

The Squibber

THE BOB DAVIDS CHAPTER E-NEWSLETTER

May 2016

This newsletter is produced by the Bob Davids Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research ([SABR](#)), which serves members in Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia and parts of Pennsylvania and Delaware. Visit the chapter's official website at <http://sabrdaids.org/>.

Submissions for future editions can be sent to *Squibber* editor Walt Cherniak at wcherniakjr@aol.com. Keep sending us those squibs, and those ideas for squibs!

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SABR DAY AT NATIONALS PARK: *Join us on June 11*

SABR Day at Nationals Park will be held Saturday, June 11 for members of the Bob Davids Chapter

Here's the good news: An additional speaker has been added to our June 11 Early-Bird Special at Nats Park. If you are a regular attendee at the local big league parks, you probably have bought some food or drink from "Howie" Hart, who is known for his long blond hair, blond mustache, and outgoing personality. He has been in stadium vending for the past 35 years will give us a glimpse into the lives of the vendors who so many of us fans take for granted.

Here's the bad news: Time is running out. We need to give the Nationals our final count by June 1, so we need to hear from you.

What: The annual summer major league game meeting of the Bob Davids Chapter. The Nationals are off to a strong start and seem headed for a great season. Don't miss this chance to see them with your SABR companions avenge those three straight April losses to the Phils.

When: Saturday, June 11, 2016

9:00 – 9:30 a.m. We meet outside center field gate. (The north side of the stadium) of Nationals Park

9:30 – 9:45 Enter the ballpark, proceed to the Reagan Room on the second level

9:45 – 11:30 Our program featuring Barry Svrluga, national baseball writer for the Washington Post and author of the widely acclaimed *The Grind*; Howie Hart ballpark vendor extraordinaire; trivia with our own Bruce Brown; and a buffet ballpark lunch served in the same room (exact order to be determined).

12:05 p.m.– The Nationals vs. the Philadelphia Phillies – our seats are in the shade!

Where: Nationals Park

1500 South Capitol St., SE

Washington, DC 20003

Phone: (888) 632-NATS (6287)

<http://washington.nationals.mlb.com/was/ballpark/information/index.jsp>

Cost: \$69. Cost includes program, tickets to the game and the buffet lunch. The menu includes Burger bar (veggie burgers on request), hot dogs with condiments and sauerkraut, BBQ baked beans, field greens salad, grilled vegetable pasta salad, watermelon wedges, kettle-style potato chips, assorted soft drinks and water.

Who: SABR members and visitors --but only if you are among the first 66 attendees to register for this exciting event. The room we will be meeting in is limited to 66 dedicated fans.

Why: We are blessed to have two major league teams in our chapter's boundaries. With the advent of the Babe Ruth SABR Chapter in Baltimore, we hope to make our visit to Nationals Park an annual event. We would love to include you. Please let us know if you plan to attend; we hope you will.

Questions: Contact Bill Lewers at lewers@verizon.net or [703-893-3474](tel:703-893-3474).

How: Complete a registration form and send it and a check for \$69 before June 1 to Dave Paulson, Chapter Treasurer, who will confirm your spot. Dave's email is d2244p@yahoo.com. His address is 6285 Cardinal Lane, Columbia, MD 21044-3801. If it's getting close to June 1 and you want to make sure you're in, contact Bill Lewers.

The event is open to all SABR members and guests. We do ask that you list the names of any guests so we know who to expect. Include your e-mail address if you want confirmation.

Admission requests should be postmarked before **midnight Wednesday, June 1, 2016**. We can't guarantee seating or meals for registrants after June 1. We might have room, but seating is limited, so why take a chance?

After midnight June 1, please do not mail registration forms and checks; instead, please contact Dave Paulson by sending an email message to d2244p@yahoo.com to check availability of seating. If a seat is available for you, please bring a check for \$69 to the ball park and give it to Dave there. For receipt of application confirmation, please either include a SASE, or email d2244p@yahoo.com.

TALKIN' BASEBALL: *Upcoming Talks Scheduled, by Dave Paulson*

Matt Kastel will be the featured speaker at the next meeting of "Talkin' Baseball" on Saturday, June 4. He will discuss his book, "*Nine-Inning Murder*."

On, Saturday, July 2, Mitch Nathanson will discuss his book, "*God Almost Hissself: The Life and Legacy of Dick Allen*."

The monthly meetings are open to SABR members and non-members alike. They are held at 9 a.m. at Brighton Gardens, 7110 Minstrel Way, Columbia, MD. Come and bring a friend.

SALTED-IN-THE-SHELL: *Memories of a First-Ever Game, by J. Thomas Hetrick*

"But, Daaaad!" the boy whined.

"All right, We'll go to the ballgame. But, I won't enjoy it," the father cautioned his son.

Crew-cutted Tommy Henderson, smallish for his age, was not quite 11 years old. At his father's insistence, Tommy had to sport the insipid haircut. Always ridiculed by his more progressive classmates, the "military" look helped to create distance between father and son. Mr. Henderson had been in the Army since he was a teenager in the 1940s, lying about his age to enlist. Mr. Henderson wore the buzz-cut along with his perfectly creased pants and tried to project that lifestyle onto his son.

Tommy had been following the fortunes of the local major league team, the Washington Senators, since last season. Washington's entry was in the throes of another lousy campaign in 1968.

As with previous editions, the team was weighted down with baseball mediocrities. First baseman Mike Epstein sported Elvis-like muttonchops but could never hit like The King. Shortstop Ron Hansen made an unassisted triple play and was rewarded with a one-way ticket out of town. Faster-than-lightning Ed "The Streak" Stroud utilized his talent by popping up and racing back to the dugout. Rookie centerfielder Del Unser could have passed for the ball boy. Catcher Paul Casanova, a perpetually smiling Cuban, barely hit his weight. Backup catcher Jim

French was famous for diving all over the diamond only to drop weak foul tips. In the pitching department, the Senators endured another season of undelivered promise. Even the Washington manager seemed right for the job. Jim Lemon, a fairly decent slugger in the 1950s, had survived playing on the Washington teams of that era, who also lost with extreme regularity.

The only player of note was the gigantic Frank Howard-- a six-foot-seven-inch behemoth known primarily for bashing tape-measure home runs and weather-altering swings. When Howard connected solidly, the baseball assumed radically new shapes temporarily, before settling into the empty outfield seats of cavernous D.C. Stadium. Due to its circular, closed configuration, the stadium was known for trapping sound inside its concrete shell.

To satiate his baseball interest, Tommy woke up before his parents to see how the Senators fared the night before. He'd sneak out of the apartment to peek at the neighbor's Washington Post. Invariably, the deadline-oriented newspaper would simply print "late game" next to the results. Worse yet, the Post would sometimes carry a partial summary of the game until the fifth inning. Thus, Tommy would have to wait until school ended to hear the disappointing ball scores on the radio.

All through the riotous summer of 1968, Tommy kept pestering his father to take him to a game. Tommy had waxed eloquent about how Jimmy's dad took him to see games and how Billy's father played catch with his son every weekend. Tommy begged his dad to buy a new baseball glove so they could renew the ancient father-son tradition. Mr. Henderson, never athletically inclined and of medium build, finally broke down and bought a glove. At first, the elder seemed uncoordinated and threw "like a girl," according to Billy, who'd sometimes joined in the games of catch. After a while, though, Tommy's dad developed a whip-like throwing motion. Tommy's dad also learned to catch the ball more often than not.

When Tommy felt his dad was ready, he annoyed him again.

"Daad, you promised!" Tommy would say as the summer wore on.

One weeknight, the two piled into the family station wagon to see a game between the Senators and the Chicago White Sox. When Tommy and his father arrived at the stadium, they were greeted at the ticket booth by a smiling, gap-toothed man. Tommy was so excited he asked the man who was going to win the game tonight. A victory in Tommy's first game would vindicate all those nights hiding a transistor radio under his pillow to listen to the play-by-play of Dan Daniels. It would also greatly satisfy the lad who spent his weekends watching his heroes succumb on television with voice lamentations provided by Warner Wolf.

"Pipe down," his father said gruffly.

"Section 212, seat 14, Dad, where's that?" said Tommy.

"Follow me," said Tommy's father.

It wasn't that easy, though. Mr. Henderson had difficulty understanding the seating pattern and had to ask a kindly usher, who was roaming the stadium carrying a well-worn rag.

The usher pointed to a nearby concrete ramp. Beside the ramp was a concession stand selling hot dogs, peanuts, soda pop, and beer. Tommy begged his father for a hot dog and a soda.

"All right," said Tommy's dad, aware they'd left the house before dinner.

"Can I have some peanuts, too?"

Tommy examined his food while his father picked up a beer and paid. The peanuts seemed odd, salted-in-the-shell.

"Dad, what are these, how do they get all the salt inside a peanut?"

Mr. Henderson didn't pay attention, too busy nursing his beer and peering at the ramp. Tommy's father motioned stiffly for his son to come along.

The two walked up a steep grade into the stadium's seating section. When Tommy saw the vast expanse of green and the giant-sized dirt in the infield, he gasped. This couldn't be the right place. No man could possibly hit a baseball that far. The magnitude of the stadium far outstripped Tommy's image from the games he'd seen on television. Tommy and his father showed their tickets to a nearby usher. The man unfolded their chairs and then wiped them clean. As they sat down, the players below were practicing. While Tommy's dad sat rigid in his seat, Tommy noticed the impossible distances that the players were throwing and batting the ball. Smiling broadly, Tommy tore into his hot dog and soda combination. It was the best food he'd ever eaten. When it came time for the peanuts, Tommy turned to his father.

"Dad, have some."

Tommy's dad grabbed a few peanuts from the bag.

"Dad, can I go down there and try to get an autograph? I see Frank Howard!"

The boy giddily raced down the long concrete steps towards field level. He spied his hero Frank Howard, who was blistering throws to young Del Unser.

"Are you gonna hit one tonight, Mr. Howard?" Tommy blurted out.

The Washington slugger slowly looked up into the stands before resuming his practice tosses.

"I'll sure try, son." said the baseball star.

Tommy couldn't wait to get back to his father to tell him the news.

"Frank Howard is going to try to hit a home run for me tonight!" Tommy gushed to his father.

A verbal biography of Howard followed. Beside himself with glee, Tommy explained that Howard had once hit a home run with one arm in the World Series for the Dodgers!

"He's bigger than Babe Ruth and he's the top home run hitter in the American League!" Tommy raved.

Talking about the Senators' slugger, Tommy's father offered, "He's sure a muscular guy, but you know something, he's got a crewcut just like us!"

"Oh, Daad," sighed Tommy.

After the national anthem that Tommy and his father stood proudly for, the game began. It was over quickly. The White Sox pitcher Tommy John completely dominated the home team, winning 6-0. Frank Howard struck out twice with titanic swings against the crafty veteran John. When the Senators punched routine fly balls to the outfield, the few fans in attendance mockingly cheered. Long before the final out, the faithful had departed the park, convinced of another loss. When the game ended, the stadium echoed with the muffled sounds of exploded styrofoam cups, sounds far louder than the weak Washington bats.

"Well, I saw my first game! It's a shame that they lost," Tommy enthused.

On the walk toward the car, a still-jubilant Tommy asked.

"Can we go again, Dad?"

"What, to see them lose? I thought you said that Frank Howard was going to hit a home run." said Tommy's father, disgusted.

Tommy skipped along, realizing that there would be other games. Although this would be the only game with his father, Tommy would see thousands more, at the ballpark, on television, and on the radio. Within a few years, the attendance-poor Senators departed Washington to relocate in Arlington, Texas.

"Frank Howard's going to hit more home runs," said a confident Tommy, "Just not tonight."

J. Thomas Hetrick is the author of Seymour Medal Finalist *Chris Von der Ahe and the St. Louis Browns* and *MISFITS! Baseball's Worst Ever Team*.

SABR 46 UPDATES: *Want to Throw out the First Pitch in Miami?*

Want to throw out the first pitch at [SABR 46](#)?

Thanks to the generosity of the Miami Marlins, anyone who makes a donation of \$1,000 or more to the SABR General Fund between May 1 and June 15, 2016, will have the opportunity to go on the field for batting practice before the Marlins game against the St. Louis Cardinals on Friday, July 29 at Marlins Park.

Participating donors will also be entered into a drawing to throw out the first pitch at the Marlins game on July 29. The drawing will be held during the Ross Adell Welcome Reception during SABR 46.

This special opportunity is only available for up to six SABR donors (or a guest of your choosing.) Following our [SABR 46 ballpark session](#) — highlighted by guest speakers Barry Bonds and Don Mattingly — SABR donors will be able to go on to the field during batting practice before the game. Each one-time donation is good for one on-field ticket.

In addition to the on-field opportunity at Marlins Park and the chance to throw out the first pitch, the SABR 46 donation package also includes two tickets to the SABR 46 [Donors Breakfast](#), a SABR logo commemorative crystal baseball, and a one-year membership to SABR.

SABR is a 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

If you are interested in the SABR 46 donation package, please contact Jeff Schatzki at jschatzki@sabr.org.

Have you registered for SABR 46 yet?

- **Early registration discount ends June 13:** [Click here for complete information on SABR 46 registration rates](#), all-inclusive packages, and optional sessions. Or [click here to register for SABR 46!](#) We're again offering a special all-inclusive rate for the annual SABR convention. The early-bird discount and all-inclusive rate ends on June 13, so reserve your spot in Miami today.
- **Hotel room block going fast!** [Click here to book your room at the Hyatt Regency Miami online](#). Our host hotel overlooks the Miami River and Florida's famed Biscayne Bay, and it's just 15 minutes from South Beach and two miles from the Port of Miami. SABR 46 attendees will enjoy easy access to Miami's best attractions like Mary Brickell Village, the James L. Knight Center, Coral Gables, and the Latin flavor of Little Havana. *Please note: The deadline to book your room at the SABR group rate of \$129/night (plus tax) is Monday, June 13, 2016.* If you have any questions about your reservation, please call the hotel at (305) 358-1234.

TRIVIA ANSWER: *Kansas City A's catcher Billy Bryan connected off Hector Maestri of the expansion Senators in the sixth inning on Sept. 17, 1961. Bryan hit 41 homers in his career, the last three as a member of the Senators in 1968.*