

THROUGH THE LENS OF BASEBALL



IWBC/ SABR WOMEN IN BASEBALL CONFERENCE 2023



5th Annual Conference
September 29-October 1, 2023

Hosted by
Rockford University

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Welcome to the Fifth Women in Baseball Conference

Welcome to the Fifth Annual Women in Baseball Conference! And thank you for joining us as the IWBC and SABR sponsor another exciting conference focused on women in and around baseball.

This joint venture began when members of both organizations asked, “Where is the women in baseball conference? There is a conference focused on about every other part of baseball, what about women?” There wasn’t one of course so the Society of American Baseball Research and the International Women’s Baseball Center teamed up to create one.

Now, in its fifth year the Women in Baseball Conference has become a staple on the yearly baseball conference schedule. Each year the Conference focuses on a different aspect of baseball and this year, “Through the Lens of Baseball” highlights the varied and various roles of women in baseball media. Through art, writing, photography, or on-air reporting, women provide images and stories that enrich our understanding and appreciation of the game. Using a mix of fun, film, creativity, and scholarship we will celebrate their contributions and honor the courage of those who took the first steps into the literal and metaphorical locker rooms of baseball.

The Conference is hosted by Rockford University. We thank them and you for continuing to support the efforts of SABR and the IWBC as we endeavor to preserve and honor the long history of women in baseball.

Kat Williams, CEO, International Women’s Baseball Center



WIBC Attendees:

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the fifth annual SABR / IWBC Women in Baseball Conference. This event is a grassroots celebration of both the history and future of the women who have and will continue to shape our great game. Throughout the weekend you will be treated to a collection of entertaining and informative speakers and research presenters committed to expanding the legacy of women in baseball.

SABR is grateful to the IWBC for its continued partnership in presenting this conference; it truly would not exist without the leadership of Kat Williams and Leslie Heaphy and the rest of the IWBC Board of Directors. We are also thankful for the support of Rockford University as the institution continues to provide a base of operations for our virtual environment. Finally, I want to thank the conference planning committee for their work to plan a top-notch event: Catherine Forslund, Catherine Headley, Leslie Heaphy, Jessica Smyth, Mary Weeks-Baxter, Kat Williams, and Marlene Vogelsang.

If you're already a SABR member, thanks so much for joining us! If you're not, we're glad you're here, too! If you enjoy yourself this weekend, I hope you'll consider joining our organization as we continue to pursue our vision to become the essential community for the world of baseball.

Yours in baseball,

Scott Bush
SABR CEO



To All Conference Attendees:

On behalf of the entire Rockford University community, I want to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you attending the SABR and IWBC 5th Annual Women in Baseball Conference.

As we gather for this event, participating in the many panels and presentations, let us do so with a profound sense of purpose to preserve the memory of the trailblazing athletes, coaches and advocates who have shaped the history of women's baseball. This year's conference theme, "Through the Lens of Baseball" allows attendees to explore a wide range of topics from the rich heritage of women's baseball to the innovative strategies that will drive its future growth and success.

Throughout history, women have faced numerous challenges and barriers in their pursuit of excellence in baseball. Yet, their unwavering passion, determination, and talent have shattered those barriers and paved the way for future generations. Let us remember that we are not only celebrating a sport, but also the remarkable women who have transformed it. One of those remarkable women was my godmother, Aldine (Calacurcio) Thomas. It is my sincere hope that this conference will help to expand the historically important work of the IWBC, as well as inspire all of us to work towards a future where women in baseball continue to thrive, breaking records and inspiring generations to come!

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have worked so hard to make this conference a reality – from the organizers and sponsors to the passionate individuals who have dedicated their lives to women's baseball. May the coming days be filled with inspiration, collaboration, and a shared commitment to the bright future of women's baseball.

With warmest regards –

Patty Lynott





Become a SABR member today!

If you're interested in baseball — reading about it, talking about it, writing about it — there's a place for you in the **Society for American Baseball Research**.

SABR members include everyone from academics to professional sportswriters to amateur historians and statisticians to students and casual fans who merely enjoy reading about baseball history and gathering online or in person with other members to talk baseball. Memberships are available on annual, multi-year, or monthly subscription basis.

We hope you'll join the most passionate international community of baseball fans!

Check us out online at SABR.org/join

SABR Membership Benefits

- ◆ Receive two issues (spring and fall) of the Baseball Research Journal, our flagship publication
- ◆ Receive expanded e-book edition of The National Pastime, our annual convention journal
- ◆ Over 95 e-books published by the SABR Digital Library, FREE to all members
- ◆ "This Week in SABR" e-newsletter, sent every Friday
- ◆ Regional chapter meetings - both virtual and in-person - which can include guest speakers, presentations, and trips to ballgames
- ◆ Participate in research committees and online discussion groups
- ◆ Contribute to books, the Baseball Biography Project, and the SABR Games Project
- ◆ Collaborate with SABR researchers and experts
- ◆ Discount on registration to our annual conferences, National Convention & analytics certification courses
- ◆ 50% discounts on paperback SABR books
- ◆ FREE online access to the Newspapers.com World Collection, The Sporting News archives, and Historical Black Newspapers Collection
- ◆ Discounts with other partners in the baseball community

Become a Member!



Help level the playing field and
build #APlaceofTheirOwn by
joining the IWBC today!

iwbc.org

Grassroots Baseball: Women
By Jean Fruth



I've spent much of my photography career documenting the game and its connection to culture around the globe, from grassroots to the major leagues with all stops in between. As my first book, ***Grassroots Baseball: Where Legends Begin***, was being published in 2019, I reached a point in my life and career, where giving back became very important to me, as well as surrounding my work with purpose.

Along my journey there have been several caring individuals who have helped me develop a deeper appreciation for, and a stronger understanding of, baseball and its place in global culture. As they have been so giving to me, now it's my turn to give back and help other women in the field. From encouraging young photographers working with minor and major league teams, to assisting shooters in other industries, I am committed to mentoring to help grow the next generation of women photographers.

I am also focused on giving back to the sport I love. I reached out to Hall of Fame President Jeff Idelson, who was announcing his retirement in 2019 after 26 years with the Museum, and asked if he would partner with me to grow Grassroots Baseball into a non-profit. Jeff said "yes", and we co-founded our non-profit organization with a mission to promote and celebrate the amateur game around the globe, with a focus on growing interest and participation at the youngest levels.

One of Grassroots Baseball's initiatives is to give back by providing inspiration, instruction and equipment to help ensure more children have the opportunity to learn, play and enjoy the game. We started our inaugural journey along Route 66, given the strong connection to America that baseball and the Historic Highway share. The passion, devotion and commitment to the National Pastime along the route runs deep.

A host of sponsors joined us for that program, with Marriott, Rawlings, Sony, the Arizona Diamondback, San Diego Padres, and Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation stepping up as important partners. With their support, Grassroots Baseball staged clinics in partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs, from Chicago to Santa Monica, to introduce the game to kids at the youngest levels. Several Hall of Famers -- Johnny Bench, Goose Gossage, Ozzie Smith, Jim Thome and George Brett -- joined us. We also welcomed a host of other baseball legends who were raised along Route 66. They shared words of inspiration, presented each child with a new Rawlings glove and baseball, taught them how to throw, and organized games of catch. In total we introduced the game to some 500 boys and girls along the Will Rogers Highway, who may not have otherwise had an opportunity to play the game.

After sharing baseball stories from small towns and cities along Route 66 over three years, ***Grassroots Baseball: Route 66*** was published in 2022. The book's images celebrate and illuminate America's pastime in the small towns and large cities that connect the historic highway.

One of my last shoots for the book was my first all-girls baseball game, near the endpoint of Route 66 in Santa Monica. I had photographed girls playing on boys' teams before, but this was my first experience documenting girls playing against girls.

It was magical.

Their positive energy, exemplary sportsmanship and high level of play were inspiring. We had been considering women as our next focus for Grassroots Baseball, and with so many exciting developments recently and with much more inclusiveness in the sport today, shooting that game in the fall of 2021 sealed the deal.

Our journey has just begun. Grassroots Baseball will spend three years sharing stories of trailblazing girls and women on and off the field; past, present & future; around the globe. Their fight for equality, recognition, and acceptance in the sport they love begs to be passed on to a new generation. Why? Because as long-time female umpire Perry Barber says, "If you can see it, you can be it."

Being a woman who has spent considerable time working in the game for more than two decades, this project runs deep for me. It is a pleasure and an honor to be able to tell the stories of these incredible women, who are challenging social norms while growing the game around the globe.

The beauty of the game captured by Jean Fruth





The intensity of the game





The beauty of your teammates



Photos courtesy of Jean Fruth

Schedule

Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2023

Friday Evening – 6:30-8:00 p.m. EST

Welcome—SABR, IWBC and Rockford

Virtual Happy Hour, discussion of women's baseball and more



Photo Credit-Donna Muscarella

Saturday 10:00 a.m.-8:15 p.m. EST

Morning Host: Tara Krieger

10:00-10:30 Donna Halper-*Making Their Voices Heard: Women Baseball Writers, 1900-1945.*

When most people think of women baseball writers, then tend to think they're a modern phenomenon that occurred thanks to the Women's Movement of the 1960s. But there have been women writing about baseball for much longer than that. In my presentation, I will discuss some of these pioneering women, several of whom wrote for the Black Press: how they were perceived by their male colleagues, how they were perceived by the players, and above all, what they had to say about the games that they covered.

Donna L. Halper is an Associate Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Lesley University in Massachusetts. She joined SABR in 2011, and her research focuses on women and minorities in baseball, the Negro Leagues, and “firsts” in baseball history. A former radio deejay, credited with having discovered the rock band Rush, Dr. Halper reinvented herself and got her PhD at age 64. In addition to her research into baseball, she is also a media historian with expertise in the history of broadcasting. She has contributed to SABR’s Games Project and BioProject, as well as writing several articles for the Baseball Research Journal.

10:30-11:00 Shira Harris and Ann Hisnanick - *Friend of Dorothy: Women in Baseball as a Motif for Creating Queer Spaces: Beauty, and Joy in the AAGPBL and A League of Their Own (2022)*

The show *A League of Their Own* (2022) is a reimagining of Penny Marshall’s 1992 film of the same name. In this presentation we will explore the theme of joy and how many of the characters are shown through the lens of making/creating beautiful things. We will focus on women’s baseball as the impetus for forming a queer space both in the 1940s and 50s and again now. We’ll then weave in Social Identity Theory to highlight the significant impact the show has had on the fan base, and some of the beautiful things the fans create. Both the AAGPBL and *A League of Their Own* (2022) provided a space and context for the gathering of queer women. We will focus on the ways each used individual contributions and creativity to build this community.

Anna Hisnanick (she/they) is an experiential educator and outdoor program administrator at University of Maryland. Her background is in sociology and higher education administration, and their work in collegiate recreation has always put them sports-adjacent. Anna’s professional interests include furthering DEIJ conversations and initiatives in recreation. She’s a big fan of Maybelle Blair and *A League of Their Own* (both the movie and the show).

Shira Harris (she/her) is a New York City based art and film teacher at a School for the Deaf. She holds undergraduate degrees in Theater and Gender/Women’s Studies from Barnard College and a master’s degree in Deaf Education from Teachers College-Columbia University. Shira is interested in the impact of media and art on identity and community-building.

11:00-12:15 Through the Lens of Baseball Panel

Donna Muscarella, Tracy Greer, Margaret Lawrence and Jessica Kleinschmidt—Moderator Leslie Heaphy



Tracy Greer is a deputy senior content editor for the Chicago Tribune. Greer has more than two decades of experience in news and sports journalism. She was previously an MLB senior editor at The Athletic and was the managing editor at the NPR affiliate station in Phoenix. A native of New Mexico, Greer earned degrees in journalism from New Mexico State and Northwestern. She is a member of AWSM and SABR. You can follow her on Twitter @pulhitzerprize.

Jessica Kleinschmidt is a multimedia journalist with the Oakland A's, where she hosts a live pregame and postgame A's Cast radio show and podcast, conducts interviews, and produces special reports. She previously spent three seasons as a web content producer and reporter for NBC Sports Bay Area and worked as an associate editorial producer with MLB.com's Cut4.

Margaret Lawrence is a Chicago-based artist whose work captures the nostalgia of America's favorite pastime in highly detailed paintings and drawings. Her love of baseball and the icons of the sport capture the best of this venerated game. She grew up blocks away from the friendly confines of Wrigley Field and had no choice but to fall in love with the Cubs. She attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and spent nearly two decades involved in the local theater community.



Donna Muscarella is a fourth-generation baseball enthusiast, photographer, mixed media artist, and baseball card collector. She attended her first professional baseball game at Age 2½ but was enthralled by the game even earlier. While Donna does not limit her photography to baseball, it is her most compelling subject. She has a passion for capturing its sights and shapes with her camera lens, using art to share her love of baseball with the world.

Hinchliffe Stadium, one of the few Negro Leagues ballparks still standing, is a repeat subject of Donna's creative compositions. In 2021, she released her debut trading card set, which used her photography of the historic ballpark on the card fronts. The set was a vehicle for educating others about the Negro Leagues. The card backs featured information about Hinchliffe's Negro Leagues ties and a portion of the proceeds from the card sales was donated to institutions devoted to promoting and preserving Negro Leagues history. Donna's Hinchliffe photography appeared on Forbes.com, in the third edition of *Turnstyle: The SABR Journal of Baseball Arts* and was requested by the YES Network for use in their programming. She also covered events at Hinchliffe Stadium for the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Her work is slated for inclusion in the planned Charles J. Muth Museum of Hinchliffe Stadium.

Donna was commissioned by the Staten Island Ferry Hawks of the Atlantic League to capture with her lens their 2022 inaugural season. A thirty-foot wall at their stadium is now filled with her imagery. Photographing the Ferry Hawks that season was exceptionally exciting for Donna because it was Kelsie Whitmore's rookie season in the Atlantic League. Some of Donna's images of Ms. Whitmore were recently added to the National Baseball Hall of Fame's photography collection.

Another of Donna's creative endeavors is mixed-media baseball artwork. She unites her love of photography and baseball cards with each new piece of artwork she creates. Every one-of-a-kind piece features an image captured by Donna, a hand-cut Allen & Ginter baseball card, soft pastels, and digital overlays. Moments in time are captured, transformed, and preserved, the creative alchemy of the process invigorating Donna.

Donna may be found on X, Instagram, and Threads using the handle @TheLensOfDonnaM

12:15-1:30 Lunch Break

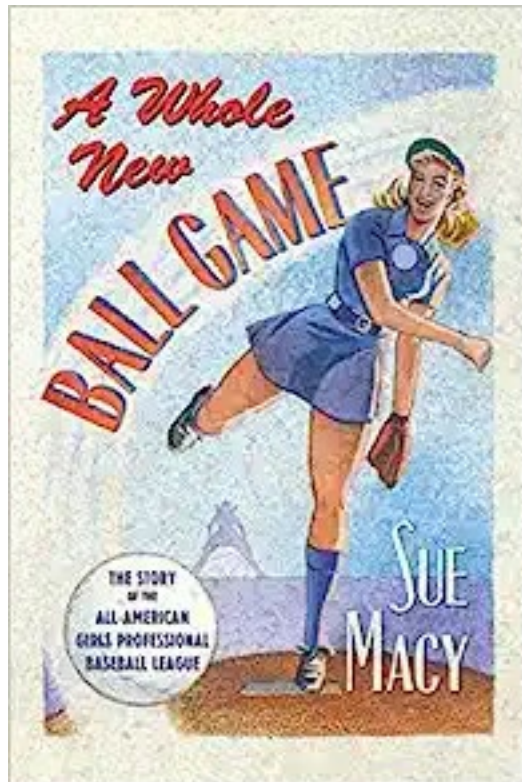
Afternoon host: Lisa Alexander

1:30-2:00 Sue Macy -*I was a Fly on the Wall at the First AAGPBL Reunion*

In 1982 I was a freelance writer looking for a project that would marry my love of research with my passion for sports and women's history. I had learned about the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League the year before and had sent out a questionnaire to the 120 former players who had been located by a committee planning a reunion. I received responses from 105 of them—87.5%—and their answers told me that there was indeed a story to be told. So I decided to attend their first national reunion in Chicago that July.

It was a four-day event that changed my life. All around me there were middle-aged women greeting each other with slaps on the back and big guffaws. There was cigarette smoke everywhere—and lots of beer. A hotel worker said he never saw women drink so much beer. I was worried about butting into their private conversations, but they welcomed me with open arms. I was invited to join them at breakfast, to look at their scrapbooks, to interview them. In this session I will recapture some of the memorable moments and share some observations from this milestone event.

Sue Macy is the author of 18 books for kids and young adults focusing mainly on sports history and women's history. Her first book, *A Whole New Ball Game: The Story of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*, was only the second one published about the league. Since writing it, Macy has attended at least 30 of the players' annual reunions and spent six years as the secretary of the AAGPBL Players Association. Macy also headed the public relations committee for the league's 75th reunion and served as a consultant for seasons one and two (upcoming) of Prime Video's *A League of Their Own* TV series. Thanks to the interest in the league generated by that series, *A Whole New Ball Game* is being rereleased after 30 years on August 1, 2023. Sue is a magna cum laude graduate of Princeton University, where she majored in American history with a concentration on women's history. Today she lives in Englewood, New Jersey.



2:00-2:30 Ryan Woodward- *All-American Generations: Rookies Hit the Road in Skirts*

After the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League folded in 1954, Manager Bill Allington assembled a touring team that barnstormed across the U.S. playing men's teams from 1955-1958. In the last two seasons, a handful of women earned roster spots who had never played in the All-American league. Drawing largely on interviews and media coverage, this presentation proposes to explore how these players were recruited, their athletic backgrounds, and how they were characterized by journalists of the time. In what has already been documented of U.S. women's baseball history, they occupy a significant space that's rarely discussed. Their professional baseball careers peaked in the interim between the decline of the AAGPBL and high-profile women competing in the Negro Leagues and the rise of Title IX and lawsuits challenging the exclusion of girls from Little League baseball. This proposed presentation will shed light on the names, faces, and experiences of an understudied and crucial chapter of women's baseball history.

Ryan Woodward created the inaugural Women in Baseball Week in 2017. He continues to develop projects commemorating women in baseball, including the induction of former AAGPBL player Anna May Hutchison into the Kentucky Sports Hall of Fame, Class of 2020. Ryan is a member of the Society for American Baseball Research and the International Women's Baseball Center and served on the IWBC Board of Directors for six years.

2:30-2:45 **Break**

2:45-4:00 Umpire Panel- Greta Langhenry, Lisa Turbitt and Sophiyah Liu – Moderator: Perry Barber



4:00-4:30 *Women's World Cup Presentation*—Tamara Holmes



4:30-5:00 Adam Berenbak - *A Brief Overview of Women's Professional Baseball in Japan, 1949-1969*

In April of 1950, at around the same time the inaugural season of the newly organized two league system in Nippon Professional Baseball was kicking off, Masako Oshima tossed the first pitch of another brand new baseball league in Tokyo. Two of the four teams founded over the course of the previous year, the Red Sox and the Bluebirds, with Oshima on the mound, faced off in an initial one-day tournament that would set the stage for a year of short and long tournaments that together would constitute the first full season of women's professional baseball in Japan.

Though many details of the subsequent seasons of pro and semi-pro women's baseball remain inaccessible to non-Japanese reading researchers, the article I propose delivering to the 2023 Symposium provides a brief outline of the seasons, teams, and stars that will be both informative to the casual fan and instructive to researchers. The article, which I hope to submit for publication in the SABR Journal in the coming year, utilizes primary and secondary sources, including Japanese publications, to outline the preliminary stages of organized women's baseball after World War 2, including Ginza dance hall dancers and company teams, through the stages of professional and industrial leagues, and into the transition to softball and international barnstorming. Though not a complete history, this brief overview will, I hope, provide a concise introduction to the unfamiliar as well as valuable context for those already familiar with this period of Japanese baseball history.

Adam Berenbak is an Archivist with the National Archives Center for Legislative Archives in Washington, DC. He has been a member of SABR for over a decade and his research focuses on the history of baseball in Japan, on which he has published articles in the SABR Journal and *Our Game*, curated an exhibition with the Japanese Embassy's Cultural Center in DC, and contributed to a number of articles and books. He has also published several essays on other topics related to baseball history in the SABR Journal, *Prologue*, and *Zisk*, and he curated an exhibition on tobacco cards in conjunction with the Museum of Durham History and the Durham Bulls Athletic Park. His work will also be featured in newly released SABR books on Jackie Robinson and US Tours of Japan.

5:00-6:30 **Supper Break**

6:30-6:45 SABR/IWBC Introductions



6:45-7:45 Melissa Ludtke “A Woman’s Struggle to Get Inside”

In her journalism career, Melissa Ludtke reported and wrote for *Sports Illustrated* and *Time*, then edited *Nieman Reports* at the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University. She wrote two books, *On Our Own: Unmarried Motherhood in America* and *Touching Home in China: in search of missing girlhoods*. She was recognized with the Yankee Quill Award and Mary Garber Pioneer Award, and she was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University and a Prudential Fellow at

Columbia University.

Ludtke was a baseball reporter for *Sports Illustrated* when she was assigned to cover the 1977 World Series. During the first game and due to her gender, Major League Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn banned her from both teams’ clubhouses where the interviews with players take place. In December 1977, Time Inc., the owner of *Sports Illustrated*, filed a complaint, *Ludtke v. Kuhn*, with Southern District Court in Manhattan, and the case was heard by Judge Constance Baker Motley, the only woman judge sitting on that district court. In September 1978, with the same teams in the World Series, Ludtke had equal access to the clubhouses due to Judge Motley's ruling. Rutgers University Press will publish her third book, *Locker Room Talk: A Woman's Struggle to Get Inside*, in 2024. For the first time, Ludtke tells her personal account of this well-known equal rights legal case.

7:45-8:00 Pylon Unveil –“Covering all the Bases”

8:00-8:15 Dorothy Seymour Mills Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

Finalists: Maybelle Blair, Julie Croteau, Lizzie Murphy, Maud Nelson, Ashley Stephenson, Toni Stone

Sunday 11:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. EST

Host: Jessica Smyth

11:00-11:30 Barrett Snyder- *Rachel Balkovec’s Baseball Journey*

The overall theme of this presentation is a comprehensive profile of Rachel Balkovec, focusing on her journey in professional baseball as a groundbreaking figure. It explores her early life, influences, struggles, and achievements, emphasizing her role as a pioneer for women in baseball and her broader influence as a coach and representative of humanity. Balkovec's journey from college athlete to strength coach and later her groundbreaking roles in affiliated professional baseball, including becoming the first female hitting coach and manager is detailed as well. Also highlighted is her determination,

resilience, and commitment to making a positive impact, not only in baseball but also in the lives of individuals and communities.

The presenter's objective is to offer the audience an extensive 20-minute biographical account of Balkovec, celebrating her story as an embodiment of resilience, determination, and a commitment to breaking barriers through dedication and unwavering self-belief.

Barrett Snyder, holds an M.S. in Sports Management and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Drexel University. He is currently enrolled at West Chester University studying Exercise Science with a concentration in Sports Psychology. He intends on pursuing a J.D. or PhD.

11:30-12:00 Lauren Stewart - *Creation of props for a baseball movie*

When a baseball fan watches a movie, they are not often thinking of what kind of ball their favorite fictional player is throwing or the type of glove they are using. But every prop in a movie is painstakingly researched and shopped for by someone with a specific vision in mind. Whether it's a film recreating a specific game or a sitcom trying to give a character some backstory, props are part of the world building key to creating timeless silver screen moments. Hours of research, building, restoration, and work can go into mere seconds on screen. This presentation covers the way a prop master gets a baseball story from script to screen.

Lauren "Tavi" Stewart is a prop master, prop restorationist, and baseball historian at History for Hire in Los Angeles, CA. She has restored hundreds of baseball gloves, masks, and other protective gear along with thousands of other historical props for movies and tv alike. The baseball collection includes props used in movies like *42*, *61**, *The Sandlot*, *A League of Their Own*, and *Moneyball*. Lauren has also made props for Marvel and projects like *Perry Mason*, *The Fablemans*, and *Oppenheimer*. On the weekends, she works for the Dodgers as a tour guide.

12:00 -12:30 Adam Korengold- *Visualizing the AAGPBL Through the Lens of Data*

While the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) has received significant attention in popular culture through Penny Marshall's 1992 *A League Of Their Own* and the 2022 Amazon miniseries inspired by the film, there has not yet been an overarching overview of player performance across its twelve seasons of play. The lack of a digital database has been an obstacle to enabling baseball researchers to analyze and visualize these data to make them more understandable and resonant.

This paper and presentation will show how I painstakingly translated the statistics in W.C. Madden's *The Women of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* into a digital data file and created data visualizations to show the league's greater emphasis on offense in its later years, and notable achievements including Joanne Weaver's .429 season average in 1954, Connie Wisniewski's 33 wins in 1946, and Helen Fox's 163 career wins in context. The emphasis will be on both insights (including an explanation of the data and the insights they reveal) and process (how the data were digitized, cleaned, and made ready for analysis).

The presentation will draw on this analysis on Tableau Public: [The AAGPBL Visualized](#).

Adam Korengold is an Analytics Lead at the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. He is also an adjunct faculty member at the Maryland

Institute College of Art, teaching the practice of data visualization in the graduate program. He has been a SABR member since 2020 and his presentations to date have focused on data visualization and the relationship between baseball card design and trends in art and design.

12:30-1:30 **Lunch**

1:30-2:30 **Telling Their Story Panel- Shae Sloan, Marlene Vogelsang and Missy Coombes
- Moderator Kat Williams**

2:30-3:00 Erin Cooper - *Get Off the Field: Persisting in the Face of
Opposition.*

This session will outline emerging barriers to girls' youth baseball programs; including value differences between girls and coed programs, how girls programs challenge a landscape of youth player poaching, and perception on exclusivity

Philly Girls Baseball (PGB) Coach Erin Cooper will share strategies for overcoming local opposition through examples. When local organizations opposed girls baseball programming and women coaches, PGB found creative solutions to maintain safe and welcoming environments for girls and women in baseball. The session will include a blend of storytelling and tactical examples of 3 initiatives:

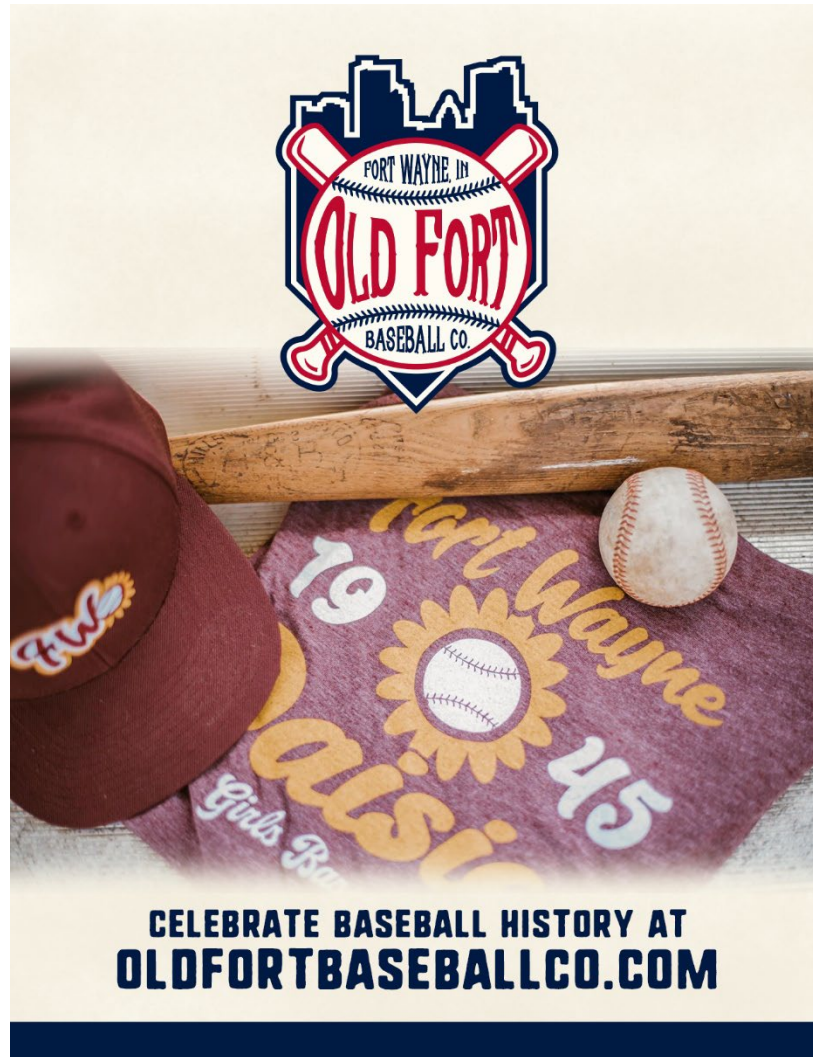
1. Philly Girls Baseball is shifting our coaching model to be completely hands free /no coach initiated physical contact. Even high fives are player initiated. We will share the coaching tools and imagery strategies we use in place of physical contact to guide and teach players.
2. Making our resources such as warmups, practice plans and winter workouts publicly available and open to coed players.
3. Our own progression of modified Jamboree Game rules for multi-age player groups. We've been tweaking this over the last few years and think we have a great set of rules for a full player pitch, umpired game with 12-15 players.

3:00-3:30 Justin Kinney-*Through the lens of baseball-the girls themselves*

What better angle to look at baseball from than from the girls playing it themselves. I propose to present and talk about a documentary I am making that chronicles girls' baseball players and their journeys this summer. The documentary will dig deep into what motivates the girls to be trailblazers of the sport. What got them hooked on baseball. What their experiences have been like so far, including the highs, lows and in-betweens. Who their role models are. Who their support network is. What their goals are in the short-term, mid-term and long-term. The challenges and adversity they have faced. Their favorite moments so far. Feedback from their families, friends and coaches. All leading into the experiences they will have this summer and then where they hope to go from there. The girls will be of various backgrounds, ages and abilities, so the perspective will be broad and wide-ranging.

The goal of the documentary is to give girls another platform they can use to bring more awareness to the current state of girls' baseball in hopes of leveling the playing field. The goal should not be to play with the boys. It should be to have opportunities to play without the boys.

Justin Kinney is excited to speak at the upcoming Women in Baseball Conference. Justin played pretty much every sport he could growing up, but none compared to baseball. Kinney loved and still loves everything about the sport; The lessons learned, the camaraderie, the unique culture. Justin could go on and on. He even wrote his senior thesis in high school about, "Baseball and the American Dream," which he sees as most relevant today with girls playing baseball. Justin says he knows that in every girl's heart who is playing baseball, she is doing so to live the American Dream through baseball.



Donna Muscarella's Baseball Story

By Donna Muscarella

Donna Muscarella is a fourth-generation baseball enthusiast, photographer, mixed media artist, and baseball card collector. She attended her first professional baseball game at Age 2½ but was enthralled by the game even earlier. While Donna does not limit her photography to baseball, it is her most

compelling subject. She has a passion for capturing its sights and shapes with her camera lens, using art to share her love of baseball with the world.



Hinchliffe Stadium, one of the few Negro Leagues ballparks still standing, is a repeat subject of Donna's creative compositions. In 2021, she released her debut trading card set, which used her photography of the historic ballpark on the card fronts. The set was a vehicle for educating others about the Negro Leagues. The card backs featured information about Hinchliffe's Negro Leagues ties and a portion of the proceeds from the card sales was donated to institutions devoted to promoting and preserving Negro Leagues history. Donna's Hinchliffe photography appeared on Forbes.com, in the third edition of *Turnstyle: The SABR Journal of Baseball Arts* and was featured on the YES Network. She also covered events at

Hinchliffe Stadium for the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Her work is slated for inclusion in the Charles J. Muth Museum of Hinchliffe Stadium which opens later this year.



Donna was commissioned by the Staten Island FerryHawks of the Atlantic League to capture their 2022 inaugural season with her lens. A thirty-foot wall at their stadium is now filled with her imagery. Photographing the FerryHawks that season was exceptionally exciting for Donna because it was Kelsie Whitmore's rookie season in the Atlantic League. Some of Donna's images of Ms. Whitmore were recently added to the National Baseball Hall of Fame's photography collection.

Another of Donna's creative endeavors is mixed-media baseball artwork. She unites her love of photography and baseball cards with each new piece of artwork she creates. Every one-of-a-kind piece



features an image captured by Donna, a hand-cut Allen & Ginter baseball card, soft pastels, and digital overlays. Moments in time are captured, transformed, and preserved, the creative alchemy of the process invigorating Donna.

Donna may be found on X, Instagram, and Threads using the handle @TheLensOfDonnaM. Some of her mixed media artwork is visible in her online portfolio at Behance.net/TheLensOfDonnaM.





Kelsie Whitmore—photo by Donna Muscarella

Working for the *Boston Globe*
Rena Sokolow

While studying graphic design at the School of Visual Arts in NYC in the mid-1980s, I used to joke that my fellow students thought Mets was a typeface, not the team I faithfully listened to on my yellow Walkman while completing assignments in the student workshop. We had T-squares and exacto knives and paid a dime for a xerox we would cut up or hand color with dyes.

Upon graduation I was lucky to land at the *Boston Globe* where for the next 15 years I designed various sections including Food, At Home and, occasionally, Sports. In 2001, as what would soon become the golden years of sports in New England began, I left the Globe to open my own studio and raise my family, but only a few months later was called back with an offer to work as a contractor. My job was to turn existing Globe newspaper content into a Championship book for the Patriots – overnight. I was thrilled. Over the next several years I got the opportunity to design these books for the Patriots, Celtics, Bruins, and was the design director of “Finally” in 2004 when the Boston Red Sox rallied for the title after an 86-year drought. How ironic that a Mets fan from Brooklyn and a Yankees fan who didn’t grow up in Boston were the design team for this historic book!

In 2013 and 2018 when superb editor Janice Page and designer extraordinaire Cindy Babaian (current and former Globies at the time) joined me, another dream team was formed. Three women who grew up watching baseball games on TV when they were televised and listening on the radio when they weren’t, also read box scores, saved for baseball cards collaborated to bring the championship Red Sox books to life.

The timeline on these instabooks required that we skip all post-game festivities (and sleep) and get right to work, with coffee, peanuts, and veggies plates sustaining us through the night. In the wee hours, giddy and exhausted we would discuss photo options, type solutions, and how we had gotten ourselves into this intense and exhilarating situation. We would reminisce about growing up in the 60’s, our dads (all working class men with loud voices and big hearts), and how our love for the game grew out of our desire to spend more time with them. I often marveled at how unlikely it was that this group of women would end up working together on “For Boston” in 2013 and “Relentless” in 2018.

My favorite memory: late one night while waiting on a photo from the Globe, we started sharing childhood memories of watching games with our dads. I think I started to cry as did Janice and Cindy. Then one of us said “there’s no crying in baseball book design!”, which got us all laughing.



Janice, Rena and Cindy—photo courtesy of Rena Sokolow

Rena Anderson Sokolow is founder of one2tree, a design studio in Brookline, Massachusetts. Her award-winning work includes editorial design, corporate branding, books, promotions, and exhibits.

Sokolow's passion for sports has been integral to many successful collaborations with Cambridge Seven Associates – including The World of Little League, Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, the Sports Museum in Boston at TD Garden, and the Campbell Sports Center at Columbia University – The Boston Globe, which include 12 retrospective books chronicling the championship seasons of the Patriots, Red Sox, Bruins, and Celtics (2001-2019) – and, since 2017 with the International Women's Baseball Center. The pylon designs are all created by Sokolow.

When not designing, Rena can usually be found hiking with her daughter, birding with her son, or on bike ride with her husband.

BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

Locker Room Talk

A Woman's Struggle to Get Inside

MELISSA LUDTKE

In September 1978, Manhattan's Southern District Court Judge Constance Baker Motley, the nation's first Black woman on the federal bench, ordered Major League Baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn to provide equal access to all journalists to interview baseball players. Her judicial order in this well-known gender discrimination case applied only to Yankee Stadium, but her ruling's impact was far reaching. Young women flocked to sports writing and broadcasting at the same time that girls and women began competing more widely in sports due to Title IX.

Though Motley's ruling and Title IX legislation boosted opportunities for girls and women in sports, fair, just, civil, and equal treatment of them has required decades of advocacy and court battles to advance—and these fights for equality continue today. The plaintiff in this groundbreaking case, *Ludtke vs. Kuhn*, was Melissa Ludtke, a *Sports Illustrated* baseball reporter who had been banned by Kuhn from the teams' locker room during the 1977 World Series, effectively barring her from doing her job as a journalist.

In *Locker Room Talk: A Woman's Struggle to Get Inside*, Ludtke tells what it was like to be publicly ridiculed as a 26-year old woman for her provocative role in this sensationalized, headline-grabbing, groundbreaking case. After showing how she became the plaintiff in this case, she reveals the tactics that sportswriters and professional baseball men used to malign her during this time when she was the only woman covering baseball nationally. By spotlighting the legal sparring in Judge Motley's courtroom, she invites readers to watch Judge Motley weigh each side's arguments and question the lawyers. Outside this courtroom, cultural bellwethers, such as Johnny Carson, the cast of Saturday Night Live, and even "Peanuts" cartoonist Charles M. Schulz, spoofed her fight for equality.

Ludtke's legal victory mattered then, and still does. *Ludtke v. Kuhn* eroded conventional gender barriers in sports media, but patriarchal attitudes are still prevalent in sports culture. *Locker Room Talk* resurfaces this game-changing legal case from the 1970s when its gender lessons resonate with the issues revolving around sports in our time.

MELISSA LUDTKE is an award-winning journalist who worked at Sports Illustrated, Time, CBS News, and the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, where she edited Nieman Reports. In 1977-1978, while working as a baseball reporter for Sports Illustrated, she was the plaintiff in *Ludtke v. Kuhn*, the federal legal case that opened doors for women sportswriters by enabling their equal access to the players. She is a recipient of the Yankee Quill Award for lifetime achievement as a journalist and was nominated by the New York University Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute as one of the "100 Outstanding Journalists in the United States in the Last 100 Years." As a reporter for Sports Illustrated, she won a Front Page Award from the Newswomen's Club of New York (1978). She has been awarded a Mary Garber Pioneer Award (2002), been a Neiman Fellow, and a Radcliffe Public Policy Institute Fellow, and a Prudential Fellow at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. She is the author of *On Our Own: Unmarried Motherhood in America* (Random House, 1997) and *Touching Home in China: in search of missing girlhoods* (digital multimedia, 2016).



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Margaret Lawrence's Baseball Journey

By Margaret Lawrence

Having grown up blocks from the friendly confines of Wrigley Field, I had no choice but to fall in love with the Cubs.

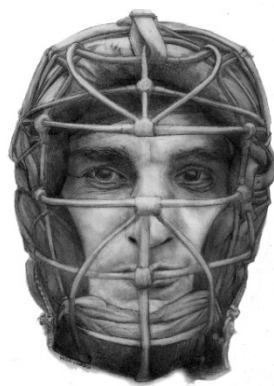
The organ music and cheers of the crowd would drift through the open windows of my school, which sat a mere block from the bleacher entrance. And like many of my loves, the Cubs have disappointed me, but I kept the hope alive that one day everything will be alright in the world and they - we - will win a World Series. 2016 was my epiphany and the religious experience fueled my artistic nature.

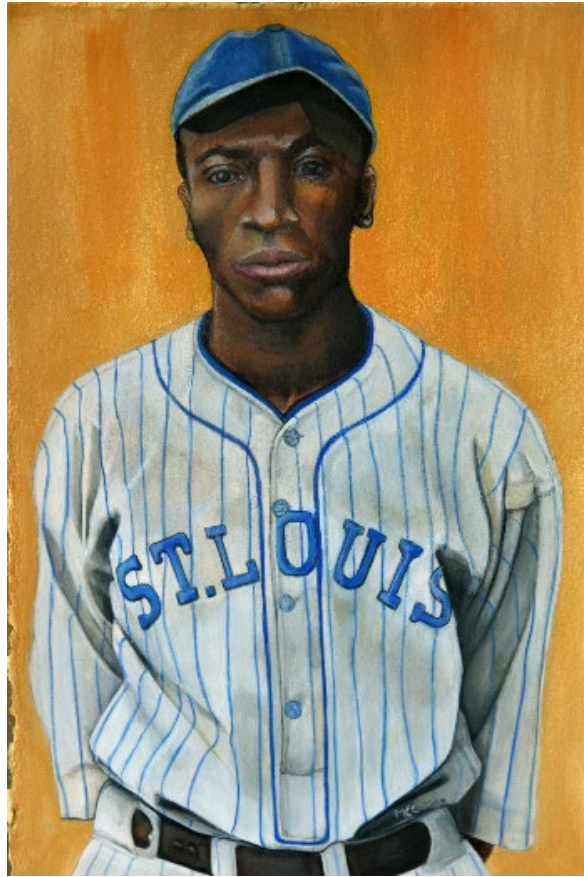
I spent close to 20 years involved in the theatre in Chicago and made a few excursions to the East Coast. In the mid 80's, I left the Windy City to travel and actually became a bigger fan than when I had been at home. Eventually I had to come back, and after a 12-hour car ride, I hit Wrigley on 8-8-88: the night that lights came to Wrigley.

It was an omen since I was coming back home to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (and the School of Baseball at Wrigley). Within the week I was once again basking in the sunshine of the bleachers and soaking up the sounds and smells of the ballpark: freshly mown grass, combined with grilled hot dogs, balls caught by leather gloves, and dorky organ music.

At school I drove my professors crazy with my "affliction" for baseball. 95% of my art was baseball-themed, but then again everyone at that point seemed to be a Cubs fan...we were contenders, and the city was going nuts. After 24 years I have made more paintings and pencil renderings than computer pieces, but they all shine like a big "W" flag.

My subjects range from long-forgotten players like Chief Meyers up to Addison Russels gymnastic plays and the trio of Bryant, Rizzo, and Russell in the dugout. I do prefer the old timers, as they all seem to have been such characters—Three Finger Brown, Cool Papa Bell, and Leo the Lip.



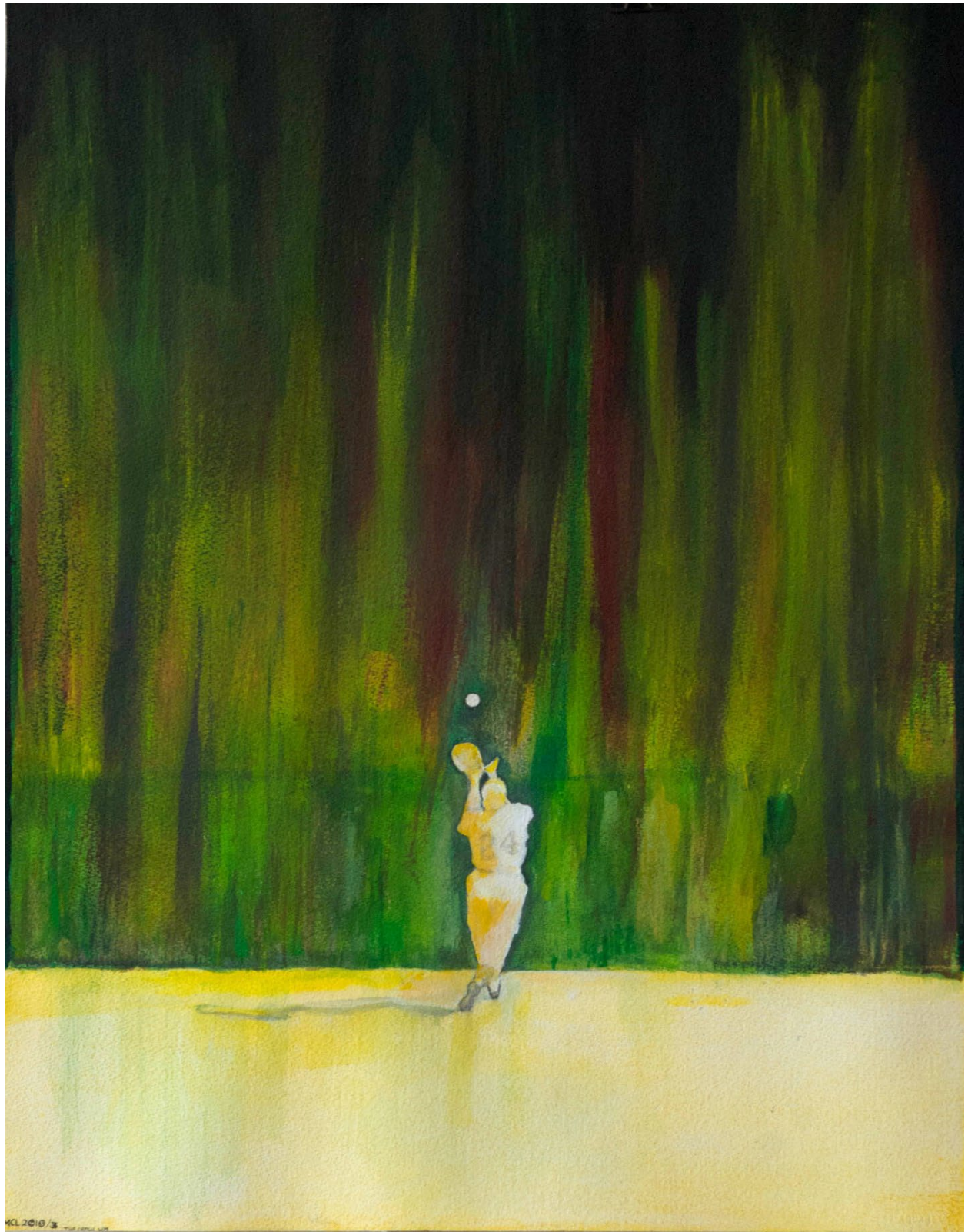


Cool Papa Bell-Margaret Lawrence





Maybelle as a Cardinal- Margaret Lawrence



The Catch-Margaret Lawrence

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A Fan's Love of the Game

Kate M. Haines

IWBC Archivist and Baseball Photographer



Great American Ballpark, 2014. Vintage Filter. Toronto Blue Jays at Cincinnati Reds.



Pristine Home Plate. Beyer Field at Beyer Stadium, Rockford, Illinois, 2023.



First Base Line. Beyer Field at Beyer Stadium, Rockford, Illinois, 2023.

Photography
By Carol Sheldon



Carol Sheldon playing in 2012 at the Hong Kong International Baseball Tournament



Carol Sheldon Batting in 2012



Sheldon Vintage Baseball Game



Carol Sheldon



Sheldon at Boston Red Sox Women's Fantasy Camp

"I WENT ONTO THE FIELD ALONE"

BERNICE GERA'S DIFFICULT ROAD TO BECOME PRO BASEBALL'S FIRST WOMAN UMPIRE

Dan VanDeMortel

Sexism.

Merriam-Webster defines it as "prejudice or discrimination based on sex, especially discrimination against women. Behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex."

Bernice Gera never had to look up "sexism." Baseball administered her a harsh dose of it. And on an overcast evening on June 24, 1972, at Shuron Park in Geneva, New York, in her debut as the game's first professional woman umpire, she stood alone, drowning in a sea of it. The circumstances, results, and ensuing analysis of that moment and its enduring legacy were and remain complicated.

In a sense, Gera's journey to Geneva began at childhood, when she became smitten with the game. Born Bernice Marie Shiner in 1931 in the mining town of Ernest, Pennsylvania, she became adrift after her parents divorced when she was two, abandoning their five children. She and her siblings moved frequently from one relative to another, covering four states. She gravitated to baseball when she was eight, outhitting her brothers and other boys on the block. "I would stay with whomever would take me. I think that's where it came in, the love of baseball, because there you joined in with kids, you belonged," she later remembered.¹

Gera's devotion to the game persisted wherever she landed. In her teens, in Detroit, she pitched and played outfield with the Highland Parkers women's softball team. After graduating high school in Louisiana in 1949, she married and moved to New York, where she worked as a secretary. In her free time, she taught neighborhood kids baseball fundamentals, took them to Mets games, and put on hitting exhibitions for youth charities featuring baseball stars such as Roger Maris. Newspaper accounts marveled when she hit balls 350 feet and once cracked three hits off Bob Feller, skills that intrigue us with possibility now in a time when stars such as Jenny Finch and Jessica Mendoza have captured headlines. Unfortunately, her sole option to play, the distant mid-western All-American Girls' Baseball League, folded in 1954.

Eventually, Gera divorced her first husband, married photographer Steve Gera in 1962, and settled in Jackson Heights, Queens. Baseball engulfed their courtship. "While we were dating, he wanted to go dancing or to a movie, the normal things. I wouldn't go out unless we went to Rockaway Park where I could throw and hit baseballs at the concession stands," she recalled.² Her husband witnessed legendary performances. Rockaway Park and Coney Island eventually banned her for her proficiency at knocking over milk bottles. *Ripley's Believe It Or Not* added her profile to its unusual facts collection, chronicling how her pitching accuracy at local amusement parks won 300 large dolls, which she donated to a local children's shelter.

¹ "And Now . . . The Rest of the Story," *Referee*, May 1979, 24.

² "Sport: Squeeze Play," *Time*, August 13, 1969.

Gera attempted to translate her baseball passion into employment, casting her net out to every team in search of a job, any job. Hopes and prayers went unfulfilled, however, as she was left to field only negative results. Dejection set in. All she wanted was to be involved with the game she loved and use her position to draw kids to it and help them, but there was no avenue to do so. Then one night in 1966 at 2:30 a.m., inspiration visited: Why not umpire? Her husband nearly choked on his coffee when she mentioned it. But in deference to her passionate, relentless nature, he quickly became supportive of her goal.

Only two women in baseball history had ever umpired semi-pro games; neither made it to the professional level. —would be good to tell people who they were Undeterred, Gera entered the on ramp, applying to and getting accepted at the Al Somers School for Umpires under the name “Bernie Gera.” When Somers later learned of Gera’s true gender, he informed her she had raised an important policy matter with the Umpire Development Program, which oversaw his course, and that she would be further advised. No additional communication arrived. Changing course, she gained admittance to a six-week umpiring course at Jim Finley’s National Sports Academy in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Gera was now on the road, albeit a bumpy one as the school’s lone umpire—no others attended? and woman. With no available school facilities for women, Gera agreed to live away. After two weeks of daily 50-mile drives each way, she was allowed to live at the Academy with four instructors and 35 baseball hopefuls. She soon learned she had to learn the craft of her prospective trade *and* how to navigate gender mores. Initially overly chatty with the players, a disapproving Finley had to “tell her to stop being a woman and be an umpire,” which he did by ordering push-ups.³ Wearing male-fitted chest protectors proved problematic: a plight she solved by strapping one to her petite frame. Intense daylight hours were followed by rulebook study until 1:30 a.m. Overall, the required effort resembled boot camp, and so did the macho hazing she endured. On the diamond, she was ridiculed for her looks and soft demeanor. At night, the players and coaches threw beer cans and bottles at her door, forcing her to spend her last week living off campus.

Gera’s enticing story drew the national press to the Academy. Reporters chronicled Finley’s evaluation that she was “every bit a girl” (translation: not a lesbian) and other developments via accounts frequently stained with condescension and sophomoric commentary about the detrimental impact a woman umpire would have on The National Pastime.⁴ Outwardly, Gera gave as good as she got, telling the Associated Press, “For the life of me, I don’t understand why women can’t be baseball umpires. Look who you have doing the job now, a bunch of old men in their 50s, many of them fat and out of shape.”⁵ And she absorbed the sailors’ vocabulary on the field and the critics’ disdain. Privately, though, she cried at home. “Those six weeks felt like 60 years,” she later recalled of her “horrible, lonely experience.”⁶

Still, Gera stayed in her lane and toughed it out, graduating with honors in July 1967. She began looking for work for the 1968 season while enhancing her resume with a series of umpiring jobs. She landed a prominent gig at the semi-pro National Baseball Congress Tournament and later umpired for the semi-pro Bridgeton Invitational Tournament and American Legion, CYO, YMCA, New York Police Department,

³ “Housewife Learning to Call ‘Em Out at Home,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1967.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ “N.Y. Woman Enrolls in Umpire School, Hopes to Eventually Work in Majors,” *Washington Post*, May 11, 1967.

⁶ “Sport: Squeeze Play”; Nora Ephron, *Crazy Salad* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 64.

and Little League games. Not exactly Broadway's neon lights, but her progress captured the media's eye, including appearances on *The Today Show* and *The Tonight Show*.

If Gera had any Jack Kerouac-like sense that "somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me," she was quickly disabused of it. Seeking a professional umpiring position, she twice contacted head of umpire development Ed Doherty without receiving a response. Stymied, she approached Baseball Commissioner William D. Eckert by telephone and letter, only to be directed back to Doherty.

Gera again faced a roadblock. Again she determined to smash through it. In 1968, she obtained the assistance of New York lawyer Mario Biaggi, a former policeman who would soon be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He filed a case with the New York State Division of Human Rights ("Division"), charging Eckert's conduct indicated he objected to female umpires. Eckert passed the buck, replying that since his office did not handle umpire hiring Gera should contact the (minor league) National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues ("NAPBL") or the National League and American League presidents for opportunities.

In June, the Division sided with Eckert's lack of responsibility regarding umpire employment. The ruling sparked continued interest in Gera's story, although with relief more than curiosity. Feeding off their own sexism and baseball's tone and culture, the nation's scribes wiped their collective brows that the imagined perils of a temperamental, indecisive, dainty woman umpire would now be avoided. In this instance, discrimination would preserve the sanctity of the game and was welcomed by the male bastion.

Moving forward, Gera sought out a minor league position, eventually targeting the nearby Class A New York-Pennsylvania League. League president Vincent McNamara declined her request, however, replying she would not be considered since the ballparks had no female-appropriate dressing rooms. He also warned that tempers and language on the ballfields were "of a nature that one would not relish having one's mother or sister or any lady exposed to": as if Gera had virgin ears from walking the streets of New York.⁷ Around this time, Doherty finally surfaced, only to declare Gera ineligible for the umpire development program since applicants were required to be ages 21-35 and at least 5'10" and 175 pounds, statistics inharmonious with Gera's 37/5'2"/129 slash line.⁸

Gera challenged these limitations. In 1969, she and Biaggi returned to the Division's Appeal Board ("Appeal Board") for a hearing. After several postponements, on June 24, as Gera watched Apollo 11's astronauts safely return to Earth after their lunar landing, McNamara contacted her with an opportunity to apply for a 1970 season slot. Then he abruptly shifted, sending her a contract to umpire in the NY-P League for the remaining 1969 season, which she quickly agreed to.

At last a happy ending! No. McNamara merely sent the contract to relieve the pressure mounting upon him, knowing Gera's candidacy would ultimately be resolved by NAPBL President Phil Piton. Gera's scheduled umpiring debut in Auburn, New York, arrived on August 1, but the coveted moment was voided by yet another round of obstruction when news broke of Piton's terse announcement that his

⁷ "Lady Ump Charges Discrimination," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, March 22, 1969.

⁸ Baseball's height and weight standards barred over 99% of women for employment consideration and were not met by McNamara and some past professional umpires, including the "father of umpires," Hall of Famer Bill Klem.

office had disapproved Gera's contract, citing her inability to meet height, weight, and age requirements. McNamara, contentedly rolling over like an old hound, stood behind Piton's decision.

The stench from baseball's stonewalling had by now drifted toward Congressional hallways. Biaggi threatened to investigate baseball's practices, potentially beyond the scope of Gera's plight. Rep. Samuel Stratton (D-NY) indicated he would ask the Equal Opportunity Commission and Department of Justice to look into the situation. Rep. Roman Pucinski (D-IL) called for equality among umpires and other sports positions. And Rep. Martha Griffiths (D-MI), a rumored potential Supreme Court nominee who would soon introduce the Equal Rights Amendment to the House, joined and spoke on Gera's behalf at a press conference. Critics harped that making special arrangements for woman umpires would exact economic costs harmful to some teams' bottom lines. Stratton and Griffiths swatted this and other claims away, advocating that ending discrimination would lead to increased attendance and profit. "I wouldn't do anything to hurt baseball. All I want is a chance," Gera simultaneously pleaded, attempting to calm easily frightened minds.⁹

Indeed, requests for "a chance" were being expressed by women across America at this time and were gradually being accepted. A booming economy had created demand for non-industrial jobs, which women were suited to fill and had increased flexibility to do so with the advent of birth control pills. And recent civil rights successes had helped raise women's consciousness about how *they* had been treated like second-class citizens, increasing their desire and determination for change. Consequently, women were making inroads in once exclusively male provinces, including in sports as horse jockeys, race-car drivers, and cross-country runners. A 1968 Virginia Slims cigarettes advertisement targeting women captured the zeitgeist, cheering, "You've Come a Long Way Baby." But there was still a long way to go. The corridors of power, as in baseball, resided with men. At the dawn of the 1970s, the House was comprised of 13 women, the Senate one. Among state representatives, fewer than 5% were women. And no woman had ever been elected governor in her own right. Amidst this changing cultural direction, Gera's quest had taken on a life of its own. The road extended to an uncertain future, with her sometimes driving events, other times led by them.

Gera's Appeal Board hearing inched forward, gaining steam in 1970. Finally, the Board ruled the NAPBL size requirements as arbitrary, directing they be revised within three months, at which time Gera would be reconsidered. Missing no chance to obstruct, NAPBL appealed the case to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of New York ("Appellate Division").

In March 1971, Gera filed a separate \$25 (now \$177) million lawsuit against organized baseball, naming Commissioner Bowie Kuhn, the NY-P League and McNamara, and NAPBL and Piton. Biaggi, again by her side, said out loud what most would not write: Baseball had virtually destroyed his client's umpiring career.

A month later, the Appellate Division affirmed the Appeal Board's decision that baseball had engaged in sexual discrimination. Unsurprisingly, the NY-P League and NAPBL appealed the ruling to the state Court of Appeals, offering circular, blame-the-victim logic that Gera exhibited a "proclivity" for publicity that demonstrated she was "temperamentally unfit for professional umpiring."¹⁰ Sanity prevailed in January

⁹ William Vance, "Congress Goes to Bat," *Miami Herald*, August 8, 1969.

¹⁰ "N.Y. Court Orders Female Ump Hired," *Washington Post*, January 14, 1972; "Gera's Curves Beating Baseball," *Oneonta Star*, November 23, 1971.

1972 when the Court affirmed the Appellate Division's finding of sex discrimination and need for revised physical standards.

Repeatedly rebuffed in the courts, baseball lowered its bats and forwarded a one-year NY-P League contract. Gera, now 41, had arrived at her destination, set to work her first game in June when the season began. She expressed continued confidence in her ability to umpire, and supportive fans, particularly young girls, provided a welcome psychological boost. But her grueling journey had exacted a heavy toll. \$30,000 (now \$213,000) in lost income over five years of not working, plus expenses. Uncertain legal bills that low umpiring wages would not cover. Brunette hair that had turned gray and fallen out in patches due to stress. Hostile letters and phone calls warning her to stay away from the field.

The league assigned Gera to umpire the opening game in Geneva on June 23, when the Auburn Phillies would take on the Geneva Rangers, then to cover games in Williamsport and Oneonta. Buzz over her tour abounded, with brisk pre-game ticket sales and building anticipation. Geneva, a 17,000-population city hugging Seneca Lake in rural Upstate, prided itself as "The Lake Trout Capital of the World," a self-awarded honor unknown beyond local limits. Yet a more appropriate venue would have been hard to imagine. The city and surrounding Finger Lakes region had been a hotbed of women's and equal rights activism in the previous century, highlighted by the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, which launched the U.S. women's suffrage movement. The following year, Elizabeth Blackwell had become the first woman to earn a medical degree upon graduation from Geneva Medical College. Visitors could learn about these and other significant milestones at The National Women's Hall of Fame in nearby Seneca Falls.¹¹

Gera's husband, sister, and other guests accompanied her to Geneva, which welcomed them at a June 21 season-opening dinner at the Belhurst Castle, a striking late 19th-century three-story, nine bay-wide Romanesque Revival style former mansion converted into a restaurant. Gera spoke briefly about her debut, which would be "the happiest day of my life," thanking God and baseball while noting that her voice was sore from constantly talking with the media since her arrival. When asked if she could cope with tough managers, she confirmed, "I'm not afraid to thumb a manager or player if they get abusive."¹² She did wonder, though, "Umpiring is a team job. I keep asking myself: 'Are the guys going to work with me?' They can hang you if they want to."¹³

So could Hurricane Agnes, which attacked and flooded the Eastern United States, postponing the opener to a re-scheduled doubleheader the following day.¹⁴ However, June 23 still delivered a landmark moment: President Richard Nixon signed into law Title IX of the 1972 Federal Education Amendments, which prohibited sex discrimination at federally-funded institutions, leading to future opportunities for girls and women to participate in sports.¹⁵

¹¹ The Women's Hall of Fame was incorporated in 1969. The first inductions into the Hall occurred in 1973; Gera is not an inductee.

¹² Bill Boyle, "Bernice Gera, 'A Little Nervous But Not Scared,'" *Canandaigua Daily Messenger*, June 22, 1972.

¹³ "Bernice's Biggest Worry: Reception by Fellow Umpires," *Geneva Times*, April 22, 1972.

¹⁴ Agnes was the nation's costliest hurricane at the time, causing damages estimated at \$3.1 billion (now \$14.52 billion) and killing 128.

¹⁵ Title IX updated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned several forms of discrimination in employment but did not address discrimination in education.

Agnes's fury abated somewhat on Saturday, permitting the magic professional baseball moment Gera had been dreaming about for over 10 years. She was assigned to cover the bases for the first seven-inning game and home plate for the second. Her fellow rookie umpiring partner, 6'4", 215-pound, 24-year-old Doug Hartmayer, picked her up at her Chanticleer Motor Lodge room for the five-minute drive to the park. Gera did not bring her chest protector, mask, or shin guards, but indicated that her husband would bring them along separately. Upon arrival, she appeared nervous—"like she was going to an execution rather than a baseball game" per the *Boston Globe*—and declined pre-game interviews with a press swarm including ABC, CBS, NBC, and several national and local newspaper correspondents.¹⁶ A minute or two before 6:30, she followed Hartmayer onto the field, clad in a cap and \$29 (now \$206) men's blue suit she had purchased and altered for the occasion. The virtual sellout crowd of 2,225 cheered, while a group of girls in the bleachers held up a "Right on, Bernice" homemade bedsheet banner featuring the Women's Liberation symbol. Television cameras and photographers crowded along the first baseline.

Gera's evening started off promisingly, despite her admitted rust from not umpiring during her legal ordeal. She made a few routine calls at first and second, which the crowd applauded. The only eventful moment occurred in the second inning when she called time to consult with Hartmayer about moving back a crowd of photographers along the first baseline.

Then the fourth inning arrived. With Auburn runner Terry Ford on second base, John Dawkins hit a line drive to second baseman Jim Pascarella. Pascarella snared the ball and flipped it to shortstop Brian Doyle who beat Ford back to the bag. Gera forgot the force play was in order and called Ford safe since Doyle did not tag him. She immediately realized her error and called Ford out. Not soon enough to prevent controversy, however. Nolan Campbell, the Phillies' 5'7", 32-year-old manager, stormed from the dugout and approached, yelling at Gera even after she admitted her mistake. "That's two mistakes you've made. The first was putting on your uniform," Campbell barked, he claimed in a post-game interview. Gera later disagreed, insisting he said, "The first mistake was you should have stayed in the kitchen peeling potatoes."¹⁷ Gera raised her right arm and forcefully motioned Campbell out of the game for crossing the line from acceptable complaint to personal insult. The crowd howled. Campbell, who had been thrown out nine times the previous season, stalked after Gera, head bobbing, hands in his pockets, as she moved away toward the first baseline. "You're not only a woman, but you've got a quick temper," he added.¹⁸

Hartmayer, meanwhile, stayed behind home plate during the confrontation, declining to intervene on Gera's behalf. "That was her problem," he later explained.¹⁹ As the dispute dragged on, Campbell neared the dugout but refused to completely depart. Finally, Hartmayer moved forward to put his arm around Campbell to assist him off the field.

Eventually the game resumed, but in a now, at times, unsettling fashion. In the bottom of the 4th, Gera called a Rangers baserunner out for oversliding second base, incurring Geneva manager Bill Haywood's

¹⁶ Leigh Montville, "It's Official! Mrs. Gera Quits in Tears After Debut," *Boston Globe*, June 25, 1972.

¹⁷ Norm Jollow, "Bernice's Appearance Brief, Explosive, Mysterious," *Geneva Times*, June 26, 1972; Craig Davis, "Called Out: Major League Baseball Kept Her Out, But Bernice Gera Knew Her Calling," *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, September 15, 1989.

¹⁸ "Bernice's Debut as Ump Also Becomes Her Final," *The Sporting News*, July 8, 1972.

¹⁹ Dave Anderson, "The Lady Was an Umpire," *New York Times*, June 25, 1972.

ire. Auburn's acting manager, Sterling Coward, joined the act, blasting her later in the game for calling a Rangers runner safe at first. She was also criticized for being out of position and failing to understand the procedures for assisting with pitching changes.

Turbulence notwithstanding, fans witnessed history as Gera finished the two-hour, six-minute Rangers 4-1 win and walked off the field. What they did not witness was Gera abruptly seeking out Geneva general manager Joseph McDonough. "I've just resigned from baseball. I'm sorry, Joe." With those few words, she shook his hand, then hastily left the park, briefly talking to a reporter before climbing into a waiting car, leaving the game in tears.²⁰ Game over. Umpiring career over.

As Gera and her guests sped away, confusion reigned. McDonough went to her motel room to try to stop her, but her party had already checked out at 7:30. Meanwhile, an announcement about the resignation and departure was made to the baffled crowd. Elliott Giacobello, a fellow league umpire sitting in the stands, was recruited to take her place. Agnes blessedly returned in the middle of the first, postponing a game rendered superfluous to the outcome everyone cared about.

With Gera on the highway, everyone was left to sort out her "brief, explosive, and mysterious" appearance, as described by the *Geneva Times*.²¹ Speculation abounded that Gera engaged in a conspiracy to umpire just one game, make her point, quit, and then use publicity, television appearances, and/or a potential book deal to sell her story. Even Biaggi was shocked by her conduct. Others filled in the blanks more maliciously. Campbell professed using reasonable tone and language with her, then tossed in, "They should have never let her in the league. Women don't have the strength to withstand the pressure. This is a man's game and it always will be."²² Hayward labelled her a "disgrace to baseball and women."²³ Hartmayer, who had expressed pre-game displeasure at working with Gera, now piled on. "It didn't surprise me that she quit. . . . She was just scared to death."²⁴ He was glad she had resigned, ruling, "The game is too good for people like her."²⁵ As for her run-in with Campbell, "It wasn't a hard game to umpire, really. You could see she just didn't have it," he added, judging her admission of making a mistake as "unethical" and "the cardinal sin of baseball."²⁶

Most press accounts expressed harsh sentiments, too, blaming Gera for disgracing those who arranged her appearance, both teams, the fans, the women's movement, and the game itself. She was compared to Jackie Robinson's well-chronicled triumph over racism in breaking baseball's color barrier and found wanting. In the court of public opinion, she was a grifter or quitter, or both.

At a press conference days later and in lifelong interviews, Gera shared the deeper story, which proved more credible than the accusations levied at her. The first dark cloud loomed on June 23, the morning of the game's original scheduling, when she attended a six-hour-long umpires' meeting. "They acted like they didn't want me around baseball. It was that old chauvinism once more," she explained.²⁷ Later that

²⁰ Norm Jollow, "Hassled Female Ump Quits," *Washington Post*, June 25, 1972.

²¹ Jollow, "Bernice's Appearance Brief, Explosive, Mysterious."

²² Guy Curtright, "Gal Ump Calls Herself Out," *Democrat and Chronicle*, June 25, 1972.

²³ Leo Pinckney, "Lady Umpire Resigns After Working Game," *Auburn Citizen-Advertiser*, June 26, 1972.

²⁴ Curtright, "Gal Ump Calls Herself Out."

²⁵ Brian Biggane, "Mrs. Gera Had No Intention to Finish Job," *Tonawanda News*, June 29, 1972.

²⁶ Leigh Montville, ". . . Mrs. Gera Quits in Tears After Debut," *Boston Globe*, June 25, 1972; Ephron, *Crazy Salad*, 67.

²⁷ Dave Rosenbloom, "Bernice Says Umps 'Were Not Cordial,'" *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, June 27, 1972.

night outside her room, she heard men drinking loudly and talking offensively about her. Fed up, she packed her bags the next morning, mulling over whether to go to the park until her family and friends talked her into it. When Hartmayer later picked her up, she tried to go over signals and the game, but he refused to engage, compounding the previous day's snubs. Her colleagues' "cool resentment," and the animosity experienced before and during the game contributed to her coalescing pre-game decision to umpire the first game and depart.²⁸ "Umpires must work as a team. But I went onto the field alone. I had no partner," she lamented.²⁹ "It was quite evident baseball did not want a woman on the field."³⁰ She insisted she was not a quitter, but rather "I'm just frustrated and disappointed in baseball. My whole life has been baseball . . . I would have shined the player's shoes if they had let me."³¹ Now she was bitter, felt baseball had never given her a fair deal, and no longer cared what people had to say.

Gera also opened up about the greater feminism advances going on around her. During her legal battles, she has been circumspect, even conservative about the issue. "Goodness knows, I'm not a women's libber. I think it's downright nonsense—burning bras and stuff like that," she had claimed, to the chagrin of the women's movement.³² She did not consider herself a crusader, but rather a woman trying to get into baseball because she loved it and wanted to use it to help kids, wishing to win without protest marches. Consequently, activists had mostly declined to embrace her cause. Geneva changed that. Days after the game, both parties joined forces, with the National Organization of Women issuing a three-page press release decrying what their newly-enlisted member had experienced at baseball's hands. Gera described the game's hostile treatment by "sexist operators" as "premeditated."³³ "If they don't want women in baseball, then women should not go to games," she declared, stopping short of calling for a boycott.³⁴

Gera went on to umpire a charity game or two, but her professional career was done. The New York Mets hired her in 1975 to work in promotions and sales and assist the Lady Met Fan Club. A few years later, she and her husband moved to Pembroke Pines, Florida, where she continued her lifelong passion of fundraising for and working with children.

In 1985, Gera was diagnosed with metastatic renal cell cancer. She battled right arm paralysis and surgery and at least 31 rounds of radiation treatment before succumbing in 1992. Some of her ashes were buried at Shea Stadium: the final, undisputed call in a seven-year health battle that should have alerted even the sexist and intellectually lazy that she was anything but a quitter. "Bernice would always say, 'I could beat them in the courts, but I can't beat them on the field,'" her husband quoted in her obituary.³⁵ The spikes Gera wore during her one-game career are preserved at the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

²⁸ "Mrs. Gera Raps Geneva Ball Club," *Geneva Times*, June 26, 1972. Gera claimed she made sure a standby umpire was available, cementing her decision to depart. "Women's Lib Helps Umpire Strike Out," *Washington Post*, June 29, 1972.

²⁹ "Other Umps Chased Out Mrs. Gera," *Syracuse Post-Standard*, June 29, 1972.

³⁰ Al Young, "'Fought Me Until the End,' Claims Former Umpire Gera," *Bridgeport Telegram*, June 29, 1972.

³¹ "Bernice Sours on Baseball," *Oakland Tribune*, June 29, 1972.

³² "Bernice's Biggest Worry: Reception by Fellow Umpires."

³³ "Women's Lib Helps Umpire Strike Out."

³⁴ "Other Umps Chased Out Mrs. Gera."

³⁵ "Bernice Gera: Umpire, 61," *New York Times*, September 25, 1972.

What can we make of Gera's legacy? Her long arc upward followed by a rapid, controversial exit serves as a Rorschach test of how one views baseball, a women's place in it, and what kind of qualities, behavior, and perseverance we should expect from those trying to knock down walls. One thinks of the confusion surrounding another trailblazer who suffered a similar fate: Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-CO), who briefly entered the 1988 Presidential campaign. She carried the dreams of many who gauged her as the first woman with a legitimate shot at becoming President. But those hopes crashed when she officially withdrew at an emotional press conference, claiming she had no path forward amidst organizational and financial obstacles. Caught on camera wiping away tears, she received decades-long hate mail for her decision and vulnerability.

And what of the call reversal, the "cardinal sin" forever linked to Gera? If Hartmayer truly believed that violated one of diamond's tenets, it partially explains why he was not destined for a long career.³⁶ Gera later properly clapped-back at his nonsense, quoting a minor league baseball umpiring manual admonition that "To right a wrong is honorable. Such an act will win you respect."³⁷ Using a wider lens, common sense dictates that the true "cardinal rule" is to get the call correct, which happened. And we should keep in mind that the setting was just a single-A minor league game in rural America. Everyone was learning: players, managers, coaches. And umpires, as evidenced by neither he nor Gera were informed at the umpires' meeting about the League's new experimental designated hitter rules.³⁸

Claims that Gera was a grifter were likewise baseless. Any proceeds she received from public appearances on the lecture circuit or television talk shows were donated to children's causes. Her pay for umpiring the game? \$10.46 (now \$74.15). Her pay if she had lasted the season? \$400 (now \$2,836), plus expenses. And she never did write a book about her experience.

Gera was no Jackie Robinson. But critics past and present neglect to weigh that Robinson was at least wanted by some in baseball: Dodgers owner Branch Rickey, open-minded teammates, and Negro League players aware that his breakthrough could encourage their advancement. Robinson's integration would also bolster his team's competitive advantage, which would likely translate to the box office. On the other hand, baseball's leaders did not need or want Gera, and they did not confront a groundswell of fellow women candidates proving increasingly impossible to ignore.

Currently, women occupy six refereeing slots in the NBA and 42% of those in its developmental league. Two work in the NFL, including one who has officiated a Super Bowl. Only seven women have followed in Gera's professional baseball wake. None have been invited to *The Show*: a damning condition that grimly pinpoints Gera's final destination if she had persevered: dead end. Not a matter of if, just a

³⁶ The Tonawanda (Upstate), New York native graduated from a St. Petersburg, Florida, umpiring academy in February 1972. He finished the 1972 NY-P League season, then umpired in the Midwest League in 1973. Available records indicate no professional umpiring beyond that time.

³⁷ Ephron, *Crazy Salad*, 67

³⁸ The rules allowed two designated hitters for each team. One could be used for the pitchers' lineup spot. The other could bat for any player without that player leaving the lineup. He could bat twice during the game and for different batters, but not twice in any half inning unless his team batted around, in which instance he would be considered as having used only one of his eligible times at bat. Barney Deary, chief of the umpire development program, in attendance at Geneva, said he had not received a copy of the rules and had not discussed them at the June 23 umpires' meeting. This snafu was rectified just before the game when the rules were sorted out and explained to Gera and Hartmayer.

matter of when. We're resigned to, as writer/activist Gloria Steinem wrote in *My Life on the Road*, "be amazed by what is, angered by what isn't, and hooked on what could be."³⁹

A half-century after Gera's achievement, we are left to ponder several possibilities. What if the pre-game umpires' meeting had been more equitable and inclusive? Would it have been helpful for Hartmayer to go to Gera's aid on the field, or would he have been perceived in some quarters as an overbearing man dominating a woman who could take care of herself? Why wasn't a more experienced umpire paired with Gera? What if Gera had umpired the second game? Would she have improved and done an excellent job that would have partially silenced the haters? Or would disputed strike zone calls have exposed her to an even more intense examination? How would she have fared if she had attempted to finish the season? These and other questions intertwine when you try to project an answer for any of them. Alas, we have only the admirable path she travelled along and the imperfect results that occurred to properly weigh, and nothing can be done about that.

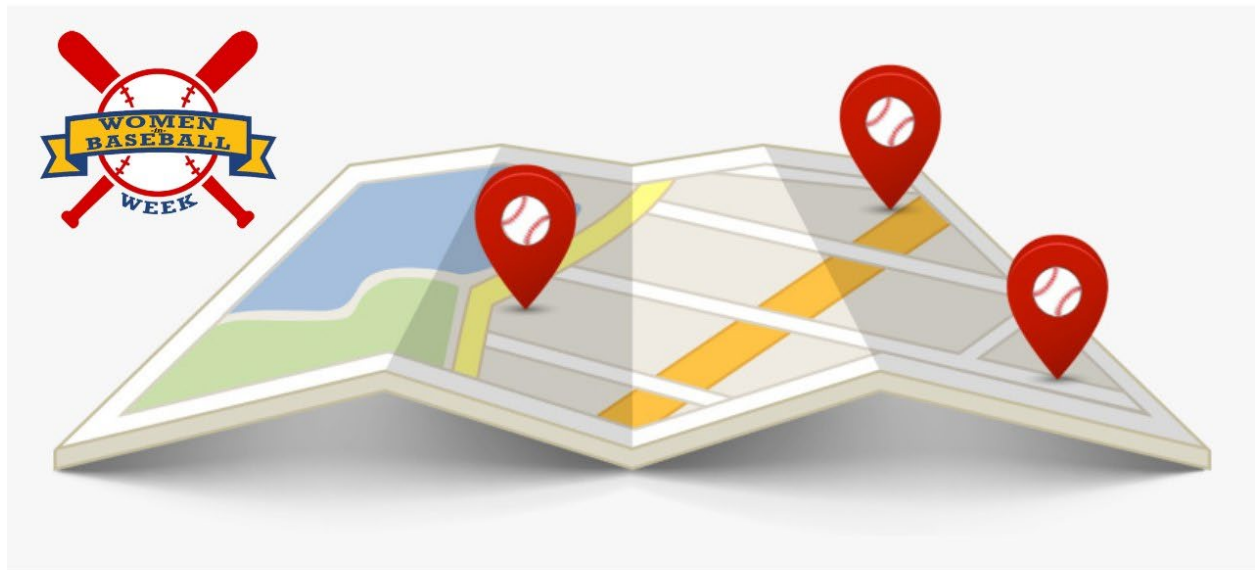
What is undisputed is that Bernice Gera broke the barrier and she was alone on the field when it happened. From that vantage point, she and the few women who have followed her have been allowed on the road but have been prevented from a rewarding, completed journey. That's her legacy. And baseball's.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The most undisputed call is to thank Ken Manyin for his edits and suggestions. Likewise praise to Leslie Heaphy for providing the opportunity to write about a topic that has intrigued me since I was a kid, living near Geneva, wishing, as I still do, my mother had taken me to the game.

DAN VANDEMORTEL became a Giants fan in upstate New York and moved to San Francisco to follow the team more closely. He has written extensively on Northern Ireland political and legal affairs. His baseball writing has appeared in *The National Pastime*, San Francisco's *Nob Hill Gazette*, and other publications. His article "White Circles Drawn in Crayon" (featured in *McFarland Historic Ballparks 05: The Polo Grounds*, 2019) won the 2020 McFarland-SABR Baseball Research Award. Feedback is welcome at giants1971@yahoo.com.

³⁹ Gloria Steinem, *My Life on the Road* (New York: Random House, 2015), xviii.

Chart a course for honoring the
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**WOMEN'S BASEBALL
HERITAGE TRAIL**



womeninbaseballweek.org

Umpires at Work



Sophiyah Liu



Ila Valcarel



Liana Rinx



Amanda Clement

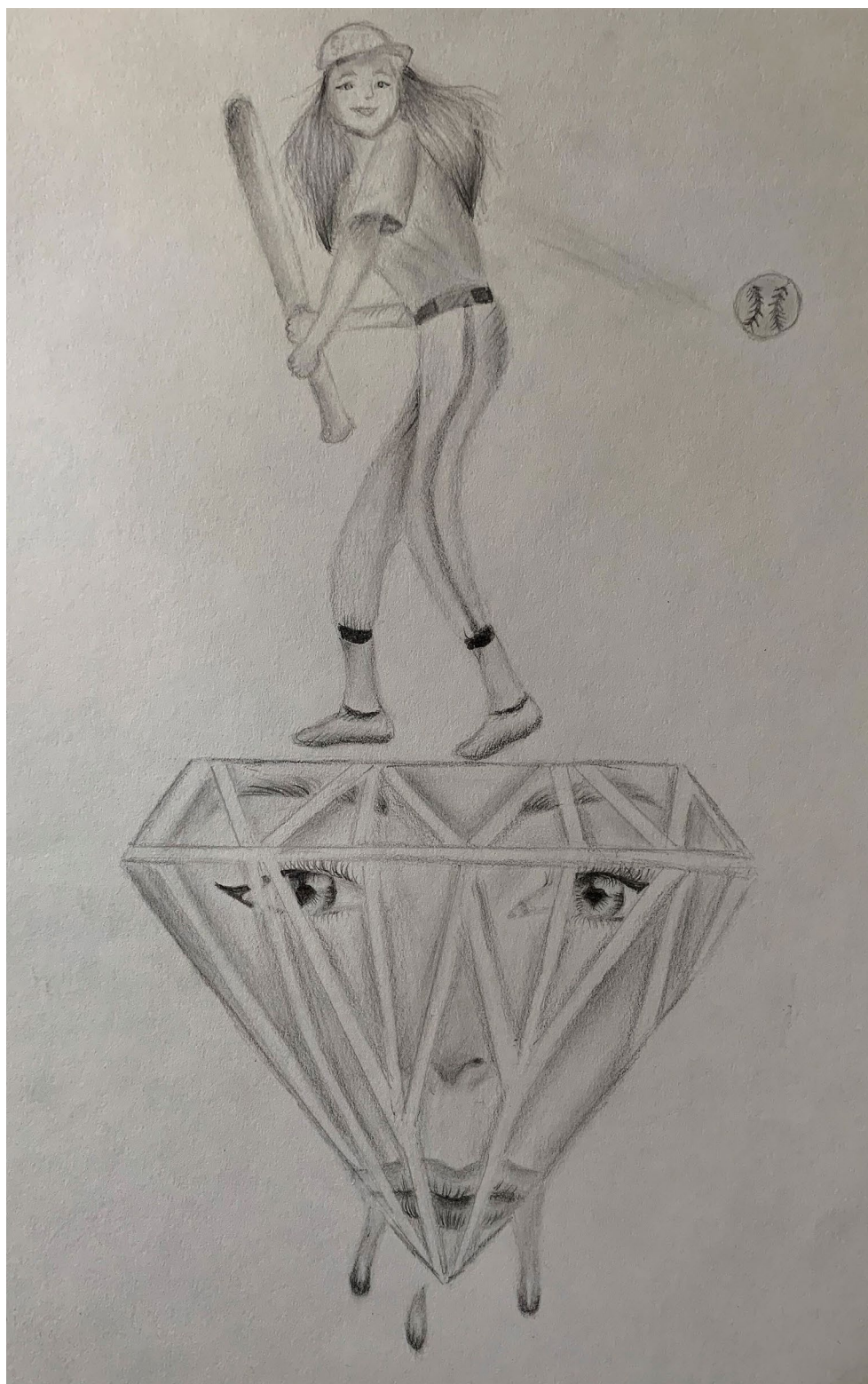
Sample Artwork Entries over the Years



Youth entry 2021- D. Aron Raj



Youth Art 2021- Olivia Roman



Youth Entry—Sarah Khowadry



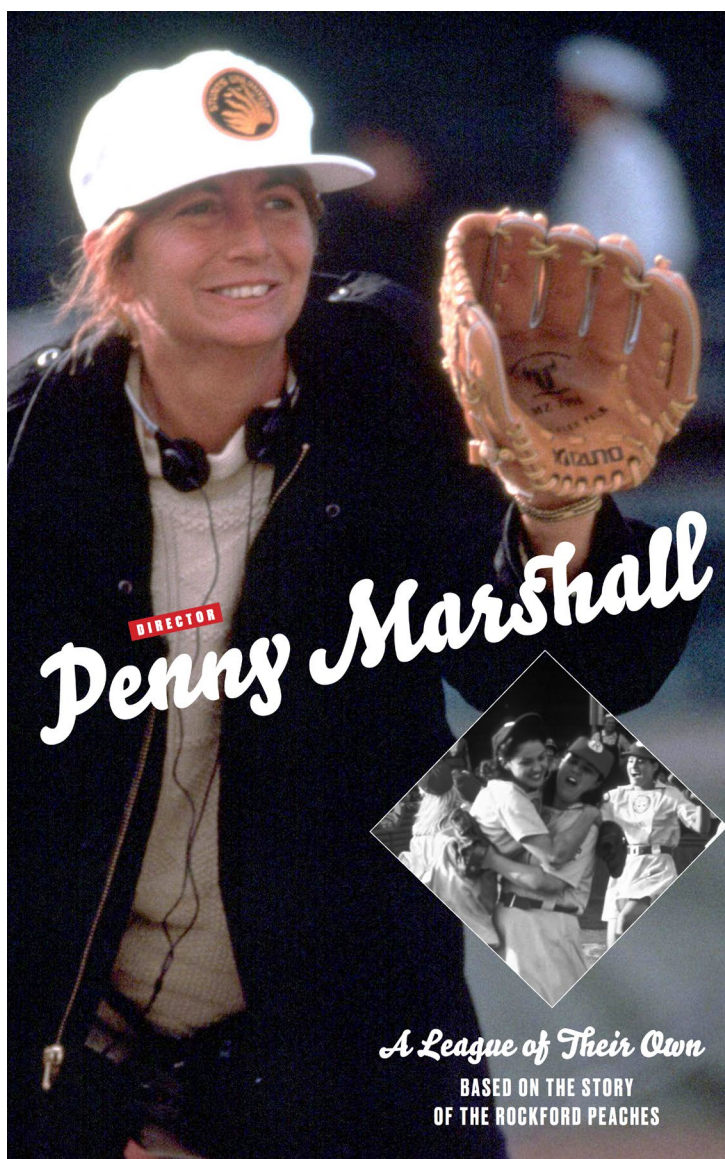
Youth Entry- Nigina Valiboyeva



Bethany Morlan- an Amateur winner



One Tough Out- Joseph Farnham Professional Winner



STEP UP TO THE SPORT



Throw
a Ball
with
SOMEONE

100,000

GIRLS CURRENTLY PLAY BASEBALL,
NO DOUBT INSPIRED BY
A League of Their Own



STEP UP TO THE SPORT



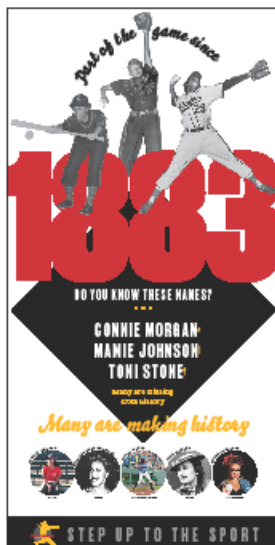
Permanent Pylons in Museum Plaza

Ours is a long, illustrious and diverse history, made up of women from all backgrounds, races, ages and ethnicities. Here at the home of the Rockford Peaches we preserve in glass their likeness and we honor in our hearts the path they paved.

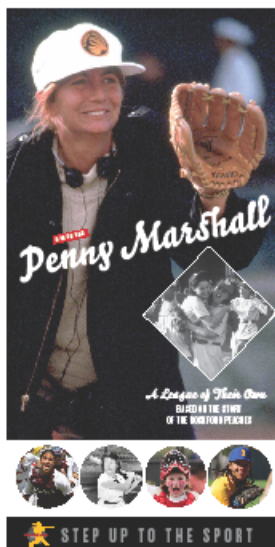
On deck

- Umpires
- International teams
- Media
- Travel teams
- Owners
- Little league
- Standouts

2020



2019



MAMIE PEANUT JOHNSON

2003

I was just as talented and looked just as good playing baseball as the white female players but I was never considered...

THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED WHAT SEGREGATION MEANT."

MO'NE DAVIS 2014

I throw 70 miles per hour. That's throwing like a girl."



Sponsorship



Player



Multiculturalism & Inclusiveness



Marketing



Owner



STEP UP TO THE SPORT



STEP UP TO THE SPORT



places loaded 31

WOMEN ARE
TAKING
THE FIELD
IN 31
COUNTRIES

2018 2015 2004 2000

12 teams competed
in the 2018 Women's
World Cup as Japan
won its 6th consecutive
championship, defeating
Chinese Taipei 6-0.

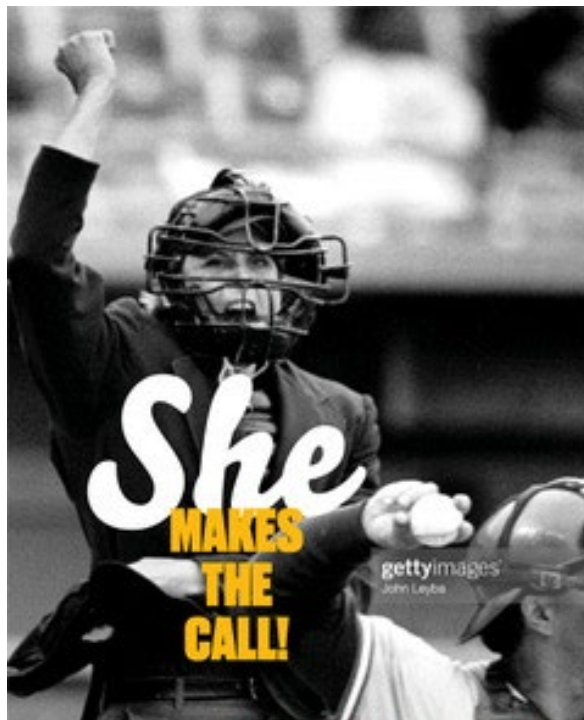
Women's baseball
debuted at the Pan Am
games in July 2015 with
the first game between
Venezuela and the US.

The first Women's
Baseball World Cup was
held in Edmonton, CAN
from 7/30-8/8 2004.
The US won the first
championship 2-0 over
Japan.

On May 1, 2000 the US
National team traveled
to play Team Energen in
Tokyo, Japan. This game
led to the first Women's
World Series being held
in Toronto, CAN in 2001,
which the US won.



STEP UP TO THE SPORT



BASEBALL MADE ONE CONCESSION TO CHANGE IN 2006 WHEN THE RULES COMMITTEE VOTED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRESENCE OF A FEMALE UMPIRE.

"An amendment to Rule 2.00 in the Definition of Terms reads: "Any reference in these Official Baseball Rules to 'he', 'him', or 'his' shall be deemed to be a reference to 'she' 'her' or 'hers", as the case may be, when a person is female."



Bernice

Bernice Gera attended the Florida Baseball School in 1967 but when she applied for a job as a professional umpire she was denied by the National Association of Baseball Leagues. They said she was...

TOO *Short*

Their umpires had to be a minimum of 5 feet 10 inches...

SHE WAS 5 FT 2 IN.

TOO *old*

Their umpires had to be between 22 and 25...

SHE WAS 30.

TOO *thin*

Their umpires had to weigh a minimum of 170 pounds...

SHE WEIGHED 120.

She **SUED, WON IN COURT,**

On March 19, 1969 Gera filed a sex discrimination suit in NY state. Her claim against the NABL was centered on their refusal to hire her as a professional umpire based on her gender. After a long legal battle Gera won in court, leading to her professional debut on June 24, 1972 in Geneva, NY.

AND Umpired FOR A DAY

After one game as the first professional female umpire, Gera resigned and never appeared in another professional game. She cited lack of support and strong resentment among the men she worked with.

CALLS COMMONLY MADE BY UMPIRES



STEP UP TO THE SPORT



STEP UP TO THE SPORT

