

**VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF
EXCERPT FROM CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
TWO RIVERS CONVENTION CENTER
MAY 15, 2000, 7:00 P.M.**

PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL

George Killian: I am George Killian, Executive Director, NJCAA. I have been the executive director since 1969. I came to Grand Junction the first time in 1960. We established a partnership with the City of Grand Junction. When I came here in 1960 you had a cow pasture out here. Look what you have today. The money that came from this 40 years of operation, all of it has been turned back to the City of Grand Junction and you have the most outstanding baseball field in the world. I would like to tell the gentleman from Butte I did never, have not and will never write a letter to Sam Suplizio, Mark Achen or anybody else. Mark, you've known me for a long time. Reford, you have too. I have worked out a deal so that JUCO never can move from Grand Junction unless you commit a very serious, serious offense. No way would we leave this community. I have 40 years of experience. We have a wonderful working relationship with major league baseball. We have done things for major league baseball; we're the only organization that has done some of these things. What I dislike, extremely dislike, is to have a set of rules that you're going to put out which affect only major league baseball or minor league baseball or anything else. It did not take into consideration your relationship with JUCO. There are many things in that proposition that was presented to you by the Park Board which gives that entity coming in here a lot more freedoms, a lot more money, a lot more for the dollar than we have gotten in the last 40 years. Please remember, I'm not here to argue with you one way or the other. We are not taking anything out of this town. The things that I read in the paper, and why Mr. McCurdy says he's a friend of Sam's, well, if he's a friend of Sam's, I don't need friends like that because he's not a friend of Sam's. He is not a friend of Sam's. I have worked very closely with Sam Suplizio, I don't know how many years. What you do with those proposals, you do. We are not leaving. We're not threatening you, but if you accept them, we are leaving. I'm disappointed in the Park Board. That the Park Board did not ask us, did not say to JUCO, because JUCO is owned by the NJCAA. We have given that event to the City of Grand Junction under contract. I'll give you one example. We have three divisions. You have Division 1. We have Division 2 in Millington, Tennessee. We have Division 3 in Batavia, New York. We use a minor league ballpark. We can't hold it on the same dates as we hold Division 1 because the minor league team needs the ballpark. Do you know how many season tickets we sold in Batavia, New York? 73, 73 season tickets. And do you know why? We can't have anybody in the seats because the pro team was there before us, and they own and control the dollars in the community. What the Grand Junction Baseball Committee has done for this community in 40 years is unprecedented in any city in the United States of America. You need to support that group because every year they take their money, put it back in the community. I just saw a letter tonight that somebody wrote to Sam asking for money for a youth project. And they'll get it, and no ifs, ands or buts about it,

because this is strictly a non-profit organization. I ask you, please, to consider that. But please remember we are not threatening you, we have never threatened you and the contract is so written, as I said before, you have to commit "hari kari" before we'd leave. Thank you.

Councilmember Spehar: George, before you leave, a couple of points I'd like to make.

Mr. Killian: Oh yah, go ahead.

Councilmember Spehar: When you first came to Grand Junction in 1960 I was playing ball on that field and there was far more than a cow pasture. It certainly has been improved since then but it was far more than a cow pasture because it was my spikes in the grass out there and that's personal experience. So I think, and while we appreciate all that's gone into that stadium from the Baseball Committee and because of JUCO, I'd also just point out in some of the accounting we had done in trying to get to the point of making a decision, in the last 5 years there's been about \$450,000 spent there. \$332,000 roughly came from the taxpayers of the City of Grand Junction and the rest came in contributions from JUCO and the PIAB partners, and so on. And all of this we appreciate, but just a couple of things I thought maybe it might be worth correcting.

Mr. Killian: You know I remember when I came here in 1960. I came out of New York and I stood behind first base, and it was a little fence, and for many years, when I first became the executive director, people wanted to leave Grand Junction. They wanted to leave because they weren't satisfied because there isn't a week goes by that we don't get a letter from some city who wants the JUCO World Series. Just this week in Troy, New York, the State of New York is building a brand new, double AA ballpark which is going to be owned by one of our member colleges. And I wrote them a letter and said "No thank you. Regardless, of what you build, we are not leaving Grand Junction." We have no intention, Jim, of ever doing that. I've traveled all over this country, collegiate-wise. This is the finest ballpark that I know on any college level. Oh, there's been one built down in Mississippi that's a little bit better and so on and so forth, but you've got the best in the world. And we are not leaving regardless of what you do with these proposals. But we hope that if you're gonna keep these proposals, let us come in and sit down with the Park Board and let's write them together so that we protect everybody, what you want to protect, what we want to protect. We are very, very group oriented. We'll sit down with anybody. We're not biased. We give away a lot of things. I always tell the baseball committee someday I'm going to go to jail for the contract that I wrote over here and the stipulations I put in there to make sure it always stays in Grand Junction. Thank you.

Councilmember Spehar: Appreciate your dedication to Grand Junction.

Councilmember Scott: Jim, I was going to say something also. I'm kind of offended of the fact that you said it was a cow pasture.

Mr. Killian: In my opinion, it was.

Councilmember Scott: I am surprised that a person like you would bring the National Junior College to a cow pasture. That's what I say.

Mr. Killian: In 1950 we would have played in any cow pasture in America, but we had no place to build, and Jay Tolman, who was the Athletic Director at Mesa College, was kind enough to invite us here because when we started the championship in 1959, it was _____ . Believe, me, Jack, I know what I'm talking about.

Councilmember Scott: I've been around a long time and I know what the field is, and I don't think it was that bad, but maybe you do.

Councilmember Theobald: Appreciate your coming by.

Councilmember Terry: I just have one thing to say, I'm sorry. Mr. Killian, if there is ever a discussion about whether or not professional baseball comes, the discussions will be held with the Council. The Parks Board certainly did our bidding and they weren't directed to talk to anybody else, so if you have any exception to take with the process, you took it up here and we recognize that. We recognize what you have done to keep JUCO here and we appreciate it, but any further discussion would be with us.

Mr. Killian: If you would just invite us, it would help a lot.

Councilmember Theobald: If it gets to that point, if it will get that far

Councilmember Spehar: It will be a decision just like you've seen tonight, George, and I've written it down in case it comes up again since we've all had to wonder about this over the last few months. Correct me if I'm wrong, "We are not leaving regardless of what you do with these proposals. George Killian."

Mr. Killian: I did not say that.

Councilmember Spehar: That's a direct quote, Sir.

Mr. Killian: No. You know what I said over and over again. We are not leaving Grand Junction unless some tragic thing happens. It has nothing to do with these proposals so whoever quoted me on that did not quote me correctly.

Councilmember Theobald: We appreciate your input and appreciate your coming.

Councilmember Payne: Hey, George, I just wanted to add one thing. I'm not a new timer. As a matter of fact I umpired the first year that JUCO came to Grand Junction. I umpired the games. So I've been around a couple of years too and I've seen what JUCO has done for this community. Thank you.