

## Arnold “Chick” Gandil by Mariam Hansen



Arnold Gandil was born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1888 to Danish father Christian and Swiss mother Louise Gandil. In 1900 he lived with his parents in Seattle, WA. In 1905 at age 17, Gandil ran away from home to play baseball: some say in Arizona, others in Texas.

Gandil was described as a giant with hands like iron. He could put his fist through a door and play baseball without a glove. He was six foot two inches tall and weighed 192 pounds, with broad, powerful shoulders. People described him as loud, tough, shrewd, corrupt, wild, and an unschooled rube, persistent and persuasive.

He smoked cigarettes and cigars.

In *“Eight Men Out”* the author writes that he went to Amarillo, TX to play semi-pro. He supplemented his income by boxing in the local heavyweight division and working in the copper mines in Mexico. In 1907 he met Laurel Fay Kelly and in 1908 they married in Joliet, Ill. Marriage did not tame him. In 1909 he played in Sacramento, for the California State League in Fresno, and was arrested for breaking into the clubhouse and stealing a uniform.



1910 April 10, 1910 saw his debut in the major leagues by joining the Chicago White Sox. His daughter was born in Illinois. In 1911 he played in minor leagues for Montreal. Washington Senators bought him in 1912, where he remained through 1915 season, followed by Cleveland Indians for one season.

Feb 25, 1917 Gandil rejoined the White Sox as their regular first baseman. The Sox won the World Series that year.

However, in July 1918 the team almost went on strike due to low salaries paid by owner Charlie Comiskey. They were a very good team and were paid like the worst. Eddie Cicotte was the angriest. Gandil was arrested for punching an umpire in 1919.

In September 1919 he approached his friend Joseph Sullivan (a professional gambler), with the idea to fix the World Series. Sullivan, after consulting with his gambling acquaintances, assured Gandil that the fix was on, and that \$100,000 would be paid to the players.

In late September the conspirators met in Chick Gandil’s hotel room. In addition to serving as the contact for the gamblers, Gandil was also responsible for recruiting and paying the 7 players involved in the fix: Eddie Cicotte, Bucky Weaver, Happy Felsch, Swede Risberg, “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, Fred McMullin and Lefty Williams. Rumors about a fix were everywhere by the time the first game started on October 1. The gamblers raked in the money, but initially refused to pay the \$100,000. The White Sox lost the World Series to the Cincinnati Reds 5 games to 3. Gandil received \$35,000 for his role in throwing the World Series - nearly nine times his 1919 salary of \$4,000. In the end he collected \$80,000 and paid the others \$45,000.

The existing corruption in baseball made it seem normal, but tampering with the World Series was sacrilege to Americans. A Grand Jury was convened in September 1920. The trial began June 27, 1921 and the players were acquitted, probably due to missing evidence. The damage to the sport's reputation led the team owners to appoint Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis as the first Commissioner of Baseball. After the acquittal, Landis banned the eight players from major league baseball for life.



**The players are seated in court in 1921, with the lawyers standing behind them. Gandil is seated on the right. From the website “Famous Trials” by Douglas O. Linder 2006. [www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/)**

Gandil had already refused to play for the White Sox due to a salary dispute with the stingy owner. Shortly after receiving the payoff, he bought a new house in Inglewood, CA, a new car and diamonds. He is listed in 1920 census in Inglewood and played for an Elks Club team in Bakersfield.

Laurel Gandil wanted to return to Texas, so the California house was sold abruptly and they drove to Texas in the new car with their daughter. 1925-27 saw Gandil playing for the outlaw Copper League in Douglas, Arizona. By 1930 the family lived in Los Angeles again and Chick became a plumber, moving to Oakland in 1944. He retired in 1952 and in 1956 lived at 1542 Yount Mill Road, Yountville. By 1957 he and his wife had moved to 1905 Fairway in Calistoga.

Gandil died in 1970 at Calistoga Convalescent Hospital from cardiac failure and emphysema. He was buried at St. Helena March 15, 1971 after his wife died. It is interesting to note that his obituary doesn't mention he played professional baseball. In fact all of the “Eight Men Out” lived quietly alone and ashamed the rest of their days

Sources:

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