

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



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Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

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Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke
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In the 1987 film *The Untouchables*, lawman Eliot Ness (played by actor Kevin Costner) is asked what he's going to do after Prohibition is repealed and his job chasing alcohol bootleggers becomes extinct.

"I think I'll have a drink," Ness replies.

Betting on baseball is provoking a similar reaction among many fans today. The 2021 season was the first in which widespread sports gambling became legal and available in many US states. Major League Baseball has spent most of the past 100 years warning fans about the evils of gambling since the Black Sox Scandal. But the sport's top leaders have sure seemed to embrace this brave new world quickly.

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Peter J. Wilt, a lifelong White Sox fan and soccer executive, has solved a Black Sox mystery, discovering the unmarked grave of pitcher Lefty Williams at Melrose Abbey Memorial Park in Anaheim, California. The location of Williams' final resting place had eluded baseball researchers until now. See the full story on page 3.

1921 Black Sox trial focus of new SABR Century Project

100th anniversary of many major milestones in baseball history

The 1921 season was a pivotal one in baseball history. SABR's Century Committee invites you to join us on a journey back in time to learn more about baseball during the Jazz Age one hundred years ago with our 1921 Century Project, featuring stories, games, and highlights with contributions from more than 70 SABR members.

Visit [SABR.org/century/1921](https://www.sabr.org/century/1921) to view SABR's new 1921 Century Project

The Black Sox trial — baseball's Trial of the Century — took place 100 years ago in 1921. Eight members of the Chicago White Sox, along with some of the gamblers who bribed them, were charged with conspiracy to fix the

1919 World Series, which the heavily favored Sox lost to the Cincinnati Reds.

For six weeks during the summer of 1921, baseball's fallen stars — including Shoeless Joe Jackson, one of the greatest pure hitters the game has ever seen — gathered in a Chicago courtroom to await their fate. Their criminal trial made front-page headlines across the nation. Today, it's unusual to see any transgression by an athlete, on or off the field, play out fully in the legal system. Baseball's first commissioner, Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, preferred that the game take care of its business outside the courtroom.

After the Black Sox players and gamblers were acquitted by the jury on August 2, 1921, in a verdict that surprised many observers, Landis showed

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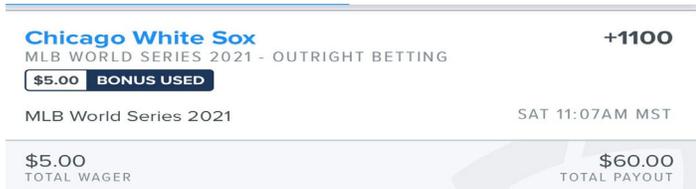
In June, the Washington Nationals partnered with BetMGM to launch an on-site sportsbook area at Nationals Park. The Arizona Diamondbacks followed with Caesars-branded betting windows at Chase Field in September. The Chicago Cubs have already announced plans with DraftKings to build a two-story sportsbook outside Wrigley Field, while the White Sox and Yankees are expected to do the same at their ballparks soon.

As Maury Brown of Forbes.com reports, every MLB ballpark in a state with legalized sports gambling will eventually have a sportsbook attached to it as team owners continue to look for ways to build outside revenue streams that they can shield from the league’s revenue sharing system and collective bargaining negotiations with players.

Today, if you live in Illinois or other states with legalized sports betting, you can’t watch a single game without being bombarded with ads to open your own account and (theoretically) win lots of money.

When my home state of Arizona opened sports gambling for the first time in early September, some sportsbooks offered up to \$200 as a “signing bonus” after you placed your first bet online or through their mobile app.

So like Eliot Ness, I decided to take the plunge and see how it all worked. I opened an account at FanDuel and placed my first legal bet using my smartphone — a \$5 wager on the White Sox to win the 2021 World Series. (A championship would have netted me \$60, but as so many South Side fans have learned over the years, betting on the Sox isn’t always lucrative.)



FanDuel also offered some ridiculous betting options during each White Sox-Astros playoff game. With a few clicks on my phone, I could bet on how many hits Tim Anderson or Jose Altuve would have in Game One; who would hit the first home run, or which team would be leading after the third or fifth inning.

The dizzying array of possible bets to be made could drive someone to drink!

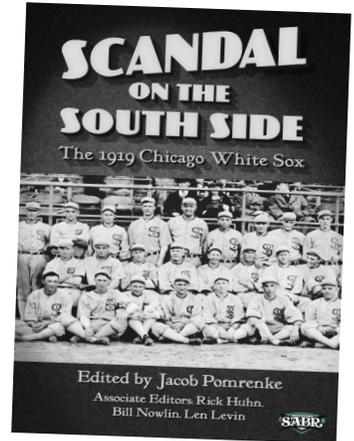
It’s all a far cry from baseball’s stance on gambling even just a few years ago. Whether the sport has opened up a rewarding new revenue stream or a Pandora’s box full of future scandals remains to be seen.

For more information about SABR’s Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, e-mail buckweaver@gmail.com.

Catch up on Black Sox committee projects, research

Want to dive deeper into the Black Sox Scandal? Here are a few ways to catch up on some of our recent committee projects:

◆ **Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox**, edited by Jacob Pomrenke, with associate editors Rick Huhn, Bill Nowlin, and Len Levin, is available from the SABR Digital Library at [SABR.org/ebooks](https://sabr.org/ebooks). All SABR members can download the e-book edition for free in PDF, EPUB, or Kindle formats. SABR members also get a 50% discount to purchase the paperback edition.



Free download available at [SABR.org/ebooks](https://sabr.org/ebooks)

◆ **Eight Myths Out**, published in 2019, is an online project on the most common errors and misconceptions about the scandal. View it at [SABR.org/eight-myths-out](https://sabr.org/eight-myths-out).

◆ **2019 Centennial Symposium: Listen to highlights** from the SABR Black Sox Scandal Centennial Symposium, held on September 28, 2019, at the Chicago History Museum to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1919 World Series.

◆ **Infamous America podcast**: Season 2 of the [Infamous America podcast series](#), produced by Black Barrel Media in 2019, focuses on the Black Sox Scandal, using research from our *Scandal on the South Side* book.

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A grave journey: In search of the Eight Men Out

By Peter J. Wilt

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Peter J. Wilt is a SABR member and an avid Chicago White Sox fan. When not cheering for the White Sox he is launching and operating professional soccer teams. He is currently operating Chicago House AC and has launched eight other teams including MLS' Chicago Fire and NWSL's Chicago Red Stars.

I love baseball, the Chicago White Sox and history ... and I am a taphophile. That is, I am a person who enjoys visiting cemeteries. In particular I enjoy searching for famous and interesting people's graves.

These interests converged to create a personal lifetime goal to visit the graves of the Eight Men Out, the banned players from the 1919 Chicago White Sox. This is the story of my yet-to-be-completed search, a quest that is more rewarding for the journey than its eight destinations.

Learning About the Black Sox

As a young boy, I first learned about the Black Sox sacrilege from my dad who grew up on the south side of Chicago. He was born a few years after the eight were banned. Dad was an ardent fan of the poor excuse of a baseball team that the Sox had become in the 1930s and he supported the Pale Hose through thin and thinner. His description of the banned players to me was generally sympathetic, but he made no attempt to whitewash the players' guilt.

Later in my childhood I learned more details of the case through flawed books and motion pictures that immortalized the eight dishonorably discharged ball players. In seventh grade I read Eliot Asinof's *Eight Men Out* and began to realize that it was a complicated case. The book of course painted the gamblers and White Sox owner Charles Comiskey as the real villains. It claimed the gamblers lured a group of mostly naive players to sell out the team's owner who treated them poorly with low pay and broken promises. The conspiracy was painted in the book as an extension of a practice that was not uncommon during the period.

After reading *Eight Men Out* in 1974 and later W.P. Kinsella's *Shoeless Joe*, I took the first step in my journey. I didn't realize it would grow into a bucket list to visit all eight resting places. Nor did I realize I would also visit the graves of several supporting characters in the Black Sox Scandal, including Charles Comiskey, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, and Harry Grabiner. The journey began nearly four decades ago and is now three-quarters complete.

#1: Joe Jackson, 1984

I started at the top with a trip in 1984 to Greenville,



In 1984, Peter J. Wilt visited Shoeless Joe Jackson's gravesite at Woodlawn Memorial Park in Greenville, South Carolina, setting off what would become a lifelong quest to visit the final resting places of all eight Black Sox players around the country. (Author's collection)

South Carolina, with my girlfriend, now wife, Ann, to see Joe Jackson's grave. It was our first vacation together and, perhaps, I may have neglected to share with her the real reason for the destination. When Ann later realized it was to see Joe's grave, she did not complain. That's when I knew she was the one for me.

I don't recall all the details of the trip, but I do know we made a stop at the Bob Jones University bookstore to scoop up some unusual apparel, and we attended a Greenville Braves game in their inaugural season.

The G-Braves were managed by Bobby Dews and Leo Mazzone, who went on to become one of the best pitching coaches of the modern era. Their roster that season included six future or former major-leaguers including Zane Smith and Matt Sinatro. While I don't recall any details of the game on the field, I do remember being served by one of the best beer vendors ever. I requested a couple of Stroh's and the young man looked in his cooler and came up empty. I offered to take a different brand, but he insisted that he could find Stroh's for me and turned to run beneath the stands ... or maybe even across the street. Ten minutes later the gallant vendor returned with two cold cans of Stroh's that may very well have come from a nearby liquor store.

The next day Ann and I drove to the Jacksons' former

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home at 119 E. Wilburn Avenue, which was then privately owned. In 2006, the home was cut in half and transported a mile and a half to its current location, 356 Field Street, across from the Greenville Drive's Fluor Field. In 2008 it was converted into the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library.

We then fulfilled the trip's mission by visiting Joe's grave at Woodlawn Memorial Park. In an age prior to FindAGrave.com I took the old-fashioned way of finding his grave by going to the cemetery office to get a map. Joe and Katie have a [grass level marker](#) in Section V, plot 333. Ann took a photo of me wearing my newly minted Greenville Braves hat, holding onto a yellow Wiffle Ball bat to commemorate the occasion.

My search for all eight Black Sox graves had achieved its first milestone without my knowledge that this would be a quest at all. That bucket list commitment wouldn't come for nearly three decades.

In between, I returned to Greenville and Joe's grave in 1986 and added to my Joe Jackson pilgrimage with a pair of Dyersville, Iowa, visits to pay homage to Kinsella's baseball novel and the *Field of Dreams* film. But the gravesite journey didn't pick up again or even become a personal bucket list for decades.

#2: Happy Felsch, March 2012

It was in the spring of 2012 when I was reminded that Happy Felsch, "the Pride of Teutonia Avenue," lived out his life in my adopted hometown of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After finishing his blacklisted career playing outlaw baseball in Wisconsin, Montana, the Dakotas, and Canada, he returned home and lived in a second-floor flat on Milwaukee's northwest side. A quick Internet search showed he was interred at Wisconsin Memorial Park, just a dozen miles from my home in suburban Milwaukee. The next day, with Felsch's final resting place data in hand courtesy of FindAGrave.com, I ventured over to the cemetery to pay my respects.

Wisconsin Memorial Park is a large cemetery with several mausoleums and beautifully kept grounds. The [crypt for Felsch and his wife Marie](#) is in "The Gardens of the Last Supper" mausoleum at the south end of the park. Before spotting Felsch's crypt, I came upon a historic piece of statuary. I have a fondness – some would say obsession – for statues. So the serendipitous discovery of the [world's largest carving](#) made from a single block of marble blew me away by itself. To find out this magnificent carving of the Last Supper was less than 20 feet from Felsch's crypt was stunning.

My visit to Felsch's crypt brought back memories of



Happy Felsch and his wife Marie are buried at Wisconsin Memorial Park outside Milwaukee. (Author's collection)

my earlier trips to see Joe Jackson's grave. I remembered how wonderful those journeys were and that inspired me to make visiting the final resting places of all eight blacklisted White Sox players a life goal.

#3: Buck Weaver, April 2012

On Major League Baseball's 2012 opening weekend, my journey continued with a visit to the only Chicago burial site of a Black Sox player. The undeservedly blacklisted third baseman Buck Weaver was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery on the far south side of Chicago.

My quest had garnered the interest of several friends who joined me, including Night Train Veeck, grandson of Baseball Hall of Famer and Chicago White Sox owner Bill Veeck. Spending time with Night Train was great fun. We share a passion for life, people, the White Sox, and finding ways to entertain people creatively. Recently, we began working together to launch Chicago House AC, Chicago's newest professional soccer team.

Our [group of seven](#) also included Mary Kay, whose great-uncle Tony Piet followed Weaver by 15 years as the White Sox third baseman.

The FindAGrave website told us Buck had a grass level marker in Section 35. The seven of us fanned out searching for Weaver's grave using the clue that it was "near the road." I offered a free 7-Eleven Slurpee to the person who found Weaver's grave first. My friend Sara, who just so happens to love Slurpees, cashed in moments after the offer was made by discovering [Buck's grave marker](#).

As I did at Shoeless Joe Jackson's grave 26 years earlier, I posed with a yellow Wiffle Ball bat. After our group separated, I drove an hour to my father's grave where I shared the news of my visit. It was a way for me to connect with my father who introduced me to the Black Sox when I was a young boy.

Three down, five to go!

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Peter J. Wilt has also visited, from left, Buck Weaver's grave at Mount Hope Cemetery in Chicago, Fred McMullin's grave at Inglewood Park Cemetery in Los Angeles, and Eddie Cicotte's grave at Parkview Memorial Cemetery in Livonia, Michigan. His final two Black Sox graves to visit are Chick Gandil and Swede Risberg, both in northern California. (Author's collection)

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#4: Eddie Cicotte, July 2016

My search for Eddie Cicotte's grave in Livonia, Michigan, included a wild two-day adventure in which I attended four soccer matches and visited three famous graves in three different states. On July 22, 2016, I drove from Chicago to Grand Rapids for the NPSL Midwest Regional Semifinals at [Houseman Field](#). The first game saw Cleveland AFC defeat Ann Arbor and then my Indy Eleven-affiliated amateur team fell to the host Grand Rapids FC in front of nearly 7,000 fans.

Early the next morning, I began an epic day by visiting the Grand Rapids graves of Dick York, the original (and better) Darrin Stephens actor from TV's *Bewitched*, and Lou Gehrig's predecessor Wally Pipp. A little-known fact about Pipp is that he scouted Gehrig at Columbia University and recommended his eventual replacement to Yankees manager Miller Huggins. York is in Plainfield Cemetery and Pipp is in Woodlawn Cemetery. From there I was off to Livonia to visit the grave of Eddie Cicotte, the great knuckleball pitcher and ball doctor (shine, emery and spitter).

Livonia is a 2½-hour drive from Grand Rapids. FindA-Grave directed me to Section 79 of Parkview Memorial Cemetery for Eddie's final resting place. It didn't take long to find his grass level flat grave marker. I took pictures with the yellow Wiffle Ball bat and, in this case, a 2005 White Sox World Series hat.

I am a huge fan of the meat pie known as a pasty. They are indigenous to Cornwall, England, but were popularized in US mining communities including Michigan. After a

short visit with the great but flawed Sox pitcher, I lunched at [Superior Pasties](#) in Livonia, the only Top 10 Pasty Shop (according to USA Today) in Michigan's lower peninsula. The other nine are in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The delicious pasty fueled my long drive to Cincinnati for [FC Cincinnati's 2-0 victory](#) over their USL rival Louisville City FC. I had to leave that match at the half to make it to Indianapolis in time to see my Indy Eleven beat FC Edmonton 1-0.

I slept well that night knowing I was halfway through my search for the Eight Men Out.

#5: Lefty Williams, November 2016

A new work assignment put me in Southern California often in late 2016 which allowed me opportunities to seek out two more Black Sox graves. The first was the holy grail of Black Sox graves, the unmarked grave of Claude "Lefty" Williams. As far as I know, the exact location of Williams' ashes has been unknown to the general public until now.

I had been retained by two organizations in Orange County and San Diego to help them launch new pro soccer teams. In November, I made my first visit to Melrose Abbey Memorial Park in Anaheim to find, or at least be near, the unmarked grave of Williams, the young Black Sox left-hander. In April 2012 I had exchanged emails with the cemetery's sales manager, Dee Zrinski, who politely refused my impassioned plea for her to disclose the location of Lefty's grave, which was left unmarked at the family's request when he died and was cremated in 1959.

I assumed I would have no more luck in person and just intended to drive around the cemetery, so I could say I was close to Lefty's grave. When I arrived, I went to the office

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and spoke with the administrator on duty. I sheepishly told her about my quest and that I understood she may not be able to disclose the location of Lefty's resting place. When she apologized for not being able to disclose the location, I didn't press the issue. Instead, I thanked her for hearing me out and asked her about the location of *Addams Family* and *King Creole* actress Carolyn Jones' crypt.

The woman directed me to the nearby North Patio Mausoleum and told me Carolyn's crypt was in the **bottom row** (46 gg) with a picture of her leaning against the crypt. I thanked her, turned, and began to walk away when she called me back. She paused and then in a stage whisper said, "When you're at Carolyn Jones' crypt, you will be VERY, VERY close to Mr. Williams." There was only one unmarked crypt near Carolyn Jones' crypt, so I assume this is [Lefty Williams final resting place](#).

#6: Fred McMullin, December 2016

The following month I was back in the Los Angeles area for work and made plans to find the grave of Fred McMullin, the least well-known of the Black Sox.

Fred is in Inglewood Park Cemetery, just a few miles east of Los Angeles International Airport.

Like Fred's career, his grave is unremarkable, a simple, grass level marker with his name, birth and death years and his role as a husband and a father.

Like many area cemeteries, Inglewood Park is the burial place of many, many celebrities. Baseball players buried there include Earl Battey, Wally Berger, Lyman Bostock, Al Cowens, Doc Crandall, "Wahoo Sam" Crawford, Dock Ellis, Curt Flood, Junior Gilliam, Lee Maye, and Irish Meusel.

Entertainers at Inglewood Park include Chet Baker, Edgar Bergen, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, Betty Grable, Etta James, Gypsy Rose Lee, Billy Preston, Cesar Romero and Buckwheat Thomas. O.J. Simpson's attorneys Johnnie Cochran and Robert Kardashian are both there, as well.

I was on a tight schedule, so the only other celebrity grave I visited there was Minnesota Twins and California Angels outfielder Lyman Bostock who was murdered in Gary, Indiana, just hours after playing a game against the Chicago White Sox at Comiskey Park.

#7: Chick Gandil, TBD

#8: Swede Risberg, TBD

I don't know when, how, or even IF I will visit the graves of Black Sox ringleader Chick Gandil and shortstop Swede Risberg. They are both in northern California, but one will be easier to visit than the other.



After Lefty Williams died in 1959, his wife Lyria had him cremated and quietly interred in an unmarked crypt at Melrose Abbey Memorial Park in Anaheim, California. The location of the Black Sox pitcher's grave has remained a mystery for many years, with cemetery officials reluctant to reveal any information to researchers who have inquired about the former White Sox pitching star. (Author's collection)

Chick's grave is in Napa, just a short drive from the Bay Area. At some point I hope to find myself in San Francisco, Oakland, or San Jose on business or pleasure, which will allow that box to be checked.

Finally, as Joe Jackson said, "The Swede is a hard guy." And he will be a hard guy to visit. The youngest of the Black Sox, just 24 years old in 1919, Risberg is buried in Mount Shasta, California, near the Oregon border, about four hours north of Napa. Mount Shasta isn't near any place I would normally be traveling, so it won't be a short detour off an otherwise planned trip. My guess is I will someday visit Swede's grave on the same day I visit Chick's.

I don't know what other sites I will see, meals I will eat, or people I will meet as I complete the quest to visit the Eight Men Out. I do know that I will enjoy the journey.

Watch: Summer of SABR Black Sox panel highlights



As part of SABR's 50th anniversary in 2021, the Black Sox Scandal Committee hosted a panel discussion on August 14 for the Summer of SABR: Golden Celebration Series, presented by Major League Baseball and Baseball-Reference.com.

Authors Bill Lamb, Bruce Allardice, and Don Zminda (pictured at left) participated in the panel, which focused on the 100th anniversary of the Black Sox criminal trial in 1921. The panel was moderated by committee chair Jacob Pomrenke.

[Click here](#) to watch this panel on SABR's YouTube channel. Visit [SABR.org/summer](https://www.sabr.org/summer) to watch more highlights and video replays from the Summer of SABR: Golden Celebration Series.

One week later, on August 21, SABR's Emil Rothe Chicago Chapter hosted a panel with Pomrenke, Lamb, author Willie Steele, and moderator Sharon Hamilton to talk about the Field of Dreams game and the aftermath of the Black Sox Scandal.

[Click here](#) to watch highlights from that panel on YouTube.

► CENTURY

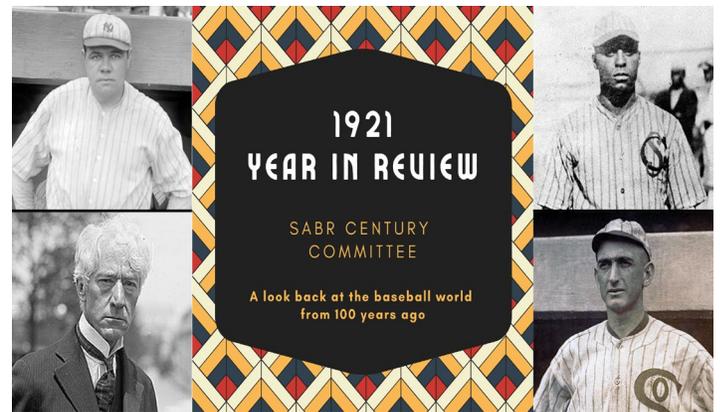
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he would rule the game with an iron fist by immediately banning the players from ever appearing in the major leagues again.

Gambling in baseball was a hot-button issue in the early 20th century, just as it is now in the 21st century. Landis was hired by major-league owners with a mandate to clean up a corrupt game. Before the 1919 World Series scandal erupted, players and front-office executives were known to openly bet on their own teams (both for and against) and bettors were allowed to operate freely in major-league ballparks. Fans could attend a game at Wrigley Field in Chicago or Fenway Park in Boston and place a bet on the next pitch from their seat — a scenario that would not look out of place at a ballpark in 2021, given the growing world of legalized sports gambling.

The Black Sox trial has been portrayed in popular culture as a chaotic affair, plagued by the same forces of corruption and underworld shenanigans that would turn Prohibition-era Chicago into a caricature of itself for decades to come. Eliot Asinof's best-selling book *Eight Men Out*, and John Sayles's film by the same name, cast the prosecuting attorneys as bumbling fools and hinted at back-room deals between gamblers and baseball officials. Little of that has proven to be true.

In 2007, researchers gained access to thousands of pages of legal documents from the Black Sox grand jury, criminal trial, and civil lawsuits, which were acquired at auction by the Chicago History Museum and then made available to the public. These files and other primary sources, such



SABR's 1921 Century Project, published in August, included special sections on the Black Sox criminal trial, the Negro National League, the first commercial radio broadcast of a baseball game, the start of the Lively Ball Era, Babe Ruth and the Yankees' rise to dominance, and their all-New York City matchup in the World Series with the Giants of John McGraw. Visit [SABR.org/century/1921](https://www.sabr.org/century/1921) to learn more.

as player salary contract cards, that have come to light in recent years have given us a better understanding of what happened 100 years ago.

The SABR Century Project also includes special sections on Babe Ruth's record-setting 59 home runs and the New York Yankees' rise to dominance; their epic all-New York City matchup in the World Series with the rival Giants of John McGraw; the Negro National League's second season of play, led by stars like Triple Crown winner Oscar Charleston and two-way phenom Bullet Rogan; the start of the Lively Ball Era; and the first commercial radio broadcast of a major-league game. All took place in 1921.

Listen: Studs Terkel, Eliot Asinof on *Eight Men Out*

On May 5, 1963, Studs Terkel was joined at Chicago's WFMT radio station by Eliot Asinof, a former minor-league baseball player and author of a new book, *Eight Men Out*. For the next hour, Asinof relayed his story of the fixing of the 1919 World Series by the Chicago White Sox to an intensely curious radio raconteur who peppered him with questions. A quarter-century later, Asinof's book was made into a Hollywood film and Terkel, who by then had become one of Chicago's most iconic and beloved figures, was memorably cast as investigative reporter Hugh Fullerton on the big screen. Terkel interviewed Asinof for a second time when the *Eight Men Out* film came out in 1988.

Their first interview was digitized in early 2021 by the Studs Terkel Radio Archive, a partnership between WFMT and the Chicago History Museum. The audio recording can be heard online at studsterkel.wfmt.com. A complete transcript is available for download at bit.ly/terkel-asinof-1963-interview. Below is a brief excerpt of Studs Terkel's 1963 interview with Eliot Asinof, transcribed by Jacob Pomrenke. Special thanks to Allison Schein Holmes of WFMT and the Studs Terkel Radio Archive for making the digital recording available.



Studs Terkel: The betrayal of innocence. There are many ways of describing betrayal, in many ways we're talking about the corrupt values of any society in which man lives, has lived, and perhaps will live. There's a new book that's received enthusiastic reviews in Chicago and in other parts of the country. It deals with baseball, yet you don't have to know baseball to fully understand. It's called *Eight Men Out* and it deals with the Black Sox of 1919, the World Series, Chicago White Sox of that. ... Eliot Asinof is our guest and it's one of the most gripping books I've read in a long time. It reads like a detective story, but that is not an apt description of it. ... We'll hear from Mr. Asinof who wrote the book, his whole approach, and perhaps excerpts from the book itself and the meaning of the book today, but I thought it's a good introduction. ... So why did they do it, these eight heroes? What were the pressures of the baseball world of America in 1919 itself that would turn decent normal, talented men to engage in such a betrayal?

Eliot Asinof: Well, Studs, I can only say that when anything as significant as the fixing of a World Series itself, that is not fully explored, when the whole story is not completely and understandably revealed to everyone, then there's a hole someplace. And every writer keeps looking for these holes so that he can spend his time filling them up. And since baseball and American history itself seems such a consequential thing in my own life, I jumped at the chance to do it.

Terkel: I think we should point out that you yourself, aside from being a writer for films, television, and several books, he wrote an excellent novel by the way about



Eight Men Out author Eliot Asinof, left, was interviewed by Chicago radio host Studs Terkel on May 5, 1963. (Photos: FindAGrave.com, 1951 theater publicity photo.)

baseball, *Man on Spikes*. Before this you were a ballplayer yourself, for a time ...

Asinof: That's right, but the interesting thing now is that I like to think of myself more as a historian, which is also part of my background. I was a history major in college in Swarthmore, PA, and then went on to get a Masters at Columbia. I like to think that there's a greater part of my effort as a historian in this book than as an ex-baseball player.

Terkel: It's no accident, is it now, 44 years after you chose this (story), we think of Fred Cook's recent series of articles in *The Nation* on "The Corrupt Society." We think of the big TV quiz scandals in our time.

Asinof: There is a tremendous parallel that when you think that society is constructed in a way wherein the man who can get away with it is the respected man and that the man who is simple and honest and does not apply himself to this code is referred to frequently as a sucker, then it is no accident that these things happen. In the TV quiz scandal, everybody was doing it. And so therefore why not you too? And when you're asked to do it, you simply and naturally fall into this same pit.

Terkel: Yes, but if we could perhaps return to this theme that connects both of the generations, 1919-1920 and 1963 today. There's a great element of self-righteousness that was avowed here by club owners, by lawyers, by public officials, by newspapers too. With the exception of several great newspaper men at the time, Ring Lardner, and Hugh Fullerton, who was sensing something was wrong. The chain of guilt that you have here is a pretty long and well connected one. ... Nelson (Algren) and that little piece of his ("The Silver Colored Yesterday"), how come some of them, the front offices, never met all of this?

Asinof: Let me just say an interesting point in connecting this — the morality of our times is not much different from the morality of these years prior to the 1920s. I was contemplating taking this story of 1919 and 1920

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and transferring the characters to the present. And doing a story — fiction, of course — of the fixing of the World Series in 1963. Transfer all the values, all the characters, and the morality of our times and setting this piece, the Black Sox Scandal, in the present. Now I chose not to do it, but I was sorely tempted to in order to make this very point that you're talking about, Studs. Namely, that in order for Americans to act in an honorable way, you must set up a code of ethics and a code of morality wherein people are encouraged to act in an honorable way. You can't expect the average American to be any different than the community in which he lives. If people are on the take, and if there's bribery and corruption all over the place, you must expect that the average American will do the same.

Terkel: We'll ask you about these eight. They're relatively decent men, right? And this betrayal was nothing new to them. ... They weren't going to get stirred up about the fixed ballgame they were about to play. They got swindled out of the money, which they did incidentally, that's part of the tale. You win, you lose, you try to take a bigger slice of the pie. Maybe you get away with it and maybe you don't. It wasn't a big deal either way, just go along with it.

Asinof: There we are. We are seeing, we're taking a look at the feelings of men caught in a trap. The trap being they don't like the circumstances under which they're living. They're trying to improve it. How do you improve it? Well, if somebody comes along and says, "Let's make \$100,000 throwing these games," their first reaction is obviously going to be no. But you've got to set up good arguments to keep them saying no. The more you examine the circumstances under which they live, the smaller and weaker those arguments become. And soon enough, all the logic comes to the point where they say, "Why not?" And if you think you can get away with it, and if you think in light of all the other things that are going on in the country, why not do it then? Soon enough, they're going to do it. ... Now there's another line in the book, which I recall as being one of those moments when you hit on a significant truth, then you write it down and by God there it is, and it's truth. And the line goes that a man will continue to sin if he can sin with impunity,

especially if he gets paid for it.

Terkel: The immorality here was being caught, and we hear officials high up in recent years (saying), "This has happened and I got caught." That was the fault.

Asinof: But isn't that part of the so-called Great American Game, Studs, isn't it? You play with life and you try and get away with as much as you can. Those who are considered the winners of the game are the guys who get away with most of it. And the losers are the guys who don't. The ones who get caught, and they may have the same morality and do the same things, they have varying degrees of influence and varying degrees of power. But we all at one point or another have to face these things, which is: How much do you think you can get away with?

Terkel: So here, then is the basis for what ... really has all the elements of a Greek tragedy, even though they themselves, the whole conspiracy, was somewhat disorganized.

Asinof: It was disorganized, as most of these things have to be. It is not too difficult, I gather, to fix a fighter because you're fixing one man or two men, including his manager. But when you go for eight (ballplayers), that complicates everything. It was never sufficiently organized, which is, you know, the best testimonial that you could make to the ballplayers themselves, that they weren't skilled and seasoned corruptors or betrayers. They were guys who happened to fall into this scene and this is what makes the whole story so remarkable.

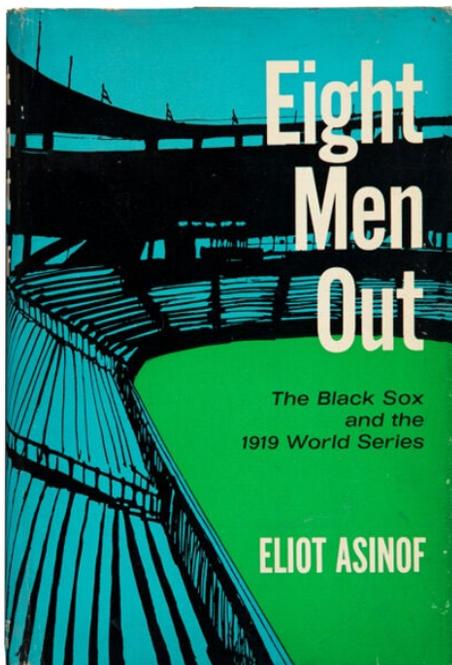
Terkel: I think your investigations, your research, would come back to the tragedy of the moment and the impact on America. But your research, I think of *Citizen Kane*, the reporter trying to find the truth about (newspaper tycoon

Charles Foster) Kane. In your research you came across a great many obstacles and mysteries, didn't you?

Asinof: I surely did, and that made the writing of the book much more fascinating, because that in itself is a kind of a mystery story. A lot of stone walls, but up against a lot of stone wall.

Terkel: And it's 44 years after the fact.

Asinof: Forty-four years later, people are reluctant to talk about it, for reasons of their own, not the least of which is a whole tradition that surrounds the story. Another interesting aspect of the research was that memories are, as you suggest, 44 years later dim and confused. One person will say one thing and say "I was there, I know." And then another person will say the opposite, and he too was there and



Eight Men Out, by Eliot Asinof, was not a best-seller when it came out in 1963, but it became widely known as the "definitive" history of the Black Sox Scandal for the next four decades. (Photo: Heritage Auctions)

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► ASINOF

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he too pretends to know. Now the Black Sox Scandal had so many ramifications and so many aspects to it that nobody, nobody, knew really what happened. No single person. And it took somebody to do all the research and to put all these little pieces together as if you were forming a jigsaw and piecing it in a way that suddenly all the pieces fit and you had a complete picture, which is what I tried to do here. It used to be said that the full story would never be known, since there were so many different aspects to it. Well, perhaps that's so. I don't pretend that this is everything there was to know about it. All I can say is that on the basis of my 2 1/2 years of researching it and talking to people and traveling all over the country and finding anybody who will talk who was involved in it, tracing through the newspaper records, I think I made sense out of the story and that I think is the best I could have expected to have done.

Terkel: And then came a judge, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, a federal judge known for his monumental fine on the Rockefeller family and the monopolies.

Asinof: Oh yes. Well, he was a marvelous choice by the baseball owners. And incidentally, there was a great deal of difficulty getting him. There was a war amongst baseball owners as to whether Landis should get this job or not. Now Ban Johnson was on one side with the clubs that he controlled, and Charles Comiskey himself, along with Bill Veeck Sr. and John McGraw and one or two others who wanted Landis ... (who) was a powerful ramrod of a man. He went to war against gamblers. He had hated gamblers all his life. He hated anybody who associated himself with gamblers in any way. ... Landis' figure that hung over baseball during these troubled times was a marvelous, marvelous one. Now there are those who say, and with certain reason, that he went overboard on this especially in the case of Buck Weaver. But you know, you can't make ketchup without busting a few tomatoes, OK? Somebody gets hurt, but Landis' power, as it turned out, was a tremendous help (for baseball).

Terkel: Even though it's real and true, to me it seems like this is a parable too. It is of 1963, certainly as of 1919, not which you pointed out that baseball games are thrown in this manner, would mean that the very fact that our values today in other facets of life are just as suspect in so many ways as these are.

Asinof: Yes, we are prey, we are prey to the same forces today that the eight men in 1919 were preyed to. And that's the reason why I wanted to write the book. It's exactly right, that this is no isolated moment in history. This is no separate and individual experience. This is typical. And it could conceivably happen again, even in the world of baseball. Well, now fortunately the circumstances at this time are not so constructed that anybody would have, or even a right to think, that the 1963 World Series is going to be thrown. The

influence of gamblers over the play in baseball is almost non-existent. We are constantly keeping a (close eye) on all of these sports, and every once in a while there is a scandal ... and it represents all the things we've been talking about, namely this disparity between what is the reality in American life and what we would like to think is the reality in American life, right?

Terkel: The dream and the truth.

Asinof: At the same time, baseball itself is singular and that it is, to the best of my knowledge, albeit a limited one, the only really clean — a free of gambling sport — professional sport in America today. There have been all kinds of scandals in other sports, and whether it's pro football or basketball point-fixing or boxing, of course, which are gambler-controlled to a certain extent. Now pro football has gradually cleaned itself up; but very recently [there were scandals](#). And it is now a marvelous, and I'm sure, honest sport. But I think we must constantly be vigilant as to the level of our morality and the whole thought that you cannot separate the morality of an athlete from the morality of a banker or politician. If the country is going to be run by and controlled by those whose morality leads to cynicism and hypocrisy, then these things are going to break out all over the place.

Terkel: The refusal to believe, again, the betrayal of the innocence.

Asinof: Well, that is one of the derivatives of the famous line "Say it ain't so Joe," which reportedly came out of his grand jury confession a few days later. But during that same week, Cicotte confessed to the grand jury, and ... one of the phrases that has since become part of American folklore, was this line "I did it for the wife and kids." And I was a good family man. And it was true. He loved his family and he had recently bought a farm. And he had to pay a stiff mortgage on it and he was at the tail end of his baseball career and he needed money. And he couldn't get it from Comiskey. He made a pittance of a salary, a 29-game winner. He was getting less than \$6,000 a year.

Terkel: Whereas a ballplayer or lesser player might get twice as much. The phrase again, "I did it for the wife and kids" might be the phrase ...

Asinof: Sure, it justifies everything because it's like "I love mother" (from) the sympathetic gangster, so to speak, who loves his mother and is treated in Hollywood or in movies and in our folklore as being really not a bad guy after all.

Terkel: This is true, a gangster like Jimmy Cagney in the films, who was good to his mother, and so the outlaw in a sense becomes the hero. The Robin Hood outlaw. ... And then of course I guess this is also the prime rationalization of our day, is always you did it for somebody.

Asinof: As long as your motivations have a cleanliness to them, I suppose it's everything else that becomes justified. But we are all complex figures and the forces that motivate us are very frequently complex and the book is an attempt to explain these forces.

1919: A loss of innocence, and a few key facts

By Bill Lamb

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Despite a writing career that spanned more than a half-century, author Eliot Asinof was essentially a one-hit wonder. His claim upon posterity rests almost entirely with *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series*. Published in 1963, the book was not a best-seller but quickly entered the baseball canon as the definitive account of the Black Sox Scandal, a position it would retain for the ensuing 40 years.

Unhappily for Asinof, his literary follow-ups received little critical attention and sold poorly. Even a return to the scandal did little to revive his professional fortunes. Sixteen years after *8MO* was published, Asinof recounted his side of a legal battle with television mogul David Susskind in a short work entitled *Bleeding Between the Lines*.

To fatten the tale of his contretemps with Susskind to book length, Asinof padded the narrative with marginally relevant backstory, including details of the research that went into the writing of *8MO*. Although *Bleeding* was largely ignored by the reading public, it has since proved a treasure trove of information for Black Sox scholars, particularly those critical of Asinof.

This article deals with the third and final entry in Asinof's Black Sox Scandal trilogy, the obscure and little-read *1919: America's Loss of Innocence*, published in 1990. The author's parade of horrors from that year — the US rejection of the League of Nations; the Red Scare; suppression of the labor movement; Prohibition and the derivative crime wave — concludes with a 53-page essay on the Black Sox Scandal. According to Asinof, there was “no more telling incident in America's loss of innocence than the fixing of the 1919 World Series.”¹

Asinof includes scandal details here that were not mentioned in his previous Black Sox works. Events related in *Eight Men Out* were recast to fit the narrative of the 1988 film of the same name, the screenplay of which Asinof co-wrote with director John Sayles. Asinof adhered to the film version of the Black Sox saga in his 1919 book. Regrettably, Asinof's storytelling methodology remained constant, with no source citations but plenty of misstatements of fact, invented dialogue, and the reading of minds.

For those curious, a catalog of the shortcomings in the

book and film versions of *Eight Men Out* is appended to the [Eight Myths Out project](#) on the SABR website. The text here will be devoted to analysis and commentary upon new scandal fictions published in Asinof's 1919 book, and the light that his final published work on the scandal sheds on the integrity of his entire Black Sox oeuvre. To place that exposition in context, we begin with a thumbnail sketch of Eliot Asinof and his creative output.

Eliot Asinof's Life and Literary Times

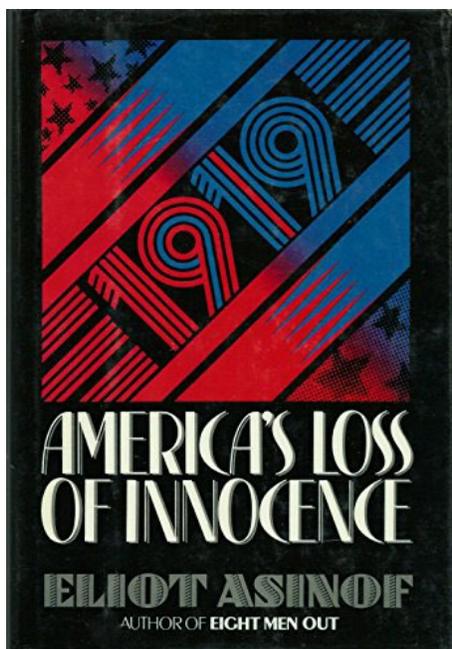
Eliot Tager Asinof was born in Manhattan on July 13, 1919, the grandson of Russian-Jewish immigrants who ran an Eastside tailor shop that employed his father and Eliot himself during his youth. An outstanding student-athlete in high school, he matriculated to elite Williams College in Massachusetts following graduation. He later transferred to Swarthmore College outside Philadelphia where he captained the baseball team.

A left-handed first baseman-outfielder, Eliot played semipro ball during college summers and then spent parts of two seasons (1940-41) playing low-level minor league ball in the Philadelphia Phillies chain.² He enlisted in the US Army and spent World War II as a commissioned officer stationed in the Aleutian Islands. Upon discharge, Asinof sampled employment in advertising, then journalism, before turning to creative writing.

The social consciousness that pervades Asinof's literary work was kindled while he was still a student at liberal Swarthmore and then intensified by an encounter with radical muckraker I.F. Stone. Left-wing political activism reputedly landed Asinof on the Hollywood blacklist in the early 1950s, but

he quietly managed a decent living anyway, working as a television screenwriter and magazine contributor. He married actress Jocelyn Brando, older sister of future Academy Award winner Marlon, and fathered a son (Martin) before the marriage ended in divorce in 1955. Eliot never remarried.

Asinof's first stab at book writing yielded *Man on Spikes*, a well-crafted but largely ignored 1955 novel based on the experiences of career minor leaguer Mickey Rutner.³



1919: America's Loss of Innocence was published by Eliot Asinof in 1990, two years after his book *Eight Men Out* became a Hollywood film. Both books are riddled with errors about the Black Sox Scandal and imagined thoughts for the people involved in the fix.

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Aside from his own passion for the game, there are two versions of how Asinof came to be interested in the Black Sox Scandal. In one, he became motivated by his friendship with Chicago-born novelist James T. Farrell, author of the celebrated Studs Lonigan trilogy and a literary icon of the political left. A boyhood White Sox fan, Farrell had been crushed by the 1919 World Series fix. As an adult, he long labored over turning the scandal into a novel but was plagued by writer's block. In 1960, Farrell gave Asinof access to his research and urged him to have a go at a Black Sox book.⁴

In the other version, Asinof began writing *Eight Men Out* around 1959 as a teleplay for *DuPont Theater*, a monthly television anthology show. The telecast was reportedly canned at the behest of Commissioner Ford Frick, who argued that dredging up the Black Sox Scandal would be harmful to baseball's image.

Whatever its genesis, Asinof's prep for *8MO* included sitting in on a September 1960 interview of Abe Attell, a one-time featherweight boxing champ who was working as a lieutenant under gambling kingpin Arnold Rothstein around the time of the 1919 World Series. An engaging rogue not overly fussy about the truth, Attell provided a spellbinding if dubious insider's account of the fix.⁵ A slightly different version of Attell's account was later published in the cheesecake magazine *Cavalier*.⁶ As later revealed in *Bleeding Between the Lines*, Attell became a major source for Asinof in the writing of *8MO*.

Eight Men Out

Although the subject of occasional newspaper columns and magazine articles, no in-depth inquiry into the Black Sox Scandal had been undertaken since the early 1920s. Released in 1963, Asinof's *Eight Men Out* filled the void. Indeed, it monopolized the space for decades.

A riveting tale of corruption and betrayal, *8MO* had it all – compelling characters; revelatory dialogue; omnipresent narration. Readers were even informed of what crooked ballplayers and sleazy gamblers were thinking as the fix of the 1919 Series unfolded. Although far from a big seller,⁷ Asinof's book had a profound effect on sports writers and baseball fans, many of whom were too young to have personal memories of that corrupt Fall Classic. For the next four decades, *8MO* provided the definitive account of the scandal, its authority and historical accuracy unchallenged.

Career Stagnation

After *8MO*, Asinof's book-writing career stalled. Subsequent works, both baseball-related and not, drew little



Among the errors Eliot Asinof makes in his Black Sox books is a tale about White Sox ace Eddie Cicotte, above, being promised a \$10,000 bonus for winning 30 games. In *Eight Men Out* (published in 1963), Asinof wrote that the bonus was promised in 1917; in *1919* (published in 1990), he wrote that the bonus was promised in 1919. In reality, neither story is true. (Photo: Library of Congress)

critical attention. More important, they did not sell.

Because this article is about Asinof's final Black Sox book, it will abjure analysis of these efforts.⁸ Suffice it to say that themes like the futility of pursuit of the American Dream and the relentless suppression of the working man by the Establishment – central to the work of leftist writers like Asinof – were passing out of fashion by the mid-1960s.

In 1979, Asinof returned to the Black Sox Scandal, albeit in a tangential way. In *Bleeding Between the Lines*, he uncorked “a dandy one-sided anecdote of revenge” that pilloried pushy New York TV producer David Susskind.⁹ The book arose from the filing of a \$1.75 million lawsuit against Asinof for allegedly interfering with the producer's efforts to mount a TV version of *Eight Men Out*. Having acquired screen rights to the work, Susskind was frustrated by Asinof's refusal to sanction changes in the book's narrative for dramatic purposes.

Although entertaining, the torching of the unloved Susskind was “not nearly enough to warrant a whole book.” So, Asinof padded the text with “lengthy flashbacks” that recounted extraneous events, including the details of his Black Sox research.¹⁰ Given that *8MO* contained neither bibliography nor endnotes, this segue yielded invaluable insight into Asinof's sources for the book. As it turned out, only two scandal insiders had talked to Asinof about the Series fix: Sox outfielder Happy Felsch, an amiable dunce who understood little about the workings of the fix conspiracy or how player payoffs were financed, and ancient

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Abe Attell, an incorrigible hustler whose slippery accounts of scandal events even Asinof came to mistrust.¹¹

The most significant revelation for Black Sox scholars was Asinof's disclosure that he had inserted fictional characters into *Eight Men Out*. His primary invention was "Harry F.," a raspy-voiced thug who was said to have intimidated Lefty Williams into his abysmal Game Eight pitching performance. Harry F. and his threatening of Williams were unreal, entirely the product of artistic imagination. As Asinof explained, this fictional character and make-believe World Series-deciding incident were inserted into *8MO* on the advice of the author's attorney, intended to serve as a plagiarism tell and copyright protection device.¹²

Bleeding Between the Lines did not revitalize Asinof's writing fortunes, nor did his ensuing literary work. But in 1988, Asinof's bank account got a boost when a Hollywood film version of *Eight Men Out* was released by Orion Pictures. Asinof and John Sayles's screenplay placed new Black Sox fables before the public.¹³ The film was not a box-office hit, failing to make back its \$6.1 million production costs.¹⁴ But between its original movie house run, more than 30 years of showings on TV, and a 2001 DVD release, the number of those who have seen the film version of *Eight Men Out* dwarfs the relative handful who have read the book.

1919: America's Loss of Innocence

Released in July 1990, Asinof's next literary effort presented a bleak view of post-World War I America, a nation depicted as consumed by isolationism, the persecution of suspected Communists, strike-breaking and the suppression of organized labor, and the Christian fundamentalism that ushered in Prohibition.

Dedicated to I.F. Stone, *1919: America's Loss of Innocence* was of a piece, a one-sided, overwrought, and dated diatribe that read like the product of a socialist workshop of the 1930s. *1919* was not a success, as few bookstore customers noticed the title when it came out, and today the work languishes in near-total obscurity. But the book is not without value to Black Sox scholars, as its closing essay on the corruption of that year's World Series affords insight into Asinof and his take on the scandal.

The first thing that struck this reader was that Asinof had undertaken no new research for the book section titled "The Black Sox Scandal." Although 27 years had passed since *Eight Men Out* was published, Asinof had not expanded his knowledge base for *1919's* treatment of the subject. During that time span, for example, he had not made a trip to Milwaukee to examine the record of Joe Jackson's 1924 civil lawsuit against the White Sox, a gold mine of Black

Sox-related information and a course urged upon him by Judge Hugo Friend in an early 1960s interview.¹⁵

Rather, *1919* relies upon the author's prior scandal prose and his gift for inventing facts, imagining private conversations, and reading minds. Nor had Asinof done any fact-checking during that period to correct surname misspellings and statistical mistakes in *8MO* that consulting any readily available post-1963 baseball reference work would have exposed.

A more striking feature of his *1919* essay is how the scandal narrative was reshaped to conform to the screenplay that Asinof had co-written with John Sayles for the *8MO* film. The relocation of White Sox owner Charles Comiskey's putative promise of a \$10,000 bonus for a 30-win season to Eddie Cicotte from 1917 to 1919 — a major plot device in the film — is one noteworthy example of the essay's scandal revisionism. Changing the admission in evidence of the incriminating Cicotte/Jackson/Williams grand jury testimony during the Black Sox criminal trial to a devastating, case-deciding loss of proof for the prosecution at trial is another.¹⁶

Finally, Asinof's lack of reflection and failure to re-examine the soundness of *8MO's* Black Sox narrative represent a missed opportunity, resulting in complacent reiteration in 1990 of the staggering number of factual errors and misstatements published in 1963.¹⁷ Remarkably, Asinof even managed to introduce new mistakes, both large and small, into his 1990 Black Sox essay.

A non-exhaustive accounting of historical errata debuting in *1919*, with brief analysis and commentary on same, follows.

1. Although it finds no mention in *Eight Men Out*, readers of *1919* are informed that "the White Sox were a second division club throughout the early years of the 1900s."¹⁸

Comment: The Chicago White Sox won American League pennants in 1901 and 1906, and were World Series champions the latter year. Apart from 1903, the White Sox were a first division club every season in the American League until 1910.

2. "Walter "Dutch" Reuther (*sic*), after but two years in the majors, was making almost twice as much [as Eddie Cicotte] on a much less distinguished record."¹⁹

Comment: Eddie Cicotte's salary and bonus made him baseball's second-best paid pitcher in 1919, while Reuther was paid only a fraction (\$2,675) of Cicotte's compensation that season, facts established by Black Sox expert Bob Hoie in his landmark 2012 article on 1919 baseball salaries for *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*. Asinof did not even correct the misspelling of Reuther's surname for his 1990 Black Sox essay, despite having been sued by Reuther for libel in the aftermath of the 1963 publication of *Eight Men Out*.²⁰

3. Shoeless Joe Jackson "would hear later that Buck Weaver, for one, wanted no part of [the World

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Series fix].”²¹

Comment: Evidence implicating Weaver as an active fix participant – Buck’s attendance at three separate fix planning meetings and his presence in the Sinton Hotel room where Sleepy Bill Burns delivered a \$10,000 payoff after Game Two – may not have been personally known to Jackson. But like Eddie Cicotte and Lefty Williams, Jackson specifically identified Weaver as a fix participant while testifying before the Cook County grand jury. Later, of course, Jackson famously disclaimed knowledge that ANY of his teammates had planned to throw the 1919 Series.

4. Prior to Game Eight, Sport Sullivan telephoned a “gunsel” in Chicago to threaten Lefty Williams into his abysmal Series-ending pitching performance.²²

Comment: Asinof had already admitted in his 1979 *Bleeding Between the Lines* that “Harry F.” was a fictional character created for plagiarism/copyright protection. The reader of *1919*, however, is left uninformed that the entire pre-Game Eight threat vignette is contrived.

5. Eddie Cicotte’s grand jury “testimony was a personal, anguished mea culpa. The Grand Jury sat breathlessly as he spun the painful story. ‘I don’t know why I did it ... I must have been crazy.’ All choked up, he had trouble finishing his words.”²³

Comment: Asinof confabulated the sworn statement that Cicotte gave at Alfred Austrian’s law office on the morning of September 28, 1920, with his grand jury testimony later that day at the Cook County Courthouse. A contrite Cicotte was the one who confessed in the Austrian office. Thereafter, Cicotte collected his wits and proved a cool and evasive witness before the grand jury.²⁴

6. “On the following day [after Cicotte’s grand jury appearance], Jackson testified before the grand jury.”²⁵

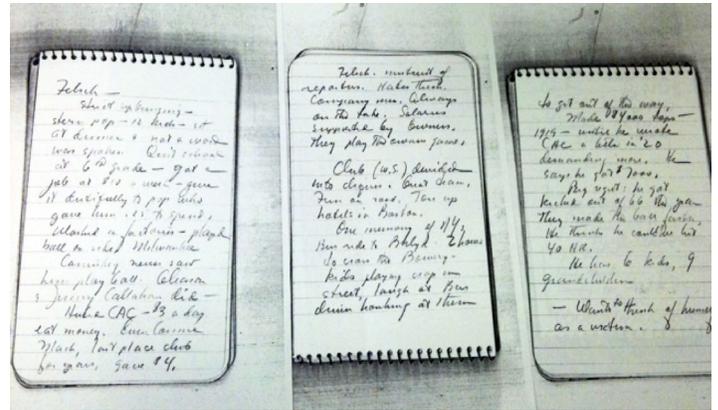
Comment: Cicotte and Jackson testified before the Cook County grand jury on the same date: September 28, 1920. The transcript of Jackson’s grand jury testimony was provided to the Chicago Historical Society and first made public in 1988, and Asinof used the transcript to support his narrative in 1919.

7. Gambler Carl Zork is identified as “a shirt-waist manufacturer from Des Moines.”²⁶

Comment: Zork was from St. Louis.

8. “Rothstein, [through defense attorney Bill] Fallon, had lifted the [Cicotte/Jackson/Williams grand jury transcripts] through complicity with the [Cook County] district attorney for the benefit of Comiskey.”

Comment: There is evidence that Rothstein, through defense counsel Fallon, financed the theft of transcripts from the Cook County State’s Attorney Office evidence vault, and that the actual thief was George Kenney, personal secretary to lame-duck State’s Attorney Maclay Hoynes.



In the early 1960s, Eliot Asinof spoke to only one living Black Sox player during his research for *Eight Men Out*, interviewing Happy Felsch at his home in Milwaukee. His book relied heavily on his interviews with Felsch and gambler Abe Attell, who was not known for trustworthy rendition of fix details. Asinof’s notebooks from his Felsch interview are now housed at the Chicago History Museum. (Photo: Jacob Pomrenke)

But with Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams already indicted²¹ and White Sox counsel Alfred Austrian providing crucial scholarly justification and a widely published public defense of the charges, the notion that the transcript theft was perpetrated for Comiskey’s benefit is far-fetched. More to the point, there is no historical evidence whatsoever for the assertion.

Asinof’s new Black Sox essay did not abandon the penchant for mind-reading suffused throughout his 1963 book. To the contrary, more inner thought of closed-mouth gamblers whom Asinof never met and who were dead long before he began his Black Sox research is revealed in *1919*.

For example, when Game One begins with Cicotte throwing a called strike, Rothstein “felt a tremor of uneasiness. He tried to place himself in Cicotte’s head, wondering at the defiance of the man. What was really going on? He could sense the possibility that this entire venture might prove a bad mistake.”²⁸

Or “in Chicago, Sport Sullivan was washed by a fresh wave of confidence. That a smart man like Arnold Rothstein would believe in him made him feel like a king.”²⁹ Asinof’s ability to penetrate the mind of deceased strangers extended to the ballplayers, as well. During the Black Sox criminal trial, Buck Weaver “felt like a man framed for a murder because he was once seen arm wrestling with the victim.”³⁰

But the most troubling feature of Asinof’s *1919* may be its exposure of the flexibility of his own Black Sox narrative. In 1963, Asinof wrote that Comiskey’s miserliness was reflected in maneuvers intended to nullify his “promise to give Cicotte a \$10,000-bonus in 1917 if he won 30 games.”³¹ Thereafter, Asinof took great umbrage at attempts to tamper with the historical integrity of his work or

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to change the facts for dramatic purposes.

Indeed, Asinof's determination to preserve his historically accurate *Eight Men Out* narrative intact so frustrated television mogul David Susskind that he sued Asinof for \$1.75 million, alleging Asinof obstructed production of the TV rights to *8MO* that Susskind had purchased. Or so Asinof maintained in his 1979 book *Bleeding Between the Lines*.

Flash forward a decade. Asinof co-authored a screenplay that relocates Comiskey's promise of a \$10,000 bonus promise to 1919, and then uses this fiction as a major plot device in the film version of *8MO*. Eddie Cicotte — in real life one of the instigators (with Chick Gandil) of the World Series fix — becomes an anti-hero who reluctantly joins the fix because Comiskey has deprived him of the starting chances needed to win the \$10,000 bonus ... the same bonus that his book had placed in 1917.

Even if director John Sayles made the call to rewrite the Cicotte bonus scenes in an exercise of artistic license, that does not get Asinof off the hook in his post-movie book. Sayles had no hand in the writing of that work. Notwithstanding what he wrote in 1963, Asinof informs readers in 1990 that "In 1919, when Cicotte asked again for more money, Comiskey referred to the pitcher's poor 1918 season and dangerously tender right arm. Cicotte would be given \$5,500, but was promised \$10,000 if he could win thirty games. As it turned out, that right arm was anything but sore and Cicotte won twenty-nine. But Comiskey had him miss his last two scheduled starts, ostensibly to save him for the World Series, but everyone knew it was to save the ten-grand bonus."³²

The exercise repeats itself when it comes to the stolen grand jury testimony. In his *8MO* book, Asinof acknowledges, grudgingly, that the prosecution was permitted to introduce recreated transcripts of the Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams testimony. Readers of *8MO* could appreciate that the trial jury which acquitted the Black Sox knew that three of them had confessed.

Viewers of the film screenplay that Asinof co-wrote 25 years later were left with exactly the opposite impression. Here, the late-film dramatic trial climax has shamefaced prosecutors informing the court that the confessions are lost. Thus, the jury never hears them, precipitating the not-guilty verdict.

Again, the historical hogwash of the *8MO* film provides small grounds for protest. The film was not a documentary; it was meant to be entertainment. But Asinof's intentions two years later were far different. *1919: America's Loss of Innocence* was intended to be taken as bona fide history, with the book's Black Sox segment furnishing the finishing touches for Asinof's indictment of post-World War I America. In large measure, however, the charge rests on

fabricated evidence.

A Closing Word

Viewed in the most unforgiving light, Eliot Asinof appears to have been a hypocrite. When TV producer David Susskind wanted to alter *Eight Men Out's* narrative for dramatic purposes, Asinof professed anger that the historical accuracy of his work would be compromised and did his best to thwart the Susskind project.

Years later, when he and John Sayles needed to change or invent matters to make their *8MO* film more attractive to a modern audience, preserving the historical integrity of the Black Sox saga was given short shrift. The same fiction-for-fact switch recurs in *1919: America's Loss of Innocence*, Asinof's book.

A more charitable take on the Asinof inconstancy might be premised upon suspicion that the author's amenity to manipulation of his Black Sox narrative stemmed from disappointment. An armchair psychiatrist might posit the theory that as Asinof approached age 70, he was distressed that his brand of left-wing politics had become antique. The New Left of the late 20th century was focused on issues of race, civil rights, abortion, AIDS, and other social problems, not worker solidarity, unionization, and the progressive labor movement that motivated Asinof's generation of activists.

Considered thusly, the film version of *Eight Men Out* and, more acutely, *1919: America's Loss of Innocence* may have served as an Asinof reminder of the oppression that the American underclasses of an earlier time had endured, and as illuminator of the fraught post-World War I political environment that spawned the likes of Asinof and his comrades.

Whatever the underlying motivation of its author, *Eight Men Out* remains an engaging read. But it is not reliable Black Sox history. It is, rather, historical fiction of the based-on-a-true-story genre. If only in a modest way, examination of the Black Sox section of *1919: America's Loss of Innocence* reinforces one overarching point: Readers accept uncritically what Eliot Asinof wrote about the Black Sox Scandal at their peril.

Notes

1. Eliot Asinof, *1919: America's Loss of Innocence* (New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1990), 346.
2. In 56 games total, Asinof batted a respectable .296, but with little extra-base power and no home runs in 216 at-bats against Class C and D pitching, per Baseball-Reference.
3. In addition to his 10 seasons in the minors, Rutner got into 12 games with the 1947 Philadelphia A's and batted .250. Like Asinof, Rutner was a New Yorker born in 1919 and he and Asinof were acquainted.
4. Almost 30 years after his death, Farrell's Black Sox

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► INNOCENCE

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novel was completed by others and published as *Dreaming Baseball*, Ron Briley, Margaret Davidson, and James Barbour, eds. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007). The foreword is by Eliot Asinof.

5. Conducted at the offices of Talent Associates, Inc., in Manhattan on September 29, 1960, Attell's interview is memorialized in a transcript contained among the Eliot Asinof papers at the Chicago History Museum. Talent Associates, Inc., was the production company of future Asinof nemesis David Suskind.

6. See Abe Attell, "The World Series Fix," *Cavalier*, October 1961, 8-13, 89-96. Whether the Attell article was ghostwritten by Asinof is uncertain, but it seems likely. See Asinof, *Bleeding Between the Lines*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 103.

7. According to Asinof, only 9,600 copies of 8MO were sold before it went out of print, per *Bleeding*, 166. Asinof placed his royalties at \$4,725.23. How much Asinof received from sales of the paperback edition issued in 1988 to accompany release of the film version of *Eight Men Out* is unknown to the writer.

8. William Farina, *Eliot Asinof and the Truth of the Game: A Critical Study of the Baseball Writings* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2012).

9. Unattributed Kirkus Review of *Bleeding*, published July 1, 1979.

10. Ibid.

11. *Bleeding*, 89-91, 113-117 (Felsch); 103-109 (Attell).

12. *Bleeding*, 42-43. Years later Asinof repeated this admission to Black Sox researchers Gene Carney and David Fletcher. See Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2006), 204-205; David Fletcher, "Remembrance of Gene Carney, B-Trail Master," *The Inside Game*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (June 2019), 11. The identity of a second fictional character inserted into 8MO was not revealed by Asinof and has since become a topic of discussion among Black Sox aficionados.

13. The writer's disdain of this handsomely costumed historical fraud has been expressed previously. See e.g., Bill Lamb, "Based on a True Story: Eliot Asinof, John Sayles, and the Fictionalization of the Back Sox Scandal," *The Inside Game*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (June 2019), 35-44. A more detailed accounting of the misinformation presented by the Sayles-Asinof screenplay is appended to the online Eight Myths Out project at SABR.org/eight-myths-out.

14. Per Box Office Mojo, the film grossed \$5.8 million in ticket sales.

15. Judge Hugo M. Friend presided over the Black Sox criminal trial of 1921 and reminisced about the proceedings decades later when Asinof interviewed him while researching 8MO. The criminal trial record had long since vanished,

but Friend informed Asinof that much of it was embedded in the Jackson civil trial transcript, still available for inspection at the Cannon law office (Jackson's attorney) in Milwaukee. In 2003, Asinof told Gene Carney and David Fletcher that he had been "too busy" to make a Milwaukee trip then.

16. Asinof's literary embrace of the film's missing confessions fiction appears on page 336 of *1919: America's Loss of Innocence*.

17. The specifics of 73 different misstatements of fact in the *Eight Men Out* book are enumerated in the appendix to the [Eight Myths Out](#) project.

18. Asinof, *1919: America's Loss of Innocence*, 295.

19. Asinof, *1919*, 297.

20. Curiously, Dutch Ruether's surname was spelled correctly by Asinof in *Bleeding*, 160-161. The 8MO misspellings of the surnames of Judge Charles A. McDonald and sportswriter John B. Sheridan were also repeated in 1919.

21. Asinof, *1919*, 306.

22. Asinof, *1919*, 315.

23. Asinof, *1919*, 319.

24. For more on the two very different Cicotte statements of September 28, 1920, see Bill Lamb, "[Eddie Cicotte: Reluctant Go-Along or Fix Ringleader?](#)" *SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee Newsletter*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (December 2020), 3-9.

25. Asinof, *1919*, 321.

26. Asinof, *1919*, 333.

27. Although the Black Sox indictments were not formally returned in court until October 29, the grand jury voted to indict Cicotte, Jackson, Williams, and the other Sox players whom Cicotte had incriminated on September 28. Those charges were promptly announced by ASA Hartley Replogle on that same date and publicly reported in the local press hours later. See e.g., *Chicago Daily News* and *Chicago Evening Post*, September 28, 1920. Days later, Comiskey/White Sox lawyer Austrian provided the press with erudite legal justification for the charges after vacationing Cook County SA Hoyne publicly questioned their validity. See e.g., "No Loophole for Indicted," *New York Herald*, October 1, 1920: 2; "Baseball Jury Will Continue Probe," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, September 30, 1920.

28. Asinof, *1919*, 299.

29. Asinof, *1919*, 311.

30. Asinof, *1919*, 338.

31. Eliot Asinof, *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1963), 21.

32. Asinof, *1919*, 297. The bogus claim that Cicotte was deprived of the chance to register his 30th win late in the 1919 season is Myth No. 2 in SABR's [Eight Myths Out](#). With 29 wins already, Cicotte was given the chance for number 30 on September 24, but pitched poorly against the St. Louis Browns and ended up with a no-decision in a 5-4 White Sox victory, won on a walk-off single by Shoeless Joe Jackson.

Jackson Museum builds on literacy campaign

The Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library opened in 2008 in Greenville, South Carolina, and has been dispelling myths and educating the public about Joe's life and career ever since.

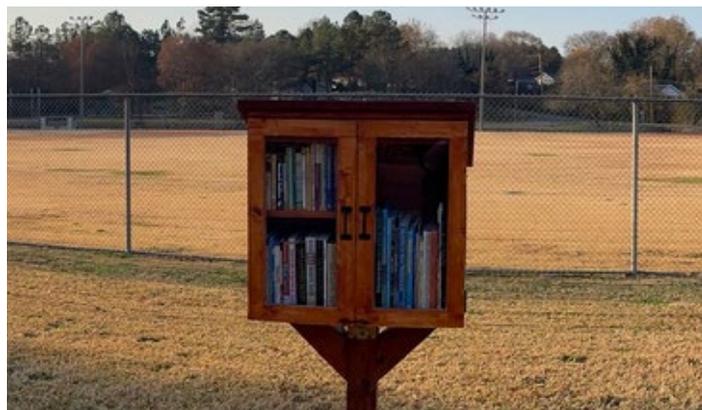
Jackson was born in Pickens County, South Carolina, the son of a sharecropper. By the age of 6, Joe was working in a cotton mill to help support his family. Like many other children from the mill villages, he never had the opportunity to attend school.



Since Joe never learned how to formally read or write, one of the museum's initiatives is to promote literacy. With the help of Greenville County's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, as well as Soteria At Work, Barnes & Noble Haywood, and supporters of Joe's both locally and nationally, we will be placing free book boxes all over Greenville in the coming years. The boxes were designed by Mitchell R. Ransdell and Thomas (Ben) Rishforth.

The Jackson Museum will initially stock the boxes, with the understood agreement that if you take a book from the box, you have to leave one in its place so the next visitor has the same full box to choose from as you did.

If you would like to sponsor a box by making a dona-



The Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library placed its first community book box in November at the Shoeless Joe Jackson Memorial Park in Greenville, South Carolina. Free books are available for local residents to take or return at any time. The museum has launched a campaign to promote literacy in Jackson's name, including a new baseball card set with original illustrations from artists around the world. (Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum)

tion, please send an email to info@shoelessjoejackson.org with "Literacy" in the subject line. Or visit shoelessjoejackson.org/literacy to learn more.

Proceeds from the sale of our first Joe Jackson Card Art set will also go toward furthering our efforts to promote literacy in Joe's name. The card set includes 20 cards featuring the artwork of artists from all over the world. Each set comes in a hand-numbered box, limited to 356 to commemorate Joe's lifetime batting average. You can order a set online at shoelessjoejackson.org.

— Dan Wallach



Cartoon on baseball fans participating in gambling from the Chicago Tribune, October 1, 1920

A family connection to Arnold Rothstein and a scandal

By David Lippman
kiwiwriter47@gmail.com

One of the benefits while I was working as Associate Editor of the New York Mets' magazine *Inside Pitch* in the mid-1980s was chatting with pitcher Ed Lynch after ball-games. Unlike many athletes, he had something between his ears, being a Brooklyn native with a college degree. After he retired, he earned a law degree at the University of Miami and became the Chicago Cubs' general manager.

What made talking with Lynch enjoyable was that he had something else that his teammates lacked: a fascination with baseball's past. I would give him photocopied articles and cartoons from various sources for him to read on long road trips. His favorite was a cartoon that showed a manager using a plunger and dynamite to remove a pitcher, and the broadcaster saying, "And that'll be all for Jenkins." Pitching for the Mets when they were bad, he truly understood that feeling.

Naturally, we talked about many subjects. He pointed out that Christy Mathewson's fadeaway was a right-handed screwball, for example. We also talked about the 1919 Black Sox Scandal. Lynch expressed amazement over the entire story.

"You know," I said to him, "My great-uncle Izzy was involved in that scandal."

"How did that happen?" he asked with wide eyes.

"Well, it started when he worked in the pool hall that John McGraw co-owned with Arnold Rothstein," I answered. "See, Izzy emptied spittoons ..."

Lynch cut me off. "Just think about a baseball manager co-owning a pool hall with the biggest gambler in America today," he said. "Wouldn't happen. Today, everybody in baseball gets paid enough not to get into stuff like that."

He shook his head in disgust. "The Old Roman," Lynch said. "Paid his players in I.O.U.s."

Well, as I learned later, [that was not accurate](#), but he was correct that ballplayers of the 1980s — even during the collusion era — did not have to own pool halls or sell shoes in Newark like Yogi Berra and Phil Rizzuto in the 1950s.

Despite being the most famous and one of the most successful managers in baseball for decades, John McGraw had to supplement his income, and did so by gambling — legally at horse tracks — and co-owning a pool hall while he was managing the New York Giants.

And that was where Uncle Izzy came in. He was the first of our Lippman family to be born in America. Great-grandpa Wolf Lippman was an alcoholic, wife-beating Jewish tailor from Poland who raised eight kids. Sam, who came to be called "Izzy," was first and Joe — my grandfather — came second. They lived first in New York's Lower East Side, and then moved up to what is now Spanish Harlem.

Izzy was not interested in school; he was what my



In the 1910s and '20s, gambling kingpin Arnold Rothstein, above, employed the services of Sam "Izzy" Lippman — the great-uncle of author David Lippman — as a bagman and enforcer. That precarious job lasted until Izzy was allegedly caught embezzling money and was never heard from again. (Photo: Public domain)

English relatives call a *wide boy*, which comes from a *wide-awake boy*, a young man who is always looking out for an opportunity to make a dishonest buck and does so at every opportunity.

Izzy joined and led gangs, got into the usual fights between ethnic groups, and graduated to crime. Joe was more studious. He enjoyed watching one of his noisy classmates annoy the heck out of their second-grade teacher, Ms. Flatto, in P.S. 86. The classmate dropped out of school at the age of eight, a victim of bullying — but Arthur "Harpo" Marx and his brothers later got the last laugh.

We do not know the details, but at some point Izzy got a job emptying spittoons at the pool hall in Herald Square co-owned by McGraw and Rothstein. Like Henry Hill of *Goodfellas* fame, Izzy learned how to hustle a buck here and there, rising to become a courier for Rothstein, carrying betting slips.

In 1908, Izzy introduced Joe to the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds, and they watched Christy Mathewson fire a 3-0 shutout against the Cincinnati Reds. Joe was hooked on the Giants and when the New York Yankees moved into the Polo Grounds in 1913, he was hooked on them, too. Both teams, for life. Thanks to Izzy, Joe got good seats and better access to Giants and Yankees games. For Izzy's life. Not his. Izzy's.

The two brothers went in opposite directions during World War I. Joe went overseas, lugging a 1903 Springfield

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rifle into the Argonne Forest. When Joe returned, he earned his bachelor's degree in pharmacy from Fordham University, married Rose Denker, ran a drugstore in Inwood, and raised my father Paul.

Izzy avoided the draft and moved up from being a courier for Rothstein to being a bagman and enforcer. "The Big Bankroll" was expanding his operations from gambling, narcotics, loansharking, and prostitution. After the war ended, he battled other big-time mobsters to take over New York's lucrative illegal liquor industry. Returning soldiers like Joe lost their right to down a beer at a neighborhood saloon when Prohibition was enacted after they came home.

Izzy dealt mostly with Rothstein gamblers and loan-shark debtors who had either won small or lost big. He brought the winners their cash and strong-armed the losers to pay up on the credit lines that Rothstein had offered them. If the losing suckers did not at least pay the *vigorish* — the bookie's cut — Izzy would break their legs.

In between, Izzy ran his own crew of crooks. They would learn about furniture warehouses in the Bronx that had just received deliveries from factories ... usually from the night watchman. Izzy and his crew would drive to the warehouse, slip the night watchman a *finsky* or a *tensky* for the tip, and take out what they wanted. If the guard was a "Square John" or just needed to look like he had put up a fight, they would beat the heck out of him first, and then bribe him for the contents.

Izzy sold the hot furniture to reliable *fences* and then pocketed the proceeds. Anything the fences did not want, he would take to Joe and Rose's large family, who were willing to accept the furniture, even if it was stolen.

"A shame for the neighbors was Izzy!" my great-aunts whined at me in the 1980s, but they did not complain about getting a new sofa or a dining room table in the 1920s.

Arnold Rothstein's main business was still gambling and loansharking, not booze. However, the 1919 World Series was going to be a hot one, and the Chicago White Sox and Cincinnati Reds were powerful teams. When Rothstein decided to put his money and resources behind rigging the World Series, he turned to Izzy as a reliable fellow to ensure that he made money. This was the story my father told me.

Izzy pounded New York pavements, pounded on apartment doors to present winnings to successful bettors, and pounded losers until they paid up. He did so with considerable efficiency, as Rothstein did well out of scamming America's baseball fans, wrecking eight White Sox players' careers in the process.

After the World Series ended, Rothstein went back to horses, booze, loansharking, narcotics, prostitution, and other noble activities. Izzy went back to breaking legs for Rothstein, robbing furniture warehouses ... and doing other dirty deeds, the details of which nobody in our family has



New York Giants manager John McGraw opened a billiards hall in 1909 in the Marbridge Building at W. 34th Street and 6th Avenue. The author's great-uncle, Sam "Izzy" Lippman, worked there and developed a relationship with gambling kingpin Arnold Rothstein, one of McGraw's business partners. (Photo: New-York Historical Society)

ever learned or likely ever will. Here is what we've heard:

At some point in the 1920s, Izzy began skimming the take to Rothstein. "The Big Bankroll" noticed this, and presumably put his own reliable forensic accountants on the trail — including his wife, Carolyn. After she broke the bad news, Rothstein called on some more reliable fellows to wreck Izzy's "career," as well.

Rothstein gave the order — and Izzy forever became a cornerstone in New York's infrastructure. He is reputedly holding up the Hellgate Bridge, which connects the Amtrak Northeast Corridor's route from Queens to the Bronx.

Why Izzy decided to betray the powerful Rothstein is unknown. He may have become addicted to the new drugs of the period: heroin or cocaine. He may have had his own gambling debts. He may have had one or more girlfriends he was trying to impress. The girlfriends' husbands may have been blackmailing him. He may have just simply become greedy.

The most immediate impact from Izzy's disappearance was that our family lost its free furniture. "A shame for the neighbors is this!" said my great-aunts at the time, according to my father, because they could no longer replace old furniture without paying for it.

Most of the Lippmans moved out to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to make money in the oil boom and buy land and stores that for some reason had become available and cheap. When they arrived, they found out that land was available and cheap because of a racist massacre that took place back in 1921, when the prosperous Greenwood neighborhood, known as "Black Wall Street," was destroyed by White mobs. The Lippmans soon found out the locals did not like their Jewish neighbors much better than it liked their Black neighbors.

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Rothstein himself took a bullet in a hotel room during a card game on November 5, 1928. In typical fashion, he refused to name his assailant, who became his assassin 12 hours later when Rothstein expired on the operating table. Rothstein died a wealthy man, but did not leave anything to us. Neither did Izzy — we never saw a nickel from him. Just hot furniture.

However, Joe Lippman did okay. He ran the drugstore, survived the Great Depression, retired, and moved Rose down to a retirement community in Florida, where he died a few months later in his sleep.

In the late 1970s, I would go down to the community to visit assorted relatives with Dad, and the aging great-aunts and great-uncles put the pieces they had together for me. I had read Eliot Asinof's colorful but inaccurate *Eight Men Out*, but my great-aunts could not provide much detail. They liked ballet and ice shows. I could not stand them. I loved baseball. They barely understood it.

In 1988, my friends and I went to see the movie *Eight Men Out*. It was a tremendous piece of work — well-written, well-acted, well-directed, and well-shot. One of my pals, a lawyer, heartily agreed with a line from White Sox corporate counsel Alfred Austrian, who said in the film, "Rule Number One in a conspiracy case: The less you know, the better."

My chief reaction to the film was simple: "Boy, I wish Grandpa Joe was alive. He would love to see this just for the period color." I was also amused to see Shoeless Joe Jackson play outlaw baseball for my hometown of Hoboken. The truth was that in 1922 after he was banned, Jackson was playing for Bogota, a nearby town, but nothing says New Jersey to an American audience than Hoboken. Otherwise, some moviegoers might have assumed Jackson had been forced to flee to South America!

A few days after seeing the movie, I went to visit friends in Hoboken, a group that included my future wife. In the dining room, surrounded by friendly but very large Doberman Pinschers and cats who sat on countertops —

everybody got along fine — all hands hunched over a map helping a woman figure out how to navigate from Point A to Point B. The woman headed out to make dinner for her husband in the brownstone they lived in down the block.

When she left, I told everyone: "I know you don't care about baseball, but I have just seen the most terrific film, *Eight Men Out*."

They all burst out laughing. The woman who had just left was Maggie Renzi, the co-producer of the film, the wife of producer-director John Sayles, and the actress who had played Lefty Williams' wife in the picture. It was the story of much of my life ... missing by that much.

Nevertheless, in 2013, I did not miss. SABR's national convention was held in Philadelphia, and I attended that one, wearing my Yankees and Giants t-shirts.

One of the speakers was Patricia Anderson, one of Buck Weaver's two nieces. The "Ginger Kid" raised Patricia and her sister Bette after their father died in 1931. Patricia and her daughter Sandy Schley and granddaughter Kristi Berg described in moving terms how Buck had cared for the sisters as if they were his own, despite his own financial difficulties during the Great Depression and their struggles to clear their uncle's name. After the panel ended, it was time for Q&A.

When it was my turn, I [stood at the microphone](#) in the crowd and told the Weaver family about my great-uncle Izzy's story. He was a direct cause and a participant in Buck's lifelong misery. After I finished, my eyes brimming with tears, I apologized to the Weaver family for the pain my family had needlessly and deliberately inflicted upon them.

They were stunned, and accepted my apology quite readily. The audience was also stunned, and they applauded. I think it was the first time the relative of a "fixer" had apologized to a relative of a Black Sox player.

I did not feel any need to forgive Izzy, since he was a crook. I did not feel any personal guilt myself, as the fix took place 43 years before I was born. But I was glad that a representative of my family could provide Weaver's family with something they deserved then and now: an apology from the family of a fixer for wrecking Buck's life.

I was just sorry that the apology came so late.

This amusing note appeared in the June 1987 edition of SABR's Ballparks Committee newsletter:



RED DOG FILMS, a movie making company based in New York, called recently and was looking for help in finding the proper ballpark for a film on the 1919 "Black Sox" scandal (based on the book, *Eight Men Out* by Eliot Asinof). They wanted a stadium that:

1. had a double deck
2. had at least 25,000 - 30,000 seats
3. looked something like the 1920s
4. had a sufficient urban/Chicago outside vista
5. was available for filming inside

Of course, the obvious answer would be to use Comiskey, but the company had not received permission, and the park would not be available until October. They had considered Fenway, Wrigley, and Tiger Stadium too, but the same problem. As for minor league parks, they had looked at Point Stadium (Johnstown, PA), War Memorial Stadium (Buffalo, NY—site of "The Natural" filming), and other locations. No one place satisfied all their criteria, as I told them what you will tell me: There aren't many 1920s style parks with double decks around. I recommended several committee members for reference, so if anyone was contacted, let me know.

— Bob Bluthardt



AROUND THE WEB

Joe Jackson signed photo sells for \$1.47 million

An autographed 1911 spring training portrait of Shoeless Joe Jackson during his rookie season with the Cleveland Naps sold for \$1.47 million in October, the highest amount ever paid for a signed sports photograph.

Hunt Auctions president Dave Hunt claims the photo is the only known image ever signed by Jackson, who famously could not read or write much but did learn how to trace his name as an adult. The photograph was part of a scrapbook made by Frank W. Smith, a photographer for the *Cleveland Leader*, who traveled to Alexandria, Louisiana, to cover the Cleveland Naps during spring training of 1911.

Later that summer, Smith traveled to nearby Pittsburgh to take photos of the New York Giants, which he developed and then asked each player to sign. Jim Chapman of the Chapman Deadball Collection explains how [Smith's autographed Giants photos were collected](#) and then printed in the *Cleveland Leader* during the World Series that fall.

The Jackson photo was first discovered by an Ohio couple and [originally sold](#) by Heritage Auctions in 2015 for \$179,250.

◆ **Tamia Boyd** of the *Greenville News* reports that an authentic [1949 Joe Jackson driver's license](#) sold for more than \$125,000 at auction in August.

◆ **Jon Ogg** of Collectors' Dashboard asks whether Shoeless Joe Jackson's baseball cards are [becoming too expensive](#) and difficult to obtain.

◆ Following the Field of Dreams Game in August, Hall of Famer Frank Thomas [purchased a controlling stake](#) in the Field of Dreams Movie Site in Dyersville, Iowa. SABR Director and former Los Angeles Dodgers GM Dan Evans will serve as the company's chief operating officer.

◆ **Willie Steele**, who recently published a biography of author W.P. Kinsella, writes about his experience [traveling to Iowa](#) for the Field of Dreams Game this summer for Alberta Dugout Stories.

◆ **Dan Wallach**, executive director of the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and lifelong White Sox fan, also writes [about his experience](#) watching "the magic happen" in Iowa for the *Greenville Journal*.

◆ **Sharon Hamilton** writes about W.P. Kinsella's novel and [the Canadian author's legacy](#) for the Literary Review of Canada.

◆ **Michael Walsh** of Nerdist reports that acclaimed showrunner Michael Schur (aka "Ken Tremendous") is planning to [adapt *Field of Dreams*](#) into an upcoming TV series for NBC's Peacock streaming service.

◆ **Don Zminda**, author of *Double Plays and Double Crosses*, was [interviewed by Justin McGuire](#) for the Baseball By The Book podcast.

◆ **Thomas E. Merrick's** new story for the SABR Games Project is on a [big day by Cleveland's Joe Jackson](#) in 1913.

◆ **Jim Margalus** of Sox Machine explores [how legalized gambling](#) will impact baseball, 100 years after the Black Sox trial.

◆ At Forbes.com, **Maury Brown** explains how legalized gambling [raises the stakes for integrity issues](#) in light of MLB's reported manipulation of the baseballs used during 2021 games.

◆ **Robert Channick** of the *Chicago Tribune* reports on the Cubs gaining early approval to [build a DraftKings-branded sportsbook](#) at Wrigley Field.

◆ **Tim Logan** of the *Boston Globe* reports on the future of [the shuttered Hotel Buckminster](#), where Chick Gandil and Sport Sullivan met to plan the 1919 World Series fix, which could soon house a biotech company.

◆ At BBC Sport, **Rob Haywood** explores Hugh Fullerton's role [as an investigative reporter](#) in the Black Sox Scandal and as a data pioneer in baseball.

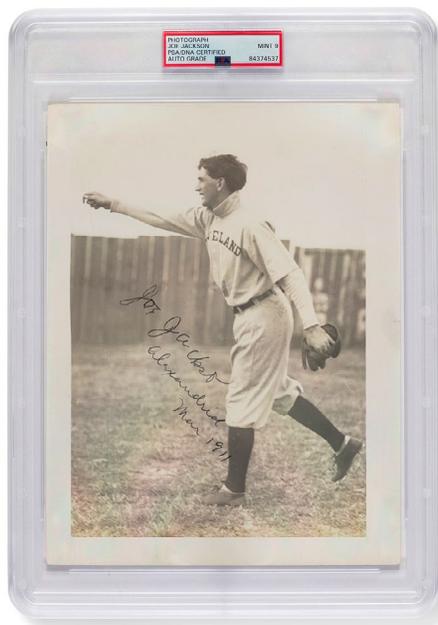
◆ **Gary Cieradkowski's** latest original baseball card highlights Roy Counts, a promising shortstop who escaped from an Oklahoma prison and then ended up playing [against the outlaw Black Sox](#) in Arizona.

◆ **Abby Sharpe** of Cronkite News takes [a trip back in time](#) to Warren Ballpark in Bisbee, Arizona, where Buck Weaver, Chick Gandil, and Lefty Williams once played.

◆ At RIP Baseball, **Sam Gazdziak** visits [Shoeless Joe Jackson's gravesite](#) in South Carolina.

◆ **Fred Krehbiel**, Bill Veeck's nephew who in the early 1960s discovered former White Sox GM Harry Grabiner's diary in the bowels of Comiskey Park, has [died at the age of 80](#), according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

◆ A suburban Chicago community group [held a mock trial](#) for Buck Weaver and Shoeless Joe Jackson in June to benefit the Alive Center in Naperville.



This signed photo of Shoeless Joe Jackson sold for \$1.47 million in an auction put on by Christie's and Hunt Auctions in October. (Hunt Auctions)

Field of Dreams Game delivers Hollywood ending



On August 12, 2021, Aaron Judge (top left) and the New York Yankees emerged from the cornfield at the Field of Dreams Movie Site in Dyersville, Iowa, to play a regular-season game against the Chicago White Sox, but Tim Anderson (top right) stole the show with a dramatic walk-off home run to win the game, 9-8. (Photos: [YouTube/MLB](#))



Major League Baseball constructed a temporary 8,000-seat stadium (above left) in Iowa for the game, complete with a corn maze, while actor Kevin Costner (above right) introduced the Yankees and White Sox players and threw out the ceremonial first pitch in a theatrical pregame ceremony. While very little was said during the Fox TV broadcast about Shoeless Joe Jackson or the Black Sox Scandal, Chicago's current left fielder, Eloy Jiménez (below left), flashed his skills with a 3-run home run in the third inning. MLB announced afterward that another game would be played in Iowa between the Cubs and Reds in 2022.

