mule (our team mascot) died from pneumonia. This was a sad time. Carl had enjoyed watching the fans show up early to home games to have a chance for their children to pet the mascot, or have a photo op.

When Charlie O. died, dad had him cremated and interred at the Oakland SPCA, which is next to the Oakland Coliseum. Carl would have a sign posted to let fans know where they could pay respects to our mascot.¹

Charlie was preparing for the Finley vs. Kuhn trial in Chicago at this time, which started Dec. 16, 1976, and ran for 15 days with Hon. Judge Frank McGarr.

Mike Norris was added to the team roster in 1976..

The rebuilding really started in the beginning of the 1977 season.

1977 a Colorado businessman, Marvin Davis, made an offer to purchase the team.

The front office had not been finished to date. Mr. Davis was offering positions to Carl and Charlie to move with the team to Colorado. The City of Oakland and Alameda County made a move to stop the move. By February 1978, this move was void.

Carl and Charlie used off-site scouts during this rebuilding. Carl made an effort to listen to any scout that called to report on a potential player.

In October 1977, Hollywood approached Carl and Charlie about a screenplay. George C. Scott would play Charlie. Several meetings took place in Oakland with producer Aaron Spelling. In early 1978, the news came that financing wasn't going to come through, due to high interest rates, and the overall economy.

In 1978, Monte Moore left to start his own radio station in Porterville, CA, where he had a residence. Carl said it would be okay for Monte to leave.

From 1976 onward, Charlie was estranged from his children, who were adults. If one of Charlie's children needed information, Carl would be asked.

1978-1979 Carl and Charlie hired Amaury P. Gonzalez as the team's Spanish Broadcaster. Red Schoendienst was also hired for regular Broadcasting. Curt Flood was hired to do Broadcasts as needed, and front office help. Carl kept a good relationship with Curt.

Haron Killebrew, a friend of Carl's, helped in the front office.

Bobby Hoffman was another good friend who Carl brought in to help.

Carl handled media calls asking what was happening with the team.

¹ Nancy Finley was a teenager when the beloved mule died. As of this writing (2024) she has possession of his ashes in a safe in her home in Georgetown, Texas.

At this time, Charlie had another heart surgery. Charlie seemed dependent more than previous years on Carl.

Carl believed the team had a chance for another comeback if the time was allowed.

Carl became friends with Kaiser Aluminum CEO, Cornell Maier who was having events on behalf of the team. If one sponsor was lost, a new one was gained.

In early 1979, Rickey Henderson and Brian Kingman were offered contracts.

In March 1979, a lawsuit was filed by the City of Oakland, Alameda County and the Coliseum Board against Charles O. Finley & Associates.

One Cause of Action was "the Roster is not up to MLB standards".²

How was this going to be handled by the city and county?

Another Cause of Action was the team's low attendance, and no marketing.³

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This lawsuit is described in the article "They're Just Mad About Charlie", by Ron Fimrite, SI Vault.

In July 1979, San Francisco Federal Court, this suit was dismissed in the A's favor.

Carl was warned by law enforcement friends about possible harm to himself and Nancy. Charlie was thousands of miles away. The reason was all of the negative news articles against the team. The warning was an overzealous fan might think it's okay to physically harm him or/and Nancy.

This caused Carl to have a thorough talk with Charlie about selling the team. Carl couldn't risk being in the Oakland area with all the negative publicity, and risking harm to his daughter.

Charlie agreed to the sale.

It was up to Carl to try to find a buyer. Carl was concerned Charlie would delay, or, sabotage a possible sale.

The final rebuild was to find a manager. Carl heard Billy Martin could be available.

² This, the team that had won three consecutive world series! At the time of the lawsuit, few knew that the A's were quietly but busily rebuilding the team.

³ This was shocking considering the team reached a Dynasty 4 years earlier

Carl needed to be the one to negotiate for Billy. Things hadn't gone well in past years between Billy and Charlie Finley.

The 1979 winter meeting was in Kansas City Dec. 1979. Carl met with the Yankees GM, and Martin was approved to start the 1980 season.

Billy Martin wanted Mickey Morabito, with the Yankees, to join him with the team. This was approved.

Carl told Charlie not to contact Billy Martin without talking to him first. Carl knew how Charlie could make a comment that might anger someone like Billy. Charlie needed to be hands off with Billy for this to work.

In early 1980, Carl brought in Walt Jocketty to run the Minor League division.

Carl called his friend, Cornell Maier with Kaiser to mention his search for a buyer. Cornell Maier mentioned he might know a local family who might fit. No promises.

Cornell Maier told Carl about his friend, Walter Haas with Levi Strauss. A meeting was arranged between Carl Finley and Cornell Maier.

The difficult part would be when Haas would speak with Charlie. Carl needed to know when and where any meeting would take place.

There were several times when Charlie tried to stop this sale. Carl used every ounce of what he knew about Charlie to keep this deal on track.

The players were playing much better during the 1980 season. The concept of 'Billy Ball' was started by an Oakland Tribune writer in 1980.

There were several meetings and press conferences about the possible team purchase throughout 1980.

Carl had a good feeling this business deal would go through.

Carl was invited to stay with the Haas family in his V.P. position to guide the new executives.

Charlie had hoped to be invited to be a consultant. This didn't happen.

In the 1981 season, there was a baseball strike that started June 12, 1981 through August 10, 1981.

The A's made it to the 1981 Playoffs, with a minimum 90% of our scouted players. This result showed Carl and Charlie could rebuild a team with minimal resources.

Carl retired full time from MLB in 1984. When he retired, he was honored with a gold-plated lifetime pass.

After 1984, Carl was asked to serve as a team historian on radio Q&A broadcasts.

Finally, the team sale went through in November 1980.