

# Las Senioritas of Glendale

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By 1934, women's softball first appeared in Glendale, California as the brainchild of a Hispanic-based Catholic Church. In a community known as "Toonerville"—a barrio area adjacent to Glendale and within the Los Angeles city limits—the Cristo Rey Church was the center of activity both spiritual and civic matters. Its leading members were active not only in the enhancement of their church—which served as an important support institution for Spanish-speaking ethnics—but also in seeking annexation to the city of Glendale.

Until 1934, social and recreational opportunities for the parish's young women were few and far between. Only during high school gym classes could these young women compete in an organized manner. However, as softball rose in popularity it captured the fancy of Cristo Rey's young women who strove to understand its fundamentals in afterschool sandlot games. During the spring of that year Manuel Regalado, a leading member of Cristo Rey's civic organization called the Spanish-American Civic League, formed the area's first organized women's softball club as a social outlet for the restless females, and as a means to enhance both community spirit and recognition.

Throughout the summer of 1934 the team participated in both exhibitions and tournaments. They traveled to all sectors of Los Angeles competing against anyone who Regalado could line up. His most formidable task, however, lay with the parents of the players. Many Hispanic parents, who traditionally kept close tabs on their daughters, were, at first skeptical that the team allowed too much independence for the girls. Yet, for the "Senioritas of Glendale"—a title bestowed on them by a local Spanish-language newspaper—the church's blessing of this activity tempered much of the parental skepticism. The team's existence was not criticised and the fact that they could venture to different sectors of Los Angeles wearing shorts in the evening made them unique among Hispanic women. The church, for its part, needed more functions for the young women. Furthermore, the community needed recognition in its drive to join Glendale. The softball club was a viable solution and tool for both their quests.

The "Senioritas of Glendale" were not an overly successful team in the won and lost column. Sketchy records indicate that they were better than average at best. But success cannot always be measured in the box scores. In the measure of providing community spirit and pride, strengthening parish bonds, exhibiting initiative and independence, and pioneering a sport for young women on behalf of a city which never took them in, the "Senioritas of Glendale" were truly of championship caliber.