

Society for American Baseball Research

BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

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Comments from the Chair

Andy McCue

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We had one of our larger Committee meetings during SABR's 34th National Convention in Cincinnati. Thirty people autographed the sign-in sheet and we had some good discussions.

Joe Murphy, who managed to finish updating *Index to SABR Publications* and adding *The National Pastime (TNP)* to The Baseball Index (TBI), was our top volunteer presence. In fact, Joe's cataloging forms for TBI began to arrive in my mailbox before my copy of *TNP* did. I'm already getting forms for the convention publication (*Baseball in the Buckeye State*) from Joe and I haven't had the time to read it yet.

The only thing Joe hasn't been doing is indexes, and that is our biggest need at the moment. SABR's *Deadball Stars of the National League* was published this year without an index. That was the one feature of that excellent book to draw criticism. Wayne McElreavy jumped in and produced an excellent name index, which is available from SABR headquarters and from Len Levin's Research Library. However, the SABR Board of Directors has decided that the American League volume of *Deadball Stars* will contain a full index of both volumes. That means we need a volunteer to create a subject index to the NL volume and name and subject indexes to the AL volume. The volunteer will have roughly a year to do the NL subject index (and gain experience in that time). The AL index will have to be produced under time constraints, probably within a three-week window in the latter half of next year.

The *Deadball Stars* indexing is the highest priority for our Committee at the moment. We have created materials to aid and guide indexers, and Committee members have produced dozens of indexes. This is an important one for us, as the Board has made it clear that it expects future SABR publications, except those which are collections of articles, to have indexes.

In a related development, Mark Durr (McFarland & Company) attended our meeting. For the past couple of years, McFarland has been republishing hard-to-find baseball classics, such as Ty Cobb's *Busting 'Em and Other Big League Stories* (1914). McFarland is looking to produce indexes for these books as they come along. Mark told us there will be roughly two a year, with the next one in the schedule being Ernest J. Lanigan's *Baseball Encyclopedia* (1922 plus 11 annual supplements). I would like to find a volunteer who could help McFarland with these indexes. You will receive full credit, along with the Committee and SABR, for creating the index, plus two free copies of the book. Please contact me if you're interested.

Karl Kageff (Southern Illinois University Press) was also at the convention and informed me that SIU Press will resume republishing the Putnam team histories next spring, with Frederick G. Lieb's *The Baltimore Orioles* (1955) as the next volume. John Spalding of our Committee did that index. SIU is resuming the republication series after a one-year hiatus caused by poor sales. SIU and SABR have reached a cooperative marketing agreement (we'll promote the book

and get a piece of the price) that both parties hope will increase sales and make it viable for SIU to publish the remaining eight volumes.

We've made great progress this year on both TBI and the amount of electronic material on the Bibliography Committee page on the SABR Web site. I'll leave most of that information to the reports (see below) from Ted Hathaway (TBI) and Jim Lannen (Web site). But I did want to mention a couple of things:

1) We had what I hope will be productive exchanges with two SABR committees—Baseball Music and Poetry Committee and Science and Baseball Committee—about capturing the material they are cataloguing for TBI.

2) We ran an experiment during last winter. Dan Ginsburg donated \$2000 to SABR to pay a student to test whether it was practical to add items from notes columns (such as "Caught on the Fly" from *The Sporting News*) to TBI. We had shied away from this approach because of the high volume of such notes and the relative paucity of usable material. However, Dan felt that within the high volume of dross, there might be enough diamonds to justify the expense. The student catalogued about four months of "Caught on the Fly" from the 1890s. However, each entry wound up costing about 65 cents and we have returned that idea to the shelf.

We are also looking for a volunteer to update and digitize Frank Phelps' *The Index to The Sporting News Registers: 1940-1995* (1996). Frank's original paper index (which lists every appearance for every player, coach, etc.) ends with the 1995 season. More importantly, this is an index that screams to be done in an electronic format. This will involve a lot of typing and a lot of double-checking, but would result in a very useful database that could be included on the SABR Web site. Again, anyone interested, please contact me.

Michael Olenick, who is in the process of moving back to the United States from England, has joined the Committee and we welcome him. We hope that several people who attended the meeting in Cincinnati will join as well.

See you in Toronto in 2005.

Annual Report of the Bibliography Committee, 2003-2004

Andy McCue

Chair, SABR Bibliography Committee

The Bibliography Committee's major project—The Baseball Index (TBI)—completed its second year of Internet availability. The Web site—www.baseballindex.org—became available on the Internet on May 27, 2002. During the past year, the database moved past the 200,000-record level. And, information from TBI was made completely free.

When it opened, TBI contained about 175,000 books, articles, book sections, videos, art works, sound recordings, and other items. The researcher may search TBI for references to a player, umpire, owner, or executive, as well as author or editor. It may be searched for terms, such as "Baker Bowl" or "Cotton States League" or "umpire baiting" or "changeups". More than 2000 separate terms are

included as well as the names of teams, leagues, stadiums, and baseball groups.

In the past year, Claudia Perry joined Steve Milman, Skip McAfee, Jim Lannen, and Joe Murphy as major financial donors to the project. Daniel Levine and his team at DMLCo. did their usual fine Web-site design work at the (thankfully) usual SABR discount. Murphy, Milman, and Brad Sullivan were major volunteers in cataloguing and providing new items for the database.

The Index's inspiration and manager, Ted Hathaway, and Andy McCue, continue to oversee the project.

While TBI is our major effort, the Committee continues with other projects. The Committee was founded in 1983 by Frank Phelps and seeks to discover, organize, and provide information about books and other research materials that might be of interest to SABR members and other baseball researchers. The Committee currently has 71 members working on a variety of projects in addition to TBI.

Two long-time Committee members continued to produce its two longest-running projects. Committee vice-chair Skip McAfee has edited the Committee's newsletter since 1988 and continues to make improvements. Book reviews from Terry Smith and other Committee members highlight the newsletter. The newsletter was converted to electronic distribution during the year.

Rich Arpi started his 17th year of researching and editing *Current Baseball Publications (CBP)*, the quarterly listing of baseball books and periodicals. *CBP* has been mounted on SABR's Web page to make it more accessible to all SABR members.

We are still seeking efficient ways to turn some of the Committee's older, paper-based research into Web-available documents. This is especially true of Frank Phelps' *The Index to The Sporting News Registers; 1940-1995* (1996). Jim Lannen has begun the process of putting Committee annual reports, newsletters, and *CBP* onto the SABR Web site; he is also working to expand the number of book reviews from our newsletter that are available electronically. We are still seeking volunteers to digitize projects such as the Phelps *Index*.

The Committee's project to provide indexes for baseball books published without them made slow progress during the year. We hope to add more indexes during the coming year.

The Baseball Index (TBI) Second Quarter (2004) Report

Ted Hathaway

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TBI now has more than 207,000 entries. Recent work by Joe Murphy (*Baseball Magazine*) and Brad Sullivan (*The Sporting News, Baseball Digest*, and other publications) will soon add another couple thousand to that total. Thanks to both Brad and Joe for their continuing excellent work.

Andy McCue and I heard many appreciative remarks about TBI from SABR members at the recent national convention in Cincinnati. Two members who have recently written books told us they didn't know how they could have done it without TBI! This is the exact reason why we created The Baseball Index. Thanks to all who have contributed to building the database and to all who have donated funds to putting it up on the Web.

Remember that TBI is now completely free to all users. Anyone can search TBI and view and/or download ALL the resulting source references from a search. Daniel Levine (DMLCo.), our Web provider/manager, has made several improvements, which should make the database easier to use. At the convention, Daniel described how TBI data will be integrated into the new SABR Encyclopedia on SABR's Web site. This will integrate information on players from SABR's home run log, players' statistical data, biographical data

from SABR's Biography Project, and TBI data into a single searchable source.

The Baseball Index continues to grow with the work of our many excellent volunteers, but there are still many opportunities to help. Please contact either me (sabrbi@mn.rr.com) or Andy McCue (agmccue44@earthlink.net) if you are interested in helping with the project.

In the coming year, we will work on several projects to improve the usability of the database and to make it easier for volunteers to contribute to the project. We will also develop ways to better guide users to the full-text sources referenced by TBI. I will be reporting more on TBI developments throughout the year.

New Web Site and Electronic Files

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New material is being posted on the new Bibliography Committee Web site on www.SABR.org and other material is being transferred from the former Web site. The new site now contains recent issues of the newsletter (from 2003 and 2004), issues of *Current Baseball Publications* (1995 through the first quarter of 2004), annual reports (2001 through 2003), and approximately 30 book reviews from various years. Previous issues of the newsletter and other book reviews will be transferred to the new Web site from the former one.

In addition, 14 SABR Research Guides and numerous pre-1998 issues of the newsletter are being scanned to convert them to electronic files so that they may be posted on the new Web site.

To reach our new Web site on www.SABR.org, from the SABR home page, click on "Research" in the menu on the left-hand side, then click on "Bibliography" in the committee column of the table. To reach the former Web site, instead of clicking on "Bibliography," go the Web Sites & Other Internet Resources Column and click on "Primary Web Site" (which is misleadingly named). I'll try to get the name changed to "Former Web Site" until we get everything transferred to the new Web site and then we'll have no more use for it.

Please contact me if you have questions or suggestions.

Book Review

Leverett T. (Terry) Smith

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SAYING IT'S SO; A Cultural History of the Black Sox Scandal

Daniel A. Nathan. Urbana; Univ. of Illinois Press, 2003. 285p.
ISBN 0-252-02765-5. \$39.95

Part of the Univ. of Illinois Sport and Society Series, *Saying It's So* was a finalist for the 2003 Seymour Medal. It is a book not so much about the sport as an institution or about the game on the field as it is about what a particular event in the game's history has meant to Americans over the years. Nathan warns in his introductory chapter that *Saying It's So* is "less about history than it is about cultural values and the way people make meaning" (p.2). His purpose is "to locate, describe, critique, and put in context the ideological subtexts inscribed within Black Sox scandal narratives" (p.8-9), to show, as he puts it toward the end of the book, "the ways in which memory and meaning are contested and revised" (p.221).

Nathan has brought together a great deal of disparate material to talk about, and this is one of the values of the book. He has written a history of the responses to the scandal in six chapters. The first concerns the immediate responses to the revelation of the scandal. These,

Nathan warns, do “not offer us transparent, unproblematic versions of social reality” but are efforts to articulate its meanings (p.12). The scandal was initially understood as a tragic morality play, as a disease that needed curing, as a crime to be solved, or as a challenge to middle class masculinity.

The second chapter takes up the entrance of the scandal into the American “collective memory”, a phrase Nathan defines as an “elaborate network of narratives and texts that represents or explains the past” (p.60). This chapter focuses on the “producers of scandal narratives and images” before 1950: Judge Landis, F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*, Kid Gleason and Charles Comiskey, the writings of John Lardner and Nelson Algren, the institution of the Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, and local memories of Joe Jackson and Buck Weaver.

Nathan’s third chapter analyzes two books he considers central to the developing meaning of the scandal: Bernard Malamud’s 1952 novel *The Natural* and Eliot Asinof’s 1963 account *Eight Men Out*. The two books portray the scandal “as a muddled social drama in which it is considerably easier to be critical of the ballplayers than to think critically about the complicated nexus of social relations that fostered the event or to entertain the possibility that Joe Jackson and his banished teammates deserve some compassion” (p.118).

The fourth chapter begins with an analysis of the shape the scandal takes in the academic histories of Harold Seymour and David Quentin Voigt. Nathan analyzes what he calls “Black Sox moments” in the 1970s, moments which seem to parallel the scandal: e.g., the Denny McLain affair in baseball and the Watergate affair in the national government. Thus the scandal “retains its narrative ability to explain the present” (p.148).

The fifth chapter concerns the 1980s, “a renaissance period for the Black Sox scandal” (p.149). The chapter mainly analyzes four novels and three films from the eighties: the novel *Shoeless Joe* by W.P. Kinsella (1982) and the film *Field of Dreams* (1989); the novels *The Celebrant* by Eric Rolfe Greenberg (1983), *Hoopla* by Harry Stein (1983), and *Blue Ruin* by Brendan Boyd (1991); and the films *The Natural* (1984) and *Eight Men Out* (1988). Their views of the scandal, Nathan concludes (p.183), “are fragmentary and often contradictory. At one extreme, we find idyllic, pastoral worlds where dreams come true if only one believe in magic; at the other extreme, we find worlds where corruption and exploitation are nothing new, the exploited have no legitimate recourse to do anything about it, and irony is the last recourse; in between disappointment and disillusionment remain fresh.”

A sixth chapter considers the events of the 1990s that evoked the scandal: maintaining the “Field of Dreams” in Dyersville (Iowa), biographies of Joe Jackson and others involved in the scandal, the movement for amnesty for Jackson, the 1994 baseball strike, Ken Burns’ *Baseball* (1994), the Cal Ripken consecutive-game streak. The Black Sox scandal remains much more alive than any of sport’s many other scandals. Why? In a brief concluding chapter, Nathan points to “the indeterminacy of the event”, the fact that “in many ways the ... scandal remains an unsolved mystery”, and to “the social utility of the story” (p.217). He lists its “various (sometimes conflicting) uses: as a fable of lost innocence, as a masculine cautionary tale, as a historical reference point for contemporary crises, as a narrative that critiques the past and the present” (p.218). *Saying It’s So* is an unusually good book on an unusual topic. Any one interested in what baseball has meant to Americans will want to read it.

Book Review

Skip McAfee

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CROSSING HOME: The Spiritual Lessons of Baseball

James Penrice. New York: Alba House, 1993. 108p.

This work is a collection of 23 meditations on various aspects of baseball and how they can enhance one’s Christian faith or prayer. Baseball situations are illustrated with quotations from the Bible and other sources.

The usual analogies are included: “The Game” is the same as Christian life, “home” equals heaven, the umpire represents a fair and impassioned God, the pitcher (from the batter’s view) is The Opponent (or Satan) except when the batter (from the pitcher’s view) is The Opponent (and thus becomes Satan), the timelessness of baseball is equivalent to eternity, hitting .300 (i.e., failing 70% of the time) is likened to God’s forgiveness, tuning into late-night radio broadcasts of games is similar to contemplative prayer, playing in the minor leagues is learning to serve God, and box scores trivialize the accomplishments of The Game (how does one account for shoestring catches?).

The goal of The Game is to return home (to score); the goal of a Christian life is to “cross home” (reach heaven). “It is because of the Cross that we can come Home; thus, in every sense of both these words, we long to be Crossing Home.” (p.ix).

Some of Penrice’s analogies are a stretch. Unless Christians are willing to wear the “tools of ignorance” to “catch” the values of “forgiveness, commitment, love and justice”, these latter will become “passed balls”. Reaching for a foul ball hit into the stands is similar to reaching for a “piece of the Divine”, taking something from a major-league field that is normally inaccessible to “mere mortals”, in essence accusing God of not having given us in His Son all that is required.

Penrice loses me when he starts babbling on the basepaths (p.9-10): “First Base is the Father of the journey, from which all life on the basepaths originates. Second Base, being in the center of the diamond, assumes the role of Mediator, standing in direct line with Home. ... Third Base is the Empowerer, for when touching Third Base the player receives an acceleration of power to boost him on his way to Home.” Whew!

In summary, Penrice states (p.102) that “baseball is a reflection of our spirituality”. Like Christianity, baseball is “eternal, a burning flame not easily extinguished by cultural winds” (p.103). But as for me, I suspect that being a good Christian and living the Christian life have little or no effect on whether one can hit a curve ball, down and away, or throw a splitter that falls off the table.

“The genius of baseball is this: It has so far survived the swine who own it, the clods who manage it, the thugs who play it, and, amazingly, the Lost Boys of Literature who have tried to love it to death. But silent springs beckon; the Baseball Century is ending. The bats are hollow, the stitches on the ball unravel, the gloves rot. Baseball has become just another enterprise zone of the American soul.

“Time out. Are you actually buying this heavy breathing? Sure you are. You’ll listen to anything about baseball because you think it’s really about Dad ... and beer. You don’t even care if it’s true. ... Football is war for wide bodies and basketball is hip-hop for stretch bodies and hockey fans can’t read. But baseball is, ah ... the Pastime.”

(Robert Lipsyte, *Esquire*, April 1993, p.101)