

The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

Volume 6, Number 3: "Let's get this lumpy, licorice-stained ball rolling!" August 2006

Chairman's Column: First Love

By **David Jones**
crawjo@gmail.com

When did you first discover the Deadball Era? By posing the question, I do not mean when did you first hear the term "Deadball Era," or when did you first learn about the existence of Ty Cobb. Rather, I mean, when did the idea of Deadball Era baseball first begin to germinate in your imagination? When did it acquire a pulse and begin to collect the kind of detail necessary to form a more complete picture in your mind?

For me, the moment came in 1994, when I was 17 years old. I had been a baseball fan my whole life, and by that time I already knew about Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson, and Walter Johnson. Despite my knowledge of these legends, the era in which they played lacked depth. I could picture Ty Cobb running over fielders on the basepaths, and I could envision Mathewson and Johnson blowing batters away, but these unknown fielders and batters were essentially faceless, formless entities, like the anonymous actors who appear for the opposing team in your typical sports movie.

Everything changed for me on this one day in 1994, when I was browsing through a list of the all-time leaders in base hits. It was a list I had memorized before. At that time, I think I knew the all-time hits list back to Vada Pinson and his 2,757 hits. Anyway, on this one trip through the list, I stopped (for

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Deadball Report from SABR 36—Not Enough Innings!

By **Susan Dellinger**
(drsusandell@verizon.net) and **Gene Carney**
(carneya6@adelphia.net)

Susan Dellinger: We arrived early Wednesday afternoon after seven-and-a-half grueling hours of flying from the old "cigar city" of Tampa to the furthestmost point on the U. S. map. Whereas Ponce de Leon had searched for the Fountain of Youth in Florida, he was quite obviously four time zones off, as Seattle (named for the Suquamish Indian Chief) was the 21st Century city of youth spawning Microsoft, Amazon.com, "Kool" architecture and oodles of fresh salmon punched up by strong coffee.

The 84 degree weather was hospitable, as 530 registered SABRites and their entourages were burped out

of green buses and yellow taxis in front of the downtown Marriott Renaissance Hotel for the 36th annual convention. On Thursday morning, June 29, John Zajc, Cleveland staffers, and eager Seattle chapter volunteers registered guests and guided them to their appointed cubbyholes. The agenda for the conference was jam-packed with panels, presentations, and committee meetings for researchers panning for gold nuggets of baseball wisdom.

For miners interested in the early days of the game, the convention began with Tom Simon at the podium for the Deadball Era Committee meeting at 8 o'clock Thursday morning. Of the 225-member committee, an estimated 50 were in attendance. Reports were as follows:

1. Deadball Stars update (letter from David Jones).
2. 2005 Ritter Award Winner—Richard Bak, *Peach*.
3. Baseball Poetry—being collected by Joanne Hulbert.

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What's Inside...

Tom Simon pinch-hits for David Jones

Richard Bak's Ritter Award Speech

John Thorn's new Base Ball journal

Book reviews:

• *Red Legs and Black Sox*, reviewed by David Fleitz

• *The Washington Senators, 1901-1972*, reviewed by Doug Skipper

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Simon Pinch-hits for Jones at Annual Meeting

At the DEC's annual meeting in Seattle at 8:00 A.M. on June 29, DEC founder and former chairman Tom Simon filled in for current chairman David Jones, who was unable to attend because he was serving as a groomsman in the wedding of a longtime friend.

Simon began by reading an update from Jones on the status of *Deadball Stars of the American League*. Jones explained that the book has been laid out, edited, fact-checked, and proofread twice, and the delay in finishing the book is due to a problem in tracking down the last handful of photos. He assured contributors that they will have an opportunity to review their bios in layout prior to publication and advised that they should stay tuned throughout July so they will know when the pages are available to be viewed.

Simon announced that the winner of this year's Larry Ritter Award is Richard Bak for his book *Peach: Ty Cobb in His Time and Ours* (Sports Media Group 2005) and read a statement from Bak, which appears in its entirety in the next column.

Gabriel Schechter of the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library gave a summary of the contents of the Gary Herrmann Collection, which is in the process of being indexed and preserved. Schechter explained that the collection contains mostly correspondence to Herrmann, and not much from him. It is especially strong on the Cincinnati Reds and the Federal League, but it unfortunately contains almost nothing on the 1919 World Series. The collection will be available to the public sometime in the next year.

Simon closed the meeting with an announcement from Jones that because he is moving to Africa, he has decided to make 2006-07 his final year as DEC chairman. Vice chairman Eric Enders has not yet decided whether he would like to become chairman, but regardless of his decision the DEC will need an infusion of fresh blood into its leadership ranks. Any member who is interested in becoming chair or vice chair of the committee should contact Jones at crawjo@gmail.com or by phone at (518) 393-2684. ♦

Ritter Award Speech

By **Richard Bak**

My sincere thanks to Paul Rogers and everybody else on the Deadball subcommittee for selecting *Peach* as this year's recipient of the Larry Ritter Award. I'm sorry that I can't be in Seattle for the SABR Convention, especially since my youngest daughter, who recently visited the area, has told me how nice this part of the country is.

It's ironic—but entirely fitting—that at the very moment Paul's email arrived informing me of the award, I was online Googling Larry Ritter's classic *The Glory of Their Times*. I've been toying with the idea of producing a modestly budgeted local documentary on the Detroit Tigers' days at Bennett Park, an era that produced three American League pennants and such iconic Deadball stars as Ty Cobb, Wahoo Sam Crawford, Hughie Jennings, and Germany Schaefer. Many of you know that a PBS documentary was made of Ritter's book sometime in the 1970s, and I was trying to locate a copy of the film online when Paul's email popped into my in-box. So Googling became channeling.

It doesn't surprise me that the Deadball group is the largest of SABR's many research committees. That big-shouldered era fascinates many of us, especially me. Perhaps it's because I grew up listening to stories from my grandfather about what the game and its players were like back then—and by extension, about what the world at-large was like. I don't mean to unduly wrap those days in sepia-soaked nostalgia. There were troubles a-plenty inside and outside of the wobbly wooden ballparks of the period. But on the whole, life seemed more appealing, both as a baseball fan and ordinary citizen. As a writer, I enjoy every opportunity to take a trip back in time to that vanished America.

Peach was written with no particular angle in mind, except to present the life of one of the game's most compelling and complicated stars in as lively and objective a fashion as possible. As I got more into the story, especially the roots of Cobb's soiled legend and his standing in pop culture, what has been described as "a corrective portrait" of his controversial life emerged. I suppose some readers might think of the book as some sort of apologia for Cobb, but that's hardly the case. I simply "called 'em as I saw 'em," and if the facts often didn't match up with what we all thought we knew about the man—well, that's part of the fun, and the pay-off, of research. Certainly I included some new items about Cobb that were far from flattering. I sought balance, so I take it as a good sign that *Peach* has managed to irritate both supporters and critics of Cobb.

Once again, thanks to everybody involved in the judging process for this award. It goes without saying that any SABR member is honored to have their name associated in any way with Larry Ritter. ♦



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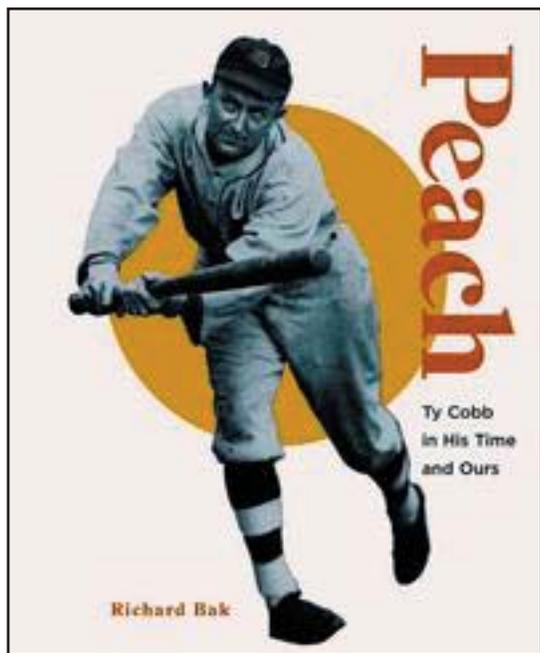
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4. Cooperstown HOF Library report—Gabriel Schechter
5. Reds HOF Exhibit on Edd Roush and the 1919 WS—recommended by John Scheppi and Susan Dellinger
6. Bioproject—Paul Wendt announced entries will be more expanded than in Deadball Stars book.
7. ProQuest—Rod Nelson reminded all to use it before we lose it (Jan 1, 2007).

The Thursday program filled with the most Deadball enthusiasts was Gene Carney’s presentation at 1 P.M. entitled “Eight Myths Out.” Instead of the promised eight, our *Notes from the Shadows of Cooperstown* author doubled the stakes by offering sixteen (eight minor and eight major) “myths” about the 1919 World Series and the resulting Black Sox scandal. The major eight myths were:

1. Eddie Cicotte \$10,000 Bonus
2. Charles Comiskey as Scrooge
3. Burns and Sullivan as sole creators of the “Fix”
4. Fictional Harry F.
5. Game 4 Cicotte muff
6. Joe Jackson confessed to throwing games
7. There were more than “eight men out”
8. The cover-up IS covered up

Carney, a leading expert on the 1919 World Series and author of the new book, *Burying the Black Sox*, was studious, respectful of his audience, and promptly met his 25 minute deadline to the second - including some expert “fielding” of questions about the origin of the term “Black Sox,” the pronunciation of the name Cicotte and the question of Joe Jackson’s qualifications for the Hall of Fame. The audience left wanting more.

Deadballers moved quickly from Carney to Don Frank’s presentation at 1:30 p.m. titled “From Landis to Selig: Leadership in Major League Baseball.” Portland Librarian, Frank delivered a scholarly comparison of all baseball commissioners based on Dr. John Gardner’s leadership model (*The Nature of Leadership:*

Introductory Considerations. Washington D.C., 1986). According to Frank’s findings, the “best leader” among the commissioners was Kenesaw Mountain Landis, with Peter Ueberroth coming in a close second. The primary reasons for choosing Landis were:

1. Use of Authority: Landis negotiated for complete control in 1921
2. Personal Integrity & Expression of Societal Values: The banning of eight White Sox players
3. Results: Landis’ political skills in negotiation with Roosevelt during WWII and visionary promotion of baseball in the media

Frank further pointed out the comparison of Landis’ *personal* leadership style with that of Bowie Kuhn’s *organizational* leadership style.

Another program of interest to many Deadballers occurred at 3:30 on Thursday. Mike Carminati, known to many as the author of “Mike’s Baseball Rants,” turned the spotlight on Bruce Sutter and relief pitching in his presentation, “Welcome to the Halls of Relief.” Giving an historical overview, Carminati identified 19th century manager, Harry Wright, as the first to use relief. In the 20th century, John McGraw employed the skills of Doc Crandall in this capacity in 1909. The concept was abandoned until mid-century and Mike Marshall’s 106 game record.¹ Bruce Sutter defined the role of the modern “closer” in the late 1970’s.

Carminati offered numerous statistical charts and presented the following conclusions on the 21st century practice of relief pitching:

1. Teams average four pitchers per game
2. Closers average one inning per game
3. 70-75% of all team “saves” are attributed to closers today.

No individual research presentations were delivered on Friday. Conferees attended sundry committee meetings and panel presentations on this day. At the annual luncheon, Jim Bouton (*Ball Four* author) wowed the crowd with personal anecdotes, and Roland Hemond (Chicago White Sox executive) announced he had stayed up the night before enjoying a new Deadball book titled *Red Legs and Black Sox*.

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Gene Carney speaks on “Eight Myths Out” at the SABR 36 Conference.

Red Legs & Black Sox: Edd Roush and the Untold Story of the 1919 World Series

by Susan Dellinger

Cincinnati, OH: Emmis Books, 2006.
[ISBN: 1578602297] 350 pages,
\$16.95, paperback.

Reviewed by **David L. Fleitz**
dlfleitz@wcnnet.org

Author Gene Carney refers to the most notorious conspiracy in sports history as “baseball’s cold case.”

The case in question is the Black Sox scandal of 1919, in which members of the heavily favored Chicago White Sox took money from gamblers to lose the World Series to the Cincinnati Reds. From Eliot Asinof’s *Eight Men Out* (1963) to Carney’s *Burying the Black Sox* (2006), public fascination with the fixed Series continues to this day, though all the participants in the drama are long dead.

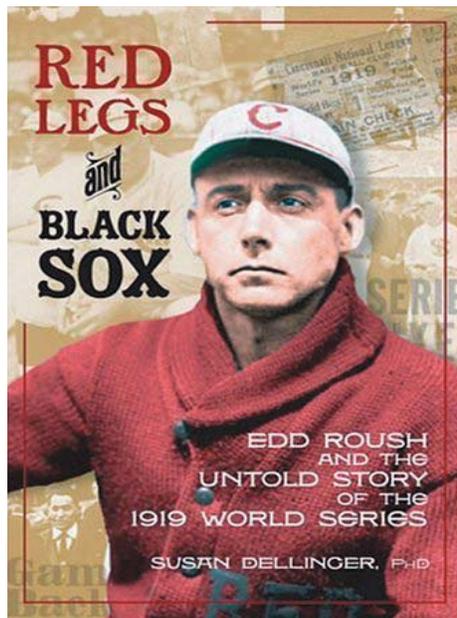
Susan Dellinger offers a different perspective on the scandal in her new book, *Black Sox and Red Legs*. Her grandfather was Edd Roush, star outfielder of the 1919 Reds and the only member of the winning team to be enshrined in the Hall of Fame. Roush’s recollections, as recorded by Dellinger over several decades of conversations and interviews, form the core of the book as Dellinger provides not only a (regrettably) partial biography of her grandfather, but also a glimpse into the controversy from the Cincinnati point of view.

Roush was an interesting man, and a full biography of the proud, prickly ballplayer would have made a fascinating read even without the scandal. Born in 1893, Edd and his twin brother Fred grew up on a farm in Indiana. Fred wasn’t much of a ballplayer, but Edd advanced through the semipro and minor league ranks and played briefly for the Chicago White Sox before jumping to the Federal League in 1914. With that circuit’s demise, Edd joined the New York Giants, where he clashed with John McGraw and found himself traded to Cincinnati. He became a star, winning two batting championships and leading the Reds

to the 1919 pennant, their first title in 37 years.

The first half of the book deals with Edd’s childhood, marriage, and rise in the baseball world, but the biography suddenly ends when the Reds meet the White Sox in the 1919 Series. The rest of the narrative revolves around those eight games, in which the Reds won a tainted world championship (which Roush insists they would have won anyway) and eight Chicago players saw their careers and reputations destroyed. Dellinger unearths some heretofore unrevealed gems about the fixed Series, including Roush’s suspicions of his own teammates. One highlight is a 1927 conversation between Roush and a prominent gambler, which casts new light on the motivations and actions of players on both sides of the drama.

Roush played for 11 more seasons after the questionable Series, but the book ignores the last half of his Hall of Fame career and skips to his death at 94 of a heart attack while watching a spring training game. Perhaps the publisher preferred to emphasize the scandal and not the biography of the author’s grandfather, who emerges as a principled, stubborn individualist. Conceivably, Dellinger has compiled more material on Roush that will someday see print and provide a complete picture of this complex personality. Nonetheless, *Black Sox and Red Legs* is a worthy addition to the library of anyone interested in the World Series of 1919. ♦



The Washington Senators, 1901-1971

by Tom Deveaux

Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005 (2001).
[ISBN 0-7864-2359-5] 288 pages.
\$35 softcover. Order at (800) 253-2187 or at www.mcfarlandpub.com.

Reviewed by **Doug Skipper**
theskipper1@hotmail.com

Sporadic early success and pervasive later failures are chronicled in Tom Deveaux’s *The Washington Senators, 1901-1971*, a comprehensive history of the two American League franchises that called the nation’s capital home during the first 70 years of the 20th century, before both moved to greener pastures. Deveaux, a former news writer, radio announcer and teacher who now lives in Canada, followed the second incarnation of the Senators as a youngster.

Deveaux’s narrative begins with American League President Byron “Ban” Johnson’s quest to place a franchise in Washington for the loop’s inaugural season, and the curious decision to name the team the “Nationals,” the official moniker for the franchise for more than half of a century. Although referred to as the “Nats” on occasion, the team was more commonly called the “Senators,” even in the early years. Those early years featured the arrival of the two key figures in Washington baseball history: Walter Johnson and Clark Griffith. Johnson’s blazing fastball wasn’t enough to lift the Senators far from the cellar until Griffith, hand picked to run the club by Ban Johnson, arrived as manager in 1914. Under “The Old Fox,” the Senators were competitive through the remainder of the Deadball Era, though the franchise didn’t claim its first pennant until 1924. By then, Griffith had become owner of the team, which was managed by “Boy Wonder” Bucky Harris, a 27-year old second baseman. Johnson, a month

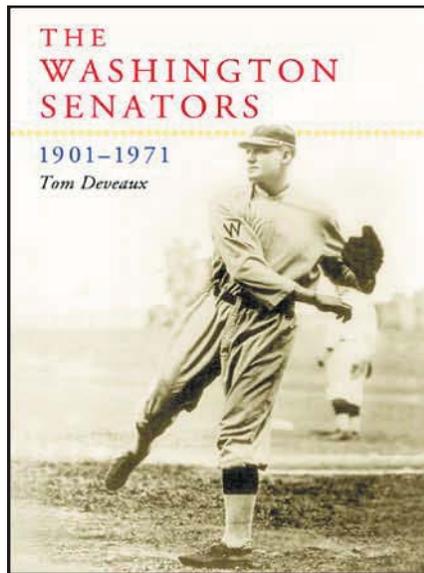
Continued on page 5.

shy of his 37th birthday, entered the seventh game of the World Series against the New York Giants in relief in the ninth inning and, aided by an auspicious bounce, became the winning pitcher in the game that brought Washington its only World Championship.

The Senators returned to the Fall Classic in 1925 under Harris and again in 1933 under Joe Cronin, but the team lost both times. After the '33 World Series appearance, the franchise was rarely competitive, and by the 1950's, Washington was so often a cellar dweller that Broadway and Hollywood both poked fun at the team with the musical *Damn Yankees*. After the 1960 season, the franchise was moved to Minnesota and became the Twins. Without skipping a beat, baseball put a new team in Washington, one that floundered for 10 years before it too was dispatched, this one to Texas to become the Rangers.

Deveaux tells the tale of both Washington entries, year by year, organized in decade-long chapters. He examines the Senators' performance in context to the AL, details the contributions of each player and includes biographical information when a new figure is introduced. Often that biographical information meanders, and even wanders far afield, before an abrupt jump back to the narrative. Some knowledgeable baseball fans will find the rambling and the recitation of well known baseball facts difficult to endure, while others will find the light pace, the anecdotes, and the readable style endearing.

Readers interested in the Deadball Era will find the Henry Thomas biography of Walter Johnson, a Deveaux source, a more comprehensive look at one of this work's key figures. The *Washington Senators, 1901-1971*, which includes a thorough index, a useful bibliography and appendices that feature year by year results for the Senators, and statistics for Hall of Famers who played for Washington, deserves a neighboring place on bookshelves as a comprehensive and readable history of an original AL franchise.◆



SABR 36 Report, continued from page 3.

Gene Carney: As individual presentations resumed on Saturday, the author of the book that Hemond praised took the podium.

Seattle is a terrific city and the extracurriculars gave the conference sessions stiff competition, beginning to end. One I was happy to attend was "Of Deadballs and Dead Relatives: A Granddaughter's 30-Year Journey" presented by Dr. Susan Dellinger.

It was easy to be confused—I could have been in "Why This Passion?"—a title of a Norman Macht session on my hit list. Susan Dellinger had the passion, but she answered that question a much different way. The story of Edd Roush was told simply and lovingly, by Susan, his granddaughter, to the larger family of Baseball. The audience sat at old Edd's knee, begging for a tidbit about Ty Cobb. We got our wish when Susan explained that Edd had been challenged throughout his career to compete with Cobb—by none other than his wife, Essie, who was Cobb's greatest fan! They heard about the star of a sport, and saw a family album filled with wonderful photographs and memories. Sometimes an audience can feel trapped—like they are being forced to watch home movies that are too intimate, or too other-worldly. Susan's telling was just right, and drew the group in.

The only criticism is one that can be made of the whole conference—there was too little time allotted to hear more of the story, including its excursion into the dark hour of baseball, the 1919 World Series, and its end. We *know* it ends in Cooperstown with a bronze exclamation point, but—oh well, we'll just have to read the rest in *Red Legs and Black Sox: Edd Roush and the Untold Story of the 1919 World Series*.

The final presentation being reviewed here was a definite not-to-be-missed event.

Susan Dellinger: What baseball researcher worth his or her spikes could possibly resist hearing the venerable Norman Macht speak on the topic, "Baseball: Why this Passion?" During the full hour allotted to him, Mr. Macht more than fulfilled our expectations. Interspersing quotes from Walt Whitman and Will Rogers, this intelligent and respected member of the SABR elite asked us to pause amid the panoply of numbers, charts and statistics. We happily followed the lead of our philosophic Pied Piper into the land that defies measurement and celebrates emotion as members of the audience stood up and gave testimonials—sharing their own personal baseball "love stories."

A few memorable quotations from Mr. Macht may whet the reader's appetite.

"Everyone likes a story. Every game is a nine inning fable."

"Like democracy, baseball is the great leveler. The wealthy, the poor gather together around the ticker tape...blending generations of young and old."

"In this new land of immigrants, we needed rituals and old-fashioned heroes. The Irish had King Kelly while the Italians thrilled to their native son, DiMaggio."

"It's a simple game that everyone can understand. Anyone—from Russian immigrants to Harvard intellectuals to Ethel Dorn, Cubs fan par excellence—is free to express an opinion without fear of consequences."

"Baseball is a chance to belong to something bigger than yourself—to forget your troubles for a little while."

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Thus we all forgot our troubles for a stolen weekend in Seattle. My sincerest apologies to those presenters on topics of Deadball interest that I missed, re: Ron Selter (“Home Runs in the Deadball Era”), Rockne Skybyrg (“Shoeless Joe Jackson”), and Richard Danko (“Rube Kroh”). Alas, there are just not enough innings!◆

(Footnotes)

¹ Mike Marshall appeared on the Seattle Pilots Panel on Friday. Four representatives discussed the 1969 expansion team (Jim Bouton, Steve Hovley, Jim Pagliaroni and Marshall.)

Thorn to Edit New Journal

John Thorn, a Deadball Era Committee member and winner of the 2006 Bob Davids Award, has announced that he will serve as editor of *Base Ball*, a peer-reviewed journal to be published twice each year by McFarland. Offering the best in original research and analysis, the journal will promote study of baseball’s early history, from its protoball roots to 1920, and its rise to prominence within American popular culture.

Base Ball welcomes submissions on all aspects of the early game, including major and minor league play, non-league baseball of all types, origins, business of baseball, biography, art and literature. Articles should generally run 2,500-7,000 words, exclusive of the notes and abstract, and two hard copies of the double-spaced manuscript or an email attachment in Microsoft Word are required. Send submissions to Thorn at 52 Main St., Kingston, NY 12401 or jthorn@newworldsports.org.◆

what reason I do not know) at the name Napoleon Lajoie. It was a name I had repeated to myself countless times before (although I think I pronounced his last name La-Joey, or maybe La-Joy). For some reason, this time when I saw his name, nestled between the more familiar Willie Mays and George Brett on the all-time list, I stopped and said to myself, “Who the hell was that guy, anyway?”

So I grabbed my *Baseball Encyclopedia* and turned the page to his playing record. And suddenly, it was like the very ground, on which I thought I knew everything one needed to know about baseball history (ha!), opened up beneath my feet. I discovered very quickly that there was much more to Napoleon Lajoie than his 3,242 hits. There was his .338 batting average, 657 doubles, 1,504 runs scored, and 1,599 RBI. There was, also, his 1901 Triple Crown, his four consecutive batting titles, and his four slugging percentage crowns. Suddenly, a player whom I had always irrationally associated with Lou Brock, because he had more than 3,000 hits and not much power, looked nothing like Lou Brock at all. In between the black and white print in my *Baseball Encyclopedia*, Lajoie looked like a monster. While my mind struggled to picture a second baseman capable of inflicting that kind of damage with his bat, I grappled with another question: How come I had never really heard of him before? Where was the full-length biography of him, or the motion picture about his life? Who was this guy, seemingly named after an early nineteenth century European emperor, who had eluded my notice for so many years?

Soon after making my discovery, I set out to find out as much as I could about Lajoie: his personality, the teams he played for, his fielding ability, his batting style, and perhaps most importantly, how you pronounced his name. Over the ensuing years I have experienced countless moments of joy, thanks to my initial curiosity about Lajoie. He was the portal through which the lost world of the Deadball Era emerged before my eyes. Whenever I feel as if the Deadball Era is a dead, useless subject, I renew my faith by going back to Lajoie. I look again at his records, as if I had never seen them before. I look again at the photo of him I have hanging on my wall, as if his is the face of a complete stranger. This is no mere trick: it serves as a fundamental reminder that the past is always open to new questions and new interpretations, and that the Deadball Era is not just a brief moment in the game’s long history, but also a strange, foreign country, where the language, customs, and values are all vaguely familiar, yet disconcertingly displaced from the surroundings to which we are accustomed. In truth, I think we still know very little about Lajoie and about the Deadball Era. His presence in the record books and the official registers should not provide us with the comfort that comes with too much superficial knowledge; rather, it should unsettle us with the reminder of all we still do not know.◆



Norman Macht speaks on “Why This Passion?” at the SABR 36 Conference.