



Biographical Research Committee Monthly Report
May 1994

Fern Bell Found

Although we have listed Fern Bell on our "Assumed Alive" list, Bell has actually been missing since the mid-1950s. His former teammates did not know his whereabouts, nor did the Pittsburgh Pirates Alumni Association. But Bill Haber used his many contacts to find Bell alive and well and living in Palm Desert, California. He is the golf pro at the Palm Desert Country Club. Isn't it amazing that with that sort of an occupation, he could have vanished for 40 years? Anyway, Bill wins the *Find of the Month Award* for tracking him down. Congratulations!

Ethics

This newsletter is circulated to the biographical research committee of SABR and is to be used solely by the committee. Its purpose is to report on the work of the committee and report newly discovered biographical information on players. We also report bits of trivia or other interesting facts relating to present or past major league players. Hopefully, it will inform and entertain.

Any information contained in this newsletter should not be reprinted in any other source without first obtaining the permission of the committee chairman or the SABR office. In most cases, that permission will be freely granted. But when information is used to denigrate the career of any individual or group of individuals, that permission will definitely not be granted. That is not, nor has ever been the intent of this newsletter.

Committee Meeting

This is just a reminder to everyone that our committee meeting is Friday, June 17, at 7:00

PM. I hop to see you all there.

A Marker For Billy

The Lancaster, Massachusetts Historical Commission is attempting to raise money to put a marker on the grave of Sliding Billy Hamilton. Anyone wishing to contribute can send their contributions to:

Lancaster Historical Commission
P. O. Box 351
Lancaster, Massachusetts 01523

New Members

Please welcome Bob Keeler, 3005 SW Westwood Drive, Portland Oregon 97225 to the committee. Bob's code number will be K2.

The Wrong Men

This month we eliminated the death information for two players, because that information belongs to someone else.

The first is for 1890 Philadelphia pitcher Edward M. Green. We had listed Green as dying March 22, 1917 in Ogden, Utah. Larry Gerlach located the obituary and dying in Ogden was Edward Miller, who was listed as a former major leaguer in his obit although that has yet to be proven. But it was definitely not Green, and I have no idea how that death was attributed to Green.

The second is the October 12, 1928 Buffalo death of Eugene A. Derby. Jack Dougherty located the death certificate which showed that the man who died in Buffalo was born in 1879, making him a 6-year-old major leaguer in 1885. The birth date found on a death certificate is not always accurate, but I don't think it is typically off by 19 years. So both Green and Derby go back to the ranks of the missing. (Sounds like a good name for a restaurant, *The Green Derby*.)

Learning Link

Thanks to Tom Shrimplin for volunteering to be our committee's representative for Learning Link. It sounds like an exciting project and I'm anxious to see how it works out.

Can We Help?

Brent Cobb, 901 East G Street, McCook, Nebraska 69001 is doing research on the McCook Generals. He needs help locating the whereabouts of George Anderson, a Denver boy, Edward Roy Tarr from Topeka, Kansas, Victor Shiell from Benld, Illinois, and Johnny Stoneham, a former major leaguer whose Houston address is apparently no longer valid. Please help him if you can.

First Out

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1930 - Cornelius Finn | 07/07/1933 |
| 1931 - Eugene Connell | 08/31/1937 |
| 1932 - Len Koenecke | 09/17/1935 |
| 1933 - Franklin Pearce | 09/03/1950 |
| 1934 - Clarence Vaughn | 03/01/1937 |
| 1935 - Clyde Hatter | 10/16/1937 |
| 1936 - Steve Sundra | 03/23/1952 |
| 1937 - Emil "Hillbilly" Bildilli | 09/16/1946 |
| 1938 - Willard Hershberger | 08/03/1940 |
| 1939 - Elmer Gedeon | 04/20/1944 |

Birthday List

There is only one nonagenarian celebrating a birthday in June. Lief Erickson turns 92 on June 25. Be sure to send a card.

The Mystery of Frank Shannon

This month's *Mystery of the Month* was provided by Dick Thompson.

The United States immigration movement during the later portion of the 19th century usually went from east to west. This month's

mystery man worked in reverse. John Francis "Frank" Shannon was born December 3, 1872 in San Francisco, California (confirmed by two lengthy bios in the 1893 Springfield, Ma. papers). At a young age he moved back to Boston with his parents, William G. Shannon, a native of California, and his mother, Elizabeth, who was born in South Boston. Frank graduated from Boston High School in 1889 and played semi-pro ball in and around the greater Boston area.

Frank's first professional engagement was with the Brockton New England team in 1892. A good recommendation from the Brockton manager, Billy McGunnigle, got him a late season trial with the Washington National League team, a game played October 1, in Boston. His relationship with McGunnigle led to Shannon's last major league connection, that being with the 1896 Louisville club, a team that McGunnigle piloted.

Shannon's minor league career was close to 20 years in duration. He both started and finished with Brockton in the New England League, his last season being 1910. He played mainly in the northeast, usually in the Eastern and New England Leagues, but did travel as far as the Southern and Western Leagues.

His family history, with the exception of his California birth, seems restricted to their greater Boston area. Both his parents are buried in the Holy Cross cemetery in Malden, Mass. His two brothers are buried in Winthrop, Mass. (Frank is not buried in either place.)

Frank showed up regularly in the Boston city directories over the 1896-1910 time period, living at a number of locations, usually with his two brothers, William, who also played in the Eastern and New England Leagues, and Lawrence, who played ball at Dartmouth College.

Frank himself had a number of college connections. He was the shortstop for the Holy Cross team in 1893, the season after his major league debut, and he studied medicine at Harvard for two years, 1898 and 1899. In 1904 he was the baseball coach at Bowdoin College in Maine. (None of these schools have any information on Shannon, other than to confirm that he was there during those time periods.)

The 1910 Brockton paper, listing the off season occupations of the team's players, stated that Frank worked as a private detective, and because of his job, spent a lot of time away from home. The spring 1899 Pawtucket, R.I. paper's baseball column stated that Shannon had just

returned from a trip to England. He reportedly managed a team in New Brunswick during part of 1911. Later that year he was a salesman for Baseball Magazine. Shannon's last confirmed sighting was at the New England League's winter meeting, held in Boston, in January of 1912.

Now, the question, What became of Frank Shannon? The current February 27, 1934 Boston death may be the correct man. Then again, it may not be. That Shannon was a skid row type alcoholic. The death certificate lists a single, white male named Frank Shannon, who was approximately 65 years old at the time of his death. Cause of death was "Etoh heart." His address was 1202 Washington Street in Boston. He was buried in a pauper's grave in Boston's Mount Hope Cemetery on October 9, 1934. He left no known survivors. No one came forward to claim the body. The Boston papers carried no obituaries.

Does it make sense that no one claimed the body? Both of Shannon's brothers were successful. His youngest brother, Lawrence, died in 1935, aged 48. He was the treasurer of a bank. He left a wife who died in 1966, and a son who we will get to in a minute. Frank's brother William, who was just a couple of years younger than Frank, died in 1966. Tom Shea located William in a Winthrop nursing home just a few month's before his death. In response to Shea's questions about Frank, William, who was 92

years old and somewhat senile, started to cry and kept saying "poor Frank, poor Frank". He was unable to provide any information about what happened to his brother.

Lawrence's son, as of 1986, was living in Dallas, Texas. Lawrence's grandson was living in Winthrop, Mass. The grandson referred all questions to his father. The father, the nephew of Frank, said he never heard of any uncle Frank. It was quite clear that we had the right family. He remembered his uncle William quite well. Apparently the family never mentioned Frank to the offspring of Lawrence. The reason is unknown.

Did Frank Shannon die an alcoholic's death in Boston in 1934? And was that enough of a disgrace for his family to disown him? Or did he move away from Boston, and is his death date and location still out there to be found? Just because a death is listed in the baseball encyclopedias, it doesn't mean our job is finished.

The Scoreboard

| | IN | OUT | PCT |
|-----------------------|-------|------|---------|
| Total Complete Names | 14079 | 75 | 99.470 |
| Total Complete Births | 13383 | 771 | 94.553 |
| Total Complete Deaths | 7011 | 479 | 49.534 |
| Total Assumed Alive | 6664 | | 47.082 |
| Total Bats | 12783 | 1267 | 90.982 |
| Total Throws | 13035 | 1015 | 92.776 |
| Total Heights | 13005 | 1045 | 92.562 |
| Total Weights | 12936 | 1114 | 92.071 |
| Total Debut Dates | 14154 | 0 | 100.000 |
| Total Questionnaires | 9970 | 4184 | 70.440 |
| Total Completion | | | 92.0519 |

New Monthly Data

Questionnaires Received:

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|------|
| 1939 Bell, Fern Lee | Name: <u>Fernando Jerome Lee Bell</u> | (H1) |
| 1993 Minchey, Nathan Derek | Height: <u>6-08</u> Weight: <u>225</u> | (C1) |

New Information Received:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|------|
| 1972 Bare, Raymond Douglas | D: <u>Mar 29 1994</u> | (C1) |
| | <u>Miami, Florida</u> | |
| 1952 Brickner, Ralph Harold | D: <u>May 9 1994</u> | (BL) |
| | <u>Bridgetown, Ohio</u> | |
| 1943 DePhillips, Anthony Andrew | D: <u>May 5 1994</u> | (H1) |
| | <u>Port Jefferson, New York</u> | |
| 1885 Derby, Eugene A. | Delete death information. Wrong man. | (D2) |
| 1895 Doheny, Edward R. | Name: <u>Edwin Richard Doheny</u> | (S7) |
| | B: <u>Nov 24 1873</u> | |
| 1890 Eiteljorge, Edward Henry | D: <u>Dec 5 1942</u> | (H1) |
| 1923 Fisher, George Aloys | B: <u>Wesley, Iowa</u> | (T2) |
| | D: <u>May 15 1994</u> | |
| | <u>St. Cloud, Minnesota</u> | |
| 1908 Foster, Edward Lee | B: <u>Georgia</u> | (D2) |
| 1943 Gentry, James Ruffus | B: <u>Daisy Station, North Carolina</u> | (H1) |
| 1890 Green, Edward M. | Delete death information. Wrong man. | (UM) |
| 1943 Gregg, Harold Dana | D: <u>May 13 1991</u> | (H1) |
| | <u>Bishop, California</u> | |
| 1949 Hofman, Robert George | D: <u>Chesterfield, Missouri</u> | (H1) |
| 1905 Hogg, William | B: <u>Dec 1879</u> | (M4) |
| | <u>Canada</u> | |
| 1884 Horan, P. J. | Name: <u>Patrick J. Horan</u> | (M4) |
| 1928 Johnson, Silas Kenneth | B: <u>Danway, Illinois</u> | (H1) |
| | D: <u>May 12 1994</u> | |
| | <u>Sheridan, Illinois</u> | |
| 1967 Leonhard, David Paul | B: <u>Jan 22 1941</u> | (S7) |
| 1901 Murphy, Frank Morton | Name: <u>Francis Patrick Murphy</u> | (D2) |
| | B: <u>1875</u> | |
| | D: <u>Islip, New York</u> | |
| 1895 Niles, William E. | B: <u>Jan 11 1867</u> | (D2) |
| | <u>Covington, Kentucky</u> | |
| 1887 O'Neil, Frederick James | Name: <u>Frederick James O'Neill</u> | (M4) |
| 1871 Radcliffe, John Y. | B: <u>Jun 29 1848</u> | (D2) |
| | <u>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</u> | |
| 1990 Rowland, Richard Garnet | B: <u>Feb 25 1964</u> | (T2) |
| 1932 Schalk, LeRoy John | D: <u>Mar 11 1990</u> | (H1) |
| | <u>Gainesville, Texas</u> | |
| 1938 Sutcliffe, Charles Inigo | D: <u>Mar 2 1994</u> | (T3) |
| | <u>Fall River, Massachusetts</u> | |
| 1939 Warren, Bennie Louis | D: <u>May 11 1994</u> | (H1) |
| | <u>Oklahoma City, Oklahoma</u> | |