



January 25, 2014

Guest Speaker: J. B. Hogan

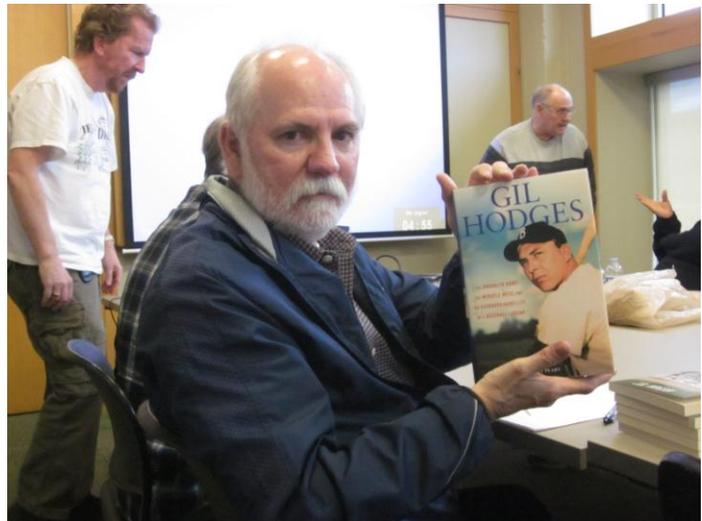
Little Rock, Arkansas

The Robinson-Kell chapter of SABR met at the Central Arkansas Library at 11:00 a.m. as part of SABR Day. There were 15 members and guests in attendance. Despite technical troubles with the library's video equipment that prevented the presentations from being projected to the screen, the group had a fun afternoon of baseball discussions and chatter.

The featured speaker was Mr. J.B. Hogan of Fayetteville, Arkansas who spoke about his book *Angels in the Ozarks: Professional Baseball in Fayetteville and the Arkansas State/Arkansas-Missouri League 1934-1940*.

Interesting points from his talk included:

- The Arkansas State League was a Class D league that began in 1934 at the beginning of the minor league's first really big growth spurt. It began with four Arkansas teams with interesting nicknames: Fayetteville Educators, Bentonville Officeholders, Siloam Springs Buffalos and the Rogers Apple Knockers (who changed their name to the Rustlers within ten days of the season starting).
- The Huntsville Red Birds and the Cassville Tigers joined for the 1935 season, but Huntsville lasted just one season and Cassville was gone following the 1936 campaign.
- After one year as the Educators, Fayetteville was renamed the Bears in 1935. Just before the 1937 season because the team purchased hand-me-down uniforms from the Ponca City Angels of the Class C Western Association and club officials chose to rename the team the Angels, rather than pay to remove "Angels" and stitch "Bears" on the jerseys.
- The league was renamed the Arkansas-Missouri League when Monett signed on for the 1936 season. They were followed by Missouri teams from Neosho in 1937 and Carthage in 1938.
- Oklahoma made a bid for a team in the league but Vinita dropped out the day before the 1937 season opened.



- The league, considered one of the smallest minor leagues of all time, consisted of between four and six teams during its short run, with Fayetteville being the only team to appear in all seven seasons.
- The league played a split-season format in the 1934-1936 and 1939-1940. Fayetteville (1939) was the only team to win both halves a season.
- Carthage was leading when the league disbanded on July 1, 1940.
- Players that appeared in the league who later made the majors included: Walker Cooper, Ralph Houk, Mickey Owen, Jerry Priddy, Pete Castiglione, Frank Ocek (who became a longtime third base coach in majors) and Sherm Lollar (who was the batboy for Fayetteville).

Following his presentation he was presented a copy of the Gil Hodges biography by Tom Clavin and Danny Peary as a “thank-you” gift and then several of those in attendance purchased autographed copies of his book.

After a break for lunch, Madison McEntire presented *They Picked a Bad Time to Lose It: Pitchers Who Lost More World Series Games than Regular Season Games in a Season*. He discussed the circumstances of the four pitchers to achieve this unusual feat – George Frazier (1981), Todd Worrell (1985), J. P. Howell (2008), and Pedro Martinez (2009). Perhaps the most interesting fact he discovered was a quote from Frazier who said that George Steinbrenner told him “It’s not your fault” although Frazier lost three games in the Yankees World Series loss to the Dodgers. Frazier’s three losses made him just the second pitcher to lose three in World Series, joining disgraced Black Sox hurler Lefty Williams who “lost” three games to Cincinnati in the scandal-plagued 1919 World Series.



Next, new SABR member Jim Yeager spoke about the “Rogers Boys”, three of six children of a single father in Pottsville, Arkansas, who would go on to play minor league baseball in the early 1900s. The three brothers were Fenna (played from 1906-1910), Brown (played from 1907-1913) and Henry (who played just the 1909 season but it was with a local team, the Newport Pearl Diggers). He noted that following their minor league careers, each

achieved personal success. Fenna received a master’s from Princeton and became a Presbyterian Minister; Brown became a successful businessman and later mayor of Russellville, Arkansas; and Henry married a prominent local woman and became a gentleman farmer.

Caleb Hardwick presented *The Rise of Professional Baseball in Arkansas*, which covered the development and progression of early professional baseball in Arkansas up to the point that allowed the introduction of the Little Rock Travelers in 1901. Highlights of his talk included:

- The 1875 Little Rock Accidentals, Arkansas' first professional team were the best of a six-team league.
- The first major league with Arkansas ties was Walt Goldsby, who was born near the state line in Marion, LA.
- The Southwestern League was founded in 1887 with teams in Little Rock, Hot Springs, Fort Smith, Pine Bluff, Webb City, MO, and Springfield, MO, but collapsed after three teams dropped out in mid-season.



- From 1888 to 1893, there were no formal leagues but were independent teams in cities such as Pine Bluff, Van Buren, Camden, and Fort Smith.
- Major Leaguer Joe "Iron Man" McGinnity once played for Van Buren. He would go to pitch ten seasons in the big leagues and pitch professionally until the age of 54 in 1925, winning a total of 481 professional games.
- In 1894 the Arkansas State League was formed but disbanded after only two to three weeks.
- On July 13, 1894, a baseball game was played under electric lights for the first time, with the Rose Citys beating the Uncle Joes 6-4. The next known night game in Arkansas would not be until 1931.
- In 1895 the Little Rock Rosebuds, composed mostly of New England players, were the first Arkansas team in a notable minor league, until they were frozen out of the league in July.

- The Quapaws and the Arlingtons, the first notable black team in Arkansas were formed in 1896.
- The Arkansas State League reformed in 1897 with teams in Little Rock, Fort Smith, Hot Springs, and Texarkana. When the Texarkana and Fort Smith withdraw, Little Rock and Hot Springs planned a 21-game playoff to determine the champion but after 14 games the playoff ends with Little Rock holding a lead of 8-6.



- From 1898 to 1899, Arkansas baseball consisted mostly of semipro teams and games, but Arkansans begin appearing in the minors and talks begin of Little Rock reentering the Southern Association.

Fred Worth presented *Kelley, Robinson, and Zinn – Three Great Minor League Careers* in which he discussed the combined pitching/hitting prowess of three native Arkansans: Harry Kelley, John Henry “Hank” “Rube” Robinson, and Jimmy Zinn. Highlights included:

- Kelley was born in Parkin, Arkansas, in 1906 and died there at the age of 52. His combined major and minor league record was 307-240, with his minor league time accounting for 265-193 of that total. He appeared in majors when he was 19 and 20 years old but did not make it back until he was 30. His two best major league seasons were for very bad Philadelphia A’s teams in 1936 when he was 15-12 and in 1937 when he was 13-21 (and led the American League in losses).



At the plate, Kelley had a minor league average of .250, although he hit just .216 in the big leagues.

- Robinson was born John Henry Roberson in Floyd, Arkansas, in 1887, and died in North Little Rock in 1965. Although some records from his time are not complete, he had a career minor league win-loss record of at least 255-187. He won 28 games for Fort Worth in 1911 and had seasons of 21, 23, 26, and 26 wins for Little Rock from 1917 to 1922. In the majors he won 12 games for the Pirates in 1912 and 14 games the following season and threw a two-hit shutout against the Cubs in 1914. Interestingly, his career major league record was 42-47, the same as that of Harry Kelley. He finished his career with at least a 297-234 combined career record. Robinson was the least successful of the three as a batter, compiling an average of .214 in the minors and .216 in the majors.
- Zinn was born in Benton, Arkansas, in 1895, and died in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1991. He had a career minor league mark of 295-198, including seasons of 27, 26, 24, and 23 wins. He was a very good hitter with a .300 average in the minors with 44 home runs. His major league record was 13-16, with his best season being a 7-6 record for the 1921 Pirates. As a big leaguer he did homer twice, one of them coming as a pinch hitter against Hall of Famer Red Faber on September 15, 1919. His career combined record was 308-214. Currently, no in minor league history is known to have won 300 games and batted .300. Zinn came very close with 295 minor league wins to go with this lifetime average of .300. In the majors he hit .283 (34 for 120).



Mark Weatherton presented a paper entitled “Consideration of the Designated Hitter” in which he discussed and compared the attendance and run-scoring rates of the NL and AL during the years just before and just after the AL’s introduction of the DH in 1973. He also commented on how he believes that the DH works to the detriment of teams that have good-hitting pitchers and that it limits the manager’s ability to pinch-hit and make double-switches early in games.

The final items on the agenda were a group discussion of the answers of the SABR 43 Quarter-Finals Trivia Contest (which had been distributed earlier in the afternoon) and a drawing for door prizes -- used baseball books, including George Will’s *Men at Work* and David Halberstam’s *Summer of ‘49*. Winners were Jerry Heckman, Caleb Hardwick, Fred Worth, Mike Dougherty, and Bob Majors.

