

# SABR Pictorial History Committee Newsletter

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## The Cameras Click

by Harold C. Burr

[The following article was originally published in *Baseball Magazine* in March 1938.]

Shanty Hogan hits the ball back to Art Nehf, the Cub pitcher, and Andy Reese is hung up between third and home. Gabby Hartnett is planted squarely on the baseline, and before Reese can dodge around him he's been tagged out, and the Giants' chance to tie up the game lost.

Manager John McGraw comes strutting out from the dugout, claiming interference, which Umpire Bill Klem majestically refuses to allow. The whole thing is thrown into the lap of President John Heydler. The league president upholds his ump and quotes the rule which says that a fielder in a rundown has as much right to the line as the base-runner.

The National League president had been sitting in the press box at the Polo Grounds when the play came up. Neither Mr. Heydler, Bill Klem or the Giants saw what one of the big newspaper cameras, with their split second lenses, instantly registered. Pictures of the disputed play were afterward printed extensively in the papers and they distinctly showed Hartnett with his arms FLUNG AROUND REESE.

Players, managers, umpires and league presidents make their human mistakes, but a camera lens doesn't lie.

Taking pictures is a highly specialized part of newspaper work. Most of the big New York dailies send photographers South in the spring with the

Giants, Yankees and Dodgers the same as they send writers. There was a movement a-foot a couple of years ago to have reporters carry kodaks to take pictures to go with their story. But after the indignant photographers, protecting their bread and butter, smashed a couple of scab cameras and Joe DiMaggio came out of the dark room standing on his head the revolutionary idea was abandoned.

There are veteran baseball photographers who risk life and limb every day at big league ball parks getting their shots—Vincent Lopez of the *New York Sun*, Bill Greene of the *World-Telegram*, Barney Stein of the *New York Post*, and the matchless Izzy Kaplan of the *Daily Mirror*.

Most baseball pictures are taken at batting practice when the line drives are whistling down the base lines. Photographers are not allowed on the field in New York during the progress of a game. At Yankee Stadium there is a special flying photographers' box suspended from the mezzanine behind first and third base.

It's baseball in reverse the photographer sees when he squints into his camera. A man attempting to beat out a bunt toward first is running toward the dugout back of third.

The thing becomes still more confusing to the youngster just breaking in when some Gee Walker of the game actually does start to run the wrong way.

*continued on page 2*

## PHC MEETING AT SABR 28

The fourth annual meeting of the Pictorial History Committee was held at the SABR convention in San Mateo, California, June 1998. PHC members who attended the meeting (and signed in) include: *Rich Frank, John Husman, David Jordan, Pat Kelly, Francis Kinlaw, Neal McCabe, John McMurray, Richard Puff, Rick Salamon, Mark Stangl, Tom Shieber, Max Weder*. Non-PHC members who attended include: *Jerry Casway, Andrew Clarke, Ralph Fortunato, Jessica Frank, John Lewis, Paul Richards, Chris Rudd, Bob Schaefer*. Most of those in the latter group expressed an interest in joining up. I'm sure we'll see their names on the PHC roster in the near future.

Thanks to everyone who made it to the meeting!

— Tom Shieber

## The Cameras Click *cont. from page 1*

Kaplan is the best beloved of the veterans. His roly-poly figure, good nature and broken English have all made him very popular with the ballplayers. He's welcome in all three dugouts in New York. And he has a modern camera that is his pride and joy. Izzy doesn't carry it around with him. Big Bertha is too big for that, weighing a neat 200 pounds.

He keeps it moored by chain upstairs in the press box. It's so big it requires three men to carry it to the taxicab that transports it from the Polo Grounds to the Stadium. The first time it stuck its tin snoot through the mezzanine railing at the Stadium spectators seated below scurried for safety. They thought the Yanks had installed a cannon to fire as the runs came dashing over the plate, a baseball adoption of Coach Chick Meehan's idea for celebrating touchdowns at N.Y.U. and Manhattan.

Izzy's cannon camera is so powerful it takes a two-and-a-half inch figure in its picture of a play out at second base. When it appears in the paper that little figure is enlarged to eleven by fourteen inches in height. It isn't such a little figure either when it's remembered that the best the ordinary camera can do on the same play is to get a half inch figure.

To get fodder for his pet Kaplan has the nerve of a stage reporter. He was bothered considerably one year by having his vision hidden by the intruding blue bodies of the umpires of the National League. He was getting excellent pictures of their backs as they crouched down at the midway to call Pepper Martin out stealing.

Martin would break his leg and Izzy Kaplan wouldn't have been able to catch his expression of agony. That sort of camera work would never do on a tabloid. So Izzy went waddling down to the Giant dugout to see his very good friend Bill Terry.

"Say, Bill," he grunted for the whole bench to hear, "tell those umpires to give their decisions on the other side of second hereafter. I can't get any pictures."

As a rule the manager of the Giants doesn't like photographers—or sports writers either. But girl reporters get even less from him. He was addressing his breakfast bacon and eggs in Boston one morning when a young lady entered the dining room.

"Mr. Terry," she began timidly, "I'm from the EVENING ASTONISHMENT—"

"I don't give out stories to women, Miss," mumbled Memphis Bill, his mouth full, and without looking up. "And besides I'm having breakfast."

When he looked up she was gone. She had been such a quiet, bashful little thing that Terry was instantly sorry he had been so abrupt. He finished his bacon and eggs and then sought a seat in the hotel lobby to enjoy his cigar, his hat drawn down

over his eyes, so as not to be recognized by any more girl reporters.

"Mr. Terry," he heard again presently in that familiar, timid voice.

This time Memphis Bill did look up—and heard the ominous click of a shutter. But already the camera man was scuttling for the door and the girl reporter was smiling triumphantly. She didn't have her story, but the EVENING ASTONISHMENT had its picture of the great man in one of his informal hours of ease.

Terry doesn't like to have the photographers snap him at the batting nets. "I look awkward swinging," is his excuse for being so camera shy. But he isn't the only big leaguer who wants the time and place to be just right. Lefty Gomez doesn't permit his picture being taken the day he pitches—thinks it will jinx him. Bob Fothergill, the old Detroit outfielder, imagined it would jinx him at any time to face the camera on the ball field—but for years he wore No. 13 on his Tiger uniform.

There is a continual mild and friendly war going on between the baseball photographers and the players. The camera man is sent out from his office by a sporting editor—his boss for the day—who insists on what is known in the trade as action pictures. Catcher and pitcher collide in midair attempting to field a bunt and the camera catches them while both are off the ground. That's an action picture.

If the lucky photographer comes up with that sort of a picture in the heat of battle it's all right with the ballplayer. It's the other kind of action picture to which he objects. If the batter poses on the roof of the dugout and the camera man takes him from the ground below while lying flat on his own back it will produce an action picture of a sort, with big feet, a funny fat bat and shortened body.

But the ballplayer is sensitive to ridicule. He likes the good old orthodox poses—swinging a bat at the plate, snaring a ground ball, catching a fly with uplifted arms.

The best manager in baseball for the photographers—and he was no slouch, either, for the writers—was Rogers Hornsby. He would think nothing of letting his St. Louis Browns tire themselves out before a hard doubleheader with the Yankees before the camera, running and leaping about, so that some newspaper could get some good pictures of ballplayers in action.

One big daily likes to scoop the others in its pictures. It likes to be first on the street during a World's Series. The city editor of the New York Journal conceived a plan while riding home on the "L" one afternoon where the structure is even with the rooftops of New York. He saw boys training pigeons.

"Why couldn't a homing pigeon fly from a ball park to a newspaper office?" he asked himself, slapping his leg.

During the 1936 Giant-Yankee series he put the idea into execution. Negatives of pictures taken

at the Polo Grounds and Stadium were fastened to the legs of the *Journal's* new homing pigeons with fine silk thread and away they went after circling the park once to get their bearings. There was a man waiting for their cargo on the roof of the newspaper office, and the negatives rushed downstairs for developing.

So successful was the experiment that it was used again in the World's Series last fall. No pigeon has yet lost his way and he makes the long airline trip downtown from Harlem and the Bronx to almost the Battery in fifteen minutes or a saving of half an hour over transportation by subway or taxi.

The baseball photographer's camera of today is a graflex affair. Its curtain falls in one-thousandth of a second. Not even Hal Chase could think that fast. The eye of the camera is deadly.

Those are the pro cameras, so to speak. Nowadays the ballplayer himself is going in for amateur photography. Many of the big leaguers have their own movie cameras they tote around the country with them. Dazzy Vance was a busy man before the start of the Tiger-Cardinal World's Series of 1934, taking Hank Greenberg batting on 100 feet of film.

Moe Berg, Red Sox catcher, is the most pretentious of the player photographers. This

collegian who speaks seven languages even to the umpires, has gone around the world with his movie camera. The showing of his newest travelogue is always a treat to be looked forward to by his friends who stay at home while he prowls around Russia, Japan and Indo-China. He has thousands of feet of what was probably the last appearance abroad of American baseball barnstormers now that the magnates have put their foot down.

More and more the big leaguers are coming to realize the advertising value of a picture. It's so much easier to look at the ballplayer sliding home with the winning run than to read about it in a long story that, likely as not, is jumped to another page. The tabloids have demonstrated the sound psychology of pictures to the satisfaction of all.

The story of Abner Doubleday's game has its flashing highlights and sidelights that no human eye could catch. It remains for the camera's eye to preserve those split seconds for the fans of posterity.

The men behind the camera are doing a good job, always seeking new and striking effects, taking rebuffs good-naturedly, lugging their heavy appliances of their trade down into crowded subways on the hottest day, not minding any of the hardships or the heartaches so long as the camera clicks.

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## RESEARCH NEEDS

• **Tony Szabelski** is looking for photos of the following players from the 1940s:

- ◆ Mel Bosser — Cin NL '45 (7 g);
- ◆ Hank Sweeney — Pit NL '44 (1 g)
- ◆ Claude Wilborn — Bos NL '40 (5 g);

Send correspondence to Tony at:

Tony Szabelski  
2034 Fox Pointe Dr. #104  
Aurora, IL 60504

(As all of the above ballplayers fit the current criteria for the Player Image Index "Cup-of-Coffee" Project, please send the same information along to Player Image Index Project Coordinator **John McMurray**, as well.)

• From the SABR listserver on February 14th, 1998, **Darryl Brock** wrote:

A few months back a member asked about the first appearance of dugouts. Nobody picked up on it, but it stuck in my mind. In SABR's special TNP pictorial issue on the Dead Ball Era, two pictures appear which seem to contain player benches set BELOW field level (as opposed to a bench with a sun shade positioned against the stands). One is a 1910 shot of the

Polo Grounds on page 35. The other is Shibe Park in 1913 on page 61. Does anybody know of earlier pictures or documentary evidence of dugouts? Or have information about construction of the two above?

Darryl can be reached at:

Darryl Brock  
1565 Rose St.  
Berkeley, CA 94703-108  
email: DBrock3999@aol.com

• From the SABR listserver on March 13th, 1998, **Jason Christopherson** wrote:

I am co-authoring a book about Hank Aaron and his tremendous season with the Eau Claire (WI) Bears. We are looking for any pictures showing Hank as a member of this team. Can anyone help? I live in Eau Claire and do have a few, but we are looking for others.

Jason can be reached at:

Jason Christopherson  
4908 Fairfax St.  
Eau Claire, WI 54701  
email: jasonc33@hotmail.com

## MYSTERY PHOTO FROM PHC NEWSLETTER OF AUGUST '97

**Tom Cline** sent in a guess for the identity of the mystery man posed with Mule Haas, Jimmy Dykes, and Al Simmons in the picture featured in the PHC Newsletter of August 1997. Tom suggests that the unknown fellow is Ed Geiger, sports editor of the *Chicago American*. Reproduced at right are pictures of Geiger found on p. 495 of Speed Johnson's *Who's Who in the Major Leagues* (1933) and p. 488 of Vol.III of *Spink Sports Stories* (1921). Another photo of Geiger can be found on p. 42 of *Marc Okkonen's Baseball Memories: 1930-39*.



## REVIEWS

*The Babe: The Game That Ruth Built* by Lawrence Ritter and Mark Rucker (1997: Total Sports, New York) \$40

The history and tradition of baseball, perhaps more than any other sport, lends itself to the written word. And no one exemplifies those attributes more than Babe Ruth.

**Lawrence Ritter**, author of the classic oral history *The Glory of Their Times*, and **Mark Rucker**, considered one of the games' greatest pictorial archivists, mark the 50th anniversary of the passing of America's most recognized sports icon with *The Babe: The Game That Ruth Built*.

Through prose and pictures, this handsome volume is a sentimental look at the man who many believe saved baseball in the wake of the Black Sox Scandal and the dark days of the Depression.

The narrative of *The Babe* reveals little new information. In fact, it is actually a reprint of *The Babe: A Life in Pictures*, a paperback published in 1988 by Ticknor & Fields. The latter version includes a forward by Hank Aaron and a listing of every home run hit by both the Babe and Hammerin' Hank. (This seems like a shameful ploy to make a buck: Why a new title, which can only serve to confuse the buyer, particularly if he purchases it sight unseen, via the internet? Will there be yet another rendition to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Ruth's death?)

There's nothing in *The Babe* that can't be found in more detailed biography, such as Robert Creamer's *The Babe: A Legend Comes to Life* or Marshall Smelser's *The Life That Ruth Built* (which

is erroneously cited in the source listing as *The House That Ruth Built*). It's the photographs—some rare, others familiar—offering a glimpse of the Babe not only as the most legendary figure in sports, but also as a father, husband and friend—that make this project special.

The Babe seems like a family album rather than a collection of standard sports photos. In addition to the usual group poses with fellow players, managers and celebrities, we see Ruth's playful side.

Michael Jordan was not the first athlete to make a killing from endorsements. The advertisements of the Babe shilling cereal, shaving cream, tobacco, underwear and gum, are interesting not only on the baseball level, but also on the marketing side. The "Baby Ruth" bar may have been named for President Cleveland's daughter, but the Babe could proudly call "Ruth's Home Run Chocolate Coated Candy" his own.

In addition to the ads, Ruth graced the cover of countless magazines, everything from *Vanity Fair* to *Hardware Age*. He loved to appear in uniform, and not just baseball flannels. There are several pictures of him sporting police regalia. It seems that many municipalities were happy to make the Bambino an honorary cop.

Then there are the family shots. Photos of Ruth and his first wife, Helen, are both touching and tragic. Especially rending (if they are candid rather than posed) are the ones which show an anguished Ruth at his wife's bedside, his head resting in his hands, exhausted, as he helps nurse her to recovery

after a nervous breakdown. It is a marked difference from his usual jovial portrayal.

As fitting a person of his Olympian stature, Ruth was the subject of the most enduring sports photographs of all time. The classic shot of him seated in uniform, bat leaning against his left shoulder as he stares into the camera, was taken by Nicholas Murray in the late 1920s. Some other shots from that session are also included.

Other familiar pictures:

- His embrace of Lou Gehrig, as the Yankees honored their dying first baseman. The two stars had a falling out during their playing days, but reconciled on this occasion.

- Babe Ruth Day, 1947, where a fragile, white-haired Babe shocks the crowd with his voice, rendered gravelly from therapy to treat his throat cancer.

- The haunting long-distance shot, framing the Yankee great with thousands of adoring fans on June 13, 1948, in "The House that Ruth Built." Nat Fein of the *New York Herald Tribune* took this one, perhaps the most well-known of all. Less than three months later, Babe Ruth was dead.

Pictures of the funeral serve as evidence of the love America had for the Sultan of Swat. People of all races came to pay their respects, including children too young to have seen him play. But then Ruth had always been known for his affinity for kids. The shots of Ruth on a playing tour of Japan, surrounded by adoring children, are evidence of this global homage.

— Ron Kaplan

## ARTICLES AND RESEARCH AVAILABLE

In April of this year the New York Institute of Photography's Website featured a baseball-oriented *Photo Topic of the Month*: "How to Photograph Baseball — from Little League to Big League." The article can be found at:

[http://www.nyip.com/sub\\_idx\\_pgs/referidx/topic\\_baseball.html](http://www.nyip.com/sub_idx_pgs/referidx/topic_baseball.html)

Also, copies of this 7 page article are available by sending a 55¢ SASE to the PHC chair.

**Lyle Spatz** sent in an article about the U.S. stamp commemorating the first [modern] world series. The article entitled "Twisted Up in the

Batter's Box" was published in the Weekender section of the *Washington Post*, February 20, 1998. Copies of the article are available by sending a 32¢ SASE to the PHC chair.

**Jeff Obermeyer** sent in a short note published in *Sports Collectors Digest* (November 11, 1983) about the same Ted Williams/Babe Ruth photograph detailed in the PHC Newsletter of January 1998. As usual, the date of the photo is incorrectly noted as July 13, 1943. Copies are available by sending a 32¢ SASE to the PHC chair.

## CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS TO EMAIL ADDRESSES

Below is a list of corrections and additions to the email addresses of PHC members published in the January 1998 PHC Newsletter:

Dick Derby      yannigans@aol.com  
Tom Hill        stonewall@udata.com

Chris Jennison      cjenni@guilford.com  
Tom Shieber        tom@shieber.com

## NEW MEMBERS AND MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

The SABR Pictorial History Committee welcomes the following new members:

Eric Dituri      1921 Spruce Drive  
                 Hollister, CA 95023

Doug McWilliams      430 Spruce Street  
                 Berkeley, CA 94708-9275

Please note the following address changes:

Dick Derby      c/o Yannigan's Baseball Memories  
                 19644 Center Ridge  
                 Rocky River, OH 44116  
Michael Holthaus      309 Ackerman Road  
                 Stevensville, MD 21666-2305

Tom Shieber      278 Main Street  
                 Cooperstown, NY 13326  
Tony Szabelski      2034 Fox Pointe Dr. #104  
                 Aurora, IL 60504

## MORE ON THE NATIONAL POLICE GAZETTE SUPPLEMENT

In the December 1996 PHC Newsletter, *Ray Billbrough* presented research on the many baseball players pictured in *The National Police Gazette* supplement. Ray included a checklist of these baseball player images as well as some questions about undated images. *Jim Troisi* has written in with answers to many of Ray's questions

and a partially updated version of the list. Jim continues to research the subject, but the list below is complete from the very first baseball player pictured in *The National Police Gazette* supplement (Christy Mathewson in 1901) through 1906, and all of 1908.

Numbers marked with an asterisk are new entries or include additional information not found in Ray's original listing:

No.	Date	Name	Club
1251*	8-10-01	Christy Mathewson	NY, NL
1351*	7-4-03	Roy Thomas	Phil, NL
1353	7-18-03	Red Dooin	Phil, NL
1355*	8-1-03	George Davis	NY, NL
1357	8-15-03	Tommy Leach	Pitt, NL
1359	8-29-03	John McGraw	NY, NL
1361	9-12-03	Cy Seymour	Cin, NL
1363	9-26-03	Joe McGinnity	NY, NL
1365	10-10-03	Jack Cronin	NY, NL
1400	6-11-04	Dan McGann	NY, NL
1403	7-02-04	Red Ames	NY, NL
1407	7-30-04	Jack Warner	NY, NL
1411	8-27-04	Frank Bowerman	NY, NL
1413*	9-10-04	Roger Bresnahan	NY, NL
1450*	5-27-05	Joe McGinnity	NY, NL
1451*	6-03-05	Nap Lajoie	Cle, AL
1452*	6-10-05	Honus Wagner	Pitt, NL
1453	6-17-05	Malachi Kittridge	Wash, AL
1457	7-15-05	Jack Chesbro	NY, AL
1459*	7-29-05	Roger Bresnahan ("Backstop of N.Y. Nat'ls")	NY, NL
1461*	8-12-05	Pittsburg team photo	Pitt, NL
1463	8-26-05	Willie Keeler	NY, AL
1465	9-09-05	Sam Mertes	NY, NL
1466	9-16-05	Dave Fultz	NY, AL
1467*	9-23-05	Carlisle University baseball team photo	—
1468	9-30-05	Bill Hogg	NY, AL
1502	5-26-06	Broadway Aleck Smith	NY, NL
1504	6-08-06	Red Kleinow	NY, AL
1505	6-16-06	Rube Waddell	Phil, AL
1510	7-21-06	Nap Shea	
1516	9-01-06	Jimmy Casey	Bro, NL
1518	9-15-06	Hal Chase	NY, AL
1607*	5-30-08	Harry Bay	Cle, AL
1613*	7-11-08	Harry Lumley	Bro, NL
1615*	7-25-08	Charlie Hemphill	NY, AL