

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



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Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

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Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke
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Last time in this space, I mentioned that we had enough interest to proceed with a SABR BioProject book on the 1919 White Sox. Six months later, I'm pleased to report that our project is progressing nicely.

We set a tentative deadline of May 2012 for new biography submissions, but several new bios have already been turned in and I'm told a few more drafts should be completed soon. We're in great shape so far.

Here's where we stand now:

- ◆ 18 bios are ready to go, including all "Eight Men Out"; Hall of Famers Red Faber, Ray Schalk and Eddie Collins; owner Charles Comiskey; manager Kid Gleason; and even the mascot, Eddie Bennett.

- ◆ 4 have been submitted and are in the editing process: Joe Jenkins, Harvey McClellan, Win Noyes and Dave Danforth.

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Joe Jenkins was the Chicago White Sox's bullpen catcher during the 1919 World Series. But in October 1919, his older brother, William Oscar Jenkins, made bigger headlines — the U.S. consular agent in Puebla, Mexico, was kidnapped by revolutionary rebels and held for ransom, setting off an international incident between the two countries. William Jenkins would later go on to make a fortune in the sugar-producing and film/cinema industries, and *Time* magazine would call him "the richest man in Mexico." Read more about him on page 3. (Photo: Chicago Daily News negatives collection, SDN-061832, courtesy of Chicago History Museum.)

A Black Sox issue of 'Base Ball'

By Bill Lamb
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The Spring 2012 issue of *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, will be devoted entirely to Black Sox scholarship, with several members of this committee contributing articles.

The issue will not recycle arguments about the World Series play of Joe Jackson, the fairness

of Buck Weaver's banishment from the game, or other staples of scandal commentary.

Rather, the authors endeavor to deepen understanding of the Black Sox affair by investigation of scandal-related events that have largely escaped the notice of Black Sox aficionados.

Or they attempt to set the historical record straight via dispassionate

exposition and analysis of scandal events poorly covered in the Black Sox canon.

To provide a sneak peak at the issue, an article on a 1917 Fenway Park gamblers riot will acquaint readers with a little-known but illuminating incident that reflects the lengths that the era's betting forces were prepared to go

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Hey, college boy!

By Jacob Pomrenke
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I recently read an article on Bill Werber in which he said the 1927 Yankees had ostracized him because he was a collegian. It got me to wondering about the well-known cliques between the educated and uneducated players on the 1919 Chicago White Sox — not unusual for that era, by any means. Here's a tentative list of the education levels attained by those players. Most of these schools were found in the SABR BioProject essays on the individual players:

College/University

- ◆ E. Collins: Columbia University, New York (graduated)
- ◆ Danforth: Baylor University, Texas
- ◆ Faber: St. Joseph's, Iowa; now Loras College
- ◆ Mayer: Georgia Tech
- ◆ Murphy: Villanova University, Pennsylvania
- ◆ Noyes: Nebraska Wesleyan U; Northwestern U, Illinois
- ◆ Ragan: Cornell College, Iowa
- ◆ Robertson: Austin College, Texas
- ◆ Shellenback: Santa Clara U, Hollywood JC, California

High School

- ◆ McClellan: Cynthia HS, Kentucky (graduated)
- ◆ *McMullin**: Los Angeles HS, California (graduated)
- ◆ Sullivan: St. Rita High School, Chicago (graduated)
- ◆ Jenkins: Battle Ground Academy, Tennessee (unknown)
- ◆ *Gandil**: Oakland High School, California (2 yrs)
- ◆ Schalk: Litchfield High School, Illinois (2 yrs)

Grade School or below

- ◆ *Cicotte**: left school by age 16; may have attended HS?
- ◆ Kerr: was playing in Northeast Arkansas League by age 16, so likely did not attend/complete high school.
- ◆ Russell: left home at 15 for railroad work
- ◆ Benz: worked for family butcher business
- ◆ *Williams**: likely did not attend high school
- ◆ *Felsch**: quit after sixth grade
- ◆ *Weaver**: quit in grade school
- ◆ *Risberg**: quit after third grade
- ◆ *Jackson**: never attended school; working by age 7

Missing

- ◆ J. Collins, James, Leibold, Lynn, Lowdermilk, McGuire, Wilkinson.

* Asterisk notes the Black Sox players.

► 'BASE BALL'

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influence the outcome of important games, while incisive analysis of MLB payroll records should finally resolve the question of whether or not the 1919 Sox were underpaid.

The corruption exposed in the 1919 Pacific Coast League and its instructive lessons to Commissioner Landis receive extensive consideration in the issue.

Another article presents a provocative and highly original thesis regarding the 1919 regular season performance of Lefty Williams and Happy Felsch.

But the article getting the most space — doubtless because the guest editor wrote it — is a comprehensive account with analysis of the judicial proceedings (grand jury, criminal trial, and civil litigation) spawned by the outcome of the 1919 World Series, matters inaccurately portrayed

and only dimly understood in Black Sox literature. And lest the arts be neglected, the issue also presents an expert's review of the engaging John Sayles film *Eight Men Out*.

Whether confirmed in their opinions about scandal-related controversies or not, readers of the Spring 2012 issue of *Base Ball* will most assuredly be better informed — for the issue is chock-full of information that will come as news to even the most dedicated Black Sox enthusiast.

The issue should be coming out sometime in late Spring and can be pre-ordered at the standard \$20 price from McFarland at 800-253-2187 or mcfarlandpub.com. I hope that you will consider getting it.

Bill Lamb is the Guest Editor for the Spring 2012 issue of *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game* (published by McFarland & Co.)

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Here's a Mexican standoff — Black Sox style

By **Jacob Pomrenke**
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If someone were to ask about Mexico's most significant connection to the Black Sox scandal, the answer they'd probably get is that "Sleepy" Bill Burns — the pitcher-turned-gambler who helped fix the 1919 World Series — was tracked down by Ban Johnson's detectives somewhere near the Texas-Mexico border and agreed to become the prosecution's star witness in the conspiracy trial in Chicago.

But there's another connection to Mexico worth noting, and it involves the White Sox's third-string catcher in 1919, Joe Jenkins.

Just a week after Jenkins and the White Sox lost the World Series in October 1919, his older brother, William Oscar Jenkins, a prominent businessman in the Puebla region of Mexico and a U.S. consular agent there, was kidnapped by revolutionary rebels, setting off an international furor between the two countries that would stain William Jenkins' reputation for the rest of his life.

The Jenkins boys were originally from Shelbyville, Tennessee. In 1901, when Joe was 10, William and wife Mary left for Aguascalientes, Mexico — and never returned. They were dead broke, but William found a job as a railway mechanic for 50 cents a day. By the end of the decade, he had raised enough money to go into the cotton hosiery business and became a significant textiles entrepreneur in Puebla, southeast of Mexico City.

Meanwhile, back home in Tennessee, Joe was asserting himself as a multisport star at Battle Ground

Academy and soon signed his first professional baseball contract, with Rome (Georgia) of the Southeastern League. He gained a reputation as a better hitter than fielder, and made it to the major leagues with the St. Louis Browns in 1914. After he was sent back down to the minors for more seasoning, Joe's contract was purchased by the White Sox in 1916. Stuck behind future Hall of Famer Ray Schalk and backup Byrd Lynn, Joe served mostly as the team's bullpen catcher the following year as Chicago went on to win the World Series.



William Jenkins

The Mexican Revolution was well under way by this time, and William Jenkins was profiting from it. He had become one of the most powerful figures in Mexico. On October 19, 1919 — one week after Joe and the White Sox wrapped up a World Series that would lead to baseball's greatest scandal — William Jenkins was kidnapped by Zapatista rebels at his mill in Puebla. He was held in captivity until October 26, before a \$300,000 ransom was paid to the rebels and he was released safely.

Rumors immediately circulated, possibly spread by the embarrassed Mexican government, that William had been given as much as half of the ransom money by his captors. In November, President Venustiano Carranza's administration had Jenkins arrested and charged with staging his own kidnapping. According to [Millsaps College professor Andrew Paxman](#), who is writing a biography of William Jenkins, the accusation was borne largely from political fear-mongering and xenophobic stereotypes against the *yanqui* businessman.

But the arrest of a U.S. consular

agent in Mexico greatly increased tensions between the two countries, a relationship already in poor shape after General John "Black Jack" Pershing's failed expedition across the border to capture Pancho Villa a few years earlier. Senator Albert Fall of New Mexico called for a Senate resolution breaking off relations between the two countries, and tensions remained high for some months after Jenkins was cleared of all charges.

Suspicious about how William Jenkins made his fortune dogged him for the rest of his life. He bought up the best sugar-producing land in the Matamoros Valley and later held a virtual monopoly on the country's movie theaters. By 1960, a few years before his death, *Time magazine* called him "the richest man in Mexico."

Joe Jenkins, whose major league career ended after 1919, continued to play another decade in the minors (mostly in the Pacific Coast League). All the while, he maintained good relations with his famous and controversial brother in Mexico.

When the Depression left Joe unable to find steady work in the Los Angeles area he called home, William asked him to move north to Hanford to help their sister and ailing father on the family's struggling fruit ranch. Joe and his wife, Fay, stayed in Northern California for 40 years.

William Jenkins, who died in 1963, is still remembered today for the Mary Street Jenkins Foundation he founded in the 1950s and named for his late wife. It continues to fund hospitals, universities and other philanthropic causes in Mexico.

Joe Jenkins, who didn't even have bragging rights within his own family for front-page headlines in October 1919, died at age 83 in 1974.

Tugging on Superman's cape: A critique of Carney

"Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up Of The 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded",
by Gene Carney
Potomac Books, 2006

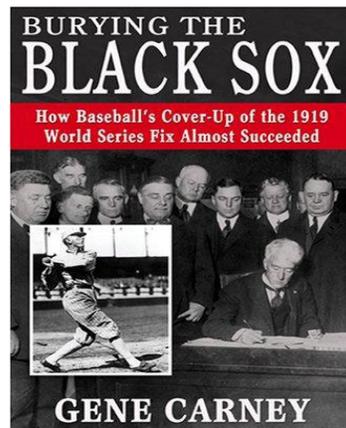
By Irv Goldfarb
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I cannot claim to have known Gene Carney all that long or, honestly, all that well. My closest association with Gene came when I was writing my Charles Comiskey bio for *Deadball Stars of the AL*. After we had traded e-mails, Gene commented that someone should write a 'dual biography'—a work that detailed the lives of Comiskey and Ban Johnson featuring alternating chapters for each legend. I thought it was a great idea and told him I was ready when he was.

He laughed and said that one day when he had more time he would seriously think about it. Unfortunately for Gene, time ran out.

I bought "Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded" about a year after Gene won the Ritter Award for it and he signed it for me that same afternoon.

But since my 'to-read' pile is now higher than my bedroom ceiling, I am embarrassed to admit that I still had not gotten to it at the time of his death. Last



year, however, brought me the perfect opportunity: SABR 40 in Atlanta included a long bus ride to the Joe Jackson museum in Greenville, South Carolina; what better way to spend five hours on a luxury bus than by settling down with Gene Carney's crowning achievement? I started reading the book that day and finished it earlier this year.

I understand that this book has perhaps received more accolades, professional and otherwise, than any book produced by a SABR member in recent memory; I'm also aware that Gene Carney, at least as far as I know, housed more information within his active mind about the Black Sox Scandal than anyone in the country.

But as they say about great players who try to become managers: It's hard to tell people how to play the game when it all comes so naturally to begin with. To me, Gene was like one of those great players: He knew his subject matter inside-out but sometimes, as in the case

of "Burying the Black Sox", he had a harder time clearly expressing it to his audience.

OK, let me try and explain: I believe that any good book on history has to start at the beginning; in other words, an author can't assume that his or her reader knows anything about the subject matter to start.

But oftentimes when listening to Gene talk about the Scandal, or when reading his always-anticipated "Notes From the Shadows of Cooperstown," it always seemed like he was speaking to someone whose knowledge was, if not on a par with his, at least greater than the average baseball fan's. Alas, in my case it really was not and perhaps that was my failing.

However, when reading a book about a historical subject, I believe the burden is on the author to provide all pertinent information and not to assume that the reader knows any of it coming in. I'm not sure "Burying the Black Sox" accomplishes that.

A good example of this comes in Chapter 1: Its title is "The Trial that Nobody Noticed" and it opens with the Milwaukee trial of 1924, the one which dealt with Joe Jackson's suit against the White Sox for fraudulently signing him to his final contract. This trial appeared to be a pet area of Gene's Black Sox research, and though an important tribu-

tary of the Scandal, for me it's a curious place to start. It is a secondary lawsuit (not to mention one that took place almost three years after the main Black Sox trial) and one that doesn't seem, save for some of the revelations that came out of it, crucial enough to actually open a narrative with its details.

Of course I'm familiar with the device in which a writer begins a story at a future point and 'flashes back' to the central plot, but it felt really jarring to open with such a relatively unknown event.

More importantly, this 1924 trial is treated as if the reader is already familiar with the Jackson lawsuit, but previously I (and other readers, I'm sure), really was not. It truly was "The Trial That Nobody Noticed" and seems a puzzling place to begin this epic.

Happily, the second chapter "The World Series of 1919" starts with a breakdown of the eight-game series and takes us painstakingly through the tale. But once again, the journey gets a mite confusing, the narrative jumping in time from one trial to the other; from pre-Series questions of how much Comiskey knew in advance, to which gamblers met with Ban Johnson once the Series was over. I could almost hear Gene speaking, as he'd rummage through his

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► GOLDFARB

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vast knowledge of the case, jumping from one point that fascinated him to another.

A book, however, needs a little more structure.

Though the chapters are titled ‘chronologically’ (3. “The Cover-Up”; 4. “Joe Jackson’s Role”; 5. “It Comes Undone”, etc.), parts of the story are repeated, or introduced later in a different context.

For instance, Chapter 3 contains a section sub-titled “Dueling Investigations” which delves into Comiskey’s and Ban Johnson’s separate attempts at “getting to the bottom” of the Scandal; this passage includes quotes from Abe Attell, among other gamblers who were allegedly involved.

However, in Chapter 5, a section titled “Johnson Ensures a Trial” brings us additional quotes from the gamblers, including Billy Maharg and ‘Sleepy’ Bill Burns and then moves directly into “The Plan to Kidnap Abe Attell”.

This sent me scurrying back to Chapter 3, trying to recall where I had previously read quotes from these very important characters and made me wonder why these sections weren’t presented closer together to weave a tighter story.

There are problems with the footnotes as well: Many times Gene has referenced a

“The journey (through 'Burying the Black Sox') gets a mite confusing. ... I could almost hear Gene speaking, as he'd rummage through his vast knowledge of the case, jumping from one point that fascinated him to another. A book, however, needs a little more structure.”

fact or person within a footnote before it’s actually mentioned in the body of the book.

An example comes in Chapter 3: A footnote tied to page 51 describes “Gedeon” meeting with the alleged fixers, with no explanation of who Gedeon is. The character’s introduction doesn’t come until the following page, where, in the body of the text, Gene tells us that Joe Gedeon was a second baseman for the St. Louis Browns. I found this to happen a number of times. (To make matters even more confusing, Chapter 5 contains two footnote number 50s! This really had my head spinning—which footnote 50 goes with the text? And does this mean that footnote 51 goes with the ‘second’ 50 designation, and that they all move down one number for the remainder of the chapter?? For someone like me, head already spinning, this was not helpful...)

I realize that the blame for much of this falls directly on the editor. That aside, I always believed Gene to be a cleaner storyteller than this.

Actually, “Burying the

Black Sox” is almost divided into two separate books.

At the conclusion of Chapter 6, Gene admits to the intricate puzzle that the Black Sox Scandal has become, and in an eerily prescient moment, seems to be passing the torch of BSS research on to the next generation of historians.

And starting with Chapter 7, he gives us capsule bios of many of the key pieces of the drama, from the White Sox players, to the writers, to the gamblers allegedly involved.

Personally, I would have thought it a better idea to give us this information first as a way to introduce the characters, to sketch out their personalities, to lay some groundwork: Joe Jackson’s small-town background; the Comiskey-Johnson feud; the St. Louis gambling connection, etc. With these back stories in place, the reader would know all the moving parts beforehand and the tale could almost tell itself.

Unfortunately, the structure of “Burying the Black Sox” does not allow for this.

Naturally, the book has its high points, as one would

expect: The final two chapters delve into every juicy sidebar imaginable, including descriptions of little-known Black Sox documentaries produced over the years; a bio of “Eight Men Out” pioneer Eliot Asinof; and speculation as to why Game 7 in Cincinnati (with the Reds on the verge of clinching), drew less than half the fans who showed up for Game 6! (An incredibly enticing tidbit...)

And I always appreciated the fact that Gene was one of the few Black Sox researchers who continued to stress the importance of *Collyer’s Eye*, the contemporary sports gambling newspaper, in bringing the Scandal to light.

I believe Gene believed that without this paper the 1919 World Series Scandal may have never been discovered. I think he appreciated a rule that fans of every sport should keep in mind: If you can gamble on it, you can corrupt it.

Gene Carney was a brilliant researcher who set the stage for every historian who is now studying, or who ever will study, this fascinating case. He was creative, relentless, and a heck of a pleasant guy.

But like the Hall-of-Fame player who can’t express to those of us less talented how to play the game, “Burying the Black Sox” suggests that storytelling may have been his one weakness.

Fortunately for us, his many strengths still enlightened us all.

Examining the Gene P. Carney Collection

By Jacob Pomrenke
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It was because of your generous donations in the fall of 2010 that Gene Carney's collection of Black Sox research files and baseball books found a permanent home at the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library. In addition to having the collection of about a dozen boxes shipped from the Carney home in Utica, New York, to Greenville, South Carolina, our committee also donated more than \$800 to the museum (an institutional member of SABR.)

On June 18, 2011, we dedicated the Gene P. Carney Library Collection during the museum's third anniversary celebration, which also included the unveiling of a South Carolina state historical marker and the premiere of the "Shoeless Joe Cookbook."

Joining us were Gene's daughter, Mary Carney; Joe Anders, a friend of Jackson's and a pallbearer at his funeral; author Thomas K. Perry; Cornell "Old Corn" Blakely, a former Negro Leagues player; and Greenville mayor Knox White.

Anders, a friend of Jackson's late in the latter's life, spoke about the slugger's impact on him as a boy growing up in Greenville.

"I spent a lot of time with Joe — not at his liquor store, but next door (at his



About 30 guests gather in front of the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library on June 18, 2011, in Greenville, South Carolina. The museum was celebrating its third anniversary with an event that included the unveiling of a South Carolina state historical marker, the dedication of the Gene P. Carney Library Collection, the premiere of the "Shoeless Joe Cookbook" and more. (Photo courtesy of Tracy Greer)

house). It was a hangout for teenagers," said Anders, 90, who played for the Greenville Spinners in the 1940s. "Joe was ... one of the most generous people you'd ever want to meet. Our relationship grew stronger as time went on. Joe was my mentor, a great man."

Cornell "Old Corn" Blakely, a former Negro Leagues player and long-time manager of WKMG, a rhythm-and-blues radio station based in Newberry, South Carolina, also talked about his career in baseball and the music industry, rubbing shoulders with everyone from sports legends such as Jackson and Satchel Paige to Motown greats Percy Sledge and Sam Cooke.

The day after the ceremony, I was invited by Arlene Marcle, the museum's cura-

tor and driving force, to go through Gene's collection of Black Sox papers.

My wife, Tracy Greer, and I spent a Sunday afternoon inside Joe's house listening to the sounds of the Greenville Drive game across the street as we went through Gene's notes.

The highlight of the collection, to me, were Gene's notes on Joe Jackson's 1924 back-pay trial in Milwaukee, the subject of his opening chapter in "Burying the Black Sox." In 2003, Gene was one of the rare researchers to gain access to the 1,696-page trial transcripts, and the collection in Greenville includes his detailed notes from the depositions of Joe Jackson; Kate Jackson; Lefty Williams; Happy Felsch; Charles Comiskey; Hugh Fullerton; Billy

Maharg; Harry Grabiner; Alfred Austrian and more. Gene took another trip there in 2006 and brought back a number of *Milwaukee Journal* articles in his file, along with many of his own questions whenever he stumbled upon a curious line or statement in a story. Gene's questions often provided as much insight as his answers.

Other gems from the Carney collection include obscure or important articles that shine new light on the scandal, such as the syndicated 1956 columns by Westbrook Pegler on the World Series, or later recollections on the scandal from catcher Joe Jenkins, batboy Harold Kenney and writers James T. Farrell and Jimmy Isaminger. The White Sox player contract cards

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► CHAIRMAN

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◆ 11 players have been assigned and are being worked on.

◆ 1 player is still left to be assigned, and believe it or not, he's one of the more well-known reserves on the roster: "**Honest**" **Eddie Murphy**.

Murphy was along for the ride with some fascinating teams — first on the champion Philadelphia A's, Connie Mack's fire sale that sent him to the White Sox for two more AL pennants, tearing up American Association pitchers for five years in his mid-30s, then wrapping up his career with a contending Pirates team that featured several Hall of Famers. If you'd like to write up his life story, e-mail me at buckweaver@gmail.com.

I'm also starting to solicit essays on the Sox to go along with the biographies. One good suggestion, from Steve Steinberg, was an analysis of all the injured/retired/unavailable pitchers (Faber, Danforth, Russell, Scott, Benz, Quinn) the White Sox could have used instead of leaning so heavily on Cicotte and Williams. Are there any other angles about the 1919 Sox you think haven't been explored yet? We definitely will want to publish an essay or two on the gamblers, the fix, the scandal, that side of things.

Or if you'd like to volunteer to write an overview or breakdown of the White

Sox's regular season, the World Series, the aftermath or the team's legacy, I'm interested in hearing from you. Many intriguing story-lines we could cover here ...

James T. Farrell papers

Last month, I received a phone call out of the blue from SABR member Kevin Farrell, who happens to be the son of the great Chicago writer, James T. Farrell. Farrell, of course, was good friends with many of the old White Sox players, including Buck Weaver and Ray Schalk. Kevin and I spent some time talking baseball and he decided to join this committee, so welcome aboard! He also informed me that his father's papers are housed at the [University of Pennsylvania's Rare Book and Manuscript Library](#), including some uncatalogued baseball-related correspondence.

It could make an interesting Black Sox-related research trip if you're attending the 43rd annual SABR convention in 2013, which conveniently happens to be scheduled for Philadelphia.

That's a long way off, of course, but I'll be glad to organize such a trip sometime during convention week if anyone wants to check out the Farrell papers with me. Can't hurt to make plans early!

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, contact chairman Jacob Pomrenke at buckweaver@gmail.com.

2011 GENE CARNEY AWARD WINNER



Thomas Debraggio, left, is the 2011 recipient of the Gene Carney Award, presented annually by SABR's Clinton High School Chapter to a graduating senior who has completed significant research. According to Principal Richard D. Hunt, right, Debraggio is a passionate Yankees fan. He has participated in numerous baseball research projects and given a presentation at the Utica-Cooperstown Cliff Kachline Chapter meeting in Cooperstown. Debraggio advocated for Thurman Munson's induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. In April, Debraggio helped the Clinton High School Chapter raise more than \$700 during its 10th annual spring fundraiser to support ALS research. For the last five years, the Clinton High School SABR Chapter has honored graduating seniors who have performed outstanding work. Each student receives a commemorative baseball bat and a \$200 award. Carney, who died in July 2009, was a mentor and adviser to the chapter and provided materials and assistance for student research. (Photo courtesy of Richard D. Hunt)

► COLLECTION

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can be viewed in Gene's files, along with detective reports from J.R. Hunter, who was hired by Charles Comiskey to investigate the eight players after the 1919 World Series. (Gene wrote about these detective reports in a posthumous article published in the [Fall 2009 Baseball Research Journal](#).) There are also

plenty of articles related to the Ban Johnson-Charles Comiskey feud that Gene was so interested in. In addition to the research files, Gene's family also donated almost a dozen boxes of baseball books to add to the museum's collection.

Arlene and Joanna Beasley have written up a research guide with a list of contents of Gene's collection, and I'll be glad to send that to anyone interested at buckweaver@gmail.com.