

# Society for American Baseball Research

## BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

### NEWSLETTER

January 1995 (95-1)

#### Comments from a Co-Chair

Andy McCue

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Welcome to 1995, may it be better than 1994, at least for baseball. I hope there are enough baseball books already in publishers' pipelines that we won't see a decrease in output this year. But I wonder. I know that many baseball fans are disgusted with what's going on in the game and I can only think publishers may react to that by publishing fewer books.

In some cases, that may be all to the good. The world could do with fewer guides to the coming fantasy baseball season.

Baseball Online, our Committee's major project, continues to grow. As one can see from the accompanying statistical table, we continue to add to the volume of the project. Bernie Esser, Joe Murphy, and Ron Replogle continue to do sterling work. In fact, the statistics would be a lot more impressive if my typing work could keep up with Bernie, Joe, and Ron's production of forms. I've got a pile about six inches deep at my elbow as I type this report. Ted Hathaway's crew on the periodicals side—especially Suzanne Wise, Bob Boynton, Dick Williams, Ron Kaplan, John McMurray, and Garnet Maley—also continues to add to the bulk.

Ted also has been doing a lot of work on the proposal we intend to take to some foundations to obtain funds to help us build up the periodicals side of the project. We are about to send out preliminary letters to several foundations to determine if they have any interest in funding the project. We'll present a fuller and more formal proposal to those who do have some interest. Our current timetable is to have the cataloger(s) in place by Sept. 1995.

Also, Committee Co-Chair Frank Phelps and I received a survey from SABR Vice President Dick Beverage, who is trying to elicit basic information about each committee (membership, projects, goals, etc.). That prompted us to have a discussion about a long-standing concern that we've raised in the newsletter before; and that is, membership in the Bibliography Committee.

There are about 85 members of our Committee. Most of the Committee's budget goes to the production and mailing of this newsletter. With postal rates going up, that cost is going to go even higher.

SABR's committees were set up to help researchers. The committees and their newsletters are designed to help people with similar research projects, to provide information and materials which other SABR members (who are not committee members) can use in their research, and to facilitate communications among researchers active on topics of interest to those committees.

In looking over the list of Bibliography Committee members, Frank and I see several names of people who contribute nothing to the Committee's goals and projects. So, to get to the point: in January 1996, the membership of the Bibliography Committee will be purged of members who have not contributed something to the Committee's work during 1995.

How can you contribute? Let me count the ways:

1) The biggest, and easiest, project to contribute to is Baseball Online. If you read one baseball book this year (and why else would you be on this Committee?), fill out a bibliography entry form for it, and send it to me, then you have contributed. If you can do more, especially in periodicals, as many members do, so much the better. If you need a form or manual to help with this project, please contact me.

2) Another project is *Current Baseball Publications*. Rich Arpi (3620 W. 32nd St., #105, Minneapolis, MN 55416) does a yeoman job producing *CBP*. If you see something odd, something clearly local, something you haven't seen elsewhere published in the current year, send the bibliographic information to Rich.

3) Frank Phelps is working on an update to the index of the *Baseball Register*. He needs people to help him check the project and to enter his written/typed work into a computer format.

4) We continue to look for volunteers to help with the project of providing indexes to important baseball books that don't have them. Committee members such as Jack Carlson and Bob Boynton have produced indexes for about half the Putnam team histories as well as books, such as *The Boys of Summer* and *Veeck ... as in Wreck*. There are plenty of other titles out there that need to be indexed.

5) Skip McAfee edits this quarterly newsletter. He is always looking for book reviews, letters, suggestions on Committee projects, and other grist for the Committee's mill. Any contributions to the newsletter are contributions to the Bibliography Committee.

There are plenty of avenues here for each of you to demonstrate your commitment to the Committee's work. I hope all of you will take advantage of them and even bring in more recruits. Please feel free to contact me if you have any suggestions.

Level	Number	% change over last quarter
<i>Books</i>		
5	2,112	13.5%
4	1,038	1.9%
Other	9,154	-0.6%
Total	12,304	1.8%
<i>Book Sections</i>		
5	4,329	41.6%
4	396	50.6%
Other	33	371.4%
Total	4,758	43.0%
<i>Magazine/newspaper Articles</i>		
5	5,905	14.4%
4	1	0.0%
Other	6,219	1.5%
Total	12,125	7.4%
<i>Total</i>		
5	12,346	22.5%
4	1,435	11.9%
Other	15,406	0.4%
Total	29,187	9.3%

#### Indexing Projects

Frank V. Phelps

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Regarding the *Baseball Register* 1940-1994 indexing project, the double-checking of my initial compilation is almost completed, thanks to our worthy volunteers: Dick Clark, Jack Dougherty, John Duxbury, Tom Eckel, Ralph Horton, Steve Milman, and especially

Rick Benner, Bob Hoie, and Jim Weigand, who performed extra heavy assignments.

Currently, I foresee the end product as a document of about 30 pages providing a single alphabetical roster of approximately 8400 men, indicating the yearly editions in which the records of each appear, with symbols to denote those edition years where the subject men were included in the sections for managers, coaches, umpires, and former stars. Additionally, players who never played in the majors (more than 1000 such) will be earmarked accordingly (a Rick Benner contribution). When (and if) the 1995 *Register* comes out, its inclusion will increase the roster's length slightly.

Now that the roster will be finalized shortly, we face the enormous tasks of 1) putting it into a computer database and 2) preparing page copy for reproduction. Because I'm totally ignorant about computers and almost so about the mechanics of layouts and reproductions, I hereby issue a loud HELP, HELP call for volunteers with some expertise in those areas. If you're willing to help, contact me and I'll provide the details and dimensions that I am proposing for this project.

Christy Mathewson's 1912 publication, *Pitching in a Pinch*, has been indexed by Tom Shieber. As with other indexes previously completed for the Bibliography Committee, a copy of this index has been sent to Len Levin (282 Doyle Ave., Providence, RI 02906) for inclusion in SABR's Research Library, and thereby available from Len in the prescribed manner. Tom has promised another index: I'm not revealing the book title until said index is in hand. While indexes to the Putnam team histories are preferred, we welcome the indexing of any unindexed worthy baseball volumes. If you have one in mind, please check with me first just in case someone else already has opted to work on the same item.

## Book Reviews

### SAM'S LEGACY

Jay Neugeboren. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973. 370p.

Review by Leverett T. (Terry) Smith

Rereading this novel, I'm surprised to find how good it is, and how vivid and affecting are its baseball passages. I'd read it, even written about it, in the 1970s, without the enthusiasm I feel now. For much of its length, baseball doesn't enter into the story at all. It is set in Brooklyn in the early seventies, and the central character is Sam Berman, a professional gambler in his early thirties. Sam's personal and professional lives are the central focus of the book (but we never see him betting on baseball), and one of the events of the book is his father's leaving their apartment to live with Sam's uncle in a retirement community in California. Part of Sam's legacy from his father is his father's childhood friend, Mason Tidewater, an elderly light-skinned black who is the janitor of their apartment building. Tidewater, it turns out, is a former Negro League baseball player, and he gives Sam his memoirs, titled *My Life and Death in the Negro American Baseball League: A Slave Narrative*.

It is this memoir, delivered to Sam by Tidewater in three installments, that will most directly interest us as SABRites. The memoir comprises almost a quarter of the book. Tidewater is initially a fine pitcher and eventually a fine hitter, known in the press as "The Black Babe".

In his memoir, Tidewater focuses on his counterpart in the major leagues, Babe Ruth. The two meet when Tidewater's team plays postseason exhibition games with major leaguers. Off the field, the two become lovers, and descriptions of their encounters on the field are deepened by Tidewater's fight to counter Ruth's emotional dominance of him off the field. This is demonstrated by the long

first sentence of Tidewater's memoir, which also points toward the climax of the narrative, the description of the game referred to (p.69):

"I consider the high point of my life to have been that moment on the fifteenth day of February 1928, in the city of Havana, Cuba, when, after I had pitched and hit my team, the Brooklyn Royal Dodgers, to a 1-to-0 triumph over a team composed of players from the New York Yankees, George Herman (Babe) Ruth mocked me for having chosen the life that was mine, calling me a 'make-believe nigger', whereupon I slammed my fist into the pasty flesh of his dark face and struck him down; it was a blow I should have struck long before that day, and one which, filling me momentarily with joy, would lead, on that same afternoon, to my own death as a player in the Negro American Baseball League."

The narrative of this game (p.321-336) is splendidly done, full of suspense, as Tidewater takes a perfect game into the ninth inning. For us SABRites, it's the high point of the book.

But there's a lot more to the novel; after all, it's mainly about Sam Berman. Sam initially doesn't know what to make of Tidewater, whether even to believe his story or not. So he goes to the library and checks Tidewater's story in Robert Peterson's *Only the Ball Was White* (p.106). Most of the action of the novel takes place in Brooklyn. The city, in the early 1970s, was, as Sam's father puts it continually, "a neighborhood in transition". Whites have moved out, blacks have moved in. Most of Sam's friends have moved to Long Island. The Dodgers, of whom they all have memories, have moved to Los Angeles. Sam's friend Dutch says, as they pass the site of Ebbets Field (p.134): "It still gets to you—just a bunch of apartment houses now". Post-Dodger Brooklyn is a real presence in the book. In fact, *Sam's Legacy* would fit right into Fredric Roberts' compelling essay on the city in *Baseball History* (Summer 1987), entitled "A Myth Grows in Brooklyn: Urban Death, Resurrection, and the Brooklyn Dodgers".

What unite Sam and Tidewater in the book are the two themes of community and identity. Both men seek to discover who they are, and they each gradually learn the value of community in that process. Tidewater's quest appears to end in suicide, but he comes to understand the role of community in achieving identity and to communicate it through his narrative. Sam imagines a triumphant end for Tidewater (think here of the way the action of the movie *A League of Their Own* is framed, a reunion of ancient heroines) in these last few lines of the book (p.370):

"One day, he imagined [Flo] writing, a week or so after Tidewater had vanished, a group of elderly black men had appeared at the door to the rummage shop; she had invited them in and they told her that, for some time, they had been looking for a man whom they believed had once been their teammate."

With this image, Sam completes Tidewater's quest for both identity and community and acknowledges its value for himself.

### DIAMOND: BASEBALL WRITINGS OF MARK HARRIS

Mark Harris. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1994. 289p. \$21.95

Review by Leverett T. (Terry) Smith

Readers who have enjoyed and collected over the years the baseball fiction of Mark Harris—*The Southpaw*, *Bang the Drum Slowly*, *A Ticket for a Seamstitch*, and *It Looked Like For Ever*—will want to have this book. Most of the writing in it is reprinted from various sources (some of it included in the 1979 collection of essays, *Short Work of It*), though there is some writing published here for the first time, a preface and an epilogue, an essay on writing the screenplay of *Bang the Drum Slowly* and the screenplay itself, and an essay on Carl Mays' fatal beaming of Ray Chapman, inspired, apparently, by Mike Sowell's book on the subject.

For this reader, the best thing about the book is its gathering of previously published pieces. I'm not a movie buff, so reading the screenplay of *Bang the Drum Slowly* is not as exciting to me as it

will be to others; I'd rather reread the book. In fact, the first ten pages of the novel are reprinted, right after the screenplay. Perhaps the happiest essay is Harris' 1957 take on Dick Stuart, "The Man Who Hits Too Many Home Runs". In retrospect, Stuart is more memorable for his mouth than for his bat. He reports snappy dialogue with Jayne Mansfield (p.169): "Jayne Mansfield said to me, 'Hey, how come you get your name in the paper more than me?' I said, 'Hell, you didn't hit no 66 home runs in the Western League'." Describing his ambition, he says (p.170) "what I always really wanted to be was somebody there's not a whole lot of". And on life in high school (p.171): "I never brought a book home in my life. They graduated me because of my .450 average." One of Harris' favorite Dick Stuart lines he gives to Patricia Moors in the screenplay of *Bang the Drum Slowly* (p.60, 170): "Money can buy nothing but happiness."

Another essay, "Bring Back That Old Sandlot Novel", appears to be an earlier version of "Horatio at the Bat, or Why Such a Lengthy Embryonic Period for the Serious Baseball Novel", which appeared in *Aethlon; the Journal of Sport Literature* (Spring 1988). The argument, at least, appears the same: that both Harris and Bernard Malamud, whose *The Natural* was published in 1952, were both eager to establish literary—rather than sporting—antecedents for their fictions. Harris now thinks (p.125–126) he underestimated "the baseball novels we loved best", those of William Heyliger, Ralph Henry Barbour, and John R. Tunis, which were not only baseball stories, but also in the "vigorous tradition of the novel of success". Harris concludes (p.128): "I must confess now that when my own baseball novel *The Southpaw* appeared in 1953, I committed an act of repression arising from real or imagined necessity. I denied the influence of those boys' books of Horatio Alger and of [Ring] Lardner."

There is also a fine essay on Bart Giamatti and Pete Rose in which Harris celebrates both men and expresses his sympathy for both, but more for Rose than Giamatti. In "Tragedy as Pleasure: Giamatti and Rose", Harris makes the point (p.233) that, in banning Rose, Giamatti was not protecting baseball, but only Organized Baseball: "the living sport of baseball had not been threatened [by Rose's actions]; only the corporation had been threatened". And finally, he turns Giamatti's own words against him. To be able to return to Organized Baseball, Rose had, in Giamatti's words (p.232), "to show a redirected, reconfigured, rehabilitated life". Giamatti himself, according to Harris (p.234), "gambled at tobacco and lost ... Not so easy to redirect, reconfigure, rehabilitate one's life!"

Important insights leap from other essays. In "Each Game Was a Crusade", he connects Jackie Robinson's career with the development of the players' union and the eventual abolition of the reserve clause in player contracts (p.162–163):

"The appearance of Robinson and the consciousness he raised among athletes quickened thinking and hastened expectations upon many topics apart from race. He broke more than the color barrier ... the spirit of reform was contagious. White players joined black players to demand unprecedented rights through union organization and other forms of professional representation. ... The odd resemblance of the 'reserve clause' to features of black slavery was remote in quality but similar in outline."

In an essay about Ed Cereghino, a New York Yankee bonus baby who did not make the majors, Harris pinpoints one reason for failure as Cereghino's interest in attending college, characterizing college (p. 201) as "a force which often subdues the kind of desire baseball demands". Such a suggestion makes one wonder about all college athletics. Haven't we all wondered, as I did watching the 1994 Florida State–Miami football game, whether the fellows on the field have got their homework for Monday done yet?

I think Harris' best essay (aside from a brief epilogue) is the one that concludes the book, "Maybe What Baseball Needs Is a Henry David Thoreau". First published in the late 1960s when it seemed that pro football's popularity would eclipse baseball's, its concluding paragraph (p.284–285) seems even more applicable today than it was then:

"If the age of baseball has passed, let it pass for this hour, not into extinction like last year's TV show, but back into its origins and local affections, town clubs and small devoted ownership. Let the big, ambitious owner surrender; let the brute sports thrive and flourish. Let time have its way with baseball as with all natural, enduring things until one day, as I suspect, America, like Ted Williams, having fished all the waters of the known world, will return to the game that bespeaks its myth at a pace to match the reconciliation."

## INNOCENCE AND WONDER: BASEBALL THROUGH THE EYES OF BATBOYS

Neil D. Isaacs. Indianapolis: Masters Press, 1994. 242p. \$14.95 paperback.

*Review by Ron Kaplan*

All sorts of oral histories have stocked the baseball bookshelves over the past several years: Hall of Famers, journeymen, managers, umpires, players from yesteryear, all telling their stories. So it's only natural that the batboys get their turn. These kids, the envy of young fans everywhere, were privy to all the behind-the-scenes doings of our favorite ballplayers. They can answer the burning question: "What was [fill in the blank] really like?"

On the surface, therefore, Isaacs' *Innocence and Wonder* seems like a wonderful idea. Generations of batboys reminiscing about athletics, working conditions, and the way the game has been transformed since the early part of the century (not to mention the gossip) had heretofore been an untapped source of information.

Unfortunately, *Innocence and Wonder* quickly becomes a collection of such poorly edited accounts that they seem like a string of non sequiturs. For example, one reminiscence of baseball in the 1940s concludes: "The one time I remember they got me ... was during a rain delay when someone said, 'Greek, run out to the bullpen and get the rubber for the pitcher's mound', and I did. What really seems funny to me now is that in all those years in the clubhouse, I never thought of doing police work." (What seems really funny is how naive these kids, many of whom were in their mid- to late teens when they held these jobs, could be to constantly fall for such tricks as searching for the keys to the batter's box or going out to buy some "frozen ropes".)

Many of the batboys' stories are similar in nature—who's a nice guy, who's a jerk, the idiosyncrasies of the players—so in effect we're reading dozens of versions of the same theme with slight variations. Two former batboys of the Washington Senators in the thirties claim to have pulled the same practical joke on Goose Goslin. Was the Goose dippy enough to fall for the gag twice or do we have conflicting accounts of the incident? If the latter is the case, how many others have embellished their roles and why didn't the author attempt to verify the accounts?

Of the 135 men interviewed for *Innocence and Wonder*, more than 40 remained in the game in some capacity. Rene Lachemann, Jim Lefebvre, Jim Merritt, and Johnny Pesky all "graduated" to the ranks of players. Others cited include Maury Povich, syndicated talk-show host, who once took care of the Washington Senators (which may have been last in the American League but finishes first with 19 former batboys represented). ESPN's Roy Firestone hauled lumber for the Baltimore Orioles in the early '70s. Frank McNulty is the president of *Parade* magazine these days, but during the forties he spent his summers with the Boston Braves. Oddly, 23 ex-batboys chose to go into some form of law enforcement after they hung up their spikes.

Even the book's title might not be entirely accurate, judging from what these men experienced with the teams: drunkenness, misanthropy, carousing, etc. It's a wonder that they maintained any innocence after exposure to such situations.

Some sections of the book are downright poorly written. One batboy recounts "fantasying" (sic) at home plate in Yankee Stadi-

um, while another speaks of his "graduation from his dad" (sic) when recalling a gift from his father. The squibs identifying each of the men range from the informative to the ridiculous: "Tim Murnin's transition from Cardinals' clubhouse to college campus was smooth". This contradicts the advice, "If you can't say something nice ... "

It might have been nostalgic to thumb through well-done interviews of these boys who have had the opportunity to rub elbows with the greats, near-greats, and never-greats. Surely they are considered very lucky by anyone who calls himself a real fan. Sadly, Isaacs boots the ball here.

## **New Members of the Bibliography Committee**

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## **Editor's Note**

The April 1995 issue of the Bibliography Committee newsletter will include a list of Committee members, including phone numbers and e-mail addresses. If you wish to have your phone number, fax number, and/or e-mail address included, please contact Skip McAfee, 5533 Colts Foot Court, Columbia, MD 21045 (phone 410/730-5847).