



Biographical Research Committee Monthly Report
April 1992

The Hunt Ends

After eight years of searching with a fervor matched only by Inspector Gerard on the trail of The Fugitive, Dick Thompson has finally tracked down the death of one of our most difficult missing ballplayers, Benjamin Franklin Hunt, in Greybull, Wyoming. Hunt has led various committee members on an exhausting trek through some 20 states before he finally stopped to rest in Wyoming where he died on September 27, 1927.

The search began with only Hunt's major league record and a birth of 1888 in Eufaula, Oklahoma. The source for this birth information remains unknown. I located a census record from 1900 which listed a family living in Perry, Oklahoma who had a son named Ben F., who was born in February of 1888 in Oklahoma. The father was born in Alabama and the mother was born in Michigan. They apparently left Perry and headed west.

Ben's baseball career began with a stint in Salt Lake City in 1908. He pitched two games before journeying to Tacoma for one game to finish out the season. His family apparently accompanied him to Washington. In 1909 he ventured back to the east to Salt Lake City, Hutchinson, Kansas, and Wichita. In September, Hunt jumped the club and disappeared, Wichita not knowing his whereabouts.

In 1910, he spent essentially a full season in Sacramento until travelling cross country to join the Red Sox in August. The winter of 1910-11 found him on a ranch near Georgetown, California milking cows to strengthen his wrists for the upcoming season. That season again found him in Sacramento. It was a poor season which saw him catch pneumonia and nearly die in June. His family at this time was living in San Luis Obispo.

In the spring of 1912, he was back near his roots when he went to spring training with the Phillies in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Two Philadelphia newspapers gave contradicting reports on Hunt's background. According to one, he was working on a farm in Oklahoma when someone told him that he looked like a ballplayer. That one comment sent him on his way to Salt Lake City where he tried out for the Utah club. His warmup pitches nearly knocked the catcher down and Salt Lake signed him on the spot.

According to the other story, Hunt ran away from home as a youth and journeyed to Memphis, Tennessee where he got a job as a stable boy for a horse breeder. The breeder took him on trips to Jacksonville, Florida, Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina. While in Charleston, he stopped horsing around long enough to learn to play baseball on the stable boys' nine.

Whatever his background, he failed to make the Phillies' staff and was back in Tacoma for the 1912 season. Late that year Tacoma sold Hunt to the White Sox, but the deal was voided when Sacramento claimed that they still owned the rights to Hunt. However, Hunt did arrive back in the major leagues in 1913, opening the season with the St. Louis Cardinals. After two games the Cardinals sent him to Chattanooga where he pitched another two games.

When next seen, Hunt was getting married in July in Juneau, Alaska. He ventured south to play in Vancouver in 1914 and 1915. He was again closer to his birthplace in 1916, splitting a miserable 2-17 season between Tulsa and Wichita. In 1917 he was in Butte, Montana before joining the Army and serving in WWI. He was back in professional baseball in 1920, twirling for Dallas of the Texas League before jumping the club in midseason.

This is where I picked up the scent by finding a 1920 census record for a Ben Hunt, (father born in Alabama, mother in Michigan), in Casper, Wyoming. I relayed this information to Dick who wrote to Wyoming and turned up a

Charles Wheatley

By Bill Carlo

B: June 27, 1893, Rosedale, Kansas
D: December 10, 1982, Tulsa, Oklahoma
BRTR 5-11 174

Charles Wheatley's entry in the Baseball Encyclopedia is rather unimpressive. He compiled a 1-4 record and 6.17 ERA with the 1912 Detroit Tigers. However, Wheatley's life is far from dull. Charley Wheatley was born in a small town near Kansas City in 1893. The majority of his career in professional baseball was spent in leagues in the Kansas/Missouri area, including stints with the American Association Kansas City Blues in 1914, 1917, and 1918.

But in 1912, an impressive 14-8 record with Springfield in the Central League earned the 19-year-old righthander a promotion to the Tigers in September. Wheatley only pitched five games for Detroit but still managed to earn himself a place in the record books. On September 27, Wheatley uncorked five wild pitches in a game against the Cleveland Indians as the result of an ill-fated experiment with the emery ball. This still stands as the American League record, although it was later tied by another Tiger pitcher, Jack Morris, in 1987. Wheatley did manage to get the ball over the plate enough in that game to also yield 21 hits.

Following his retirement from the game, Wheatley moved to Tulsa to go to work for his brother Frank, who owned an oil and valve company. At the age of 60 when most people are thinking of retirement, Wheatley began his own company, Charles Wheatley Company, and began producing valve and pumping mechanisms, obtaining 19 patents in the process. Wheatley sold his company in 1972 for ten million dollars. His 20th and last patent was obtained at the age of 88 when he applied his knowledge of valves and pumping to produce a vacuum-oriented method for preserving coffee known as the "Coffee Keeper." Wheatley died in 1982 at the age of 89 and may well have been the wealthiest of all former players who made their money outside of the game of baseball.

New Monthly Data

Questionnaires Received:

1931 Andrews, Ivy Paul
1936 Wilson, Edward Francis

No New Information (HF)
No New Information (HF)

New Information Received:

1991 Beltre y Valera, Esteban
1991 Bones, Ricardo N
1891 Burrell, Frank Andrew
1952 Carey, Andrew Arthur N
45 1934 Clift, Harlond Benton N

1950 Cole, David Bruce N
1931 Creeden, Patrick Francis N

1991 Davis, Mark Anthony N
1991 Fleming, David Anthony N
1923 Gardiner, Arthur Cecil —
1987 Harvey, Bryan Stanley
58 1955 Hazle, Robert Sidney N

1910 Hunt, Benjamin Franklin

1991 Ignasiak, Michael James N
76 1960 Johnson, Deron Roger N

1964 Joseph, Ricardo Emelindo
1930 Reese, James Herman N2
45 1936 Rosenthal, Lawrence John
relational 1902 St. Vrain, James Marcellin —
earliest
and
51 1918 Sanders, Roy L.
1939 Silvestri, Kenneth Joseph N

1931 Stanton, George Washington N

66 1964 Sukla, Edward Anthony N
1889 Thornton, John N
1991 Wilkins, Richard David N
35 1930 Williams, Edwin Dibrell N

1963 Williams, Donald Reid N

B: Ingenio Quisqueya, Dominican Republic (J1)
Name: Ricardo Ricky Bones (H1)
D: Weymouth, Massachusetts (T3)
Delete real name of Nordstrom (D7)
D: Apr 27 1992 (C1)
Yakima, Washington
B: Williamsport, Maryland (T1)
D: Apr 20 1992 (T3)
Brockton, Massachusetts
B: San Diego, California (H1)
B: Jackson Heights, New York (H1)
D: Copiague, New York (D7)
B: Chattanooga, Tennessee (H1)
D: Apr 25 1992 (C1)
Columbia, South Carolina
B: Nov 10 1888 (T3)
Eufaula, Oklahoma
D: Sep 27 1927
Greybull, Wyoming
B: Anchorville, Michigan (H1)
D: Apr 23 1992 (K3)
Poway, California
Name: Ricardo Emelindo Joseph y Harrigan (J1)
B: Oct 1 1901 (H1)
B: May 21 1910 (H1)
B: Jun 6 1883 (B7)
Name: Roy Lee Sanders (H1)
D: Mar 31 1992 (T1)
Tallahassee, Florida
D: Jan 1 1992 (H1)
San Antonio, Texas
Real name: Edward Anthony Suckla (D7)
Delete death information (S1)
B: Jun 4 1967 (H1)
D: Apr 2 1992 (C1)
Searcy, Arkansas
Is Deceased (H1)

