

KELTNER'S HOT CORNER



Ken Keltner Badger State Chapter

February 2023 In This Issue:

- Upcoming Events
- [Keltner Book Club](#)
- [January Meeting Recaps – McCalvy and SABR Day](#)
- [Get to Know](#)
- [Sal Bando Passing](#)
- [Schabowski Super Stumpers](#)
- [World Series Club](#)
- [History is Worth Preserving – AL Founding Plaque](#)
- [1951 Brewer Souvenir Visor](#)
- [Biesbol 101: Lew Burdette](#)
- [Volunteers Needed – Rucker Archives](#)
- [Neighboring Chapters' Newsletters](#)



Virtual Chapter Meeting
Special Guest – Josh Maurer
Monday, February 13 @ 7PM (CT)
Register [here](#).



Keltner Virtual Book Club
With Author - Noel Hynd
The Sputnik Season: 1957
Saturday, February 18 @ 3PM CT
Register [here](#).



SABR Analytics Conference
Phoenix, March 10-12
More Info [Here](#).



SABR 51
Chicago, July 5 - 9, 2023
Palmer House

Direct questions or comments to:
Dennis D. Degenhardt
bovine9@icloud.com
Cell: 262-339-9968

HAPPY NEW YEAR

New Members
Ron Richards – Burlington
Dom Cotroneo - Milwaukee

UPCOMING EVENTS

Virtual Chapter Meeting
Monday, February 13 @ 7PM (CT)
Special Guest – Josh Maurer - Brewer's Radio Broadcaster



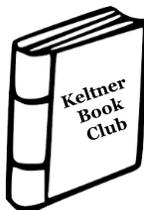
We were honored to have Josh Maurer as one of our guests when we held our first in-person meeting in over two years last April. He did a great job telling us about his path to the Brewers. Let's see how that first year as a major league broadcaster went. What were the surprises and disappointments? Did his fellow broadcasters have a hazing ritual? Plus, with spring training starting, pitchers and catchers due on February 14, what should we be watching for the new season with Opening Day on March 30.

Register [here](#) for the meeting with Josh.



Keltner Book Club News By Mary Shea

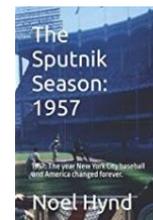
Keltner Book Club Virtual Meeting
Special Guest - Noel Hynd, author of *The Sputnik Season: 1957*
Saturday, February 18th, 3:00 PM CT



Please join us for a discussion with the author, as we reminisce about a remarkable year, especially for Milwaukee Braves fans. This book covers the season throughout baseball, the Braves, Yankees, and beyond. The accounts of the last NY Giants game at the Polo Grounds and Brooklyn Dodgers game at Ebbets Field are especially poignant. It even includes a small contribution by our own Bob Buege. You can find more info about the book [here](#).

All attendees will be eligible to win a copy of the book. As always, you do not have to read the book to participate in the meeting. **Register [here](#)**. Please submit any questions, comments, or book suggestions to [Mary Shea](#).

Happy reading! – Mary



January Meeting Recaps

Virtual Chapter Meeting with Adam McCalvy



Adam McCalvy, the Brewers MLB.com beat writer for over 20 years, joined 20 attendees to talk about all kinds of stuff. We started out learning that if McCalvy had a time machine opportunity he would go back to 1947 to watch [Jackie Robinson](#). And that a term he uses often, “sweet sassy molassy” comes from a Ray Romano [Saturday Night Live](#) skit of a bad sports anchor on Sports Center.

The attendees asked great questions and Adam appreciated that staying with us for over 90 minutes. After the disappointing 2022 season, we had a robust discussion on the Hader deal and how it affected the team. Asked who he saw as the next Brewer gold glove, he named Garrett Mitchell and maybe Willie Adames. He noted that Milwaukee was the last team to sign a free agent, we chatted about prospects and dealing with manager Craig Counsel, plus more. It is well worth the time to watch or rewatch the recording of the meeting, click on Adam’s picture or [here](#).

The winner of the drawing for McCalvy’s book, [The Milwaukee Brewers at 50](#) was John Stodola of Oak Creek.

Adam first visited the Keltner chapter virtually on April 23, 2020, just as the pandemic was taking hold and baseball was shut down. In watching that video, it was a trip (bad trip?) down memory lane trying to understand what baseball was going to do and where COVID was going. It was also a good conversation on baseball, and he told good stories. If you would like to see another fun and interesting video with Adam, see the [May 2020 Keltner Hot Corner](#).



Joint SABR Day with Chicago Chapter Brat Stop – Kenosha

About 30 members of the Emil Rothe and Ken Keltner chapters ventured out on a day with Winter Storm Warnings to get together for their annual joint chapter meeting, live for the first time in three years.

Chicago member, **Gary Livacari** led off SABR Day with a presentation on the Leslie Jones Collection at the Boston Public Library. Jones, a photographer for the *Boston Herald-Traveler* from 1917 to 1956, captured all sorts of newsworthy events that included nearly 3,000 baseball photos. Livacari was one of the SABR project editors identifying the players in those pictures. The quality of the many of the pics was outstanding, especially for the era. Jones had an interesting eye taking pictures of players who “looked alike” with features like noses and shape of their ears. He asked the audience members for the names and told stories about the early stars of baseball.



Lee Kluck joined the meeting virtually with a new outstanding presentation, *Last Ride of the Dalton Gang: Winning Baseball and the Changing Clubhouse of the 1989-1991 Milwaukee Brewers*. During this period, GM [Harry Dalton](#) was unable financially to spend money on free agents, relying on player development with 47% of their squad from the Brewers minors. Often fans tend to blame Gary Sheffield for the team’s woes during this time. It was more than Sheffield. He was difficult at times, claiming he purposely committed errors to get traded, claimed he caused Dalton’s heart attack (that he never had) and accused Dalton of having his daughters trail him, untrue. Harry wanted him to succeed in Milwaukee because he saw his talent. Some of the veterans on the team tried to help but they were more of the quiet type who did it on the field. Then he felt threatened as the starting short stop by the promotion of Bill Spiers. Eventually the clubhouse started changing perceiving Gary as childish.



Gary Sheffield

But it was far more. The Brewers financials started to worsen as early as 1983 making them unable to take on salaries for seven years. They had too many injuries and many of the players they developed underperformed. Manager Tom Treblehorn preferred a more aggressive running game but was saddled with bulky hitters who were not adept at doing so. And then there were some of the deals Brewer fans will remember forever. Star pitcher Teddy Higuera was signed to a four year \$13 million contract. The medical staff warned that Higuera was a big risk for arm trouble and advised not exceeding one year. Dalton was ready to let him walk but owner

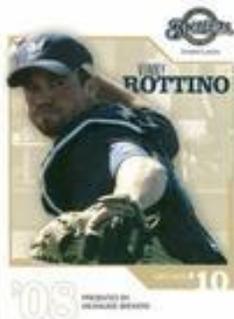
[Bud Selig](#) squelched that because he was a fan favorite. He never lived up to the deal. [Higuera pitched in 32 games with five wins over the term of the contract.] Then there was the three year contract with Franklin Stubbs, enough said.



Former third baseman, Sal Bando, who retired and joined the front office as the Special Assistant to the General Manager, worked behind the scenes to get Dalton fired claiming he would better understanding the modern player. He succeeded following the 1991 season taking over as the GM. Harry stayed on as a consultant for three years, but Selig never talked to him. Harry's fingerprints were all over the 1992 Brew Crew that finished 92-70, the last Milwaukee team to finish over .500 until 2007.

In addition to the presentation, Lee talked about his Harry Dalton book project. He told us it was done after five years of work, and it is now into the editing stage. The anticipated publishing date will be in 2024. [I can't wait to read it!]

Unfortunately, we were unable to record the presentation.



Vinny Rottino, the ninth Wisconsin born Milwaukee Brewer and 232nd major leaguer from the state, joined us to talk about his career and baseball, fielding questions from the audience. He has good memories of his major league career with three September call-ups by the Brewers, which included Vinny's biggest memory. On September 29, 2007, his pinch hit single drove in Ryan Braun in the 11th inning clinching the Brewers first winning season since 1992 (Tony Gwynn Jr's triple tied the game in the bottom of the ninth). He mentioned he could hit left handers well and the base hit was off Padre's lefty Joe Thatcher. When asked if he remembered his first (of three) homers, Rottino replied that he did. It was during his only full season (2012) in the majors, as a Met at Shea Stadium, slugged off Clayton Richards on May 28 - yes, a southpaw. Rottino then told us a story about his third

homer late in the season at U.S Cellular Field after being traded to Cleveland. Entering the game, he was hitting .091 and a friend listening to Chicago's talk radio heard a rant about how pitiful the White Sox pen was yielding a homer to some guy with a BINGO number for a batting average. Rottino was the starting catcher for the Italian National Team in the 2009 World Baseball Classic. When asked about the selection process, he laughed and related that they were looking at big league rosters for players with last names ending in a vowel. He enjoyed the experience meeting [Mike Piazza](#) who was coaching for Italy and played with Chase Utley.

Questions from the floor included who the best was he ever played against. With so many opponents, he deferred but Vinny said the best he ever saw was Prince Fielder because he loved the game and was a positive influence in the clubhouse. Also asked about some of the Brewer transactions, responding that he hated to see Hunter Renfroe and especially Brent Suter leave but was excited about acquiring William Contreras. He also talked about minor league outfielder Sal Frelick who he saw while scouting for the Rangers, "he's the real deal; old school, loves the game, and has all the tools."



With Bill Schroeder broadcasting fewer games this year, Rottino will fill in some of those games (with Tim Dillard the others) as well as continuing to do the pre and post games.

Scott Lindholm, who was scheduled to discuss the Best Negro League players was unable to make the meeting due to the weather.

The Exchange Table was a success again with members exchanging books, cards and even bobble heads.

Keltner Hot Corner Archives

You can now view or download past copies of the Keltner Hot Corner at: [Ken Keltner Badger State Newsletters](#)

Use of Links

Links in the *Keltner Hot Corner* are used to enhance the articles with the majority going to players SABR [BioProject](#) and [baseball-reference.com](#) as well as other related sites.

Who is Ken Keltner? See his SABR [Biography](#).

Get to Know...Scott Bush

Most SABR members know Scott Bush as SABR's CEO, joining the Society in 2018. When asked what that entails, his response was, "my duties and responsibilities are far-ranging, but can best be described as managing the day-to-day operations of our organization." Or, to simplify his job description, other duties as assigned. During his tenure, our membership has reached record levels, returning to over 7,000 members with 7,375 as of the end of 2022. When he became CEO, the membership had fallen to about 5,400 so he led a 36.6% growth; remarkable considering how COVID crippled many non-profit institutions.

Scott was born in Marshall, Minnesota on Monday, August 23, 1982.¹ He was the middle child of three (bookended by sisters) to Steve and Sonya Bush. Mom was a receptionist with the local healthcare clinic and dad, a farmer; both are now retired.

The farm where Bush grew up was outside Russell, MN and raised corn and soybeans on more than 2,000 acres. They also had about a 100 head of cows and ran cattle finishing operations with approximately 200 head at any one time.

Russell, with a population of 342, is north of I-90 about 168 miles from Minneapolis. It is also 196 miles to Rochester, and 78 to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He attended school in three different communities because many small rural school districts have been combining due to declining enrollments and struggling to maintain staff. Russell partnered with the school districts in Ruthton, 13 miles away, 221 residents, and the big town, Tyler, with a population of 1,069, 12 miles distance. So, his educational trek started in Russell for kindergarten to second, then grades three to five were in Ruthton, back in Russell for sixth through eighth, with high school in Tyler.

His earliest baseball memory is vaguely recalling the 1987 World Series when he was 5 years old. He subsequently learned that no one in Minnesota could believe the Twins won and he concurs, "They were right to feel that way – it's really fun to know that my earliest baseball memory is about what is likely the worst team to ever win a World Series." Growing up a Twins fan, Scott's favorite player was [Kirby Puckett](#). "I will never forget what he did during Game 6 of the 1991 World Series." If he had a time-machine opportunity, Bush would like to return to that game to enjoy it in person.

In the summer, Russell had a loosely organized youth baseball program, playing around 10-12 games per year. It was difficult fielding teams after the age of 12 with farm duties taking precedence. Scott was fortunate, able to participate until he was 15. Since fielding a baseball team is expensive for small rural school districts, SABR's CEO did not have high school baseball; instead, he played football and basketball. Or as he shared, "My athletic career ended ingloriously as I suffered an ACL tear three consecutive years in high school; twice with football, and once playing basketball." He added, "Of course, we're all failed athletes, some just failed a bit later than others."

After graduating high school, he went to college at the University of Minnesota, initially a mechanical engineering major. During his junior year he switched to majoring in sport management with a business management minor because, "I realized in school that the field of engineering didn't really scratch my social itch and I decided to address it then rather than later in life." He graduated in 2005 with both degrees.

Scott put the change in major to good effort as he says, "I have been fortunate to work in baseball most of my career." While in college, he "stumbled into an internship with the St. Paul Saints and found he loved working in minor league baseball. That put me on a path that kept me in minor league baseball for more than a decade." During that time, he was with four clubs, Fresno Grizzlies (AAA Pacific Coast League), Stockton Ports (AAA PCL), St. Paul Saints (Independent Northern League), and Charleston Riverdogs (Single A Carolina League). Prior to becoming SABR's CEO, Bush was the assistant general manager of the St. Paul Saints for five years, playing a key role in establishing CHS Field in St. Paul. At the same time, he was also the Executive Vice President of Business Development for the Goldklang Group, a consortium that owned the Saints, Riverdogs, Hudson Valley Renegades, and Pittsfield Suns.



¹ On this date, the Brewers, who lost 5-2 in Anaheim, were leading the AL East by two games over Kansas City. Scott's childhood team, the Twins were in the cellar of the AL West with the day off.

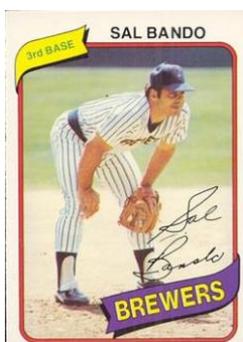
With a minor league background, Bush's niche baseball interest is researching the history of the Professional Baseball Agreement between MLB and the National Association / MiLB. He was SABR's expert when the majors took over ownership of the minors in 2020, eliminating 40 teams. He spoke at chapter meetings, including the Keltner Chapter on the changes and had some strong opinions. He also enjoys preparing and sharing information on [SABRcast with Rob Neyer](#), joining the show weekly. Rob and Scott discuss the winner of the weekend, what Neyer is reading and baseball in the news. They are approaching their 200th episode.

Scott and Lindsay have been married since 2012. Lindsay is an assistant professor in the primary care department at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine. They have an 8 year old pit-bull mix named Zizou. They moved back to Minnesota from Arizona in late October of 2021, just when the weather starts to become good in Phoenix and winter starts to appear in the north. Bush claims, "The snow and cold are manageable with semi-regular visits to warmer weather!"

With Scott returning to Minnesota, is he still a Twins fan? As he explains, "we parted ways in 2009 owing to the spendthrift habits of the Pohlada family. I'm now a Yankee fan after having the good fortune of attending Game 2 of the 2009 World Series at Yankee Stadium during my fan free agency."



Sal Bando Passed, Friday, January 20, 2023



Former Brewer Sal Bando died Friday January 20, 2023, in Oconomowoc after battling cancer for five years. He was 78.

After winning three World Championships with the Oakland A's Sal Bando, became the first big name free agent signed by the Brewers following the 1976 season. He played five seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers before moving to the front office. He became general manager in 1991, replacing Harry Dalton, holding the position for eight seasons. His signing played an important role with the Brewers first championship caliber team developing the youngsters named Yount and Molitor.

Revisit Bando's career in his [SABR Bio](#).



Schabowski's Super Stumpers

By Rick Schabowski
February Trivia

Rick continues on a roll with some interesting and challenging questions.

1. When Sal Bando finished second in AL MVP voting in 1971, who won the award?
2. Who are the only two HOFers drafted back-to-back in the first round?
3. Only two teams have retired No. 22. Which two, and for which players?
4. How many active players have totaled at least 30 home runs and 30 stolen bases in the same season?
5. Nolan Ryan's 20 seasons of 10 or more wins is tied with Greg Maddux for second in AL/NL history. Who is first?
6. Jackie Robinson was the first former Negro Leaguer elected to the Hall of Fame. Who was the second?



Do you have a baseball trivia question or two, heck even 12, to stump Our Stumper? If so, send your brilliance to [Rick](#) to see if you can trip him up and he'll include it in a future *Keltner Hot Corner* giving you credit - bragging rights - for your stumper(s).

Trivia Answers are [here](#).

Return
Pg 1

Contribute to the Keltner Hot Corner

Do you have an article or topic you would like to publish in the newsletter? If so, that's great. Please contact [Dennis](#).

World Series Club

The World Series Club returns for 2023 with the next meeting on Tuesday, February 7 at Alioto's. Our first speaker of the New Year is Racine native Ben May. Last season was Ben's first as a full-time major league umpire. Since 2014 he has shuffled between the minors and majors, at age 40 Ben finally earned a full-time position as an MLB umpire. Congratulations to Ben! Look for #97 on a major league diamond this season. He worked his first playoff games last year.

Annual Dues

Your annual dues for 2023 are \$60 payable at the next meeting you attend, or you can mail it to the address below. Make checks payable to World Series Club.

Dinner Cost

The 2023 dinner cost for members has increased to \$30.00 and guests are welcome to \$35.00. Alioto's increased the cost of dinner last summer, but we did not increase your cost until now.

Alioto's Restaurant - 3041 N. Mayfair Rd. Wauwatosa

Social Hour 5:30 - Dinner 6:30

Member Dues \$60 - Member Dinner \$30 - Guests Dinner \$35

Please make your reservations and I hope to see you next month.

Greg Ebbert - World Series Club

11351 N. Glenwood Dr. Mequon, WI 53097

gregebbert@msn.com

262-365-1579



'History is worth preserving': Proposed downtown hotel concerns baseball historian

By Ricardo Torres, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, January 6, 2023



A plaque on the founding of the American League is on the corner of North Old World Third Street and West Kilbourn Avenue. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

A proposed hotel development on the old Milwaukee Journal Sentinel parking lot has gotten the attention of baseball history fans.

The hotel would be built at the site where the American League was founded, an event memorialized by a plaque on a stone barrier on the southeast side of the property, according to members of the Society of American Baseball Research.

It's unclear what will happen to the plaque — or the historic importance of the site — if the development moves forward.

Milwaukee's Historic Preservation Commission is planning to hear the proposal by developer HKS Holdings Inc., to build an eight-story hotel on 308 W. Kilbourn Ave. The meeting is scheduled for Monday at 3 p.m. in Milwaukee's City Hall.

The Milwaukee County Historical Society, located across the street from the plaque, said it would be "happy to work with the developer to ensure this history continues to be told."

In 2001, the baseball research group's annual convention was coming to Milwaukee and Bob Buege, member of SABR, wanted to do something memorable. He heard from a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee that MLB's American League may have been formed in Milwaukee.

"I started looking and one thing led to another and there it is," Buege said. "In researching it, I went to newspaper articles, a lot of them from the Journal ... I basically stumbled onto it through many hours of research."

Buege said that in March 1900, at the Republican Hotel and Haus, a meeting was held between Milwaukee attorney [Henry Killilea](#), his brother Matt, [Charles Comiskey](#), [Connie Mack](#) and [Byron "Ban" Johnson](#) who

started the American League, which was then a minor league. It wasn't a major league until 1901.

“Chicago was the hub of everything in Midwest baseball,” Buege said. “And they did this, kind of in a clandestine way because they didn't want the (Chicago) newspapers to pick it up and the National League going to work to defend itself and so on. They wanted to spring this on the world.”

Also at that meeting, the Chicago White Sox, then White Stockings, was incorporated.

Buege even found the articles of incorporation.

“I got that from the librarian at UWM,” Buege said.

At the 2001 SABR convention, in a ceremony that included Comiskey's grandson, the plaque was unveiled officially marking the place where the American League was founded. The event took place on the league's 100th anniversary.

“It's one of the critical moments in the structure and history of baseball,” Buege said. “I've always been a baseball fan since I was 7 and attended my first (Milwaukee) Braves game. And I had never heard of the American League being formed in Milwaukee. So I figured if someone who's really close to the game, follows it closely, if I don't know about it, the average person doesn't know anything about it and I think they should.”

It's unclear if the developers of the hotel are planning to preserve the plaque or the baseball history of the location.

“I think history is worth preserving,” Buege said. “There are so many institutions and landmarks and places where something memorable happened and I think this is one of the major developments that occurred in Milwaukee.”

Buege has written several sports historical books including “[Borchert Field: Stories from Milwaukee's Legendary Ballpark](#),” which existed from 1888 to 1952.

During those years Milwaukee residents watched baseball legends of the era play.

“It's easier to answer – who didn't play there,” Buege said. “[Babe Ruth](#) played there three times ... October 28, 1928, was his first time.”

Did Jackie Robinson play there?

“He did, one game with the Kansas City Monarchs, 1945,” Buege said.

Buege enjoys diving into Milwaukee history and finding nuggets that people don't know and go unrecognized.

One in particular involved the famous Appleton-native Harry Houdini, who suspended himself upside down in a strait jacket above the intersection of 4th and State streets in 1916.

“That's great stuff but you don't read about it,” Buege said. “Things like that I think deserve to be commemorated.”

Follow-up

Bob Buege attended the Historic Preservation Commission's meeting and spoke to HKS Holdings three architects. They are aware of the significance of the old Republican Hotel as well as our plaque. The architects expressed interested in having the plaque on the future site and possibly something else inside the hotel. With the Historical Society volunteering to store the monument, the monument will be protected, and we can look forward to a rededication ceremony someday.



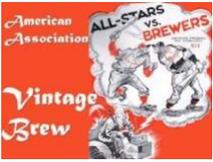
In 2001, Charles Comiskey of the Chicago White Sox unveils a marker on the fence of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* newspaper's parking lot that marks the site where the American League was born, Jack Orton

Know a Future SABR Member?

Have them visit [Become a SABR Member Today](#) for benefits, reasons to join and subscription amounts.

Return
Pg 1

1951 Brewer Souvenir Visor
by Paul Tenpenny



In March 2013, Borchert Field brought you the story of the [1951 Golden Anniversary visor](#). One of my favorite collectibles, as I am continuously collecting autographs of the American Association players who played at Borchert Field.

This 7 by 10 inch visor was fascinating to me as I could tell immediately that these were accurate signatures on this cardboard sun-visor.

To reprise who's who:

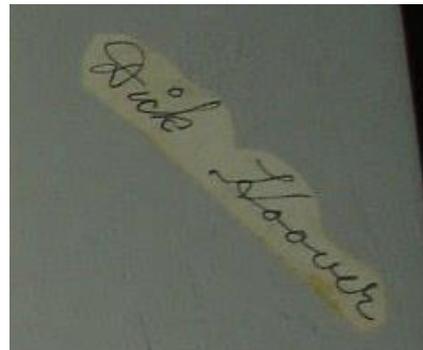
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Dick Hoover | <input type="checkbox"/> Bob Thorpe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Jaderlund | <input type="checkbox"/> Al Unser |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Virgil Jester | <input type="checkbox"/> Murray Wal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ernie Johnson | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Billy Klaus | |



How did they get the team to sign the thing and make it all fit such a compact space?

I never expected an answer but with my "constant vigilance" on the internet and my moody "Mad Eye" on eBay "Brew Stuff," the unexpected landed in my lap.

Offered as a "collection of Brewer signatures" ... here it was, a spectacular "one of a kind," team signed piece of history.



One glance answered all my questions as it was simply designed by getting the team to sign their names on paper and "literally cutting and pasting" those signatures to the visor shaped prototype in an orderly fashion.

And thanks to the final product, I was able to return the wandering "Dick Hoover" signature to his rightful spot ...underneath the **Brewers** script and our favorite catcher **Owgust!**

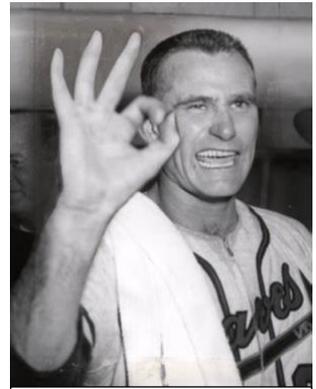
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(Tencentz@aol.com)
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Return
Pg 1

Lew Burdette: Nitro, West Virginia to Mayaguez, Puerto Rico to World Series MVP (Part I)

Lew Burdette was MVP, 1957 World Series; 1956 National League (NL) ERA leader; 2x NL All-Star (1957, 1959); 1959 NL wins leader; with an August 18, 1960 no-hitter to his credit. This blog highlights his 1950-51 Puerto Rico Winter League (PRWL) season—one that helped the Boston Braves acquire him from the NY Yankees, on August 29, 1951, as a “throw-in” in the deal in which the Yankees paid the Braves \$50,000 for [Johnny Sain](#). For other details, please see Burdette’s fine [SABR bio](#) by Alex Kupfer (Kupfer did not mention Burdette’s stint with Mayagüez.) Some pivotal items for Burdette were:

- 3-0 with a 0.67 ERA in the 1957 World Series, for Milwaukee, versus the NY Yankees.
- His first pro season, at 20, began with the 1947 Norfolk Tars, the same club where [Hiram Bithorn](#)—Puerto Rico’s first big-league pitcher (1942 Chicago Cubs), but not the Island’s first big-leaguer, also made his pro debut at 20.
- Nervous mannerisms such as fixing his jersey and hat, wiping his forehead, touching his lips, and talking to himself could, in the words of one of his managers, [Fred Haney](#), “make coffee nervous.” Burdette was rumored to throw a spitball.



Burdette after besting NY Yankees, Game 7, 1957 World Series.

Part I concludes with Burdette’s 1950-51 PRWL season. Part II will focus on his big-league highlights including MVP, the 1957 World Series.

Nitro, West Virginia

Nitro’s “claim to fame” originated in World War I, after the U.S. Congress passed the “Deficiency Appropriations Act” on October 6, 1917. This Act provided for the construction of three huge explosive plants, each capable of producing 500,000 pounds of gunpowder per day. The number-one location picked to build the first plant was a wide section of bottomland along the Great Kanawha River, 14 miles below Charleston, West Virginia’s capital city. Simply put, Nitro became a “boom town.”

Burdette was born in Nitro, on November 22, 1926, and graduated from Nitro High School, in 1944. His high school did not have a baseball team, but he starred in football. And he went 12-2 in an Industrial League, before his six months as an Air Force Reservist in 1945. Burdette enrolled at the University of Richmond and pitched collegiately for the 1946 Richmond Spiders.

Whitey Ford’s 1950 Kansas City Blues Roommate and Harvey Haddix’s Mound Opponent

Burdette was a “prankster,” who liked to have fun. So did [Whitey Ford](#), his roommate, part of the 1950 Kansas City Blues season. The 54-99 Blues were one of 15 minor-league clubs in the Yankees’ 15-team farm system. Ford (6-3 W-L, 3.22 ERA, 12 starts) was the Blues’ ace and continued his fine pitching (9-1 W-L) after being promoted to the 1950 NY Yankees. Conversely, Burdette (7-7, 4.79 ERA, 18 starts, nine relief appearances) struggled. The AAA American Association’s best pitcher was [Harvey Haddix](#), an 18-game winner for the 1950 Columbus Red Birds. “Lew was inconsistent that (AAA) season,” recalled Haddix. “He became a solid starter for the Braves a few years later. In 1959 [May 26] he was my opponent—I retired 36 straight Braves; lost 1-0, when ([Félix Mantilla](#)) got on base, on an error, and scored the only run...we pitched complete games—a tough loss.” Burdette pitched a 13-inning CG at County Stadium; allowing 12 hits; fanning two Pirates, with zero walks.

Burdette: 1950-51 Mayagüez Indios

Wayne Blackburn was the second choice to manage the 1950-51 “Tribe.” Jackie Robinson was Mayagüez² owner Alfonso Valdés’ first choice but this contract was denied by Commissioner [Happy Chandler](#). Jorge Colón Delgado’s history of the Mayagüez franchise clearly indicated that Jackie Robinson nearly became their 1950-51 skipper. Instead, Valdés hired Wayne Blackburn, who led the 1949-50 Carta Vieja Yankees—Panamá Winter League—to the February 1950 Caribbean Series Title. “We got off to a slow start,” recalled Blackburn. “Valdés



² Mayagüez Indios played every PRWL season, 1938-39-present, except for the 2007-08 canceled season. Mayagüez Indios logo photo credit: www.yahoo.com.

encouraged me to add reinforcements via a trip to the (U.S.) mainland. I convinced [Lee MacPhail Jr.](#), Farm Director of the Yankees, to let Burdette pitch for Mayagüez; Lee was reluctant at first. The [Detroit] Tigers agreed we could bring George Lerchen, from the Toledo Mud Hens, down.”

Here are some Burdette highlights with Mayagüez:



- Joined them in early November 1950, after the PRWL season began on October 12, 1950
- Defeated Ponce Lions and San Juan (SJ) Senators in several of his first few starts
- Met Jackie Robinson, when Alfonso Valdés hosted Jackie and his wife, Rachel, who were in town for the movie viewing of “The Jackie Robinson Story” (SJ owner Rafael Ramos Cobián also hosted Jackie and [Rachel Robinson](#) for the SJ portion of this trip.)
- Pitched an 11-inning CG win over Ponce and Tite Arroyo, November 22, 1950 (Carlos Bernier drove in the tying run and scored the game-winner)
- Interacted with [Rogers Hornsby](#), Ponce’s MGR, and [Luis R. Olmo](#), Caguas player-MGR
- Won his fifth game (5-3 record) after a mid-December 1950 win over SJ
- Improved to 6-3 with a 4-1 victory over the Aguadilla Sharks, on December 19.

Lou Limmer Episode

Limmer wasn’t available to face Burdette on December 19, 1950. He “escaped” from Aguadilla on December 18, by taking an Aguadilla-to-SJ “publico” (jitney) at 3:30 a.m. and catching a flight to New York City. His main concern was getting back pay from 1949-50, and he finally received it. Limmer was a fine PRWL hitter, who led the 1950 American Association with 29 HR and 111 RBI, for the St. Paul Saints, Brooklyn’s top minor-league club, one of its 24 minor-league teams. Limmer opined: “Burdette’s pitching improved with Mayagüez.” Limmer was suspended from playing winter ball but returned to the 1955-56 PRWL to help Caguas win the post-season playoffs. Tables I-II include some of Burdette’s 1950-51 stats.

Table I: Mayagüez 1950-51 Pitchers

Pitcher	W-L	PCT	K
L. Burdette	8-6	.571	53
R. Lint	4-4	.500	42
A. Alicea	3-6	.333	15
A. Alonso	3-11	.214	25
A. Perry	1-1	.500	12
W. Morales	1-2	.333	13

D. Roselló	1-2	.333	6
N. Irizarry	1-5	.167	25
C. Conde	1-8	.111	28
W. Fields	0-2	.000	9
Other (7)	1-4	.250	20
Totals	24-51	.320	248

Source: 1950-51 Don Q Baseball Cues.

Table II: 1950-51 PRWL Most Wins and K’s

Pitcher	Team	Wins	Pitcher	Team	K’s
Mike Clark	Caguas	14	Pete Wojey	Aguadilla	116
Tite Arroyo	Ponce	13	José G. Santiago	Ponce	111
Rubén Gómez	Santurce	13	Tite Arroyo	Ponce	94
Manolo Cáceres	Caguas	12	Mike Clark	Caguas	77
José G. Santiago	Ponce	11	Rubén Gómez	Santurce	61
Roberto Vargas	Caguas	10	Roberto Vargas	Caguas	61
Pete Wojey	Aguadilla	10	Bill Powell	Santurce	57
Bill Powell	Santurce	9	Cot Deal	San Juan (SJ)	55
Lew Burdette	Mayagüez	8	Lew Burdette	Mayagüez	53

Source: 1950-51 Don Q Baseball Cues.

December 26, 1950, PRWL All-Star Game

Only two pitchers received more fan votes than Burdette—Tite Arroyo and [José “Pantalones” Santiago](#) per

Table III. Burdette started for the Imports, comprised of Stateside players, with the exception of backup catcher Griffin Tirado. Imports' MGR George Scales got PRWL permission to add Tirado to the Imports, who were defeated, 5-1, by the Natives (Puerto Rican and Dominican players). Burdette gave up a run in his two innings. Caguas' Mike Clark took the loss. Table IV is a mythical 1950s PRWL All-Star Team, solely based on single-season BA.

Table III: December 26, 1950 PRWL All-Star Game—Imports-Natives

Imports (1R-6H-1E)	LP-Clark	#Fan	Natives (5R-8H-1E)	WP-Vargas	#Fan
Player/Pitcher/POS	Team	Votes	Player/Pitcher/POS	Team	Votes
Clint Courtney-C	Ponce	8500	Joe Montalvo-C	SJ	5584
George Crowe-1B&	Caguas	6441	Nino Escalera-1B	SJ	7059
Gene Markland-2B	Caguas	6441	Carlos Santiago-2B	Mayagüez	7062
Bill Skowron-3B	Ponce	6586	Vic Power-3B	Caguas	7332
Stan Breard-SS	Caguas	6608	Jaime Almendro-SS	SJ	5632
George Lerchen-LF!	Mayagüez	6342	Luis R. Olmo-LF	Caguas	4928
Willard Brown-CF	Santurce	6342	Canena Márquez-CF	Aguadilla	4797
Bob Thurman-RF	Santurce	4092	Carlos Bernier-RF	Mayagüez	3822
Lew Burdette	Mayagüez	7604	Tite Arroyo	Ponce	8133
Mike Clark	Caguas	5662	José G. Santiago	Ponce	7851
Cot Deal	SJ	5584	Roberto Vargas	Caguas	6673
Bill Powell	Santurce	4905	Rubén Gómez	Santurce	5329
Pete Wojey	Aguadilla	3681	Manuel Cáceres	Caguas	4862
Bob Thurman	Santurce	3562	Milton Ralat	Aguadilla-SJ	3541
Griffin Tirado-C	Ponce		Luis St. Claire-C	Caguas	
Alonzo Perry-1B	Mayagüez		José A. Burgos-3B	Ponce	
Junior Gilliam-2B	Santurce		Coco Ferrer-SS	Santurce	
Buster Clarkson-SS	Santurce		Alfonso Gerard-OF	Santurce	
Jim Russell-OF	SJ		Jim Rivera-OF	Caguas	
Al Gerheuser-P	Ponce		Pancho Coímbre	Ponce	coach
Roy Hughes	Caguas	coach	Monchile Concepción	Santurce	coach
Dick Seay	Santurce	coach	Fellé Delgado	SJ	coach
George Scales	Santurce	MGR	Luis R. Olmo	Caguas	MGR

#Fans voted for POS players-pitchers. &Crowe replaced Lou Limmer. !Lerchen replaced Taft Wright. Sources: *The Sporting News*, January 3, 1951; 1950-51 Don Q Baseball Cues.

Table IV: PRWL Mythical All-Star Team—1950s—Single-Season BA

Player	POS	Team	Season	AB	H	BA
Dixie Howell	C	Mayagüez	1954-55	227	76	.335
George Crowe	1B	Caguas	1950-51	285	107	.375
Jack Dittmer	2B	SJ	1951-52	199	65	.327
Rance Pless	3B	Caguas	1955-56	217	73	.336
Bill Harrell	SS	Santurce	1957-58	208	66	.317
Roberto Clemente!	RF	Santurce-C	1956-57	225	89	.396

Other Local Baseball Organizations
 Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, [Facebook](#)
 Old Time Ball Players of Wisconsin, [Website](#), [Facebook](#)

Willie Mays	CF	Santurce	1954-55	172	68	.395
George Lerchen	LF	Mayagüez	1950-51	143	53	.371
Bob Thurman#	P	Santurce	1950-51	309	112	.362
Totals				1985	709	.357

Clemente was sold to Caguas, late December 1956. #Thurman pitched and played RF. Sources: Héctor Barea, 1981, and José Crescioni Benítez, 1997.

Blackburn and Burdette are Released

Burdette ended 1950 with his seventh win—4-3 victory over first-place Caguas, on December 29. Luis R. Olmo, their player-MGR, was impressed with Burdette. “I played for the 1950 Boston Braves,” noted Olmo, who also scouted for them in Puerto Rico. “I alerted [\[Lou\] Perini](#) (principal owner, Boston Braves), that Burdette was a good pitcher.”

Blackburn was fired pre-New Year’s Day and replaced with 1B [Alonzo “His Majesty” Perry](#), in a cost-cutting move. Perry and Lerchen were the team’s best hitters. Burdette won his final game in a Mayagüez uniform, 4-1 over last-place Aguadilla, on January 2, 1951 but unconditionally released 10 days later, with an 8-6 record. Fans and radio commentators “raised a howl.”

Mayagüez GM Babel Pérez, stated, in January 31, 1951, *The Sporting News*: “Failure of our club to win games was the sole reason for dropping Burdette. He did a good job, and his efforts were appreciated by us, but he received a letter from the Yankees asking him to report to Spring Training on February 15, 1951, so we decided he ought to take a rest.” Alfonso Valdés added: “Burdette is one of the best players I had on my club. Maybe he feels that we treated him unfairly when we released him, but I am sure the rest he will have before joining the Yankees’ spring training camp will do him a lot of good. We saw to it that we didn’t overwork Burdette in giving him pitching assignments, realizing that his future is just ahead with the Yankees. The Mayagüez organization wishes the boy only the best of luck.”

Mayagüez catcher Luis “King Kong” Villodas—Puerto Rico’s first big-league catcher, having played for the 1946 and 1947 Baltimore Elite Giants—had a favorable impression of catching Burdette in 1950-51. “Lew took his starts very seriously,” affirmed Villodas. “I recall a Three Kings Day (January 6, 1951) game against Santurce, when [Bob Thurman](#) shut us out [2-0]. Lew gave it his best and was disappointed—and so were we—that we did not score any runs for him.”

Grateful acknowledgment to Lew Burdette for his written responses to the author’s questions, in 1992. Thanks to Joey Black, Wayne Blackburn, Harvey Haddix, George Lerchen, Lou Limmer, Luis R. Olmo, and Luis “King Kong” Villodas. Jorge Colón Delgado, Official Historian, of the Roberto Clemente Professional Baseball League, and Coordinator, of the Puerto Rico Professional Baseball Hall of Fame, did the editing-photo placements, and proofing.

This article originally appeared on **Beisbol 101**. Jorge Colon Delgado administers a website, [biesbol 101](#). Its main purpose is to preserve history pertaining to the Roberto Clemente Professional Baseball League—once known as the Puerto Rico Winter League (PRWL)—via blogs, selected players’ index with their stats, all-time records/league leaders, and other particulars. It also, via its writers, furnishes updates on the performance of Puerto Rico’s ballplayers at the MLB, minor-league, and collegiate levels.

The site’s six (6) writers include Jorge Colon Delgado, Luis Rodriguez Mayoral, Humberto Charneco, Tom Van Hyning, Angel Juarbe, and Jamil Laboy. Jorge wanted the blogs to reach a broader audience, e.g., Stateside readers. Thus, he contacted Tom, who’s formative years were spent in Puerto Rico, about four (4) years ago to seek blogs—written in English—on Baseball with a Caribbean emphasis/focus. Tom wrote Puerto Rico’s Winter League (1995) and *The Santurce Crabbers* (1999), published by McFarland.

Tom’s journal articles focusing on Puerto Rico/the Caribbean have appeared in SABR’s *The National Pastime and Baseball Research Journal*. He presented at two SABR National Conferences (1995 and 2018) and is a member of Mississippi’s Cool Papa Bell SABR Chapter but also attends meetings of the Brooks Robinson/George Kell SABR Chapter in Arkansas. His three essays on Roberto Clemente appeared in the 2022 SABR book on Clemente titled *Arriba!*

Tom’s chapter on the Caribbean Series was in a November 2022 book published by the University of Florida Press. Book title—*Baseball and Cultural Heritage*. As Tom is proud to say, “This was a pro-bono labor of love.”

[I had the pleasure of partnering with Van Hyning writing the SABR Bio of Wisconsin’s [Bert Thiel](#) with Tom covering Thiel’s Caribbean baseball experience. He was fun to work with exhibiting great curiosity.]

Return
Pg 1

Seeking Volunteers to Help Organize Rucker Archive Photos

JANUARY 5, 2023 — SABR recently acquired [The Rucker Archive](#), one of the world's most extensive private collections of historical baseball photographs, spanning more than a century of baseball history.



We are now looking for volunteers to help us review and tag the photos with metadata (e.g., date, team, location) that will improve search capabilities of the archive for SABR members and the public. Our initial push will focus on ten Hall of Famers, with a goal of completion by Opening Day.

If you would like to be among the first group of researchers to work with these incredible baseball images, SABR Chicago member and Rucker Archive project co-lead Jason Schwartz has created a [signup sheet](#). He will also schedule a kickoff meeting by Zoom in the upcoming weeks to launch the metadata project and provide specific training to volunteers.

We are excited to add these Rucker Archive images to the [long list of resources](#) SABR offers our membership. With your help, we believe the Rucker Archive collection will become an invaluable aid to researchers, authors, and fans of baseball history in general. [Click here to get involved!](#)



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CHICAGO TO HOST SABR CONVENTION IN 2023
SAVE THE DATE: JULY 5-9, 2023

Save the date! SABR will be returning to Chicago for our 28th annual convention on July 5-9, 2023, at the Palmer House Hilton hotel in downtown Chicago, Illinois. Registration information for SABR 28 and our special hotel room block will be available on SABR's website in early 2022.

The Palmer House Hilton sits in the heart of the Chicago Loop, convenient to...

ABOVE: On Friday, August 19, 2022, SABR Board President Mark Atencio enjoyed meeting several Emil Rothe chapter members at Chase Park at Cannon Yards. They watched the Baltimore Orioles defeat the Boston Red Sox, 10-10.

WHAT'S INSIDE

THE "HOLY COW"

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Schabowski's Super Stumpers

February Answers:

1. Bando's teammate Vida Blue
2. Robin Yount (No. 3 by the Brewers) and Dave Winfield (No. 4 by the Padres) in 1973
3. The Orioles (Jim Palmer) and the Giants (Will Clark)
4. Six - Mike Trout, José Ramírez, Mookie Betts, Christian Yelich, Ronald Acuña Jr. and Cedric Mullins once each
5. Hall of Famer Don Sutton (21 seasons with 10+ wins)
6. Roy Campanella (HOF Class of 1969)

[Return Pg 1](#)

[Return to Trivia Questions](#)