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# Society for American Baseball Research

## BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

July 1999 (99-3)

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### Comments from the Chair

**Andy McCue**

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We had a very successful convention in Scottsdale, Ariz. We saw what I predict will be the best game of Jose Jimenez' career and concluded a good deal of SABR, Bibliography Committee, and RBI business while meeting with old friends and making some new ones. Welcome new member Richard Saylor (135 East Main, Apt. A, Dallastown, PA 17313; phone 717/246-8033; e-mail yu906@juno.com) to the Committee.

Personally, it was a highly successful convention because I was privileged to meet novelist Mark Harris. I found him to be very down-to-earth, amusing, and, thank goodness, quite spry. I keep dreaming Henry Wiggen will come back for his Hall of Fame induction and reintroduce the Huck Finn of the 20th century.

The Committee's formal annual report is published below.

Nineteen members attended our Committee meeting. Skip McAfee gave an update on the book indexing project. Joe Murphy prepared indexes for Tom Meany's *The Magnificent Yankees* (1952) and Babe Pinelli & Joe King's *Mr. Ump* (1953). Alain Usereau prepared an index to Claude Raymond's *La Troisieme Retrait*. I talked with Len Levin about SABR's Research Library: he noted many requests for the Putnam team history indexes and is currently receiving a bit of traffic for the *I Had a Hammer* (Hank Aaron's autobiography) index prepared by Roger Erickson.

Ted Hathaway presented RBI volunteer awards to Brad Sullivan, Bernie Esser, Steve Milman, Terry Sloope, Tim Cashion, Joe Murphy, Bob Boynton, and Terry Smith. A later meeting about the RBI project drew six members where Ted talked about the future of the project.

We decided to begin posting *Current Baseball Publications* on the website. We have not been as successful in soliciting subscriptions as we had hoped so it seems better to make it readily available for a broader readership than it is receiving with the newsletter. The site will also contain back issues, as editor Rich Arpi has been keeping them electronically. I'll pass out the address in the next newsletter after we have it set up.

### Annual Report of the Bibliography Committee, 1998-99

**Andy McCue**

Chairman, SABR Bibliography Committee

The Bibliography Committee was founded in 1983 by Frank Phs and seeks to discover, organize, and provide information about

books and other research materials that might be of interest to SABR members and other baseball researchers. The Committee currently has 72 members working on a variety of projects.

Our largest and most important project is Research in Baseball Index (RBI), headed by Ted Hathaway, with assistance from Andy McCue and Tim Cashion. RBI is an annotated, electronic catalog of baseball research materials. Early in 1999, RBI surpassed 100,000 entries. It now includes more than 17,700 books and more than 104,000 magazine and newspaper articles, book sections, videos, poems, and other items. The database covers items from *Porter's Spirit of the Times* published in the 1850s to books and articles published this spring.

The database has been accomplished through the work of a dedicated corps of volunteers, featuring Brad Sullivan, Bernie Esser, Terry Sloope, Ron Kaplan, Steve Milman, Bob Boynton, and Terry Smith. In addition, sales of the database to researchers as well as payments for individual searches of RBI have brought almost \$1300 into SABR's coffers in the past 12 months.

Committee members also continued to turn out two of the Committee's longest-standing projects. Rich Arpi commenced his 12th consecutive year of producing *Current Baseball Publications* (CBP), a quarterly bibliography with an annual compilation. CBP has been produced by the Committee since 1986, when it was started by Joe Lawler. It records baseball books and magazines published during the year. CBP is distributed with the Committee's quarterly newsletter, which has been edited ably by Committee vice-chair Skip McAfee since Dec. 1988. The newsletter also contains Terry Smith's fine book reviews, as well as those by other members of the Committee.

Ted Hathaway, with considerable help from Terry Sloope, upgraded the Committee's web page ([www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm/](http://www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm/)) during the past year. It contains the full texts of Committee newsletters as well as more than 70 book reviews prepared by Committee members since 1992.

Committee members continued to add to the number of indexes we have produced for significant baseball books that were published without them. This year's crop of 15 brought the total to 40. Another 10 are in preparation. In addition, we have reached agreement with the Univ. of Nebraska Press to produce indexes for its baseball reprints beginning in 2000 with two Roger Kahn books: *A Season in the Sun* (1977) and *Good Enough to Dream* (1985). A similar agreement is possible with Southern Illinois Univ. Press. The past year's indexers and number of books indexed were Roger Erickson (2), Skip McAfee (6), Dick Miller (1), Joe Murphy (3), Brad Sullivan (1), and Alain Usereau (1). All indexes are available through Len Levin's SABR Baseball Library.

### Research in Baseball Index (RBI) 1999 Report

**Ted Hathaway, Andy McCue, and Tim Cashion**  
*RBI Project Co-Directors*

*More than 100,000 records!* This milestone has been reached by the indexers of RBI!

First proposed more than nine years ago and then starting its growth in Fall 1992, RBI has grown to be the largest repository of information on baseball literature. While we still have "a long way to go" (as you are doubtless weary of hearing), we believe we can rightfully claim now to be "*The Readers Guide* to Baseball Literature" (apologies to the H.W. Wilson Co.).

RBI is an ongoing project of the Bibliography Committee to catalog the entirety of baseball literature, from the earliest reference to the present day. The index includes books, magazine articles, programs, pamphlets, films and videos, recordings, songs, cartoons, poems, and anything else that may be of interest to the baseball fan or researcher.

## Status of the database

- The RBI database is divided currently into three parts reflecting the three principal types of information sources: Books; Book Sections (or chapters); and Articles.

- RBI has grown over the past seven years from zero to 122,372 cataloged records, comprising 17,712 books (14.5%), 12,018 book sections (9.8%), and 92,642 articles (75.7%).

- In terms of sheer *coverage* of existing Book titles, this database is nearest to completion. We estimate that more than 80% of all books ever published on baseball are now indexed in RBI. Surveys of universal bibliographic databases such as WorldCat and OCLC support this estimate. Only about 37% of the books cataloged for RBI have been recorded in full detail, but it should be noted that the majority of the remaining 63% consists of media guides, yearbooks, and instructionals.

- The Book Sections database has grown steadily over time and will likely to continue to do so. In addition to containing parts of baseball works, there is also a host of sports and nonsports publications that contain significant sections on baseball. Many of these have been cataloged already.

- The Articles database has experienced the most dramatic growth of the three databases in recent years. See the accompanying list of significant periodicals covered in RBI.

## History of RBI

The project was first proposed by Ted Hathaway to the Bibliography Committee in April 1990 and to the SABR membership at the 1990 convention in Cleveland. A subcommittee was formed within the Committee to study the project. The following two years were spent on the creation of a cataloging manual and a list of terms (the-saurus) used to identify the main topics of each item to be cataloged; this was accomplished by the 1992 SABR convention in St. Louis. It was then proposed that the project would attempt a "test" cataloging of a year's worth of publications (both books and periodicals) to improve the effectiveness of the cataloging manual, measure the usefulness of the database, and determine the Committee's ability to successfully attract volunteers to work on the project.

In the following months, several SABR members volunteered and nearly 5000 books and magazine articles were cataloged. The cataloging manual and thesaurus were improved significantly and the database itself was first demonstrated to the SABR board of directors and the Bibliography Committee membership at the 1993 SABR convention in San Diego. The SABR board sanctioned "Baseball Online" (as RBI was then called) as an official SABR project and approved the use of SABR funds for photocopying and mailing expenses and for the use of two pages of *The SABR Bulletin* to attract additional volunteers to work on the project. The solicitation garnered dozens of responses from the SABR membership. Many additional responses were elicited through advertisements over the Internet and in baseball and sports publications (e.g., *Baseball America* ran a brief article describing the project).

By the time of the 1994 SABR convention in Arlington, Texas, the size of the database had increased fivefold to more than 24,000 records. In 1996, the name of the project was changed to "Research in Baseball Index" to reflect more accurately the nature and purpose of the database.

We also decided to explore ways of making RBI available to SABR members and the general public. The RBI Data Service was established and advertised first on the World Wide Web in Nov. 1996, and again in *The SABR Bulletin* the following January. This service provided searches of the RBI database through an intermediary, along with a modest fee for obtaining the information from the database. To date, the RBI Data Service has received more than a thousand requests, with more than 200 paying customers, resulting in receipts for SABR totalling more than \$1400.

In Jan. 1998, a CD-ROM recordable drive was purchased and after making numerous corrections and updates to the database, RBI

was deemed ready for distribution by Spring 1998. Since the first sale at the 1998 SABR convention, 14 copies have been sold, with receipts totalling \$1115.

## Volunteers

RBI has always been a volunteer effort. Only its directors have received some compensation (reimbursement for office expenses, mainly mailing and photocopying). RBI's directors have always sought volunteer catalogers for the project (indeed, co-director Tim Cashion began as a volunteer cataloger). Many Bibliography Committee members and nonmembers have contributed to the project, although the great majority of the work has been accomplished by only a half-dozen persons, including the project co-directors. RBI volunteers of note (with number of records cataloged):

Volunteer	No. records	Books	Book sections	Articles
Brad Sullivan	35,407	48	125	35,234
Bernie Esser	4,439	1,581	2,710	148
Joe Murphy	3,208	186	2,779	243
Terry Sloope	2,669			2,669
Bob Boynton	1,246	43	26	1,177
Terry Smith	939	11	243	685
John McMurray	813			813
Steve Milman	747	318	359	70
Ray Lisi	622			622
Skip McAfee	608			608
Ron Replogle	499	115	328	56
Ron Kaplan	449	46	59	344
Suzanne Wise	388			388
Virgil Diodato	383			383
David Marasco	382			382
Steve Roney	309	4	246	59
Jerry Kirsch	305			305

## RBI trends

If we assume that RBI continues to grow in the same manner as before, we will see the following patterns develop:

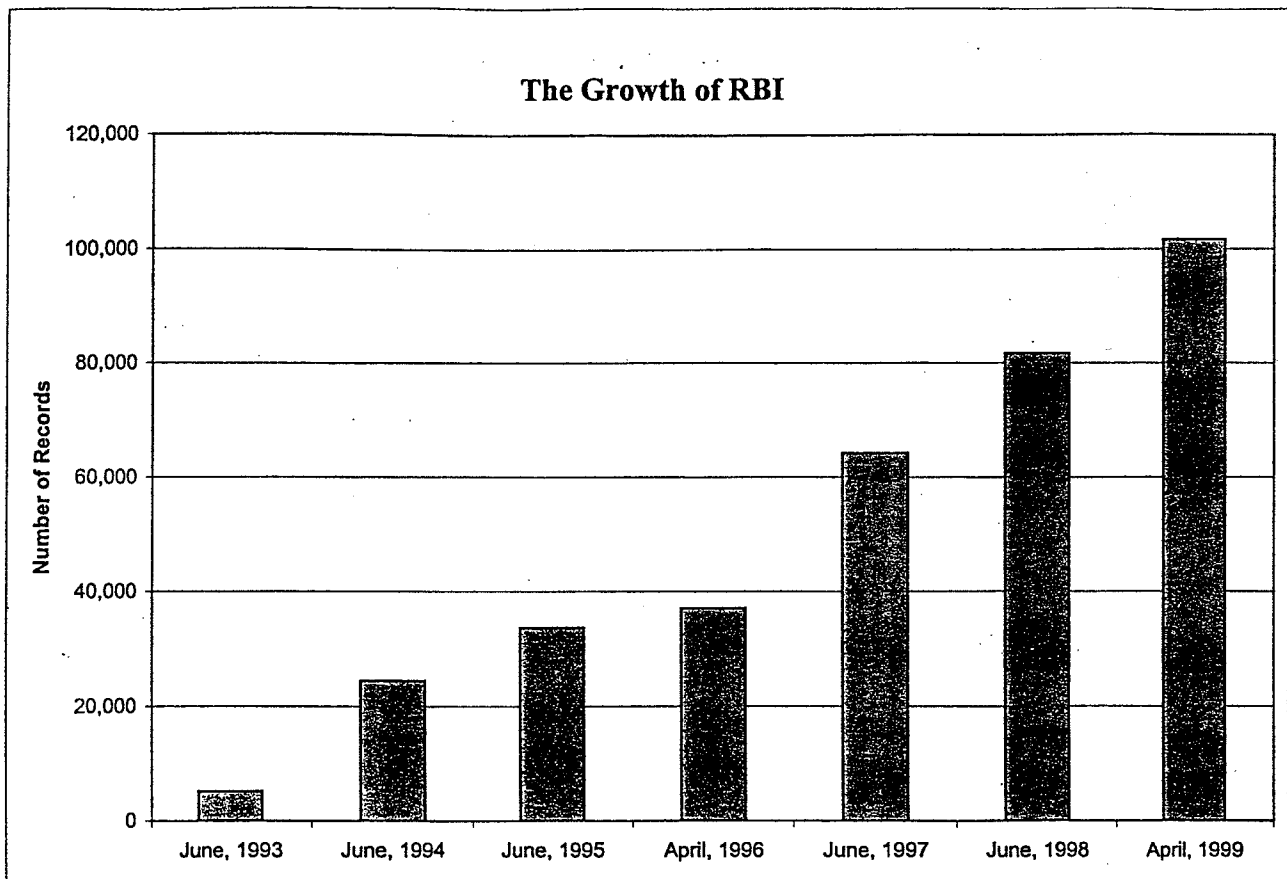
- The Books database will continue to grow slowly as new titles are published each year and various older titles are found and added. More significantly, a steadily increasing number of existing records will be improved as more books are completely cataloged. Better access to the content of books will be the result and the usefulness of this database will increase.

- The Book Sections database will also continue to grow, but perhaps at a slower pace. This database was set up to address biographical and team history compilations, certain kinds of anthologies and collections, and the many books that contain sections on baseball along with other subjects. The number of these kinds of sources is more finite than other kinds of baseball books. Furthermore, most of the current records in this database are fully cataloged. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect an eventual "completion" of this database (excepting newly published titles). It will likely also remain the smallest of the three databases.

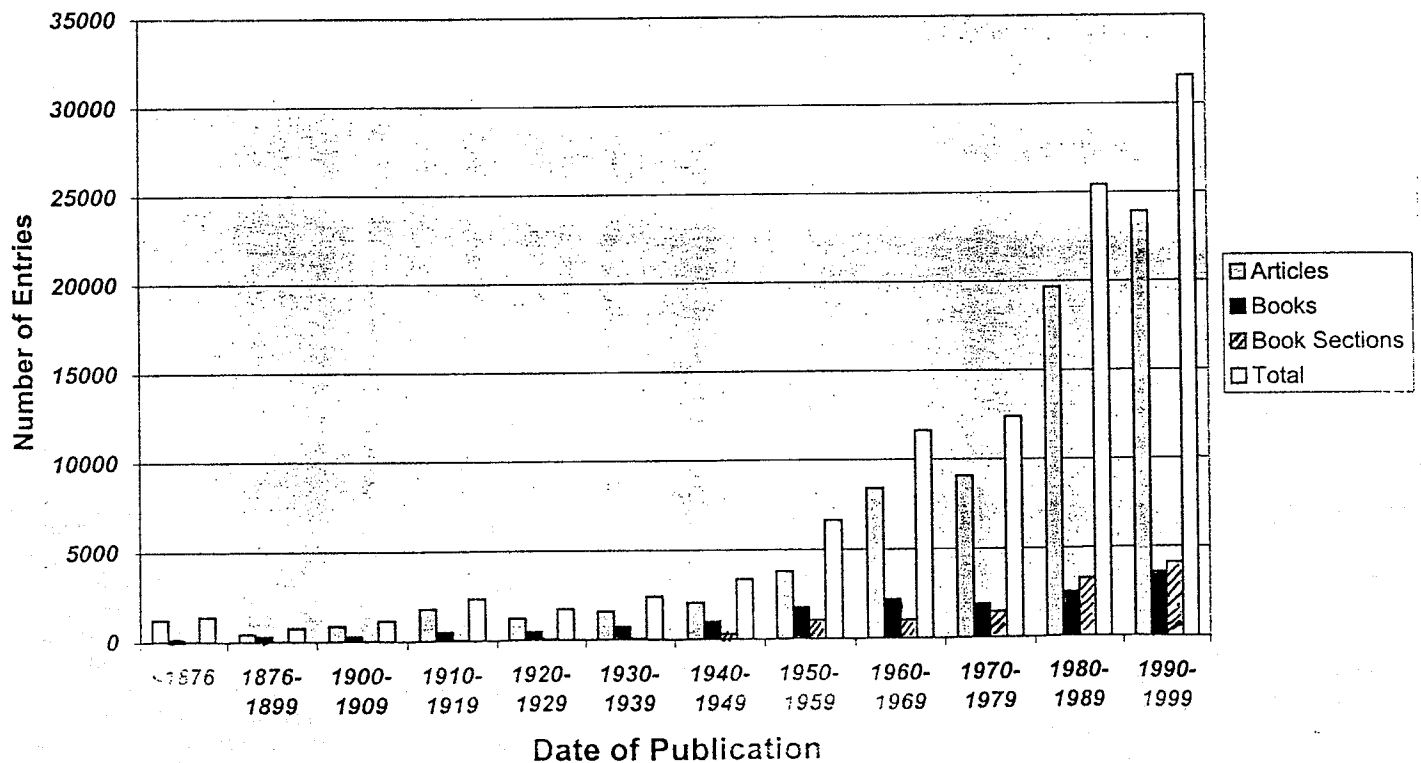
- The Articles database represents the Labors of Hercules for this project. The previously mentioned numbers for *The Sporting News* graphically illustrate this activity. Based on these numbers, we could estimate that TSN alone might result in a quarter of a million cataloged records. However, what has been done with TSN is significant, and much work has been done toward the completion of many other periodicals.

## For further information

Members interested in working on the RBI project should write to: RBI, 3536 Orchard Lane, Minnetonka, MN 55305; or [sabrri@baldeagle.com](mailto:sabrri@baldeagle.com).



## RBI Content by Date of Publication



<u>No. records</u>	<u>Periodical (years completed)</u>
324	<i>Advertising Age</i> (1958-1995)
86	<i>American Boy</i> (1900-1906, 1913)
159	<i>American Legion magazines</i> (1919-1941)
93	<i>American Magazine</i> (1906-1956)
952	<i>Athletic Journal</i> (1922-1987)
885	<i>Baseball America</i> (1991)
145	<i>Baseball Australia</i> (1992-1994)
2229	<i>Baseball Digest</i> (1954, 1972-1976, 1988-1993)
1317	<i>Baseball Magazine</i> (1908-1912, 1929-1935)
71	<i>Bay Sports Review</i> (1991-1997)
143	<i>Black Sports</i> (1974-1978)
35	<i>Bleacher Creature</i> (1993-1994)
298	<i>Boston Baseball</i> (1995-1996)
261	<i>Boys' Life</i> (1971-1998)
30	<i>Brit Ball</i> (1994-1995)
31	<i>Business Week</i> (1945-1959)
65	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i> (1997-1999)
	<i>Coach &amp; Athletic Director</i> (see <i>Scholastic Coach</i> )
1285	<i>Collier's</i> (1898-1956)
36	<i>Country Gentleman</i> (1925-1937)
100	<i>Diamond Duds</i> (1991-1994)
8	<i>Diehard</i> (1994)
387	<i>Dodgers Dugout</i> (1996-1998)
10	<i>Dugout</i> (1994)
275	<i>Ebony</i> (1946-1996)
373	<i>Fantasy Baseball</i> (1990-1994)
24	<i>Hardball</i> (1997)
257	<i>Harper's Weekly</i> (1859-1916)
65	<i>Harvard Graduates Magazine</i> (1892-1918)
452	<i>Inside Sports</i> (1991-1998)
750	<i>International Baseball Rundown</i> (1992-1998)
195	<i>Japan Weekly Chronicle</i> (1928-1940)
71	<i>Journal of Sport History</i> (1988-1997)
286	<i>Life</i> (1938-1958)
261	<i>Literary Digest</i> (1896-1937)
263	<i>Look</i> (1937-1960)
38	<i>Los Angeles Dodgers Magazine</i> (1991)
14	<i>Low and Inside</i> (1994)
217	<i>Minneapolis Review of Baseball</i> (1981-83, 1985-86)
39	<i>Minnesota Motorist</i> (1963-1976)
45	<i>Minnesota Sports Fan</i> (1972-1973)
50	<i>New York Times Magazine</i> (1947-1958)
50	<i>New Yorker</i> (1925-1960)
1047	<i>Newsweek</i> (1933-1960)
370	<i>Nine</i> (1992-1999)
651	<i>Oldtime Baseball News</i> (1989-1998)
512	<i>Orioles Gazette</i> (1992-1994)
148	<i>Outing</i> (1886-1921)
39	<i>Outlook (&amp; Outlook and Independent)</i> (1911-1932)
65	<i>Pittsburgh Courier</i> (1923)
95	<i>Popular Mechanics</i> (1909-1956)
	<i>Porter's Spirit of the Times</i> (see <i>Spirit of the Times</i> )
319	<i>Reds Report</i> (1993-1994)
23	<i>Research Quarterly</i> (1950-1977)
44	<i>Ron Shandler's Baseball Forecaster</i> (1994-1997)
23	<i>S.A. Baseball Digest</i> (1993)
464	<i>Saturday Evening Post</i> (1922-1967)
1117	<i>Scholastic Coach</i> (1932-1997)
66	<i>Schureck Baseball Report</i> (1993-1994)
1173	<i>Spirit of the Times</i> (1856-59, 1864, 1866-67, 1870-71)
40	<i>Spitball</i> (1988, 1995)
2891	<i>Sport</i> (1962-1968, 1972-1996)
370	<i>Sport Collectors Digest</i> (1991, 1997-1998)
32	<i>Sports Heritage</i> (1987-1988)
72	<i>Sports History</i> (1987-1990)
4334	<i>Sports Illustrated</i> (1954-1971, 1981-1983, 1991-1993, 1997-1999)

315	<i>Sports, Inc.</i> (1988-1989)
99	<i>St. Nicholas</i> (1882-1939)
108	<i>Stars and Stripes</i> (1918-1919)
23,749	<i>The Sporting News</i> (1916, 1960-1961, 1977-1985)
26	<i>Thinking Pitcher</i> (1993)
585	<i>Time</i> (1923-1953)
50	<i>Twins Magazine</i> (1991-1992, 1996)
209	Univ. of Minnesota Alumni Publications (1902-1999)
613	<i>USA Today</i> (newspaper) (1996)
7525	<i>USA Today Baseball Weekly</i> (1991-1994)
127	<i>Vintage &amp; Classic Baseball Collector</i> (1995-1998)
1263	<i>Wall Street Journal</i> (1955-1998)
	<i>Wilkes' Spirit of the Times</i> (see <i>Spirit of the Times</i> )
444	<i>Youth's Companion</i> (1881-1929)

## RBI Statistics

<u>Level</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% change over last year</u>
<i>Books</i>		
5	4,401	24.2%
4	2,104	37.2%
<u>Other</u>	<u>11,207</u>	<u>10.7%</u>
Total	17,712	16.5%
<i>Book Sections</i>		
5	8,553	7.3%
4	3,282	79.1%
<u>Other</u>	<u>183</u>	<u>6.4%</u>
Total	12,018	20.5%
<i>Magazine/newspaper articles</i>		
5	83,915	74.0%
4	1,323	3.9%
<u>Other</u>	<u>7,404</u>	<u>5.1%</u>
Total	92,642	63.9%
<i>Total</i>		
5	96,869	62.2%
4	6,709	44.7%
<u>Other</u>	<u>18,794</u>	<u>8.4%</u>
Total	122,372	49.8%

## Book Review

**Leverett T. (Terry) Smith**

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### SOL WHITE'S HISTORY OF COLORED BASE BALL WITH OTHER DOCUMENTS ON THE EARLY BLACK GAME, 1886-1936

Jerry Malloy, compiler & introducer. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1995. 190p. \$30 (cloth), \$12 (paper)

In 1984 I bought—many of us did—the Camden House reprint of *Sol White's Official Base Ball Guide* (published in 1907), with an introduction by Red Barber. A publisher's note in that edition regrets the imperfections of the reprinting, which include very poor reproduction of the original's photographs and a hard-to-read text, even though Camden House enlarged it in the reprinting. Nevertheless, I was glad to be able to own a copy, however, imperfect.

The 1995 Nebraska edition is, I imagine, in part the result of finding another, better copy of the original edition. Nebraska has reset the type and enlarged and better-reproduced the photographs of the original. The result is a handsome and easily readable book.

There are other important differences between the 1984 Camden House reprint and the 1995 Nebraska edition. Jerry Malloy's introduction to the latter is much lengthier (by some 50 pages) than Barber's, and Malloy has collected a dozen ancillary documents by and about Sol White and 19th-century black baseball. Dick Clark provides a White chronology and Bob Davids compiles minor-league records of some 19th-century black players and a list of 19th-century black players in organized baseball. Lawrence D. Hogan concludes the volume with a note on Milton Dabney, whose daughter provided the copy of the original edition that made the improved quality of the reproduction of illustrations possible. So there's a lot more in this newest edition of White's little book.

White's history is valuable just for the facts it gives about players, teams, and games of the early African-American game. My interests are more with White's chapters "Colored Baseball as a Profession", "Managers Troubles", and "The Color Line". We get first an idea of the meaning of the game for White. He speaks of baseball as "indisputably a masculine game" and which "from a scientific standpoint ... outclasses all other American games" (p.67). Later he speaks of ideal ballplayers (p.71): "They should aim to blend the team into a highly polished and magnificent machine. The play itself is a science, if that term may be applied to sport." White also saw a decline in the propensity of blacks to incorporate humor into their exhibitions and thought that was a good thing: "The majority of colored ball players are now carefully watching the scientific points of the game" (p.74). White allies baseball with the progressive impulses of science and machinery, as many of his white sportswriting colleagues also were doing.

White's chapter on the color line is particularly affecting. He begins by noting that "in no other profession has the color line been drawn more rigidly than in baseball" (p.74). He includes a section on Cap Anson's role in establishing the segregation of the races in the sport and continues by praising New York Giants manager John McGraw for being open to employing talented African-American players. White closes the chapter by quoting a letter from Weldy Walker to the president of the Tri-State League which he says resulted in the league's rescinding the prohibition of African-American players. White seems surprisingly optimistic here.

Malloy's introduction contains a description of the racial climate of the time, which casts doubt on White's claim that Anson was the prime agent of racial segregation in baseball. According to Malloy, White "exaggerated Anson's role"; Malloy also quotes Robert Peterson (p.xx-xxi), who noted that the majority of the ballplayers of the time opposed integration. Malloy augmented and corrected White's account of the formation of the Cuban Giants as "African-American baseball's first team of salaried professionals (p.lviii-lxi).

In general, Malloy's introduction, Nebraska's improved presentation of the text and photographs, and the ancillary materials collected and compiled by Malloy make *Sol White's History of Colored Base Ball* an essential book for those interested in 19th-century baseball and African-American baseball.

## Book Review

**Ron Kaplan**

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### THE COMMISSIONERS: Baseball's Midlife Crisis

Jerome Holtzman. New York: Total Sports, 1998. 296p. \$22.95

Holtzman, one of the premier sportswriters of our time, has compiled profiles of baseball's ultimate executives. Beginning with the craggy, imperious Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, owner of one of the game's most recognizable faces, through Bud Selig, until recently the longest-running interim commissioner, Holtzman's portrayals are, for the most part, not very complimentary. If one is to believe him, none of the nine men to hold the game's highest po-

sition deserve top grades.

Landis, as we have often read, was chosen because he was steadfast and upright (although generally acknowledged as a mediocre jurist at best). In the early 1920s he was Moses, leading the national pastime out of the desert created by the gamblers who had plagued the game. As most fans know, the eight Chicago players in the Black Sox scandal were never convicted of any crimes, but that wasn't good enough for Landis. In his famous statement following the court ruling (J.G. Taylor Spink, *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*, 1947, p.84), he declared: "Regardless of the verdict of juries, no player that throws a ball game, no player that entertains proposals or promises to throw a game, no player that sits in a conference with a bunch of crooked players and gamblers where the ways and means of throwing games are discussed, and does not promptly tell his club about it, will ever play professional baseball." Hence the legendary expression "eight men out".

Landis may not have been the fairest man to occupy the commissioner's office, but he certainly was decisive. "My decision, right or wrong" was his motto (though he rarely, if ever, admitted to being wrong). He banished a goodly number of players from the majors during his 24 years in office, in the process making another concept famous: "conduct detrimental to the game". He also fiddled with the reserve clause (shaping it as he saw fit at the moment) and the burgeoning farm systems, and kept the game "pure" by holding fast to the gentlemen's agreement to keep black players out of organized ball.

But *The Commissioners* focuses less on biographical sketches than it does with the politics of the office. And make no mistake, the Commissionership is no less filled with political intrigue than that of President of the United States. Holtzman conjures up the image of smoke-filled rooms where a few powerful men decide, in effect, the fate of the nation through its national sport. Deals and alliances play their parts, as in any political wranglings, regardless of scale.

Holtzman, whose other fine books include *No Cheering in the Press Box*, brings to mind the writings of Theodore White, who chronicled numerous Presidential elections, as he discusses the bickering and bantering by club owners as they cast their ballots. In the case of Gen. William D. Eckert, the executives thought they were actually voting for Gen. Eugene M. Zuckert (as if *that* would have made more sense—it's difficult to believe that out of 156 candidates, Eckert, *or* Zuckert, was the best they could come up with).

The author characterizes each commissioner according to the crises he faced:

- Landis, the birth of the commissioner's office and making baseball America's game again.
- Happy Chandler, who bashed heads with the Dodgers over Leo Durocher, while at the same time paving the way (or did he?) for Jackie Robinson to break the color line.
- Ford Frick, former sportswriter (and Babe Ruth's ghostwriter) who, for all the other events that occurred during his watch (relocation, expansion, television, the decline of the minor leagues), will forever be remembered for the "asterisk" he affixed to Roger Maris' home run mark.
- Eckert, whom one writer referred to as "the Unknown Soldier".
- Bowie Kuhn, who saw free agency, new expansion, the designated hitter, and a more active players' union change the game forever.
- Peter Ueberroth, who tried to parlay his success with the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics into big bucks for baseball.
- A. Bartlett Giamatti, a poetic soul who died in office, perhaps as a result of the disillusionment of the Pete Rose affair.
- Fay Vincent, who served during the 1989 "earthquake" World Series and who, upon leaving the post, claimed: "To do this job without angering an owner is impossible. I can't make all 28 of my bosses happy."
- Selig, the reluctant commissioner, who had the misfortune of

running the sport during what some consider its darkest days but survived to see a renaissance season in 1998.

The various owners and decisionmakers throughout the decades have always formed one of the most exclusive clubs in America (including, as of 1969, Canada). Realizing the mistake in agreeing to Landis' demand for a lifetime contract, they made sure that ensuing commissioners would have the teams' interests on a par with baseball as a whole by opting for fixed terms. The desire for continuous employment might cause baseball's big bosses to be more cautious in their dicta.

Of course, there were a fair share of mavericks who incurred the wrath of their owner brethren; e.g., Bill Veeck was a perennial thorn in the establishment's side and therefore thwarted whenever possible. When Veeck opined that African-Americans should be allowed to play in the majors, Landis helped to quickly quash that notion. Years later, Veeck was forced to sell his floundering St. Louis Browns when the majority of his fellow owners voted down his plea to relocate to a more lucrative location. As soon as the Browns were purchased, that same request was granted to the team's new owner. Another pain-in-the-neck owner (read innovator) named Charles O. Finley tried to sell three of his marquee players for a combined \$3.5 million; this time, commissioner Kuhn stepped in to negate the deal as "not in the best interests ..."

Kuhn, in fact, merits the most ink, as his tenure saw the most turmoil. There is a fascinating depiction of the events leading up to the lawsuit filed by Finley when Kuhn axed his deals (referring to Kuhn as "the village idiot" in the process).

Holtzman does manage to show a degree of sympathy for some of the men who filled the position: "history has not been kind to Ford Frick", and the belief that Eckert and Ueberroth were in over their heads. Overall, *The Commissioners* is an insightful look at the men who oversaw the business of baseball. And after reading this book, you will understand, if you haven't up to now, that the sport is no game.

## Book Review

Andy McCue

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### BASEBALL'S RADICAL FOR ALL SEASONS: A Biography of John Montgomery Ward

David Stevens. Lanham (Md.): Scarecrow Press, 1998. 250p. \$32

Some of the most interesting figures in baseball's early years were those who used their playing days as stepping-stones to somewhere else. Charles Comiskey, Clark Griffith, and Connie Mack are better remembered as owners than as players. Albert Spalding is better known for making sporting goods or dominating baseball politics than for pitching.

Spalding, Comiskey, and Mack have all had their biographers. And, now, probably the most interesting of the group that used baseball as a stepping-stone has one, too.

Johnny Ward's early years sound like a Hortatio Alger novel. His father died when he was three, his mother when he was 14. He struggled to get an education and got expelled from Penn State for pranks. He debuted in the major leagues at 18, quickly became a star, but then blew out his arm when he was in his early twenties. He switched to the outfield, then the infield, and wound up playing for another decade, adding managing to his resume.

But he didn't just swing the bat. He finished his undergraduate education and managed a law degree from Columbia. Then, he got really interesting. He formed the Brotherhood of Professional Baseball Players in 1885 and started the Players League in 1890 to challenge the owners' control of the game and their increasingly tight rein over players. After his retirement as a player, he did legal work for several players. His knowledge of both the law and the re-

alities of the game made him a factor in owners' decisions about how far they could push certain measures.

In several ways, the person Ward most resembles in today's baseball scene is agent Scott Boras. Boras never made the majors and thus didn't have Ward's playing career, but he did get a law degree, and he's been more successful at challenging the baseball powers than Ward ever was. His clients consistently sign contracts that leave owners complaining and he has the free agent draft system tottering from a series of skillful attacks.

Stevens brings all the details into focus. While Harold Seymour and others have drawn copiously on Ward's career to illustrate points of baseball history, Stevens provides the first full-length biography of Ward. It is very good on the baseball material. Stevens clearly has done a yeoman job of wading through the newspapers of the period to pick up details of Ward's life, and to understand the complicated financial picture that was baseball in the 1880s and 1890s. Material on those years can be sketchy and any biography that pretends to completeness requires its author to delve deeply into the local newspapers as well as the national weeklies, such as *Sporting Life* and *The Sporting News*.

Unfortunately, the book leaves the human Johnny Ward a somewhat sketchy figure. For example, Stevens lays out far more details of Ward's marriage and divorce from the glamorous actress Helen Dauvray than I have ever seen. But there is little discussion of Ward's emotions, of how they might have affected his baseball career, and of how they might have changed him as a man. Admittedly, given the written record, I suspect Stevens would have had to do a fair amount of speculating to put such a portrait together, but informed speculation, clearly labeled as such, is an excellent role for a biographer. Burt Solomon, in this year's *Where They Ain't*, drops a few interesting details about Ward's personality.

Also, the book falls short of justifying its title. Clearly, Ward was not a "radical for all seasons". For a time, he even owned part of the Boston Braves. His actions speak very much of a man who recognized the inequities of the reserve clause and all the other control mechanisms of the time. They show a man determined to remove or ameliorate all those inequities. But, with the mighty exception of the Players League, they don't show a man committed to radical change. They show a man willing to compromise, to improve gradually, to work within the system—as his ownership days would indicate.

In the brief time he was an owner, for example, Stevens shows Ward working very hard to improve the quality of the team on the field, but to expend little effort to change the structure of the game's organization, the way owners worked with players, or the legal structure of the sport. Those are the actions of a pragmatist, not a radical.

Nevertheless, *Baseball's Radical for All Seasons* is worth the time and money of anyone interested in the 19th century or in the torturous history of baseball's economic and legal organization.

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