

# *Fun While it Lasted*

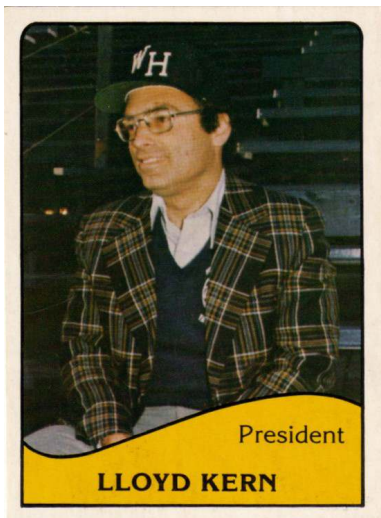
Lloyd Kern and Robert Zeig purchased the New York Yankees Double-A farm club in West Haven, Connecticut after responding to an advertisement for a minor league baseball club in *The Wall Street Journal*.

The rights to a Yankees farm club in the shadow of Manhattan would be worth a small fortune today. Witness the reported \$8.3 million sale of the Yankees single-A Staten Island affiliate in late 2011. But in the 1970's, minor league baseball was subsistence agriculture for the men who backed the teams. Teams frequently changed hands for no more than the assumption of debts outstanding and Kern and Zeig's experience of finding a team for sale in the classified ads was not unique.

At the end of the 1979 season, Kern separated from the Yankees organization and signed on with the Seattle Mariners, adopting the "Sailors" nickname. Shortly thereafter, he moved the club to Fraser Field in Lynn, Massachusetts where he operated for two more seasons in the Eastern League before selling the club.

Kern's ownership of the West Haven Yankees/Lynn Sailors remains his only foray into sports investment. Today he is the Senior Vice President of Finance for the Boys & Girls Club of Philadelphia.

Lloyd Kern spoke to Fun While It Lasted about the Lynn Sailors and Eastern League baseball on December 8th, 2011.



*Interview begins after the jump.*

**FWiL**

How did you originally get involved with the Eastern League club in West Haven?  
Was that your first foray into sports ownership?

**KERN**

We answered an ad in *The Wall Street Journal* put in by the Eastern League President. This was my first (and last) venture.

**FWiL**

Why did you and Robert Zeig decide to leave West Haven in 1979 and how did you settle on Lynn, Massachusetts as your new destination?

**KERN**

West Haven would not upgrade the lighting system at the park on a timely basis or improve our clubhouse facilities. Lynn was willing to put in a new lighting system and do some upgrades at the ballpark. Unfortunately, there were no other alternatives at the time.

**FWiL**

Back in those days, the Eastern League had legendary baseball operators like Joe Buzas in Reading and Charlie Eshbach in the league office. Who were some of your fellow owners who really made an impression on you?

**KERN**

The only other good owner was Tom Kayser of the Holyoke Millers, who later worked in the Minor League departments of the Pirates & Reds before becoming the Texas League president, a position he has held for several years.

**FWiL**

How did the city of Lynn react to the arrival of the Sailors in 1980?

**KERN**

Not as well as we would have liked. The Mayor embraced us but *The Daily Item* was extremely negative.

**FWIL**

How did the sale of the team to Mike Agganis come about in 1981? Do you recall the sale price of the team?

**KERN**

We advertised in several publications and he (and Rico Petrocelli) were the only legitimate buyers. The sale price was less than six figures, slightly below the market at that time.

**FWIL**

Do you have one or two favorite memories or stories that you can share from your days in the Eastern League?

**KERN**

We were playing a twilight/night Doubleheader vs. Holyoke in 1977. During the first game our manager, Mike Ferraro, motioned to me to come down to the screen to talk. The umpire had asked the field manager to turn on the lights which he did. Then one of the Stadium Commissioners told the field manager to turn off the lights which he then did. Mike said that if the lights were not turned back on, we would forfeit the game. I told the Commissioner that if the umpire has the lights turned on, they stay on, whether he feels it should be on or not. The lights were turned back on!

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