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OF BOOKS

A FORUM of BASEBALL LITERARY OPINION

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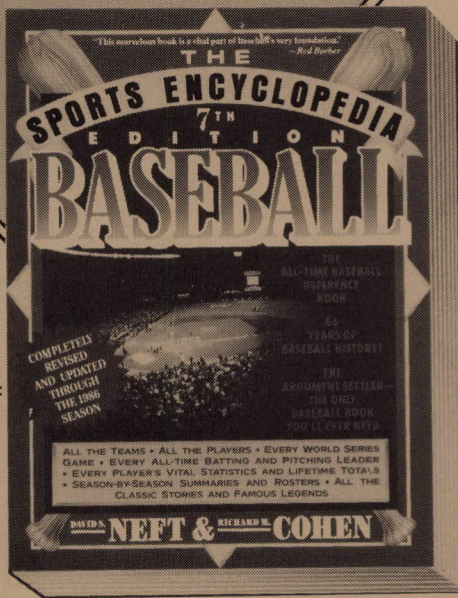
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The SABR Review of Books

A Forum of Baseball Literary Opinion

Volume II



Edited by **Paul D. Adomites**. Interior design by **John Thorn**; interior illustrations courtesy of **John Thorn**. Cover design by **Pati Ingold**. Cover and "On the Air" illustration by **Robert Patla**.

The SABR Review of Books

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All Kinds of Thanks

No one could ever say that editing *The SABR Review of Books* is a thankless job; I have hundreds of people to thank. Starting with all the contributors, those whose words appear here, plus those who offered articles or ideas that didn't get in (I hate the word "rejection") for whatever reason. Thanks to Frank Phelps and Lloyd Johnson for giving more than they were expected to give (but those guys always do).

Of course it's impossible to put together a SABR publication without hours of contribution in thought and effort by John Thorn. He also provided the bulk of the illustrations from his substantial collection, and the overall design concept is his.

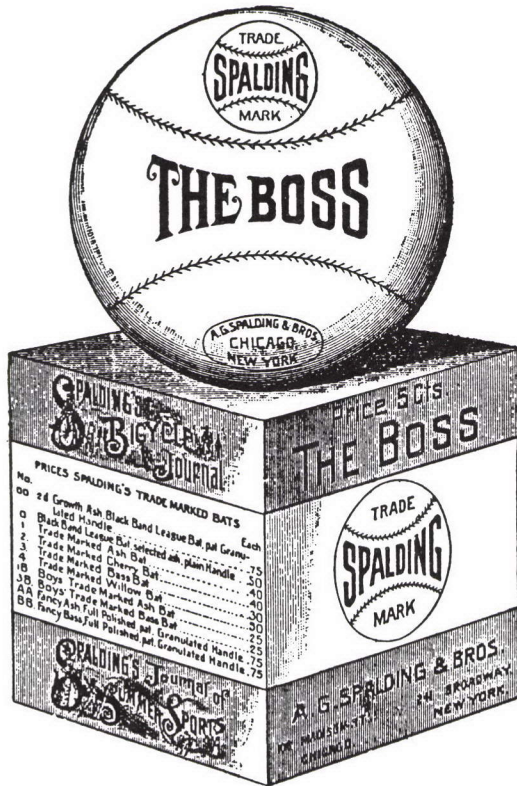
Other artists who helped were Pati Ingold, who designed the cover, and Bob Patla, who illustrated it.

And again special thanks to a woman who is wonderful enough both to love baseball and to marry me, Rosemary.

— Paul D. Adomites

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In this issue. . .

If experiencing the game of baseball were limited to actual participation or in-person attendance, the sport would mean much less to all of us than it does. Because we **read** about the game, we can enjoy it long after the fact, and in a whole new form: digested, chewed, analyzed, stat-icized. The electronic media have also played a big part — letting us “be there” for

games many miles too far for a drive. This two-sided richness of enjoying baseball is at the two-sided center of this edition of *The SABR Review of Books*.

The SABR Review is here to provide literary opinion, so we begin with a survey of a blue-ribbon panel of baseball writers and researchers, asking the question, “What books would con-

stitute the essential baseball library?" We compiled the results and added the comments of the participants. What we got is an intriguing forum that sounds like a SABR bull session — full of savvy and fun conversation.

The recent release of several books on or about baseball broadcasting is the other main section of this issue. First is Curt Smith's magnum opus, *Voices of the Game*. It's the first full-scale history of broadcasters and broadcasting. Accompanying that review are reviews of books by two characters who played big roles themselves in Smith's book: Jack Brickhouse and Ernie Harwell. Joel Oppenheimer reviews the former, Jim O'Donnell the latter. Then we asked videophile and sports broadcaster himself, Bill Borst, to review the baseball videos now available.

Baseball's literary legacy is much more than histories and narratives. It has spawned major works in both fiction and poetry. Yet while the wedding between baseball and poetry has been fruitful, baseball fiction often leaves an unfulfilled feeling. Why is that? We asked Luke Salisbury, who has tackled the challenge of writing baseball fiction himself, why it's so goshdarned tough to do well. Poet Ira Stone provides us with a "Meditation" on the linkage of baseball and poetry, advising that "These poets did not seek to write about baseball. . . . These poets surprised themselves in creating poems wrapped in the mythology of baseball. . . ."

Comparisons seem to be at the heart of nearly any baseball discussion, so it's only fair that two articles in this issue start with that premise. Adie Suehsdorf reviews *Say It Ain't So, Joe*

and *One Last Round for the Shuffler*, two works that treat similar baseball characters: one a legend for his faults, the other barely a memory. For the first issue of *The SABR Review* Frank Phelps was asked to review Anton Grobani's *Baseball Bibliography*, and he did, but between contribution and publication, we got word of a "new and better" bibliography, this one by Myron Smith. So we asked Frank to review it. The result is a side-by-side comparison of the two. Must reading for baseball bibliophiles.

Always fascinating are those behind-the-scenes looks at the game that go beyond clubhouse chatter, into the worlds of power and prestige. Merritt Clifton analyzes what the notorious Bowie Kuhn said about himself in *Hardball*, and Don Warfield's book on Larry MacPhail is discussed by Philip Bergen.

This issue's "personal favorite" feature looks lovingly at *Pitching in a Pinch*, by Christy Mathewson. Rob Johnson even explains how he spent years searching for a copy of it he could call his own. And we all know that feeling.

But that's far from all: we have reviews of Joe Durso's *Baseball and the American Dream*, by Darrell Berger; Pete Cava on *The Dixie Association*; Lawrence Rubin squares off with *The Sporting News* on their "Fifty Greatest Games"; Glenn Stout discusses Maury Allen's *Maris*; and more.

Especial thanks to everyone who sent compliments on Issue 1. Hope you find this go-round as interesting. And please sign on to help with the next issue: there are still subjects that need to be discussed.

Paul D. Adomites, Editor

Two Who Paid For Their Sins

By A.D. Suehsdorf

SAY IT AIN'T SO, JOE!

The Story of Shoeless Joe Jackson
Donald Gropman
229 pp., illus., Little, Brown & Co.,
1979

ONE LAST ROUND FOR THE SHUFFLER

Tom Clark
157 pp., illus., Truck Books/Pomerica
Press, 1979
Paperback \$4.95 (still in print)

“**S**HOELESS JOE” Jackson and “Shufflin’ Phil” Douglas were unequal talents who otherwise shared similarities of background, character, and experience. Both were small-town Southerners in an era when a man’s nature often bore the idiosyncratic stamp of his region. Both were painfully ill-equipped to cope with the demands and diversions of life in major-league cities. Both, by appalling acts of foolish and undisciplined behavior, destroyed their baseball careers. Both returned to their rural environments, where their disgrace was excused or ignored, and each basked in the regard of friends and neighbors to the day he died.

Jackson, by far the greater player, has achieved almost mythological status. He is Natural Man, prodigious

in performance, yet stained beyond redemption and forever denied baseball’s Valhalla at Cooperstown. There are few today who could have seen him at his best, but for generations after the banishment in 1921, baseball men nourished his legend. There was awed admiration for the flawless swing and the screaming liners that tore gloves from outfielders’ hands, and connoisseurs’ appreciation of the anticipatory fielding and opportunistic baserunning. Novelist W.P. Kinsella, a keeper of the flame, writes of Jackson’s glove as “the place where triples go to die.”

More’s the pity that simple Joe, steadfast in his refusal to become literate, blundered into the Black Sox scandal. Despite his .375 Series batting average and errorless play afield, he **was** the confessed recipient of \$5,000 of gamblers’ payoff money. Say it ain’t so, Joe! Indeed.

Phil was something else again. A hulking six foot five, he was one of the National League’s top righthanders

A.D. SUEHSDORF retired as editorial director of Ridge Press, New York publishers, in 1979 and is now indulging his lifelong interest in baseball research. He is the author of *The Great American Baseball Scrapbook*, plus articles for several other SABR publications.

when sober, incorrigible when drunk. He was the blurred image of the good ol' boy: sly, unreliable, self-pitying, yet amusing when he had a yarn to tell or a song to sing, and a bear-down competitor when his head was clear and the spitball was moving. His peak season was 1921, when he was 15 and 10 for the Giants and contributed two well-pitched victories in the winning Series against the Yankees.

But the liquor demon never left him. Periods of moderate behavior and first-rate pitching were followed by what he called "vacations" when he went AWOL, stupefied himself with drink, and missed turns in the pitching rotation. Fines, suspensions, roommates or gumshoes assigned to tag along and keep him out of saloons — all were unavailing, for all were disciplines imposed from without on a man lacking discipline within. His managers were exasperated but rueful at failing to keep him in line. "There was no harm in that fellow," said Fred Mitchell of the Cubs. "It was just that I never knew where the hell he was, or whether he was fit to work."

Only John McGraw, who never suffered derelictions of duty lightly, treated the Shuffler more in anger than in sorrow. Ultimately, writhing under a particularly savage locker-room tongue lashing, befuddled Phil wrote the letter that would end his career. In it, he offered to desert the Giants — "take the next train home" — if he were given "an inducement." It was a wretched effort to strike at McGraw's pennant hopes, but unforgivably ill-timed since the 1922 race was approaching the stretch. Worse, it was written to a straitlaced Cardinal outfielder, Leslie Mann, who would never

fall in with such a dumb scheme or overlook it as an aberration.

The letter quickly found its way to Commissioner Landis. In a more temperate time, like today, Phil's alcoholic derangement (and the fact that nothing came of his bizarre offer) probably would be judged as treatable illness and rehabilitation begun. In 1922, a year after Joe Jackson was cast into darkness, baseball was still scrubbing the tarnish from its reputation, and Landis still was dealing with a muddle of bets, bribes, and collusions affecting the outcome of games. After a hearing attended only by the furious McGraw, Landis added Phil Douglas to the lengthening list of players permanently barred from baseball.

Even discounting their abrupt departures from the game, Joe and Phil, like all players, had much longer lives outside baseball than in, and both authors — Clark even more than Gropman — give commendable weight to the years of aspiration and the years of exile. Both biographies end as they begin, in the cotton-mill and mining towns where Joe and Phil were known, accepted, and to some extent healed. Gropman has the better, if more familiar, subject. Joe achieved more and had farther to fall, but he started a dry-cleaning business with his capable wife, Katie, did well at it, swung Black Betsy in semi-pro or outlaw games, and made more money than he ever did with the cheapskate Comiskey. In time he recovered a good measure of dignity. Clark has the sadder story. Phil had a shorter, more erratic career and was stunned by its drastic conclusion. He was impoverished by the loss of his baseball income and lived marginally on handout jobs. Still, his family was

loyal and supportive; they genuinely liked him and their memories of him are warm, despite the booze.

Gropman's is the more substantial book. His account of Joe's career with the A's, Indians, and White Sox is comprehensive. Connie Mack comes off as less than a genius, standing by as his hard-edge A's taunt and jeer the unlettered Jackson into ineffectiveness, then trading him even-up for journeyman Bris Lord because he wants to do Cleveland owner Charlie Somers a favor. Come on!

Coverage of the Black Sox mess is accurate, though standard. By now, there's probably nothing to add to Asinof's *Eight Men Out* and Veeck's *Hustler's Handbook*, or, for that matter, John Lardner's authoritative "Remember the Black Sox?" in a 1938 *Saturday Evening Post*.

One Last Round contains some small factual errors, and reports conversations — such as what transpired at the Landis hearing — without attribution, although it would be useful to know whether a verbatim transcript exists, or only Phil's (or Landis') recollections. Clark makes Douglas out to be a greater pitcher than his record (93-93 lifetime) seems to warrant, and

I feel that he rationalizes, and even finds some redeeming charm in, the Shuffler's alcoholic personality. McGraw may well have been the ogre he appears to be, but Phil was a serious case. He couldn't even manage to be one of the clever drunks — after hours, between turns, on days off — of whom old-time baseball was so tolerant. To regard him too generously skews our sense of how acute his pain must have been.

That said, it must also be acknowledged that both books have been diligently researched, particularly in the Southern purlieu of family and friends, but also through newsmen and players who were Joe's and Phil's contemporaries. The authors also are fascinating and unsparing in their accounts of the casual tyranny of baseball's lords and masters. By today's standards the treatment of both Jackson and Douglas was an outrageous violation of legal and human rights.

Both men played as opportunity offered until their mid-forties, vestiges of their marvelous skills evident to the end. They died within a year of each other: Joe at sixty-four in 1951, Phil at sixty-two in 1952. There is no suggestion in either book that they ever met.



The Essential Baseball Library

Compiled by Paul D. Adomites

Contributors:

Dick Beverage

Bill Borst

Jon Daniels

Cappy Gagnon

Bob Hoie

Tom Jozwik

Phil Lowry

John Pardon

Larry Ritter

Leverett T. Smith

Jules Tygiel

Alan Blumkin

Jack Carlson

Jay Feldman

Mark Gallagher

Lloyd Johnson

Jack Kavanagh

Vern Luse

Frank Phelps

Louis Rubin

Adie Suehsdorf

David Voigt

IN LAST YEAR'S SABR *Review* we performed a quick phone survey of selected members, asking each "What baseball book can you return to most often?" In other words, "Which is your favorite?"

One of the first things we noticed was that most SABR members had trouble keeping that answer to fewer than six or eight books. The average SABR member is a genuine reader who has a baseball library, not just a book or two. The next logical question, then, becomes: What books make up the essential baseball library?

We arrived at a request for fifty books, because it seemed to be both sufficient and manageable. Around fifty members were asked to participate; twenty-three did. (This wasn't meant to be a purely quantitative scientific survey; the members asked to participate are a true blue-ribbon panel of serious baseball writers and researchers. In fact, five of those who responded wrote or edited books on the list.) The result was over 60 type- or hand-written pages. More than 200 books were mentioned.

Yet of all that, the amount of agreement was remarkable. The "library" created has 57 entries. (Some are multiple-volume sets.) To be listed, a work had to be recommended by more than three participants. Not surprisingly, the two works mentioned most often were *The Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia* and Lawrence Ritter's *The Glory of Their Times*.

In addition to mere lists, the participants provided their comments — some a few words, some rather extensive. Some even engaged in a little stream-of-consciousness pondering in their replies. (“I liked this one better than that one, but if I mention his one book, I really should mention. . .”) Alan Blumkins’s last comment was “I did **not** overlook *Ball Four*.” Vern Luse’s list is appended separately; he created an essential library for researchers who, like he, specialize in the minor leagues. Jay Feldman was careful to point out the difference between “essential” works and “favorites,” and so didn’t include Roger Angell, *Shoeless Joe* or *Hoopla*. Tom Jozwik looked at it from this angle: “Suppose my wife decreed that my library had to be reduced to 50 books — for whatever reason. What would I keep?”

The categorization here was not developed before the titles were counted; in other words, we didn’t go looking for books to fill a category — the fifty-seven books selected had more mentions than the others. Then we put them in categories to make for easier analysis. As always, there is blurring between some categories.

The biggest surprise is the author who appears most often: Donald Honig. Although almost no one would rank him with the great historians, his solid work on the American and National Leagues and his two interview books — *Baseball Between the Lines* and *Baseball When the Grass Was Real* — all made the list. Roger Angell, Thomas Boswell, Jim Brosnan, Robert Creamer, Pat Jordan and John Thorn each placed more than one book in the library. Charles Einstein’s *Fireside* trilogy and multi-volume histories by David Voigt and Harold Seymour were listed, too. (No one mentioned *The SABR Review of Books Volume 1*; although several other SABR publications, notably Lowry’s *Green Cathedrals* and the two volumes of *Minor League Stars* were listed.)

By categories, here are the books, with assorted comments from the contributors. A full list of the library is located on page 18.

STATISTICS

Neft, Cohen, Deutsch, *The Sports Encyclopedia — Baseball*.

The Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia.

The Sporting News Baseball Guides & Registers.

Thorn and Palmer, *The Hidden Game of Baseball*.

There was consistent agreement across this category. Few other statistical works were mentioned at all. Most contributors indicated that both the Neft/Cohen/Deutsch and Macmillan works are necessary, although, typically, there were disagreements.

Alan Blumkin: “The Neft/Cohen work is better organized than Macmillan. It is also easier to carry.”

Jack Kavanagh: "The 1969 Macmillan has more specific content for minor players, but the latest updating is, of course, necessary too."

Jack Carlson: "Neft and Cohen fill the few gaps left in Macmillan, but don't include the 1800s."

Bob Hoie on *The Hidden Game*: "If for nothing but the history of statistics and statistical analysis this would be essential."

Dick Beverage on the same: "This isn't really my area of interest, but the subjects this book raises are very thought-provoking and interesting."

HISTORY

Asinof, Eliot. *Eight Men Out*.

Daguerreotypes. *The Sporting News*.

Fleming, Gordon. *The Unforgettable Season*.

Honig, Donald. *The American League*.

The National League.

Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract.

Kahn, Roger. *The Boys of Summer*.

Lieb, Fred. *Baseball as I Have Known It*.

Okrent and Lewine, eds. *The Ultimate Baseball Book*.

Seymour, Harold. *Baseball — The Early Years*, and *Baseball — The Golden Age*.

Spink, J.G. Taylor. *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*.

Tygiel, Jules. *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*.

Voigt, David. *American Baseball* (3 vols.)

Cappy Gagnon said of *Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract*: "Any words I use to praise this work will be insufficient." Frank Phelps noted that Bill dedicated the book to Bob Davids — "a perfect start!"

The two multi-volume scholarly baseball histories — by Harold Seymour and David Voigt — each had particular fans. Adie Suehsdorf on Seymour: "Impeccably researched, absolutely accurate, complete and pleasingly written. All that's missing is the third volume on the modern era."

Frank Phelps on Voigt: "Outstanding scholarly history closely relating baseball to the mainstream of American history." On Professor Seymour, Frank noted, "Work of the highest quality." Bill Borst said simply of Seymour: "The best histories ever written." Alan Blumkin offered this perspective: "Seymour is more detailed (than Voigt) but also much more difficult to read."

Tom Jozwik on *The Boys of Summer*: "For some reason I haven't been able to get into Kahn's more recent works, but this one certainly belongs."

Jon Daniels clarified his feelings about two works. On *The Ultimate Baseball Book*: "The ultimate baseball **picture** book." And on Honig's

American League and National League: “The pictures are what makes these two books worthwhile.”

Dick Beverage had this to say about *Judge Landis*: “A good account of the impact the Judge had on the game during his term as commissioner.” But Lawrence Ritter points out of the same book: “Actually Fred Lieb wrote this.”

Our favorite comment on the category was Jack Carlson’s note on *The Unforgettable Season*: “The AL race was close, too.”

TEAM HISTORIES

Mead, William B. *Even the Browns*.

Putnam team histories.

Dick Beverage on *Even the Browns*: “A most readable book with lots of good information about the wartime era.”

Adie Suehsdorf on the Putnam series: “Pedestrian as some of them were, Harold Kaese’s *Boston Braves* and Lee Allen’s *Cincinnati Reds* are particularly good.”

Dick Beverage has read all the Putnams. Here are his particular recommendations: “*The Yankees*, *The Dodgers*, and *The Giants*, all written by the legendary Frank Graham; Lee Allen’s *The Reds*; *The Indians* has a complete discussion of the Cry Baby Indians of 1940 and the 1948 pennant; *The Senators* is valuable for its discussion of Walter Johnson; Lieb’s *The Red Sox* and *The Tigers* and Lieb and Baumgartner’s *The Phillies*; Kaese and Lynch’s *The Milwaukee Braves* is an updated version of *The Boston Braves* through the first Milwaukee season.”

IN THEIR OWN LEAGUE

Coffin, Tristram. *The Old Ball Game*.

Gerlach. *Men in Blue*.

Kerrane, Kevin. *Dollar Sign on the Muscle*.

Lowenfish and Lupien. *The Imperfect Diamond*.

Ritter, Lawrence S. *The Glory of Their Times*.

This category consists of works that truly are one of a kind (**the** best in an area, if not the **only**.) The biggest surprise to the compiler was the Coffin work. I stumbled across it in a New York second hand bookstore, and it was only one of a fistful of baseball books I brought home that day. What a find. But I had since figured that no one else had ever seen it. I was glad to find out I was wrong. Apparently a similar thing happened to Tom Jozwik. His wife bought him the book for his birthday. He calls it “the best birthday present I ever received — from anybody.” Frank Phelps is less emotional: Coffin is “must reading for those who would understand the public image of baseball.”

Dick Beverage on *The Imperfect Diamond*: "A history of baseball labor relations, it's an extremely thoughtful book that makes one much more sympathetic to the players' position."

Dick Beverage on *Dollar Sign on the Muscle*: "A pity, but I see this book frequently on remainder tables."

Lawrence Ritter on *The Men in Blue*: "Interview-type books depend on the interviewer's skills as an interviewer and as a writer. Gerlach is tops on both counts."

Naturally, the praise was universal for Lawrence Ritter's *The Glory of Their Times*. Perhaps Louis Rubin said it best: "Simply the greatest baseball book ever written — the distilled essence of the game. I can read this one over and over."

Adie Suehsdorf adds a more thoughtful note on why Ritter's imitators didn't always compare. "This book opened the way for a number of oral histories and is still the best of the bunch. The tape recorder endows these books with vivid authenticity, and the best interviews are warmly human. Unfortunately, these are the exceptions. Many old-time ballplayers have no real perspective on themselves or the great men they played with or against. They have no talent for autobiography. For every Edd Roush, still sputtering vigorously and profanely about McGraw half a century after the fact, there are all too many Willie Kamms talking as though his career were someone else's."

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BIOGRAPHY/AUTO- AND OTHER

Alexander, Charles. *Ty Cobb*.

Bouton, Jim. *Ball Four*.

Brosnan, Jim. *The Long Season*.

Pennant Race.

Creamer, Robert L. *Babe*.

Stengel — His Life and Times.

Durocher, Leo. *Nice Guys Finish Last*.

Honig, Donald. *Baseball Between the Lines*.
Baseball When the Grass was Real.

Jordan, Pat. *A False Spring*.
Suitors of Spring.

Murdock, Eugene. *Ban Johnson, Czar of Baseball*.

Smelser, Marshall. *The Life that Ruth Built*.

Veeck, Bill. *Veeck as in Wreck*.

The only subject that approached controversy in this survey concerned the two famous biographies of Babe Ruth. Only four books in the entire survey received more mentions than Robert Creamer's *Babe: The Legend Comes to Life*. Yet more than a few people felt strongly that Marshall Smelser's *The Life that Ruth Built* surpasses it. Both Bill Borst and Cappy Gagnon rated Smelser ahead of Creamer. Jon Daniels feels that *Babe* "isn't as provocative as Sobol's or as scholarly as Smelser's but definitely the most complete." Louis Rubin says, "Creamer's is very good. Smelser's is better."

Frank Phelps says that the Smelser work is "extremely detailed, exhaustively researched." Dick Beverage takes the other side: "*Babe* is the best baseball biography ever." Alan Blumkin goes one step further; he feels that both Creamer's *Stengel* and *Babe* are "probably the best baseball biographies ever written." But Frank Phelps called Murdock's book on Ban Johnson "the best baseball bio yet!"

As Darrell Berger's insightful review in the last issue described, many people found *A False Spring* a book that was bigger than baseball. Tom Jozwik: "Beyond a surface story, it's a loss-of-innocence/coming-of-age tale, a diary of small town life that'll make the city reader feel blessed with his postage stamp yard and high taxes." Jules Tygiel: "Perhaps the best book about life in the minor leagues and failure, rather than success, in baseball." Lawrence Ritter says that Pat Jordan is "another writer in the Angell-Boswell class." Jon Daniels remembers of *The Suitors of Spring*: "This is where I learned about Steve Dalkowski."

Two writers whom not only history, position, first names and syllabification inevitably link are Jim Brosnan and Jim Bouton. Each seems to have a place in the hearts of SABR readers. Lawrence Ritter said of Brosnan's ground-breaking *The Long Season*: "As far ahead of its time as Galileo." Cappy Gagnon recalls a special treat from *The Long Season*: "His inclusion of Twain's critique of Fenimore Cooper's literary Indians is priceless."

And Dick Beverage asks the sensible question: "Why hasn't Brosnan written more books?"

On *Ball Four*, Jon Daniels comments, "The original 'kiss-and-tell'

baseball book seems tame now.” While Tom Jozwik cautions, “Never forget that before there was a Bouton, there was a Brosnan.”

FICTION

Kinsella, W.P. *Shoeless Joe*.

Malamud, Bernard. *The Natural*.

It was frankly a surprise to the compiler that so many SABR members were unable to arrive at a consensus on more baseball fiction. Several were mentioned (Coover and Roth), and some were praised highly. But not by more than a couple folks. Maybe Luke Salisbury’s article on page 28 provides some answers why.

Jules Tygiel commented on *Shoeless Joe*: “I read this one aloud to my wife.” Bill Borst mentioned Greenberg’s *The Celebrant*, O’Connor’s *Stealing Home*, *Bang the Drum Slowly*, *Hoopla*, *Shoeless Joe*, and Coover. But of *The Natural*, he said, “The movie was better.”



THE MINORS

Obojski, Robert. *Bush League*.

Society for American Baseball Research. *Minor League Stars I and II*.

Dick Beverage on *Bush League*: "The standard general history. You can't find as much information about all of the leagues under one cover any place else."

ANTHOLOGIES AND COLLECTIONS

Allen, Lee. *The Hot Stove League*.

Angell, Roger. *Five Seasons*.

Late Innings.

The Summer Game.

Boswell, Thomas. *How Life Imitates the World Series*.

Why Time Begins on Opening Day.

Davids, L. Robert, ed. *Insiders Baseball*.

Einstein, Charles, Ed. *The Fireside Books of Baseball* (3 vols.) and *The Baseball Reader* (a one-volume compilation from the three.)

Thorn, John, ed. *The Armchair Book of Baseball*.

Bob Hoie on *Hot Stove League*: "One of the first serious baseball histories I read and it blew me away. I couldn't believe all that information was available. I've never been the same since." Cappy Gagnon agrees: "If he wrote the Yellow Pages, I'd read them. *Hot Stove League* is the only baseball book I've ever read with the word 'oleaginous' in it."

Lawrence Ritter on Einstein: "It's hard to understand how the publisher could let these classics go out of print."

Most of the people who mentioned Roger Angell or Thomas Boswell listed all their books. Except for Mark Gallagher on *Five Seasons*: "I never read *The Summer Game*, but it can't be any better than this one." Jack Carlson on Angell: "He excels as he spellbinds."

Alan Blumkin says, "*Five Seasons* contains one of the two most sensitive pieces of baseball writing I've ever read: the piece on the demise of Steve Blass' pitching effectiveness."

Bill Borst on Boswell: "The most penetrating baseball writer today, by far."

NEGRO LEAGUES

Holway, John. *Voices from the Great Negro Baseball Leagues*.

Peterson, Robert. *Only the Ball was White*.

Universal agreement here, too. These two works, along with Jules Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment* (listed in the "History" category) most people agree cover the subject pretty well. If you're interested in hearing

about the rest, check back to Jules Tygiel's overview of the genre in *SABR Review 1*.

BALLPARKS

Lowry, Phil. *Green Cathedrals*.

Reidenbaugh and Carter, eds. *Take Me Out to the Ball Park*.

Shannon, Bill. *Ballparks*.

Tom Jozwik on *Take Me Out to the Ball Park*: "The most impressive book I've seen on the subject of stadia. By relating the history of what goes on **inside** the parks, this is something of a baseball history of many cities."

Adie Suehsdorf on *Green Cathedrals*: "A unique compilation of basic material not available elsewhere."

VERN LUSE'S SPECIAL MINOR LEAGUE ESSENTIAL LIST

1. *Baseball — The Early Years* and *Baseball — The Golden Age* by Harold Seymour. The former has the best bibliography on baseball history; the latter is especially valuable for the tracing of the birth and early years of the National Association (Minor Leagues).

2. *Microfilm Index of Minor League Baseball Cities* by Jerry Jackson. Although this was not a published book, it has been one of the most frequently consulted of all my possessions.

3. *Guide to Ohio Newspapers, 1793-1973*. Steven Gutgesell, printed by the Ohio Historical Society. Would that other states had such books!

4. *Texas League Record Book*, William Ruggles. Originally published in 1930, various editions of greater or lesser quality have been issued by the league.

5. *Baseball in California and Pacific Coast Leagues*, Fred Lange. Good data in first person anecdotes ranging back to the 1880s.

6, 7 and 8. *Southern League Record Book*, *South Atlantic League Record Book*, and *American Association Record Book*.

9. *Who's Who*, reprints from Ag Press, dating back to 1913. Especially good in the '20s and '30s.

10. *Reach Guides* and *Spalding Guides*: of some use in the pre-WWI era, deteriorated heavily in 1919-1940 era, disappeared in 1946.

11. *Sporting News Guides*: quite reliable beginning in 1946, deteriorating in accuracy beginning about 1960.

12. *Sporting Life*, on microfilm. I have the complete run. This is without question the single most important research tool I own. For study in the 1883-1916 era, an unparalleled asset.

13. *Sporting News*, on microfilm. Two shootings of early TSN exist — one is very bad, picture quality poor, and the other is negative (SABR copy).

The Essential Baseball Library

STATISTICS

Neft, Cohen, Deutsch, *The Sports Encyclopedia — Baseball*
The Macmillian Baseball Encyclopedia
The Sporting News Baseball Guides & Registers
Thorn and Palmer, *The Hidden Game of Baseball*

HISTORY

Asinof, Eliot. *Eight Men Out.*
Daguerreotypes. The Sporting News.
Fleming, Gordon. *The Unforgettable Season.*
Honig, Donald. *The American League.*
The National League.
Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract.
Kahn, Roger. *The Boys of Summer.*
Lieb, Fred. *Baseball as I Have Known It.*
Okrent and Lewine, eds. *The Ultimate Baseball Book.*
Seymour, Harold. *Baseball — The Early Years, and Baseball — The Golden Age.*
Spink, J.G. Taylor. *Judge Landis and the Twenty-Five Years of Baseball.*
Tygiel, Jules. *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy.*
Voigt, David. *American Baseball (3 vols.)*

TEAM HISTORIES

Mead, William B. *Even the Browns.*
Putnam team histories.

IN THEIR OWN LEAGUE

Coffin, Tristram. *The Old Ball Game.*
Gerlach. *Men in Blue.*
Kerrane, Kevin. *Dollar Sign on the Muscle.*
Lowenfish and Lupien. *The Imperfect Diamond.*
Ritter, Lawrence S. *The Glory of Their Times.*

FICTION

Kinsella, W.P. *Shoeless Joe.*
Malamud, Bernard. *The Natural.*

THE MINORS

Obojski, Robert. *Bush League*.
Society for American Baseball Research. *Minor League Stars I and II*.

BIOGRAPHY/AUTO- AND OTHER

Alexander, Charles. *Ty Cobb*.
Bouton, Jim. *Ball Four*.
Brosnan, Jim. *The Long Season*.
Pennant Race.
Creamer, Robert L. *Babe*.
Stengel — His Life and Times.
Durocher, Leo. *Nice Guys Finish Last*.
Honig, Donald. *Baseball Between the Lines*.
Baseball When Grass was Real.
Jordan, Pat. *A False Spring*.
Suitors of Spring.
Murdock, Eugene. *Ban Johnson, Czar of Baseball*.
Smelser, Marshall. *The Life that Ruth Built*.
Veeck, Bill. *Veeck as in Wreck*.

ANTHOLOGIES AND COLLECTIONS

Allen, Lee. *The Hot Stove League*.
Angell, Roger. *Five Seasons*.
Late Innings.
The Summer Game.
Boswell, Thomas. *How Life Imitates the World Series*.
Why Time Begins on Opening Day.
Davids, L. Robert, ed. *Insiders Baseball*.
Einstein, Charles, ed. *The Fireside Books of Baseball* (3 vols.) and *The Baseball Reader* (a one-volume compilation from the three).
Thorn, John, ed. *The Armchair Book of Baseball*.

NEGRO LEAGUES

Holway, John. *Voices from the Great Negro Baseball Leagues*.
Peterson, Robert. *Only the Ball was White*.

BALLPARKS

Lowry, Phil. *Green Cathedrals*.
Reidenbaugh and Carter, eds. *Take Me Out to the Ball Park*.
Shannon, *Ballparks*.

Not Exactly an All-Star Performance

By Louis D. Rubin, Jr.

THE SPORTING NEWS SELECTS BASEBALL'S FIFTY GREATEST GAMES

Written by Lowell Reidenbaugh; Co-editors, Joe Hoppel, Mike Nahrstedt. 288 pp., illus., The Sporting News Publishing Company
\$19.95

HAVING DECIDED THAT the hour was at hand to select and chronicle the "fifty greatest games" in major league baseball history, Lowell Reidenbaugh informs us in the introduction to this book, the authorities at *The Sporting News* confronted a philosophical problem. Of what did a "greatest game" consist?

Was it a game in which something astounding took place, such as the 1934 All-Star game when the Giants' Carl Hubbell struck out Drs. G.H. Ruth, H.L. Gehrig, J.E. Foxx, A.H. Simmons, and J.E. Cronin, in that order and without interruption? Was it a game the high drama and results of which were pre-eminent, such as the Giants' Bobby Thomson's homerun of 1951 which erased a two-run Brooklyn lead in the bottom of the ninth inning and won a playoff and a pennant? Or was it a game of no special note as a game, but the mere playing of which was of great significance, such as the first night game in Cincinnati in 1935, or the opening game at Ebbets Field in

1947 when professional baseball's long-standing and disgraceful color barrier was broken once and for all?

What the general staff in St. Louis decided, we are told, is that all three varieties were "greatest games," with the result that the book before us, entitled *Baseball's Fifty Greatest Games*, chronicles "the twenty most memorable games," "the twenty top performances," and "the ten most significant games."

I opened this book with considerable anticipation. It arrived for review at just the right time: a sleet storm had deposited four inches of solid ice upon our locality, and if the hounds of spring were upon winter's traces they were giving no signs of picking up the scent. One of the foremost attractions of baseball for us old folks is that it is best played in summer, and the memories of same are of summer afternoons outdoors, before the discomforts of mortality seemed applicable to us. Alas, I found myself increasingly disappointed as I read about the successive

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“greatest” games. The accounts of them were superficially done, reporting only upon what was obvious.

For enlightenment as to the reasons for my disappointment, I turned to the book that is my own and almost everyone’s favorite baseball book, Larry Ritter’s *The Glory of Their Times*. What did that splendid account of the National Pastime in days gone by offer that the new *Sporting News* compendium didn’t? The answer, I think, is that in his approach to the subject Mr. Ritter was an **historian**. The information he provides us is not merely recounted as journalistic fact, but is offered with a sense of the past as being importantly different from, as well as similar to, our own time. The feeling of recollection permeates each sketch in it. John J. McGraw doesn’t come out as identical with Sparky Anderson. Mr. Ritter sets the scene. He develops the significance of what his players do and think and say, giving us personalities.

By contrast, the fifty historical occasions in *The Sporting News Selects Baseball’s Fifty Greatest Games* are presented as if they happened only yesterday. They remain newspaper accounts, and no more than that. Let me give an example. One of the “twenty most memorable games” selected for the book is the third game of the 1929 World Series between the Philadelphia Athletics and the Chicago Cubs. It will be remembered that the Athletics won the first two games of the Series, but lost the third and were trailing by 8-0 going into the bottom of the seventh inning of the fourth game. At that point they staged a colossal comeback, scoring ten runs off four Cub pitchers, and won the game by 10-8, whereupon the starch was gone from the Chicago-

ans and the Athletics took the series, four games to one.

The account of this event begins by telling us briefly how Connie Mack had disbanded his powerful team of the early 1910s, then engaged in a decade-long love affair with mediocrity before beginning to rebuild his club in the mid-1920s. It describes the successive acquisitions of Al Simmons, Mickey Cochrane, Lefty Grove, and Jimmy Foxx, along with others. “By 1929, the A’s were ready to crest,” we are told. “They did so in a most impressive style, winning 104 games to outdistance the Yanks by 18 lengths.” (Masterful metaphor, that.) We then get one paragraph about the Cubs, informing us that they were “back in the winner’s circle after a 10-year absence,” under the direction of Joe McCarthy.

We are next told of Mack’s surprising decision to pitch Howard Ehmke in the opening game, of Dr. Ehmke’s thirteen strikeouts, Dr. Foxx’s game-winning homerun, and of the 9-3 Philadelphia victory in the second game, with George Earnshaw and Lefty Grove also striking out thirteen batters. An additional paragraph informs us that Dr. Earnshaw also started the third game but lost to Guy Bush, 3-1, on a walk, an error, and singles by Rogers Hornsby and Kiki Cuyler.

Having learned all that (or having been reminded of it), we get a lengthy description of the fourth game and in particular the seventh inning, followed by several paragraphs on the final game and one of the joy in Philadelphia over the winning of the series.

Now what is wrong with all this? Simply that it could have been written in the *Philadelphia Daily Record* a week afterward, with almost nothing

changed or added. There is no effort made to characterize that colorful and repeatedly-thwarted Chicago Cub club of the 1920's, with its quartet of head-hunting pitchers, its hard-drinking heroes, its knock-'em-down run-over-'em style of play. There was Dr. Hornsby, twice a manager and eager to be one again; that superb outfield of Drs. Cuyler, Stephenson, and Hack Wilson, all three at the peak of their careers. And while a bit more is done with the Athletics, there is nevertheless little sense of just how great that club was, and how remarkable the personalities on it, with its combination of young and old. Drs. Grove and Earnshaw were still in their twenties, Rube Walberg and Eddie Rommel were in their early thirties, while John Quinn was at least 45 yet won eleven games and started eighteen! It was one of the five or six greatest of all major league ball clubs, and if its pennywise boss-manager hadn't sold his stars off for cash money he could have contested the Yankees for domination of the game all during the 1930s.

The 1929 World Series constituted a changing of the guard, and the events of the fourth game highlighted it. The powerful Yankee club of the 1920s, with Dr. Ruth at its center, was no longer supreme; it would win again, in 1932, but not until 1936 would a new Yankee Murderers' Row resume full control. As for the Cubs, they would win three more pennants over the next nine seasons. And is it not interesting, if not relevant, that within less than half a month after the final game of the 1929 Series came the Stock Market Crash?

My point is that merely to recount the happenings of the fourth game of

the 1929 World Series in terms of base hits, walks, errors and pitching changes, without also sketching the personalities of those involved, the setting, the strengths and weaknesses (if any) of the two teams, the style of baseball, and so on, is to write baseball history without most of what makes it historical. It is not a matter of length, of how many words were allotted, but of selectivity, of skill at recapturing an event — of, in short, imagination.

We are told that the ten-man sanhedrin deliberating on which games were to go into *Baseball's Fifty Greatest Games* included representatives of several generations of fans. Among its membership were those who recalled Carlton Fisk's game-winning homer in the 1975 World Series, those who remembered Bill Mazeroski's winning homerun in 1960, those who could recall Cookie Lavagetto's double which broke up Bill Bevens' no-hitter in 1947, as well as several voters "with elongated memories" who remembered how the Athletics scored ten runs in the seventh inning of the fourth game of the 1929 Series.

I have no knowledge about the personnel who took part, but I am not much impressed with some of their decisions. One has the sense that it was a pretty superficial operation, in which a great deal of emphasis was placed on the "memories" of the assembled judges. What one remembers obviously depends both upon how long one has been around and following developments, and upon the manner in which such memories were acquired. Obviously nobody making the decisions for inclusion in the book could actually have remembered Christy Mathewson's six-hit shutout of the Phil-

Philadelphia Athletics in the final game of the 1905 World Series, his third such in a five-game series every game of which was won by a shutout. Personal remembrance, therefore, was not enough. It was incumbent upon the selection committee to be thoroughly familiar with the history of major league baseball, and to be able to examine the events of that history in terms of their significance and their impact at the time they took place. For the purpose of the book, it must be kept in mind, was not to select the fifty most widely-remembered games, but the fifty "greatest" games.

I can remember, for example, Sandy Amoros' running catch of Yogi Berra's drive into deep left field in the 1955 Dodger-Yankee World Series. Had Dr. Berra's shot dropped in, the score of the seventh game would have been tied at 2-2 in the bottom of the seventh inning. As it was, the Dodgers held onto their 2-0 lead and won the Series, their first such win in six tries against the Yankees. I remember it not because I was there, but because I was listening to the radio broadcast.

Nobody was broadcasting the 1905 Series. But how can anyone, forced to choose between Dr. Amoros' catch and Dr. Mathewson's third straight shutout of the Athletics in 1905, fail to come down on the side of the earlier event as the greater accomplishment, personal memories or no personal memories? Yet the Amoros catch made the book, while the Mathewson shutout didn't.

In other words, the selection of these particular games as constituting the fifty greatest such in major league history rests on very shaky grounds. Too much attention to media hype was

apparently involved. Selections seem to have been made in part because certain games have been written and talked about more than other, less publicized games. Except for the fact that they took place before huge crowds in New York City and were broadcast or telecast throughout the land, just how momentous were, for example, Bill Bevens' 1947 almost-no-hitter, Mickey Owen's dropped third strike in the 1941 Series, or Sandy Amoros' catch?

Certain games are clearly memorable because of individual record-setting feats. Henry Aaron's 715th homerun, Dr. Ruth's 60th in 1927, Dr. Maris' 61st in 1961, Bob Gibson's dispatch of seventeen St. Louis batters by strikeouts in the Series opener in 1968 — the games in which such performances took place are indisputably among the greatest. Very properly, too, the governing board at *The Sporting News* substituted Roger Clemens' twenty strikeouts against the Seattle Mariners last spring for a previously-made choice, though they won't reveal which game they decided to delete.

But some records, however, are of less moment than others, and possess little significance beyond luck. Tony Cloninger smote two bases-loaded homeruns for the Atlanta Braves against the San Francisco Giants on July 3, 1966. Six other major leaguers have done the same in their time, but what makes Dr. Cloninger's achievement noteworthy is that he was no feared slugger but a journeyman pitcher. His homerun-hitting feat was, with all deference to his considerable talents, a freak occasion, a curiosity. To a somewhat lesser degree the same might be said of Jim Bottomley's twelve runs driven in for the Cardinals against

the Dodgers in 1924. That Sunny Jim was an outstanding hitter worthy of his plaque at Cooperstown, is beyond cavil. But the Cardinals collected eighteen hits and seventeen runs against mediocre Brooklyn pitching that day. How many runs are driven in depends importantly upon how many runners are on base when one comes to bat. No less than twelve Cardinals were available to Dr. Bottomley for driving in that afternoon.

On the final day of the 1941 season, as is well known, Ted Williams of the Red Sox went six for eight against Philadelphia A's pitching. He had entered the ballpark with a batting average just fractionally over .400. Urged by his manager to sit out that last doubleheader, he declined to do so, and raised his batting average to an incredible .406. After the rabbit ball of the 1920s was toned down following the 1930 season, and inflated batting averages went plummeting (eight .400+ hitters between 1920 and 1930!), only Dr. Williams has hit .400, and he did it when the overall batting average that year was .262, as compared to .296 in 1930 when Bill Terry hit .401. Dr. Williams is the sole major leaguer to have hit .400 or better over a period of what is now 47 years! Yet neither of those two last games of the 1941 season, when he risked falling below .400 only to get five hits in eight attempts, is deemed to be among the fifty greatest games! Which game would you have rather witnessed, Dr. Cloninger's day in 1966, Dr. Bottomley's in 1924, or either game of that Shibe Park doubleheader in 1941? To ask the question is to answer it.

The style of play in baseball changes over the years, of course. The

pitching feats of the dead ball era could not have been accomplished against the rabbit ball hitters of the 1920s. In the 1940s and 1950s teams played for the big inning, and base stealing was downplayed. In the 1960s and 1970s it was otherwise. Complete games were in fashion among pitchers until the 1950s, when relief pitching came into its own. It is difficult to compare batting averages, earned-run averages, games won over the decades, though with proper allowances the comparisons can be meaningful. In selecting the fifty greatest games, it seems to me, attention must be paid to the dominant characteristics of the game in its various eras, and outstanding performances selected in accordance with what was most valued in a given period, if such a selection is to possess any claim to authoritativeness.

In the early years of the century, pitching was at a premium. Between 1901 and 1915 there were no less than twelve 30-game and two 40-game winners! Obviously it was less difficult for a really good pitcher to win baseball games then than nowadays. Just as obviously, however, top-line pitching was what was foremost in the public eye, and "greatest" performances for that period should be selected with that in mind. In 1912 Smoky Joe Wood won 34 games, including 16 in a row. Walter Johnson also won 16 straight American League games that season, while in the National League Rube Marquard won 19 in a row! The only notice taken of all this early pitching prowess in *Baseball's Fifty Greatest Games* is Addie Joss' perfect game for Cleveland against the White Sox in 1908. Such a selection process is ahistorical; it fails to view the high

points of the game in their context.

Late in that season of consecutive-games-won feats, on September 6, 1912, Dr. Wood of Boston, seeking his fourteenth straight victory, opposed Dr. Johnson of Washington, who had won 16 straight earlier in the year and was intent upon preventing his opponent from matching his record. The Red Sox and Dr. Wood prevailed, 1-0. Could any game more fitly symbolize the great pitching of the dead ball era than that one? If it is not a "greatest" game of baseball history, then what is a greatest game?

It is all very well to say, as the author of *Baseball's Fifty Greatest Games* says in his introduction, that any such selection as this is bound to cause disagreement, and that such disagreement is "a healthful sign, an indication that all continues well within the baseball community." But this is not merely a question of one person disagreeing with another person over a matter of opinion. What is at stake is the extent to which the editors of a book proposing to chronicle the leading events of a major league baseball history can be expected to approach their assignment with sufficient seriousness to make their work not only authoritative, insofar as such things can ever be made such, but — whatever the limitations of form and format — faithful to the spirit of the history being surveyed.

Most of us do not, in the pages of such a book as this, expect to learn a great deal that was not previously known to us. What we seek, rather, is to be reminded of what we know, through having it retold with the historical meanings infused into the bare

chronological facts. **Why** are these the "greatest" games? Not merely because of the particular feats performed, games or series or pennants won, and so on, but also and importantly because those things are significant moments in our experience of the history of major league ball. The really good books of baseball history give us that experience again, by making it possible to see it in its time and place, as part of the history of the game.

In one sense, of course, the ultimate and only "history" is the record book, the encyclopedias of baseball with the statistics of the individual players and the teams. Most of us can spend delightful hours merely leafing through the Macmillan *Encyclopedia*, the *Sports Encyclopedia: Baseball*, Paul MacFarlane's marvelous *Daggerreotypes*, the successive issues of *Who's Who In Baseball*, and the like. But this is because as readers we bring all the meanings to the statistics; the encyclopedia volumes merely invoke our experience for us. What books such as *The Glory of Their Times*, Robert Creamer's several biographies, and certain other excellent works of baseball history do is to guide us in shaping what we remember and know about baseball into meaningful sequences, so that we can see its connections and continuities over the years. To write or edit a book that can enable us to do that perceptively and with real enjoyment is no easy task. The baseball books come in quantity, and they go; only a very few will ever be reread other than for factual information. *The Sporting News Selects Baseball's Fifty Greatest Games*, I am sorry to say, will not be among them.

The Mice and The Minors

By Pete Cava

THE DIXIE ASSOCIATION

Donald Hays
Warner Books
Paperback, \$3.95

THIS FIRST NOVEL by Donald Hays, which debuted in 1984, chronicles the exploits of the fictional Arkansas Reds and their lineup of misfits and undesirables in the Dixie Association. The tale is narrated by the Reds' slugging first baseman, Donald (Hog) Durham. Through the efforts of Reds' manager Lefty Marks, Hog has been released on parole from an Oklahoma prison in time for the season. Marks is a one-armed former big leaguer who has returned to the game after a stretch as a university professor. Lefty, as his nickname implies, has definite socialist tendencies.

Hog, a former bankrobber, and his Marxist skipper aren't the only oddballs in the Reds' dugout. The team roster includes a folksinging starting pitcher, an alcoholic reliever with a wicked knuckler, a Cuban refugee who supplements his baseball income as a pool hustler and, eventually, two players on loan from Fidel Castro and a female infielder.

We have to guess that if Eddie Gaedel, Bill Veeck's midget, were still around he'd be wearing Reds' liveries.

The Reds, aided by several bona fide major league prospects, battle the

league's perennial kingpins — the Selma Americans — for the Dixie Association flag. Naturally, Hog and his teammates can do no wrong despite their tarnished backgrounds while the Selma squad, cheered by the likes of the self-righteous Reverend G. Forrest Bushrod and his flock (they rate the Reds up there with Darwinism, free love and atheism), resort to all sorts of chicanery to undo the Arkansas team.

The Dixie Association is a double-A circuit. Unfortunately, that's about the literary level of the story, too. Remember those Farmer Gray-and-the-Mice cartoons that aired on the black and white television sets of the fifties? The mice always wanted simple things, like a roost in the farmer's house or the rights to half his crop. The farmer always responded with nothing sort of genocide, but the mice always prevailed. After the mice counterattacked, Farmer Gray was dispatched to the horizon with his pants ablaze or with a swarm of bees in hot pursuit.

After a few episodes of this mindless predictability, any self-respecting kid started to root against the mice. And the Reds, like the mice, are sup-

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posed to be the “good” bad guys (maybe they came up through the same minor league system that produced Huck Finn, R.P. McMurtry and Dennis Moriarity). After enough chapters, Hog and his comrades, like the mice, become stereotypes — literary APBA cards, playing on a rigged game board — instead of flesh and blood characters. Lefty Marks, the Reds’ hopelessly idealistic manager (he holds team meetings to decide on personnel transactions, something he didn’t pick up from Earl Weaver), is a foil to Selma’s



redneck skipper, Bull Cox. When he’s not in a baseball uniform, Bull is — what else? — a lawman. We’re to presume that because he isn’t an ex-con, a bleeding heart or someone else bruised by society, Bull must be a racist, a fascist supporter of apartheid or someone who farts with impunity in elevators and votes for anyone named Wallace.

Bull and his Selma team are in cahoots with all those who conspire against the fallen (but pure at heart, of course) Arkansas squad. Both sides begin to grate on your nerves long before the seventh inning stretch.

Hog and the Reds manage to stay within striking distance of the powerful Selma club. The Reds suffer a major setback when their star reliever, the beer-guzzling knuckleballer Bob Turner, jumps ship to join Selma. Not a surprising move, since Bob’s worldview is only a few degrees to the right of Bull Cox and Genghis Khan.

The bad guys even manage to get Hog’s parole revoked, but this setback is only temporary. At the denouement, with the Dixie Association title on the line on the last day of the season, we’re treated to a neo-classic matchup between the forces of good (the Reds, naturally) and evil (Selma, of course). It all comes down to Hog Durham hitting against Bob Turner with two outs in the bottom of the ninth, etc.

Who wins? Read the book, or just ask the mice. . .

One of the more interesting characters in *The Dixie Association* is the Reds’ enigmatic star pitcher, Jeremiah Eversole. A huge bear of a man, Eversole is a half-breed refugee from the Mexican League who, at age 46, is still serving up a mean spitter en route to a 30-win season for the Reds. Eversole is a loner who opts to bunk down in a hammock at the ballpark instead of rooming with the rest of the Reds at their communal home. He reads himself to sleep with a copy of *Darien Massacres: Pedro de Avila and the Conquest of Panama*.

Eversole is a self-reliant individualist who inspires both respect and terror in opponents and teammates alike (“From now on you catch him,” grumbles one Reds’ receiver to another. “He looks like he might be considering taking up cannibalism.”).

But even the stoic Eversole degenerates into parody in a love story subplot that reads like a rehash of William Faulkner. In fact, given the characters who populate this book, it could be subtitled “Yoknapatawpha County Gets an Expansion Team.”

It would be a minor league to be sure, and scouts would have to rate this effort ‘no prospect.’

Why is it so Hard To Write a Good Baseball Novel?

By Luke Salisbury

I ASKED CAPPY GAGNON, former SABR president and aficionado *extraordinaire*, what he thought the best baseball novels were. Without hesitation, Cappy replied, "That's easy. There aren't any. Baseball fiction is not as interesting as baseball history. Why make up stories, when better ones already exist?" This raises an interesting question: is there a good, let alone great, baseball novel? Most of us, backed into this corner, would probably say *The Natural*, but I don't know who would want to argue that Malamud's book is a great novel, or even a great baseball novel.

There are three ways to write a baseball novel. The first, and *The Natural* is the best example, is to create a fictitious story in a real setting. The team in Malamud's novel is the New York Knights and its owner and players are fictional, but the league is the National League, and New York is the recognizable city of realistic fiction. The second method is a fictitious story in a fictitious setting, which is another way of saying fantasy: the *Alice In Wonderland* approach. This is the least plausible method, but it's been done. W.P. Kinsella's *Shoeless Joe* is such a book, and people claim to like it. I find that *Shoeless* wanders so far into sentimentality that prose describing those magical cornfields, fecund Iowa dirt, and that "when-you-wish-upon-a-star" ballfield becomes as sugary as pancake syrup, but *Shoeless* has its following.

Another book which trifles with reality is Robert Coover's remarkable *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc.; J. Henry Waugh, Prop.*, which proves that there's nothing wrong with surrealism if it works — if it provides a commentary on this world and judiciously follows the laws of its own. Lewis Carroll did this brilliantly, Coover has more trouble, but Hamlet says, "By indirections find directions out;" and if we're looking for the essence of the game, we may have to look in a surreal mirror.

LUKE SALISBURY is the author of *Baseball Catechism*, *The Search for the Perfect Trivia Question*, which will be published next year by Times Books.

The third method, and I think the most successful, is a fictional character put in a real setting. This is Conrad's method of placing the narrator in the action, but not making him the hero. F. Scott Fitzgerald used this strategy in *The Great Gatsby* and think how silly that story could



be if it were narrated by Gatsby. With the Conradian method, to paraphrase Emerson, the author hitches his wagon to a star, and can inject a consciousness of his own creation into an historical situation. I think this technique is superior to a *Ragtime* treatment where the author provides us with the thoughts and “interiority” of an historical figure. The *Ragtime* approach can deteriorate into a “dramatization,” or become the hybrid of the 1960s, the non-fiction novel, where an author is freed from the constraints of writing accurate history, while not having had to create a world like a novelist. This is the slipperiest slope on the mountain of fiction.

A novel which employs the Conradian method is Eric Greenberg's *The Celebrant*, where a jeweler idolizes Christy Mathewson, and tells both his and Mathewson's story. Harry Stein's *Hoopla* combines the Conradian and *Ragtime* methods. The book has two narrators, one not directly involved in the 1919 World Series, a reporter named Luther Pond; and Buck Weaver, who though a principal in the story of the fix, was an observer to it rather than a participant. The problem I have with *Hoopla* is I have no idea what the real Buck Weaver would have talked like in 1944,

but Stein's Weaver talks like Ring Lardner's Busher. Stein tries to cover his literary tracks by having Weaver dislike *You Know Me, Al*, but the voice is practically the same. Stein's Weaver, however, is a good vehicle to comment on the men who did sell out, particularly his friend Eddie Cicotte, and *Hoopla* is a successful novel. I prefer *The Celebrant* and the less adulterated Conradian method, which allows the author to operate freely in an historical situation without forcing him to pretend to know what was actually in the minds of real people. This is an effective way to recreate, comment on, and explore the motivations, ambiance, and guts of another time.

I may be foolish to look for a great baseball novel. There have been decades when the notion of Great American Novel dominated the public's expectations. The 1890s cried out for a GAN while dismissing *Huckleberry Finn* as children's literature, and not knowing *Moby Dick*. The 1920s also waited for the GAN like a tenth century hermit expecting the Messiah, and though that decade had as many contenders as any since the 1850s, those readers who wanted our literature sanctified by one big book were disappointed. Perhaps looking for the great baseball novel is as silly, but my question is: Can there be a great baseball novel? Or does the nature of the game make this impossible?

Philip Roth titled his baseball book *The Great American Novel*, and one assumes he did this with tongue in cheek, rather than as a critical guide. My problem with Roth's GAN is that something ridiculous happens. Gil Gamesh, (If you want to read something great, read the Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh*: it's one of the world's great stories, but alas, no baseball), the greatest pitcher of all time, kills an umpire with a pitch. I got lost after that because I didn't find this probable, and the book hadn't convinced me it was fantasy. It was a realistic novel that veered into the fantastical, and I stopped reading.

To return to Cappy's argument: how can a novelist improve on baseball history? Indeed, how could a novel which contained a game like the sixth game of the 1986 World Series be credible? It would seem that the author had taken liberties. That game makes no sense, except that it actually happened. Serious novels do not try to out-sensationalize life: that can't be done. They heighten life and explain it. They put reality under the glare of imagination, and this is different from an escapist fantasy.

If fictional baseball can't outdo the bizarre happenings of actual baseball without seeming contrived, perhaps fiction can provide insights into the game, in the same way that non-baseball novels provide insight into non-baseball life. I don't believe a realistic baseball novel can get to the essence of the game. *The Natural* succeeds because of its non-baseball elements. What makes that book so good is that every male harbors a dark

fear that if he were really “the best in the world” at something, there would be women who want to destroy him. This fear is as old as Adam and Eve, and Samson and Delilah. Please note, I said this is a male fear, not a universal truth. Roy Hobbs’ self-destruction at the end of his one big league season is not brought on by something unique to baseball, but by his own slovenly, infantile personality. One gets a feel for a certain type of man from that book, not a type of ballplayer. *The Natural* is a good novel, but only a fair baseball novel.

The second approach to baseball fiction may be more promising than it first appeared. If realistic fiction can’t compete with real baseball (Why should it? Baseball, the quantifiable game that started in 1876, with all its numbers and anecdotes, is one long collective dream, one long collective American fiction — how can one book made up by one author compare with this collective majesty?), then perhaps the *Alice In Wonderland* method can by indirection find the game’s Direction. Perhaps surrealism can succeed where realism fails.

The key to Robert Coover’s book is that he explores the psychology of a baseball fan, not the psychology of a player. J. Henry Waugh plays a game, not unlike APBA baseball (Thank God he didn’t have a home computer — there’s something marvelously down-to-earth about throwing dice on a board), but what makes the novel so interesting is that J. Henry goes a step farther than most of us. He not only roots, but invents his own league, his own players, and writes biographies of them, giving his creation life, like a novelist peopling his “own postage stamp of earth,” as William Faulkner said. The sense of Waugh’s imaginary world, its complexity, and its reality to its inventor, show more about the psychology of being a baseball fan than any book I can think of. Part of it is Coover’s phenomenal ear. The names he makes up are worthy of the *Baseball Encyclopedia*: Long Lew Lidell, Whistlestop Busby, Raglan Rooney, etc. Where *The Universal Baseball Association* stumbles is when imaginary baseball is left for reality, then J. Henry seems like just another alienated character in a modern novel.

Imaginary worlds can be interesting when they run parallel to this one. They are less satisfying when they intrude into our “reality.” Coover ends the book with an unconvincing leap into the future where a baseball death is re-enacted every year as ritual; but despite this rather English professorial leap into anthropology, the book captures a dimension of being a fan — the obsessiveness about documentation and lust for a complete world that a fan can enter like Alice going through the looking glass — that we all share, and rarely discuss.

Kinsella’s looking glass world is too silly for me. The narrator, also called Kinsella, repeatedly says he’s sentimental about baseball. That’s no

sin. We are all sentimental about baseball. Ray Kinsella's problem is he's sentimental about literature. A make-believe team of the 1919 Chicago White Sox with Ray's dad as catcher? If Chick Gandil showed up in my backyard, I'd ban him. *Shoeless Joe* attempts, like Coover's book, to explore the psychology of a baseball fan, and indeed, there is a sentimental side to us all, but Kinsella's down home anything-can-happen-day magic field, makes me wonder if he ever actually rooted for a team, or has he always drifted in the pantheistic "Everything's OK, I'm a baseball fan" mist that Roger Angell substituted for a description of the 1986 World Series in the *New Yorker*. At one point Kinsella tells us rain makes "the field an orgy of rainbows." I'm wary of rainbow orgies.

The Conradian *Celebrant* explores another aspect of being a fan: hero worship. Jake Kapp idolizes Christy Mathewson, makes jewelry for him, and becomes his friend. What makes this novel work is that Kapp is also concerned with his own life, family, and the family business. Baseball is his passion, and Mathewson is the embodiment of baseball, but Kapp has a life, witnesses some momentous games, like the Merkle "boner" game, the final game of the 1912 Series, and some of the 1919 Series, but he also contends with family politics, a brother with a growing gambling mania, and suffers the death of a child in the influenza epidemic of 1919. In other words, Jake Kapp is a human being, not just a vehicle. When he visits the stricken Mathewson in '19 in a hotel in Chicago to get Matty's opinion of the crookedness of the Series, (Jake must decide if he should put money on Cincinnati to balance brother Eli's \$40,000 on the White Sox), Kapp has the stature of a fully developed literary character and the scene is powerful. To use a Kinsella dichotomy, Jake Kapp is a fan, not a spectator; and of life, not only baseball. That scene is memorable. Jake's decision does seem to be a matter of life and death. Greenberg understands when to retreat into characters of his own making, rather than let a John McGraw or Christy Mathewson do his talking.

Hoopla starts out like it's going to be a great novel as a young Luther Pond (he's much easier to take before he becomes a combination of Westbrook Pegler and Walter Winchell) covers the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries "Fight of the Century" in 1910. The *Ragtime* style cameos of Johnson, Gentleman Jim Corbett, and Jeffries, are done with just the right mixture of history and panache. Perhaps these cameos work because we know less about old-time fighters than Ty Cobb, who is a character; and who, supposedly drunk, tells Pond about his father's murder. This I find unlikely; and I also think it unlikely that Cobb would cry, as he does for Pond. Cobb did tell Al Stump about Hershel Cobb's death, but that was fifty years later, and Ty was dying.

Luther Pond becomes a caricature too quickly and Buck Weaver talks

like the "Busher," but the evocation of the sporting world in the first two decades of this century is done so well the book achieves the novelists' state of grace: the whole is bigger than the parts.

Can a great baseball novel be written? I'd like to think so. The novel, let alone the baseball novel, has been pronounced dead as many times as boxing, but both seem to hang on. Baseball novels are difficult because they compete with the game's history, which reads like a great novel, but men like Coover, Greenberg, Stein, and Malamud deepen our understanding of baseball and ourselves.

BASEBALL JOE ON THE GIANTS



LESTER CHADWICK



Sp. B. J. J.

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION.

MR. BLEECKER.—What in thunder?——

MR. BROOKE LYNN.—Well, I've *got* to see the ball game, and, of course, I can't get away from the baby; so I devised this rather novel arrangement. Clever, is n't it?

What's the Source?

By Philip Bergen

THE ROARING REDHEAD, LARRY MACPHAIL - BASE- BALL'S GREAT INNOVATOR

Don Warfield

266 pp., with illustrations. Diamond
Communications

\$16.95

IT BECOMES EVIDENT from looking at recent baseball biographies that the most interesting volumes are those which focus on an off-field individual. Their lives are more faceted and reflect their times to a greater extent than a star hitter or pitcher. Works on Albert Spalding, Ban Johnson and Branch Rickey, to name three, are of more lasting significance than are those of their employees. (Having stated this premise, it is wise to admit that there are obvious exceptions. Cobb, Ruth, and Robinson are larger-than-life figures and represent qualities not found in the average ballplayer.) Certainly in fifty years, biographies of George Steinbrenner, Bowie Kuhn and Marvin Miller will attract more attention than those of Ron Guidry or Dale Murphy. Using this as a basis for a choice of subject, a student of the game who looks at likely candidates becomes aware of one prime topic — Larry MacPhail, a Hall of Famer, innovator, entrepreneur, and hothead.

As Don Warfield notes, it is incredible that no biography has attempted to present the life of this complex executive, for there are many reasons why MacPhail's story needs

recounting. From strictly a baseball sense he was a master administrator. He took moribund franchises in Columbus, Cincinnati and Brooklyn and turned them into winners during the Depression, increasing attendance and improving the team on the field; he presided over the Yankees at the start of their generation-long domination of the American League during the post-World War II period. In each case MacPhail traded aggressively and promoted his teams through a variety of means previously untried. He was the first to recognize the connection between radio broadcasts and franchise popularity and that increased media coverage would also increase attendance rather than drive people away. He brought Red Barber to Brooklyn with him, approved the first televised ballgame in 1939, and departed from the New York agreement not to broadcast games. By ending this censorship, MacPhail set into motion New York City's "Golden Age of Baseball."

MacPhail's other great legacy, one that by itself would insure his importance to baseball, was his championing of night games, both in the minor leagues and in Cincinnati. From a half-century hindsight it is difficult to conceive that baseball could have sur-

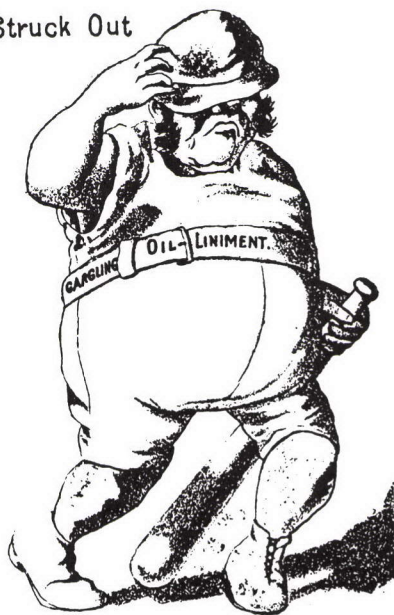
PHILIP BERGEN noted in the first SABR Review that he was waiting for the Red Sox to win the World Series during his lifetime. He continues to wait, but, having aged twenty years last October, finds this is less likely to happen.

vived in the Depression with day ball alone, and an examination of attendance figures of the period will indicate just how fragile the sport's economy was. (In 1932, MacPhail's Columbus team, using night games as its base, actually outdrew the parent Cardinals.) With millions out of work, those people who were free to attend afternoon contests could not afford to do so; in effect Saturday and Sunday games subsidized those played during the week. Incredibly, baseball owners were extremely reluctant about changing the nature of the game and MacPhail had to tread lightly to obtain rivals' permission to play his Reds under the lights. For a decade afterwards the growth of night games was gradual. Only after World War II did they become the rule rather than the exception. Obviously playing games at night was something that was inevitable, but it was at Larry MacPhail's prodding that it was achieved.

Unlike many of his baseball counterparts, MacPhail's life was extremely interesting away from the game. Born in small-town Michigan in 1890, he had received his law degree by age twenty. (MacPhail's name was originally McPhail. He added the "a" to emphasize his Scottish heritage.) He ran a department store in Nashville and served in France during the first World War where he received notoriety for his participation in an ill-advised attempt to kidnap Kaiser Wilhelm, and was wounded on Armistice Day an hour before the war ended. Warfield's account of the much-discussed kidnap tale is thorough and interesting, a "Dirty Dozen" story that came close to its objective. After baseball, MacPhail retired to his Maryland

farm where he became a leading racehorse and cattle breeder. He bought Bowie Racetrack and became a very successful figure in a second sport, starting from scratch and reaching his goal. There was much more to his full life than baseball; one tends to forget that his major league career only spanned the years 1933-1947, with time out for service during World War II.

Struck Out



On top of his accomplishments, MacPhail's personality set him apart. It would appear that he combined the flamboyance of a Ted Turner with the democratic tendencies of a Veeck, mixed thoroughly with the volatility of a Steinbrenner — all of which were in stark contrast to the Rickeys, Griffiths and Gileses of his period. MacPhail's temper and uncontrolled emotions led him into trouble on innumerable occasions. His firing (and later rehiring) of Dodger manager Leo Durocher after being bypassed by the team's train upon

winning the 1941 pennant has gone down in baseball lore. Warfield starts his biography with it. Yet at the same time MacPhail was intensely loyal to his employees. He was instrumental in the establishment of pension funding for both players and front office staff, and kept the fans' interest in mind, sprucing up his ballparks for their comfort. MacPhail was the type of man whose thrill came from the challenge of the creation, who could not stand to relax at the top, but who constantly hungered for the next mountain to climb. Immediately upon his Yankees winning the World Championship in 1947, he picked a fight with traveling secretary John McDonald, fired George Weiss, and sold his share of the team to Dan Topping and Del Webb. Frequently these actions were assisted by alcohol. He could be a difficult man to work for; he could also be charming and solicitous. Whatever he was, he was not dull.

Thus we are presented several ingredients for an outstanding biography: an exciting, varied life which influenced events of both his time and today; an engaging personality; and a person who has not received his written due and is in danger of fading from memory. Is *The Roaring Redhead* an outstanding biography? No.

The fault does not lie with Larry MacPhail but from Warfield's prose and disregard for the student of baseball history. The text contains a mixture of hoary clichés — "pulling the chestnut out of the fire" is used at least twice to refer to winning ballgames, and "Katie, bar the door" is also there — and awkwardly painful phrases. Tommy Henrich's leap "like a Masai warrior" for Lavagetto's 1947 World Series hit off

Bill Bevens is not likely to be forgotten in baseball prose. One sentence lapses into the first person partway through the book, the only time the author intrudes.

Besides grammatical and spelling problems, there are lapses of a more



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68 & 70 Wabash Ave, CHICAGO.

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serious nature. MacPhail's participation in the selection of Happy Chandler as Commissioner is incomplete; he is identified as nominating the Senator but no mention is made of why. Instead, MacPhail's inability to get flight reservations is stressed, as he was only in town to vote because of the

delay. A list of MacPhail's innovations includes him being the first to introduce yellow baseballs (superfluous as they never caught on). There are enough legitimate firsts to credit MacPhail for that to put in ersatz accomplishments cheapens his importance.

Warfield does cover a lot of ground, and to his credit he chides Branch Rickey (the villain in the book, if there is to be one) for his cavalier treatment of the Negro leagues, while stressing MacPhail's more equitable plan of team compensation and talent drafting. But what is annoying is Warfield's lack of citations for his sources. While the volume is aimed at the general fan, documents evidently obtained from the MacPhail family are quoted, several at great length (four pages from

the National League meeting which approved MacPhail's entering the league) with no attribution. Aside from a list of interviewees there is no indication of what Warfield did to write his book. At this stage of baseball scholarship there is no excuse for not including even a rudimentary bibliography.

Unfortunately, there is not likely to be a competing biography of MacPhail available. Most baseball figures are lucky to get one. Thus if you are interested in MacPhail or baseball in the thirties or forties, you should probably give it a try. (Look out for the Masai warrior.) However, if what you read is important, and how it is written matters, than you might better go elsewhere.



Summer of Love, Year of Yaz

By Dick Johnson

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM REMEMBERED:

THE 1967 RED SOX

Ken Coleman and Dan Valenti
260 pp., The Stephen Greene Press,
Lexington, MA
\$18.95

THE YEAR 1967 will forever be remembered for many phenomena: among them the escalation of the Viet Nam War, the psychedelic "summer of love" in San Francisco, and the epic American League pennant chase.

With today's inevitable playoff muddle (the bane of modern-day baseball), we have lost forever the ingredients that made the 1967 American League pennant race the best in modern memory. Indeed, the '67 race was baseball's best since 1908, when **both** leagues went down to the wire.

In *The Impossible Dream Remembered: The 1967 Red Sox*, Ken Coleman (the radio voice of the Red Sox) and Dan Valenti have chronicled this miracle season in splendid detail. Coleman tells the story of the 100 to one shot champions from the unique perspective of the broadcast booth where he was one of only a handful of people who saw **every** spring training and regular season game. Initially, Coleman paints a comprehensive portrait of manager Dick Williams. Williams is depicted as a master psychologist, drill sergeant and tactician. The book probes his stormy relationship with George Scott as Williams needed and

cajoled his first baseman to his best all-around season.

1967 was also known as "the Year of Yaz" as Carl Yastrzemski enjoyed one of the greatest seasons ever. Coleman describes the pre-season fitness program that enabled Yastrzemski to stay clear of injury and emerge as one of baseball's true superstars. In preparing for 1967 Yaz first displayed the work ethic and stoicism that typified his 23-year career.

The major portion of the book is written in diary fashion with detailed accounts of every regular season and World Series game. Special features include a monthly statistical review of the league and team, box scores of selected "key" games and a World Series diary kept by former Red Sox All Star second baseman and 1967 hitting instructor Bobby Doerr. The only omission from this section are the box scores of every game which would have made this volume an even more valuable source of '67 information.

Sprinkled throughout the book are numerous sidebars and present day interview excerpts such as the following from Yastrzemski: "Everyone participated in the effort and we went through some tough times together. Probably the toughest was when Tony Conigliaro got hit. We suffered a tremendous blow in losing Tony, who was just coming into his own not only

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as hitter but as a defensive outfielder. With Reggie Smith in center and myself in left it was a tremendous defensive outfield. We could all run, catch and throw; then we lose Tony. When he got hit I remember my reaction driving home that night. I said, "That's it. We don't have a chance at the pennant." Then all of a sudden, Jose Tartabull comes in, and he plays like Superman for the last six weeks of the season. Jerry Adair. . . coming through in the clutch. And it got to the point where they couldn't pitch around me, people like Adair and Dalton Jones were always on base. They had to pitch to me because so many times I came up with guys on first and third, first and second. I just got into one of those grooves. I didn't even know I won the Triple Crown until the next day. I read it in the papers after the final game of the season. My only thought was pennant, pennant. We got to win one for Mr. Yawkey."

Yastrzemski also gives credit to Bobby Doerr for helping him work through an early season hitting slump. On May 14th, Doerr suggested that Yaz adopt the high-handed batting style which in turn triggered the slug-ging binge that brought the Sox to the Series and an MVP trophy to Yastrzemski.

The hallmark of this book is its comprehensive treatment of key games and moments of the 1967 season. Such games include Billy Rohr's Yankee Stadium one-hitter, the nine-run extra

inning comeback against California at Fenway, Tony Conigliaro's tenth inning homer to win a 2-1 decision against Chicago, the ten-game winning streak on the road, the August 18th beaming of Conigliaro, Jose Tartabull's miracle throw at Comiskey Park and the final nail-biting season-ending series with the Minnesota Twins.

This book serves both as a reference source and as an evocative tribute to a landmark season and an unforgettable team. Red Sox fans will especially enjoy the slightly nostalgic flavor of Coleman's recollections. The 1967 Red Sox will forever be remembered as the only Sox team of the post-1920 era that never delivered the heartbreak associated with the 1948, 1949, 1950, 1972, 1975 and 1986 teams. This is primarily due to the sheer improbability of their accomplishments and the fact that they **won** most of the crucial "must" games that other Red Sox teams always devised excruciatingly painful ways to lose.

The Impossible Dream Remembered: The 1967 Red Sox is highly recommended for both Red Sox fans and those who lived through or are intrigued by the intense drama of the 1967 season. However, there is still a definitive history of the 1967 American League race waiting to be written that would take into account the stories associated with each contending team as well as including every box score from the season.



A. J. Reach & Co.'s Individual Bat Bag.

It's Lonely at the Top

By Merritt Clifton

HARDBALL: THE EDUCATION OF A BASEBALL COMMISSIONER

Bowie Kuhn

440 pp., Times Books
\$19.95

"Bowie Kuhn is the biggest jerk in the history of baseball." — Charles O. Finley, former owner, Kansas City & Oakland Athletics.

CONSIDERING THAT virtually everyone who has ever had anything to do with Charles O. Finley has come away considering HIM possibly the biggest jerk in the history of baseball, it's hard to take his summation of former baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn as anything but a compliment.

Yet, after immersing myself in *Hardball*, Kuhn's 440-page tome of self-justification, I find myself empathizing with Kuhn's arch-enemies Finley and former Players' Association president Marvin Miller as never before. Kuhn denies repeatedly that he's a "stuck-up patrician stuffed shirt," but his own account indicts him on almost every page. For a man who was the chief executive officer of Organized Baseball longer than anyone but Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Kuhn seems to have remarkably little perspective on the major issues of his tenure. His book both begins and ends with laboriously tedious accounts of his dismissal, in

effect a firing, as if he honestly believes this was the most critical event in baseball since the major league expansion of 1969. Throughout the book, Kuhn remembers and quotes every criticism ever directed his way by owners and media, in the long-suffering tone of a

The little k Play.



BASE-BALL.

THE Ball once struck off,
Away flies the Boy
To the next detlin'd Poit,
And then Home with Joy.

MORAL.

Thus Britons for Lucre
Fly over the Main;
But, with Pleasure transported,
Return back again.

TRAP-

self-anointed martyr, following up each time with a string of testimonials from other people whose opinions may or may not have any bearing on the

MERRITT CLIFTON is a professional writer and editor who includes titles such as the novel *A Baseball Classic*, the statistical *Relative Baseball*, and *Baseball Stories for Girls & Boys* (Past Puberty), all available from Samisdat Press.

topic. The self-canonization climaxes on page 407, when Kuhn quotes Buzzie Bavasi stating that only two men fit the owners' ideal description of a baseball commissioner: "One of these was crucified 2,000 years ago and the other is being crucified by our own membership."

That's a line worth quoting, all right, but not with a straight face. Kuhn evidently takes it most seriously, concluding 33 pages later that could have been condensed into one, "I could say in the words of St. Paul, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept my faith.'"

The Gospel According to Kuhn is that the former Griffith Stadium scoreboard boy raised major league baseball from the dead, fed the masses loaves and Catfish, endured the barbs and scorn of Finley, Miller, et al, was betrayed by George Steinbrenner, and was finally denied three times by Ted Turner after the Kroc croaked. Despite this, he retains "special affection" for more people than Mae West invited to come up and see her sometime.

It's an interesting theory, but Kuhn actually seems to have lost more battles than he won, and the individuals most obviously responsible for reviving baseball interest during the 1970s and 1980s are conspicuously not Kuhn's favorites. Self-described non-patrician Kuhn admits greatest sympathy for the old-fashioned baseball "sportsmen" such as Walter O'Malley, Horace Stoneham, John Fetzer, Tom Yawkey, Joan Payson, and Calvin Griffith, who ran the game all their own way and nearly into oblivion behind football and basketball until mavericks began showing up to replace them.

O'Malley, of course, was always eminently successful. The rest had more downs than ups. The deeply conservative Kuhn seems to have preferred them primarily because they were fellow conservatives, maintaining their unity as the Establishment.

Newcomers like Steinbrenner, Kroc, Turner, and Eddie Chiles are also political conservatives, but they represent money self-made rather than inherited. Their strident, evangelical zeal disturbs Kuhn's sense of propriety much as Jerry Falwell disturbs Barry Goldwater. One may empathize with Kuhn, just as polls show the American public overwhelmingly empathized with Goldwater a few years ago when he opined that "Every good Christian should kick Jerry Falwell right in the ass." At the same time, any realistic appraisal shows the evangelists have led the revival of both baseball and political conservatism, after the Goldwaters conspicuously failed. They're the ones whose antics grab the headlines, who make the grandstand moves that put people in the seats. They're the ones whose teams have made the biggest gains in community support over the past decade.

Kuhn's conservatism may have been a very good thing for baseball during his first two years as commissioner. Posing as a liberal, in the Gladstone tradition, he appeared interested in change to precisely the degree that was necessary to rally public opinion behind the status quo. He permitted, even encouraged, experiments with the designated hitter rule, flared foul lines, the three-ball walk, and orange baseballs. While the furor over these short-lived (save one) innovations absorbed the clamor that base-

ball should somehow adapt to the times, Kuhn actually permitted only two changes, both of which were actually returns to the status quo. In 1969, the strike zone was reduced to the pre-1963 size. The same year, the pitcher's mound was lowered to approximately the same worn, weather-

later may have been a mistake. Attendance was already making a significant comeback in both leagues; if American League offense lagged, the real reason could have been isolated and dealt with.

The introduction of the DH, however, has had minor impact on



eroded height it had always been everywhere but in the major leagues of the 1960s, where grounds crews had begun restoring it regularly between games.

Allowing the American League to use the designated hitter four years

baseball beside Kuhn's series of blunders in player relations. From his first days in office, Kuhn denied being an owners' commissioner, professing great admiration and sympathy for the athletes. From the first, however, he also adamantly supported the reserve clause

exactly as written. If Kuhn allowed Rusty Staub, Donn Clendenon, and Hawk Harrelson some say — after the fact — in where, when, and how they were traded, he nonetheless refused to advise the owners that the reserve clause should be loosened before, not after, the Players' Association blasted it apart with strikes, strike threats, and court decisions.

According to Kuhn, he knew from the first that Marvin Miller sought to overturn the baseball establishment by breaking the reserve clause. If this is the case, Kuhn badly underestimated Miller's abilities. Worse, Kuhn misread the attitudes of the players, who employed Miller and repeatedly rallied behind him despite the open disapproval of ownership. He simply never realized that some owners — like Finley — could rankle their players as much as they rankled a commissioner, to the point that the players would feel compelled to depart a club to preserve personal sanity. Kuhn never realized, either, that journeyman players who then made a normal middle-class income might justifiably resent being relocated across the continent repeatedly. The reserve clause, pay scale, and expanded geographic scale of the major leagues in the '60s together placed social stress on major league players that had to be remedied. Had Kuhn taken the lead here, Marvin Miller might never have claimed the degree of influence he did. Dave McNally and Andy Messersmith might never have taken major league baseball to court. The salary scale might have remained at a level where most major league clubs could make modest profits.

As Kuhn explains, he had to de-

fend the reserve clause as written in the Curt Flood case. Understood, if not agreed; a lawsuit does tend to cement the opponents into non-negotiable adversarial positions. Yet Kuhn could also have introduced a compromise he apparently never thought of: making Flood a free agent while compelling the Cardinals to compensate the Phillies for the loss of his services. He did compel the compensation — Willie Montanez, who, traded for Garry Maddox, gave the Phillies a hell of a lot more quality centerfielding than they'd bargained for. What Kuhn didn't do is concede anything to Flood's sense of dignity.

Allowing Flood to feel like something more than a well-paid slave might have caused future problems in player relations, but nothing that didn't happen anyway. It would also have stolen much of Miller's thunder, and just incidentally done much to enhance baseball's appeal to black fans. From the ghetto perspective, Rusty Staub and Hawk Harrelson got concessions because they were white. Donn Clendenon got concessions only because he was part of the Staub deal. Flood got shafted for being black. Right or wrong, that's a perception Kuhn never did address, while vocally wondering why more blacks don't support baseball at the box office.

Suppose that in 1970 or 1971 Kuhn had offered for public discussion an arrangement combining the 10/5 trading rule with the option of free agency and compensation if a player of 10 years' service or five with one club were to be traded but chose free agency instead. Radical as that suggestion might have sounded, it would have satisfied all the players' demands and

then some, while giving the owners a much better situation than they suffered after the McNally/Messersmith decision of 1976. Of course Kuhn never had the power to impose such a compromise, or to impose anything. To make sure he's not held responsible, Kuhn makes plain the limits of his power at every opportunity. Yet he did have power and authority he largely neglected, to introduce proposals in such a manner as to assure they would receive serious consideration from both labor and management. If Kuhn had truly been commissioner for all baseball, not just the owners, he could have led the way in reforming the reserve clause at any time between the Flood case of 1970 and the McNally/Messersmith case six years later.

Unfortunately, as Kuhn emphasizes time and again, his chief concern was and is with appearances and propriety, not with getting things done. The only ideas Kuhn ever introduced were a variety of ways to return baseball to Washington, D.C., and a plan for significantly increasing his own authority.

Kuhn rationalizes his obsession with image by calling it concern for the marketability of baseball. But many of his actions supposedly on behalf of public image harmed baseball more than helping; many others were simply irrelevant; and still others resemble vendetta.

Harming rather than helping was Kuhn's stance on baseball and gambling. When Kuhn suspended Denny McLain for betting on games in 1970, that made sense; players were still paid a set amount for the season, and the amount was low enough that gamblers could conceivably bribe a star to fix a

game. Kuhn's later actions on gambling made progressively less sense. He excluded club owners for investing in horse racing, although he never explained how a club owner could fix a ballgame even if he or she wanted to. While a club owner possibly could fix



the outcome of an entire season, in a negative way, the idea that one would fix is absurd. The owner would in effect count on gambling gains to offset the loss in attendance and broadcast income that always comes with a losing season. Who has ever bet that heavily that a losing team will continue to lose? Next, Kuhn forcibly disassociated Willie Mays and Mickey Mantle from baseball when they took public relations jobs at gambling casinos. He didn't actually bar or suspend them, but the effect was similar. Since both Mays and Mantle were years past their playing careers, they couldn't have fixed games even if they had wanted to. Presumably, they could have introduced active players to gamblers, but so could anyone else. Basically, Kuhn was grandstanding, attempting to dispel his image as an owners' puppet by taking actions reminiscent of Judge Landis. He now credits himself with having prevented tampering by gamblers that was never likely through the channels

he closed off, but could have happened through the same channels that supplied hundreds of players with illegal drugs throughout his term of office.

Not that Kuhn did nothing about drug abuse. Quite the opposite: when Jim Bouton exposed drug abuse in

were well-recognized gamers, guys who kept in shape, busted ass on the field, and always showed up ready to play. They nonetheless took the full, relatively light weight of Kuhn's anti-drug stance for the first decade Kuhn was commissioner. (And the Lee case isn't



WHEN GAMBLING CONTROLLED

baseball with his book *Ball Four!* in 1970, Kuhn reprimanded him for conduct detrimental to the game. Eight years later, Kuhn called Bill Lee on the carpet for admitting he used marijuana — not for the use, because Lee was never actually caught, but for making the admission. Both Bouton and Lee

even mentioned in *Hardball!*) Only after numerous players were arrested on drug charges in the early 1980s did Kuhn begin doing anything substantive. What he did then amounted to kicking men who were already down, suspending players who had already served prison sentences.

Significantly, even Judge Landis didn't suspend players who had served their time elsewhere. He expelled players who gambled on games or conspired to fix games but got off the legal hook through technicalities. He expelled contract jumpers. But Landis, Ford Frick, and Spike Eckert all allowed players to return to professional baseball promptly after serving prison time, for a variety of offenses including some violent crimes and some that were alcohol-related.

Once again Kuhn proved he was tough at players' expense. He had not announced the rules and possible penalties before anyone got into trouble; he did not succeed in preventing further drug abuse; he did not apply his rules equally to management. He did manage to antagonize the Players' Association more than ever, attempting to introduce compulsory drug testing in disregard of one scientific verity: one can flunk a marijuana test just by entering a room where someone else smoked up to an hour before. Any player who had recently kissed a girl who'd smoked marijuana could have flunked the test and been suspended.

Kuhn stretches credibility farthest in his analysis of the baseball strikes of 1981 and 1985, which probably were the most significant issues of his tenure to players, fans, and owners alike. In each case the real obstacle to settlement was the owners' position that losses through free agency had to be compensated. Kuhn denies page after page that the demand for compensation was an attempt to roll back free agency and cut salaries. Yet in effect that's exactly what has happened since the owners succeeded in making a first-round draft choice the price of

signing a Class One free agent. Given a choice between signing a 33-year-old veteran and a Pete Incaviglia or Bo Jackson, the owners have understandably chosen to go with the top prospects. Consequently, many Class One free agents of declining but still useful skills are out of baseball. Men like Tony Armas can't sign with anyone even at the minimum salary, because they aren't worth the risk of losing a younger man who might do more for longer. Other veterans now have powerful incentive to sign contracts with anyone at any price rather than risk becoming free agents.

Kuhn doesn't dwell long upon the plight of jobless players. Indeed, Kuhn discusses the players' point of view remarkably little. Kuhn does discuss Charles O. Finley at considerable length, however, reciting Finley's arguments in reasonable detail. Apparently, Kuhn believes Finley's case on each major point of conflict is so weak it should fall apart of itself. His judgment is shaky. Kuhn describes how he intervened "for the sake of baseball" in the contract disputes between Reggie Jackson and Finley, 1970, and Vida Blue and Finley, 1972. In each case Kuhn's intervention clearly shows him as a management man, helping get one of the game's biggest gate attractions to accept a relatively paltry salary. If Finley was a mean-spirited tightwad, Kuhn was little better than his accomplice, contributing mightily to the resentment that brought about free agency a few years later. His one accomplishment on behalf of the players was preventing Finley from returning Jackson to the minor leagues. Later, Kuhn claims credit for reinstating Mike Andrews, after Finley made him the

scapegoat for losing a World Series game in which his errors only added runs to the Mets' lead. In actuality, national media coverage and a threatened player strike probably had at least as much to do with that as Kuhn's action.

Detestable as he's always been, Finley starts to look better and Kuhn worse in Kuhn's account of post-McNally/Messersmith dealings. Fearing his stars would all become free agents, Finley began trading and selling them off in early 1976. Kuhn promptly vetoed the sale of Joe Rudi and Rollie Fingers to the Red Sox, then vetoed the sale of Vida Blue to the Yankees, allowed the sale of Paul Lindblad to the Rangers, but then vetoed the trade of Vida Blue to the Reds for Dave Revering and a substantial lot of cash. Kuhn recounts Finley's argument that he would lose the players anyway, but could use the cash to rebuild his franchise. Then Kuhn states simply, "I wondered if you could believe anything Finley said, and even if you did believe him, did it make any difference?"

Certainly Finley couldn't rebuild the Athletics without cash. Before free agency threatened, Finley had traded star prospects Chet Lemon, Danny Ford, Manny Trillo, George Hendrick, and Champ Summers to acquire pennant insurance for his dynasty that won five straight A.L. West divisions. He didn't reasonably expect to have to do any massive rebuilding. After free agency hit, Finley had exactly four quality position players left in his farm system: Wayne Gross and Dwayne Murphy in AAA, Denny Walling in AA, and Rickey Henderson in rookie league. With cash his Oakland franchise wasn't earning him at the gate,

despite consistent winning, Finley might have signed his top draft choices, picked up a few bargain free agents, and been contending again soon. Without it, he hadn't a chance.

This isn't to say he didn't try. After losing most of his star players, Finley eventually traded those he had left in a series of masterful moves that gave him Tony Armas, Doc Medich, Rick Langford, and Mitchell Page, among others, for Phil Garner; Gary Alexander, Gary Thomasson, John Henry Johnson, and others for Vida Blue; Mike Heath for Johnson; etc. Even without operating capital, Finley sold a first-place team to Levi-Strauss five years later.

But Kuhn didn't act just to screw Finley. According to Kuhn, Kuhn acted to insure competitive balance; to insure that the richest teams couldn't simply buy up the best players and run away with everything. Never mind that this is exactly what could have happened after Rudi, Fingers, et al became free agents. Fortunately for both Kuhn and baseball, other owners were never as astute judges of talent as Finley. Of the players Finley tried to sell, Rudi never again hit over his lifetime average. Blue remained a quality pitcher for eight years, but may already have been battling cocaine. Fingers had many more excellent years ahead. Don Baylor was still on his way up, but Ken Holtzman, Sal Bando, Bert Campaneris, and even the still young Claudiell Washington had begun declines.

At prices ranging from \$400,000 for Lindblad up, Finley was giving away much less to get much more than his Bay Area neighbor Horace Stoneham. One year earlier, Stoneham sold Dave Kingman to the Mets for a mere

\$150,000. Unloading expensive players for cheap ones, Stoneham had already traded a washed-up Willie Mays for Charlie Williams and cash, still-dangerous Willie McCovey for Mike Caldwell, and maybe-finished Juan Marichal for cash. Stoneham, however, was one of the good old boys. Kuhn never said a word.

At 6'5", Kuhn may not be the biggest jerk in the history of baseball, but he's certainly bigger than Finley, who didn't hurt his reputation for good baseball judgment by later calling Kuhn "the village idiot" as well. In all fairness, Kuhn did inherit troubled times, and did take a bad rap for not being able to act with the same free hand Judge Landis had. He may be a decent fellow to those rich enough to have lunch with him at the '21' club, whose name is dropped as often as pop flies to Dick Stuart. He undoubtedly does have a lot of loyal and admiring friends in high places. None of this

made him the legitimate peer of Jesus Christ, heir to St. Paul, or even a good baseball commissioner. Kuhn's own account makes plain he has little tolerance for dissent, none for public discussion of sensitive issues, and strictly a traditionalist's viewpoint, all of which combine to insulate him from any but his own ideas. When those ideas do not coincide with the ideas of players and fans, he blames Marvin Miller and the media. When his ideas don't coincide with those of owners, either, he blames a conspiracy of vengeful people who were out to get him. His own endless backroom maneuverings were only business as usual.

Ultimately, Kuhn's memoirs remind most of Richard Nixon's. Like Nixon, he concludes by remembering that he was re-elected by a landslide. Like Nixon, he was out soon after, his doom assured by the very manner in which he tried to rig the landslide . . . for higher motives, of course.



“Roughewn Troubadours”

By Paul D. Adomites

**VOICES OF THE GAME:
THE FIRST FULL-SCALE
OVERVIEW OF BASEBALL
BROADCASTING, 1921
TO THE PRESENT**

Curt Smith

566 pp., plus xii, with Chronology and
Index and 80 photographs

Diamond Communications

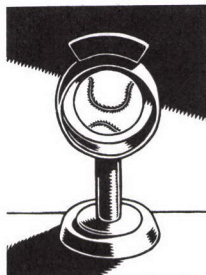
\$22.95

SPEAKING OF THE great era of radio baseball, Curt Smith says, “. . . it was the **broadcasters** — more than the players, managers or even the glorious ballparks — that set one’s sense of fancy rippling and proselytized, as the most fervent newspaper never could, the ethos and characters of the game.”

The truth of that statement is the strength of this large and notable book that looks at the history of baseball broadcasting in almost breathless detail and frequently in the words of the broadcasters themselves. That’s when the book is at its best. (It’s the other areas that Smith tries to explicate that cause some stumbling.)

There is no doubt that when it comes to these men — from Graham McNamee to Allen, Barber, Harwell, Prince, Hodges — this work is complete. I really don’t think Smith missed **anybody**. These men are in many ways responsible for the way America feels about America’s game. Smith is elo-

quent on this subject; he describes an experience a lot of us share — at night, hiding under the covers, spinning the dial to hear as many games as we could, relishing the achievements of the heroes who played the game, delighting in the descriptions of the great men who told the stories.



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ON THE AIR

And what great characters they were. Not surprisingly, the most fun this book has to offer lies in the words of the men who were there. Here’s the inimitable Harry Caray talking about the pleasure gap between games he saw at Sportsman’s Park as a kid and the games he heard on the radio: “Was I that lucky — happening to go only to games that were great — or were the broadcasters that bad?”

Smith also has the good taste to let the stories tell themselves when they can. Instead of jumping from man

PAUL D. ADOMITES edited this volume of *The SABR Review of Books*.

to man in an attempt to “follow the chronology,” he lets each man’s tale unfold. The result is wonderful entertainment — the section on Ernie Harwell alone is an anthology piece. Here’s Harwell explaining why so many Southern-born gentlemen became outstanding announcers: “We came from a storytelling background. We learned early on how to tell a tale.” That rings awfully true to me.

In addition, there are spectacular reminiscences of some of the greats by their broadcasting partners. Bob Prince on Rosey Rowswell’s antics; Jim Woods on Russ Hodges; Richie Ashburn relating how By Saam explained a scorer’s decision to his audience: “And now for all you guys scoring in bed.” Even the marvelous Mel Allen was capable of big-league boo-boos. During a slow game at Yankee Stadium, Mel noted that two teenagers were trading kisses in the bleachers. “That’s interesting,” he said. “He’s kissing her on the strikes, and she’s kissing him on the balls.”

One of Smith’s earlier books was on Dizzy Dean, and he spends what seems to me to be a little longer on Dean’s historical impact and humor than is really necessary. At times his tone becomes almost defensive. In fact, when Smith gets to Pee Wee Reese as an announcer, the first things Pee Wee has to talk about are more Dizzy stories.

Even when he discusses those announcers who were as deadly dull as white bread, yet who somehow managed to be successful over many years, Smith tries to be as objective as possible. After all, “play it down the middle” is what Vin Scully does; Bob Elson and Milo Hamilton are just **bor-**

ing. The only real dig on those characters happens when a colleague is quoted as saying “Elson raised shilling to a new plateau.”

A more telling comment is a quote on the studiousness of Milo Hamilton. Listen: “Just to prepare a book on homeruns for the (upcoming) season, took him more than **ten hours.**” (Italics mine.) Just imagine that — a man making \$100,000 for seven months of work can spend ten whole hours doing research! I don’t expect Milo will be heading up the SABR Statistical Committee anytime soon.

One of the longest single-announcer sections in the book is on Bob Prince, and for good reason. There weren’t many announcers as colorful, as fun-loving, or as much in love with a team and a city than The Gunner. Smith paints the sad picture of how Prince and Westinghouse Broadcasting came to a battle, ultimately over who was more important to the customers, and how Prince was dumped. The real sadness, however, came ten years later, when the Pirates tried to bring him back, but the cancer that was killing him was far advanced, and he was able to help with only a few innings. I’m not sure why Smith left out the more upbeat story that was The Gunner’s real epitaph for those of us who loved him much. Bob left the hospital on May 3, 1985, to broadcast what would be his last inning ever. And a serious dose of magic occurred. The pitiable Pirates scored nine runs in that fourth inning and won the game 16-2, only their seventh win of the season. Two weeks later The Gunner was gone forever.

But along with the great voices and great characters, Smith is trying to

re-create history, too. He tries to go beyond the *Glory of Their Times* format: 1) to place the events in historical context, both in terms of baseball and the outside world; and 2) to discuss how the broadcasting industry grew, how it changed, and how it rode high on baseball for years, only nearly to destroy it in the late sixties and early seventies, and then resurrect the magic as baseball (belatedly) came to grips with football's TV challenge. In the final analysis, Smith seems to be saying that now is truly the great era of network baseball broadcasting, and that (almost by definition) the local skills will be improving along with the tide. Overall, that's hard to argue with; it's how Smith gets there that makes it tough.

As a writer, Smith is best when he lets the broadcasters talk for him. When he tries to describe a decade of baseball (or the world) in a long paragraph, the result is often a kind of breathless clumsiness. Not only is he a devoted fan of the Latinate ("cynosure" is a favorite), but he tries to stuff so many facts in such a short space that he will often load a sentence with back-breaking parenthetical comments. In one sentence I counted nine. That's hard to follow. On page 481, there's a sentence with 38 words in parentheses and only 26 that aren't. Awkward reading.

Sometimes his prose is just comical. On Mel Allen: "His countenance was wistful; the product, one gleaned, of an earlier milieu." He says "Roberto Clemente made basket catches at his knees," and uses "bantling" and "taiga" in the same sentence. One more nit: the '75 World Series was glorious, not "madcap." And if you



Bravo!
The Pet of the Nine

should for any reason be bothered by someone calling the World Series "the Oktoberfest," don't go near this book.

But the real problem enters when he tries to make himself a character. His editorializing on political campaigns is out of place. "For even as 'Barber's impact on New York,' said Creamer, 'was extraordinary,' **so was Roosevelt's upon the nation.**"!! Does he have that backwards? He intrudes awkwardly on conversations: "Recount, I urged, 'his announcing style.'" When Bob Broeg is opining that a healthy Dizzy Dean might have won 400 games, Smith is compelled to state, " 'Even Christy Mathewson won fewer than that (373),' I pointed out." I don't know about you, but the day I feel I can "point out" **anything** to Bob Broeg (much less Christy Mathewson's record) is the day my ego has done me in.

But between the remarkable character portraits of "The Voices" and Smith's occasional prose stumbles, he also has the courage to dig in where

many would fear to tread: into the world of corporate machinations and the broadcasting industry. The whole question of how much television is good for the home team (and baseball as a whole) and how much is too much is a tricky one. Smith gives it serious effort. He is crystal clear on the mistakes that baseball made in the "Dark Ages" — 1965-75 — when it in effect reduced network TV coverage to one man — Curt Gowdy — and one game a week, always blacked out in the home team's area. He develops an intriguing metaphor — how the almost simultaneous firings of Mel Allen and Dizzy Dean were indications of how corporate America felt about baseball. It is clear, even today, as interviews with Vin Scully and others show, that no matter how successful, a broadcaster is just like a manager: only temporary help.

Smith is also insightful on the subject of owners' greed, and how it prevented the sharing of network TV dollars, and how the whole free agency mess was tangled up with that particular piece of boneheaded avarice.

The one subject that never gets addressed, however, is a bigger one. It's true that baseball has never been more popular and it's also true that baseball has never been more widely televised. But at the SABR National Convention a couple of years ago, A's president Roy Eisenhardt raised the question that the white heat of TV popularity may ultimately be baseball's funeral pyre, simply because baseball is not and never will be a TV game.

To summarize, Mr. E. said that television is for switching channels till you find the most exciting thing happening that moment; baseball wants

you to watch **the whole game** to see the changes, the movements, not just that instant's flash. A channel-switcher will spin to a ballgame and see the score is 4 to nothing in the third inning and assume the game is over; it's not. The result, he seemed to say, is that we are via TV creating a generation of fans who are missing what baseball is really about. I'm not sure of that myself, but it is something worth thinking on.

All in all, *Voices of the Game* is a big book, and like any big book (particularly one that tackles a new subject) is prone to a few stumbles. But the richness of the "voices" makes this work major. It's fun to read in many places, and it's organized in a manner to make research easy.

"To recall the Jimmy Dudley of 1961, or Earl Gillespie, whose Wisconsin dream turned to nightmare, or The Gunner, his life as much a folktale as travelogue, or Waite Hoyt, whose stories were limitless and exquisite, or Byrum Saam and Ray Scott in their prime — one must, in a pinch, retrieving the virtues of the past, fall back on memory itself.

"However vague and selective memory may be, there is no trick, in trying to recapture that time, to observe that I was extraordinarily lucky, as were millions of my generation. . ."

That's for damn sure.

“Hey! Hey!” “So What?”

By Joel Oppenheimer

THANKS FOR LISTENING!

Jack Brickhouse, with Jack Rosenberg and Ned Colletti
224 pp., with photographs, Diamond Communications
\$15.95

CUB FANS HAVE NOT had easy lives. Perhaps only Boston Red Sox rooters have come close to their suffering, but Red Sox fans at least get to die in a World Series every ten years or so.

On the other hand, no one ever claimed that being a fan was supposed to be easy, except Yankee believers. In fact, the more the suffering, the better the baseball brain, seems to be the rule. Yankee fans tend to be know-nothings, while Cubbies and Bosockers actually watch and appreciate the game.

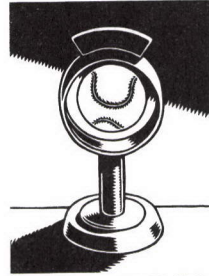
All this is prolog to the dismay I felt reading through Jack Brickhouse's memoir, *Thanks For Listening!*, a task I could never have completed were it not for loyalty to SABR.

Musing about fans, it began to occur to me that the only edge the Cubs had over those Bronx Yahoos was that Brickhouse had made it into the Hall of Fame, while Phil Rizzuto is still waiting around outside, as player, and as broadcaster.

But anyone who hasn't grown up listening to Brickhouse's voice screaming "Hey! Hey!" and stretching on "It's

a bee-youuu-tiful day at Wrigley Field," will be hard pressed to believe this man is Hall material, by his own evidence in this book.

I'm not carping or nitpicking either. The book is so badly written it's hard to believe three people worked on



SPECIAL FEATURE: **ON THE AIR**

it. And Brickhouse's timing in written prose, telling simple anecdotes, is so off, it's impossible to imagine it being **heard** any better.

And yet there are all those people who **have** grown up on him. Some of them are friends of mine. I presume they will love this book. And I have no hesitation recommending it to them.

But the rest of the baseball audience will ask for, and I think deserves, a better book. It doesn't need to be a

JOEL OPPENHEIMER is a poet whose first heard broadcast was the '41 Series. He was rooting for Brooklyn. His most recent book of poems is *New Spaces*.

“tell-all” expose, or a sententious summing-up of one’s career, or even a shpritz of great one-liners.

It just needs to be an honest, simple, direct book about how it was. After all, Brickhouse was in the radio booth early, broadcasting Cub and White Sox games in 1940, which is not too long after that end of the business began. And he was doing, and helping to invent, television coverage when it began.

What we get instead of clarity, simplicity, and brevity is sometimes embarrassingly choked bragging — which obviously can’t be done that way. Either you unabashedly talk about how the fans love you, or you let other people do it, or you ignore it — and sometimes embarrassing bootlicking, which is different from honest-to-God hero worship.

There’s a whole section which might be entitled “I Never Met A Boss I Didn’t Like,” and the same goes for owners. About the only two people he’s willing to indict in print are Steve Ellis, with whom he worked for one year broadcasting New York Giant games, and Howard Cosell, with whom he had an argument on Kup’s Show in Chicago. It always upsets me when I discover I’m taking Howard’s side, and Brickhouse is one of the rare few who forced me to it.

The Ellis anecdote ends with Brickhouse saying, “Steve Ellis and I turned out to be friends. Later on, he did a double take when he realized it could have been a great year for both of us. He told me he wished he had it to do over again. He admitted he hadn’t given me the benefit of his cooperation.”

The Cosell discussion ends with a Brickhouse replay of it with Joe Garagiola, in which they both agree that Howard only “tells it like it is” because he makes more money that way.

There are some nice stories here, to be fair, including a lovely one about Richard Burton and how he got hooked on baseball, and further, how he sat Liz down to watch the end of a Mets game, which turned out to go twenty-three innings. Liz didn’t watch again, until she discovered the LA Dodgers and Maury Wills.

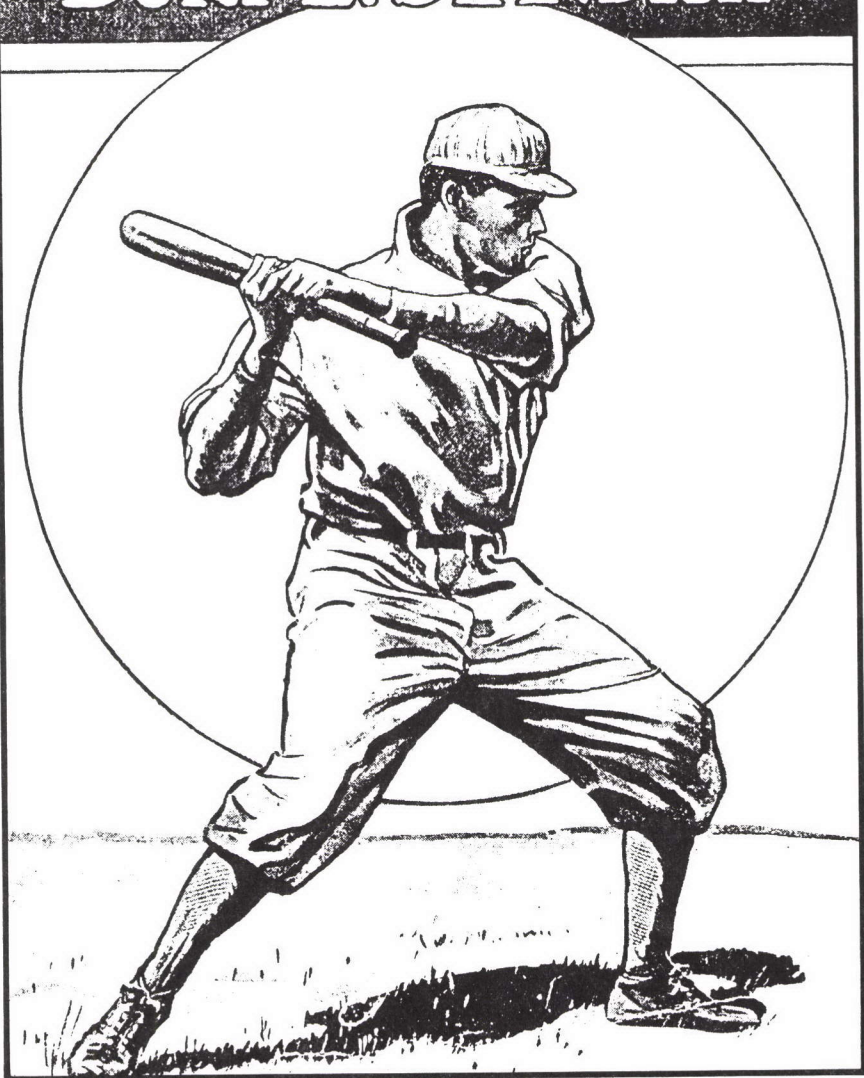
Just before that story, though, is the story behind the story of “one of my proudest moments,” an exclusive interview with Richard Nixon at the Miami convention. We never do find out what the interview consisted of, or what Nixon was like, or anything, except the advantages of knowing major campaign contributors, and being a famous sportscaster.

I guess maybe that’s the point. Brickhouse really seems to believe that being a famous sportscaster is a talent all by itself. And maybe it is. But I’d hope to see a little more in a person than just the tag after his name, at least when I’m reading his memoirs. Don’t get me wrong, now, because I don’t want to read Howard Cosell’s memoirs either.

But that little bit of Red Barber I get every Friday morning when NPR carries him live from his house, and his retirement, in Florida, **that** tells me something about the man, and the sport, and the art he practiced. I get none of that from Brickhouse in these more than two hundred pages. And I’m sorry for it.

Frank Merriwell's Baseball Victories

BY BURT L. STANDISH



The Resolute Voice

By James O'Donnell

TUNED TO BASEBALL

Ernie Harwell

229 pp., illus., Diamond Communications

\$7.95 (paper)

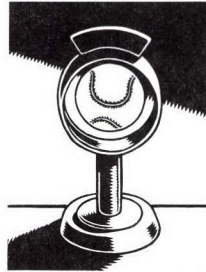
IT IS SUCH A PLEASURE listening to Ernie Harwell broadcast a baseball game that I couldn't help imagining I was hearing his voice as I read *Tuned to Baseball*, an account of his baseball life. It's a book that lends itself to listening: the anecdotes, the informal structuring, the persona of a friend who knows what it is like to be hooked on baseball.

George Vecsey of *The New York Times*, after listening to the broadcasts of the 1986 World Series, commented that the opportunity to hear Ernie Harwell broadcast baseball would be sufficient reason to move to Detroit. Ernie's prowess, of course, earned him a place in the Hall of Fame, even more telling because he's still an active broadcaster. It's an honor of which Ernie is justifiably proud — he ends the book with his induction speech — and perhaps even a responsibility now, a noblesse oblige for a man with the requisite knowledge and charm to serve as an ambassador for the game of baseball.

In *Tuned to Baseball* Ernie Harwell gives thanks to those who have helped him — his employers, his colleagues, his family, his God. It's not a chronological account, maybe because of modesty. There's no doubting the sincerity of the man. He's not afraid to

bring up some embarrassing moments in his career, some instances of self-doubt, or even the bittersweet memory of calling Bobby Thomson's epic homerun **on television**, prior to the days of sports videotaping, while Russ Hodges' radio version, recorded by a home listener, became world famous.

In both Ernie Harwell's broadcasting and writing, there is an authenticity, a quality unaffected by ego. He



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has a straightforward style, modest in tone, and economical in expression. It is the style of a man who is resolute and honest, who is impatient with nonsense even if his good manners restrain him from commenting on it. In *Tuned to Baseball* he devotes at least one chapter each to the various metiers of baseball: managers, owners, broadcasters, umpires, and players, and nearly always reports as an eyewitness and not as a

JAMES O'DONNELL, an English instructor at Edmonds Community College outside Seattle, researches topics and teaches courses relating to baseball in literature.

promulgator of hearsay. He is most trenchant when describing an early generation of sports broadcasters — Graham McNamee, Ted Husing, and Bill Munday — and some who bridged the generations — Bill Stern, Mel Allen, and Red Barber. With no feigned

more than our right to know. He is careful when mentioning such troubled Tigers as Denny McLain and Ron LeFlore, although he makes it clear that he feels McLain had too poor a track record himself to expect teammates and acquaintances to help him out



affection, he cites the fastidiousness of Barber, his refusal to compromise standards, revealing a flintiness that belied a folksy radio persona. (The stern moralist is much more in evidence now during the Friday morning phone calls to Red's home on National Public Radio.) It's a close-up view from the same radio booth and, because of the source, very convincing.

Always, though, Ernie gives his subjects their due. He appears to bear no grudges and he expresses admiration freely. He's almost reticent, and perhaps paternalistic, when discussing ballplayers, respecting their privacy

when he was in need, and that LeFlore allowed a chance to be a baseball great to slip away. In contrast, Mark Fidrych gets sympathetic treatment as a casualty of bad fortune. Except for Ty Cobb, Ernie's choice as the greatest ballplayer, no other players receive attention outside of anecdotes.

Portraits of Leo Durocher and Sparky Anderson begin and conclude Ernie's discussion of managers. Ernie reports without rancor a scuffle he had with Durocher aboard a train to Chicago (circa 1950), perhaps Durocher's test of the young broadcaster's mettle. The fight may seem a departure from

Ernie's customary mild-mannerliness but it underscores the ex-Marine's grit as well. No wonder that Ernie and Sparky Anderson have become good friends. The mutual admiration is born out of respect for one's fellow beings but, of course, out of self-respect as well. In between Durocher and Anderson, Ernie reviews Paul Richards, Charlie Dressen, Jimmy Dykes, Bob Scheffing, Billy Martin, Ralph Houk, and Les Moss. His brief sketch of Billy Martin — about three pages — is a masterful rendering of a complex man, whose lack of discretion makes him so unlike Ernie. This section and the one on broadcasters are the two most incisive in the book.

Not all of the material in the book may suit the reader's fancy. The chapter on owners interested me only slightly and Ernie's continuing relationship with the Tigers makes his portrait of Tom Monaghan seem too obligatory. (Does Ernie know what plans Monaghan has for Tiger Stadium?) In later chapters, Ernie gives testimony to his faith in God, describing his involvement in baseball chapels and his belief in miracles. It may be a fine line between testimony and preaching, but Ernie does not appear to be pressing for converts. To have described his life without talking about his relationship to God would be, no doubt, unthinkable. And, he certainly expresses no sentiments that would be offensive to others' religious views.

One chapter in the center of the book calls attention to what by now is only a footnote to the 1968 World Series, but it was the most controversial event in Ernie Harwell's broadcasting career. Jose Feliciano's

idiosyncratic but moving rendition of the national anthem prior to Game Five in Detroit caused a public uproar and some anxious moments for Ernie, who had chosen Feliciano without an audition. I remember thinking at the time what an improvement Feliciano's version was (but then again I didn't vote for Richard Nixon in 1968). That Ernie Harwell's career would be marked by such an oddity could be attributed to the law of averages — if not to an act of God — for he has been a model of professional consistency. Day game or night game, spring training through World Series, he's the best broadcaster in baseball.

Tuned to Baseball informs and entertains. It is well worth reading. When Ernie Harwell talks baseball, people should listen.



M. J. KELLY (Banzonoon).

The Diamond Video Library

By Bill Borst

COLLECTING BASEBALL cards was one of the highlights of my youth in the fifties. Stocking up on those little “cardboard Picassoes” was an informative way to keep track of the latest crop of “rookies,” player and team stats, as well as learn a good deal of minutiae about the “inner lives” of my baseball heroes. (Pee Wee Reese was a marbles champion in Louisville in 1930.)

Now that the “professional” collectors have pushed aside the amateurs, cards, programs and autographs are bartered and sold across tables all over the country, chasing the kids and ordinary fans to the sidelines. Perhaps a technological advancement that has come to us from Japan might open a new horizon for the fan who is interested in nothing more than a nostalgic trip to the fantasyland of his youth. The video cassette recorder has added a new dimension to collecting baseball history, legend and lore. Though you can't flip them very well, the cassettes offer a more vivid re-creation of the game's stars in action than ever possible on a bubblegum card.

Still in its primitive stages, baseball video production does offer enough to keep the student of the game as glued to his TV set as a group of four-year-olds, watching cartoons on a Saturday morning. The following is an expansive, though by no means

exhaustive study of what is currently available.

1) *World Series Highlights, 1943-86* — Major League Baseball has been producing its own films for distribution around the leagues, mostly as promotional and publicity-related films since during the Second World War.



SPECIAL FEATURE: **ON THE AIR**

Lew Fonseca, the American League batting titleist with Cleveland in 1929 with a .369 average and the featured SABR speaker at the Chicago Convention in 1975, has been involved with this since its early days. The early films are primitive in scope and unrealistic in their impact but the cinematography has progressed as much as the history of filmmaking since then. There were no action close-

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ups. Any close-up was nothing more than a posed batting or pitching shot, so as to simulate real game action. The audio is dull and unmoving when compared with the advancements made in the more recent films. Available in color since 1959, the World Series Highlight Films are narrated by a galaxy of stars that include Don Elston, Curt Gowdy and Vin Scully.

My goal is to someday have a complete set of these films. On a friendly visit to the Bob Costas household on Second Avenue a few years ago, the young dynamo unduly impressed me with his near-complete collection, ranging from 1945 to 1984, costing him well over \$2,500. As we settled down to watch my "first" series, the Dodgers and Yankees in 1952 (I was hoping for a different conclusion, but the Yankees still prevailed), I attempted to "outdo" Bob by telling him that I was the proud owner of the 1944 "St. Louis Series" between the Cardinals and Browns. The exchange was comparable to Coot Veal and Mickey Mantle matching quips and statistics.

II) *Team Highlights* — There is an interesting assortment available for those who would like to re-live certain select years in their favorite team's past. The first such film I ever saw that was commercially available was the Cardinal Highlight film of their 1982 Championship season. My feeling is that other teams have gone back and transferred their old films to cassette so that now the ordinary fan can have as his very own a cornucopia of historical reproductions, such as the Chicago Cubs '78 through 1982 and 1984. (Was 1983 that bad?) The Mets, who led the World in 1986, not only in the standings but with an excessive number of

videos (see below!) have their highlights from '83, '84, the ever-popular "We Can Make It Happen!" (Why didn't they?) and such oldies but goldies as '63, '69, '71, '72 and '73.

The San Diego Padres have "Putting the Winning Pieces Together" in 1984 and then, for those years when there were not enough pieces available, you can have '79, '80, '82 and '83. The Minnesota Twins have "Climbing to the Top" (Second Division?) in 1983 and also '70, '72, '79 and 1982.

The team highlight bug has hit a number of other teams, thanks to Scotch Films, including the California Angels, the Dodgers, the Orioles, the Phillies, the Brewers, the Giants, but fortunately nothing on the Pittsburgh Pirates' 1986 season.

Scotch Films has recently come out with a new addition, "The 1986 Highlight Film." Should MLB decide to reproduce prior years, it would be a great boon to the serious student of the game. The '86 tape is a concise and clear-cut summation of the entire year, done in Mel Allen's quintessential style, that shows you just enough to rekindle the sparks that burned brightly during that season.

II) *All-Star Highlights* — There are limited reproductions of past All-Star Games available, which include 1962, '65-67 and 1970-84.

III) *Team History* — I believe that the St. Louis Cardinals were the first to issue a franchise history that attempted to take the viewer back as far as the history of the National League in 1876. It was an ambitious project that was done with the expert narration of Jack Buck. Its only weakness was that of the history it tried to recreate. Film technology does not extend that far back,

and the producers were forced to re-view the earlier history (1876-1920) with little more than photographic stills, which are as exciting as watching a series of talking heads.

The Chicago Cubs, who also own a rich, if not eminently successful history, followed the Cardinals' lead with a team history back to 1876. The Mets have outdone everyone in quantity, if not quality, with their production of four videos in 1986. The first one, and by far the best from an historical standpoint, is their Silver Anniversary tape, which is a nostalgic trek back into the dark days of the "Amazin' Mets" and Casey Stengel, with some great old footage, through their World Series "miracle" in 1969 and right on until the beginning of the past season, making it in reality a twenty-four year history.

To augment this, the Mets followed with a ludicrous imitation of the Chicago Bears' best-selling tape, "The Super Bowl Shuffle." The Mets' video is a comical attempt to show how the team learned to say "Let's Go Mets, Let's Go!" with vigor and style. The tape is replete with sneak appearances by Mr. Costas and Joe Piscopo. With their less-than-surprising trip to the World Series, it was a natural that they would put out a 1986 Highlights film and a World Series Highlight film. 1986 was definitely the "Video Year of the Met."

Scotch has come out with a series of inexpensive team histories that include the "Silver Odyssey" of the Houston Astros, an untimely twenty-five year history of the Yankees, 1961-86, twenty-five years of the Minnesota Twins, "Then and Now" (yawn) and, something the world has

been holding its breath for, the first decade of the Seattle Mariners, "A Diamond in the Emerald City," 1977-86. Why not something on the Pilots as well (1968)?

V) *The Interview* — "Greatest Sports Legends" has a regrettably short series on tape, which is apparently a re-issue of the TV show in the seventies, narrated by Paul Hornung. The tapes, which range from fascinating to slow and humdrum, all seem to have good footage, and include such luminaries of the diamond as Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio, Willie Mays, Stan Musial, Babe Ruth, Ted Williams, Jackie Robinson and Roberto Clemente. Clemente is also available in "A Touch of Royalty."

Roger Kahn's book, *The Boys of Summer*, was one of the most-widely read baseball books in history. The video, which was adapted from his book but surprisingly does not include him in any way, is, in some respects an improvement on the book, just as theatrical movies often improve upon the books from which they are derived. Watching a tearful Clem Labine talk about his relationship with one of his sons has a greater impact than reading about it.

VI) *General History* — This category includes the classic, "Fifty Years in Baseball History," which is a fantastic look at all the highlights from 1919-1969. It is followed by "Great Moments in Baseball" which does a lot of the same things but even better. Then there is the Donald Sutherland narration from Cooperstown of "The Game and Its Glory" and "Fifty Years of Yankee All Stars." A TV production, the PBS adaptation of Lawrence Ritter's classic, *The Glory of Their*

Times, has just recently been advertised in *The Sporting News*. Perhaps they will do the same for the tremendous history of the Negro Leagues, *When the Sun Shines*.

VII) *Baseball Comedy* — As always seems to be the case, Joe Garagiola leads the way with his funny and



innovative video, "Baseball Bloopers," done in the humorous and witty Garagiola style. One that pales by comparison is Bob Uecker's "SuperDuper All-Star Blunders." "Mr. Baseball" should have stuck to his beer commercials. Then there is Harry Caray's "The Batty World of Baseball," which has a few good moments on it.

VII) *Instructional Tapes* include a galaxy of stars such as All-Star Catching (Bench) and Base Stealing (Brock), All-Star Batting Tips (Killebrew, Mantle and Rose), All-Star Pitching (Ford, Blyleven, Seaver and Ryan) and Charlie Lau's "How to Hit .300." The Los Angeles Dodgers have produced a ninety-minute comprehensive training camp tape, "The Dodger Way to Play Baseball," which threatens to outdo all the competition. At least one of Bench's "Baseball Bunch," his cable show, seems to have

made its way onto a videocassette.

VI) *Movies* — A number of attempts have been made to capture the glory and drama of baseball on the silver screen. Not too many of them have made it to the VCR yet, but there is hope that will change in the not-too-distant future.

To my knowledge the best movie available, and quite possibly the best baseball film ever, is the adaption of Bernard Malamud's novel, *The Natural*. This allegorical study of good versus evil captures the pristine beauty of the game in all its glory, legend and drama. Others will argue that "Bang The Drum Slowly" is superior but it's a moot point because I don't believe "Drum" is on videotape yet.

Lesser movies available include Gary Cooper's unique portrayal of Lou Gehrig in "The Pride of the Yankees," and a cute film about a young woman playing second base, "Blue Skies." For the younger set, there is Walter Matthau's hilariously funny "The Bad News Bears." As you can see the pickings are thin for movies. Quite possibly there might be videotapes of William Bendix's "The Babe Ruth Story" and Ronald Reagan as Grover Cleveland Alexander in "The Winning Team."

One thing is apparent. As this new industry expands, there will be an ever-increasing market for baseball videotapes. There are many other baseball films that I would like to add to my collection, including "Fear Strikes Out," Tony Perkins' pre-Psycho rendition of the troubled early life of Jimmy Piersall, "The Pete Gray Story," and "The Kid From Left Field."

If you know of any that we missed here, just drop me a line at P.O. Box 16271, St. Louis, MO 63105.

Well, it's a game, no?

A Meditation on Baseball and Poetry

By Ira F. Stone

“**P**OETS, IT SHOULD BE noted, keep shaping their metaphors out of the ruins of their existence, in contradistinction to the powerful on this earth, whose stock in trade is the fable of their victories.” The poet Stanley Kunitz was referring neither to baseball nor baseball poetry in his comment on the poet's craft, but he could have been speaking about both. For, as we shall see, it is partly the “ruins of existence” which the game of baseball exquisitely showcases and in doing so draws the poet to the game.

It must be said at the outset that no other area of American sport has attracted the poets of our nation as baseball has. One is tempted to say that no other specific manifestation of our cultural history has so consistently been used as the mythology of our national consciousness. Perhaps it is the need to mythologize, and baseball's easy availability for such a task, which has prompted its popularity with poets. Perhaps it is its function as a national melting pot, a common drama to which poets of various immigrant backgrounds can point to as outsiders wishing to become insiders. Perhaps it is all of these or none. We will explore some of what the poets themselves think it might be. Suffice to say that the connection is real and significant. The comparative preoccupation of poets with baseball has important things to say about both the game and the art.

To catalogue the number of poems about baseball and the number of major poets who have treated baseball themes is beyond the scope of any mere article. Rather I will focus on a small number of the most important American poets who have written baseball poems as well as those who have written commentary about their attachment to the game and its metaphors. My selection is neither exhaustive nor ruled by any particular hierarchy. It is entirely idiosyncratic, personal. We will look at two groups: first, those contemporary poets who have written extensively about baseball in their poems, Tom Clark, Joel Oppenheimer, Paul Blackburn, and Paul Metcalf; the second group, Donald Hall and Richard Hugo, have written a few poems specifically about baseball, but are more important as poets who have talked about why baseball is of interest to

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them. Finally, in a group all of his own, we will talk about Richard Grossinger, editor and baseball myth-maker.

II

Partly the issue is the issue of play. Partly the issue is the issue of childhood, and partly the issue is the issue of potentiality. For the poet, it would appear, these issues come together in the game of baseball. Listen to Donald Hall:

But I need to leave behind my own ambitions, struggles, and failures; I need to enter the intense, artificial, pastoral universe of the game, where conflict never conceals itself, where the issues are clear and the outcome uncertain. I enter an alien place, or the child in me does — and the child **plays**. . . for a little while.

It is the illusion of play which attracts the poet. It is the remembrance of childhood and its endless potential doomed to frustration which attracts the poet, for listen to Donald Hall, **the poet**:

Against the bright
grass the white-knickered
players tense, seize
and attend. . . But now
they pause: wary,
exact, suspended —
while abiding moonrise
lightens the angel
of the overgrown
garden, and Walter Blake
Adams, who died
at fourteen, waits
under the footbridge.

Yes, there is in the poem the setting of play, but more importantly is the attention to details, to the every minute reality of life, which the game provides and which forces us to confront the facts of mortality and its unfulfilled promises. Listen to the words of Richard Hugo:

I took interest in the whole scene not just the game. . . I thought again about those tiny worlds I'd lived in with far more desperation than I hoped any of them would ever know. . . How failures are in many ways successes and how successful

people, those who early in life accepted adult values and abandoned the harmless fields of play, are really failures because they never come to know the vital worth of human relationships, even if it takes the lines of a softball field to give them a frame. How without play many people sense too often and too immediately their impending doom.

The poet sees the truth that the rest of us struggle to hide from: the quest for perfection is only exciting because we know that it cannot be achieved. In the routines of life we see the inexorable working out of our fate, and the fate of each of us is ultimately the same. Baseball moves us because we see in it both the futility and the grandeur of questing after perfection. In it, every detail of physical movement reveals both that quest and its impossibility. The routine becomes the sacred for what else is available for sanctification?

Listen to the poet Richard Hugo:

. . . Their laughter
falls short of the wall. Under the lights, the moths
are momentary stars, and wives, the beautiful wives
in the stands, now take the interest they once feigned
oh, long ago, their marriage just begun, years
of helping husbands feel important just begun,
the scrimping, the anger brought home evenings
from degrading jobs. This poem goes out to them.
Is steal of home the touching of the heart?
Last pitch. A soft fly. A can of corn,
the players say. Routine, like mornings,
like the week. They shake hands on the mound.
Nice grab on that shot to left. Good game. Good game.
Dust rotates in their headlight beams.
The wives, the beautiful wives, are with their men.

III

Baseball relates me to my own life
and to others' like nothing else
ever has, not even English

Tom Clark, unquestionably the most prolific poet writing about baseball, begins his collection "Fan Poems" with this short, revealing poem. How can this be? How can a mid-twentieth century poet achieve such a feeling of connectiveness with himself and the world through the

language of baseball? More of a connected feeling than provided by the English language! Perhaps it is because we mid-century Americans have so little else to call us beyond ourselves, so little else to project our aspirations upon. Nothing stays the same long enough. The poet says:

the elements never change, only the arrangements,
the drama's situational

Down there on the field
the beautifully balanced clichés
play themselves out
in new combination each time
Its all just like Bob Veale said —
good pitching will stop
good hitting any time,
and vice-versa

The contemporary interest in baseball begins in the mythic sameness of its elements, but it is the vice-versa of the poem's end which captures our confused hearts. As the poet Gregory Corso said to Ted Williams in Corso's "Dream Of A Baseball Star":

Randall Jarrell says you're a poet! I cried.
So do I! I say you're a poet!

The lonely player working against the odds to achieve a vision of perfection, of immortality; who is it, the ballplayer or the poet? The battle for immortality no longer occurs on the great stage of history. It is not in the acts of kings nor saints that Americans search for meaning. It is, as poets have been telling Americans since Whitman, to be found in the lives of ordinary people. Who are our heroes? The poet Joel Oppenheimer describes one:

john g. "scissors"
mcilvain, described by
the sporting news as
remarkable, died
in charleroi, pa.,
recently. he was
88. he pitched for
22 minor league teams
in 15 different leagues
and was still in semi-

pro ball in his seventies.
when he won a 4-3 ball
game at seventy-five he
said: i don't see anything
to get excited about. i
think a person should feel
real good when he does
something unexpected.
i expected this. his
big disappointment was
that he never made the
majors, although he won
26 for chillicothe
one season, and 27 the
next. he was, however,
a bird-dog scout for
the indians for several
years. he had been
deaf since 1912.

If "scissors" mcilvain is our contemporary hero, the epic within which the hero operates must be described in detail. The game itself, for some of our poets, becomes the world in which the drama is captured. For poet Paul Blackburn the details of one game come to stand for the entire 1965 season, which in turn stands perhaps as the last field of honorable battle. His description is, in some ways, no different than a play-by-play. The contemporary poet finds his language in the language of everydayness:

okay, there's one out.
Ruben Amaro, sacrifice fly, drives Thomas in.
John Wesley Covington on deck: 6 homeruns
11 RBI's (o, he had his at Milwaukee in
57-58, those great years). He
goes to 3&2, takes the payoff, it
goes to Hunt, to Kranepool
(Cookie Rojas on deck)

IN TIME
IT'S ALL OVER

METS 2
PHILLIES 1

well, it's a game, no?

Well it's a game, no? That is the question. Where do we reveal what it is we value, what we are made of? In an urbanized, industrialized world, in a democratic-egalitarian world, that question haunts each one of us, and haunts our poets most of all.

In the midst of one of the most remarkable poems ever written about baseball, "Willie's Throw" by Paul Metcalf, the poet asks: ". . . WHAT POWER HAS MAN AGAINST THE GODS?" For most people such a question in the modern context seems awkward, old-fashioned. Yet the question, in one form or another persists in the human soul. For us, however, the question frames itself in less grandiose terms. The world is no longer black and white but an endless gray. Metcalf begins his poetic description of Mays' catch of Carl Furillo's long liner on August 15th, 1951, in the Polo Grounds and his unbelievable throw that turned the play into an inning ending double play, with the following lines:

I remember
what I think nobody else remembers. . .
the way the clouds were against the sky. . .
. . .they were no longer white
but ribbed with gray too,
and you had the feeling that
if you could reach high enough
you could
get the gray out of there.

Willie Mays reached high enough, baseball reaches high enough, poets try, through baseball to reach as high.

And if you don't believe me, ask Richard Grossinger. No one has done as much to organize for our edification the literary-mythic qualities of baseball. From the baseball issue of *Io*, to the numerous anthologies of baseball literature, Grossinger has collected from far and wide the elements of a sacred scripture. In his anthology *Baseball I Gave You the Best Years of My Life* (edited with Kevin Karrane) Grossinger writes:

In the daily newspaper we read the cumulative score and records of a Dogon creation myth, as if told by Ogotemmel. On the city street corners, singers and drummers gather, flipping cards of their ancestors and totem-beings, gambling on throws of Pima and Creek stones and other's teeth. A ritual jam session precedes the pick-up game, everyone clustered, jiving, chorusing, then, out in the field, guarding their positions, picking "roots and berries". In the stadiums of the city-states the big

games are played, tribal ceremonies complete with totems and clan representation. We might actually believe that Willie Mays comes wild from the waterhole races and zebra hunts, tamed to articulate skills of organized ball, via the dark vernacular of the Dixie slums.

Well, it's a game, no?

IV

"Poems do not want to explain themselves, even to the mind that makes them. . . They seem to come out of nowhere — a gift, to be sure, for which one ought to be thankful, but delivered suspiciously without a postmark and wrapped in bafflement." I quote the poet Stanley Kunitz again precisely because he discusses contemporary poetry and not baseball nor poems about baseball. I do not believe that the poets and poems I have referred to in this essay are written about baseball because the poets happen to like the sport. They happen to like the sport for the same reason that they write about it, and for the same reason most of us love the sport but cannot articulate, not being poets. These poets did not seek to write about baseball. Those that do usually produce the most forgettable of poems. These poets surprised themselves in creating poems wrapped in the mythology of baseball, a mythology that they are in part responsible for creating, and did so because what they felt to be most true emotionally at a given moment came out wrapped in baseball terminology. The following, from Richard Hugo's "The Freaks at Spurgin Road Field" should serve as a fitting conclusion.

The score is always close, the rally always short.
I've left more wreckage than a quake.
Isn't it wrong, the way the mind moves back.

The afflicted never cheer in unison.
Isn't it wrong the way the mind moves back
to stammering pastures where the picnic should have worked.
The dim boy claps because the others clap.

Hugo ends his autobiographical essay "The Anxious Fields of Play" following this poem and the statement: "I think when I played softball I was telling the world and myself that futile as my life seemed, I still wanted to live."

Well, it's a game, no?

The Dream Remains Uninterpreted

By Darrell Berger

BASEBALL AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

Joseph Durso

263 pp., The Sporting News

\$16.95

A FEW YEARS BACK, the National Football League, in a typically self-important moment, sponsored an essay contest on the topic, "The Significance of the National Football League in American History." Someone bothered to ask Henry Steele Commager, one of America's most accomplished historians, his opinion.

"The National Football League has absolutely no significance in American history," he replied. While SABR members certainly feel differently about their sport, we shall have to wait for the definitive account of baseball's relationship to American history. Joseph Durso's *Baseball and the American Dream*, while a competent and entertaining book, lacks both the breadth and depth to make its case.

The title is provocative. The book might have examined the metaphysics of baseball, how its rhythms, geometry and heroes have entwined themselves around our collective consciousness for over a century.

It could have taken a socio-economic approach, discussing the waves of immigrants who learned the game. It could have shown it was once played by gentlemen of leisure, then by

rowdies, and now by a few millionaire celebrities and scores of wealthy journeymen. Manifest Destiny as fulfilled by Ban Johnson and Walter O'Malley could have been mentioned.

But this book is merely another unsystematic retelling of events, traversing the surface of familiar territory, and with a personal touch that enhances the author's reputation as a sportswriter, but not as an historian.

The dustjacket says Durso is now *The New York Times* senior baseball writer, after covering sports for them since 1964. For fifteen years he was professor at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia.

This book, published by *The Sporting News*, is clearly intended for popular consumption. However, the standards for even popular baseball history have risen considerably in the last few years.

Baseball history was once largely limited to off-season recaps and "as-told-to" quickies. Now real historians have gotten into the game. *Baseball's Great Experiment* by Jules Tygiel, professor of history at San Francisco State, is an incisive account of breaking the color line. *The Kansas City Monarchs*, by Janet Bruce, another professional historian, shows a team's relationship to its community in all its complexity.

DARRELL BERGER is a staff writer for *Baseball Hobby News*, a *Tiger fan*, and a *Unitarian-Universalist minister*.

Bill James' Historical Abstract is the pinnacle of this new baseball history.

Accomplished amateurs have also published outstanding histories of their favorite teams, like Richard E. Beverage with *The Hollywood Stars* and Joseph M. Overfield with *100 Seasons of Buffalo Baseball*. After reading these, it is hard to be satisfied with another account of Ty Cobb's feistiness or Babe Ruth's rise from a Baltimore home for wayward boys.

Durso attempts to tie baseball events to their times by pointing out what happened at the same time. "On February 15, 1898," he writes, "the day the battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor, John McGraw and Wilbert Robinson were teaching 'Oriole baseball,' in the gymnasium at Johns Hopkins University."

What connection these two events have is anybody's guess. Durso does not hazard one. He does mention that a lot of gambling was going on in America before the Black Sox scandal, but he fails to make even the most obvious historical connections, like why the time was right for Jackie Robinson in 1947 or why the big leagues moved to the West Coast in 1958 and not ten years earlier or later.

There are dozens of historical anecdotes dropped in, like the bizarre love-triangle among Evelyn Nesbit, Harry K. Thaw and Stanford White in 1906 and an impossible test Thomas Edison developed to screen potential employees.

Durso devotes eight pages to the ridicule the test received. The connection to baseball? Edison once said, "I was always too busy a boy to indulge in baseball."

Chocolate chip cookies are made



WILLIAM EWING, CATCHER.



ROGER CONNOR, 1ST BASE.



JOHN M. WARD, SHORT STOP.

by dropping chocolate chips into cookie mix. An American history book is not made by dropping bits of American history into a series of baseball stories.

The baseball here is solid, though one detects a New York bias. While that city's place in baseball history is secure, only a Connie Mack or a Ty Cobb can distract Durso from the Big Apple.

Ted Lyons or Al Kaline, laboring in the hinterlands, might reveal more about the American dream than another rehashing of World Series games between New York teams, of which several are given.

His account of Ban Johnson's war and peace with the National League, the transcripts of Casey Stengel's congressional testimony in 1958 and Curt Flood's 1970 testimony on the reserve clause are interesting. And there are many other tidbits. Eddie Collins hit .226 in the 1919 World Series while trying to win; Joe Jackson hit .375 trying to lose. Pirate owner Barney Dreyfuss gave his share of the first World Series to his players. Therefore, the winning Red Sox received only \$46 per man more than the losers.

But nothing here leads one to discover patterns or connections in the history of either baseball or the nation. The lack of an index destroys whatever value as a source for future research it might have had.

Ironically, the years since 1964, those personally covered by Durso, are mentioned very little. He gives some coverage to recent labor disputes, but all the players of the last 25 years are lumped together in three inadequate

and sentimental pages at the end. Reggie Jackson, even Henry Aaron, are barely mentioned, others not at all.

Yet there is an entire chapter on Harry M. Stevens, whose enterprising personality brought scorecards, beer and hot dogs to the ball park. This is a fascinating story, and the closest Durso gets to realizing his theme. But a baseball history that gives a chapter to Harry M. Stevens and five sentences to Pete Rose can only be described as quirky.

Coincidentally, George Grella wrote an essay also called "Baseball and the American Dream," which appeared in *Massachusetts Review* in 1975. Erudite and lively, it fulfills the promise of its title in a way that Durso's never approaches. It has been reprinted in the excellent *Sports Inside Out*, edited by David L. Vanderwerken and Spencer K. Wertz, and published by Texas Christian University Press.

In 1977 Fred Lieb wrote *Baseball as I Have Known It*, covering his experiences as a baseball writer since 1911. The inspiration for the Walter Brennan character in *Pride of the Yankees*, Lieb gave readers a loving, personal and unique view of Gehrig, Ruth and Stengel, with rare insights into compelling but less lauded characters like Carl Mays, Grover Alexander and Hal Chase.

Durso may have an equally valuable book in him, covering the period when he was in the clubhouse, on the road and in the press box. When he writes his memoirs, his storytelling ability and the personal touch he gives to interpreting events should make it a fine addition to baseball history.

A Forgotten League Remembered

By Jack McKee

THE LAST REBEL YELL

The zany — but true! — mis-adventures of baseball's forgotten Alabama-Florida League

Ken Brooks

145 pp., Lynn Haven, FL: Seneca Park Publishing

\$7.95

ONE OF THE lovely things about baseball and its literature is the almost unlimited number of topics. The truly enterprising baseball reader can find a tome on just about any subject to whet his fancy, and usually stumbles across several he didn't know even existed.

Similarly, with the many levels of baseball — majors, minors, Negro leagues, college, etc. — there's always a subject somewhere no writer has covered. Such a subject is the short-lived Alabama-Florida League, and it's the subject of Ken Brooks' *The Last Rebel Yell*.

The League spun off from the class D Georgia-Florida League, and, as the old phrase had it, mayhem ensued. The Alabama-Florida League was peopled by the oddest collection of characters in baseball history — or so the jacket copy would have us believe.

The problem is, Brooks never succeeds in making his cast of zany cut-ups seem funnier or zanier or more interesting than the cast of your average four-week sitcom — or the San Diego Padres, with or without Dick Williams.

Perhaps part of the problem is the book's structure, or lack thereof. The book has two major sections, with several smaller sections. The first is "A Class-D Case History: Panama City, Florida," which is the narrative history of the league. That's about 45 pages — not really long enough to hold your interest or develop an in-depth history of the league.

The second section is the book's strongest, "First Person." Listed as the book's seventh chapter, it is actually longer than the previous six. It consists of, naturally enough, first person accounts of the experiences of several players and other participants in the league's illustrious — ahem! — history. This is rich fare, a sort of *Glory of Their Times* for those who did not make it big in the bigs. There are reminiscences by Jimmy Bloodworth, Onion Davis, and other veterans of this most bush of all bush leagues. There is even a recollection from ol' Leather Lungs himself, current major league ump Dutch Rennert. (How many of us have said a quiet prayer for our windshields after a particularly emphatic Rennert call?) This is the book's meat, the kind of oral history you don't find very often. It's a pity Brooks didn't see fit to do a book

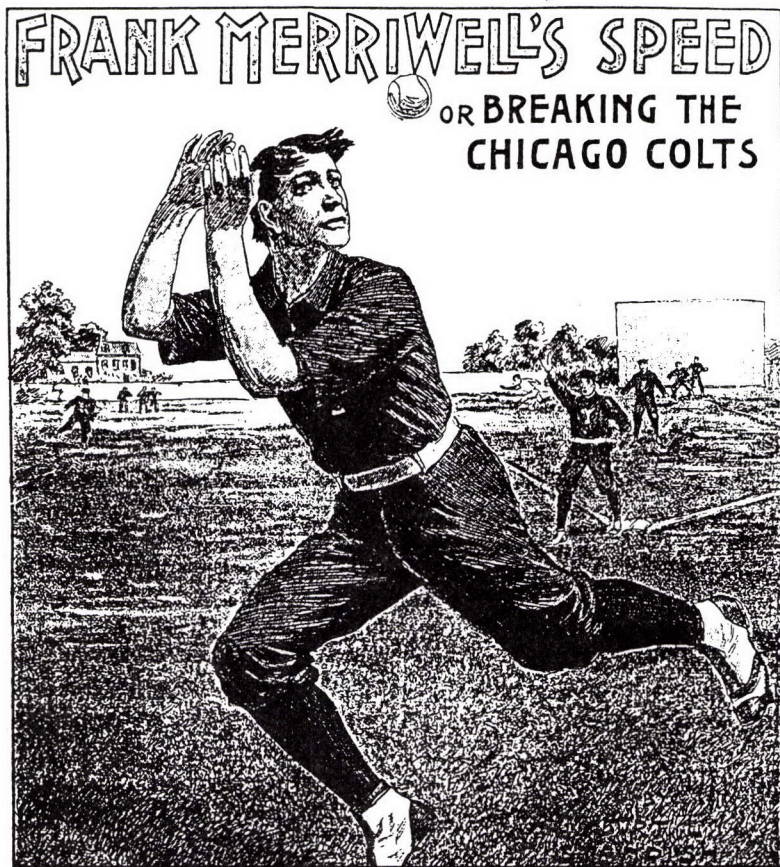
JACK MCKEE is a researcher and copy editor for a weekly business newspaper in Cincinnati, where his wife and five cats find other things to do during baseball season than talk to him.

entirely of first person accounts.

But as good as “Chapter Seven” is, it cannot rescue *The Last Rebel Yell*. Brooks has gathered a great deal of material, but cannot seem to put across the vision of the league as he sees it — funny, nostalgic or whatever he sees. His style is straightforward narrative, and I do mean absolutely straightforward. What humor there is, is blunted by this style. It’s akin to a bad nightclub comic setting up his audience, and then telling a joke so long that by the time the punchline comes around, the only response is a big yawn.

I think what is at the root of the book’s trouble is Brooks’ affection for his subject. Reading the book, one gets the opinion that he’s just **trying** too hard to make us love the league as much as he does. And, certainly, one of the most important prerequisites for any writer is an affection for the subject.

However, if the writer becomes so blinded by that affection that he allows it to rob him of his objectivity, then he’s left with — well, rather a mess. There’s a lot of info in *The Last Rebel Yell*; it’s a shame Brooks couldn’t let us care as much about it as he does.



Personal Favorite

In Search of Matty's Ghost

By Rob Johnson

PITCHING IN A PINCH
or **Baseball from the Inside**

Christy Mathewson
(with John N. Wheeler)

BASEBALL AT THE TURN of the century was a rough and tumble pastime, thought by some to be unfit for the finer elements of society. The diamond was studded with gems, such as Rube Waddell and Germany Schaefer, who were, one might say, not cut at Tiffanys.

Then along came "Big Six", Christy Mathewson, from Bucknell University. In the words of narrator Alexander Scourby, on the video documentary of Lawrence Ritter's *The Glory of Their Times*, "All at once the game received a new respectability. Young ladies could now ask their escorts to take them to the Polo Grounds to see the college boy play."

Well, not only did the college boy "twirl the pea," he used the learnin' in his pea to write himself a book. Or so it was thought. More on that later.

Pitching in a Pinch is a 304-page baseball literary delight. Reading it reminds me of going fishing with my granddad and listening to his oratory on the secrets of life. Matty's "inside baseball" blends the cleverness of one who studies and practices the subtleties

of mental strategy with a sly wit and the ability to find a humorous lining in every situation. The Mathewson rendering of the "inside game," and how it was employed in many of the key episodes of early 20th century baseball history would surely make Grandpa Bill twinkle. And the yarn spun in these pages would have kept Grandma knitting sweaters for years.

One sharp example of an "inside" account of a game is the chapter on the playoff game between the Cubs and the Giants to decide the National League championship in 1908. This was the extra game played after the famous "Merkle incident."

Bill James, in his *Historical Baseball Abstract* writes of it, "There is a chapter on the final game of the N.L. campaign which I swear is as fine a 5,000-word piece about baseball as has ever been written."

Mathewson covers the background and all the controversy surrounding the game. He recounts how Fred Merkle ran to the locker room rather than to second base when Al Bridwell singled home the winning run on September 23, 1908. Matty defends Merkle and tells of how long after the

ROB JOHNSON is an economist for the Federal Reserve Board.

players had left, and the crowd poured on the field, umpire Hank O'Day called Merkle out on a force play and declared the game a tie from "somewhere near Coogan's Bluff." One then learns of the simultaneous deterioration of Merkle and the Giants as they lose their way into a playoff game in the days following the "Merkle bonehead." It was a playoff game they didn't believe they should have to play.

After describing the meeting with the Giants team president where the players decided to play rather than forfeit in protest, Mathewson provides a mound's eye view of the play by play on a day when, as he told catcher Roger Bresnahan, "I ain't got nothin'." Problem was, "Three Finger" Brown did, and the weary Giants went down.

In another chapter are the tales of young pitchers who were razed so badly they couldn't stand the pressure. Mathewson cautions against bringing a young pitcher up too fast and ruining his confidence. He describes how Rube Marquard's career was set back two years because an early thrashing of the \$11,000 beauty at the hands of Cincinnati got into his noggin.

Mathewson stresses that the cultivation of a ballplayer's confidence is an essential art, but one that few are able to practice successfully. In a delightful chapter entitled "Jinxes and What They Mean to a Ballplayer," Matty reveals how John McGraw, a master of confidence-building voodoo, once got the Giants out of a hitting slump.

His players, it appears, encountered a horse-drawn load of empty barrels on their way to the park with "remarkable regularity." Empty barrels, it is said, are a good omen for

hitters. Upon comparing their experiences, two of the players learned the horses carrying the barrels that each had seen were identical. "Sure," exclaimed McGraw, "I hired that load of empty barrels by the week to drive around and meet you fellows on the way to the park, and you don't think I can afford to have them change horses every day, do you?"

Mathewson tells us that "McGraw asked for waivers on the empty barrels soon afterwards, but his scheme had stopped a slump and put the club's hitters on their feet again."

In that same chapter, one learns some valuable tricks of the trade. This of course includes the wisdom of spitting in one's hat to kill the jinx incurred by crossing the path of a cross-eyed man. It is told that Mathewson ruined the new silk hat of a clergyman for just such a purpose. One also learns: 1) never to cross the bats as they lie waiting for action in the dugout; 2) never cry out to a pitcher with three outs to go; and 3) always be on the lookout for a good jinx killer. One such was none other than Charles Victor Faust.

Faust, it is reported, was told by a fortune teller for \$5 that he could be famous if he were to join the New York Giants as a pitcher. So he came out for a tryout and had so much heat that Mr. McGraw put aside the catchers mitt and caught him bare-handed. But John McGraw had a keen eye for talent and a solid jinx killer was as scarce as the crown jewels. So Faust traveled with the team as a pitcher, though not under contract, and his expenses were paid.

Before each game he warmed up to be ready to be called on in the clutch. According to Mathewson, he

never did pitch. But Fred Snodgrass claimed in *The Glory of Their Times*, that one day the fans hollered so loud that McGraw put him in to pitch for an inning late in a game against Cincinnati. In fact, the sixth edition of *The Baseball Encyclopedia* claims that in 1911 Faust pitched 2 innings and gave up 2 hits and 1 run. But it shows that he appeared in two games!

As far as jinx killing goes, there were none better than Charles Victor(y) Faust. In 1911, the Giants went on to win the pennant. One day in St. Louis, Mathewson tells us, Faust was in full bloom.

“. . . the game had gone eleven innings, and the Cardinals needed one run to win. They had several incipient scores on the bases and Rube Marquard, in the box, was apparently going up in the air. Only one was out. Faust was warming up far in the suburbs when, under orders from McGraw, I ran out and sent him to the bench, for that was the place from which his charm seemed most potent. Charley came loping to the bench as fast as his long legs would transport him and St. Louis didn't score and we won the game. It was as nice a piece of pinch-coting as I ever saw.”

But Charley too had a tragic flaw. His downfall was the World Series. After losing to the Athletics, Matty apparently sensed this man's weakness in the pressure of the fall classic. He

also appears to have spirited out that he might not have seen the last of Charles Victor Faust at the end of 1911 when this book was published.

“But alas! Charley lost in the World's Series. He couldn't make good. And a jinx killer never comes back. He is gone. . . That is, McGraw hopes he is gone. But he was a wonder while he had it.”

Faust returned in 1912, and again in 1913. Both times he led the Giants to the pennant. Unfortunately for New York fans, and just as Matty suspected, Charles Victor(y) Faust was only a National League jinx killer. The Giants came up short in the World Series both times.

In addition to jinx killers, many other methods were employed by teams in their efforts to prevail. One such method, in what is perhaps my favorite passage in the book, can be found in a chapter of probing moral inquiry entitled, “Honest and Dishonest Sign Stealing.”

During the season of 1899 there was a widespread rumor that the Philadelphia club was stealing signs when playing at home. No one was able to find out how they did it. Then came one rainy day when the Washington Senators were in town. The field conditions were nearly bad enough to force cancellation even though the rain had stopped. But the game went ahead. Along the third base line, in the coaching box, there was a large puddle. The Senators' third baseman, Arlie Latham, found it quite disconcerting that Athletics' third base coach, Cupid

Childs, still stood in the coaching box with one foot in the puddle. One batter lashed out a hit and Latham teased, "So that's where you're gettin' the signs?" Childs started to jump around and, lo and behold, the next two batters went down quick as a whistle.

When the Senators came to bat, Latham strode out to coach third, and thrust his foot into the puddle. Latham told Mathewson that, "I looked over at the Philadelphia bench and there were



all the extra players with their caps pulled down over their eyes, so that I couldn't see their faces. The fielders all looked the other way. Then I knew I was on a warm scent."

At the end of the inning, Latham told Tommy Corcoran that the signs must be coming from the coaching box. Corcoran went over and paged around in the water until he uncovered a square block of wood with a buzzer on the underside. Mathewson then writes:

"That ought to help their hitting a little," he (Corcoran) remarked as he kept on pulling. Up came a wire, and when he started

to pull on it he found that it was buried about an inch under the soil and ran across the outfield. He kept right on coiling it up and following it, like a hound on scent. . . Tommy was galloping by this time across the outfield and all the time pulling up this wire. It led straight to the clubhouse, and there sitting where he could get a good view of the catcher's signs with a pair of field glasses was Morgan Murphy. The wire led right to him.

"What 'cher doin'?" asked Corcoran.

"Watchin' the game," replied Murphy.

"Couldn't you see it better from the bench than lookin' through those peepers from here? And why are you connected up with this machine?" inquired Tommy showing him the chunk of wood with the buzzer attached.

"I guess you got the goods," answered Murphy with a laugh, and all the newspapers laughed at it then, too. . . .

Today, one can barely imagine such shenanigans anywhere this side of Al Davis. But there is something remarkable, whatever the era, about the man Murphy, who sat in that fieldbox with goggles while the hunting party pulled up what must have been over 50 yards of wire to find him at its end!

There is an air of self-satisfied delight evident in the raw playfulness of the era in which Christy Mathewson performed. That mischievous signature is extremely rare today. It was a genuine color, a statement of individuality, that brings to mind the rain tarp walrus water belly flopping of Rick Dempsey or, slightly further back, the pitching antics of Sudden Sam McDowell described so brilliantly by Pat Jordan in his essay entitled, "A Talent for Refusing Greatness," in *Suitors of Spring*.

That playfulness is never more apparent than in the final chapter. It contains anecdotes on the failings of the "inside" game. There Matty reveals that figuring out the other team's strategy helps little if the opponent is too dense to implement his coach's plan.

There is a superb account of the pitfalls incurred when a home team doctors the field. Rube Waddell, it is told, failed to show after the Athletics spent the morning building up the mound by two feet to add to his already blazing fastball. Problem was, Rube got lost in some meaningful social engagement and didn't show. None of the rest of the A's staff was tall or had a heater. Philly got killed while Rube did the town.

Other examples of "doping the grounds" included putting powdered soap in the dirt near the mound so that an opposing pitcher with sweaty palms would become slippery to the touch when he tried to dry his hands. One wonders what hitters thought of this practice? Bet they didn't dig in too deeply. Bunting teams built up the foul grounds along first and third to keep 'em fair and slow teams made a roster of jack rabbits run uphill to first.

Not all of the excitement, or

knowledge surrounding this book, came from merely reading this window into baseball history. Finding this old classic was an adventure in itself, and that created almost half the fun.

My first encounter with *Pitching in a Pinch* came through a brief mention in a survey of baseball literature written by Donald Hall. It was there that my journey began.

My next stop was the card catalog at the Martin Luther King Library in Washington, D.C. I learned there that *Pitching in a Pinch* had appeared in three editions. The original was published by G.P. Putnam in 1912. An edition identical to the original was published for the Boy Scouts of America in 1913 by Grosset and Dunlap. And a paperback reprint was published in 1977 by Stein and Day that was edited by Victor Ziegel and Neil Offen.

This last edition, which was the only one still on the shelves at the library, includes a splendid introduction by Red Smith. In it he reveals that this was the first book that he borrowed from the library as a boy growing up in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

From Smith's introduction one also learns that the book was actually a collection of articles written under Mathewson's name by John N. Wheeler for the McClure Syndicate and which appeared as a series on "Inside Baseball" in the winter between the 1911 and 1912 seasons. Smith claims that Wheeler may have been baseball's first ghostwriter. What was perhaps baseball's first "att" (as told to) work may have been its best.

Detective Smith also recounts the story of when Wheeler was asked to write a review of the book by the New York *Herald's* book reviewer. "The

book,” claims Red, “received what is commonly referred to as critical applause.”

After my first reading, I knew I had to have a copy. I do not understand the essence of this urge; but it was there and I had to satisfy my hunger.

Ziegel and Offen admitted in the editor’s afterword of the 1977 edition that, upon locating the book at the New York Public Library, they momentarily contemplated the perfect crime. I too felt this urge. But not one library had an original left on the shelf to be taken. Besides, I could not merely walk off with a library book. A jewel like *Pitching in a Pinch*, vintage 1912, deserved a better hunt than that. It was all part of the fun. In that regard, I suspect that I am not alone when I admit that it is the challenge of search, as much as the final acquisition, that provides the pleasure of collecting.

I combed used book shops far and wide. Georgetown Book Shop, Fuller and Saunders, Second Story Books, Yesterday Books, in D.C. and Jeff Doranz Baseball Corner, in Arlington, Virginia. None of the locals had this old classic, though Doranz knew the book and had a lead. After over two years of searching, leaving cards at every stop, which included visits to New York City, Detroit, Richmond, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, nowhere was a copy to be found.

And then, voila! While sitting at my desk I picked up the ringing phone

and heard “Are you still interested in *Pitching in a Pinch* by Christy Mathewson?” After several seconds of tripping over my tongue, and a promise of \$20, I closed the deal for the 1913 Boy Scout edition.

The book was in excellent condition. I took the copy to my friend and neighbor Roger to celebrate. We looked at photos of Tinker, Wagner and Cobb, Marquard, McGraw, Bill Klem, Brown, Baker and Bender. I triumphantly read out loud the passage on Morgan Murphy and the buzzer box. I even had visions of the scene where Sidney Greenstreet describes to Bogart his 17-year quest to obtain the Maltese Falcon in a hotel sitting room. But my black bird was certainly no fake!

Of all books on baseball, I am most fond of this book for reasons I am sure I don’t fully comprehend. As I sit, smile and gaze at this little volume on my bookshelf, I sense that it is the tone of this collection, equal parts hi-jinx and cardsharp, that makes it so endearing. It is a wink of Grandpa’s eye. It can be seen in that warm, devilish, knowing glow, of say, John Newcombe, the former Australian tennis star. It is the prideful and polished craftsman. But perhaps most refreshing of all, it reveals Christy Mathewson to be a man who could recognize humor in the interplay of every instance. He seemed to be able to carry on, excel under pressure, and not take himself, the game, or the game of life, all too seriously.



Did Roger Maris Only Hit One Home Run?

By Glenn Stout

ROGER MARIS: A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Maury Allen

272 pp., Donald I. Fine Co.

\$16.95

SHORTLY AFTER ROGER Maris made his memorable return to Yankee Stadium for Old Timer's Day on April 12, 1978, a reporter asked Maris if he was surprised by the warm reception of the crowd at Yankee Stadium. "It's like obituaries," replied Maris. "When you die they give you good reviews." Maris died of lymphoma on December 14, 1985, and Maury Allen's *Roger Maris: A Man For All Seasons* is just such a good review.

Allen, who writes regularly for the *New York Post*, has written a number of sports books over the last twenty-five years or so, from the completely forgettable *Greatest Pro Quarterbacks* to the more inventive and amusing "autobiography" of Bo Belinsky entitled *Bo: Pitching and Wooing*. But Allen has concentrated his efforts on the New York Yankees, penning *Mr. October*, *Damn Yankee*, and last year's *Sweet Lou*, among others. Unfortunately, Mr. Allen too often takes the easy way out with his subject, offering just enough "kiss 'n tell" style anecdotes to lend the

subject a veneer of candor, then delivering merely another undistinguished and ultimately disposable biography. In *Roger Maris*, Allen offers up the same old pitch.

In his previous efforts Allen has either played ghostwriter to his subject or depended on a simple narrative, both techniques where he demonstrates some expertise. But in the Maris book he adopts a slightly different approach. The book utilizes the reminiscences of forty-three of Maris' teammates, family, and friends, supplemented by a basic narrative to connect each anecdote to the next. In this fashion Allen tries to allow the collective memory of Roger Maris to demarcate the man. But instead of developing the character of Roger Maris, Allen's interviewees draw a caricature of Roger Maris, the misunderstood red-ass. To the outside observer, Maris remains an enigma.

Not that Allen doesn't aim for better results. The technique employed has the potential to yield some interest-

GLENN STOUT is librarian at the Boston Public Library and unofficial curator of the "Boston Tradition in Sports" collection. Since 1984, he has organized the annual "Baseball Bards" poetry reading outside Fenway park on Opening Day.

ing insights and result in a revised picture of Maris. But the nearness of his death has apparently either tempered the respondents' frankness or colored Allen's own editorial judgment. The reader receives the mundane instead of the meaningful.

Allen begins his book precisely where the public's perception of Roger Maris begins, in Yankee Stadium, on October 1, 1961, with Tracy Stallard on the mound, Maris at the plate and the shadow of Babe Ruth looming over the entire proceedings. Allen's decision to begin with this moment, while understandable, subverts any hope he might have had about dispelling the myths that have since haunted this event. From that moment forward Roger Maris ceased to be ballplayer in his own right. Instead, he became defined by what he was **not**, not as good as Mickey Mantle, not as good as Babe Ruth. And while Allen obviously hopes to give Maris his due as a talented player apart from the 61st home-run, by focusing on this precise moment he undercuts whatever hope his book ever had at delivering a balanced and unsentimental portrait of Roger Maris. Like the casual fan, Allen too is blinded by the magnitude of "Number 61."

In his interviews with Maris' father and with childhood friends and acquaintances in Fargo, North Dakota, Allen is able to give an inkling of what this book might have been. Maris was truly a remarkable high school athlete. He still holds the national high school record for returning four kickoffs for touchdowns in a single football game. And residents of Fargo still take sides over his controversial transfer from public to parochial school after his

sophomore year of high school. But just as these anecdotes begin to congeal into a personality, Allen plunges into Maris' professional career. When the baseball men begin to speak, Maris loses texture and becomes, once again, a cardboard cut-out whose talent is always discussed in reference to that single, remarkable season.

Allen does a nice job of tracing Maris' early career, particularly in charting the Yankees' early and sustained interest in him, although his early performance makes it difficult to believe that the Yankees' interest was serious as early as 1958. More likely Maris was simply one of a number of lefty sluggers the Yankees' organization has always tried to cultivate. Only Maris' subsequent achievements make the Yankees' early pursuit of him memorable.

At this point Allen's chronology breaks down. He follows Maris' Yankee career through a series of interviews with a number of ex-teammates — Bob Cerv, Hector Lopez, Mantle and Al Downing to name a few, then follows the same pattern through the 1961 season up until Maris breaks Ruth's record. Since Allen opened the book with this event, he now skips over it to concentrate on the aftershocks of the blast, a disconcerting and awkward omission that disrupts the rhythm of the entire book. Here many readers will undoubtedly turn back to the beginning of the book to keep Maris' career in context.

The remainder of Maris' post-1961 life receives only cursory attention. Beyond a few interesting anecdotes, such as his attempt to retire after the 1967 season, Allen uncovers no new territory.

Allen has no trouble finding those who will vouch for Maris' all-around talents. In the wake of Maris' death, even those who knew him only superficially hand out compliments without complaint. As if to meet a deadline, the years following Maris' retirement in 1968 are compressed into less than twenty pages; his death and subsequent funeral cover only a few more. One gets the uncomfortable impression here that the book was rushed into print to capitalize on Maris' untimely demise.

Every year there are scores of baseball books that take Allen's limited



FIRST BASEMAN CATCHING
A HIGH BALL.

approach, allowing the anecdote to obscure analysis, and Allen can't be singled out for this error. Despite the publication over the last twenty years or so of a good number of baseball books that stand on their own as works of serious inquiry, the market is still dominated by works such as this. The figure of Roger Maris is ripe for a full

explication on what the mass media can do to color the perception of a ballplayer. Maris is perhaps baseball's first, and most obvious, victim of the modern media's tendency toward overkill and distortion. But Allen, operating according to standard practices, is ill-equipped to consider these questions. Publishers know that the topical baseball biography finds a steady and willing constituency, so they are under no pressure to change their editorial focus. The harder, more significant questions not only never get answered, they only rarely get asked in the first place. The fault here is not all Allen's, but is shared by those of us who continue to settle for books like this that hardly tell even half the story. Baseball, and Roger Maris, each deserve more.

But neither is Allen blameless, for *Roger Maris: A Man For All Seasons* is hardly adequate even in the terms of the type of work we have learned to expect. Ford Frick's famous "asterisk" ruling is given short shrift, and much of that appears factually suspect. Even the 1961 season is given only a cursory description. The saving grace of many books of this type is often an appendix of statistical information, but Allen's book includes only Maris' career record and the 1961 Yankee roster. Maris' 1961 season is not described in any detail.

As I was growing up, Roger Maris was the first baseball player I became aware of, and as such I have always retained more than a passing interest in his career. I was hoping this book would contribute to my understanding of Roger Maris, but it did not. *Roger Maris: A Man For All Seasons* is a disappointment.

Millions for Defense

By Frank Boslett

PLAYING THE FIELD

Jim Kaplan

167 pp., Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill

\$12.95

“FIELDING WAS always something special. It’s the most American subculture of our most American game. It’s all wrapped up in our pastoral myth.”

Jim Kaplan, author of *Playing the Field*, tells us that baseball was invented as a fielding game. The defense was given the ball, the purpose was to put it in play, and the most cherished skill was fielding ability.

Kaplan, who formerly covered major league baseball for *Sports Illustrated*, is not timid when discussing his love affair with the defensive aspects of the game.

The book is a history, not only of great fielding plays that we, as baseball fans, have retold many times, but of little known happenings that have occurred when we may have been watching the ball instead of the fielder.

Kaplan realizes what some fans tend to forget when they are discussing baseball and when emotions and prejudices take over. The first point is that when great plays are made in a World Series, the Series itself magnifies the event. The second is that great fielders are great not because of how few errors they made in a season or how many positions they played, but how they affected the success of their teams. So, because of the many positions he

played, Pete Rose was not the greatest fielder, but rather the most versatile fielder. Incidentally, he ranks Honus Wagner second in that category.

To further illustrate his point, Kaplan tells us that despite the notoriety of great catches by Al Gionfriddo and Sandy Amoros, Gionfriddo, in fact, never played in another major league game and Amoros has disappeared.

After an introduction by Dick Howser, Kaplan moves through the book in a quite structured manner. In his chapter, “In Defense of Defense,” he cites the importance of defense to the entire concept of winning. He quotes fielders who understand how their performance affects the performance of the pitcher. Grass versus artificial turf is discussed and what type of fielder plays best on which surface.

The infield is examined as a whole and then position by position, with Kaplan providing a profile on his favorite at each. Pitching, catching and the outfield receive the same treatment.

As a journalist, Kaplan has access to present and former players that some other writers might find difficult to obtain. He uses this access to probe, to find the differences between the way each position was played years ago and the way it is played today. Alvin Dark, for example, anguished over an entire

FRANK BOSLETT is a Pittsburgh-based writer who is taller than any of these Pirate shortstops: Clem Koshourek, Fred Patek or Rafael Belliard.



A HOT PROPOSITION IN THE EARLY DAYS

winter because of a bad feed he made in a World Series game that lost his team a double play. Nowadays, fielders practice making throws off bad feeds.

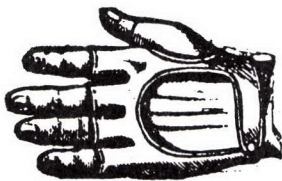
A baseball fan wishing to learn more about the subtle aspects of the game will surely benefit from *Playing the Field*. Myths, old and deep, are dispelled. The throw from left field to home when there is no angle to distinguish how far the runner is from the plate is pulled apart and put together again. Keith Hernandez tells us to always stretch the leg on the glove hand side when reaching for a ball in the dirt. How Bill Mazerowski made the pivot at second base is explained even though you still know that you would really have to be Maz to make that play as effectively. Most baseball instructional books will tell the youngster "how" to react in the basic situations. This book goes to the players for the inside tricks.

Kaplan also uses this forum to air some of his arguments for change. The unfortunate 1964 decision by the wire services to eliminate assists and putouts as well as fielders involved in double plays from box scores is examined. The poor official scoring by people who aren't as well qualified as a scorer should be (Kaplan calls for a fifth umpire to be rotated as they are on the bases to serve as scorer) and the new statistic "team error" are brought forth.

Jim Kaplan's admiration for excellence in the defensive aspects of baseball is unabashed. He calls it the military necessity of defending bases (the most precious, of course, being home base). He says that above all, it's the freedom of imagination. More than anything, though, fielding is the glue that holds baseball together. He quotes his all-time fielder, Bill Mazerowski, "Without defense, you aren't going to win. If you can't stop the other guy from scoring, you aren't ever going to score enough."

And why isn't defense recognized in Cooperstown? He mentions that the Hall's omissions are unfortunate enough when you consider that middle infielders are supposed to be defense oriented, more so when you see the overlooked players' offensive stats. He lists Maz with Nellie Fox and Red Schoendienst as those who should be inducted. He says, "And you wonder why second basemen are a little sensitive."

Playing the Field is a book that is easily read, easily understood and occasionally prejudiced. If it has Ted Williams and the late Charley Lau saying, "What about us?", it quotes Don Baylor, "Pinch fielding is harder than pinch hitting." The book is strictly about baseball defense and it covers it well.



The Woman Comes of Age

By Merritt Clifton

SHE'S ON FIRST

Barbara Gregorich
288 p., Contemporary Books
\$16.95

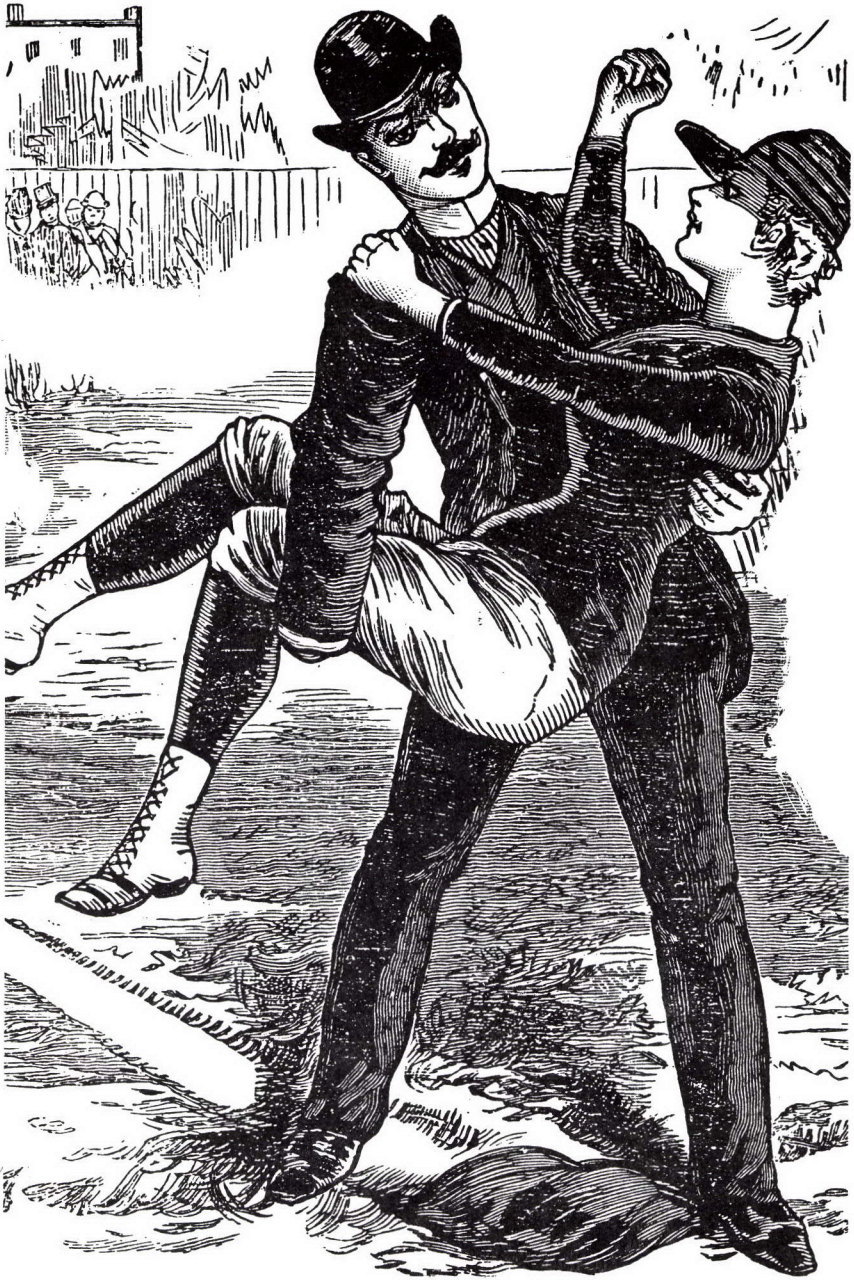
20 YEARS AGO, in Berkeley, California, a teen-aged infielder named Stacey Vialas was barred from the local Pony League not because she couldn't hit, run, field, or throw adequately, but because she happened to be born female. Berkeley at that time was a hotbed of politically radical activity, including school desegregation, resistance to the Vietnam War, and the Free Speech Movement. Yet sexual integration of hardball was apparently too radical a notion even for Berkeley. As a sandlot teammate, friend, and neighbor of Stacey's, I wrote the only letter of protest the Pony League officials received, co-signed by my brother Ted, our buddy Tim Moellering, and perhaps a handful of other boys from the neighborhood — but I can't remember who. Our own outlaw team of kids aged 8 to 12 welcomed her at second base, compiling a won/lost record of 24-1 versus every Little League, T-Shirt League, and neighborhood team we could coax to play us. I don't recall that Stacey took any guff for being female from fellow players; only from supposedly adult coaches.

What became of her after that, I don't know, but I've been hoping ever since that some talented young woman would crack the professional baseball sex barrier just as Jackie Robinson cracked the color barrier; that someone

could open the doors for girls like Stacey Vialas. I didn't understand as a pubescent young man and still don't understand today why other men should in any way feel threatened, contemptuous, or resentful of women participating in our sports. As a fairly competitive weekend marathoner and ultramarathoner, I personally admire hell out of women who can outrun me for six, 26, or even 50 miles. As a town-team pitcher, I'll admit I was a bit taken aback last summer when a very good-looking, unknown blonde talked her way into a sandlot game and roped my curve off the centerfield fence at the Boston Common — but if I ever see her again, my team will choose her, for both her bat and ambition.

Meanwhile, women in baseball remain fiction. Back in 1978, when I made a would-be minor league second basewoman the heroine of *A Baseball Classic*, an otherwise factual, autobiographical novel about trying out with the 1974 Portland Mavericks, baseball people mostly laughed. Apart from a few women who played the odd game in the low minors as a gate attraction, women had never competed professionally against men. A few years later, though, girls were admitted to Little League and school baseball. No less an authority than Henry Aaron opined on television that women tennis and track stars have the physical ability to play big-league ball. Aaron

MERRITT CLIFTON, in addition to being a writer, sells his books. See his classified ad elsewhere in this issue.



said he personally would welcome women players. A spate of other novels appeared about female ball players, at various levels of the game.

Barbara Gregorich's *She's on First* is probably the most daring such novel yet, postulating a woman shortstop on a contending major league team. Shortstop? Well, there's a questionable point. Even women Olympic javelin throwers haven't yet demonstrated the arm strength required of major league shortstops, third basemen, catchers, and right fielders. But Gregorich's heroine, Linda Sunshine, is in fact the unknowing child of two former professional baseball superstars, Chicago Eagles slugger turned club owner Al Mowerinski and the late Amanda Quitman of the Hammond Chicks, who played in the All-American Girls' Baseball League that existed 1943-1954. Sunshine is also unusually tall and long-armed for a woman. Gregorich takes pains to point out that Sunshine played baseball, among other sports, from early childhood, combining the advantages of heredity and environment. Maybe, just maybe, such a woman could play shortstop. Certainly she could play left field, where Sunshine debuts in the minors and makes occasional appearances later while breaking into the big leagues.

Gregorich's baseball action is entirely plausible. Unlike Bernard Malamud, whose *The Natural* is so replete with technical errors as to discredit it for any knowledgeable baseball fan, Gregorich thoroughly knows the game. Where she makes questionable statements, such as observing on page 211 that stealing home is comparatively easy, they're matters of opinion, not fact, and a few leading authorities

could be mustered to agree with her.

Characterizations, however, run from very good to downright shaky. Sunshine herself evolves well; sports-writer Neal Vanderlin is excellently drawn; Al Mowerinski and comic-relief scout T.C. Corry are credible. Arch-chauvinist pitcher Isemonger is so overdrawn, however, as to seem a complete caricature. The problem isn't what he does so much as the comic-strip dialog he's given while doing it. Manager Black, his illegitimate father, is just a bit too partisan and too stupid to have been hired, much less retained, by the radical Mowerinski and the clever Corry, who has his own streak of chauvinism but never lets it interfere with his baseball sense. Subtly patronizing chauvinists are all but absent here, though in actuality they're the type who would probably dominate any real attempt at sexual integration.

Style? Gregorich sacrifices depth for fluent action, a trade that should appeal to most fans and casual readers. Her pace is the pace of most baseball novels. Except that Sunshine is female, her story is more-or-less the story of other novels about rookies, from John R. Tunis and *The Kid from Tomkinsville* (1938) on. Duane Decker wrote the basic story at least a dozen times in his series about the New York Blue Sox. However, sportswriters write it in actuality about 20-30 times a season. Prospect-makes-good is the baseball edition of coming-of-age, generally regarded as one of the five basic themes in all literature. It wears well. Give a kid a chance. Having scrapped her way into the lineup, she could be around for awhile. For certain, sooner or later, she'll look prophetic.

Not the Ultimate, but We're Getting There

By Frank Phelps

BASEBALL: A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compiled by Myron J. Smith, Jr.

vii + 915 pp., McFarland & Company, Inc.

\$55

A RIPPLE OF ATTENTION to bibliography of baseball literature surfaced in 1943 when Ernest L. Krotz, Cleveland book dealer, issued *Collector's Guide to Baseball Publications*: 30 pages describing 48 guide serials, record books, histories and trade periodicals. The ripple spread when *The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball*, by S.C. Thompson and Hy Turkin (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1951; revised edition, 1956), included a 650-item bibliography of non-fiction books, guides, annuals, schedules, rules, periodicals and films. But later editions dropped the feature entirely.

Baseball bibliography reached full flow with *Guide to Baseball Literature*, Anton Grobani (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1975). Grobani's work included 363 pages, plus xv, and itemized and annotated nearly 3,000 fiction and non-fiction books, booklets, pamphlets, guides, annuals, pictorials, rules, schedules, manuscripts and periodicals.

Now comes Professor Smith's impressive volume. He calls it (and I think correctly so) "the largest and most comprehensive non-computer-produced bibliography on any major American sport." He includes "books and monographs; scholarly papers; government documents; doctoral dissertations; masters' theses; poetry and fiction in limited amount; pro team yearbooks and other publications; college and pro All-Star Game and World Series programs; commercially produced yearbooks. . . and periodical and journal articles, including the first-ever analysis of the diamond-oriented contents of *Baseball Magazine*, *Baseball Digest*, *Sport*, *Sports*

PHELPS, FRANK V. (1917 NY, NY - 20??, ?), Trinity School, NYC, 1936; Hamilton College, AB, 1940; U.S. Army (*European Theatre, Fifth Army*), 1942-45; *Metropolitan Life*, 1940-82. SABR: Member, 1973; Treasurer, 1980-81; Board of Directors, 1981-85; Chairman Bibliography Committee 1984-. Lifetime interest in history, records and literature of sports (excluding those involving other animals, vehicles, lethal weapons and fakery).

IT'S A GAME OF SEE SAW.



Illustrated, and *Inside Sports*,” and articles from more than 350 other journals (listed following the preface). Specifically, he **excluded** “references to book reviews, most poetry, fiction and music and newspaper articles (unless reprinted in non-fiction anthologies. . .),” and citations from *Sporting Life* and *The Sporting News* as yet not indexed by anyone. Apparently he also excluded the early club constitutions and titles of periodicals which Grobani placed in separate sections. Smith refers readers to Grobani for fiction titles other than the few he chooses to include.

The professor’s expertise as bibliographer is obvious. He carefully declares his objectives, defines the types of literature included and ex-

cluded, explains the pattern of entries in each section, and provides author and subject indexes — none of which Grobani (or Grobani's publisher) saw fit to provide. Both compilers numbered all entries: Smith in one consecutive series; Grobani in separate sequences within each section. In citations of books, Smith furnishes author/title/location/publisher/year/total pages, while Dr. Grobani omitted location and total pages. However, I prefer the latter's noting each year a book was revised or reissued versus Smith's frequent habit of keying on latest editions and dates with mention of only first and not intermediate edition years. In some instances, Smith loses earlier titles as well, as in the following comparison:

(Smith, page 16) "147 *Baseball Blue Book*. Fort Wayne, Ind./St. Petersburg, Fla. 1908-. Annual containing information on both major and minor leagues and teams; officials, media, rules and regs also covered."

(Grobani, page 284) "30-9 *Heilbroner's Official Blue Book*. Heilbroner Baseball Bureau. 1910-51. Paperbound. The official administrative manual of organized baseball. Directory of all leagues and clubs in the National Agreement. Rules of the National Commission. Contracts, schedules. Supplements issued during the season. In later years, date of first publication was erroneously given as 1909.

"30-9A *Baseball Blue Book*. Baseball Blue Book, Inc. 1952- to date. Paperbound. Continuation of 30-9."

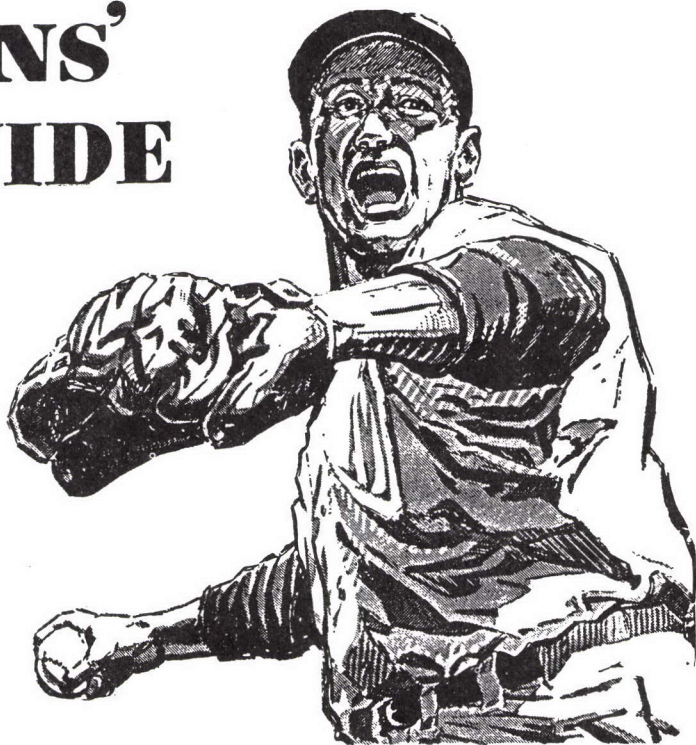
Here Smith saved space at the expense of significant detail. Heilbroner does not appear in his author index.

The great accomplishment of *Baseball: A Comprehensive Bibliography* is inclusion of so many articles from journals and selections from books, an area untouched by Grobani. These entries, 88% of the total 21,251, dominate all sections except "Reference Works." Items from *Baseball Digest*, *Baseball Magazine*, and *Sports Illustrated* are very numerous. But how thoroughly Smith analyzed these periodicals needs a full-scale study. For example, the first article for which I searched was missing: "Minor League Team in New York" by Joe Overfield, *Baseball Digest*, February, 1958 (regarding the 1911 outlaw United States League). Most of the entries selected from books come from collective biographies. Some oversights were spotted readily. Two examples follow.

First, Ira L. Smith's books — *Baseball's Famous Pitchers* (1954), *Baseball's Famous Outfielders* (1955) and *Baseball's Famous First Basemen*

(1956) contain 139 individual biographies, but only 117 are included by Smith, and *Baseball's Famous Pitchers* is absent from the "Collective Biography" section although the other two are present. Second, the series, *Baseball Stars of 19—*, first published in 1950, next in 1953, and annually thereafter through 1975, edited successively by Bruce Jacobs and Ray Robinson, contained 519 biographies profiling 264 subjects once or more,

BASEBALL FANS' GUIDE



1956

yet Professor Smith picks up only 42% of these articles, all from the issues of 1953-56 and 1959-63. Even in those he omits one to five biographies in each. None of the series are entered in the "Collective Biography" section.

Smith out-reaches Grobani by going beyond pure baseball literature to note general sports and general publications possessing worthy baseball content or research value. These kinds of entries are found particularly in "A. Reference Works, 1. Bibliographies and Indexes" which lists many standard library aids valuable to anyone commencing serious baseball

research, especially in items like 51 *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, 1900-*, and 60 *Subject Guide to Books in Print, 1957-*. (Unfortunately, he omits others: *Ayer Directory, 1880-*, *Biography Index, 1947-*, *Newspapers in Microfilm, 1948-1972 and 1973-1977*, and *American Newspapers 1821-1936*.)

Invariably outsized volumes loaded with names and numbers suffer typographical and other inadvertent errors and so does Smith's book. The most unfortunate is the absence from the author index of "Peverelly, Charles A.", although his landmark history, *The Book of American Pastimes*, New York, 1866, is listed 838. Spalding is called Spaulding and Grobani, Grabani once each, and harmlessly, in the Table of Contents, collective biography becomes "Collective Bibliography," an error so glaring it is almost invisible. Overall, there seem to be relatively few of these typos and lapses.

Beside bibliography, Smith adds other matter, as if to convert the book to an encyclopedia of baseball. In the introduction and each section he inserts narratives overviewing history, organizational structures and practices, playing techniques, etc., tables of major league won/lost records and standings, and for each of the 1,637 subjects in "Individual Biography," their vital dates, teams and years, and notable records and honors. The appropriateness of this additional material is questionable. Deletion would have saved about 100 pages plus a piece of the retail price and avoided the compiler's exposure to errors having nothing to do with the basic bibliography.

On page 244, he says "Mitts for first basemen are usually smaller than those used by other fielders." On page 226, he implies that the demise of independent ownership in the minors was a fortunate, progressive development. On page 162, he indicates it was A.J. Reach who transferred the Worcester NL franchise to Philadelphia whereas no transfer of assets, players or other property occurred. It was the league who dismissed Worcester, and Reach's involvement commenced in Philadelphia. Smith further indicates that the Phillies first played in the NL in 1885 (instead of 1883) and names as "Noted Personnel — Managers" Ben Chapman, Eddie Sawyer, Gene Mauch and Danny Ozark only. Shades of Harry Wright, Red Dooin, Pat Moran and Burt Shotton.

But it is in the bibliographic area that *Baseball: A Comprehensive Bibliography* is seriously flawed. As Grobani's coverage ended with 1972 items and publication of baseball books accelerated during 1973-1984, we might expect a count of book/monograph/etc. entries (as distinguished from journal articles and selections from books) to be much greater than Grobani's. Not so. In fact, the reverse is true. An item-by-item check identifies more than 800 non-fiction titles, exclusive of early club con-

stitutions, present in Grobani's work, but not in Smith's. Worse yet, some of these are well-known, well-respected works.

Compared to Grobani, Smith is stronger in biographies and team histories, middling in instructionals and team yearbooks, and weak in other areas. Why is this? I do not know. Many of Smith's omissions are of booklet or magazine type, but so are some of his included entries so he didn't eliminate such items categorically. He says in his introduction he is using the same criteria for selection he used in his bibliographies on historical topics and contemporary affairs. Perhaps some consideration pertinent to those bibliographies is less appropriate to this one? Perhaps there exists a tendency to downgrade the old (witness the *Baseball Blue Book* example above) or disregard what appears outmoded or superseded. Bear in mind, this volume is marketed primarily for the library trade.

I have not examined Smith's post-Grobani entries very closely, but in passing note a few items askew: John Tharn's name is omitted from the author index and his book 3435 *Baseball's Dream Team* (1983) assigned therein to John Thorn (although entry 3435 itself is written correctly). These titles are missing:

Bready, James H., *The Home Team*. Baltimore MD: 1979 edition (1958 edition is 4532).

Doyle, Ed "Dutch." *Al Simmons: The Best*. Chicago: Adams Press, 1979. 76p.

_____ *The Forgotten Ones*. Philadelphia: Doyle Publications, 1974. 35p.

_____ *The Only One*. Chicago: Adams Press, 1974. 116p.

Lipset, Lew. *The New York Clipper Woodcuts 1879-1880*. Manhattan KS: Ag Press, 1984. 72p.

Smith, Leverett T. Jr. *The American Dream and the National Game*. Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975. 285p.

White, Sol. *Sol White's Official Base Ball Guide*. Columbia SC: Camden House facsimile reprint of original 1907 edition, 1984. 128 p.

Professor Smith's bibliography is an admirable effort and result, and certainly worth the \$55 retail price but it does not replace Grobani. The two should stand together on the reference shelf, each excellent, each supplying matter the other lacks. So don't throw Grobani away! Ideally a better product might have been a composite, drawing on the skills of Smith, the expert bibliographer, and Grobani, the baseball buff extraordinaire. This field is too vast to be mastered simply. And, it must be obvious now, that a challenge of gigantic proportions awaits those who attempt such a bibliography.

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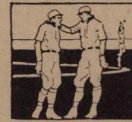
Jack is told to go in training and joins the squad as pitcher



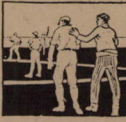
Jack's night and morning routine



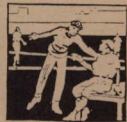
The regular pitcher neglects his teeth and has indigestion



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