

# THE BALTIMORE CHOP



## SABR Babe Ruth Chapter

Vol. 5, No. 2

Summer 2021

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### President's Message

#### Mitosis

The original founders of SABR believed that the "society" would remain small and that baseball research was of interest only to a handful of people. However, SABR grew rapidly and the need for local organization into chapters soon became evident.

Bob Davids, over his strong personal objection, saw the first chapter adopt his name. That chapter was the largest and most influential for several decades. It was so large and so active that SABR 47 in New York City was the first convention where the local chapter had more members in attendance than the Bob Davids Chapter.

The obvious (in hindsight) method of growth in SABR with the strengthening of the chapter is one of the most basic processes in nature—mitosis. In mitosis, a cell grows by dividing itself into two fully functional cells. Those two then divide in the same way and so forth until the whole organism reaches a stable maturity.

SABR's original chapter once encompassed the entire states of Virginia, Maryland, and the District of

**President** ▶ Page 10

### The Texan Who Adopted Baltimore

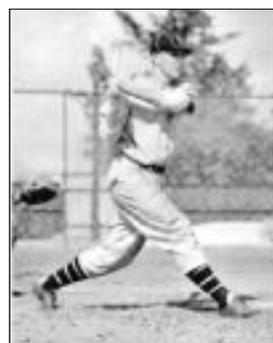
*Editor's note: Eddie Robinson turned 100 in December 2020. He hosts a podcast, "The Golden Age of Baseball with Eddie Robinson" and has been "rediscovered" for those two reasons. He played for the major- and minor-league Orioles and was in the restaurant business. The restaurant angle piqued the interest of Jim Considine.*

#### By Jim Considine

You don't hear of many Texans who adopt Baltimore as their home. But Eddie Robinson is not just any Texan. He is the only MLB player who is a centenarian, a four-time All-Star, called the most clutch hitter that Ted Williams had ever seen, and the best first baseman that Paul Richards had ever seen.

He was one of six Robinsons to play for the Orioles. He played with Brooks and against Jackie in the 1946 International League. He crossed paths with Frank many times during his days as a front-office executive or scout.

Eddie arrived in Baltimore in 1942 and stayed for the next 20 years. He has lived a full life, and it appears he earned everything he got in life. He is a good



guy who got along with everyone except, by my count, three people. He doesn't dwell on the negative. He is a family man with a delightful wife, Bette, of almost 67 years. They have three

sons—Marc (64), Drew (62), and Paul Richard (60)—who were all born in Baltimore. Eddie was married to a Baltimore girl, Elayne, before Bette. They had two children, William Edward Robinson III and Robby Ann. They lost their daughter to a brain tumor before she was 3. Such a tragedy destroys many marriages and it destroyed the Robinson's. Eddie is grateful that Elayne raised their son and supported the good relationship he had with his son.

**Robinson** ▶ Page 7



### Signing on the Curve: Autograph Tales

#### By Ruth Sadler

We fans take so many things baseball players do with a baseball for granted. We expect them to be able to catch, throw, and hit—and they seem to do it easily and effortlessly (at least most major-leaguers seem to most of the time). These are basic skills we expect them to have.

OK, how about signing a baseball?

Shawn Herne, who sees a lot of autographed baseballs in his job as executive director of the Babe Ruth Birthplace Foundation, thinks it is. "I believe they are more difficult than people believe because none of us are trained to sign on a curved surface."

**Autograph** ▶ Page 8

# SABR Baltimore Babe Ruth Chapter Formed 2015

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Find us on [Facebook](#), too.

## Calendar

### Regularly scheduled events

All are Zoom meetings until further notice (registration links are sent by the chapters)

### Peeps @ The Peeb

First Wednesday of the month, 7-9 P.M. unless noted

### Talkin' Baseball

Since 2001, Bob Davids Chapter hosts a guest speaker

First Saturday of the month, 9 A.M.

### Called Shot Lunch

BYO lunch and talk baseball

Third Wednesday of the month, noon

### Baltimore Baseball Babble (new)

Free-for-all baseball chat, not recorded

Last Sunday of the month, 7-9 P.M.

### August

**4:** Peeps @ The Peeb, SABR member and Executive Director of the Babe Ruth Birthplace Foundation Shawn Herne on the state of the museum and coming attractions, including virtual programming

**7:** Talkin' Baseball, Steve Bratkovich, "The Baseball Bat: From Trees to the Major Leagues, 19th Century to Today"

**18:** Called Shot Lunch, SABR member and author Greg Larson on his recent book *Clubbie*

**29:** Baltimore Baseball Babble, Inning 5

### September

**1:** Peeps @ The Peeb, Author Jim Cryns on his book about Milwaukee County Stadium

**4:** Talkin' Baseball, Steve Steinberg, "Comeback Pitchers: The Remarkable Careers of Howard Emke and Jack Quinn"

**4:** Joint MD/PA/NJ chapter minor-league game at Scranton Railriders

**15:** Called Shot Lunch, SABR member Tom Hanrahan on the 1971 Orioles and their four 20-game winners

**25:** **SAVE THE DATE**, Baltimore/Babe Ruth Chapter annual game at the Orioles with pregame party

**26:** Baltimore Baseball Babble, Inning 6

### October

**2:** Talkin' Baseball, Luke Epplin, "Our Team: The Epic Story of 4 Men and the World series That Changed Baseball"

## Getting to Know ... Brendan Veit

Brendan Veit of Annapolis is one of SABR's newer members, having joined last May.

He's spending the summer in Cleveland as a retail management intern with the Indians and will return to Knoxville for this senior year at the University of Tennessee, where he is majoring in business analytics with a minor in supply chain management. "One day I would love to work in baseball operations in some capacity, whether it be scout or statistical analysis," he says.

Despite the orange shirt (think UT), Maryland address and a summer with the Indians, he's a Red Sox fan born and bred: "My dad is a Red Sox fan, and so was his dad. Just a family thing."

His favorite ballpark is Fenway Park and favorite all-time player is David Ortiz.

One of Veit's favorite baseball memories involves his favorite current player, Xander Bogaerts. "At Red Sox spring training in 2012, I snuck into a practice dugout to get Xander Bogaert's autograph. He was still in the minors at the time, so looking back and how he's progressed it was a truly special moment."

Two other games stand out for him.

One is the first game he saw. It was at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, but "I was too little to remember when it was or even how old I was, but I do remember getting Torii Hunter's autograph when he was a member of the Minnesota Twins."

The other special game was Game 4 of the 2012 NLDS between the Nationals and Cardinals. "Jayson Werth hit a walk off home run," he says. "It was the most electric atmosphere at a baseball game I've ever been to."

He enjoys watching, playing and studying sports (especially baseball, football and soccer). He also plays the bass and enjoys boating and cooking.

Something most people don't know? "I spent a month in 2019 abroad in Germany, where I practiced German and traveled to Switzerland, France and the UK as well."



## Welcome, New Members

Raymond Brown	Columbia
Michael Dougherty	Baltimore
Frank Hart	Poolesville
Barry Kramer	Reisterstown
Brad Schlegel	Rosedale

## Trivia Corner

John Means threw the sixth no-hitter in Orioles history on May 5. The O's have been no-hit seven times in their 68 seasons. Who were the pitchers?  
Answer on Page 4.

## Save the Date!

SABR 50  
August 17-21, 2022  
Hyatt Regency Inner Harbor

# Jim Palmer: The Origin Story

By Pat Brown

On a recent Orioles telecast Jim Palmer mentioned his major-league debut when he faced the likes of Carl Yastrzemski and Tony Conigliaro. Palmer made his major-league debut on April 17, 1965 against the Boston Red Sox at the age of 19. He entered the game in relief of Robin Roberts in the bottom of the third inning with two men on and no outs and the Orioles with a 6-3 lead. His first batter was Yaz, whom he walked to load the bases. He then struck out Tony C., but gave up a two-run single to Lee Thomas before getting Felix Mantilla to hit into a 5-4-3 double play. His pitching line for the day was two innings pitched, giving up no earned runs, one hit and two walks while recording one strikeout. So how did he get to this point at such a tender age?

According to the biographical article on Palmer written by Mark Armour for the SABR BioProject, after living in places like New York City and Beverly Hills during his early childhood, Jim and his family moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, before he started high school. In high school he was a star pitcher and center fielder in baseball and excelled in football and basketball as well (for people from a certain era the name "Chip Hilton" probably comes to mind) and had several college offers, signing a letter of intent to Arizona State University in June 1963. Armour describes how after high school graduation Palmer played for a summer team in Winner, South Dakota, with several other future major leaguers like Jim Lonborg, which eventually led to his being signed by the O's. How did a star high schooler from Arizona end up in a small town (population 2,500) in south central South Dakota known primarily for its pheasant hunting and being the childhood home of famed Notre Dame coach Frank Leahy (for whom the baseball stadium was named)?

The answer is the Basin League. The Basin League started in South Dakota and Nebraska in 1953 with a mixture of professional and amateur ballplayers, but by 1963 it had become one of the nation's better college leagues. An extensive history of the Basin League can be found at <https://usfamily.net/web/trombleyd/BasinHistory.htm>. How did this 17-year-old recent high school graduate end up with the Winner Pheasants in a league where everybody else was 19 and 20? Palmer explains in his book *Palmer and Weaver - Together We Were Eleven Foot Nine*:

"...Bobby Winkles [Arizona State baseball coach]...came to me and said, 'You're too good [in 1963] for the American Legion teams around here. You won't get any better playing with them. I've got five guys who go to ASU going up to the college league in South Dakota. I want you to go up there.' So, I go."

Palmer made an immediate impression. The consensus of players, local sportswriters and scouts alike was that he was the fastest pitcher that the league had seen in a long time. He pitched in 15 games (79½ innings), giving up 53 hits, 38 runs and 60 walks while recording 98 strikeouts. He ended up with a 5-3 record and a 3.29 ERA (seventh best in the league just behind his teammate Lonborg) as Winner won the regular-season title. However, it lost in the first round of the playoffs, dropping the first two games of a best-of-three series. Again, as Palmer describes it in *Palmer and Weaver*:

"... we're in a best-of-three playoff. I'm supposed to pitch the third game, if there is one. We lose the first game. ...). Harry Dalton, who's farm director for the Orioles, has driven all the way there ... to see me pitch that third game. But it doesn't look like there's going to be a third game..." I pitch one inning of the [second] game and strike out the first two batters. The third one grounds out to the shortstop, and Harry Dalton decides I'm one of the guys the Orioles want to sign."

He was signed by Jim Russo, scout supervisor for the Orioles, in August 1963 right after he returned to Arizona.



The Leahy Bowl, Jim Palmer on the mound.

Palmer says a large reason he signed with the Orioles, despite several major-league clubs making him offers, was because his mother thought Russo and Jim Wilson of the Orioles were very polite and were nice to Jim's parents during their visit to his house.

This eventually led to Palmer's joining the Orioles' Class A farm team in the Northern League, the Aberdeen (South Dakota) Pheasants (noticing an avian theme here?), in 1964. As has been widely documented, the 1964 Pheasants were managed by Cal Ripken Sr. (at the ripe old age of 28) and ran away with the regular-season title, winning by 12 games with an 80-37 record. As for Palmer, he did pitch a no-hitter (one of four in the Baltimore farm system that season) and ended up with an 11-3 record and a 2.51 ERA (third best in the league) with 107 strikeouts in 129 innings, but with a 1.589 WHIP due to his 130 walks (does the name Nuke LaLoosh come to mind?). The pitching star of the team was future Oriole Eddie Watt, who went 14-1 with a 1.77 ERA.

## ORIOLES

Manager Dee Phillips; Coach George Bamberger; pitchers Harley Anderson (York), Steve Caria (Fox Cities), Art Darwin (Stockton), Chuck Estrada (Baltimore), Jim Jankow (Fox Cities), Dick Mielke (Elmira), Charles Moulden (Elmira), Jim Palmer (Aberdeen), Ken Sokolowski (signed for '65), Howard Stethers (Elmira); catchers John Burrows (Fox Cities), John Griffin (Rochester); infielders Mark Ballinger (Aberdeen), Mike Fiore (Aberdeen), Bob Litchfield (Aberdeen), John Riddle (Stockton), John Sepich (Fox Cities); outfielders Louis Piniella (Aberdeen), Herm Rathman (Stockton), Ron Stone (national defense list).

The roster of the 1964 Florida Winter Instructional League Orioles from *The Sporting News*.

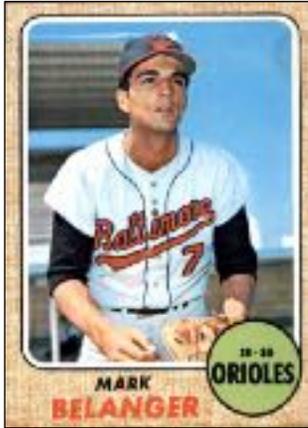
Based on that performance, the Orioles sent Palmer to their team in the 1964 Florida Winter Instructional League. While Baseball Reference characterizes this as a "Winter Rookie" league, it was also a place where some veterans, like Chuck Estrada of the Orioles who was trying to come back from arm troubles, went to work out issues or learn new positions. Of some note that season was the game on October 17 between the "Baby Birds" and the Kansas City

Palmer ► Continued on Page 10

# Mark Belanger's First Error (April 30, 1967, E4)

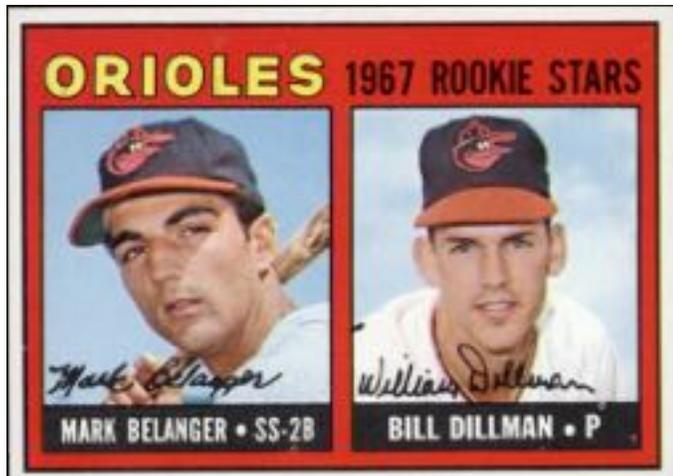
By Francis Kinlaw

Few of the 26,884 people entering Baltimore's Memorial Stadium on April 30, 1967 for the Orioles' doubleheader against the Detroit Tigers would have anticipated three developments that would be witnessed on that sunny Sunday afternoon. First and foremost, the Bengals would defeat major-league baseball's defending world champions in both games of the twin bill. Second, Steve Barber and Stu Miller



would combine to throw an unusual no-hitter in the first game as Barber issued 10 bases on balls to Detroit players---and also nailed two batsmen with pitches. The losses in the doubleheader, and especially the no-hitter, are recalled often by longtime Orioles fans, but the circumstances relating to a crucial error in the ninth inning of the no-hit effort have been generally overlooked.

With the Orioles clinging to a precarious 1-0 lead in the top of the ninth inning, Birds skipper Hank Bauer replaced second baseman Woodie Held with 23-year-old Mark Belanger. (The shortstop position was occupied by Luis Aparicio.) Moments later, as one might have expected based on Barber's lack of control in the preceding eight frames, runners were on the basepaths. The left-hander walked Norm Cash and Ray Oyler, and a sacrifice bunt by Tigers hurler Earl Wilson advanced the runners to second and third base. (Dick Tracewski had pinch-run for Cash and Jake Wood for Oyler.)



## Belanger's Rookie Card--and Season

Mark Belanger's rookie card is #558 (of 609) in Topps' 1967 production. This was when cards were issued in series and were rolled out all season. He shares the card, "Orioles 1967 Rookie Stars," with pitcher Bill Dillman, but neither had a stellar 1967. Belanger played in 69 games, starting 43, and batted .174 (206 plate appearances, 32-for-184); he played 38 games at shortstop, 26 at second, two at third and came in as a pinch hitter in three games and a pinch runner in seven. (The next season, he played 145 games at short, starting 142.) Dillman went 5-9 in 32 appearances, starting 15 games, with an ERA of 4.35. He struck out 69 and walked 33 and was back in the minors in 1968. The Orioles sold him to the St. Louis Cardinals in December 1969. His only other major-league season was 1970, with the Montreal Expos.

Willie Horton fouled out, but Barber bounced a pitch in the dirt that skipped by catcher Larry Haney and enabled Tracewski to score the tying run. When Mickey Stanley also drew a base on balls from Barber, Miller was summoned from Baltimore's bullpen. Don Wert of the Tigers then hit a ball over the second-base bag, but Aparicio made a fine play and flipped the ball in a back-handed manner toward Belanger. According to an account by sportswriter Doug Brown published in *The Sporting News*: "(Belanger) put his right hand in (his) glove before the ball arrived. The ball dropped to the ground for an error and Wood came home with the tie-breaking run." Al Kaline grounded into a force play to bring an end to the half-inning, but the damage to the Orioles' cause had been done. Detroit's victory was secured when reliever Fred Gladding retired the Birds in order in the bottom of the ninth.

Belanger, who was nicknamed "The Blade" because of his slender 6-foot-1, 170-pound frame, would recover from this unfortunate moment and become recognized for his superb defensive skills. (It should be stressed that he was playing second base for only the sixth time in a major-league game when the costly error against the Tigers occurred and that his subsequent recognition would be earned as a shortstop.) Many fine performances and eight American League Gold Gloves later, a record of excellence at the latter position would for good reason cause his first big-league error (in his 16th major-league game in the field) to be all but forgotten.

## Speaking of No-Hitters

There have been 15 combined no-hitters in major-league history, and the Orioles have two (as do the Angels and Astros).

Baltimore-born Babe Ruth was involved in the first, June 23, 1917 as the Red Sox hosted the Senators. He was ejected for arguing with (and punching) the umpire after walking leadoff man Ray Morgan. Ernie Shore (who was Ruth's teammate on the 1914 minor-league Orioles) replaced him, Morgan was out trying to steal second, and Shore retired all 26 men he faced.

There have been two combined nine-inning no-hit losses, and the Orioles had the first, when Steve Barber and Stu Miller combined for a 2-1 loss to the Tigers; see accompanying article "Mark Belanger's First Error (April 30, 1967, E4)" at left.

The Orioles' other combined no-hitter was July 13, 1991, when Bob Milacki's six no-hit innings were followed by one each from Mike Flanagan, Mark Williamson and Gregg Olson. Final: O's 2, A's 0 in Oakland.

## Trivia Answer

Bo Belinsky	May 5, 1962	Angels 2, O's 0	L.A.
Nolan Ryan	June 1, 1975	Angels 1, O's 0*	Anaheim
Juan Nieves	April 15, 1987	Brewers 7, O's 0**	Mem. Stad.
Wilson Alvarez	Aug. 11, 1991	White Sox 7, O's 0†	Mem. Stad.
Hideo Nomo	April 4, 2001	Red Sox 3, O's 0‡	Oriole Pk.
Clay Buchholz	Sept. 1, 2007	Red Sox 10, O's 0+	Boston
Hisashi Iwakuma	Aug. 12, 2005	Mariners 3, O's 0	Seattle

\*--Ryan's fourth of seven no-hitters

\*\*--Brewers' first no-hitter

†--Alvarez's second major-league start

‡--Nomo's second of two no-hitters

+--Buchholz's second major-league start

# Edward Barrow: Credited with Building the Yankee Dynasty

## Barrow and The Babe, The Red Sox Years

By Fred Glueckstein

In December 1917, at the annual meeting of the International League at the Hotel Imperial in New York City, Edward Grant Barrow was forced out as league president. Knowing that Barrow would be ousted, Harry Frazee, a well-known theatrical producer and owner of the Boston Red Sox, waited in the lobby. Frazee told Barrow that with the United States at war in Europe, Jack Barry, Boston's player-manager, had joined the Navy. Frazee needed a new manager, and he offered Barrow the job for the 1918 season; Barrow happily accepted.



It was in Boston that Barrow first met a young ballplayer named Babe Ruth. A talented left-handed pitcher, Ruth had joined the Boston Red Sox in 1914 and was a member of the teams that won the 1915 and 1916 World Series and finished second in 1917. During that time, Ruth became one of the premier pitchers in the

American League. He also showed prowess as a hitter.

With many of the Red Sox players at war, Barrow felt that Ruth's bat was important in the lineup and played him in the outfield when not pitching. Ruth ended the 1918 season with 11 home runs, a league high, and for the second straight season, he won 23 games as a pitcher, helping Barrow not only guide the Red Sox to the American League pennant, but also defeat the Chicago Cubs in the World Series.

As the 1919 season approached, Barrow had a plan that would subsequently transform Ruth's career and turn baseball into the exciting offensive game it became in the 20th century. Knowing that the Babe was an excellent hitter, an accomplished fielder, a fine base runner, and possessed an accurate throwing arm, Barrow decided to convert Ruth from a pitcher to an everyday player.

Through the first month of the 1919 season, Ruth took a regular turn in the Red Sox pitching rotation and at other times played the outfield. Later that season, Barrow told Ruth he would have a great future as a hitter and should consider becoming an everyday player. The Babe agreed and gave up a successful career as a pitcher to become an everyday Red Sox outfielder.

One day Ruth complained of weariness. Attributing his tiredness to running around and carousing all night, Barrow told Ruth to take better care of himself. However, Ruth was 24 years old, trim, strong, and he liked having a good time. Needless to say, he did not take Barrow's advice.

Later that season, Barrow and Ruth had their most serious disagreement, one that came close to a fistfight. As the club's manager, Barrow would stay up at night when the team was on the road until all the players were in the hotel. Sitting up one evening in the Raleigh Hotel in Washington, Barrow waited until 4 A.M. for Ruth before finally going to bed.

Deciding not to wait up the next night again, Barrow gave the hotel porter a few dollars to let him know when Ruth came in. The next day at 6 A.M., the porter knocked on Barrow's door and told him that Ruth had just returned to the hotel.

Putting on a dressing gown and slippers, Barrow went down the hall to the room that Ruth shared with Dan Howley, a coach who was assigned to watch over him. When Barrow reached Ruth's door, light showed through the transom and voices could be heard inside.

After knocking on the door, the light went out and the voices stopped. The door was unlocked and Barrow found Ruth in bed smoking a pipe. The covers were pulled up over his neck. Howley was nowhere in sight; he was hiding in the bathroom. When Barrow asked Ruth why he was smoking a pipe so early in the morning, the Babe told him that it relaxed him. Pulling the covers down, Barrow saw



Babe Ruth (standing left) and Stuffy McGinnis (standing right) sign 1918 contracts with Red Sox manager Edward Barrow (left) and owner Harry Frazee (right).

that Ruth was fully dressed, even wearing his socks and shoes. Barrow told Ruth and Howley to see him at the ballpark that afternoon and left.

When Barrow arrived in the clubhouse, the players were dressing. As he was tying his shoes, Ruth peeked at Barrow out of the corner of his eye. He watched as Barrow locked the door. The Red Sox manager warned the players that there would be no further violations of the rules. Most of his remarks were directed at Ruth, and after listening for a while, the Babe spoke back and threatened to punch Barrow in the nose.

A hush fell through the clubhouse.

"All you fellows finish dressing and get out of here," said Barrow, "all except Ruth. You stay here, Babe, and I'll give you a chance to punch me in the nose." When the players finished dressing, they began to leave the room; Ruth was among those that left.

Before the game started, Barrow was filling out the starting lineup on the card that is given to the umpires. When asked by Ruth if he was playing, Barrow told him he was suspended and to go into the clubhouse and take off his uniform. On the train back to Boston, Ruth asked to see Barrow, and they had a long talk. Touched by the story of Ruth's tough childhood, Barrow came to understand him better. He realized how much Ruth loved playing baseball and that a suspension was the worst thing that could happen to him.

Ruth told Barrow that he would follow the team's rules and offered to leave him a note in his box every night the team was on the road, telling him what time he got back to the hotel. Barrow couldn't say no. Afterward, Ruth always left a note addressed "Dear Eddie" or "Dear Manager". Barrow never knew whether the Babe ever lied to him and never checked up on him. He took Ruth at his word.

Barrow ► Continued on Page 10

# When Home Run Derby Was a TV Show

The modern Home Run Derby has been part of baseball's All-Star Game festivities since 1985 and has undergone many format changes.

Its ancestor, however, was a syndicated TV show in black and white that ran for just one season due to the untimely death of its host and creator, Mark Scott, midway through the run in 1960.

Home Run Derby the TV show featured 19 sluggers, including 16 of the 20 players who hit at least 25 homers in 1959; only the American League champion Chicago White Sox, who had no player with more than 22 homers, was shut out.

In each episode, two sluggers went nine "innings". Any batted ball that didn't reach the seats in Los Angeles' Wrigley Field (former home of the Pacific Coast League Los Angeles Angels) was an out, as was any pitch called a strike by the umpire. Three straight homers without an out netted a \$500 bonus. The winner of each game got \$2,000 and a return, while the loser pocketed \$1,000.

The Orioles' representative was Gus Triandos, who had just played in his third All-Star Game and had hit 25 homers



(in 1958, he had slugged 30, tying Yogi Berra for the AL record for catchers).

Triandos lost to Dick Stuart of the Pittsburgh Pirates 7-1 and didn't homer until the seventh, the drought any competitor went before hitting his first.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=UN9dsm5dhZo&ab\\_channel=Baseball](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UN9dsm5dhZo&ab_channel=Baseball)

In an interview with Ed Attanasio of This Great Game, he said: "That was one of the most embarrassing things I've ever done. I got bounced out the first time. Dick Stuart and I embarrassed the whole damn thing. They did it the middle of winter, when guys hadn't been to Spring Training, we were both so out of shape. Every once in a while they show it on TV and I turn it off." <https://thisgreatgame.com/gus-triandos/>

Henry Aaron, who hit 39 homers in 1959, won \$13,500 in the derby after earning \$35,000 with the Milwaukee Braves. Willie Mays was the 1959 salary leader at \$75,000; he finished fourth in the derby with \$8,000.

Future Oriole Frank Robinson won \$3,500, and Baltimore native Al Kaline earned \$1,000. Triandos played six more major-league seasons but only reached double digits in home runs three times, with 17 the best in 1961).

American Motors produced a 20-card black-and-white set in conjunction with the show, and a reprint set came out in 1988.

--Ruth Sadler

## References

Zminda, Don. "Home Run Derby—A Tale of Baseball and Hollywood." *The National Pastime: Endless Seasons: Baseball in Southern California* (2011): 69-73.

[www.beckett.com/baseball/1959/home-run-derby/](http://www.beckett.com/baseball/1959/home-run-derby/)

# Happy Anniversary!

August 6 marks the 60th anniversary of my first baseball game.

It would have been my second had my elementary school continued the tradition of sending its Safety Patrol to a Phillies game; instead, for a reason never divulged, we were sent on what amounted to a school trip to the Hagley Museum (where we learned how E.I. DuPont made gunpowder—and a fortune—on the banks of the Delaware) and Brandywine Battlefield (site of the largest single-day battle of the Revolution). Plenty of good seats were obviously available at Connie Mack Stadium. The Phillies finished last in the National League at 47-107-1 and unsurprisingly last in attendance (590,039).

My parents were not baseball fans. So I saw my first game with a family friend who was taking his son for the first time. Making this even better was that it was a doubleheader with my favorite team, the Pirates.

Connie Mack Stadium (so known since 1953, after Connie Mack, who retired as A's manager in 1950) had been the Phillies' home since mid-1938 and was five blocks from the Baker Bowl, their old home. The park opened in 1909 as Shibe Park, a baseball palace built by A's owner Ben Shibe. By 1961, fans parking their cars in the neighborhood were likely to be approached by a boy asking "Watch your car, mister?" but the neighborhood was not yet seen as unsafe.

Coming out of the dark concourse to our seats, I was not prepared for the greenest grass I had ever seen. Baseball grass on TV in that era was gray (dark gray after the shadows fell), but we knew that the grass (even in the middle of a city!) was green. But this was amazing. The Phillies might have stunk (they were 30-74), but their grass was great.

Baseball Reference says the first game started at 6:06 and went 2:27 with the Pirates winning 10-2. The second game

was memorable for a bench-clearing brawl in the bottom of the sixth after Pirate catcher Hal Smith tagged out Tony Gonzalez (from my seat, it looked like he was tagged in the mouth). Even with that, the 3-2 Pirate victory took 2:37. Attendance was 11,081 (of 33,608 seats).

Sixty years later, besides the memories, I have souvenirs: my ticket stub and a Pirate pennant. I have no idea why, but you could get souvenirs from other NL teams at Connie Mack no matter who the Phillies' opponent was. The next two years I picked up a Pirate yearbook and a Pirate bobblehead, even though the Pirates were not in town. Now, first-time fans at Oriole Park can get a button, and proud parents (and/or other relatives) take pictures, probably with the same phone the tickets are loaded on.

Another thing that has changed is the way we dress to go to the ballpark. Back then, I wore a dress (and stockings!). Men were in jackets and ties or sport shirts; no tee shirts, jerseys or team colors but a few caps.

One thing that has not changed is fans fighting over foul balls. At my second game in 1962, I had my glasses knocked across my face by a man in the row behind lunging past me for a ball that landed in the row in front of mine. My glasses had those earpieces that wrapped around your ear, so that was quite a jolt from that rude man (no, he did not apologize, and I don't remember whether he got the ball).

--Ruth Sadler





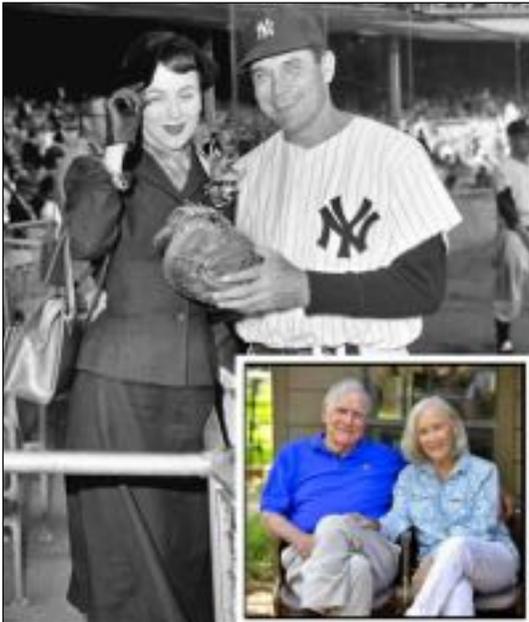
## Robinson ► From Page 7

Eddie displayed some of the sports memorabilia that he collected along the way. The most impressive item was a Babe Ruth autographed "Eddie Robinson" bat. Eddie was playing for the Indians in 1948 on the day the Yankees retired Babe Ruth's jersey number 3 and celebrated the 25th anniversary of Yankees Stadium. Babe, who had just undergone chemotherapy for throat cancer, was gaunt and feeling poorly. Lou Gehrig was the first player to have his number retired, and now, just about 10 years later, the honor would be bestowed upon the Bambino. Coincidentally, Eddie wore #3 for the Indians.

Babe arrived to put on his uniform for the last time so the newspapers and newsreels could record the event. The Yankees had moved their locker room since Babe had played. His original locker remained in what was now the visiting locker room. It was Babe's wish to dress at his old locker.

As Babe was about to be introduced, Eddie noticed his wobbly gait. He reached for a bat and suggested that Babe might want to use it as a cane if he felt the need for support. Babe did just fine, and before leaving, he offered to sign the bat for Eddie.

The bat was displayed behind the bar in front a copy of the Pulitzer Prize-winning photo taken that day.



Bette and Eddie in 1955 and 2016.

an instant hit playing for the 1946 International League Orioles. The team had settled in to playing baseball on Municipal Stadium's coliseum styled field, where left field was a mere 273 feet and a net was hung so that a home run had to have the trajectory of a normal homer. Since Eddie was a left-hander, he got to hit to a virtual cow pasture with a temporary fence. Despite lacking speed, he had no trouble hitting an in-the-park home run there. He was the International League's Most Valuable Player in 1946, edging out Jackie Robinson and future Yankee teammate Bobby Brown for the honor.

As a restaurateur in 1950s Baltimore, he embraced the Colts. It turned out that Raymond Berry's father was the varsity football coach at Eddie's high school in Paris, Texas. Eddie, who had played football, said he regretted that Raymond's dad, whom he considered a better coach, did not arrive until the year Eddie graduated. Raymond and Eddie are still friends today.

*"When Raymond played for the Colts, he frequented the Baltimore restaurant I owned during that time, along with other Colts such as Johnny Unitas, Lenny Moore, Gino Marchetti, Jim Parker,*

*Alan Ameche, Art Donovan, and Big Daddy Lipscomb. I guess all roads lead from Paris, Texas."*

It should be noted that restaurants in "Jim Crow Baltimore" did not welcome the black players. Eddie did not have an ounce of "Crow" in his veins.

Eddie's baseball career began to wind down in 1956 after he was traded to the Kansas City Athletics. He came back in 1957, limping to a finish. He turned to his mentor, Paul Richards, who offered him a job as a coach/roving instructor in 1958. In September 1961, Richards was announced as the general manager for the expansion Colt .45s and offered Eddie the position of farm director.

The family moved to Houston. Eddie decided he needed to add a "Robinson" to the shingle at The Gorsuch House. The restaurant became Eddie and Brooks Robinson's Gorsuch House in 1962. Brooks bought 24% of the business, and Orioles controller Joe Hamper bought 24%.

This arrangement lasted until 1969, when Eddie, who was then living in Atlanta, sold his share. Brooks would remain owner for the Orioles' halcyon days of 1969 through 1971.

In 1972, Brooks was out. The only problem was that the guy who bought the restaurant was indicted in a federal probe for accepting payoffs while he was with the Baltimore City Police. Eventually it all worked out and Brooks found an upstanding citizen to replace the tainted one.

Eddie Robinson, like most baseball players of his era, always needed to find employment for the winter months. Some of the jobs he held included:

- Athletic director for Beth Tfiloh Community Center and School, coaching the boys high school basketball team and conducting an exercise program for women in the synagogue.
- Salesman for Katz Jewelers (where he met his first wife)
- Schenley Whiskey brand representative (a job also held by Art Donovan during his off-season).

## References

Robinson, Eddie and Rogers, C. Paul. *Lucky Me: My Sixty-Five Years in Baseball*. Southern Methodist University Press, University Park, Texas, 2011.

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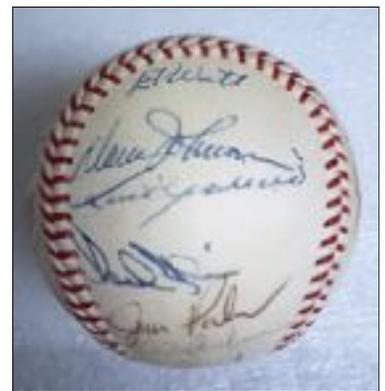
## Autograph ► From Page 1

Then there's the size of a baseball: "The signable surface area of a baseball is relatively small due to the stitching. A single signature on the sweet spot is easier than signing anywhere else on the ball," he says.

"Team signed baseballs require very tiny print."

He can attest to that. The museum has a tradition of presenting retiring employees and volunteers with a ball autographed by their colleagues. Herne says he was surprised how difficult it was the first time he tried it.

The museum's collection covers many decades, generations of players, and a decline in legibility, especially over the past 10 years or so. He points out that on older balls



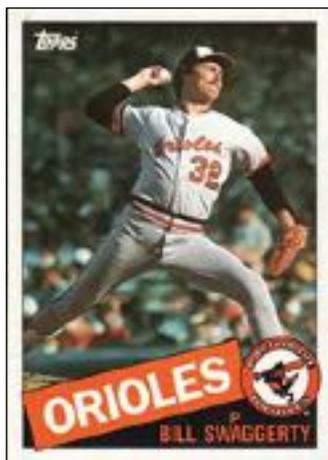
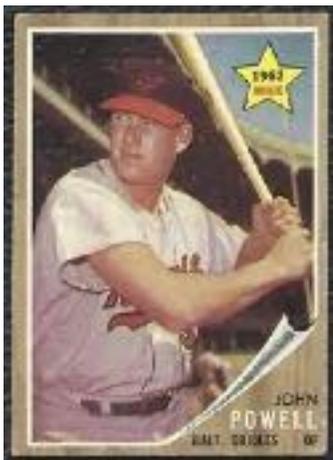
1967 Orioles team ball. Note how Eddie Watt signed "Ed Watt" to make it fit. (Babe Ruth Birthplace)

Autograph ► Continued on Page 9

## Autograph ▶ From Page 8

“you can read [Cal] Ripken and [Jim] Palmer” but now “you can’t read them.”

Now we’ll go to a couple of experts from the old (legible) school, former Orioles Bill Swaggerty and Boog Powell.



Boog Powell (left) on his 1962 rookie card and Bill Swaggerty on his 1985 rookie card.

Both sign right-handed (Swaggerty was a right-handed pitcher; Powell was a right-handed first baseman who batted left).

Swaggerty, who pitched for the Orioles from 1983 to 1986, echoes Herne on legibility.

“When I was in rookie ball, we used to sit and work on crazy wild signatures for when we made it to the big leagues,” he recalls. “But I was signing next to Cal Ripken in Double A ball in Charlotte in the Southern League and he asked me whose signature was this and it was mine. He told me if you are going to take the time to sign your name you might as well make it so the person will know who it is a month from now. From that point on, my autograph was always legible. A lesson learned.”

Swaggerty and Powell grew up in Florida when the only major-league baseball there was spring training, but neither was an autograph collector.

“I never had an autographed ball before my career,” says Swaggerty. “I also never attended a spring training game until I attended my very own.”

Powell, though, got a gem: “The only autograph I got when I was a kid was Stan Musial at a spring training game in Lakeland,” says Powell, who grew up in Lakeland.

Powell’s first full season was 1962 with the Orioles; he was 20, but his first autograph request came eight years earlier. It still puzzles him: “I couldn’t understand why someone would want to mess up a perfectly good ball by writing on it.”

However, it is something he’s been asked to do many times over the years, and he admits it did not come natu-

rally. “[The first time] wasn’t too bad, a little awkward.” Does it get any easier with experience? “Still working on it.”

Swaggerty’s take: “It was tougher than I thought. It’s round, for gosh sakes!” He adds: “I don’t think it’s a skill, but you need to take your time or it will not be legible. I never asked for a tip; I figured it out pretty quick.”

Powell was John Powell on his 1962 rookie card, but Boog Powell on the 1963 card. He says his signature, though, “went from Boog to John Boog.” As for dealing signing a team ball, at any point in the process, he says he can make his signature fit any space.

His pro tip for a tool of the trade? “Ballpoints are best for balls,” he says. “Sharpies bleed. The best overall pen is a Staedtler fine point.”

His first request came quickly. “I first remember signing a ball in rookie ball in the Appalachian League in 1979. I thought it was pretty cool to sign my first ball. I do not remember signing baseballs in Little League or high school.”

Swaggerty enjoyed it. “I attended a lot of signings in Baltimore. I never turned one down. I liked seeing the kids and fans who wanted to meet a professional baseball player.”

Fans are still looking for autographs, even from the long-retired.

Powell, the American League MVP in 1970 and a four-time All-Star, is familiar to younger fans as the proprietor of Boog’s BBQ at Oriole Park, and the autograph requests continue. He’s happy to oblige, but collectors can bug him. “I can tell when a collector is asking,” he says. “Most of them are OK; some are a pain in the rear. They are just looking to turn a buck.”

On the other hand, Swaggerty appeared in 32 games in four major-league seasons and was out of baseball by 1989. He’s surprised by the attention he receives.

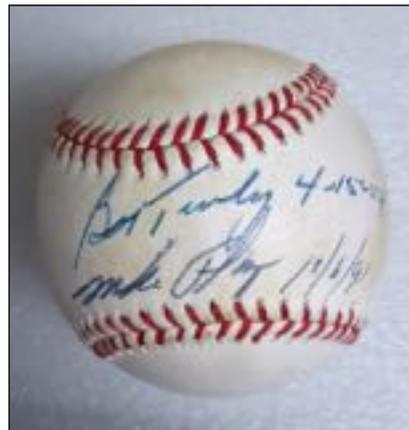
“It never ceases to amaze me how they find us. I moved to Florida two years ago and I had fan mail in one month” he says. “I get about two, three letters a month as a common average player. I bet my buddies like Cal, Eddie [Murray], [Rick] Dempsey, and Palmer get 200 a month!”

### Sources

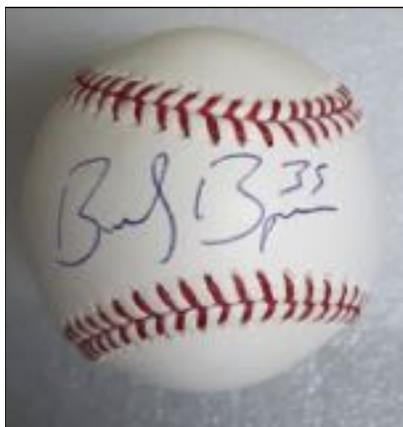
Shawn Herne, email correspondence with author, July 30, 2021; telephone interview with author, July 30, 2021.

Boog Powell, email correspondence with author, February 24, 2021.

Bill Swaggerty, email correspondence with author, April 29, 2021.



Bob Turley made the first pitch at Memorial Stadium in 1954 and Mike Flanagan made the last in 1991. They teamed up on this baseball in the Babe Ruth Birthplace collection, both signatures easily recognizable.



Shawn Herne says he has no idea who signed this ball from the Babe Ruth Birthplace’s collection. He says many balls from the past 10 years are difficult to decipher.

## Fun Fact

Did you know that twice in Babe Ruth’s career he personally hit more home runs than every other team in the American League? 1920 and 1927

## President ▶ From Page 1

Columbia as well as parts of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware and even North Carolina and Tennessee.

I'm pleased to report that that same geographical designation now includes the following healthy, functioning chapters, listed with their central cities:

- ◉ The Bob Davids Chapter  
Washington, D.C.
- ◉ The Baltimore/Babe Ruth Chapter  
Baltimore
- ◉ The Matheson-Plank Chapter  
Harrisburg, Pa.
- ◉ The Bud Metheny/Virginia Eastern Shore Chapter  
Norfolk, Va.
- ◉ The Williamsport Chapter  
Williamsport, Pa.
- ◉ East Tennessee Chapter  
Knoxville
- ◉ The Carolina Chapter  
Durham, N.C.

This remarkable mitosis shows the strength of SABR in this area, and it might not be complete. Discussions about forming chapters in Richmond, Va., Maryland's Eastern Shore, Annapolis, Md., and West Virginia continue to take place. SABR only requires four members to apply for forming a chapter, so who knows?

Chapters exist to enhance the SABR experience for members and prospective members alike. As we enter our seventh year of operation, we want to acknowledge the effort of all those who help make the Baltimore/Babe Ruth Chapter meaningful to our members. We also congratulate all new chapters as they form. It seems like we're headed toward stable maturity.



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## Barrow ▶ From Page 5

Ed Barrow guided the Red Sox to the world championship in 1918.

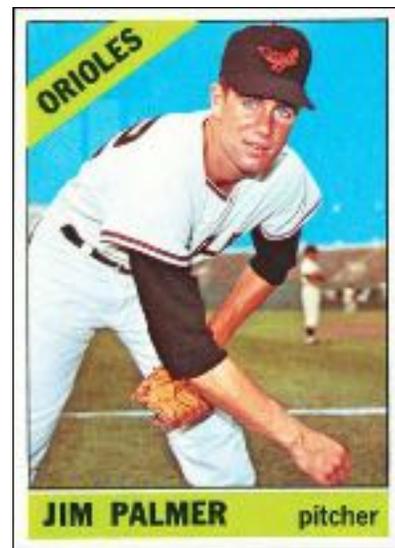
Playing the outfield regularly for the Red Sox in 1919, Ruth led the major leagues with 29 home runs, a record that broke the mark of 25 by John Buck Freeman of Washington (National League, 1899), and he scored 103 runs. However, even with Ruth's impressive numbers, Boston finished in sixth place and then fifth in 1920.

The off-season brought Barrow more disappointment. Needing cash for his theatrical shows and to pay notes due on the ballclub, Harry Frazee, the Red Sox owner, sold Ruth to the New York Yankees for \$100,000 and a personal loan of \$350,000 from Jacob Ruppert, one of the Yankee co-owners. Frazee put up Fenway Park, the home of the Red Sox, as security for the loan. Barrow disagreed with Frazee's decision to sell Ruth. Soon Barrow and Babe Ruth would be reunited.

*(To be continued ... in the Fall issue)*

## Palmer ▶ From Page 3

entry which featured the just-turned 18-year-old starting pitcher Jim Palmer smashing a three-run double and his Aberdeen teammate Lou Piniella as the Oriole center fielder and Tony LaRussa as the Kansas City second baseman. At the end of the season, Palmer had a 4-2 record with a 2.89 ERA (fourth best on the team) for the third-place Orioles. He was still experiencing control problems with a 1.679 WHIP resulting mainly from 60 walks in 53 innings. The Orioles, however, showed their faith in him by first acquiring his contract from Rochester, their triple-A affiliate, in October 1964 and then signing him to an Orioles contract in February 1965.



Jim Palmer's rookie card (1966 Topps)

When spring training started in 1965, Palmer was competing for a spot on the Orioles with another "first-year player", Steve Caria. Both were right-handed pitchers over 6 feet tall, born two days apart in October 1945, and signed by the Orioles to substantial bonuses one day apart in August 1963. The two were friends, with their friendship going all the way back to the 1961 Babe Ruth world championship game, when Caria bested Palmer, 4-1. Because of one of the restrictions springing from the various drafts of the period instituted to discourage large bonuses, with only one exemption first-year players put on the 40-man roster had to remain with the major-league club all season. As reported in *The Baltimore Sun*, at the start of spring training both manager Hank Bauer and Oriole scouts were leaning to keeping Palmer because he was bigger, threw harder and was "more likely to throw strikes in the majors", although as *The Sun* pointed out "there's nothing in the records to support their contention." In 1964 Caria was 9-7 with 105 walks and 195 strikeouts in 154 innings with Class A Appleton and then 5-2 with a 2.65 ERA with 49 strikeouts and 38 walks in 51 innings as Palmer's teammate in the Florida Instructional League. Palmer soon ended the competition by pitching seven scoreless innings over several appearances before giving up a run on March 31. By then Caria was no longer in camp and would end up pitching for the Orioles Class AA affiliate in 1965 (he was out of professional baseball by 1968). At this point, the name being most often linked to Palmer's was that of Wally Bunker, who, as a 19-year-old, had been a first-year player in 1964 and ended up going 19-5 with a 2.69 ERA. However, the 19-year-old Palmer did not reach those first-year heights, as he was used as a part-time starter (six starts) and reliever (one save), finishing with a 5-4 record with a 3.72 ERA in 92 innings with 75 strikeouts and just 56 walks.

Besides his debut against Boston, Palmer's most memorable game that first season was the Orioles' 7-5 win May 16, 1965 against the Yankees when he picked up his first major-league victory, hurling  $3\frac{2}{3}$  innings in relief of Dave McNally, and hit the first of his three big-league home runs, a two-run shot off Jim Bouton in the fourth (do the names Babe Ruth or Shohei Ohtani come to mind? probably not).