Society for American Baseball Research

BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

April 1995 (95–2)

Comments from a Co-Chair

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SABR's annual convention in Pittsburgh is approaching and I hope to see many of you again this year. The Bibliography Committee meeting is scheduled tentatively for Saturday morning, June 17, at 8:30. The meeting should allow us to discuss Committee projects, take suggestions, and answer questions. These newsletters tend to be one-sided pronouncements or hectoring and it's good to have a more reciprocal discussion of the Committee and its proe-jcts.

Given the baseball strike, I expect there will be fewer baseball publications this year, although early returns look fairly strong. Unfortunately, the stuff is still weighted heavily toward Rotisserie guides, stat books, and baseball-card price guides rather than biographies, histories, and other books of substance.

Baseball Online, as you'll see from the accompanying statistics, continues to grow. On the books side, I have been able finally to catch up with the Stakhanovite work of Bernie Esser and Joe Murphy. Bernie worked his way through his substantial collection of biographies and collective biographies. Joe has cataloged virtually all of SABR's publications dating back to 1972. I've also had good input from Ron Replogle, Steve Millman, and several other contributors.

On the periodicals side, Ted Hathaway (5645 Fremont Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55419) has had considerable help from Ron Kaplan, Bob Boynton, Jody Ackerman, Skip McAfee, Garnet Maley, and John McMurray.

As always, much remains to be done. The database has more than 30,000 items, but more than half of them are barely cataloged. There is plenty of work to be done with both books and especially periodicals. Filling out a bibliography entry form every time you finish a book, or a set of forms every time you read an issue of *The Sporting News* or *USA Today Baseball Weekly* is very helpful. Contact Ted or me if you're interested in helping.

Ted is in the initial stages of approaching foundations who might be willing to help us fund a paid employee for Baseball Online. This person would be used to build up the bulk of the project and make it attractive as an online, CD-ROM, or other commercial project. Several letters have been sent out and perhaps when the Committee meets in Pittsburgh, I will be able to give you some more detailed feedback on where this project stands.

I'd also remind everyone that Baseball Online is not the Committee's only project. Frank Phelps (253 Bernard Drive, King of Prussia, PA 19406) has done excellent work in spearheading the project to create indexes for basic baseball research books that were published without them. We have been aiming at compiling indexes for all the Putnam team histories and about half have been done already. The rest of these, plus hundreds of other books, are possibilities. Contact Frank or me if you have any interest in this project.

Again, I hope to see as many of you as possible in Pittsburgh. Otherwise, I'll be making a report in the July 1995 newsletter.

Level	Number	% change over last quarter
Books		
5	2,213	18.9%
4	1,156	13.4%
Other	9,044	-1.8%
Total	12,413	2.7%
Book Sections		
5	4,694	53.5%
4	728	176.8%
Other	34	385.7%
Total	5,456	64.0%
Magazine/newspaper Articles		
5	6,852	32.7%
4	1	0.0%
Other	7,097	15.8%
Total	13,950	23.5%
Total	13,759	36.5%
4	1,885	47.0%
Other	16,175	5.4%
Total	31,819	19.1%

Book Reviews

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LORDS OF THE REALM: THE *REAL* HISTORY OF BASEBALL
John Helyar. New York: Villard Books, 1994. 576p. $24

This isn't *actually* the real history of baseball. After a very brief introduction, Helyar covers the labor/management history of Major League baseball from the beginnings of the Major League Baseball Players Association in 1966, focusing, as the title suggests, on Major League owners. The book's epilogue is set at the 1993 All-Star Game in Baltimore. I found it, in all, a quite absorbing book, full of insights into the culture of baseball.

Of course, it's also the story of a horror show, and one that continues to this day. What does Helyar think is going on? In the introduction, Helyar describes his book (p.xii) as "a study of this quintessential American institution in transition". But from what to what? Though Helyar never says, much of the evidence in the book suggests that the business of Major League baseball has been experiencing the process of modernization. That means that the stakes become much higher, that the whole culture becomes less informal and personal and more commercialized, bureaucratized, professionalized, and rationalized.

Here are a few illustrations from the book. The presence of an independent arbitrator to resolve conflict between players and management caused Buzzy Bavasi to complain (p.109) that the process turned "everything into litigation". Owners resisted any change in the reserve clause because "they wanted the pleasant, paternal relations with players before [Marvin] Miller came along" (p.157). The story of Ruly Carpenter, called "one of the boys" and "the closest owner there was to the players", yet who got out of the game, is a story of the loss of a family atmosphere within Major League baseball (p.253).

The players, as well as the owners, are uneasy with this change. Robin Roberts says (p.552): "For all the players have gained, the

changes took something away from baseball. For me, it was fun and a privilege to be a ballplayer. The union made it a job." Of course, it always was—for the Major Leaguer—a way to make a living, and more—a profession. I suspect that it's these feelings—of resisting modernization—that account in part for the widespread sympathy for the owners' position in the recent strike. Maybe we all want to live in an idealized past, that never was.

But the owners, as Helyar describes them, are not sympathetic; they are alternatively arrogant, stupid, insane. Much of the intelligence among them seems possessed by those most reviled, such as Charles O. Finley and Bill Veeck. In concluding his chapter on the beginnings of free agency, Helyar states (p.215) that "the owners had met the enemy and it was themselves". This might stand as the book's central theme. By the nineties, particularly at the meeting in Kohler, Wis. in Summer 1993, the owners are described (p.541) as "living on differnt planets". Earlier in the year, an owners' meeting is described (p.527) as "simultaneous gridlock and chaos".

Is the recent baseball strike a consequence of a fight among the owners, the resolution of which is an attempt to break the union rather than negotiate with it? Helyar's depiction of the owners provides considerable evidence in favor of that way of understanding the strike. More and more, Major League baseball clubs are bought by rich people who want to be famous, and this is not necessarily consistent with fiscal responsibility. Peter Ueberroth found (p.320) that "the owners knew their teams' won–lost records a lot better than they knew their balance sheets. They all wailed about losing money, but they didn't even know how much they were losing." And some, of course, were signing players to astonishingly high salaries that affected the salary structure of every club. Ted Turner is famous for this practice, but Helyar states that many owners regarded George Steinbrenner, along with their arch enemy Marvin Miller, "father of the modern salary structure".

Too, it's clear from the book that Major League owners don't trust one another. We're used to them crying poverty and not declaring their financial records publicly. One of Helyar's epigraphs is Don Fehr's statement (p.ix) that, according to management, two things are always true: "You never have enough pitching, and nobody ever made money." I was startled to find that, additionally, owners don't share financial data with each other (p.497), and even when they were in collusion to hold down salaries in the 1980s they lied to each other about the size of their salary offers to free agents.

Finally, there is the question of revenue sharing, the most recent focus of all the owners' troubles with each other. Helyar contrasts Major League baseball and pro football with respect to revenue sharing. In baseball there is "local-think"; in the NFL, there is "league-think", both in marketing the product and sharing television revenue (p.316). Major League baseball has arrived at one (though Helyar points out that they have lots to learn about marketing), but not the other. Helyar cites (p.522) a minority report from baseball's Economic Study Committee as the greatest wisdom on the subject of revenue sharing: "a governance structure of professional baseball clubs that is incapable of enforcing greater revenue sharing is *the* problem". I wonder if the owners haven't decided, rather than face this problem, to bust the union instead (Helyar doesn't say).

One of the curiouser dimensions of Helyar's book, for me, is the unusually sympathetic light in which the owners' union busters (John Gaherin, Ray Grebey, Richard Ravitch) appear. Helyar describes Ravitch (p.471) as "the man who might knock out the union". But Helyar's treatment of Gaherin reveals the position each of the three are in. He describes Gaherin (p.35) as "a recent arrival from the real world". And he gives a sense of Gaherin's growing understanding of his own position which applies to all three (p.31):

"The labor-relations structure being built by baseball was curious. Perhaps, he [Gaherin] told himself, he just didn't understand this industry yet. Only after he'd taken the job, only after he'd come to understand the industry all too well, did the shape of the structure become clear. It was a scaffold, and he was standing on a trap door."

As we now know, even the man Helyar has occasion to refer to as "poor Dick Ravitch" (p.525), is now a *former* employee of the owners.

One of the dimensions of Helyar's book that remains mysterious to me is his treatment of the economics of Major League baseball. Not that anyone else has had much luck with this subject, though the economic studies I've read suggest that Major League baseball is much healthier economically than it pretends to be. The basic problem is a lack of information, and when figures do emerge, they are immediately challenged by one side or another. (Could it be that the recent strike might have been resolved if only the owners and players could have agreed on just how much income Major League baseball brings?) Helyar himself suggests an economic history of baseball's last 30 years without always telling us how he arrived at this conclusion. He tells us (p.214), for instance, that, in describing the first year of free agency, salaries amounted to a scant 25% of revenues in the early seventies but "there was plenty of room for players to catch up and owners to continue to prosper". By 1984, according to Helyar (p.308), owners, who "had been crying poverty before the 1981 strike", were now "really experiencing it". In 1992, he reports (p.495) baseball's economy as "badly listing". Maybe he's right, but us poor newspaper readers have got to wonder about the new million-dollar deals cut with players during the strike. What is the health of the industry?

Perhaps it's the same as the health of American industry as a whole, traveling a thin line between boom and bust, in the throes of radical change. My own guess is, we won't go back to the good old days, no matter how much the owners appear to want to. What will happen to the players' union? Though Helyar's is a book about the owners, the players' union—and particularly Marvin Miller—get a considerable portion of his attention. For Helyar, the union is another intrusion of the real world into the baseball owners' world; but he also criticizes its recent actions for intransigence, which he associates with Miller's continuing influence. He has particularly interesting things to say about the supposed greediness of the modern player. He begins by citing Ty Cobb's 1925 remark (p.ix) that "most of the players are in the game for the money that's in it". Helyar notices that this image has become in part a marketing ploy (p.532):

"Michael Jordan was no less self-centered and no more virtuous than any baseball player, and his income was considerably higher. Yet the NBA had marketed him beautifully as a genial Superman in designer sneakers.

"Baseball owners, obsessed with denouncing the overpaid players, never did that. As agent Scott Boras once put it, 'If the players were a can of Campbell's soup, the owners would roll it down the aisle, step on it, kick it, call it overrated and overpriced, and then stick it on a shelf and try to sell it.'"

Helyar also senses a tradition of attitudes among the fans toward players' salaries (p.120): " ... when it came to the National Pastime, people found something uniquely immoral about money. Baseball players were supposed to be folk heroes, not union members. They were supposed to consider themselves lucky to play this game for a living."

Finally, Helyar makes a nice distinction regarding the players' current greediness (p.307): " ... players were now horribly money-conscious. It wasn't that they were greedy—though some were—but rather that salaries were the new basis of the pecking order. For ultra-competitive, ultra-proud players, it was how you measured who was the Big Dog. Marvin Miller had started it all by prying open the secrets of the payroll. Salary arbitration, 1980s style, ultimately made comparative pay an open, obsessive matter." It's hard to reduce all this to simple greed on the part of the players.

Helyar has written an important and fascinating book on one dimension of the culture of Major League baseball. He's based it on interviews "with more than two hundred people in the baseball business" (p.xii). It's not complete; the crisis it describes has intensified and continues since Summer 1993 when his narrative ends. But the information it contains will be an enormous help in balanc-

ing the accounts of Bowie Kuhn in *Hardball* and Marvin Miller in *A Whole Different Ball Game*, and in augmenting Lee Lowenfish's account of Major League baseball's labor relations in *The Imperfect Diamond.*

THE WRONG SEASON
Joel Oppenheimer. Indianapolis & New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1973. 165p.

I reread this book annually; I guess for most of us fans it nearly always turns out to have been the wrong season. Our hopes for our team are sooner or later dashed, our fears realized. There's only one champion each year. *The Wrong Season* is a fan's account of following his team through a single season, in Oppenheimer's case, the 1972 New York Mets. What an unfortunate team! The wonder is that Oppenheimer's book remains so fresh after more than 20 years, and, in this reader's case, after more than 20 readings. But I wouldn't bother to write about it but for the fact that 1972 was the year of the first players' strike and Oppenheimer has some things to say about that which may be useful for us as we endured the recent strike.

Just a single, eight-page chapter of *The Wrong Season* is devoted to the strike, but in a way it's an epitome of Oppenheimer's views about baseball as a whole. From his perspective, there are three points to be made about the strike: 1) he is all for the players and against the owners—he is on the side of labor, not capital; 2) he distinguishes between the game of baseball and the corporate entity of Major League baseball; and 3) he sees the ballplayer as something more than a union member.

That Oppenheimer ends his chapter on the 1972 strike (p.30) with the phrases "off the bosses! up the players! no god, no master, one big union!" is perhaps all we need to say about his pro-labor, even radical, stance. But it's also important to realize that he's taken into account the limitations of that stance. Earlier in the chapter he admits (p.25–26) "sure, I find it hard to bleed for a yo-yo jock making a lot of money for playing a game, but if i had to choose i'd rather bleed for them than phil wrigley or cbs, you betcha." (Oppenheimer disdains the upper case.)

Oppenheimer doesn't want us to mix up the game of baseball with the corporate entity of Major League baseball. This also emerges from his irritation with the owners (p.26):

"the owners keep talking about how they're doing it for me, how the players are going to destroy the game. i think they don't understand something. baseball will survive or die through the kids, like with any other game. if the kids play it, get turned on by it, then we'll have baseball. if they start playing football or soccer or pool instead, and don't care about baseball, baseball will die."

It may be useful nowadays (I wrote this on Babe Ruth's 100th birthday, when negotiations between owners and players appeared to have arrived at the same point at which the hockey owners locked the players out) to turn this idea on its head, to remember that baseball, the game, will survive whatever happens at this point to Major League baseball, and that we could well end up with something better if the present corporate structure collapsed. It's highly unlikely; we're much more likely to end up in the sort of upscale, theme-park utopia hardly anyone can afford that's described by Jack Sands and Peter Gammons in *Coming Apart at the Seams: How Baseball Owners, Players & Television Executives Have Led Our National Pastime to the Brink of Disaster*. My own impulse, and I suspect it would be Oppenheimer's too, is to hope for disaster. Is there any other way to preserve, as Reggie Jackson noted during his 1993 Hall of Fame induction speech, "the humanity that is unique to the game"? Oppenheimer (p.71) could look at the hoopla surrounding Willie Mays' return to New York City and "divest" the event "of its bread and circuses outer coating and see beneath it to the human beauty". But the bloodbath of the 1972 Olympics stopped him. "the simple fact," he wrote (p.135), "is that the games have foundered in a sea of nationalism and commerce and that it's no longer possible for a man simply to try to outdo his fellow man in a physical contest."

Few would argue that baseball is not now foundering in that same sea of commerce, but would Oppenheimer join those who condemn both parties, who argue that the workers are now as bad as the bosses? John Helyar in *Lords of the Realm* draws a lovely analogy (p.532) between the 1994–95 contract dispute and the ending of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: "The pigs, who'd once led a barnyard rebellion against the oppressive farmers, now shared many of their traits and, at the end, were sharing a sumptuous meal with them. Wrote Orwell, 'The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.'"

This isn't the situation Major League baseball is in, but it might well be. The fans are certainly "the creatures outside", and maybe we should be thankful the two parties haven't yet gotten around to sharing that sumptuous meal. And I suspect that Oppenheimer, for one, would still be able to distinguish the players from the owners. In *The Wrong Season* he says (p.26) "nobody ever went to the stadium to watch connie mack wave his scorecard around". The players, for Oppenheimer, differ from the owners in that they actually produce what we want to watch; they are producers, craftsmen, even artists, and therefore of a different order from the owners, "the bosses".

John Poff, in "Casey Revisited: The Culture of Baseball" (*Elysian Fields Quarterly*, 1994, v.12, no.4, p.3–5), makes an argument of which I suspect Oppenheimer would approve. He distinguishes between baseball players ("craftsmen who tend to have a union mentality") and football players ("warriors" used to obeying orders). The notion of baseball as a trade or a profession is one which might, for Oppenheimer, redeem the players from the charge of greediness. If there's money to be made, they who produce ought to make it.

Oppenheimer loved following Major League baseball—every page of *The Wrong Season* proves that—but my guess is he would have hoped for a settlement that reduced the "bread and circuses" aspect of the corporate entity and enhanced the game's "human beauty". That's probably too much to hope for. Another very different book, Ted Vincent's *The Rise and Fall of American Sport: Mudville's Revenge*, recently reissued by the Univ. of Nebraska Press, makes many of these same points about games and their modern corporate entities.

WALT WHITMAN'S NATIVE REPRESENTATIONS
Ed Folsom. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994.

This book contains the latest version of Folsom's essay on the poet's response to the emerging national game, here called simply "Whitman and Baseball". It first appeared in *The Iowa Review* (Spring–Summer 1980, v.11, no.2–3, p.68–80) as "America's 'Hurrah Game': Baseball and Walt Whitman" and then in *Arete: The Journal of Sport Literature* (Fall 1984, v.II, no.1, p.43–62) as "'The Manly and Healthy Game': Walt Whitman and the Development of American Baseball". Four pages of illustrations accompany the text in *Arete*. *The Iowa Review* version has a "bibliographic note" but no footnotes; the *Arete* version has a slightly expanded text and 45 footnotes.

"Whitman and Baseball" is a considerably expanded version of the *Arete* essay. There is a new introductory section treating how other writers have understood Whitman's relation to baseball. The descriptions of the development of 19th century baseball are more specific and extended, especially the professionalization and specialization of play, the opportunities for expression of male–male affection that the team sport afforded, the balance of individual skills and team effort, and the notion of the ball field as a transformed wilderness (p.6):

"The early development of baseball—its democratic movement away from a gentleman's game into a game for the working class, its increasing speed and difficulty, its continental expansion, even its role as amusement for Civil War troops—all pleased Whitman,

but its later development into a game of specializations, pitching deceptions, and professional disputations disheartened him. His lifelong response to the game paralleled his response to America as his early ideals gave way to a disturbing sense that something somewhere had gone wrong: greed and specialized selfishness had crept into all aspects of society, and their appearance in baseball, the ritual of national sport, underscored the pervasiveness of the problem."

Thus Folsom's thesis. Certainly Whitman is by no means the last to respond to baseball in this way, but Folsom's point (p.53) is that Whitman "was one of the first of our writers, perhaps *the* first, to recognize the vital significance of baseball to America".

Elsewhere in the book, Folsom tells (p.x–xi) of his first encounter with Whitman—on a baseball card at the age of eight in the mid-1950s. And he makes the transition from Whitman and baseball to Whitman and American Indians with a brief account of the career of Lou Sockalexis. "Whitman and Baseball" is an essential text for those interested in the relation of the game to the country's literature. It's also a useful adjunct to the academic historical accounts of the period: Melvin Adelman's *A Sporting Time*, George Kirsch's *The Creation of American Team Sports*, and especially Warren Goldstein's *Playing for Keeps*, the last of which Folsom cites frequently.

"Author Behind the Author" Baseball Trivia Quiz

Jon Daniels
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The following baseball people have co-authored books with (or been assisted by) writers. Match the baseball person with the co-author and collaborative book. Answers at top right of the page.

Baseball person	Co-author	Book title
Jackie Robinson	___	___
Dominic DiMaggio	___	___
Bill Veeck	___	___
Kirby Higbe	___	___
Ralph Houk	___	___
Rogers Hornsby	___	___
Ted Williams	___	___
Bob Gibson	___	___
Tony Conigliaro	___	___
Donald Davidson	___	___
Bowie Kuhn	___	___
Ron LeFlore	___	___

Co-author	Book title
a. Martin Quigley	a. *One in a Million*
b. Charles Dexter	b. *Ballplayers are Human, Too*
c. Jim Hawkins	c. *Real Grass, Real Heroes*
d. Bill Gilbert	d. *Caught Short*
e. Jesse Outlar	e. *From Ghetto to Glory*
f. Carol Rowan	f. *Seeing It Through*
g. Phil Pepe	g. *My Kind of Baseball*
h. J. Roy Stockton	h. *My Turn at Bat*
i. Martin Appel	i. *Hustler's Handbook*
j. Ed Linn	j. *Hardball*
k. John Underwood	k. *Wait Till Next Year*
l. Jack Zanger	l. *The High Hard One*

Answers to Trivia Quix

Baseball person	Co-author	Book title
Jackie Robinson	Carol Rowan	*Wait Till Next Year*
Dominic DiMaggio	Bill Gilbert	*Real Grass, Real Heroes*
Bill Veeck	Ed Linn	*Hustler's Handbook*
Kirby Higbe	Martin Quigley	*The High Hard One*
Ralph Houk	Charles Dexter	*Ballplayers are Human, Too*
Rogers Hornsby	J. Roy Stockton	*My Kind of Baseball*
Ted Williams	John Underwood	*My Turn at Bat*
Bob Gibson	Phil Pepe	*From Ghetto to Glory*
Tony Conigliaro	Jack Zanger	*Seeing It Through*
Donald Davidson	Jesse Outlar	*Caught Short*
Bowie Kuhn	Martin Appel	*Hardball*
Ron LeFlore	Jim Hawkins	*One in a Million*

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