

# LYN ARY PARK & THE MARSTON FIELDS

Welcome and thank you for visiting the Lyn Ary Park Baseball Memorial, which honors those who have volunteered and coached on the Marston Fields. Also, please look for the John Opinsky Memorial bench nearby.

While you are here, enjoy the many features and activities this much-loved park in our community offers:

## **Lower Level:**

- Watch a baseball game at the Marston Fields.
- Take a stroll or ride a bike on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.
- Read about the 1964 Earthquake and how baseball was integral in the creation of Lyn Ary Park.
- Look for beluga whales swimming in Knik Arm.
- See if Denali — the tallest peak in North America — is visible across the inlet.
- Look for Mt. Susitna, also known as Sleeping Lady, which is part of the Alaska Range.
- Enjoy a walk through the Michelle Byrum Memorial Garden.
- Look for moose who frequent Lyn Ary Park and trails in this area — but please do not approach, and never put yourself between a cow and a calf.

## **Upper Level:**

- Let the kids scramble over the playground equipment.
- Toss frisbees or kick a ball in the large open area.
- Play a game of tennis at the Hendrickson Courts.

Most of all, have fun!

**A special thank you to Lyn Ary Park Baseball Memorial donors — this memorial would not have been made possible without your support!**

- Donor #1
- Donor #2
- Donor #3



# ALASKA BASEBALL

## A History of the Game in the Last Frontier

Alaskan baseball dates back to when whalers carried equipment on board for impromptu shore games. In the early 1900s, mining camps and salmon canneries formed teams and used baseball to diffuse potential conflicts and build comradery among crews. Alaskans came from all over, and according to historian Katie Ringsmuth, baseball provided a way to bring diverse people together. Anchorage has had a baseball field since before it became a city in 1915. On July 4, 1915, Artist Sydney Lawrence photographed a game where at least 100 spectators lined an area from first base to third.

In 1916, the first baseball park in Anchorage was no more than a cleared field at 16th Avenue and C Street. In 1949, that field was rebuilt, expanded, and formally named for William Mulcahy, the father of Anchorage baseball. Arguably, Satchel Paige



provided one of the greatest moments in Anchorage baseball history with his appearance in 1965. Despite not debuting in the majors until he was 41, after Jackie Robinson broke the race barrier, Paige was a national legend and pitching star of the leagues, prior to integration, as well as a two-time Major League Baseball All Star. He appeared at Mulcahy in four games against local military and All-Star teams.

In 1960, Henry Aristide “Red” Boucher and Don Dennis founded the Alaska Gold Panners and subsequently the North Pole Nicks and the Valley Green Giants. The Anchorage Glacier Pilots, the Peninsula Oilers, the Anchorage Bucs, the Mat Su Miners, and the Chugach Eagle River Chinooks were also organized. Overtime they formed the amateur Alaska Baseball League, which still plays today.

Also in 1960, the American Legion organized baseball teams for boys 18 and under. The Babe Ruth program for boys ages 13-16 first played on the fields at Lyn Ary Park on land donated in part by Muktuk Marston. You can learn more about Muktuk and Lyrin Ary at the historical signs situated at the Lyn Ary Park and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trails Intersection. The Babe Ruth Program sent its first Alaska team to the Northwest Regional tournament in 1968, the first team to represent the State of Alaska on the national level. Many players starting on these fields have gone on to win high school championships, play for the Anchorage Bucs, and earn scholarships to play at the college level.

In the early 1990’s, Anchorage West Little League played a critical role in helping to return baseball to the Marston Fields at Lyn Ary Park. Once again offering boys and girls as



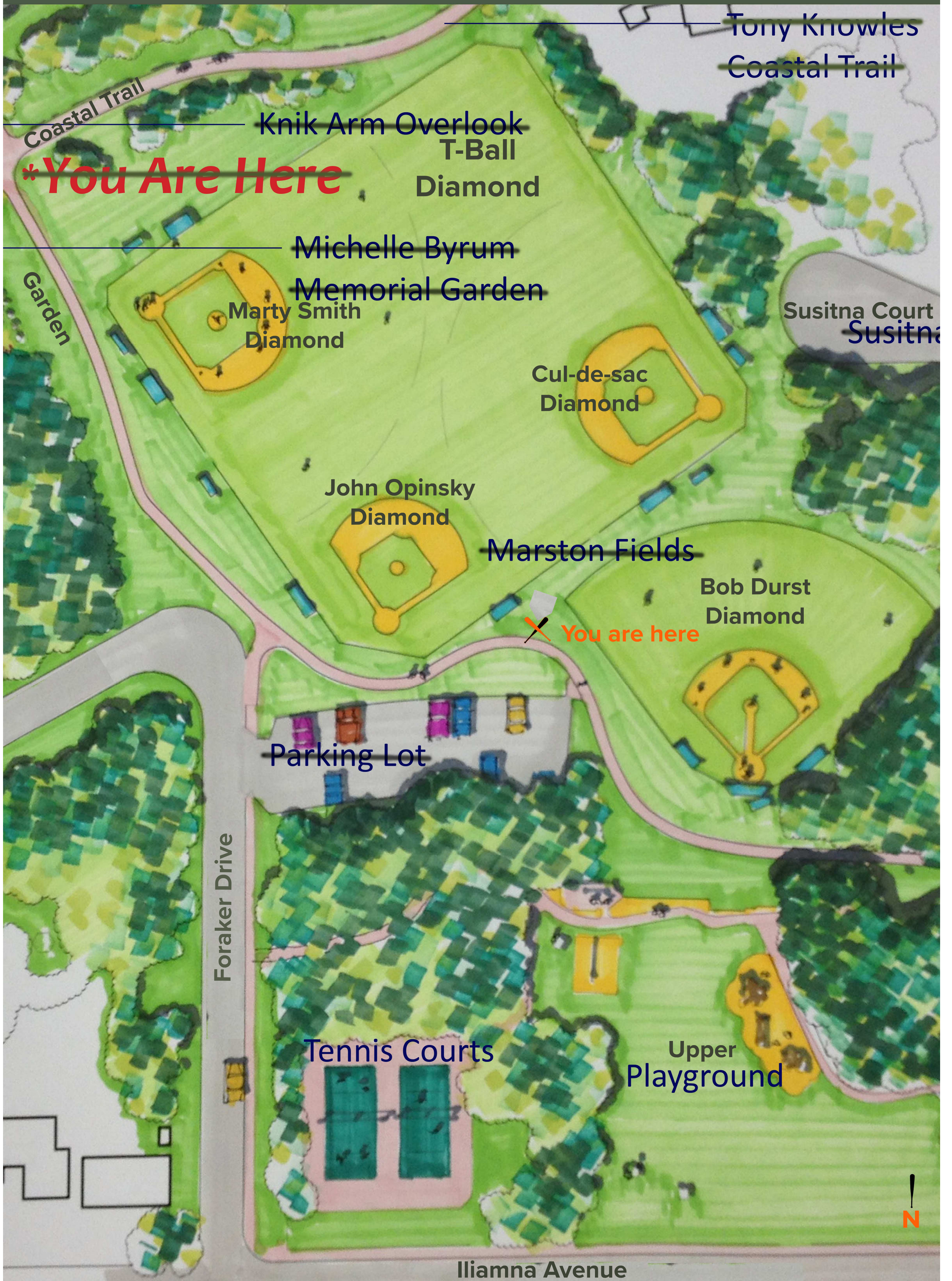
young as 4 years old the opportunity to play baseball while continuing to allow for multi-use play outside of baseball practices and games.

The people honored at this memorial worked fiercely to develop these fields, teamwork, patience and the good sportsmanship baseball requires. Please pause and honor their commitment to ensuring baseball continues to thrive here at Lyn Ary Park.



# THE MARSTON FIELDS

AT LYN ARY PARK





# In Memory of **COACH Robert (Bob) Durst** **03.16.1950 - 01.06.2007**

**Bob Durst started coaching for Anchorage West Little League (AWLL) when his oldest son Zack played in minor league baseball. He joined the Board of Directors and served as League President from 1995-2005. At his death, AWWL League President/ADN Columnist Matt Zency wrote, "He was that rare parent who stays on long after his kids have moved through the program, helping run things for the future generations of players. Besides being the institutional history of our league, besides being an astute adviser on organizational and political matters, besides being a lifetime student of the game of baseball and how to teach it, he gladly helped with the sweaty physical work that a man of his age and stature could have easily skipped."**

**Back in those days, the Marston Fields, despite begin originally established as baseball fields, mostly supported soccer leagues. Bob was instrumental in working with the city and community groups to relocate the soccer fields elsewhere in the city and redesignate the Marston Fields for baseball. This lead the way for AWLL's five-field complex while also allowing for community use outside of baseball.**

**Bob was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1950 and attended Montfort Heights Elementary and Colerain High School. He then obtained a degree in Architecture from the University of Cincinnati College of Design. Bob married his wife Dianna in July of 1974, and they arrived in Anchorage a month later where they raised their family: daughter, Ashley (1979), and sons, Zack (1983) and Zjok (1986). All three children have made Anchorage their home. Bob was the co-founder and principal architect of Bezek Durst Seiser (BDS Architects).**



**On January 6, 2007, Bob died suddenly of a massive heart attack after working outside in below zero weather. He was 56 years old, but left a lasting legacy of contributions to AWLL and Lyn Ary Park.**



# In Memory of **COACH JOHN OPINSKY** 12.24.1968 - 01.06.2021

**John Opinsky began coaching in 2006 for Anchorage West Little League (AWLL) when his boys were just five and six years old. He joined the board of directors shortly thereafter, and served as League President from 2013-2016. John spent countless hours coaching, managing equipment, and performing field maintenance at Lyn Ary Park. In his final year with AWLL, the Senior team he coached won the Alaska District 1 Championship.**

**After his time with AWLL, John went on to coach the West High School baseball team, his alma mater, with many of the same players who began in tee ball here at Lyn Ary Park. In 2020, the West High American Legion team brought home the State Championship title under his leadership for the first time since 1977! To watch a short video of the final play made by his son, Jack during that magical game, please visit the QR Code below.**



**John, a third generation Alaskan, was born in Anchorage in 1968 and attended Inlet View Elementary, Romig Junior High and graduated in 1987 from West High School. John went on to attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks and moved back to Anchorage where he married his wife Cathy in 1998 and had three boys: Jack (2001) and twins Jimmy and Nicko (2002). John had a successful career in Commercial Real Estate as a partner at Frampton & Opinsky.**

**John was diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer in the Spring of 2019. He passed away peacefully on the afternoon of January 6, 2021 in his Anchorage home, sporting his West High Baseball Championship ring earned just 6 months prior, and surrounded by his loving family. Many lives were touched by John's commitment to this game, his players, and their successes on and off the field.**





# In Memory of **COACH Martin (Marty) Smith** 12.11.1966 - 02.18.2018

Marty loved spending time improving and taking great care of the fields at Lyn Ary Park. He began coaching at Anchorage West Little League when his children started tee ball, coaching at every level. He served as the League President for two years, and also filled in as an umpire whenever needed.

Marty was born in Anchorage in 1966. He attended Northwood Elementary, Romig Middle School, and in 1985 graduated from West High School. He went on to attend the Colorado School of Mines and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. After college, Marty moved back to Anchorage where he met and married his wife Shannon. Together they had three children; Emilee (1997), Sean (1998) and Ian (2003). Marty spent the majority of his 20-year career as an Electrical Engineer with Municipal Light and Power and Electrical Power Systems.

In 2013, the family embarked on a month-long “Baseball Trip,” visiting the Baseball Hall of Fame and watching baseball games at the Mariners, Nationals, Yankees and Red Sox stadiums. Of all the ball parks, Fenway was a family favorite. The highlight of the trip was a seventeen-inning game between the Red Sox and Mariners that ended at midnight.

In August of 2017, while in Seattle for his son Ian’s kidney transplant, Marty was diagnosed with a very rare form of liver cancer, cholangiocarcinoma. He peacefully passed away just six months later on February 18, 2018, knowing his love of baseball would continue at the park where he devoted so much of his time.

The photo below reflects Marty’s three favorite teams: The Anchorage Glacier Pilots, the Seattle Mariners, the Boston Red Sox.







**BOB DURST**  
**DIAMOND**





**JOHN  
OPINSKY  
DIAMOND**





**MARTY  
SMITH  
DIAMOND**





**CUL-DE-SAC  
DIAMOND**





**T-BALL  
DIAMOND**