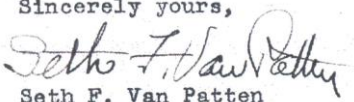




**HISTORY OF THE CALIFORNIA**  
**INTERSCHOLASTIC FEDERATION**  
**SOUTHERN SECTION**  
**(CIFSS)**

74<sup>th</sup> historical “tidbit.”  
Dr. John S. Dahlem

Sincerely yours,  
  
Seth F. Van Patten

**CIF-SS COMMISSIONERS**

**SETH FIELDS VAN PATTEN**  
**“The Father of the CIF-SS and Czar”**



Seth F. Van Patten was born in Steward, Illinois on July 5, 1873. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1900 and came to California in 1901. His very early coaching days in California were at the Harvard School and Hitchcock Military in South Pasadena. His first full time teaching position was at Escondido High School in San Diego. He coached football and was very successful when he defeated the powerful San Diego High School team twice in the same season (1903) 6 – 5 and 5 – 0. Seth liked to tell the story of when he was at Escondido High School the students asked him to coach them in baseball and before long he was their starting pitcher...team membership and eligibility was far different prior to the establishment of the CIF. He moved to Ventura High School for a short time and arrived at South Pasadena High School in 1907 where he taught English and Social Studies. He became very active in the first attempts to organize high school athletics in Southern California. In 1910, he moved to Los Angeles High School and became the President of the Los Angeles County League.

Seth Van Patten was always very active in the track community and attempted several times to take control of the running of the high school track meet away from the local colleges and Y.M.C.A. As a number of complaints mounted regarding the track meet, Seth issued his famous challenge to the local high school track community:

**“...if they did not have the guts enough to run the meet properly themselves, they did not deserve a championship meet.”**

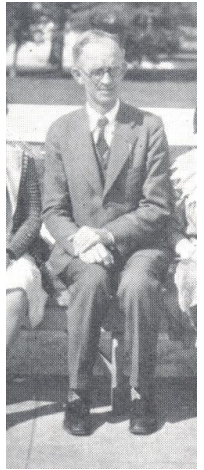
On March 29, 1913, at the Y.M.C.A Fieldhouse and track, the Southern California Interscholastic Athletic Association was founded between the morning prelims and afternoon finals of the Southern California Track Championship. That Association later changed the name to the California Interscholastic Federation Southern Section (CIF-SS) following the foundation of the State CIF in March, 1914. Seth Van Patten was the manager of that meet and would continue in that position for 39 consecutive years. He kept the handwritten records of that meet for each of those years.

Seth Van Patten's handwritten report on the first track meet - 1913

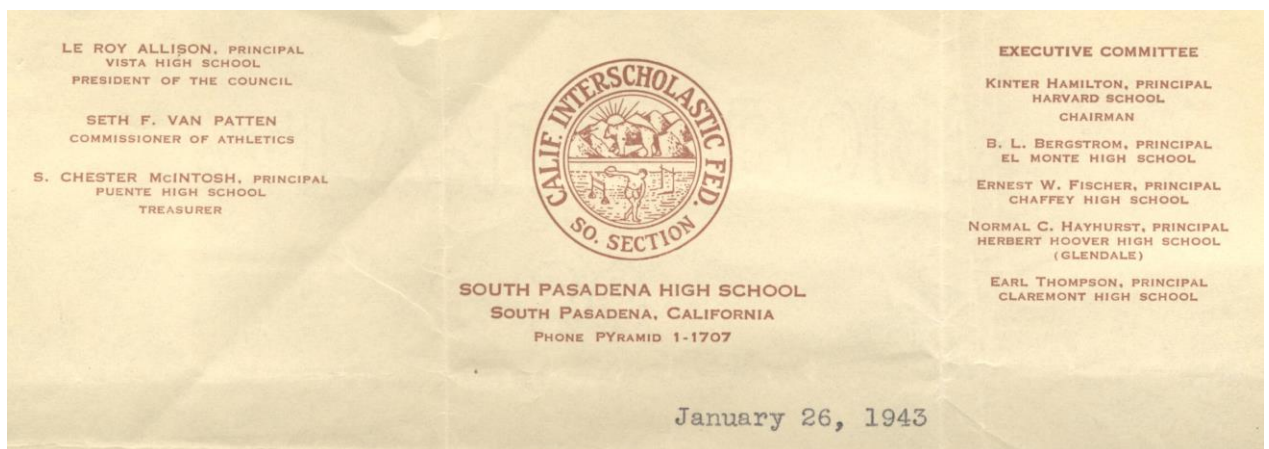
2	Southern California Track Meet Y.M.C.A. Field Los Angeles March 29 1913	
Receipts:		
162 entree fees at \$25	\$ 40.50	
387 students tickets at \$25	96 75	
Gate receipts day of meet	122 25	
Total	\$ 259 50	
Expenses:		
To rental Y.M.C.A. Field	\$ 25 00	
" T.D. Allen Co, medals and ribbons	92 85	
" cloth numbers for athletes	9 25	
" Printing programs, tickets, entree blanks	25 50	
" rental of four tents	8 75	
" one vaulting pole (to replace one broken)	7 00	
" hauling hurdles to and from U.S.C.	6 00	
" postage and stationery	7 30	
" telephone, long distance	2 00	
" four gross safety pins	1 65	
" 2, 100 foot cloth tapes	1 50	
" 1 box blank cartridges	45	
" 1 skein of yarn, for finish tape	25	
Total	\$ 188 50	
To balance		71 00
\$ 259 50		



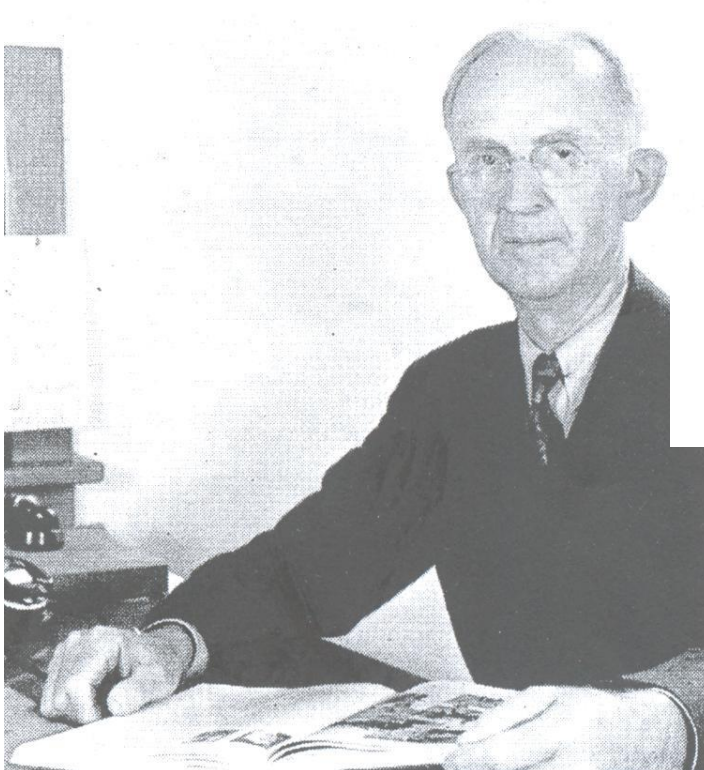
In 1926 he moved to Van Nuys High School and continued to be very active for the CIF-SS in answering track and eligibility answers. In 1928, Seth Van Patten was named Secretary of the CIF-SS Council and was responsible for the running of that organization. All meet managers reported directly to Seth. From 1932 to 1936, Seth Van Patten was President of the Southern California Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). In 1936, Van Patten became the first full time CIF-SS Commissioner with a small staff when he retired from teaching.



CIF-SS Letterhead when the office was at South Pasadena High School



South Pasadena High School Yearbook - 1936



Left: Mr. Van Patten, C. I. F. secretary, at his desk in the Academic Building.



Van Patten was known as the “Czar” of the CIF-SS because of his toughness and by-the-book-attitude. His grandson Don Thomas said that, “Nothing really bothered him too much, at least on the surface. He’d sit there and let the guys yap at him, the coaches and all, and not get real ruffled.”

1933/1934



SETH VAN PATTEN  
COMMISSIONER - C.I.F., S.S.





1913-  
1950

Seth F. Van Patten

## Taken from the CIF-SS "Bulletin" Special 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition - 1988

### RED LETTER DATES

#### 75 YEARS OF PROGRESS

The following is a chronological listing of important events that have shaped the progress and growth of the 75-year history of the California Interscholastic Federation Southern Section.

OCT. 1912	The California Interscholastic Federation was organized in a meeting conducted at the old Y.M.C.A. playground on Stevenson Avenue in Boyle Heights.
APR. 1913	Pomona High School, under Coach Ralph Dignowitty, wins the 1913 Southern California Track and Field Championships, held at the Y.M.C.A. field in Los Angeles. The event is recognized as the first ever conducted by the CIF-SS.
MAY 1913	The Southern California Interscholastic Athletic Council, which eventually became the CIF Southern Section, was formed in Los Angeles.
MAR. 1914	The California Interscholastic Federation initiative was adopted statewide.
SEPT. 1914	The Southern California Interscholastic Athletic Council officially changed its name to CIF Southern Section.
MAY 1914	Orange High School captures the first-ever CIF-SS baseball championship with an 8-4 win over Long Beach Poly. The game was played at Occidental College.
FEB. 1915	Whittier High School posts a 38-32 win over Covina in the first-ever CIF-SS championship basketball game, held at Manual Arts High in Los Angeles. Coached by John Wilson, the Cardinals go on to win the first three CIF-SS cage titles consecutively, with wins over Citrus in 1916 and Hollywood in 1917.
NOV. 1915	Under the direction of Head Coach Duffy Sea, Pasadena High School wallops Whittier, 50-0, in the first-ever CIF-SS championship football game, held at Occidental College. However, Pasadena is the second member school to claim a CIF-SS grid title, as Santa Ana was declared the 1914 champion by virtue of its league record, which included no losses and one tie. The '14 Saints were coached by Walter Hall.
NOV. 1922	The "Four Point" rating table (height, weight, age and grade) adopted for classification of high school boys for interscholastic competition.
MAY 1926	Los Angeles High School captures the first-ever CIF-SS swimming championship, in a meet held at Huntington Park High School.
NOV. 1926	Los Angeles Poly High School wins the first-ever CIF-SS Cross Country Championships, conducted at Griffith Park.
MAY 1930	Mr. Seth Fields Van Patten recommended for the position of first CIF Southern Section Commissioner of Athletics. Van Patten had participated actively in CIF-SS affairs prior to this date as manager of track and field and secretary of the organization.
OCT. 1930	Seth F. Van Patten assumes post as first CIF-SS Commissioner of Athletics.
MAY 1935	Los Angeles City Schools depart from the CIF-SS membership to form the CIF Los Angeles City Section.
SEPT. 1935	CIF-SS Council passes a new "three-point" system for classification of lower level athletic competition.

### RED LETTER DATES (Continued from page 3)

SEPT. 1937	Upon the recommendation of Commissioner Van Patten, the CIF-SS begins publication of a monthly bulletin to include all Council and Executive Committee minutes, playoff results and other news of the organization. At the commissioner's request, the bulletin is to be distributed to all member schools and interested parties.
SEPT. 1937	South Pasadena High School becomes the new office site for Commissioner Van Patten and the CIF Southern Section.
DEC. 1937	Under the direction of W.R. "Bill" Schroeder, the Helms Hall Athletic Foundation conducts a meeting of Southern California prep sportswriters for the purpose of selecting the first-ever All-CIF team in the sport of football. Quarterback Frank Albert of Glendale is named the first MVP. Although its name has changed, the organization has provided recognition for the high school student-athletes of Southern California ever since.
FEB. 1942	The CIF-SS Office moves to Oneonta School in South Pasadena.
1942-1944	CIF Southern Section programs are limited severely due to the war effort.
NOV. 1949	The CIF Southern Section Office moves to the Helms Hall Athletic Foundation, located at 8760 Venice Blvd. in Los Angeles. The office space was provided free of charge to the CIF-SS and made possible by Mr. Paul H. Helms.
APR. 1950	Member schools of the CIF Southern Section adopt playing rules of the National Federation of State High School Associations for the sport of football.
JUNE 1950	Commissioner Seth F. Van Patten, recognized as the "Father of the CIF" retires at age 77. Just two years later, Van Patten passes away at his home in Alhambra.
SEPT. 1950	William W. Russell becomes the second CIF Southern Section Commissioner of Athletics.

STATEMENT

The California Interscholastic Federation  
Southern Section

June 22, 19 48

In Account With

COLLECTOR OF INTERNAL REVENUE

2nd QTR. Withholding Tax

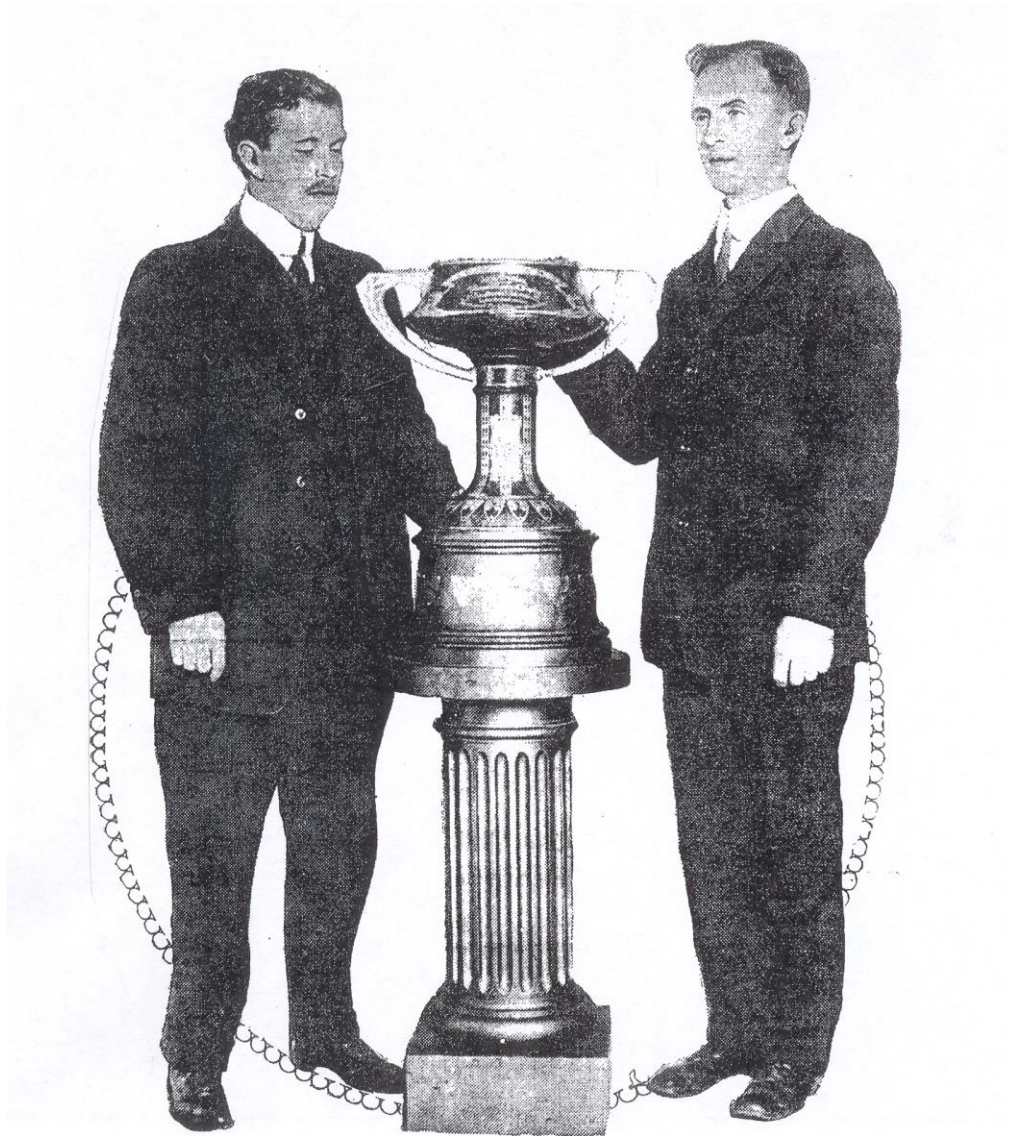
SFVP	\$168.20
M Frank	11.63
VS	82.30
	<hr/>
	\$262.13

THIS COPY

Q.K.  
S.F.V.P.



**1914 - Seth Van Patten and E.W. Oliver before 2<sup>nd</sup> CIF-SS Track  
Championship with the Tribune Trophy**



The Tribune Trophy and the two men behind the Southern California championship meet. Vice Principal Oliver of Los Angeles high school (who is on the left) has been instrumental in making the meet possible. Van Patten has personal charge of it. This picture gives an idea of the size of the Tribune Trophy.

**1926 Los Angeles High School Yearbook**  
**Van Patten, Register    Oliver, Vice Principal**





The following history of the CIF-SS was hand-written by Seth Van Patten in the summer of 1951:

## I. Origin

Just when the first interscholastic contests were played in Southern California I have been unable to determine. When I arrived in Southern California in December of 1900 there existed the beginnings of some high school leagues formed for the purpose of promoting high school games in football and baseball. There were at that time four leagues that were attempting ~~at that time~~ to carry on athletic contests. There was the Citrus Belt League made up of the <sup>following</sup> high schools, Chaffee, Redlands, Rineride & San Bernardino. The Channel League <sup>San Luis</sup> consisted of Oxnard, Santa Barbara and Ventura. The Los Angeles County League had as members, Los Angeles High, Los Angeles Poly. Pasadena, Long Beach, Santa Monica and Whittier. The Orange County League had only three members, Anaheim, Fullerton & Santa Ana.



Van Patten retired in 1950, at the age of 77 and passed away from a heart attack on August 11, 1952 in Ventura. He left his wife Edna, a son and daughter. His home in Alhambra (2200 Westminister):



Van, prior to his death, was asked to pick his all-time prep high school football team:

Just for the record, we asked Van Patten to name an all-time CIF grid team. It's an outfit which makes it all too clear why Southern California has become a Mister Big in the world of sports.

At ends there are Al Krugger (Antelope Valley) and Francis Tappaan (Los Angeles); tackles—Bob Craven (South Pasadena) and Jess Hibbs, (Glendale); guards—Harry Smith (Chaffey) and Adam Walsh (Hollywood); Center—Babe Horrell (Pasadena). The star-studded list of backs includes Glenn Davis (Bonita), Orv Mohler (Alhambra), John Petrovich (Alhambra) and Frankie Albert (Glendale).

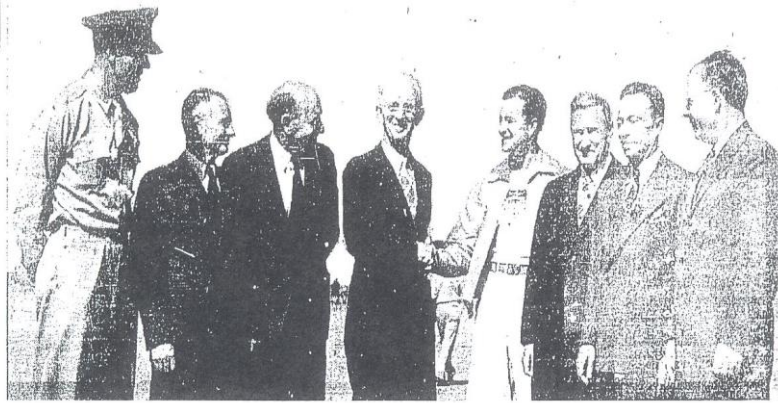
#### Davis Best

If he were pinned down to name a greatest of them all, Van Patten would tab Davis. Van Patten loves to recall the afternoon Glenn, just a 17-year-old at Bonita High School, kicked off three times over the goal, ran for three touchdowns, passed flawlessly and blocked and tackled viciously. All this in a final round play-off game against Newport Beach, which Davis & Co. won 42-8.



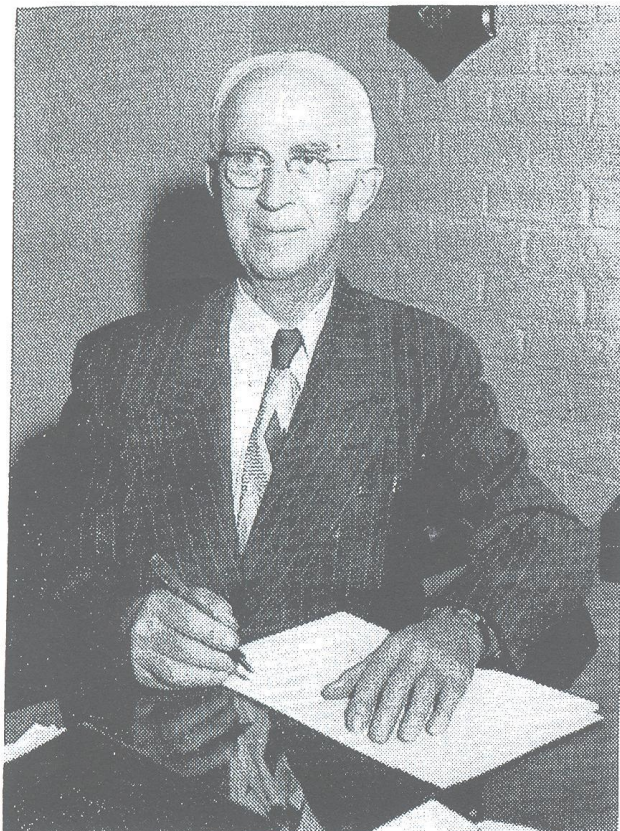
IT'S BEEN A LONG, LONG TIME—Seth Van Patten, CIF Athletic Commissioner, will resign post this summer after serving since 1928. Under Van Patten, the CIF grew into a powerful sports body which produced some of the greatest prep athletes of all time. Times photo





**CO-OPERATION**—C.I.F. Commissioner Seth Van Patten shakes hands with Carson Conrad, civilian director of Army Air Corps physical program at Santa Ana, after adopting Conrad's program for schools this fall. Looking

on are members of the C.I.F. executive committee and Lieut. Lloyd Harper. Left to right, Lieut. Harper, Normal Hayhurst, Ernest Fischer, Van Patten, Conrad, Kinter Hamilton, Bernard Bergstrom, Ralph Barnright.



*The Grand Old  
Man of the  
C. I. F.*

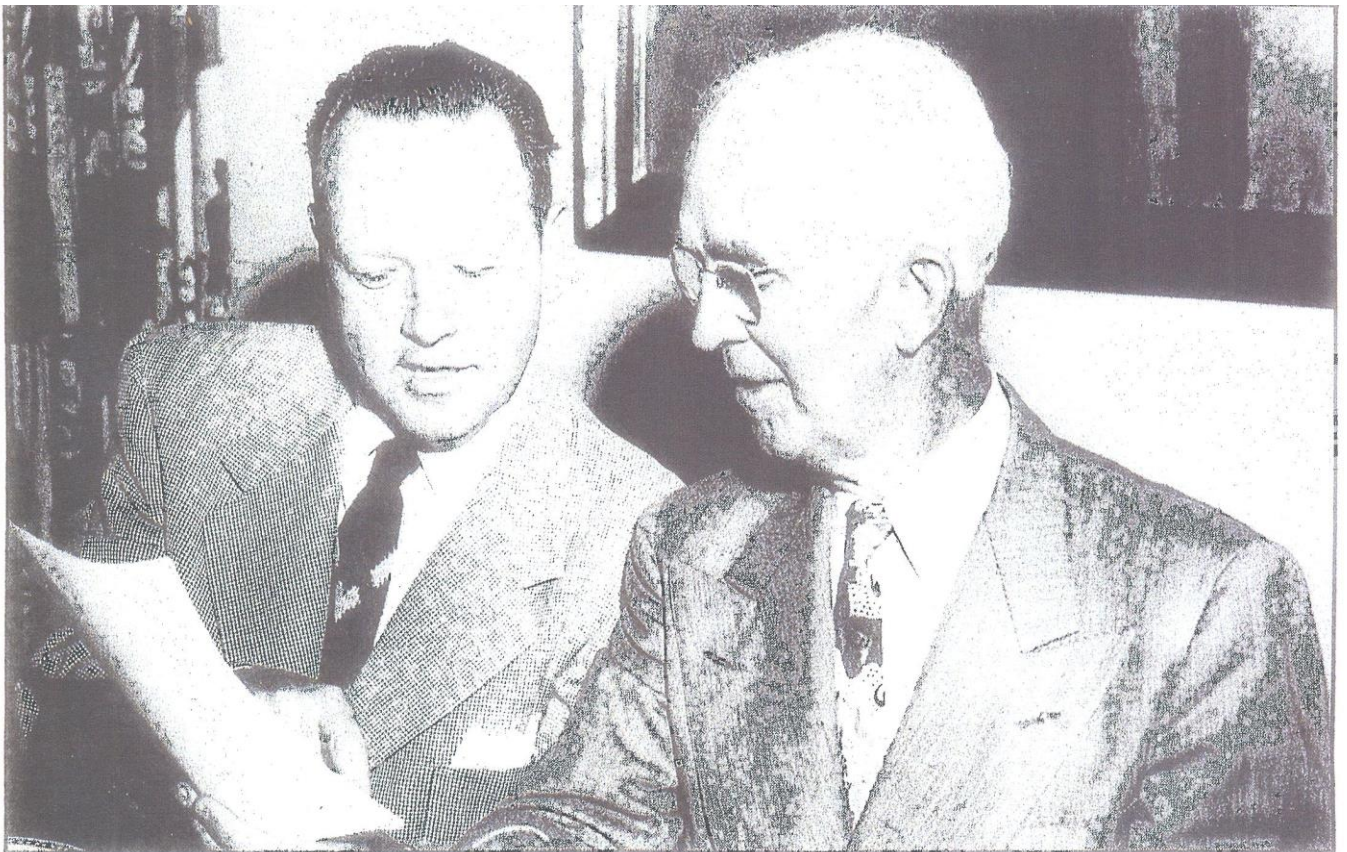
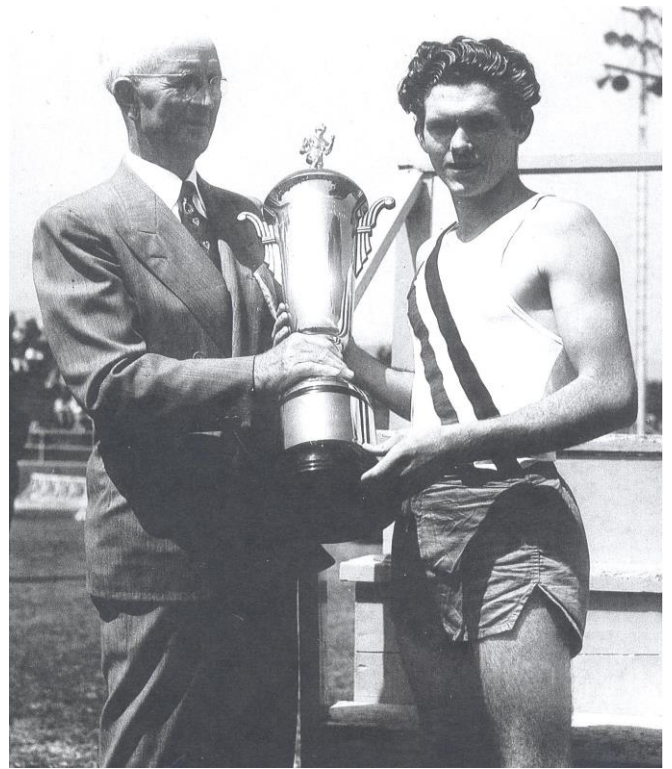


*Seth Van Patten*



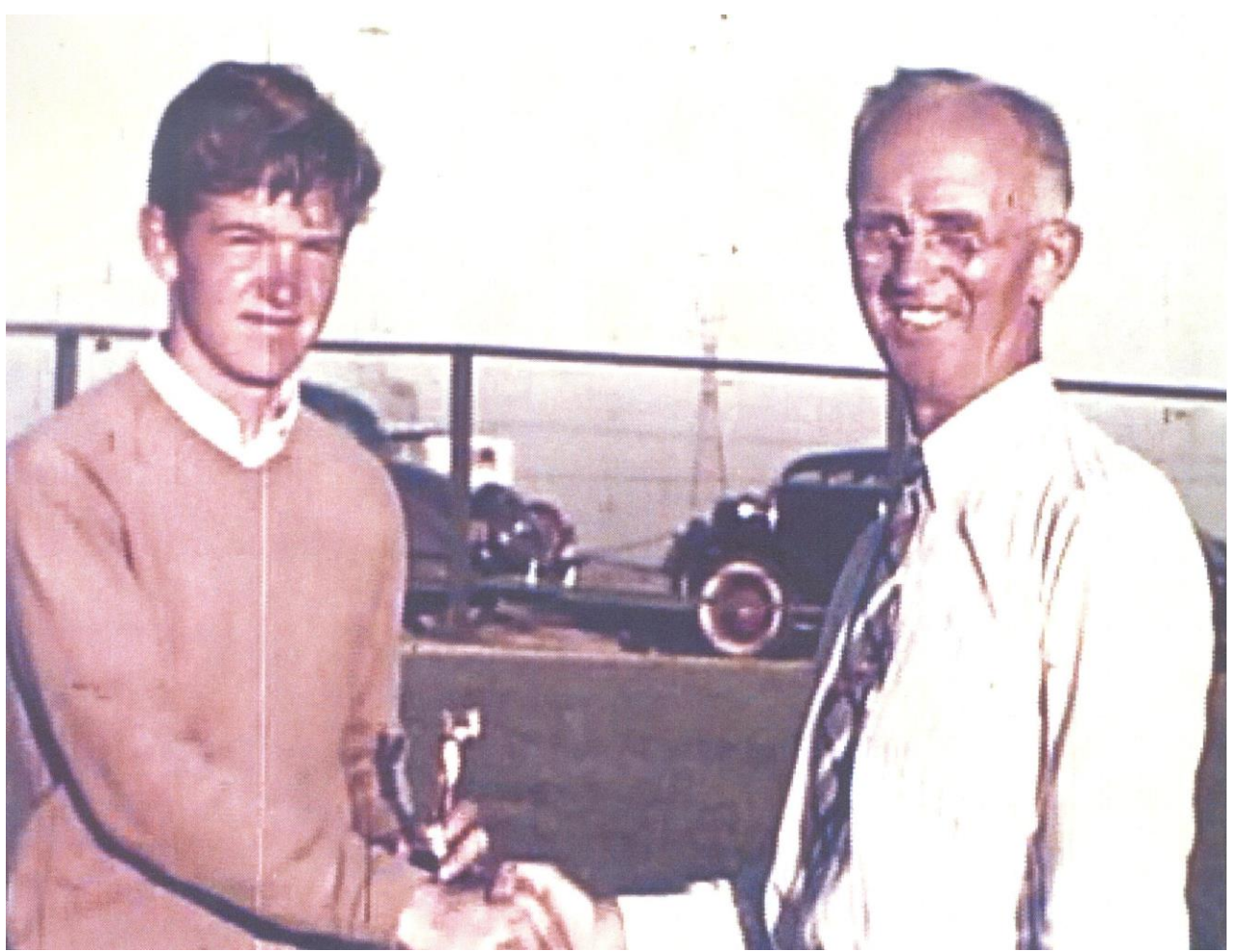


*Seth Van Patten*



**NEWLY APPOINTED COMMISSIONER** Bill Russell (left) joins the outgoing Seth Van Patten at an athletic luncheon in the Helms Hall Building in 1950.









SETH FIELDS VAN PATTEN 1873-1952

A BELOVED EDUCATOR AND PIONEER IN ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATION, SETH F. VAN PATTEN IS RECOGNIZED AS THE FOUNDING FATHER OF THE CIF, SOUTHERN SECTION. IT WAS IN 1913 THAT MR. VAN PATTEN URGED SOUTHLAND HIGH SCHOOLS TO CONDUCT THEIR OWN CHAMPIONSHIPS AND SUBSEQUENTLY ACCEPTED THE APPOINTMENT TO 'MANAGE' THE TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS. HE SERVED THE CIF, SS, AS MANAGER, SECRETARY AND COMMISSIONER UNTIL HIS RETIREMENT IN 1950 AT THE AGE OF 77.



# Los Angeles High School

LOS ANGELES CITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

4600 COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE

CIPAL

LOS ANGELES, CALIF..

May 14, 1926

In Appreciation of Mr. Seth F. Van Patten:

For over twenty years Mr. Van Patten has been a dominant figure in the development of interscholastic track athletics in Southern California. Before the organization of the California Interscholastic Federation in 1912, Mr. Van Patten, wherever he taught, was a vital factor in developing the play spirit among boys, in securing contests with other schools, endeavoring to find fair and satisfactory rules of eligibility, and in encouraging a spirit of kindly relations and good sportsmanship between schools.

When the California Interscholastic Federation was organized in Los Angeles in 1912, at the old Y.M.C.A. playground on Stevenson Avenue in Boyle Heights, Mr. Van Patten was one of the prominent educators in Southern California to give his approval of the movement and to urge other men of Southern California to fall in line with this progressive movement in athletics. Since the organization of the California Interscholastic Federation Mr. Van Patten has been the recognized leader in track athletics. He has been the manager all of these years and has developed Southern California competition from an unorganized group of a few schools into what is, without question, the best, largest, and most efficient organization of competitive track athletics in America. All of this has taken a tremendous amount of energy, ability, time, and effort, which he has given gladly.

Therefore, the Southern Council of the California Interscholastic Federation hereby goes on record as desiring to show its appreciation of the great services Mr. Van Patten has rendered the cause of athletics in Southern California, and hereby presents him with a watch, that he can time his steps with, and a stop watch that he can use at all future contests of the California Interscholastic Federation, which we hope will be many.

It is hereby enacted that Mr. Seth F. Van Patten is declared to be a life member of the Southern Council of the California Interscholastic Federation, with all of its honors and privileges.

*E W Olson  
Gruenen*