

B I N G D E V I N E

This conversation between Bing Devine and Walter Langford is being taped in Bing's home in St. Louis on December 9, 1987.

BD: I was born in Overland, MO. At that time it was out in the country. Now it's a part of greater St. Louis. I wasn't really brought up on a farm, but we lived in a house which was one of just a few in an area of several miles. That was 1916.

I had great aspirations to become a ball player. I played in the old Trolley League here. At that time semipro ball was big in the StL area. A lot of major leaguers came out of semipro ball - Terry Moore was about as good an example as there is. In the Trolley League a team that was well known through the midwest was the Belleville Stags. That was one of quite a few teams I played on. We played several ^{evenings} ~~nights~~ a week. I also played at University City High School for a coach named George Thompson, and likewise at Washington University.

When I came out of there I made contact in an unusual way with the baseball Cardinals. I went to a tryout at old Sportsman's Park and was hired to be an office boy and a runner around the ball park, still thinking I could play ball. Ray Blades was the manager in 1939-40 . I asked him if I could work out with the team. He let me do it and eventually I became one of his primary batting practice pitchers, throwing to some of the great Cardinal hitters, Joe Medwick being one of them.

Looking back on things, I realize you have a completely different aspect of things when you're young and when you're older, because in those days we pitched batting practice without any screens. So you were out there and a great target for some of the hitters. ~~was~~ some of whom liked to hit the ball

back through the box to see if they could hit you. And now that I look at it and see the screens, in fact, I pitched later just for the fun of it with screens, and I wonder how I stood out there with nothing in front of me. Then I went out and played one year of minor league baseball in Johnson City, TN. That's where I met my wife, incidentally.

The game I played the best was basketball. I was a fine basketball player, if I do say so myself. I wasn't unusually tall, yet I was pretty tall for those days. I played for Washington University and then played AAU ball around the city, and we went to several Denver tournaments, which was the big climax of basketball season before the days of pro ball.

We played basketball and football at WU. At that time Jim Conzelman was the coach and athletic director. He was developing quite an outstanding football program, but it eventually died/after Conzelman left because the administration didn't want ~~like~~ ~~just~~ that kind of program. They played Notre Dame in football and we played ND in basketball. In fact, I didn't play in high school and when I went to WU the coach who gave me a chance to play was Hudson Helmick, who had been a fine athlete at the U. of Illinois. He gave me a chance to start as a sophomore. In church league and AAU I never had played in organized ball before a big crowd. The first game of that sort I ever played was when I started against Notre Dame out at the old fieldhouse. As I think back now, I was scared to death.

Between then and when I became associated with the Cardinals in administration, I played baseball one year and discovered the scouts were right. It wasn't going to be much of a career. But they kept me in the organization. At that time the major league teams owned their own minor league clubs. They supplied both the players and the administrative personnel. Not many at the lower levels, just a business manager and a concessions manager, that was it. I became the business manager (today the general manager) of clubs at Fresno, CA and Decatur, IL. That was in the early '40s, and then I went into the service and served three years in the Navy. When I came back out, I immediately went back into the Cardinal organization at Columbus, GA. I was

general manager there for two years. It was a Class A league - the Sally League, and then I went from Columbus to St. Louis, as a matter of fact.

Sam Breadon, who still owned the team, brought me into STL to be a kind of ambassador of goodwill, I guess. I don't remember what title they bestowed on me. I was sent on a quick trip during the off-season to establish better rapport with their minor league clubs. I went to Pocatello, Idaho, Fresno, CA, Sacramento, CA - four or five places. When I came back into Union Station (everybody still traveled by train at that time), ~~picked up~~ ^{caught} a cab to go home. On the way I ~~The driver~~ picked up a newspaper and started to read it, and the headline said, "Sam Breadon Close to Selling Cardinals." Now there was a question of who was going to own the team. Breadon did sell the team to Bob Hannegan and Fred Saigh, and Hannegan kept me on as his public relations director.

After a year in that job I was sent to Rochester, NY as general manager. About the time that happened, Fred Saigh bought out Hannegan and owned the club by himself. He talked to me and wanted me to stay in St Louis and work for him. I told him that I really looked forward to operating a club at the top minor league level. I said, "We've already announced it and I've made preliminary trip up there, and I'd like to stay with ~~that~~ that." So I went to Rochester as general manager and stayed there for six years, 1949-54.

Dick Meyer, who was Mr. Busch's right hand man at the brewery at that time, had taken a liking to me at Rochester and asked me to come to StL and work for him as a sort of assistant general manager. He had been doing that job and wanted to move back to the brewery. I think they had in mind that I was to take over as GM immediately, but at that time Mr. Busch ran into somebody who recommended Frank Lane. Busch hired Lane as GM and Lane kept me as his assistant. When Lane left after two years to go to Cleveland, Mr. Busch appointed me to be the general manager, late in 1957.

The way I worked my way up to the top as an administrator was about like a ball player working his way up through the minor leagues. At that time they

used to have Class D, C, B, and A leagues. Now they only have Class A, in addition to AA and Triple A. Ball players advanced gradually from D to the majors in about five years or so. Whether that was better for them or not is questionable, because in those days there was very little instruction in the minors. They got their experience by doing rather than by learning.

1926 is the first year I remember very much about baseball, when the Cardinals won the pennant and the Series. My dad ^{was} a great baseball fan and sports fan, as well as quite an athlete in his day. In those days you had to be a Cardinal fan or a Brown fan, and my father was the former. There were lots of Brown fans, but not too many of them ever showed up at the ball park. So I became a Cardinal fan too. I do remember some of the things about that 1926 season.

So I became the Cardinals' GM late in '57, and they didn't win the pennant again until 1964. Mr. Busch became frustrated in August ^{'64} about not having won for so long, and he decided to make a change. He fired me in August and six weeks later the Cards won the pennant and the World Series. At that time it was quite a story in the press. The famous Brock trade was just one I had made in putting the team together. Another player I had acquired and who had a lot to do with the Cards winning was a pitcher I'd gotten from the Cubs and had in the minors until about mid-season. He was Barney Schultz, the knuckleball pitcher.

WL: I would guess that there aren't many trades that are better known and more lopsided than the Brock for Broglio deal.

BD: Probably not. It was 6-player trade, incidentally. It wasn't a well-accepted trade publicly, and particularly in the media. Broglio had won 20-some games for us before. And there's always been the accusation or suspicion in the press that I knew Broglio had something wrong with him when I traded him, which was absolutely not true.

Johnny Keane was the manager then and had been my manager at Rochester. We worked well together and ~~had discussed~~ and trusted each other, respected each other. We had talked about Brock during the off-season after the '63 campaign. The Cubs said they were ^{not} ~~definitely~~ going to get rid of Brock. We sort of forgot about it, although he was one of the players on our want list. Just before the trading deadline in '64, John Holland, then GM of the Cubs, called me and said, "Well, we're in desperate straits. We need a pitcher and you've always been interested in Brock, so we might be willing to make a trade of outfielder Brock for a pitcher." I said, "Well, it depends on what pitcher you're talking about." HE said, "I guess we'd take Broglio. We might ^{want} to enlarge the deal, but we'd take Broglio."

We were on a West Coast trip, and I was in Dodger Stadium where we were playing an afternoon game. After the game we were leaving for Houston. After the game Keane and I got together on the plane. I told him that during the game I had some time free and got on the phone with John Holland, because it was getting close to the trading deadline. That meant a lot in those days, though it doesn't mean much anymore, for you can make a trade almost any time during the year now. We had been playing badly, especially that day in Dodger Stadium, and Keane was down about it, morose and not wanting to talk too much. I said to him, "We need to talk. We have a chance to make a deal, and between here and Houston we have to discuss it and see what you want to do." I told him what the deal was, and I remember distinctly his reply was, "What're we waiting for?" So I said, "Well, I guess we don't have much to talk about, after all." Now what do we do? We have to wait until the plane gets to Houston. We didn't get there until late. So, I waited until the next morning and called John Holland and we put the deal together.

WL: Did Broglio's sore arm show up as soon as he got to Chicago, or was there a lapse?

BD: I think almost immediately there was something. He didn't appear to

them to be the same pitcher that they thought he was, although he had been starting regularly for us. He was one of our best pitchers. It wasn't anything that was immediate, but it was something that began to creep into the picture. You know, there's something wrong, he's not the pitcher he used to be. And he wasn't old. He was a young pitcher.

WL: So, after '64 you went with the Mets?

BD: I was with the Mets in '65, '66, and '67. In fact, I was president of the Mets in 1967. We were putting together the team that, surprisingly to everybody, including the baseball people in New York, won the pennant and World Series in 1969. Nobody expected it to happen that soon.

WL: You certainly had to bring in ~~some~~ ^{a lot} of those players.

BD: Well, one of the most important ones was Seaver. I had a definite hand in bringing him to the Mets. And I had a deal made when I left to come back to St. Louis. Dick Meyer, always a great supporter of mine, needed a general manager, because Musial, who had been GM while I was gone and had seen the Cards win it all in '67, decided that was a good time to bow out. Musial was one to always make a proper decision and he thought that was the time to go out. He didn't really want to do that job. Meyer suggested to Busch that I might like to come back, since my family was ~~here~~ ^{fore'} still. I had commuted from here and never moved. I hadn't planned to leave the Mets. I expected to stay there a long time. But when I got the opportunity to come back here, I didn't have a contract with the Mets. The Cards had the Mets' permission to talk to me.

I came back here in '68. We won the pennant and had the World Series almost won, three games to one, but lost the last three games. Then in '69 the Mets came on to win. The other player, as I left the Mets, I had a deal made with Eddie Stanky, then the manager of the White Sox, for Tommie Agee. When I left New York I told Stanky - it was just before the baseball meetings, "We've agreed on this deal, but confidentially I'm going to leave the Mets and go back to the Cardinals. I'd like to have you delay this deal and let the new man for the Mets

make the decision as to whether he wants to go through with it. He agreed to that but asked how long he would have to wait. I told him, "This is all going to happen within the next week." And he said they'd wait that long. When I turned everything over to John Murphy in New York, I told him the decision was his to make. He already knew about the trade and went ahead with it. Another player the Mets got in the deal was Al Weis, who was not a bad-looking infielder.

WL: So, when you back here in '68 the Cardinals won the pennant again and seemed to have the Series in hand. In fact, you were still tied in the 7th game until about the 8th inning.

BD: Yeah, it was a tie game and then Flood kind of misjudged a ball - slipped, really. Slipped as he tried to go back on the ball in the outfield. The pictures show it. The ball went over his head and drove in the winning run.

BD: Also, we could have won the Series 4 games to one. We had a good lead in the 5th game in Detroit and in the 5th inning could have scored some more, but Brock came into the plate and was out when he didn't slide. Then they came back late in the game and won it.

WL: Now, after taking over again as GM in '68, how long did you stay?

BD: Through '78. Very few people remember what you almost did, but in '73-'74 ^{our division} ~~we missed winning the pennant~~ on the last day of each season.

I don't know whether any other team has had that bad an experience for years in succession. The last deal I made before I left in '78, with another interesting angle, was the George Hendrick deal ^{with the San Diego Padres.} For Eric Rasmussen. As it turned out it was quite one-sided. Hendrick was a productive player. The only problem with Hendrick ~~with~~ - which I didn't consider a problem as far as acquiring a ball player that could help you - was the fact that he didn't talk to the media. The media didn't particularly like him. But after he came here and produced, they stopped worrying about it and ^{writing} about it so much. But the interesting thing is that in '78 Mr. Busch made the decision at that time to get rid of me. Actually, he did offer to me to stay at that point as a

consultant, and I'd never liked the term consultant, and so I said, "No, I'd just as soon go out and see what I can do elsewhere." Would you fulfill my contract?" He said yes, and so I left. I had already gone to the baseball meetings, and this happened right after those meetings. I came back with a deal that I thought could be made. You never really know until you actually make a deal.

Buzzie Bavasi, who was with the Angels at the time, talked to me about a deal where we would give up Garry Templeton for Frank Tanana and Dickie Thon. I came back to talk with Mr. Busch about the deal. Soon after I got back Mr. Busch called me down to the brewery before we had a chance to discuss deals. So I called Bavasi and told him I was out and somebody else was going to take over, so everything was on hold. ~~There's~~ There's an interesting thing about that. I told Ozzie Smith at a dinner the other night, "You don't know about this, but let me tell you about it." Which I did. And the interesting thing about it is that if we had made that deal, Smith would never have been a Cardinal, for they wouldn't have had Templeton to trade to San Diego. And Dickie Thon wouldn't have been at Houston and wouldn't have been hit in the head.

WL: Now, after that, what were you doing?

BD: In '78 I went with the San Francisco Giants as a sort of special assistant to the general manager and did mostly player evaluation, both in and out of their organization. In the middle of the '88 season, Bill Bidwill, owner of the football Cardinals, called me and asked to make a date with me. We had known each other but never spent much time together. He needed someone to take over as vice president for administration and public relations. He wanted to know if I was interested in coming back to St. Louis in that capacity. I was travelling a great deal for San Francisco, which I didn't mind, but my family had remained here in St. Louis. So I took that job and stayed with the football Cardinals for a couple of years.

Then, John McHalze of the Montreal Expos, ^{called} ~~with whom~~ I had ~~been~~ turned down

offer from him a job/some years before while I was still GM of the Cards. He had gotten permission from the Cards to talk with me, and he wanted to bring me to Montreal as the GM under him on a 5-year contract. I rejected it on the theory that I would have to move my family. This time, in '81, he wanted someone to run their minor league organization, and so I did that for a season.

At that point Bidwill came back to me and said, "Well, I've just lost my GM." The term GM in football doesn't mean the same thing as a baseball GM, because Bidwill is an on-the-scene everyday operator, but he wanted to bring me in as president of the organization. I took it and kept that position from the middle of '82 through '85.

WL: Now that you're into indoor soccer, you're an all-sports man.

BD: I've made almost all of them. I played basketball, which was probably the game I played best. But we don't have an NBA team here in St. Louis.

WL: Has the concept of GM in the majors undergone much change in the last decade or two?

BD: Extremely so. Going back to my early days as GM, (and really about the first half of my last tour with the Cardinals), a GM really did every-
and
thing. He was responsible not only for the team on the field ~~but also~~ for the signing and development of players, but he also ~~was~~ actively directed the marketing and the public relations and the entire operation. He was really a chief operating officer. Mr. Busch was the chief executive officer. And that's definitely changed. There are very few GMs who pursue all those duties any more. And it's logical, because the whole thing has become so complex and complicated, particularly the player contracts. The collective bargaining agreement has changed the whole picture. And in St. Louis in the late '70s I really, by my own choice, suggested to Mr. Busch that we begin to make that kind of a transition. And Schobert Schoen (?) took over as vice president of administration. It was a transition because he depended on me quite a bit while he was developing the administrative side of the operation.

I was trying to concentrate on the player side. Now that has happened to most GMS in most organizations since.

WL: Do you feel a former major leaguer can make a good GM?

BD: I don't think there's any reason he can't make one. I don't think that just because he was a former player, whether he was a star or what, would automatically make him a good GM.

WL: There are several who have done it of late - Maxvill, Rosen ...

BD: And Dallas Green. Who is not in that post right at the moment, but he will probably be back some place. And Jim Frey, just recently.

WL: What do you think about the rise of the Giants under Craig and Rosen?

BD: Well, I think it's obviously dramatic after a number of years when nothing seemed to work. Craig has obviously done a good job, and he's certainly an expert with pitchers. I've known Rosen for years, and they obviously have done a good job. There's no question that it's pretty tough to repat, and the big reason is that there's nobody dominant. You don't have any great clubs any more. Talk about the old Dodgers, the old Yankees, maybe the old Cardinals...

WL: Or the Reds of the '70s.

BD: They just don't happen, and the rules have changed enough to make it impossible to put together a so-called dynasty. I was always interested in that term dynasty. People like to say, as they did three years ago, the Tigers are a dyaasty. A dynasty, as I see it, or as I read history, a dynasty is a dynasty after it's over. You can look back and say it was a dynasty. You can't predict dynasties.

WL: I guess free agency has made it harder for a team to keep its set lineup ywar after year, which you could do in the old days.

BD; Yeah, all the rules have moved in that direction, and all of it revolves around the collective bargaining agreement. Arbitration. When they talk about the increase in salaries they talk about free agency, but the real truth of the

matter is that arbitration may have as much to do with it as free agency.

WL: All the old players I talk with have certain definite opinions. Almost every one of them is against the DH. But a few, and Marty Marion is one, say "I like the DH."

BD: I think the biggest thing about the DH is not whether you care if there's another hitter in the lineup but whether you if the pitchers can't hit, and so it's a dead spot in the lineup. I think it's an interesting question, and I don't care. I'll tell you the truth, I could live with either one of them. But the biggest difference is that you don't have the same strategy on the part of the manager. Do I pinch hit? Do I bunt? What do I do? And the real truth is that what the fans really enjoy about baseball is that it's all out there in the open where you can see it. And you don't really have to be an expert to think you're an expert. You can sit in the stands and figure what you(d do if you were the manager. Why did he do that? And I think the more things you can give the fans to become in effect a part manager on their own, the better off you are. They become participants.

WL: Well, I don't think it can go on forever with one league using the DH and the other without it. What do you think about expansion?

BD: Oh, it's going to happen. They been saying it for several years. I would guess that by the passage of time it should be closer than it was 5 or 10 years ago. I think it'll happen in the next two or three years. I think probably when they set it up they'll do it on a timetable basis, much like the NBA has, where they expand to certain cities and give them two or three years to get their act together.

WL: Would you think the next expansion logically would see the NL adding 2 teams?

BD: Well, logically, but the AL might not agree with that. The AL might decide to go its own route, and if there are some "plums" out there in certain cities the AL might decide it doesn't want to get left along the wayside. Now whether the Commissioner can completely control that or not, I don't know. Logically,

as you say, the NL ought to expand to get to 14 teams, but then you're going to have the NL having that same unbalanced schedule that the AL has. There have even been rumors that they'll go ahead and expand to 16 teams. Then they could have a balanced schedule again. If they were to do that, I'd say they will certainly have to it on a staggered basis.

WL: Somebody recently proposed that they go to 16 teams in each league and create four leagues of 8 teams each. And make them more geographically compact and thus save enormous sums on travel.

BD: There's no doubt that makes sense.

WL: And the rivalries between the Cubs and White Sox and Milwaukee

BD: And Kansas City and St. Louis. There's no doubt that's the right way to go, but getting enough people to vote for it as the right way is something I don't think will happen.

WL: I worry that even if it's 10 years before they go to 16 teams per league, they will water down the quality of play in the major leagues when they do.

BD: Well, the quality of play in the majors has probably already been watered down, and now it'll be watered down some more. But the attendance is greater all the time. And the parity is closer. There are still some have-nots and some haves, but there's no big dominance, as I see it. And the truth of the matter is, I don't think the fans care that much. They're interested in the stars, the glamour, and when you get below those suprstars, or maybe even the stars, the players who are average or journeymen, they are part of what the fans see as their team. The fans don't have to live in the city they root for, it's the team they follow, and TV has made that more common. I just don't think quality is a key factor. It'll happen, it'll be watered down, and I don't think the fans care. The fan may even say, "Yeah, it's not the same quality it used to be." But then he'll go out to the games and root and get excited and get happy or angry, whichever the case is with what his team does.

WL: Do you agree that expansion up to this point made less impact on quality

because of the influx of blacks and Hispanics at about that time?

BD: That's no doubt true.

WL: Any special thoughts about being a general manager?

BD: Well, I guess the most memorable thoughts are that I was fortunate in having been born in the community, brought up in the community, ~~enjoyed~~ played sports in the community, and eventually became general manager of the team in the community that I had rooted for all my life. That's unusual. I learned to transfer my abilities, whatever they may have been, and my loyalties when I went with the Mets and to San Francisco and to Montreal. I could do that and live with it, although when I think back, I was happy to return to St. Louis. But I'm going to tell you honestly that the happiest six years of my life were the ones I spent in Rochester, New York. Six years as the GM of a Triple A team, which was even more important then than it is now. Rochester was not only a fine community, despite its bad winters, but also a great baseball town. And they had great baseball memories, just like a major league city. They remembered things that happened back in the Little World Series, they remembered their stars, and we drew 500,000 people up there in 1949, my first year there. We were in the playoffs every year and won the Little World Series one year. Our children were growing up at that time, so we had children of all ages and in different schools, and ~~they~~ it was so easy to become a part of the community. Somehow those years were the happiest I've had, even though they weren't as meaningful or as important or as satisfying from the remuneration standpoint.

WL: Any other GMs you particularly admired?

BD: Well, Bavasi. Sometimes he was an ~~ass~~ actor. He'd put on a little act in what he was doing, but he was always honest, straightforward, and he'd do what he said he'd do. I'll tell you one I had great rapport with. He was a maverick, no question about that. He was Charlie Finley. I think he contributed a great deal to baseball. I dealt with Charlie Finley a lot,

and in those days you could agree a lot more to things that weren't written. I mean now it's become more closely checked out. Everything's in the contract, you can't make all these agreements about a player to be named later. A lot of people criticized Charlie Finley. Every deal I had with Finley, he did everything he said he would.

WL: He was ahead of his time in a lot of the ideas he proposed, which later became a standard part of the game. Night games in the World Series, for example.

How about your friend that you replaced - Frank Lane?

BD: I learned a great deal from Frank Lane. He taught me, from working with him, that you don't worry if you make a bad deal, forget about it. About like a ball player has to forget about a bad day. A ball player learns this when he plays 162 games in a season. Which makes baseball so much different from all other sports, because you play every day. Lane would make a deal and it didn't worry him one minute if the deal didn't work out. In fact, he felt it was like having an auto crash. You need to get back behind the wheel as soon as you can, so it won't affect your emotions. I think Frank did make some deals just to be making and I tried not to do that, a deal, but he did ~~teach~~ teach me that you don't worry about making a bad deal. If you make enough deals, you're going to make some bad deals. And if you don't make any deals, you'll never make a good deal, either. I have the feeling that if I hadn't been with Frank Lane for two years, I might have been almost a conservative, timid GM. But having been with him for a couple of years, I found out I wasn't that way. You have to take your chances and do what you do. I think I tried to make deals with a lot more input from my people. I think Frank tended to jump out and make trades all on his own.

I'm going to tell you an interesting story about Frank Lane that won't have anything to do with what you're writing. ^{Dick}~~Steve~~ Meyer was the liaison man; he was president of Anheuser Busch, under Mr. Busch ~~was~~ who was the chief executive officer ^{as} and chairman. Dick was my liaison with Anheuser Busch. When you couldn't get to Mr. Busch you could get to Dick, and he'd either

give you the answer or get you the answer. That was very important. I don't think Frank Lane completely fit what Dick Meyer thought the GM should be. But they got along and Dick worked it out with him. I remember a night when - and you'll remember the deal - Frank and Dick and I were out at the ball game in old Sportman's Park, and Frank was talking and trying to convince everybody, maybe including himself, that a deal he wanted to make was a good deal. It was Bill Virdon to Pittsburgh for Dick Littlefield and Bobby Del Greco. Remember that one?

WL: I do.

BD: And one of the aspects of the deal he kept talking about during the course of the evening, during the game and afterwards, was that Virdon's got problems with his eyes. He can't see well, he won't be able to see pretty soon. I don't think Frank was adverse to making deals where he ~~was~~ thought he was putting something over on somebody. I never thought I could do that or wanted to do it. I don't think he was right, incidentally. Virdon did have bad eyesight, but it didn't affect his hitting - before, then, or later. As we left the ball park, Lane had talked all evening and I had had my input, little as it was. I was Frank's assistant and trying to be loyal, accordingly. We arrived at the door of the office and Dick Meyer said, "Well, I'm going to my car and I'm going home." Frank said, "What about this deal?" Frank didn't like it, but in theory Busch had to approve deals like that. Dick said, "Look, if you like the deal as much as you obviously like it, I'm not going to stand in your way. But let me talk to Mr. Busch in the morning and tell him what you want to do and make sure he at least know about it before you do it." So we all left. At seven o'clock in the morning, in this very house in the back room, the phone's ringing. I picked up the phone and it was Dick Meyer, who was an earlier riser than I was. Dick said, "I guess I've awakened you, but I have to ask you a question. What went on at the ball park last night when we parted. What was said? What did I say?" I told him, "Well, my memory is you told Frank, 'If you want to make the deal, I

don't know if I like it, but I'm not going to stand in your way. You're the GM. Let me talk to Mr. Busch about and let him know and give him a chance to say anything if he wants to." Dick said, "That's what I what I said. You haven't had the radio on yet, but turn on your radio, because that deal has been made. It's already announced."

WL: In his first years with the Padres, Trader Jack McKeon was a little bit like Trader Lane. He was closing a deal every five minutes.

BD: I'll tell you another thing. That kind of person is pretty smart. Frank was smart. The Cardinals had been down. They hadn't been winning for several years of the brewery ownership, and Lane knew he couldn't be worse and he might be better. Just like the deal Frey made for the Cubs with Lee Smith. Lee's quite a pitcher, but the Cubs haven't been doing anything, so what have they got to lose? Those are ideal situations under which to trade. You can't lose. You go ahead, kind of shuffle the cards. In the first place, on any deal you make you gotta be lucky. Nobody's all that smart about a human being. If you make enough deals that make sense, some of them you're going to get lucky and they're going to be good. Maybe one~~2xx~~ you didn't think was the best will turrrn out to be really good. And some time you get on a hot streak, like Al Rosen and Sid Thrift during the '87 season. The test for them come now, after you get ~~to~~ be pretty good and you need to do something to get better.

have always

I'll tell you another fellow I/admired, and a lot of people don't. If I worked for him I might have a prob~~lem~~, I don't know, but I don't think I would. It's George Steinbrenner. I happen to like George.

WL: He's got his points. In my book he's a little like Finley. He's his own man and he takes control of the situation.

BD: They both owned their team. The real truth of the matter is that when they own the team they can do what they want. And I'm going to tell you the truth, and there's no doubt in my mind, there are a lot of owners down through the years that people thought didn't care. But I've never seen an owner who didn't want to win.

He may go about winning in a different way from what you think you would or he should, but he really wants to win, particularly if he's never won. He wants that World Series ring on his finger. He wants to be looked upon as better than his peers, and anybody that thinks those people don't care, that's not true. The owners are a different breed now from the time when I started, but then corporations and executives in general have changed.

WL: Well, you've certainly put together a career that was not dull.

BD: That's true. I learned how to make deals from Frank Lane, and I learned how to live with all those things. You do the best you can and make the moves you think are good. If they work, fine, but if they don't you look in other directions for something else. That's the story of my career when you look at it: From St. Louis to New York to St. Louis to San Francisco to Montreal to the football Cardinals to the Steamers.

WL: How did you get the name "Bing"?

BD: I had an aunt that lived with us when I was in Overland as a very young child, and they say she called me a "Binger." Because I threw everything and made a lot of noise, and so she referred to me as Binger, and that was later contracted to Bing. When I went to University City High School, I didn't bring along the nickname Bing. I didn't tell people that was my nickname. My name was Vaughan - like Arky Vaughan - it was a family name, and that's what everybody called me. When I went to Washington U. and got in sports and every once in a while my name would appear, there was a sports writer on the old Star-Times by the name of Ray Gillespie, and one time he had a headline that read something like Vaughan Devine Scores 20 Points. He said to me then, "Don't you have another name?" That name just doesn't fit." I said, "Well, I was known as Bing Devine." And from then on it was Bing. My mother wasn't altogether happy with us. Incidentally, she's still alive at 104 plus.

Let me tell you about how we got Seaver for the Mets. They set up a plan whereby there would be a pool. Every club willing to pay Seaver for the same

for
sum he had already signed a contract/with the Braves would go into this drawing. And they had to be willing to accept that figure - about 40-50 thousand dollars. That's nothing now but was pretty big then.

I had brought a scout with me to the Mets from the Cards named Nelson Berbrink (?) from the West Coast who liked Seaver immensely. I went to George after Berbrink came with us, and I said, "Look. Berbrink likes this pitcher and we'd like to go into this drawing. It'll cost us \$50,000, and I'd like your approval. He said, "\$50,000 for a free agent pitcher? Let me see the reports on him." I went and got Berbrink's reports, the one he put in with the Cards and the one he made after he came to the Mets, just a difference of 6 months.

He said, "Look here. Six months ago Nelson wrote a report for the Cards saying he would give Seaver \$15,000; six months later he writes another report and says he'd give him \$35,000. How can he change that much in that short time? And now you want to give him \$50,000. I can't approve that." Well, we debated it back and forth for about ten days. I said to myself that this was a case where I'd have to go to Don Grant. Finally, at the last minute, George said, "All right, go ahead and put our name in." I believe he thought there would be enough clubs in the drawing that we wouldn't get him anyway. Actually, only three clubs went into the drawing for Tom Seaver - Baltimore, Cleveland, and the Mets. We got a call from Lee McPhail, then deputy Commissioner, and he said, "You've got the rights to Seaver." Now I'll tell you the final act. I called Nelson on the West Coast and said, "We've got Tom Seaver. Go on up to Fresno, get together with him, and sign him to a Mets contract." A day later he calls me and said they want more money. I told him I couldn't go back to George Weiss, and asked what he thought we ought to do. He said, "I've got a little idea from talking with him. I think the big problem is that Seaver does not want to go down and pitch at the lower level. He wants to go and pitch Triple A ball. If I tell him we'll sign him to a Jacksonville contract and guarantee we'll pitch him at Jacksonville (out Triple A club), I think we can get him." I

said, "Go on back and do it. What difference does it make? We're not that good anywhere." So he went back and got Seaver on that basis. The interesting thing is, if you look at the record book, Seaver was a pretty good pitcher at Jacksonville. He probably could have pitched right away with the Mets. That's one the cases where you were lucky, you just did what you had to do.

WL: Did they bring in Koosman at that same time?

BD: Yeah, Jerry Koosman is another story. Joe McDonald was my assistant, the farm director. We had a fellow named Jerry Koosman who had borrowed some money from us, about \$600. Joe McDonald came to me and said, "Koosman owes us \$600 and we want to release him." Koosman was then at Allentown or somewhere, and Joe said the people there didn't like him and we wanted to release him. But any time I release a player, George gets mad at me if he owes us money and we have to write it off. He said, "I'd like to keep Koosman until we get the money out of his salary in the next six weeks or so, and then I don't have to tell George we released this player who owed us money." I said, "Fine, go ahead and do it and we won't say anything to anybody." And that's how we kept Koosman and how he came to the big leagues. We were going to release him. Stories of that kind prove that nobody is all that smart. There are two of the main pitchers with the Mets when they won their pennant in '69 and chances are neither one of them would have been with them if you had followed your normal course of action.

Did

WL: How about Nolan Ryan? ~~Was~~ you have anything to do with him?

BD: I was involved in that. I was double-checking the top-level free agents for the Mets. I think George was happy to have me get out of his hair and go traveling around the country to see ball players. So I said, "One of the things I'll do, since we're trying to acquire talent, is get the reports of all the scouts and then go out and see each of the scout's top players. The scout can compare players in his own territory. I'll be able to compare them all over. So I went out on this trip and one of the places I went was Texas. Red Murff

was the scout and he had seen Nolan Ryan. I went out on a gray day in the spring. Red picked me up at the airport and drove me out to the field. It was a dirt, skinned field at a country high school, and here's Nolan Ryan. Red's really building him up. "Boy, wait until you see this guy pitch." Ryan went out that day and, not only did his team make errors, but bad high school playwrs were facing Ryan and making contact with the ball. It was a bad game and Ryan was bad. Murff was pretty near in tears, because he was extremely jealous of his scouting reports on players. He said, "Oh, geez, I feel terrible. How could anything like this happen? The one day you get in here this guy's bad. I know I can't draft him now." I asked, "Why not?" Red replied, "Well, I can imagine the report you'll put in." I said, "Look, I'm smart enough to have already found out that nobody knows everything, and one game doesn't tell it all. You've seen Ryan over a period of time and you like him. You go ahead and put in your report exactly the way you want to. I can't put in a report verifying it, but I won't negate it either. I'll let it go on the basis of what you say." Now we still didn't draft Ryan high; he wasn't drafted until about the 5th round. Again it shows how much everybody can be off the mark. Ryan and I, when he was here last winter, talked about this story. I happened to run into him in the hotel. Now I'll tell you one on the other side of the ledger.

Whatever year it was, '65 or '66, one of my first two years with the Mets, one of the players I saw on my trips traveling around with the scouts was, of all people, Reggie Jackson, playing for Arizona State. And he was obviously good, if not great. I continued on my trip and went to the west coast and saw a catcher on a small high school team 50 miles north of Los Angeles by the name of Steve Chilcott. We had no catcher coming up in our organization. We even took Casey Stengel with us during the day up to see this high school catcher. Well, Chilcott got about seven hits in the doubleheader, and when we left Casey, in his inimitable voice, said something like, "Well, seven for seven, how can you not like him?" Who's bad at seven for seven?" So, the

end of this whole thing is that we had the first draft ~~in~~ of all the major league teams (because we had been so bad) and we drafted Chilcott instead of Reggie Jackson. Jackson was the second player drafted.

People often ask me, "Who was the best free agent as a free agent that you ever saw?" And I'll tell you who it was: Rick Monday. And a lot of the guys I saw, the guy that wound up signing them was Charlie Finley. Monday, Jackson, Bando, Vida Blue. Charlie didn't have a big organization, he didn't need it. He didn't overload his organization with people or salaries. Charlie would pick everybody's brain. He'd call all around the country and talk. I knew what he was doing, but I didn't mind, I enjoyed it. He'd say, "What does your report show on So-and-So?" Well, he put all these comments together, but he was smart enough not to let anyone overpower him, and he would come up with the right answer lot of times, even if he wasn't a scout at all. He probably did more with less than anybody I've ever known.

The best manager I ever spent day to day with was Johnny Keane. But when he went to the Yankees, he was out of his element. He had been an organization man, in the minor leagues for the Cardinals, he really was a Cardinal man. And when he got into another organization with other personalities and people oriented in another direction, he just didn't adjust. I'll tell you another thing, the Yankees were just over the hill, they were going downhill at that point. So he got there just at the wrong time. The players respected Keane. I don't think they rejected or resented him. But he just didn't fit. And before he had to get started over somewhere else and regain his standing, he had that attack and died.

The fellow I think knew the most about baseball overall, particularly on the field and evaluating talent, was Eddie Stanky. The unfortunate thing about Eddie is that he couldn't be that smart and let things happen. He kind of had to go overboard. It was overkill in a sense. He really knew so much and knew he knew so much that he couldn't contain himself. He couldn't find the middle ground,

where he could say, "I know this but I can't force it on the person. I'll have to let ~~him find out~~ it ride until he finds out about it." When he later took over as manager of the Texas Rangers and quit after one day, he knew he just didn't fit any more. When I got to the office the next morning, my secretary said, "You had an urgent call from Eddie Stanky." He said he was traveling but would call you from the next stop he made." I thought, "What does he mean? He's with the Rangers in Minnesota." Within a couple of hours he called me from somewhere else and said, "I've left." And then I read the story afterwards.

WL: And you surely think Whitey is a pretty good manager, too.

BD: At a dinner for Herzog some months ago, I said, "There are only two managers I can think of who, by the very nature of their background and their success and their personality, kind of intimidated other clubs and other players: Casey Stengel and Whitey Herzog. ~~Not only~~ The important thing is, not only does Whitey intimidate them to the point that the other players think the chances are he's going to do something that will turn the tide, not only that but they respect and like him at the same time. You'll notice that the players traded away from the Cardinals, even if the circumstances were a little touchy, never want to say anything against Herzog, because they know everybody will want to know why they are saying something about Whitey, who always does things right. They think they'll look bad saying something about him.

The first deal I ever made was the Curt Flood deal. Very ~~first~~ deal. Went to Colorado Springs for the major league meetings. Gabe Paul and Birdie Tebbetts of the Reds and Fred Hutchinson and myself got together and started talking about a deal. They wanted some pitching, and toward the end of the meeting Gabe said, "You're my last chance. We're going to sit down and talk about a deal tonight." We missed the final dinner and went up to Gabe's suite and started talking. They got to the point where we were going to put three pitchers in the deal - Willard Schmidt, Marty ~~Katzen~~ ^{Katzen} (✓), and Ted Wiant. And the guy they brought up was Curt Flood, who had never played in the big leagues. (?)

We went into separate rooms ~~and~~ after several hours and Hutchinson said to me, "Let me tell you something. Make this deal. I've heard enough about Curt Flood that I know ^{he's} ~~en's~~ going to help and he's worth taking a chance. Even if he's not ready to play in the big leagues yet." So I said okay, but I was scared, I'll admit, for this was my first deal. Dick Meyer was with us at the end, kind of listening. He was a great executive and knew ^{how} ~~not~~ to let you do your thing, but he could give advice. He said, "Well, you know, if Hutchinson likes him that much and we need to make a deal, then go ahead." We got Joe Taylor thrown in on the deal, which was virtually nothing. Well, you know what Flood became. Pretty good for a first deal. Hard to beat, except for the Brock deal.