

THE
National  Pastime

**BASEBALL
IN THE
PEACH STATE**

EDITED BY
KEN FENSTER AND WYNN MONTGOMERY

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Note from the Editors

THIS JOURNAL WAS CONCEIVED when SABR chose Atlanta to host its 2010 national convention. Three Magnolia Chapter coeditors distributed a call for papers, seeking articles that focused on some aspect of Georgia's broad history of baseball at every level—from youth leagues (such as the ones that produced current Braves phenom Jason Heyward and three Little League World Series winners) through high schools and colleges to the professional ranks.

We received proposals that covered a wealth of topics and came from a diverse group of writers (published authors and rookies) from across the United States and Canada. Most of these authors met the established deadlines and survived the rigorous rounds of comments from our triumvirate of editors; only ten fell by the wayside. We also lost one local editor, who had to devote more time to the increasing demands of his paying job.

Those authors who weathered the local editing process soon learned the difference between amateur and professional editors, as SABR's factcheckers and copyeditors scrutinized every article for accuracy, clarity, and compliance with the SABR style guide. Some found the process to be painful; all agree that their articles were much improved.

Those articles are what this effort was about. As you will discover, they do capture Georgia's rich and varied baseball traditions, which began long before the Braves became our first major-league team. A quintet of vignettes presents little-known episodes that illustrate the game's influence in a variety of nineteenth-century settings. Another article explores our state's long history as a spring-training site. We also offer a detailed look at the spring-training camp that housed Braves' prospects while the parent club was still up North.

The Braves were not Atlanta's first successful professional baseball team; three articles tell of the exploits of the Atlanta Crackers. One looks at a single extraordinary game played in 1910; two others look at powerful teams from the 1950s, when the Crackers were called "The Southern Yankees" because of their dominance on the field. Another article traces the history of the Atlanta Black Crackers.

Georgia's link with minor-league baseball did not begin or end with the Crackers. Over the years, some thirty-eight Georgia cities have fielded teams in fifteen minor leagues—from Class D to Triple A. You will find here a detailed account of the brief life of one such league and an exploration of the importance of the semiprofessional teams that represented the textile mills of northwest Georgia.

Of course, the Braves receive some attention. They are the subject of the publication's only poem, paying tribute to some of the

players who became hometown heroes. Many of these players also made the Magnolia Chapter's "All-Time Atlanta Braves All-Star Team," which is presented here. Other articles examine the impact of the Braves and Ted Turner on the broadcasting industry and pay homage to a beloved Braves announcer.

Georgia is the birthplace of some of baseball's greatest players, several of whom were selected for the Magnolia Chapter's "All-Time Georgia-Born All-Star Team." Biographies included here give you insight into the careers of some of these players (and some others who are less well known). You will find the story of the Georgia beginning of one Hall of Fame career and one fan's case for enshrinement of a local legend. You will meet one of the few surviving participants in the Negro Leagues, the youngest person ever to play professional baseball, and a legendary college coach. All of them are Georgians. You also will gain new information about Ty Cobb, the "Georgia Peach." One article traces his acting career; another explores his relationship with his controversial biographer; the third offers a first-person account through the eyes of a young batboy.

Several authors share their personal stories with us. One describes the life of a minor-league executive during the late 1940s and early 1950s; another relives the excitement of being the Braves' radio and TV announcer during the team's first ten years in Atlanta. One fan describes his baseball odyssey that culminated at what is perhaps the most memorable game in Atlanta baseball history—Game 7 of the 1992 NLCS.

Baseball is a team sport that, unlike most, systematically places each individual team member in the spotlight—as he stands alone on the mound or in the batter's box, or as the ball is hit or thrown in his direction. Preparation of this journal replicated this process. It was certainly a team effort, and the final product gives each of our authors time in the spotlight—the undivided attention of the reader.

Just as baseball teams benefit from behind-the-scenes work by a cadre of dedicated, but often anonymous support personnel, this journal reflects the efforts of just such a crew. You will find their names listed at the front of the journal. You are holding the fruits of their labors.

We trust that you will enjoy these articles. We know that you will recognize and appreciate the passion that the authors brought to their task. Most of all, we hope that you will gain new knowledge and a better understanding of "Baseball in the Peach State."

— Ken Fenster and Wynn Montgomery
August 2010



Remembering Skip

PETE VAN WIEREN

I first met Skip Caray on a December day in 1975, when he and I were introduced as the new members of the Atlanta Braves broadcast team. Little did we know that it was the beginning of a 33-year partnership that ended only with his untimely death in August 2008. While numerous broadcasters have had longer major-league careers than ours, only four broadcasting tandems have worked for the same team, at the same time, for a longer stretch of years.

Vin Scully began broadcasting Dodgers games in 1950, and Jaime Jarrin became the team's Spanish play-by-play broadcaster in 1959. They have been together as the bilingual voices of the Dodgers for 51 years and are still going strong. Bob Murphy and Ralph Kiner were Mets broadcasters together for 42 years, beginning in 1962. Murphy retired after the 2003 season. In 1960, Ernie Harwell and George Kell began a string of 36 years together as broadcasters for the Detroit Tigers. Harwell was primarily the radio voice; Kell worked the television side. And the radio team of Marty Brennaman and Joe Nuxhall had a 32-year run as the voices of the Cincinnati Reds before Nuxhall retired.

I didn't know much about Skip when I first met him besides that he was Harry Caray's son and the play-by-play voice of the Atlanta Hawks. But over the years, we got to know each other like brothers. So let me begin this remembrance with a brief biography.

Skip grew up in suburban St. Louis and was a high-school football star—an all-city lineman for Webster Groves High School. A torn-up knee forced him to forgo football when he entered the University of Missouri as a journalism major in the mid-1950s. He wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and become a sportscaster.

He had done some broadcast work while still in high school, hosting a weekly radio show about high-school sports on KMOX in St. Louis. At Missouri, he worked part-time for a local Columbia station and helped his father on Missouri football broadcasts.

After graduating from college, he took minor-league baseball broadcasting jobs with the Tulsa Oilers and the Atlanta Crackers. His first opportunity to broadcast for a major-league team came in the mid-1960s,



GETTY IMAGES

Harry Christopher (Skip) Caray Jr.
(1939–2008)

when he was named the play-by-play announcer for the NBA's St. Louis Hawks.

When the Hawks moved to Atlanta in 1968, Skip moved with them. He told me that he made that move partly to get out from under his father's shadow. "St. Louis was always going to be 'Dad's town,'" he said. "I needed to go somewhere to establish my own identity." That's how Skip landed in Atlanta, and millions of Braves fans nationwide are glad he did.

Skip's irreverent style and sarcastic wit quickly became a trademark of the Braves broadcasts beginning in 1976. There was really no other broadcast style quite like it. When we received an audition tape from an aspiring broadcaster, we would often note how the announcer seemed to be trying to sound like Vin Scully or Al Michaels. But we never received a tape from someone trying to sound like Skip. No one could.

Skip's philosophy of broadcasting was short and simple. "Tell the truth . . . have some fun." And that's

exactly how Skip proceeded. He was brutally honest. If he didn't think an umpire got a call right, he'd say so. If he didn't like it that the start of a game was being delayed to accommodate a television network, he'd let you know. When the Braves were playing poorly, he wouldn't sugarcoat it. His honesty even extended to sponsors.

One year, the Coca-Cola Company decided to unveil a new product, Vanilla Coke, on one of our telecasts. During the game, a sample of the new beverage was brought into the broadcast booth. Skip and Joe Simpson were supposed to try it and then pass along their recommendation to the viewer. After they had each taken a sip, Joe asked, "Well, Skip, what do you think?" "I don't like it," Skip replied, "too sweet." After that exchange, few sponsors dared risk introducing a new product on our telecasts ever again.

Skip had one of the quickest wits I've ever been around. Some of his lines became legendary to Braves followers:

- Late in a blowout game: "If you promise to patronize our sponsors, you have my permission to walk the dog."
- Almost every game: "We go to the top of another fifth."
- If the situation warranted: "The bases are loaded and I sorta wish I was too."

And we can't forget: "That foul ball was caught by a fan from Hahira, Georgia." It was amazing how many times he was asked how he knew where every fan was from.

He also loved to stir things up. In the late 1970s, the *Atlanta Constitution* ran a story about the lack of fan interest in the Braves. No one was attending the games, they said: no one was listening, no one was watching, and nobody cared. Skip took exception to the story and several times during the broadcast invited viewers and listeners to call the newspaper and tell them, "I'm watching the Braves." He then gave out the newspaper's telephone number. The response overloaded the *Constitution's* switchboard. It took nearly a day to get it back to normal. Skip loved it.

Sometimes his mischief extended beyond the ballpark. One night after a game, we were having a drink at our hotel in Houston. The bartender was an attractive girl from Czechoslovakia who told us she was going to take her U.S.-citizenship test the next day. "What sort of questions do they ask on a test like that?" Skip asked. She handed him a booklet covering the test's subject matter, and Skip began quizzing her on some of the

information she was supposed to know. How many states? How many senators? When he got to "Name the first five presidents of the United States," she hit a roadblock. She knew Washington, Adams, and Jefferson, but she couldn't think of the fourth. Skip gave her the name. "Are you sure?" she asked. "Says so right here," Skip answered, holding up the booklet.

For the rest of the night, Skip continued to go back to that question to make sure the young lady had it right. As we were about to leave, he asked her one final time. And she had the list down perfectly, just as Skip had taught her: "George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, ERNIE JOHNSON, and James Monroe." "Always glad to help," Skip said to me as we walked out.

But behind this playful side of Skip was a dedicated broadcaster—although he would never have been a SABR member. While he understood the importance of the records, the numbers, and the history of the game, these were not his main areas of interest. All of that research was best left for someone else.

What mattered to Skip was the game being played that day. What strategies would the managers use? How was the defense positioned? Who was playing well? And who wasn't? Who was left on the bench? Each game was a story in itself, but he always remembered to connect it to the bigger picture as well.

The game was always the important part of the day. All of the pre- and postgame shows that we broadcasters are obligated to do were a nuisance to him.

We broadcast more than 5,000 games together, and every day was a new adventure. Whether the team was winning or losing, we always found something to laugh about. Our wives got to know each other. Our families became close. Our grandchildren began arriving just one day apart in 1997. We had a friendship that extended well beyond the broadcast booth.

It was tough watching this fun-loving partner of mine suffer from the myriad of health problems that came along in the last few years of his life. He reduced his travel schedule in 2007 and quit traveling with the team altogether in 2008. Fans noticed nights when he was a little slow or his speech was a little slurry, but that was primarily because of all the medications he was taking. Skip's mind stayed sharp, but sometimes his body wasn't willing to cooperate.

When he died on August 3, 2008, it was like I'd lost a brother. And every Braves fan felt like they had lost a good friend.

Skip was a tremendous broadcaster, one who eschewed the need for a signature call. "You can't call every play the same way," he would tell you, "and you

can't end every game with the same words. Every home run is different. Every game is different."

So Skip never had a trademark home-run call like Mel Allen's "Going, going, gone!" And you never heard him end a game with a catchphrase like Marty Brennaman's "This one belongs to the Reds" or Jack Buck's "That's a winner."

All you ever heard was Skip being Skip. Honest, witty, sometimes grumpy, always entertaining Skip.

And when those rare, unforgettable moments arose, he always delivered. Remember October 14, 1992, Game 7 of the NLCS versus Pittsburgh:

"BRAVES WIN, BRAVES WIN, BRAVES WIN, BRAVES WIN . . . BRAVES WIN!"

Who needs a catchphrase when those simple words, delivered by Skip, said it all? ■

Ms. Eliza Gets a Seat

RICHARD McBANE

IT WASN'T APRIL FOOL'S DAY, but it was a Friday the 13th; maybe that explains a lot. It was also a beautiful April afternoon in 1894, so Eliza Barnard, like many other residents in her neighborhood, decided to watch the game being played at the nearby baseball park. And that's exactly what she was doing when an Atlanta policeman came by and hauled her down from the roof of her house.

Described by the *Atlanta Constitution* as "a lanky mulatto female with a serious face," she was promptly transported to a seat in the courtroom of Records Court Judge Andrew E. Calhoun, where she was "charged with sitting on top of her house and allowing her gaze to rest upon the restive forms of the ball tossers as they flitted back and forth upon the diamond."¹

The *Constitution* noted that "she did not deny having, with much exertion and labor, hoisted herself to the roof of her house to look upon the game, but she said she thought she had a right to do so."²

While Judge Andy Calhoun was a serious jurist when weighty cases were presented, he also had a lively sense of humor in dealing with the variety of human foibles that were paraded before him. The *Constitution*,

in another context, described him as "one of the most entertaining men in the world. . . . His jokes never tire, and he never tires telling them. He has a way of acting them while telling them that is simply irresistible. He pushes his thumbs back under the armholes of his vest and, leaning far back, pours these jokes out to the group of attentive and appreciative listeners, and they always are rounded off with a hundred ha-has from the boys."³

With Ms. Eliza before him, having asserted her belief that she'd done nothing wrong, Judge Calhoun was not at a loss. Perhaps he was already savoring how he'd tell the story to some ready audience when he said he had "a question in his mind whether she should be allowed to sit there or not." It was not, however, a difficult question for him to answer. As the *Constitution* explained his reasoning: "If it was her house he believed she had the inalienable constitutional right to sit on it day and night."⁴ ■

Notes

1. *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 April 1894, 2.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 April 1894, 11.
4. *Atlanta Constitution*, 14 April 1894, 2.

Frank Anderson

The Dean of Southern College Baseball Coaches, 1916–1944

PAUL HUDSON

[He] could watch a player plow a field and tell whether there was baseball in his bones.

— said of baseball coach Frank Anderson at Oglethorpe University

On May 11, 1963, the loyal alumni of Oglethorpe University gathered at historic Hermance Stadium on the outskirts of Atlanta, Georgia, for a joyful occasion. They dedicated the verdant two-acre athletic flats—set deep in a natural amphitheater bounded by stair-shaped rubble-cement stands behind home plate—as Anderson Field. The guest of honor was a slightly jug-eared octogenarian, Coach Frank Anderson. Affectionately hailed on campus as the “father of Oglethorpe athletics” and more widely known as an illustrious “dean of Southern college baseball coaches,” he had long since retired. “In dedication to the zeal and talent of Frank B. Anderson, Sr.,” a bronze plaque reads, “who during his years as head baseball coach 1916–1944 helped place the name of Oglethorpe University within the highest ranks of College Baseball, the athletic field you overlook is hereby named Anderson Field.”¹

Frank Anderson, 81, looked out on the field where tiny Oglethorpe had won two Southern intercollegiate championships. “I was there [in 1916] when the school opened,” he recalled. It was not long before Anderson was to develop a powerhouse baseball program known as giant killers. The venerable coach briefly reminisced about his best Oglethorpe player, the legendary Luke Appling, who later became one of the greatest Depression-era shortstops in a Hall of Fame career with the Chicago White Sox. The old coach delivered one of his last quoted statements in 1963 at an Oglethorpe sports banquet. With clear blue eyes twinkling in his leathery face, Anderson exhorted the young men in his audience, “Dreams do come true . . . so keep on dreaming.”² Anderson died three years after the field was dedicated in his honor.

Born on June 16, 1882, on a family farm near Powder Springs in Cobb County, Georgia, about seven miles from the Douglas County line, Frank Buttner Ander-

son grew up dreaming about baseball. His family moved to nearby Douglasville in Douglas County in 1890, when the baseball craze in America was underway. Anderson excelled not only on the ballfield but also in the classroom. In 1900 he enrolled at the University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens. He played three years of varsity baseball and was All-Southern second baseman in 1903 and 1904, when he captained the team.³

At UGA, Frank Anderson established an exemplary standard of the “gentleman” athlete that he was to encourage in all young men who later were to play for him as coach. He always stressed running for conditioning; indeed, his college record for the 440-yard dash was 51 seconds on an oval track, which was not to be broken for 30 years, and then on a straightaway. The ultimate recognition of Frank Anderson as a college gentleman athlete was his election by his peers into the UGA Sphinx honorary society—patterned after Skull and Bones at Yale—which was limited each year to only 13 outstanding young men.⁴ His greatest sports moment as a collegian was on April 26, 1903, when he hit a ninth-inning, two-out home run to tie the game against archrival Georgia Tech at old Brisbane Park on Formwalt Street in Atlanta. With Tech leading 3–0 and just one out to go, Atlanta sportswriter Morgan Blake later recalled, fans had begun to “file to the turnstiles,” but Anderson “pulled a Frank Merriwell on Tech.” What happened was truly the stuff of baseball dreams.⁵

The story, as told with marvelous hyperbole by a UGA student correspondent, was to take on legendary proportions. Anderson was in a pressure-packed situation, but it “only made him smile.” And then, with a mighty swing, he “lifted the next pitch high and dry over the left-field fence and chased around the bases like the bailiff was after him.” After he crossed home plate there was reportedly so much excitement “that the game had to give way for a few minutes to the

hundred or more men [fans] who rushed the field to embrace Frank.” Tech supporters bitterly alleged that the homer was the result of luck. The 3–3 score meant that “new life was injected into the team and victory was assured for the Red and Black.”⁶ Indeed, UGA won the game; Anderson’s teammates, in the custom of the times, later awarded Anderson a medal for his achievement, and it became one of his most prized sports mementos. More than twenty-five years later, UGA seniors were still telling underclassmen the classic baseball story of Frank’s home run.⁷

After receiving his A.B. degree in 1904, Anderson began coaching in Georgia prep schools. In his first assignment, in 1904–5 with the University School for Boys at Stone Mountain, Anderson’s Bluebirds compiled a 12–1 championship record. Thus he began a forty-year coaching career and the first of his many championship teams. In five years of prep-school coaching, Anderson always held the title Athletics Director and Mathematics Professor. He believed that mental discipline was vital to learning mathematics and to playing sports, and he thought that academic and athletic endeavors should be closely related. Anderson never liked the term “star” and preferred to call his players “gentlemen” athletes.⁸



Coach Frank Anderson always wore his uniform to practice and to games. He held practices after classes (after labs for science students) and devoted more than half of his drills to hitting, where he said most baseball players need it most.

COURTESY OF OGLETHORPE UNIVERSITY, ATLANTA, GA

Anderson married Lorena Walton Brown in Athens in 1905—she had attended the Lucy Cobb Institute there and was a UGA baseball fan of his—and the newlyweds moved to Thomaston, Georgia. Frank and Lorena raised a family of five boys, all of whom played college baseball as second basemen, like their father.⁹ Anderson taught and coached at R. E. Lee Institute and in 1905–6 won his second prep-school championship, with a 12–2 record. There Coach Anderson recruited what he later called “[his] first real prospect.” Paul Stowers, Anderson remembered, “was six feet and five inches tall, as slender as a rail, and could throw a baseball like [a gun shoots] a bullet.” The coach, having somehow found Stowers guarding convicts on a chain gang in Upson County, Georgia, immediately brought him to R. E. Lee as a pitcher. “Connie Mack signed him right out of school,” Anderson remembered. Stowers later had a minor-league career, mostly in the South, from 1907 to 1912, winning ten games or more for four seasons.¹⁰

Anderson’s success as a prep-school championship coach put him much in demand throughout Georgia, and in 1906–7 he assumed duties at Gordon Military Institute in Barnesville. Assessing the talent, Coach Anderson scheduled a game between his juniors and seniors before the season opened. He had seen young Bradley Hogg, who had a “peculiar sidearm delivery,” playing catch on campus and, on an inspired hunch, asked him to pitch. “Nobody could hit it,” Anderson chuckled, so Hogg “pitched nearly all our games that spring and we never lost a one.” After a stellar career at Mercer University in Macon, Hogg played in the National League for Boston and Chicago. He was also successful in six years in the minor leagues, with a .620 winning percentage and two twenty-win seasons, including a 27–13 record in 1917 with Los Angeles of the Pacific Coast League. Hogg’s best major-league season was 1918, when he was 13–13 with three shutouts for the Phillies.¹¹

In 1909, Anderson’s prep-school success was so great that UGA invited him to return to Athens to serve as head baseball coach. Anderson always regarded a 1910 contest hosted by Tech at The Flats, the historic old playing field in Atlanta, as the most exciting game he had ever coached. It was an ultimate defensive struggle, a 0–0 tie that went fourteen innings until the game was called. The two starting pitchers struck out ten and twelve batters. The bases were loaded seven times, yet superior defense prevailed. “There were a dozen times when it looked as if the tie might be broken,” Anderson recalled, “but the fielders worked as sensationally as the pitchers and every scoring

threat was killed.” He was particularly proud of his catcher, who cleanly fielded seven bunts in front of home plate to throw men out at second every time. A scout from the Chicago Cubs who was there agreed with Anderson that it was the most exciting game he had ever seen. “It was certainly the Halley’s Comet in the baseball firmament,” wrote sportswriter Dick Jemison, “the brightest light that had ever shown in this section of the country.”¹² In subsequent seasons, 1911 and 1912, Anderson compiled 17–5 and 15–6–2 records for UGA to win consecutive SIAA (Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association) championships.¹³

Despite his success coaching at UGA, Anderson in 1913 relocated to Atlanta, moving his family to a residence at 224 East Ponce de Leon Avenue in Decatur, where Frank and Lorena were to live for more than thirty years. He taught and coached at Commercial High for the 1914 and 1915 seasons, but these won-lost records are not clear. By then Anderson had heard about the flamboyant educator Dr. Thornwell Jacobs (1877–1956), who had gained much publicity with his plan to “resurrect” Oglethorpe University. Old Oglethorpe, founded in 1835 near Milledgeville in the approximate middle of Georgia, ceased to exist during the Civil War. President Jacobs, having secured land nine miles northeast of Atlanta in the wilderness off Peachtree Road, opened the doors of a refounded Oglethorpe University in 1916 and hired Anderson to serve as registrar, professor of mathematics, and athletic director.¹⁴

Jacobs wanted his college to be a “living memorial” to James Edward Oglethorpe, the founder of the original British colony of Georgia. The granite Gothic architectural style he favored was inspired by Oglethorpe’s alma mater, Corpus Christi, Oxford. The school yearbook was christened *Yamacraw* after the famous bluff near Savannah where Oglethorpe had arrived in Georgia. For athletic teams, Jacobs and Anderson chose an unusual mascot—the petrel, a small, persistent seabird that had inspired Oglethorpe when he was at sea. The nickname for the university teams, the Stormy Petrels (pronounced, idiosyncratically, “pea-trels”), is unique in American intercollegiate athletics.¹⁵

As a late “start-up” baseball operation in 1917, Anderson was obliged to arrange a partial schedule. Oglethorpe practiced on its rough campus field and did not have stands or facilities for spectators. The Petrels played their home games in Atlanta at Spiller Field (later called Ponce de Leon Ball Park) or Grant Field at Georgia Tech. Anderson’s first collegiate victory was at Grant Field, a split of a doubleheader with Clemson

University. His captain that year was catcher Lucien “Bird” Hope of Atlanta, a Tech High School graduate and astute student of the game who became a prominent Atlanta high-school coach and later would coach Luke Appling at Fulton High in Atlanta’s City League.¹⁶

In 1918 Anderson coached his first big win for Oglethorpe, a tight 1–0 victory over Vanderbilt at Spiller Field. “Yesterday I saw a dream come true,” Jacobs later exulted.¹⁷ Winning on the mound was freshman Absalom Holbrook “Red” Wingo Jr. of Norcross, Georgia, who really was a third baseman. Immediately after his only college season, Wingo signed with the Atlanta Crackers. He played briefly for Connie Mack and the Philadelphia Athletics in 1919, later logging five seasons (1924–28) for the Detroit Tigers, some of that time under player-manager Ty Cobb. For six major-league seasons and 1,326 at-bats, Wingo hit .308. His best year was 1925, when he compiled a .370 average.¹⁸

By 1921, Anderson was developing full schedules and had a record of 17–10–3, which included sweeps of doubleheaders at Ponce de Leon Ball Park against the Auburn Tigers and the University of Alabama Red Elephants. At the end of the season, Oglethorpe pitcher Lucas Newton “Chief” Turk of Homer, Georgia, signed with Columbia, South Carolina, of the old Sally League. Clark Griffith bought his contract in 1922, and Turk quickly (and briefly) became a major leaguer with the Washington Senators.¹⁹ Eventually Turk, an excellent student in science as well as an outstanding pitcher, earned an M.D. degree from Emory University and became a prominent Atlanta doctor. One of Turk’s college friends, John Randolph Smith, once related a story from their undergraduate days. Several students were on a nature walk with Oglethorpe botany professor Eugene Heath. Spying a beautiful bloom on a tulip tree about forty feet away and knowing Turk’s reputation as a precision power pitcher, the professor asked his student if he could throw a rock to detach the flower—whereupon, Smith swears, Turk calmly picked up a rock, took aim, and threw it, clipping the stem holding the bloom!²⁰

Coach Anderson’s 1921 team captain, outfielder Roy Carlyle of Buford, Georgia, who played with Turk, also went on to the major leagues after a brief stint in the minors. From 1925 to 1926, Carlyle played for Washington, Boston, and New York in the American League. A collection of clippings, including one said to be from the *Guinness World Records*, located at the Old Timers Baseball Association in Norcross, Georgia, relates that on July 4, 1929, in Oakland, California, Carlyle hit the longest home run in professional base-

ball, off Ernie Nevers, a former Stanford All-American football player. Carlyle hit a fastball that left the park and landed on a roof outside the stadium. Witnesses noted the point of impact, a still-visible dent in a gravel rooftop, and then carefully measured the distance at 618 feet.²¹ The college success of Georgians “Red” Wingo, “Chief Turk,” and Roy Carlyle at Oglethorpe from 1918 to 1921 began a sustained interest in Anderson’s Oglethorpe teams by major-league scouts.

It was not until April 29, 1922, that Anderson, after more than five years, finally hosted a home game on the Oglethorpe campus. Trustee Harry Hermance in 1919 had made a pledge that he would donate \$5,000 per year for ten years to begin building a stadium, and Oglethorpe, with the help of Anderson’s athletes, had hewn out a field on the wooded campus. Playing Wofford College, Oglethorpe had a 2–1 lead in the top of the ninth, but the Terriers loaded the bases with no outs. In the twinkling of an eye, Oglethorpe pulled a triple play on a ball sharply hit to an unidentified infielder for a sudden walk-off win.²² In his unpublished history of Anderson’s coaching career, Earle J. Moore relates this remarkable story with no supporting details, and there appears to be no written account of this particular game. It is indeed difficult to envision any single baseball defensive-play scenario that would have made for a narrower margin of victory.

Meanwhile, Anderson continued to recruit excellent ballplayers from unlikely rural places. When he was in Mountville, Georgia, a farming community in Troup County near LaGrange, Anderson in 1920 met Jay Partridge working “between two plow handles” in a cornfield. Indeed, Atlanta writers believed “Ander-

son could watch a player plow a field and tell whether there was baseball in his bones.” And when he talked to the friendly, polite Partridge, the coach knew he wanted this young man on his team.²³ Partridge, who was an honor graduate from Oglethorpe in 1924, later played second and third base for Brooklyn. His best year as a Dodger was in 1927, with 572 at-bats and a .260 batting average, but his career lasted only two years.²⁴

In 1924, Anderson’s Stormy Petrels became Southern champions when they won twenty of twenty-two games, compiling a .909 winning percentage. The only losses were splits in doubleheaders with Dartmouth and the University of Georgia. A turning point came early in the season when the Oglethorpe academic dean suspended “a certain student” for an infraction concerning a university rule and most of the team went “on strike.” The players met with President Jacobs in his office, asking for reinstatement of their teammate or they would leave college. “I rose and shook hands with all the squad and told them good-bye,” Jacobs wrote in his diary, “expressing my regret they were leaving us.”²⁵

Undaunted, Anderson quickly rebuilt his team, primarily with scrub players, for a game against Wofford College. The coach knew he could depend on a few varsity regulars not to sit out the game. These included Jay Partridge and the outstanding pitcher Leonard “Lefty” Willis. Anderson, who as registrar knew all the Oglethorpe students, then recruited good athletes, especially track runners. The Stormy Petrel “Strike-breakers,” so termed by Jacobs, lambasted the Terriers 18–6. Afterward, the regular ballplayers apologized

to Jacobs, who granted reinstatement in time for a second game against Wofford that Oglethorpe also won. Anderson’s biographer Earle J. Moore contends that this episode, more than any other factor, brought the 1924 players together with their coach and Oglethorpe to allow them to win the Southern championship.²⁶

The critical series for Oglethorpe in 1924 took place when the University of Alabama came to Oglethorpe’s Hermance Field. Alabama, with only two losses—the same as Oglethorpe—had a claim to the Southern championship. This distinction, before the Southeastern Conference, included all Southern colleges, members of the SIAA, the Southern Conference, and those in the region playing as independents. The Petrels got off to a 7–5 lead

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University of Georgia 1904 team, on which Frank Anderson (front row, left) was captain and All-Southern second basemen.

with their second-best pitcher, sophomore Mark “Hump” Humphrey, on the mound. In the fourth inning, in a surprise move, Anderson brought in his ace, and “Lefty” Willis preserved a victory. In the second contest the Petrels, with a somewhat rested Humphrey pitching, easily won 6–1. Oglethorpe continued with two wins over rival Mercer University as well. The Stormy Petrels defeated Georgia Tech, coached by Alva “Kid” Clay, in a doubleheader to win the Atlanta City Championship and became undisputed Southern champions.²⁷

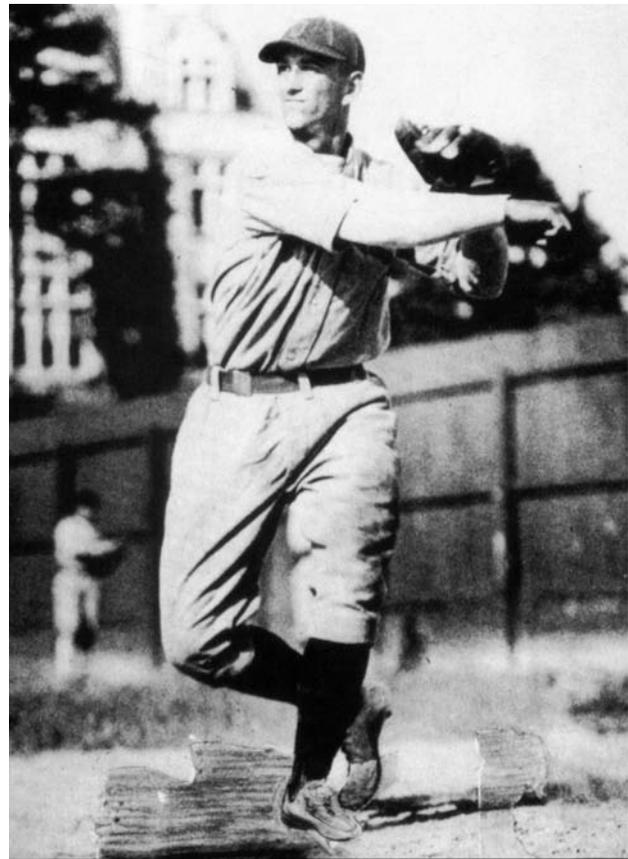
In 1925, Anderson competed well for the Southern championship with a 19–7 record that included sweeps in doubleheaders versus Vanderbilt, Georgia, and Mercer along with splits against Ohio State, Georgia Tech, and the Fort Benning service team. The college yearbook proudly observed that “Oglethorpe played a brand of ball that made her nines famous throughout the country.”²⁸ Some of the best Oglethorpe players signed with major-league teams when they concluded their college careers, sometimes early or after graduation; these included Partridge (Brooklyn Dodgers) and Willis (Pittsburgh Pirates).²⁹

Willis was Coach Anderson’s best southpaw pitcher. Born in the West End of Atlanta in 1902, he was a star athlete at Boys High. In three years, from 1923 to 1925 (freshmen were not allowed to play varsity), Willis logged records of 6–2, 7–0, and 8–0. His best game was a 1–0 victory against Georgia Tech at Grant Field to clinch the 1924 Southern college baseball championship. However, just as important as baseball to Anderson and to Willis were Willis’s studies at the unique Lowry School of Banking and Commerce at Oglethorpe, which attempted to bring “the best academic spirit along the lines of practical success in the country’s business activities.” In his senior year, Lefty’s classmates saluted his versatility and love of his commerce (business) major: “He has many original ideas and expects to use them in the advertising business after he has a fling with the Pittsburgh Pirates.” Unlike many talented athletes whom Anderson coached, Willis was never tempted to leave college early for baseball. As it turned out, the Pirates sold his contract to the New York Giants, which sent Willis to the Columbus (Georgia) Foxes—where he later would pitch against his old college coach.³⁰

Despite all the good students and athletes under Frank Anderson in the mid-1920s, the one destined to have the greatest impact on Georgia baseball played only on the junior varsity and dropped out of college. Otis Earl Mann (1904–90) “attended Oglethorpe University for two years, pitching for the baseball team,”

according to an obituary.³¹ Mann was on the 1925 “Baby Petrels,” the first Oglethorpe freshman team with its own schedule, which had a 14–5 record and also played scrimmage games against Anderson’s varsity. Mann’s coach was Homer Chestnutt on Anderson’s staff. Soon after leaving Oglethorpe, Mann became assistant business manager of the Atlanta Crackers, later in the 1930s rising to president and owner of a phenomenally successful franchise that won ten Souther Association pennants. Mann developed an extensive scouting system. Earle Moore relates that Mann’s “scouts brought in players from farms . . . mill towns . . . school teams . . . everywhere.” The Crackers trained these players at Ponce de Leon Ball Park and then “their contracts were sold to the highest bidder of major league clubs.” This key element of Mann’s success, Moore contends, is reminiscent of what he terms the Anderson System of scouting baseball players on nearly every kind of team in Georgia.³²

By 1927, Anderson’s teams were so consistently strong that he began to schedule professional teams, including the Crackers. Oglethorpe had long competed with the always tough Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, which fielded professional athletes on special service teams. Anderson’s recruiting and scheduling



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Hall of Famer Luke Appling when he played for Oglethorpe in 1930, his only year of college baseball.

COURTESY OF OGLETHORPE UNIVERSITY, ATLANTA, GA



The granite collegiate gothic Oglethorpe University campus on Peachtree Road outside Atlanta during the Great Depression of the 1930s. From left, Hermance Stadium, Lupton Hall bell tower, and Administration Building. The Southern Railroad is in the foreground.

led to a blurring of the line between amateurs and professionals. Oglethorpe shortstop Earl “Shep” Shepherd, for example, started the 1926–27 school year with a contract to play for the Cleveland Indians (under player-manager Tris Speaker) whenever his college career ended.³³ Anderson scheduled Oglethorpe’s opener that season against the Columbus Foxes. Hugh “Buck” Buchanan, from Tate, Georgia, pitched a three-hitter to shut out the Foxes 6–0. But in the second game Lefty Willis defeated his alma mater.³⁴ Two days after the Columbus series, Anderson took his team to play the Atlanta Crackers. Anderson’s decision to pitch Buck Buchanan on two days’ rest looked good as he “mowed down . . . the professionals of Atlanta for six innings as if they were so many tin soldiers.” Meanwhile, the Petrels were demonstrating a stinging offense with one of their characteristically technical aspects of hitting. “Frank Anderson has trained his boys to bunt and squeeze with smoothness and precision,” effused sportswriter Guy Butler,” noting that “two of their three runs were pulled off on perfect bunts.”³⁵

Playing professionals conditioned the Petrels marvelously to compete against college teams. Oglethorpe scored victories against Clemson and Furman and again won the 1927 Atlanta Championship, this time with 4–3 and 6–1 wins against Georgia Tech in a drizzling rain at Grant Field. Shortstop Shep Shepherd slipped on the wet turf when making a throw and hurt his arm, but Anderson shifted him to outfield for the next nine games. Shepherd reported to the Cleveland Indians on June 1, 1927, as scheduled.³⁶ Meanwhile, alumnus Lefty Willis still aspired to play in the major leagues.

Tragedy struck young Willis in the 1928 offseason in Atlanta. After taking his new bride to dinner at the Atlanta Athletic Club one cold night, Willis found that their car would not start and tried to crank it. His left

hand caught on the license plate on the front bumper, damaging his tendons and muscles severely and ending his baseball career. Rather than dwell on what had happened, Willis used his Oglethorpe degree, gained on a baseball scholarship, to begin a successful thirteen-year career in the circulation department with William Randolph Hearst’s *Atlanta Georgian*. Willis eventually realized a lifelong dream when he became the owner of a successful Atlanta advertising firm.³⁷

The year 1929 had all the earmarks of prosperity for Anderson’s athletic program when the impressive first granite section of Hermance Stadium was ready for play. Oglethorpe dedicated it when the Stormy Petrels hosted the University of Dayton Flyers in a football game on October 26 of that year. Three days later, Harry Hermance lost his entire fortune when the stock market crashed. Hermance Stadium, which was intended to be bowl-shaped, never was completed and even today stands as a monument to the Great Depression.³⁸

In the Depression year 1930, Anderson again produced a Southern championship with a 17–1 record, scheduled against nearby teams as a cost-cutting measure. Oglethorpe opened with a doubleheader sweep against the Clemson Tigers at Hermance Stadium. The first game marked the collegiate debut of Petrel shortstop Lucius Benjamin “Luke” Appling Jr., who drove in three runs with a double. Oglethorpe swept a doubleheader from the Fort Benning Soldiers and also a three-game series against Georgia Tech at old Rose Bowl Field in Atlanta. It was clear that the Stormy Petrels were having a spectacular year. “As for Frank Anderson, I think he has one of the finest nines in Southern baseball,” opined sportswriter Morgan Blake, coining a term by dubbing Oglethorpe a “Sportanic Eruption.”³⁹ Anderson, who had continued his practice of scheduling professional teams, led his Petrels

against the Lindale (Georgia) Pepperells of the Georgia-Alabama League and split a doubleheader, the only Petrel loss that year. Oglethorpe rebounded with a sweep over the Carrollton (Georgia) Champs.⁴⁰

When Anderson brought his 12–1 team, undefeated in collegiate competition, into Athens to play the University of Georgia, Oglethorpe faced a stiff challenge. In a twelve-year rivalry, the Bulldogs enjoyed a 12–6–3 advantage. But Hubert “Hot” Holcomb slammed the door shut with a one-hit shutout while Oglethorpe erupted for seven runs. Completing doubleheader sweeps against Georgia and Mercer, Oglethorpe won another state championship. With four games remaining, the Petrels were stunned when catcher and team leader Al Kimbrel abruptly signed a contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers and left school to play for the Johnstown (Pennsylvania) Johnnies of the Middle Atlantic League. Anderson characteristically wished Kimbrel the best, and Oglethorpe played on.⁴¹

The Stormy Petrels ended the 1930 season against Mercer, as the teams helped dedicate the new Calaway Stadium at a neutral site in LaGrange, Georgia. Oglethorpe wanted to complete the season undefeated in college play to become undisputed Southern champion. The hero was Luke Appling, who in his last game as a collegian hit four consecutive home runs and later signed with the Atlanta Crackers of the Southern Association.⁴² Hitting .326 in 104 games with Atlanta in his only minor-league season, Appling began his distinguished professional career, and the Chicago White Sox bought his contract. He ended his long 1930 season with a .308 average in six games with Chicago. It was to be the start of a twenty-year .310 Hall of Fame career as a seven-time All-Star White Sox shortstop.⁴³ In his only year of baseball under Frank Anderson, Appling was one of the greatest hitting college short-

stops of all time. As a right-hander, at times he could seemingly line, slice, or punch singles to the opposite field at will. Anderson once said, “Luke could watch a curve ball” better than any player he ever coached. Moreover, Appling had an ideal hitter’s temperament. “Some hitters miss their hits two days in a row and go into a slump from plain worry,” Anderson observed, “but Luke goes back on the third day to get his share.”⁴⁴

The innovative Anderson was such a widely respected coach in the South that by 1931 he was able to persuade his five major rival institutions—Georgia Tech, UGA, Mercer, Florida, and Auburn—to form the Dixie College Baseball League. He had in November 1929 proposed such an alliance as a cost-cutting measure. The League was designed with symmetry and mathematical precision: Each college was to play the other in two-game series on a home-and-home basis, a kind of massive round robin tournament for a twenty-game season in which individual statistics in common would be extremely meaningful.⁴⁵

The Dixie League arrangement meant that in 1931 Oglethorpe hosted Georgia Tech, the only time the Yellow Jackets ever visited Hermance Stadium. Anderson used a wicked bunt attack—teasing rollers down both baselines and in front of home plate—that bewildered Tech. Young Ralph McGill, destined for Pulitzer greatness as an editorialist for the *Atlanta Constitution*, covered the game and witnessed a “bloody second inning” when the Petrels netted five runs with six hits, three of them bunts. With a 6–5 lead in the eighth inning, Anderson again unleashed aggressive bunts for two more runs to ice the game. “The Petrels bunted the Jackets sick,” McGill reported.⁴⁶ Indeed, as a college baseball strategist Frank Anderson was a notable exponent of the

COURTESY OF OGLETHORPE UNIVERSITY, ATLANTA, GA



Coach Frank Anderson (standing, left) and his 1924 Oglethorpe University Southern champions.

bunt, which he placed into three categories: “the hit (for clever players), the push (bat held tightly and pushed firmly), or the drag (down the baseline).” To players he advised: “Bunt only good balls.” To coaches he said, “Time to use: when score is tied or when you are ahead . . . never when you are behind.”⁴⁷ Oglethorpe’s “bunt victory” over Tech enabled the Stormy Petrels to place second to Auburn, the Dixie League champion. Moreover, with a 2–1 series lead over Tech and a rainout, Oglethorpe for a third consecutive year was the Atlanta City champion.⁴⁸

As the Depression deepened, Anderson’s dream of the Dixie College Baseball League ended in 1932 when Mercer dropped its program and UGA and Tech declined to continue. Anderson began to use his own money for equipment. He eliminated train travel and rented two cars that he and his players drove on short road trips. As colleges curtailed baseball, Anderson creatively scheduled other competition. In 1932 Oglethorpe played teams as diverse as the Atlanta Penitentiary Commodores (understandably restricted to “home” games) and the independent semipro Bona Allen Shoemakers. Sponsored by Bona Allen Mills, they were a dominating force in North Georgia baseball during the Depression, later becoming 1938 semipro national champs.⁴⁹

The greatest opposing team that Anderson ever scheduled for Oglethorpe was the St. Louis Cardinals, led by manager Gabby Street, in an exhibition game in Dublin, Georgia, on March 31, 1933. The Cards, popular in Georgia as the Southernmost major-league team, had been 1931 world champions and were destined to repeat that distinction in 1934. This “Gas House Gang” was returning to St. Louis after spring training in Florida. Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge was special guest of honor for the occasion. One can only imagine the excitement of Anderson and his players when they took the field before an overflow crowd of 2,000 at the Dublin Fairgrounds against such major league stars as Ducky Medwick, Frankie Frisch, and Rogers Hornsby. Adding to the festive air, Dizzy Dean and Pepper Martin served on the umpiring crew. That the Cardinals won 4–0, with eight hits against Oglethorpe’s four, did not detract from a special day for Anderson’s Stormy Petrels.⁵⁰ To those who criticized the coach for scheduling more experienced professional teams, he made no apologies. “You have everything to gain and nothing to lose,” he maintained, and such games were the experiences of a lifetime. Anderson also believed he could see how his players handled pressure while learning first-hand from professionals. Plus, he knew that everyone pulls

for the underdog. Besides, the wise coach smiled, “You might get lucky.”⁵¹

Oglethorpe fielded competitive teams during the Depression, but Anderson’s days of championships were over. His best player of the early 1930s was Elmer “Greek” George of Waycross, Georgia, who logged five seasons of major-league baseball for four teams as a bench player in the late 1930s and early 1940s.⁵² With U.S. involvement in World War II, colleges everywhere lost athletes to the war effort, and Anderson’s players enlisted, were in the Army Reserves and called to active duty, or took jobs in war-related industries. Anderson finished his distinguished coaching career anticlimactically, with a one-game season in 1943 at Hermance Stadium against an Army team, Lawson General Hospital from nearby Chamblee. Oglethorpe won 6–1, with Earle Moore pitching.⁵³ Anderson subsequently suspended all varsity sports at Oglethorpe, coaching only intramurals, and retired in 1944.

Frank Anderson’s record at Oglethorpe over twenty-seven seasons was 296–210–14, a .575 winning percentage against a wide assortment of teams from large universities, small colleges, mills, Army service teams, semipro and professional ranks, all the way up to the St. Louis Cardinals. Against his major rivals, Anderson was competitive against UGA (31–34–3), Georgia Tech (20–22–1), Auburn (22–32–2), Mercer (24–15–1), Florida (12–12–1), and Clemson (10–3). He had shorter rivalries against Alabama (5–6), South Carolina (4–0), Tennessee (4–2), and Vanderbilt (4–1). Far more often than not in these series, Oglethorpe was the visiting team. While Anderson did not schedule small colleges as often, some ongoing rivalries were Furman (13–4), Wofford (8–1), Presbyterian (7–3), and Birmingham Southern (7–2). Other series were against the semipro Buford Shoemakers (6–5), Atlanta Penitentiary (8–0), Fort Benning (14–8), and the Atlanta Crackers (1–9).⁵⁴ During his tenure at tiny Oglethorpe, which averaged enrollment of only a little more than one hundred full-time students, Anderson sent three pitchers and nine regular players to the major leagues for a combined total of about forty years’ playing experience, half of which Luke Appling performed in his Hall of Fame career.⁵⁵

Three years after his retirement from Oglethorpe, Frank and his wife, Lorena, relocated to Albany, Georgia, where he began a new career. He thrived on work, managing the Albany AAA Motor Club office for nineteen years. He relaxed by listening to baseball games on the radio while sitting in a favorite rocking chair on his front porch. Anderson continued correspondence with his “baseball boys,” including Earle J. Moore, his last

Oglethorpe pitcher, who in his own retirement wrote a touching unpublished memoir about his old coach. Frank Anderson died on November 8, 1966, and he and Lorena are buried at Crown Hill Cemetery in Albany.⁵⁶

“Every baseball game is full of thrills,” Frank Anderson once said. “There is a whole lifetime of crucial situations, demanding quick and correct decisions, compressed into each game. That is why it is the greatest sport ever invented.”⁵⁷ Anderson had the uncanny ability to convey his love of the game to those who played it. Oglethorpe player Jim Decker, who traveled with Anderson on a recruiting tour, commented on his rapport with all players. “Everywhere I went with him . . . Coach Anderson was greeted with outstretched arms. He was loved, whether he was at a small town stop sign in Georgia or anywhere we traveled.”⁵⁸ Announcing Anderson’s posthumous induction into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in 1966, Atlanta sportswriter Charlie Roberts saluted “the South’s best-known baseball tutor.”⁵⁹ Anderson Field, which now is lighted and used not only by Oglethorpe but also by various leagues and young players throughout the year, would no doubt make the old coach happy today. “If there exists a baseball heaven in the far beyond for greats that have contributed to the grand old American game,” Ross Wyrosdick of the *Atlanta Constitution* once wrote, then “surely a seat will be reserved for Frank Anderson.”⁶⁰ ■

Notes

1. “Anderson Field to Be Dedicated,” *The Flying Petrel* (National Alumni Association of Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia) 45:6 (April 1963) 5–6; “Anderson Field Dedication,” *Albany* (Georgia) *Herald*, 28 May 1963. Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia.
2. *Ibid.*
3. “Georgia’s All-Time Baseball Record, 1886–1949,” *University of Georgia 1950 Media Guide*, University of Georgia Athletic Department Records, Athens, Georgia.
4. Program, Annual Awards Banquet, State of Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, Inc. Atlanta Biltmore Hotel, December 9, 1966; Bill Clark, “Hall Inducts Anderson, Suggs, Butts and Shiver,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 December 1966, 10. Anderson was inducted posthumously, having died about a month before, and his son Eddie accepted the award. Other inductees in 1966 were UGA football coach Wallace Butts, All-American I. M. “Chick” Shiver, and golfer Louise Suggs, amateur and LPGA champion.
5. Morgan Blake, “Frank Anderson Pulled a ‘Frank Merriwell’ on Tech in the Ninth Inning: Thrilling Rally by Georgia with Count 3–0 Against Her in the Last Round—Anderson Tied the Score with Home Run over Left Field Fence—Game Was Played at Brisbane Park,” unidentified clipping; “Georgia Wins from Tech, by a Spurt in the Ninth and Tenth: Varsity Wins Her Third Game—Frank Anderson the Hero of the Occasion.” The latter article appears to be from the UGA student newspaper *The Reporter*, which was the predecessor to *The Red and Black*. Georgia’s 5–3 victory, the article relates, was “one of the hottest finishes ever seen on a baseball diamond.” Unidentified clippings, both from the Frank Anderson Scrapbook, Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia. Frank Merriwell, to whom writers compared the young Anderson, was a mythical All-American heroic character created by Gilbert Patten (under the pseudonym of Burt L. Standish) for Street and Smith publishers about 1895. He was “frank for frankness, merry for a happy disposition and well for abounding health and vitality.” See Susan Ikenberg, “Education for Fun and Profit: Traditions of Popular College Fiction in the United States, 1875–1945,” in Susan Huddleston Edgerton, ed., *Imagining the Academy: Higher Education and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2005), 53.
6. Blake, “Frank Anderson Pulled a ‘Frank Merriwell.’”
7. Willard Neal, “Biggest Thrills in Baseball,” *Atlanta Journal Magazine*, 24 May 1931, 11.
8. MS 23, box 19, folder 5, p. 17, Earle J. Moore Collection, Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter Moore Collection). Earle J. Moore graduated from Winder (Georgia) High in 1940 and remembered when baseball was such an integral part of life in the state that businesses regularly closed on Wednesday afternoons to allow employees and customers to watch small-town competition. Moore attended Oglethorpe University on a baseball scholarship and was a 1943 alumnus. He pitched in the last game Frank Anderson coached. Afterward, Moore played service baseball for the U.S. Army Lawson General Hospital team in Chamblee, Georgia. He became a mathematics teacher and coach at various secondary schools in the North Georgia area, including Woodward Academy, Douglas County High, and Rabun County High, where he became principal. Moore was a lifelong devotee of Frank Anderson and, like his coach, loved both academics and all sports, especially baseball. In retirement Coach Moore undertook an ambitious research project and completed an unpublished 858-page typewritten manuscript, complete with appendixes, index, and illustrations, entitled “Petrel Glory: The Early Athletic History of Oglethorpe University.” It deals primarily with Oglethorpe football and baseball, and Part I is entitled “Coach Frank B. Anderson, Sr.” The Earle J. Moore Collection consists of twenty-two boxes in a rich archive that has never been used for publication.
9. Willard Neal, “Oglethorpe Coach Makes Stars: Frank Anderson Has Sent Twelve Men to the Major Leagues and Has Coached Twenty-one Players Who Have Entered Professional Baseball. In Addition He Has a Family of Five Second Basemen,” *Atlanta Journal Magazine*, 3 July 1927, 13. (The figure of twelve men “sent to the Major Leagues” apparently includes some players who signed but did not play.)
10. Unattributed, “Peachtree Road Big Leaguers: Frank Anderson Brought Plowboys, Waiters and School Kids to Oglethorpe and Turned Them into Big League Players,” *Atlanta Journal Magazine*, 18 May 1941; “Paul Stowers,” www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 21 December 2009).
11. Neal, “Oglethorpe Coach Makes Stars”; “Bradley Hogg,” www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 22 December 2009).
12. Dick Jemison, “Georgia and Tech Fight Fiercely in Great Game: Fourteen Rounds of Brilliant Ball Ends with Neither Side Able to Tally. Collier and Brannan Twirl Superb Ball. They Were Given Great Support by Their Team-mates—Both Teams Had Several Chances to Win—Rival Rooters Yelled Themselves Hoarse—Georgia Wins the Series.” Unidentified clipping, Frank Anderson Scrapbook. Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia. Darkness brought an end to the epic game that was reportedly played before a crowd of 4,000.
13. MS 23, box 9, folder 4, Moore Collection.
14. *Catalogue of Oglethorpe University, Second Year, 1917–1918*, published by the University (Oglethorpe University, Georgia), 33. Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia. Anderson’s hiring did not make the publication deadline for the First Year catalogue.
15. See Paul Stephen Hudson, “Flight of the Stormy Petrel: The Glory Years of Oglethorpe University Athletics,” *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South*, 36, no. 2 (summer 1992): 13.
16. MS 23, box 19, folder 9, pp. 57–58, Moore Collection.
17. Thornwell Jacobs, diary entry, 2 May 1918, *Step Down, Dr. Jacobs: The Autobiography of an Autocrat* (Atlanta: Westminster Publishers, 1945), 295.
18. “Al Wingo,” www.baseball-reference.com (accessed December 23, 2009).
19. MS 23, box 19, folder 10, appendix C, Lucas Newton “Chief” Turk’s 1922 Baseball Contract with the Washington Senators. The document is labeled “American League of Professional Baseball Clubs Uniform Players Contract . . .” The Washington club agreed to pay Turk “for skilled services during the playing season of 1922 . . . \$300.00 per month.” If he

- reported for Spring training on March 10, 1922, there would be a \$100.00 per-month salary increase. It is signed in flowing script, "Clark Griffith, Pres." However, Turk pitched in only five games in 1922 for Washington and gave up ten runs in eleven innings. "Lucas Newton Turk," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 1 February 2010).
20. John Randolph Smith to Earle J. Moore, 25 January 1985. MS 23, box 19, older 13, p. 143, Moore Collection.
 21. *Ibid.*, 141; "Roy Carlyle," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 23 December 2009). See Sally Toole, "Brothers in Baseball," *Remembering Norcross* [Georgia]: *Nuggets of Nostalgia* (Charleston, S.C. and London: History Press, 2009), 70.
 22. MS 23, box 19, folder 10, p. 164, Moore Collection.
 23. Unattributed, "Peachtree Road Big Leaguers."
 24. "Jay Partridge," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 22 December 2009).
 25. Jacobs later recalled this incident in a diary entry (5 October 1936) in *Step Down, Dr. Jacobs*, 495.
 26. MS 23, box 19, folder 16, p. 218, Moore Collection.
 27. *Ibid.*, pp. 222–29; "Baseball Review: [1924] Dixie [Southern] Champions." *Yamacraw 1925* [Oglethorpe University Annual] published by the Senior Class, 104–5 (Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia).
 28. "Baseball Review [1925]," *Yamacraw 1926*, 101 (Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia).
 29. *Ibid.*, *Yamacraw 1925 and 1926*.
 30. *Yamacraw 1925 and 1926*, 100 and 22–25; "The Baseball Career of Leonard 'Lefty' Willis," MS 23, box 19, folder 19 p. 307, Moore Collection. Willis was to compile a 13–10 record in two years with the Columbus Foxes. "L Willis," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed February 2, 2010).
 31. Darrell Simmons, "Earl Mann, Who Owned Atlanta Crackers in Pennant Years, Dies," *Atlanta Journal*, January 6, 1990.
 32. MS 23, box 19, folder 17, pp. 255, 307, Moore Collection.
 33. MS 23, box 20, folder 20, appendix D, "Life and Career of Earl Lenward Shepherd," pp. 870–80, Moore Collection. Shepherd's injury and subsequent turnover in the Cleveland Indians organization (the American League elected Cleveland president E. S. Bernard as AL president and Tris Speaker resigned), as well as Earl's desire to finish his studies in 1928 (which he did), caused complications with his major-league aspirations. He later taught sciences and coached at Tech High in Atlanta, where his best player was Marty Marion, who was to play shortstop with the St. Louis Cardinals. In the 1930s Shepherd was a chemist for Atlantic Steel and played semipro for the company team, sometimes called Dixiesteele. He was on the 1937 team that won the Atlanta City championship. Moore based this section of his manuscript on interviews and correspondence with Earl Lenward Shepherd, 1984–90.
 34. MS 23, box 19, folder 19, p. 307, Moore Collection.
 35. Guy Butler, "Hugh Buchanan Toys with Pros for First Six Innings; But Oglethorpe Ace Weakens in Seventh and Is Beater; Niehoff Goes on Batting Rampage," *Atlanta Journal*, 29 March 1927; MS 23, box 19, folder 19, p. 310, Moore Collection.
 36. "Life and Career of Earl Lenward Shepherd," MS 23, box 19, folder 19, p. 307, Moore Collection.
 37. "The Baseball Career of Leonard William 'Lefty' Willis," MS 23, box 19, folder 17, pp. 256–57, Moore Collection. Moore based this sketch on correspondence and interviews with Lefty's wife, Frances England Willis, and his son William Willis from October 1985 to June 1986.
 38. See Hudson, "Flight of the Stormy Petrel," *Atlanta History*, 17.
 39. Morgan Blake, "Sportanic [sic] Eruption," *Atlanta Journal*, April 11, 1930.
 40. MS 23, box 19, folder 22, p. 402, Moore Collection. Moore details Anderson's 1930 championship season in chapter 20, "The 1929–1930 School Year." (He used an academic calendar to organize much of his manuscript.) The Stormy Petrels lost a 9–8 game against the professional Pepperells. Stung, Oglethorpe responded in the second game with a resounding 16–4 victory, limiting the Pepperells to five hits.
 41. *Ibid.*, 406; "Albert Kimbrel," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 2 February 2010). Kimbrel caught and batted .283 with 339 at-bats. Because it was in 1930, this entry is almost certainly Coach Anderson's Al Kimbrel. He also caught for Hartford in the Eastern League and the Atlanta Crackers in the 1930s. "Albert Kimbrel," *ibid.*
 42. MS 23, box 19, folder 22, p. 402, Moore Collection.
 43. *Ibid.*, "Lucius Benjamin 'Luke' Appling, Jr.," 410–13. Because of conference rules, Appling could not play varsity sports until his sophomore year. "Luke Appling," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed December 22, 2009).
 44. Jack Kytle, "Appling Would Make Good in the Majors—Anderson," unidentified clipping, Frank Anderson Scrapbook, Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia.
 45. Ed Miles, "Petrels in Dixie League Debut Against Georgia," *Atlanta Journal*, 6 April 1931. William A. "Alex" Alexander, Athletic Director at Georgia Tech, was president of the league.
 46. Ralph McGill, "Auburn Takes Dixie Pennant; Tech Is Beaten; Florida Upset as Tigers Win Flag; Petrels Victorious," unidentified clipping, Frank Anderson Scrapbook, Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia.
 47. MS 23, box 9, folder 21, Moore Collection. Moore about 1943 completed a thirty-seven-page handwritten notebook in ink that is a remarkable compendium of fundamental baseball techniques and strategy envisioning numerous scenarios: "The Coaching of Baseball: Notes from the Lectures of Coach Frank B. Anderson: Baseball Knowledge That He Has Accumulated thru 27 Years as Baseball Coach at Oglethorpe University."
 48. MS 23, box 19, folder 23, p. 443, Moore Collection.
 49. MS 23, box 20, folder 1, pp. 621–23, Moore Collection. Anderson managed only one victory in four games against the Bona Allen Shoemakers in 1938. They defeated Enid, Oklahoma, that year in Wichita, Kansas, for the semipro championship. Several former Oglethorpe players, including catcher Al Kimbrel, who had left Oglethorpe in 1930 to sign with the Brooklyn Dodgers, were on the Buford team.
 50. Ed Miles, "Dublin Home-Coming Proves Great Success: Cardinals Trim Petrels 4–0 in Well-Played Exhibition Game Before 2000 Fans," unidentified clipping, Archives, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia. Miles reported "fans were convinced that Frank Anderson, peerless leader of the Petrels, has another championship team in the making." MS 23, box 20, folder 15 Appendix G, Moore Collection. "Program of the Oglethorpe–St. Louis Cardinals 1933 Baseball Game"—Dublin Lions Club sponsoring Homecoming Day March 31 [1933] St. Louis Cardinals vs. Oglethorpe University Fairgrounds 2:30 p.m.
 51. MS 23, box 19, folder 20, p. 234, Moore Collection.
 52. "Greek George," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 23 December 2009).
 53. MS 23, box 20, folder 12, p. 747, Moore Collection. Even in the unusual wartime one-game season, five members of Anderson's last team went on to professional baseball in the Georgia State League, in cities such as Jesup, Fitzgerald, and Carrollton. Earle J. Moore played for Thomasville and later for the Lakeland (Florida) Pilots in the Detroit Tigers organization.
 54. MS 23, box 20, folder 13, pp. 781–809, Moore Collection.
 55. Oglethorpe University Registrar's Office records; "Oglethorpe University Stormy Petrels (Atlanta GA)," www.baseball-reference.com (accessed 22 December 2009).
 56. MS 23, box 20, folder 14, p. 856, Moore Collection.
 57. Unattributed, "Peachtree Road Big Leaguers."
 58. Jim Decker graduated from Oglethorpe in 1939 and signed with the Chicago White Sox, where Jimmy Dykes assigned him to room with Luke Appling. Joe Cronin of the Boston Red Sox later purchased Decker's contract and sent him to Greensboro, North Carolina, of the Piedmont League. MS 23, box 20, folder 8, p. 651, Moore Collection.
 59. Charlie Roberts, "Butts, Anderson, Suggs, Shiver to Enter [Georgia Sports] Hall of Fame," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 20 November 1966.
 60. MS 23, box 9, folder 1, Moore Collection. Ross Wyrosdick, "In This Corner," unidentified clipping.

Working to Play, Playing to Work

The Northwest Georgia Textile League

HEATHER S. SHORES

The popularity of baseball over the years has given rise to countless teams and leagues at all levels of society and in virtually every corner of the nation. One form of the game that developed in the United States by 1900 was industrial baseball.¹ Historical evidence of company-sponsored baseball can be found in many areas of the country; however, in the early twentieth century it was in the textile-mill villages across the southeastern region of the United States that industrial baseball caught on and settled into the roots of the community. One area with strong ties to textile mill-sponsored baseball is Floyd County, Georgia, which lies in the northwest corner of the state, along the Alabama state line. A region saturated with baseball traditions, the Floyd County area at one time supported eight different textile mills, each with a baseball team composed of mill workers. These teams became the formally organized Northwest Georgia Textile League in 1931. This league reached its pinnacle of success during the years of the Great Depression before its demise in the 1950s, providing Floyd County with three decades of industrialized community recreation that has not been rivaled since. The Northwest Georgia Textile League both serves as an example of highly organized industrial baseball in the southeast and demonstrates how recreational activities such as baseball can become an integral part of the social structure of a community.

The origins of industrial baseball lie in the aftermath of the Civil War. In the decades following that conflict, Southern entrepreneurs, funded by Northern investors, sought to create a “New South” by transforming the existing agrarian economy into one grounded in industry and cash-crop capitalism. Beginning in the 1880s, industry in the South grew at an exponential rate, with textile mills as the keystone in the region’s industrial base.² To attract rural people to work, mill owners constructed mill villages soon after they established each business. These villages evolved into self-sustaining communities, providing workers with places to live, eat, and shop. As with the mill villages, the mill-sponsored baseball teams extended

the influence of the company into the personal lives of the workers.

Historians offer two very different interpretations for the motives behind mill baseball. Many support the idea that company management created baseball teams in order to promote teamwork, to keep workers away from labor unions, and to teach immigrant workers how to be “real Americans.” In addition, these scholars argue that organized sports such as baseball helped workers fresh from the fields become more dependent on and accustomed to mill and village life as opposed to the often nomadic, seasonal schedule of the agrarian worker. These historians believe that mills organized baseball teams “in an effort to transform sandlot games into a sport sponsored by and identified with the company.” The same authors contend that baseball kept workers from being “idle” outside of business hours, encouraged them to stay at the mill for longer periods of employment, and, according to one manager from a South Carolina mill in 1910, taught employees from rural areas the “rules” of mill life.³

Other scholars argue that mill baseball was not an advantage for the company alone. They believe mill baseball was more worker oriented than some people have realized, at least for the players. Many mill baseball managers and players in South Carolina had the bargaining power to secure good financial support for the team each season. In Dalton, Georgia, players seemed to have more control over their situation in the mill, using their talents on the field to alter the “rules” of their lives off the field. For example, the best players enjoyed some opportunities for mobility within the mill network as different companies sought to recruit them from competitors.⁴

While there is little debate that mill baseball teams in Floyd County were started in order to bond workers even more strongly with the company, by the time these teams were formed into an organized league in 1931, the players were able to exert some control over their relationship with the mill. Even with the economic stresses of the Great Depression, mill baseball

players earned extra pay for their abilities on the field and could even be granted less arduous jobs in the mill.⁵

As an industrial area, Floyd County illustrates the traditional ideals that appear to be common to many areas that supported industrial teams because of the shared values that often emerged in mill communities. The situation in Floyd County closely mimics, in terms of structure and community function, the textile-mill baseball teams and communities in South Carolina described by Thomas Perry in *Textile League Baseball: South Carolina's Mill Teams, 1880–1955*. However, certain factors—the unusually high concentration of teams in the area, the participation of those teams in an official league, and the fact that the region was considered the best in the country for fierce competition among industrial teams—made the Rome–Floyd County area of northwest Georgia an atypical but significant example of Southern industrial baseball. Thus, the community of Floyd County offers an excellent case study to examine the relationship between mill teams and the people they represented from the 1920s to the 1950s.⁶

Floyd County's long tradition of baseball laid a solid groundwork for the Northwest Georgia Textile League. By 1868, organized baseball was in full swing in the area, with early clubs like the "Constellation Base Ball Club" meeting other local teams for games in the city of Rome. In 1910, Rome became a charter member of the newly formed Southeastern League; the "Romans" (later the "Hillites") played against teams from Gadsden, Alabama; Knoxville, Johnson City, and Morristown, Tennessee; and Asheville, North Carolina. That team folded along with the league during the 1912 season, but the city had professional baseball again in 1913 when the Morristown (Tennessee) Jobbers of the Class D Appalachian League relocated to Rome and became the "Romans." That relationship was short-lived, as the team moved again after one season, but Rome switched over to the Georgia-Alabama League (also Class D) in 1914 and maintained membership until the league folded early in the 1917 season, like many other minor leagues affected by manpower shortages, travel restrictions, and reduced fan interest brought on by World War I.⁷ During that final season, the team represented both Rome and nearby Lindale but retained the nickname Romans.

The area was without professional baseball for a few years, but in 1920 both Rome and Lindale became charter members of the Class D Georgia State League, which had been resurrected following two earlier incarnations (1906 and 1914). [EDITORS' NOTE: The latter

version of this league was a "continuation" of the Empire State League discussed elsewhere in this journal.] This time, the league and the two teams from the Rome area (and a team from Cedartown in neighboring Polk County) lasted for two years, but after the 1921 season, the area's baseball fans once again had to rely on semiprofessional and amateur versions of the game.

Professional baseball returned to the area in 1928, when a revitalized Georgia–Alabama League fielded six teams from northeastern Alabama and northwest Georgia, including teams from Lindale and Cedartown—but not Rome, the area's largest city. These teams testified to continued local interest in the sport, and when the league folded following the 1930 season, the crowds of spectators migrated to the Northwest Georgia Textile League.⁸

Over the years, various industries in the Floyd County area, from local divisions of well-known companies such as Coca-Cola to smaller institutions such as Battey Hospital, had sponsored baseball teams, but it was the textile mills that created the most organized and most popular teams. By 1900, the first textile mill-sponsored teams appeared in the Rome area, beginning a traditional mix of baseball and business that eventually culminated in the formation of the Northwest Georgia Textile League.

By 1931, many of the local mills had been established long enough to support fully organized athletic programs. With so many area mills sponsoring baseball teams and with professional ball no longer conveniently available for the fan base, organizers saw an opportunity and took advantage of it. The Northwest Georgia Textile League was born, and (after its original Opening Day was rained out) the six-team league began play on April 11. From then until August 28, 1954 (except for a three-year hiatus during World War II), textile-mill teams dominated the baseball scene in the northwestern corner of Georgia.⁹

The six charter members of the league included the Tubize–Chatillion (Celanese) and Anchor Duck mills in Rome, Pepperell Mill in Lindale, and three Goodyear teams located in Rockmart, Cedartown, and Cartersville, the latter also being known as Atco Mill. Each team featured a roster of seventeen players, and the 30-game schedule was equally divided between home and away games all played on Saturdays. After that first year, Brighton Mills in Shannon, Georgia, which had reluctantly dropped out of the inaugural season to create a balanced six-team league, replaced Anchor Duck, and the league composition did not change for four years, until Aragon Mills joined in 1936, bringing

membership to seven teams. The odd number of teams allowed each club to have an occasional “off weekend . . . to play games outside the league.”¹⁰ The opportunity for “outside” games was enhanced further by reducing the schedule from 50¹¹ games to 36. After two years, Anchor Duck returned, creating an eight-team league and a 42-game schedule for one year. When Aragon dropped out after the 1938 season, the league again had a 36-game schedule for seven teams, who stayed together for three years, until World War II. Chart 1 lists league membership over its entire life span; the accompanying map shows the proximity of the teams to each other.¹²

Over the years, NWGTL officials made a few other changes that affected the way the game was played. In 1935, the league eliminated the umpiring system that had hometown umpires travel with their teams and work games with a local umpire for the home team. Understandably, this system had generated criticism from fans and players alike. Under the new system, the league designated six umpires (each nominated by one of the league’s teams) who would work games in pairs but would never call a game in which their hometown team was involved. Since this system required that the umpires travel separately from the teams, their pay was doubled—to \$4.00 per game. In 1938, the league introduced a mid-season All-Star Game, pitting the league-leading team against a team composed of the best players from the other league teams. The players split the gate receipts (after expenses

were deducted), each earning some eight or nine dollars¹³ in addition to the honor of being recognized as an elite player. Starting in 1939, the league used a Shaughnessy-style four-team playoff to select the league champion rather than a series between the champions of the first and second halves of the season.

Throughout these refinements, all teams in the textile league followed one ground rule: all players were white men employed by the mill. Starting in 1935, each team’s roster could include up to three young players whose parents worked for the mill that sponsored the team.¹⁴ Jobs for players varied from mill to mill, the type of job depending upon which mill and mill manager the players worked under. In some cases, players like “Powerhouse” Jim Hammonds had intense jobs such as welding, working regular eight-hour shifts each day, with regular practice and occasional week-day afternoon games following work. However, it was not uncommon for the players to be assigned to lighter tasks on game days to make sure that they would be well rested for the game. The granddaughter of one industrial-league player remembers hearing her grandfather explain how his team would be given the task of painting a house in the mill village on game days, which really meant, according to her memories, “a day full of relaxation and plenty of beer.”¹⁵

Textile-league players were compensated for their time on the field in addition to their regular salary. During the Depression era, players would make anywhere from \$12 to \$14 per week from their mill job,

ROME AREA HISTORY MUSEUM



1947 NWGTL Champs: Pepperell Mills.

First row, left to right: Hubert Stepp, “Shorty” Hall, Johnny Teat, Clarence Walker, Abie McClung, Joe Goodlett.

Middle row, left to right: Bo Sheppard, Al Brown, Jack Gaston, Mel Stamey, Gene Baggett, Jack Clifford.

Back row, left to right: Manager Clarence Rawson, Joe Gaston, John Stowe, L. R. Knowles, John Mathis, Willard Nixon, Jim Jordan, Aggie Lumpkin.

with an extra \$4 to \$7 per week for playing baseball. This extra pay added an incentive for mill workers to play well and make the team each year. These stipends also illustrate both the value placed on players by the mills and the dual strategies of both encouraging talent and imposing an economic control over the players in the league.¹⁶

Textile-league events were literally at the center of the industrial communities and mill life in the Floyd County area. Initially games took place on Saturdays and Sundays, but once the Tubize Mill added lights at its park in 1938, night games during the week became fairly common. Games were not allowed to interfere with the work day, since production was the top priority for the mills. Scheduling games after working hours and on weekends ensured that workers would not be encouraged to shirk their job duties. Most mills had their own baseball fields, all located near the mill building itself, at the heart of the mill village. Many of these playing fields were large enough to support bleachers, full grandstands, and concessions and could be examples of community pride, as was the case with the Tubize Mill field, where mill workers raised funds for building materials and then supplied the labor themselves. Some of the mill fields were known for special characteristics such as trees in the outfield or a particularly deep center field that made it next to impossible for a ball to clear the fence. At least one field had a canvas fence built around it to keep fans who did not pay for a ticket from witnessing the game for free. The field at Anchor Duck Mill was known for having an outfield full of "cow patties," since the land was also used for mill workers to graze their own livestock. Concessions such as popcorn and peanuts were sold at games, and many families would often bring picnic lunches to the ball park.¹⁷

Play was intense and rivalries ran deep in the Northwest Georgia Textile League. Each season culminated in a league championship, and winning it not only signified the athletic achievement of that team, but it also assured "bragging rights" for that particular mill community as a whole and secured the place of players on the winning team for the following season. Champions of the Northwest Georgia region would often go on to play industrial and minor-league teams from other states. On occasion, teams from the minor leagues, such as the Atlanta Crackers, or college teams from schools such as Oglethorpe University would come to Rome and play a textile-league team, offering fans another variety of play.¹⁸

Textile-league games could draw up to 2,000 or more fans per game during the regular season. It was

not unusual for fans of both competing teams to fill the stands, paying 25 or 50 cents per game for adults and 10 cents for children. If seats were full, fans often sat along the baseline in order to see the game. Crowds that witnessed textile-league games appear to have been composed mostly of the textile workers, mill managers and supervisors, and their families, but citizens of the city of Rome, the heart of Floyd County, were also fans of the game. One local businessman, C. J. Wyatt, not only owned a store that sold sporting goods to the mills but also acted as league statistician for several years. It was common for the rural citizens of the county to attend the textile-league games, although exact numbers are not available.¹⁹

There is no evidence, however, that the textile-league games drew or allowed any African American fans. Photographs of the stands during a game do not show an African American presence, and interviews with former players revealed no evidence that black citizens of Floyd County were regular attendees of the textile-league games. This does not mean that African Americans never attended the games, but the racial norms of the day would have prohibited black fans from entering into any social interaction with whites. It is more likely that African Americans in the area participated in their own recreational events. The later years of the Depression and the early 1940s saw the first vestiges of organized African American baseball teams in the area, perhaps as an offshoot of the successful professional Negro Leagues, which enjoyed their greatest success between the years 1933 and 1947. While not part of the Northwest Georgia Textile League, African American teams associated with industries and mills did exist in the Floyd County area, including the Black Giants from Tubize and the Fairbanks Eagles. These teams were not fully supported by the mills in the same manner as the white teams; the players were not paid for their efforts, but the mills often donated equipment and material to make uniforms, and photos and news stories would often be included in the mill newsletter.²⁰

Fans who did not attend the games could still keep up with textile-league play. Games were broadcast on Rome radio station WLAQ, with announcer Lee Mowry behind the microphone. Announcing textile-league games was not easy; to call a game, Mowry would often take a taxi to the park, only to sit on the ground behind the umpire or on a rough platform fenced in by chicken wire. Well known by both players and fans, Mowry was not beyond the reach of pranksters on the field. Pitcher J. M. Culberson was known to throw warm-up pitches against the boards near Mowry's head

to “make sure he was awake.” Through thick and thin, Mowry stayed with the game. During one game between Brighton and Pepperell, Mowry broadcast for four hours and twenty minutes before the game was called because of darkness. Such was the fierce dedication of the players and the announcer to the textile-league games, the broadcasting of which shows how important the textile league and its games were to the communities surrounding Floyd County.²¹

In Floyd County, despite radio broadcasts of regional and national baseball, the textile-league teams remained the center of attention. Even in the mills with villages that provided amenities such as electricity and paid workers enough to be able to afford radios, local sporting events like industrial baseball games still held precedent over their national counterparts. “We paid attention when the World Series was on,” one man stated, “but the rest of the time local teams were more important.”²²

Another method for keeping Floyd County fans in touch with the national baseball scene in a time before television was the “Playograph” that the City of Rome installed in the City Auditorium. This device was composed of a three-dimensional rendering of a baseball diamond, with individually moving pieces representing the players on a ballfield. When a play was made, a person controlling the device would move the corresponding pieces to represent what had happened during the game, while an “announcer” relayed a play-by-play commentary. Used primarily during the World Series, the excitement inspired by the mechanical action of the “Playograph” paled in comparison to the thrilling live games of local teams.²³

The press also emphasized local teams and provided another way that local citizens could keep up with the action in the Northwest Georgia Textile League. Industrial-league teams received prominent placement in the local newspaper, the *Rome News-Tribune*, garnering big headlines and even comic strips devoted to the games. National teams, on the other hand, were often given scant coverage in the press, even such prominent events as the opening celebration of the National Hall of Fame in 1939. In addition, the paper sponsored a local All-Star ballot that encouraged Floyd County residents to recognize their favorite industrial-league players. The annual league championship was also a highly publicized event for the area, its popularity placing it on the same level as the Dixie Series in the South and the Major League’s World Series.²⁴

Practical matters may also have contributed to the popularity of the Northwest Georgia Textile League,

particularly during the Depression era. A lack of transportation was one factor that kept people close to home. Baseball fans typically were limited to watching the games played in close proximity to their homes or workplaces, although it was not unheard of for a mill family to travel to Atlanta for a sporting event or entertainment. Before the Atlanta Braves existed, there were few professional baseball teams near northwest Georgia; Birmingham, Chattanooga, and Atlanta were the closest cities with minor-league teams. However, major-league teams including the Cincinnati Reds, Washington Senators, Cleveland Indians, and New York Giants played exhibition games at the Tubize Mill baseball field, giving Floyd County residents a chance to see national teams close to home.²⁵

Textile-league games were popular not only because of the athletic spectacle they presented; they served other community functions, too. The nature and frequency of the ballgames gave Floyd County industrial communities a recreational activity through which they could pursue other social interests. Games were played in the heart of the mill village, offering employees a chance to visit with neighbors and friends, exchange local gossip, or court a favorite sweetheart. Games were important community occasions where the village could come together. The ladies dressed up, hoping to catch a player’s eye. “My grandmother and her sisters wouldn’t think of going to a game without dresses, hats, and gloves,” one woman remembers. “In that community, you only dated ball players.” Clearly, textile-league players enjoyed advantages beyond the extra cash.²⁶

At the heart of every textile-league game were the players themselves. The fiercely competitive league fostered talented players and entertained northwest Georgia with a brand of baseball still remembered today. Most players came from the local area and ranged in age from eighteen to thirty-six, although mills would recruit college players to work and play for the company each summer. “College boys” were usually recruited from Southern schools such as Vanderbilt, Auburn, and Oglethorpe. Most of these players became aware of the Northwest Georgia Textile League through college teammates with ties to the Floyd County area. A summer job and the chance to play in a popular baseball league were good enough incentives to lure several college players, such as Harry Boss of Vanderbilt and James “Mac” McClanahan from Oglethorpe University, to Floyd County, and many of them returned to the area to settle when their college days were over. The use of college players worked well for both parties—the players had a chance to continue



Above: The Rome baseball line-up pictured before the opening game with Lindale. Right: Veterans Walt Little and Harry Andrus, starting pitcher and catcher. Left: Plant Managers Crooks and Harvey, who officially opened the season.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES



Tubize's announcement of the opening of the 1947 NWGTL season.

their training away from school, and the mill enjoyed access to fresh talent every baseball season. In turn, the textile league offered local players a chance to hone their athletic skills, which often led to college scholarships and a recurring spot on a college baseball team, as was the case of Willard Nixon, a Floyd County native who used his experience on a textile-league team to earn a scholarship to Auburn University. [EDITORS' NOTE: See Wynn Montgomery's article "Georgia's 1948 Phenoms and the Bonus Rule" in the summer 2010 issue of *The Baseball Research Journal*.]

At times, popular players would switch teams in the league in order to make additional money. A winning team was so important that mills would try to out-pay each other for the top players. For example, six supervisors at Brighton Mill in Shannon once pledged a dollar from their salaries each week in an attempt to lure the future major-leaguer Rudy York away from the Atco Mill in Cartersville, Georgia, to play for the Brighton Mill team.²⁷ Having a winning baseball team in such a closely knit and competitive area proved that a particular mill community stood out above the rest and helped raise all those associated with that community above their typical social status. The players represented all of the workers in the mills, helping them overcome the pejorative label of "lint-head."²⁸

Players were popular both on and off the field. These "hometown heroes" lived and worked with their fans, inspiring countless local children to be the new generation of baseball players. "These great players were the people we saw every day," one community member remembers fondly. "Star" players enjoyed upward social mobility within the community and also helped to raise the status of the community as a whole. Some players from the Floyd County area went beyond the textile league to have careers in both the minor and major leagues, elevating them to a new level of local fame. Yet the status of local hero was enough for at least one player; "Lefty" Sproull turned down a spot on a professional baseball team to remain a mill worker and player for the Goodyear plant in Rockmart, Georgia. Others (including Rudy York, Leon Culberson, Willard Nixon, and Joe Tipton) used their textile-league prowess to follow their dreams to the big leagues.

For some citizens in the Floyd County area, textile-league baseball provided not only a source of community pride but also a way to survive. Especially during the Depression, a number of unemployed Georgians used their baseball talents to try to win a spot on a mill baseball team and thereby secure a job in the mill itself. As one former player recalls, "If you could play, you got a job." Reflecting on that time, the same

player added, “Today players get paid millions of dollars. Back then, we were just lucky to have a job.”²⁹

Even with all of the opportunities it afforded to both the players and the community, the Northwest Georgia Textile League was not impervious to the economic turmoil of the Depression. The General Textile Strike of 1934 reached the South in early September with 200,000 mill workers eventually participating in it. Although Floyd County was never at the center of activity during the revolt, the “Strike of ’34” did cause snags in the fabric of mill life and mill baseball in that area of northwest Georgia.³⁰

Floyd County textile mills and their baseball teams were unaccustomed to the nuances of organized labor when the General Textile Strike began. Labor unions had never been a strong force in the community. The two earlier strikes that had affected the textile mills in Floyd County had been brief and disorganized. The first strike had taken place at the Lindale Mill in 1896, when white workers had protested management’s decision to let a black worker fill in as a machinery operator. The other strike had occurred in 1933, when several workers at Anchor Duck Mill organized a walkout in protest of increased workloads and a decrease in shift hours.³¹

The widespread organization of the textile strike in 1934 caused a ripple effect in Floyd County mill life. The workers, according to the historian Michelle Brattain, were generally confused and disorganized by the strike—if they bothered to participate in it at all. Both Brighton Mill and Anchor Duck Mill employed significant numbers of workers who supported the strike. However, Brattain maintains that only 40 percent of the total textile workforce in Floyd County participated in strike activities, and most of those workers became involved only after the strike had already begun. For those Floyd County mills that had striking workers, production halted briefly, if at all. Most workers were indifferent to the strike. Floyd County experienced no real conflict as a result of the strike, and the only violence stemmed from a clash between a mill guard and a drunken deputy at Lindale Mill. Even when that story appeared in the local newspaper, millhands in Floyd County still reported to work.³²

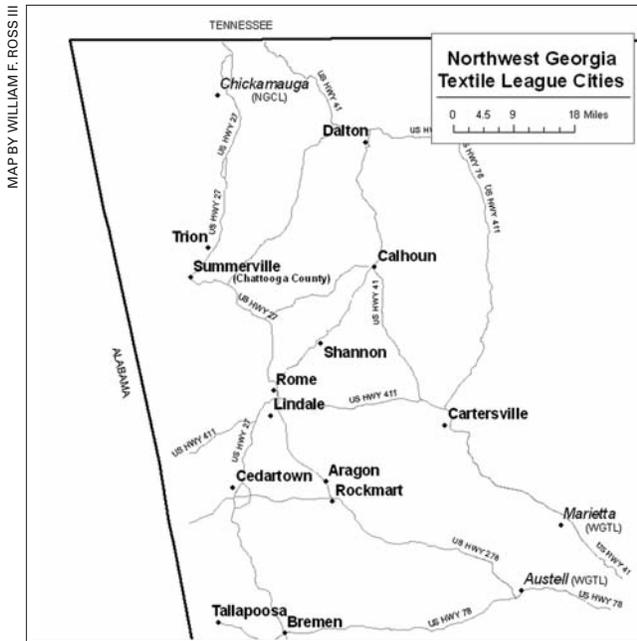
The General Textile Strike of 1934 did affect the Northwest Georgia Textile League in two major ways. When managers at Lindale Mill feared that a “flying squadron” of union organizers might arrive at the mill, they deputized the baseball players as mill guards. The squadron never appeared, suggesting that the players were respected enough by the community that their presence alone could dissuade union violence during the strike. When the strike began, league officials de-

cidated to cut the 1934 season short and to cancel the annual championship series, declaring Shannon and Lindale co-champions. By the following spring, play resumed for the Northwest Georgia Textile League, and it again was baseball as usual in Floyd County.³³

Throughout the Great Depression, Northwest Georgia Textile League baseball proved to be the most popular form of organized recreation in the Floyd County area. In an era when helplessness and poverty were everyday occurrences, the game provided a medium through which textile-league players and the community of workers they represented could survive the rough economic conditions of the time and maintain a sense of social pride. However, by the beginning of the 1940s, world events were set in motion that would forever change the face of mill life and textile-league baseball in Floyd County and elsewhere.

As America entered World War II, focus shifted from the economic troubles at home to the fighting in Europe and the Pacific. With many players trading baseball uniforms for military gear, professional baseball in the United States faced a precarious situation. In Floyd County, the stresses of the war took their toll on mill baseball. In 1941, league officials shortened the NWGTL season by six weeks, creating a 24-game schedule for each of the seven teams, to accommodate the Goodyear mills’ increased production requirements.³⁴ As the war intensified, the league rosters lost more and more players as the citizens of Floyd County answered the call to arms. In March 1942, the NWGTL announced that it would not operate that year “due to local as well as general wartime conditions.” At the same time, the *Rome News Tribune* announced the creation of a new league, the Floyd County Textile League, which would “provide the local fans some enjoyment of their favorite local pastime”³⁵ and would play with “retreaded” baseballs—used balls with new covers.³⁶ This new league had only four teams, all of which had been members of the NWGTL: Tubize, Lindale, Anchor Duck, and the Orphans.³⁷

The Orphans were a team unique to the time. Composed mostly of players from Brighton Mill or any of the three Goodyear mills who were either too old or too young for military service, the Orphans were the creation of Rome businessman and league statistician C. J. Wyatt. A baseball fan, Wyatt provided uniforms and equipment to the “orphaned” players, allowing them to split whatever profits they earned from playing baseball games. According to C. J. Wyatt’s son, the Orphans were the only team in the history of the area’s textile leagues for which players who did not work in the mill were allowed to compete.



Mills in many communities sponsored teams in the NWGTL during its twenty seasons. All were located in Georgia's northwest corner, as were the few neighboring towns that briefly fielded teams in other leagues such as the West Georgia Textile League (WGTL) and the North Georgia City League (NGCL).

At the end of the abbreviated season, the Anchor Duck team collected its first championship trophy—and the only Floyd County Textile League trophy ever, as the league did not return in 1943. Some of the larger mills (notably Pepperell, Tubize, and Brighton) continued to support teams made up of veteran players too old for military service and high-school athletes, allowing teenagers like Willard Nixon, who later pitched for the Boston Red Sox, to get an earlier-than-usual start by filling the ranks of the textile teams.³⁸ These “independent” teams gave local fans some baseball, but no organized league existed in the area until the war ended.

On the front lines of the war, ball players from the Northwest Georgia Textile League acted as ambassadors of the sport. One example is Jack Gaston, a textile player turned enlisted man who helped organize baseball games while stationed in England. Another Rome native, Nath McClinic, played on an African American military team that won the “Island Championship” in Iwo Jima.³⁹

While local textile mills proudly supported players and workers serving their country, the U.S. government's demand for increased production breathed new life into the industry and called for an increased focus on matters at home. Floyd County mills competed for the coveted Army-Navy “E” Award for production records. Mill baseball parks became venues for com-

memorating the community war effort in addition to hosting games. Parades of local military groups, ceremonies surrounding the Army-Navy “E” Award, and patriotic celebrations were held on mill baseball fields for the duration of the war.⁴⁰

With the end of the war, baseball in Floyd County shifted roles once again. As players came home from active duty and returned to the mills, interest in the Northwest Georgia Textile League revived. By 1946, the league had regrouped, with five of the seven 1941 teams back in the fold. The *Rome News Tribune* predicted that it would “be rated as one of the strongest and oldest ‘loops’ in Georgia.”⁴¹ The teams played 32 of the scheduled 40 games, with weather canceling the others, and Pepperell (Lindale) won the first of two consecutive league championships.

Despite a successful season, only Lindale, Shannon, and Tubize were willing to commit to the league for the 1947 season. The teams that withdrew cited “fulltime working conditions” and their inability to attract the players needed to field competitive teams.⁴² League officials considered postponing the start of the season but avoided that prospect by adding a mill team from Bremen, Georgia. The league entered the 1947 season with only four teams, the fewest ever, and by mid-June the newest of those teams had withdrawn. Summerville replaced Bremen, and the league was able to finish its season.

The NWGTL was back to six teams for the 1948 season, but four of the teams were new. Lindale and Shannon were back, but the other stalwart league member, Tubize, was now part of a new league in the northwest Georgia area. The West Georgia Textile League also fielded six teams, including three other teams (Aragon and the Goodyear teams from Cartersville and Rockmart) that had been members of the NWGTL at some point in the past. Thus, northwestern Georgia was now asked to support two organized leagues totaling twelve teams.

The instability of the various leagues and the mobility of the teams continued in 1949. The Northwest Georgia Textile League again had six teams, but only three (Lindale, Shannon, and Trion) were returnees from the previous year. The other three transferred back from the West Georgia Textile League. Once again, however, the NWGTL did not offer the only games around. Rome, the geographic and population center of northwest Georgia, fielded a team (the Red Sox) in the North Georgia City League, which sported teams in four other nearby towns—Calhoun, Chickamauga, Dalton, and Summerville. Rome left this league in June to play “independent, semi-pro ball.”⁴³

Chart 1. The Northwest Georgia Textile League (1931–1954)

Member Teams

TEAM	YRS	'31	'32	'33	'34	'35	'36	'37	'38	'39	'40	'41	'46	'47	'48	'49	'50	'51	'52	'53	'54
Anchor Duck ¹	8	X							X	X	X	X			X					X	C
Aragon	6						X	X	X							X			X	X	
Bremen	½													X ⁶							
Calhoun	1														X						
Cartersville ²	14	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X				
Cedartown ²	13	C	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X				
Chattooga Co.	2																			X	X
Dalton	1														X						
Lindale ³	20	X	X	X	C2	X	X	X	X	X	C	X	C	C	X	C	X	X	X	X	X
Rockmart ²	12	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X					
Shannon ⁴	19		X	X	C1	C	C	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	X	C	C	C	C	X
Summerville	½													X ⁶							
Tallapoosa	4																X	X	X	X	
Trion	4														X	X	X	X			
Tubize ⁵	13	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	C	X	C	X	X							
TOTAL TEAMS	20	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	8	7	7	7	5	4	6	6	6	4	4	6	4

- 1. Located in Rome; Anchor Duck later called Anchor Rome
 - 2. Goodyear Mills; Cartersville [Bartow County] Mill, called *Atco*
 - 3. Pepperell Mills
 - 4. Brighton Mills
 - 5. Tubize-Chatillon (Celanese) Mill located in Rome
 - 6. Summerville replaced Bremen on 18 June 1947
- C = League champion
C1 = Champion, first half
C2 = Champion, second half

During the eleven years that the league existed before disbanding during World War II, five teams were part of the league every year, and another joined in the second year and remained for the next ten years. Only two other teams participated before the war, and they played for three and four consecutive years, respectively. Following the war, only two teams were in the league for all nine years, while thirteen other teams came and went, with only two being league members for as many as four years. Two others lasted less than a full season. These fluctuations in league membership reflect the changing times and the many reasons that the Northwest Georgia Textile League was never able to recapture the popularity it had held for local citizens prior to the war. According to the announcer Lee Mowry, factors such as the growth of community youth baseball and the loss of friends and family to the war kept the league from reclaiming its special role in the area.⁴⁴

A change in perception by returning players also fed the decline of the Northwest Georgia Textile League in the Floyd County area. Their war experiences had changed their perspective of the game. Former player Billy Primm explained his mindset after the war: “After what I had seen overseas, baseball just didn’t seem that important anymore.”⁴⁵

Another factor to consider in the decline of the

Northwest Georgia Textile League is the shifting role of the mills themselves by the late 1940s. The boom in demand for textile goods during the war decreased sharply when the conflict ended, creating a slump for some textile mills, many of which changed ownership in the years following the war. In turn, the economic losses for textile mills decreased their dominance of the economy in many areas of Georgia, including Floyd County.

The mill workers in Floyd County were also changing in post-World War II Georgia. Workers could now find better pay and improved working conditions in places other than a mill village. In addition, the GI Bill allowed workers who could not afford an education before the war to go beyond the mill village and find other occupations. These circumstances served not only to end the Northwest Georgia Textile League but spelled the beginning of the end for traditional mill-village life in Floyd County.⁴⁶

As the strength of the textile league continued to wane, professional baseball returned to northwest Georgia. The city of Rome entered a team, the Red Sox, in the Class D Georgia-Alabama League in 1950. That team, which included some veterans of textile ball, lasted only two years; the textile league itself continued to operate through 1954, fielding four teams some years and six teams in others. The Pepperell (Lindale)

and Brighton (Shannon) Mills were the only constants, and league membership was never the same from one year to the next.

Even after the league was no more, the last few mill-sponsored baseball teams in the area played their games against other community teams. With the arrival of the former Milwaukee Braves in Atlanta in 1966, the major leagues no longer just visited northern Georgia. Now they had a permanent home in the hearts and minds of fans with a new “home team” to rally behind. On a local level, the Floyd County community’s focus shifted from mill teams to high-school baseball, which enjoyed several years of popularity before eventually being replaced as the top sport by high-school football. Although many of the mills in the Floyd County area continued production well past World War II, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, mill villages became less cohesive as worker houses and businesses were sold off to individuals. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the mills had become only parts of larger communities rather than the communities themselves. As of 2009, the former Brighton Mill at Shannon, Georgia, is the only one of the original buildings that remains in use as a textile company, now Gayley & Lord.⁴⁷

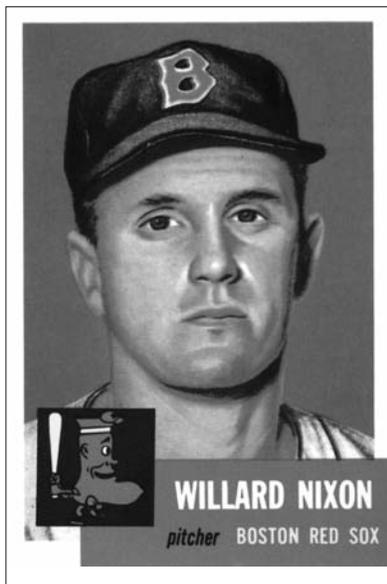
The Northwest Georgia Textile League lives on in the collective memory of the community. The Floyd County area houses a network of folklore and folklife

traditions surrounding baseball, from the years of the Great Depression up to the present day. Floyd County now boasts its own Hall of Fame, founded in the late 1960s to showcase the achievements of local athletes, many of whom were textile-league players.⁴⁸

Although no formal history of the Northwest Georgia Textile League has been written, oral traditions perpetuate the stories and legends of the teams and players throughout the Floyd County community. Often the players themselves relate their own stories to younger fans through reunions and community interaction, thus contributing and adding to their legendary status. Former player Harry Boss stated, “When we get together and start talking, we seem to become much better players than we really were back then.”⁴⁹ The stories associated with the Northwest Georgia Textile League also help remind the community of its industrial ties, since many of the mills are no longer in business and the mill villages were divided into private lots long ago.

During the years that the Northwest Georgia Textile League was active, the customs surrounding the players, the teams, and their fans served to unite the members of the Floyd County community and bolster the community spirit of the industrial families within the area. The All-Star players, the game rivalries, the community social patterns, the mill owners, the fans—

WILLARD NIXON, 1953, NO. 30 COURTESY OF THE TOPPS COMPANY, INC.



ROME AREA HISTORY MUSEUM

Leon Culberson and Willard Nixon reached the major leagues after playing in the NWGTL. Both began their textile-league careers while in high school. Culberson was a star outfielder first for Brighton Mills in Shannon and then led Tubize (Celene) to the league championship in 1939. Nixon became the ace of the Pepperell pitching staff, leading the team to league championships in 1946 and 1947.

the many elements that created and supported this baseball league—each represents a different tradition in the historical collage of northwest Georgia. Their interaction created an outlet that allowed the people of that region to persevere during times of economic hardship, especially when faced with the Great Depression, when pay was low and chances of advancement were few.

Overall, the traditions and activities of the Northwest Georgia Textile Baseball League demonstrate a dynamic baseball tradition in the Floyd County area and paint a picture of a close-knit community that found that baseball played close to home gave a more personal face to the game, a face that was not unlike their own. Community itself was an important element from the tough times of the 1930s through World War II, giving mill workers in the area a medium for bonding with neighbors who shared similar backgrounds and experiences. For the Floyd County area, the traditions that surrounded local baseball during this time instilled a sense of community pride while elevating the importance of baseball to which members of the community still bear witness today.

The three decades of the Northwest Georgia Textile League represent the ultimate combination of business and baseball. For the mill owners and managers, baseball represented a “safe” leisure activity that tied workers to their jobs and communities and granted “bragging rights” to mill administrators who produced winning teams. For the players, the league served as an economic buffer against the hardships of the Depression, a method for securing an elevated place within their community, and a chance for a few to use their athleticism to propel them out of the mill village and into the big leagues. For the mill villagers as a whole, baseball provided a break from the monotony of the work week, a social outlet for the community, and a way to enjoy improved social status vicariously through winning teams and famous players.

This symbiotic relationship served to elevate mill baseball to an unprecedented height within the Floyd County area, resulting in almost thirty years of league activity that even the labor unrest of the Depression could only minimally affect. The bond forged between textile-league baseball and the Floyd County area was so strong that the memories of this brand of baseball still live on, decades after the last inning has ended and the last fan has left the stands. Player reunions, newspaper articles, and the stories handed down through the generations have helped preserve the memory and importance of mill baseball in the collective consciousness of the Floyd County community. ■

Notes

1. Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1996), 62.
2. Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884–1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xvii; Pete Daniel, *Standing at the Crossroads: Southern Life in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 42.
3. Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *Baseball: An Illustrated History* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 124; Daniel, *Standing at the Crossroads*, 42; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (New York: Norton, 1987), 135–37.
4. Thomas Perry, *Textile League Baseball/South Carolina’s Mill Teams 1880–1955* (Jefferson, Mo.: McFarland, 1993), 50; Flamming, *Creating the Modern South*, 163–64.
5. Beth Gibbons, Videotaped interview by Heather Bostwick, 19 September 2000, Special Collections Department, Rome–Floyd County Library, Rome, Ga.; Harry Boss, videotaped interview by Beth Gibbons, 1995, Special Collections Department, Rome–Floyd County Library, Rome, Ga.
6. Flamming, *Creating the Modern South*, 167. Douglas Flamming suggests that mill communities, because of the close proximity of the families and similar backgrounds of the workers, create their own system of values and social standards not unlike those of rural communities. At Crown Mill in Dalton, Georgia, some of these behavioral “rules” included no drinking and keeping both house and yard clean. Flamming asserts, however, that these social norms were by no means followed by everyone in the mill village but did serve as a set of basic guidelines for mill families to judge one another in the community. In many cases, this set of behavioral rules is reinforced by mill regulations as well. The mill villages of Floyd County created their own set of social rules not unlike those of Crown Mill in Dalton. Also, see Rhonda Sonnenburg, “When Textile Mill Athletes Were Champs,” *Fiberarts* 25, no. 5 (March/April 1999): 8.
7. Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball* (Durham, N.C.: Baseball America, 1993), 137.
8. *Rome (Ga.) News Tribune*, 27 March 1868: 1, 19 May 1868: 19 July 1895: 4 July 1901: 1902 Industrial edition: 28 May 1912: 9 April, 4, 10–11 May, 7 June, 21 July 1910; Michael McCann, “Minor League Baseball,” Michael McCann Minor League Baseball History, www.geocities.com/big_bunko/total.htm, 2000; Polly Gammon, *A History of Lindale* (Rome, Ga.: The Art Department of Rome, 1997), 28–29; Baseball Reference, www.baseball-reference.com.
9. Gammon, *A History of Lindale*, 28–29; Harry Boss, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; *Rome News Tribune*, 18 June 1976.
10. *Rome News Tribune*, 10 March 1936.
11. In 1933, the league had authorized Sunday games and had expanded the schedule to 50 games.
12. Klenc, Tom. *Northwest Georgia Textile League (1931–1954): Research Guide*, June, 2007. Unpublished document in Rome–Floyd County Public Library. Map courtesy of Magnolia SABR member Bill Ross.
13. *Rome News Tribune*, 27 July, 1939.
14. *Ibid.*, 31 March, 1935.
15. Stacy McCain, ed. *PastTimes: Hometown Heroes of the Playing Fields* (Rome, Ga.: Rome News Publishing Company, 1996), 31; Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 135; Beth Gibbons interview, 19 September 2000.
16. Harry Boss interview, 14 February 2003; James C. McClanahan, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; William Primm, Videotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.
17. Harry Boss interview, 1995; William Primm interview, 14 February 2003; Kenneth Forbus, letter to Heather Bostwick, personal collection of Heather Bostwick, Silver Creek, Georgia, 25 April 2001; Margaret Brannon, letter to Heather Fincher, *Rome News Tribune* archives, Rome, Ga., 2003; Tubize-Chatillion Mill, *Tubize Yarns* (April 1945): 12–13.

18. Robert Gregory, *"Diz": The Story of Dizzy Dean and Baseball during the Great Depression* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 42; Harry Boss interview, 14 February 2003; Tubize-Chatillion Mill, *Tubize Yarns* (Rome, Georgia; March 1946); James C. McClanahan interview, 14 February 2003; *Rome News Tribune* (Rome, Georgia; 8 May 1940).
19. Harry Boss interview, 14 February 2003; William Primm interview, 14 February 2003; C. J. Wyatt, Personal communication with the author, 28 February 2003; Jackie P. Shores interview, 20 October 2000.
20. Harry Boss interview, 14 February 2003; William Primm interview, 14 February 2003; James C. McClanahan interview, 14 February 2003; Harold Bowman, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; J. M. Culberson, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; James "Slugger" Howren, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Georgia; Robert Kinney, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; Julius Locklear, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; Hubert Stepp, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; Elliz Z. Woods, audiotaped interview by Rome Braves Historical Research Team, 14 February 2003, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Ga.; Nathaniel McClinic, Personal communication with Doug Hamil, 4 March 2003, Doug Hamil Advertising, Rome, Ga.; G. Edward White, *Creating the National Pastime* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 139.
21. *Broadside* (Rome, Ga.), 17 February 1977; Lee Mowry, personal communication with the author, 7 February 2003; McCain, *PastTimes*, 30, 34.
22. Jackie P. Shores interview, 29 October 2000.
23. Jackie P. Shores interview, 29 October 2000; McCain, 29.
24. *Rome News Tribune* (Rome, Georgia), 11-13 June 1939; 30 June 1947; 6 September 1947.
25. Tubize-Chatillion Mill, *Tubize Yarns* (Rome, Ga.) October 1946; *Rome News Tribune* (Rome, Ga.), 4 April 1940; Flamming, *Creating the Modern South*, 163; Sonnenburg, "When Textile Mill Athletes Were Champs," 8; Gammon, *A History of Lindale*, 29.
26. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 139; Beth Gibbons interview, 19 September 2000.
27. Harry Boss interview, 14 February 2003; James C. McClanahan interview, 14 February 2003. Harry Boss and "Mac" McClanahan were not originally from Floyd County. Mr. Boss's family moved to Floyd County when his father was transferred to Tubize Mill. Boss played baseball at both Vanderbilt University and for Tubize Mill, eventually returning to Floyd County after college, where he still resides today. "Mac" McClanahan had no ties to the Floyd County area prior to his college years. While on a baseball scholarship at Oglethorpe University, McClanahan was asked to play on the Tubize Mill team for a summer. McClanahan played for the Tubize team for a few seasons, but was so impressed by the people of the area that he moved to Floyd County after his college career and baseball career ended. Also, see McCain, *PastTimes*, 46-47.
28. Jackie P. Shores interview, 29 October 2000; Beth Gibbons interview, 19 September 2000; McCain, *PastTimes*, 46-47; Sonnenburg, "When Textile Mill Athletes Were Champs," 8.
29. Harry Boss interview, 1995.
30. Michelle Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness: Race, Workers, and Culture in the Modern South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 53.
31. *Ibid.*, 37-38, 64-65.
32. *Ibid.*, 53, 68-71, 78-84.
33. *Ibid.*, 68-69.
34. *Rome News Tribune*, 12 March 1941.
35. *Ibid.*, 29 March 1942.
36. *Ibid.*, 12 April 1942.
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38. Wyatt, 28 February 2003; McCain, *PastTimes*, 46-47.
39. Max Gaston, letter to Heather Fincher, *Rome News Tribune* archives, Rome, Ga., 2003; Nathaniel McClinic, Personal communication with Doug Hamil, 4 March 2003.
40. Gammon, p. LXVII, LIII.
41. *Rome News Tribune*, April 14, 1946.
42. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1947.
43. *Ibid.*, 8 June 1949.
44. *Broadside* (Rome, Ga.), 17 February 1977; *Rome News Tribune*, 20 February 1947, 23 February 1947, 30 June 1947, 2 July 1947, 6 September 1947, 4 April 1951, 23 April 1951, 26 April 1951, 4 June 1952, 22 November 1953, 4 June 1954.
45. William Primm interview, 14 February 2003; personal recollections of Heather Bostwick. The author lived in Floyd County for twenty-eight years, attended Pepperell High School in the Lindale community between August 1989 and May 1993, and witnessed a shift in focus from high-school baseball to high-school football in the area.
46. Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 165.
47. Floyd County Heritage Book Committee, 134; *Rome News Tribune*, 22 November 1953, 26 February 1982; *Senior Times* (Rome, Ga.), October 1989.
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49. Harry Boss, interview, 1995; *Rome News Tribune*, 13 March 1983.

The Atlanta Black Crackers

LESLIE HEAPHY

Atlanta's baseball history is dominated by names such as Hank Aaron, John Smoltz, Greg Maddux, Dale Murphy, and Chipper Jones. The Braves also dominated their division in the 1990s, but that is only a small part of Atlanta's long and storied baseball history. Anyone can look up the history of the Braves and their players to learn more. A lesser-known part of the diamond tale goes back to the days when America was segregated. Atlanta had a significant black population who had to entertain themselves separately. In part due to the pervasive Jim Crow laws, black baseball in Atlanta flourished on the sandlots and local diamonds. Only one local team really made it to the big time, the Atlanta Black Crackers, who played in the city off and on from 1919 to 1949. The Black Crackers took their name from the white Atlanta Crackers squad, hoping to benefit from their popularity and name recognition. This part of the story of Atlanta's baseball needs to be taken out of the shadows and added to the city's story.

Ponce De Leon Park, home of the Atlanta Crackers, became home to another team shortly after the 1919 season began: the Atlanta Cubs, the predecessor to the Black Crackers. That team consisted of Atlanta players and college athletes brought together by a group of local businessmen.¹

Atlanta Crackers general manager Frank Reynolds realized that he could lease the ballpark to the black ballclub when the Crackers went on the road and thereby increase the Crackers' profits. The Cubs were a hard-hitting team that got off to an immediately strong start against a variety of opponents. While playing a series in Birmingham, the Cubs so impressed area fans that they came back to Atlanta with a new name, the Atlanta Black Crackers.² By the end of the summer season, the Black Crackers had played all over the South and had beaten teams from New Orleans to Florida and many places in between.

Insurance man W. J. "Bill" Shaw took over the Black Crackers in 1920, for their second season. Shaw moved to Atlanta from Brunswick, Georgia, and added to his insurance work a social club that held dances in the rooftop garden of the Odd Fellows Building and Audi-

torium on Auburn Avenue. This avenue was the heart and soul of the African American community in Atlanta. "More financial institutions, professionals, educators, entertainers and politicians were on this one mile of street than any other African American street in the South."³ The social club's profits helped finance the ballclub, and a number of the players played in the club's orchestra. Shaw helped the Crackers line up games to play at Morris Brown University Field and at Ponce de Leon Park. Many of the early ball players joined the club from the local colleges, including Morris Brown and Morehouse. He ran the team on a shoestring budget with twelve players and hand-me-down equipment and uniforms from the white Crackers team.⁴

When the Black Crackers played at Ponce De Leon Park, they attracted good crowds, including a sizable number of white fans. When the Black Crackers played, fans could sit anywhere in the park, but when the white Crackers played, the seating was segregated. Black fans sat in the bleachers in left field, an area they called Buzzard's Roost, according to former player Gabby Kemp.⁵ Even with good fan support the Black Crackers struggled, because they could not afford to travel north to play the major Negro League teams, and those teams did not regularly include a swing through the South in their season schedule. As a result, the Black Crackers played all but one season outside the major Negro Leagues and spent much of their playing time traveling to wherever a paying gig could be found. Atlanta sportswriter Ric Roberts described the importance of the Black Crackers to the local community, saying: "Baseball was an outlet. To sit where the whites sat—it was a moment of escape. . . . Blacks have always loved baseball. . . . And it gave them a chance to look at their heroes."⁶

When the Negro Southern League (NSL) formed in 1920, the Black Crackers became members, paying the \$200 franchise fee and hoping for a successful first season. Unfortunately the club struggled, and by August their record only stood at 39–37. While not a success on the field, the Black Crackers proved that a team

could survive in Atlanta. They returned for another year, opening the 1921 season in early April with a win against the Federal Prison Indians. They also ended their season by defeating the Federal Prison Indians⁷ again, 3–2. Big Preacher Davis struck out sixteen for the winners. Although they spent much of the season on the road, where they made better money due to larger crowds and not having to pay to lease ballparks, their financial struggles caused the team to dissolve before the end of the season.

The Black Crackers did not return to league play until 1925, because the college players lost their eligibility if they played for money. Thus the club could not find enough good players to field a team, and without a strong team they could not afford the rental fees for a park.⁸

New money and organization came to the team in 1925 in the forms of businessmen H. J. Peek and George Strickland. The team still spent a lot more time on the road because Atlanta's blue laws meant that Sunday baseball had to be played in other towns. Due to the Black Crackers' long absences from home, little about them can be found in the papers, and fans found it difficult to follow the team's progress. The weekly *Atlanta Daily World* did not start coverage until 1928 and did not become a daily until 1932. The *Atlanta Constitution* gave only sporadic coverage.

The club disappeared again before the end of the 1925 season. Peek brought the club back in 1926 with one major change: no more traveling by rail, which was expensive. Instead, the team rode in automobiles and saved money by driving themselves. Even this cost-saving measure did not help, and the Black Crackers went bankrupt before the end of the 1926 season.

The Black Crackers returned to play in the NSL in 1927, opening the season with a loss and then defeating Chattanooga 7–4. The club knocked out eleven hits in their win. By midseason, the Black Crackers were back to traveling and playing local teams and still not garnering much attention in the newspapers.⁹

From 1928 to 1931, Atlanta had no league black team, but there were a number of local sandlot and semipro clubs that kept black baseball alive. The Atlanta Grey Sox made a short-lived league attempt in 1928, but they only played a few games before financial troubles closed them down. H. J. Peek tried again in 1930 to revive baseball with a team called the Black Panthers, but most players were content playing in the local city league. The Panthers managed to survive through the beginning of the 1931 season before the worsening depression led to them shutting down. They might have delayed their demise somewhat by

being the first black team in the city to play night games at Ponce de Leon Park, which meant that fans could come after work to see the Panthers play.¹⁰

Even with the history of struggles for Atlanta's black baseball teams, the NSL granted the city another franchise in 1932. The new club got off to a rough start and never recovered, forcing the league to abandon the team in July. For example, they lost 11–1 to a rival club, the Montgomery Grey Sox, in early May.¹¹ Most of the players continued to play in the city league, which in 1933 was flourishing, led by the East City Blues and their star first baseman, Red Moore.

In 1935, the NSL met in Memphis to organize for the new season, with W. B. Baker representing Atlanta. Baker promoted other sports, such as basketball and amateur baseball, in the city and wanted to try to revive the Black Crackers. He tried something many of the earlier teams had not: he went outside Atlanta to sign players. He thought some new talent and big names might help draw in the fans. He signed Sammy Thompson from Memphis, Norman Cross from the Chicago American Giants, and George Bennette, a 16-year veteran of the Negro Leagues. The home opener looked promising: the Crackers beat the Memphis Red Sox 7–6. Unfortunately, the next few games were losses. As attendance and revenue declined, the Crackers threatened to remove the privilege of Sunday baseball at Ponce de Leon Park. A big victory and larger payday helped end that threat at mid-season. The Black Crackers managed to entice local black businesses to help them advertise, and they drew their largest crowd in a winning game against Birmingham, which convinced Cracker president Earl Mann to continue to allow them to lease Ponce de Leon Park. Their success was short lived, however, and once again the Black Crackers could not sustain the necessary fan support. By early August their season was over.¹²

Unwilling to give up on the dream of the Black Crackers, businessman Percy Williams vowed to finance the club. After securing interest from other local businessmen, he decided to try again in 1936 but would use local talent and try to find another park to lease. Unfortunately, this revival hinged entirely on Percy Williams' leadership, and he died unexpectedly on April 26, 1936. With the verbal support of his widow, the other owners tried to keep his dream alive. Some early victories behind the strong pitching of Snook Wellmaker kept the team afloat, but then Cum Posey signed him to a Homestead Grays contract in early June, and the ballclub floundered.¹³

In 1937, filling-station owner John Harden, with his wife Billy, took over ownership of the ballclub, and

the team's fortunes improved. Harden, whose gas station was located on Auburn Avenue, got into the action due to a local feud over who had the rights to use the Black Cracker name. Other businessmen were interested in owning the rights to the team, but Harden won the day, and by 1938, the team was winning. Instead of traveling in cars to games, the team now had a bus and new uniforms. The roster also jumped to 15 players and, in some years, as high as 17. The Black Crackers played as many of their games as possible in Ponce de Leon Park, setting their schedule around the white Atlanta Crackers. Harden worked with Earl Mann to continue to lease the ballpark and to arrange payments that benefited Harden's team. Their best financial success came when the Kansas City Monarchs came to town: fans wanted to see this famous Negro League team and its stars.¹⁴

Harden's first season in 1937 saw his team revive a lot of interest in Southern black baseball as his players traveled north and showed that they could compete with the Negro National League (NNL) clubs. In two contests with the Chicago American Giants, the Black Crackers won 8–2 and 6–1 respectively. After watching his team lose, Giants manager Candy Jim Taylor had nothing but praise for the Black Crackers and their solid play. He thought that the Crackers might have been the best team that the Giants had faced that season. Reporter Ric Roberts added to this praise by claiming that the Crackers' top two twirlers, Ping Burke and Ewelosh Howard, could match the great

Satchel Paige pitch for pitch. Later in the season, Manager Gainor of Hammond, Indiana, even brought in extra players for their exhibition game with the Crackers to ensure a good contest.¹⁵

During the 1938 season, the Black Crackers joined the Negro American League (NAL). They enjoyed immediate success when they won the second-half championship before losing two games of the playoff series to the Memphis Red Sox, the first-half winners. That series ran into financial conflicts, and Negro American League president Dr. R. B. Jackson canceled the series when neither team was willing to play in the other club's home ballpark, where their success had been limited. Since only two games were played, no season winner was declared.

The papers described the 1938 Black Cracker squad as "a team that possess [*sic*] small but speedy ball hawks, whose keen eye at the plate make [*sic*] them dangerous hitters at all times, even if they do not have the sheer power that nines like to depend on."¹⁶ Their team's success both on the field and off seemed to rest squarely on the shoulders of their catcher, Jim "Pea" Green, described by the press as a giant of a man who could hit a ball a long way and make their pitchers look good no matter what they threw, even if it was the 6-foot-7 Duncan. The infield was anchored by Gabby Kemp, a former football star from Morris Brown who also managed the club, while the outfield had speedsters who could cover a lot of ground. The strong play of center fielder Red Hadley, who had also played foot-



The Southern League Atlanta Black Crackers pose for a team photo before a game.

ball at Morris Brown, helped the Crackers win. Don Pelham, called by some the “Colored Ruth,” took care of the left-field duties, and Don Reeves, a graduate of Clark University, tracked down the ball in right field. Pelham led the team with 16 homers. Red Moore, who was later inducted into the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame for his accomplishments, played first base. Shortstop Pee Wee Butts made the tough plays up the middle and could turn a mean double play with Kemp. Butts used a sidearm delivery and sharpened spikes to keep oncoming runners from trying to take him out.¹⁷ Their best play of the season came in August, when they beat the Monarchs in four straight contests. They immediately followed that series with a sweep of the Memphis squad that had won the first-half championship.¹⁸

In 1939, due to financial troubles, the club moved to Indianapolis and played as the ABCs before returning to barnstorming. The league had wanted the club to move to Cleveland, but Harden refused. Louisville was the next suggestion, but the Louisville Black Caps did not want to share their stadium. By default, the Crackers went to Indianapolis. They quickly fell to the cellar, and little news made it back to the Atlanta papers because of the distance and cost. Harden decided to move the club back to Atlanta late in the year, and the owners of the league kicked him out for the move. Harden decided to disband the team and gave all the players their release to sign with other clubs.¹⁹ The next three seasons saw no professional black team play for the city. Baker left for Utah, taking his financial support with him, and Harden gave up because of his financial losses. Black baseball continued with the city league and other amateur efforts. Fans did on occasion get the opportunity to witness big-league-caliber play when Negro League teams came to town. A highlight in 1940 involved two appearances by future Hall of Famer Satchel Paige, to the delight of the locals.²⁰

By 1943, the Crackers seemed to be back on track with a solid group of young players led by their flashy shortstop, Harvey Young from Baltimore. Young joined center fielder Dave Harper, left fielder Fred Sheppard, and right fielder Dusty Owens in what the press dubbed Atlanta’s “murderers’ row.” Eugene Jones and Adolphus Grimes helped by making the all-star team. The team spent a hefty sum purchasing new players to regain their reputation in black baseball. John Harden was convinced by other local businessmen to get involved again, and they built a team made up of the best players from the Atlanta All Stars and the Scripto Black Cats, sponsored by the Scripto Pencil Factory, known infamously as the scene of the 1913 murder of Mary Phagan. The club played independently and used

Northern booking agents to help them organize contests that would prove profitable. They began the season with a 9–6 victory over the Cincinnati Clowns. They played in a three-team doubleheader at Yankee Stadium in August, taking on the St. Louis Stars and the New York Black Yankees.²¹

Due to the financial success the Black Crackers had in 1943, the club returned in 1944 with high expectations. The opening-day gala started with a band concert that the club hoped would attract 12,000 fans. John Harden became part owner of the New York Black Yankees and planned to use that relationship to help the Atlanta Club secure opponents. One of the highlights came early in the season, when the Black Yankees came to town, with Satchel Paige expected to make a guest appearance. Unfortunately Paige never showed up, but 6,000 fans came for the game and stayed. Harden offered special discounts to soldiers and their families, and he extended promotional efforts such as family days to encourage fan attendance. To keep the park owners happy, Harden encouraged the Crackers ownership to book other teams into Ponce de Leon Park when there were open dates. Felix Manning pitched a no-hitter against the St. Louis Stars and won 5–0. He came back to lead the Crackers to victory in the second game of the doubleheader, taking over in the third inning as the Black Crackers won 5–3. Another highlight came when the club got a chance to play in the Polo Grounds in September, although they lost to the New York Cubans, 16–5.²²

In 1945, Harden had the luxury of being invited to join two leagues. He chose the NSL because of the close geographic proximity of the other league entrants. He was made treasurer of the league; Dr. Jackson served as president. As treasurer, Harden hoped to work with Jackson to create a favorable schedule for his Crackers. Led by some big bats and a stellar pitching staff, the Black Crackers won both halves of the season and were declared the NSL champions. They defeated Knoxville in the first half by two games.²³ Manager Sammy Haynes guided the team to their early-season triumphs and brought back most of the team intact for the 1946 season, when they hoped to repeat their initial success. In both seasons, clean-up hitter Lomax “Fence Bustin’” Davis led the team offensively while southpaw Robert Branson anchored the pitching staff, relying on the solid play calling of catcher Harry Barnes.²⁴

When the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson at the end of the 1945 season, interest in baseball around Atlanta in 1946 surged, as it did in many places. Fans were excited by the changes taking place in baseball, and the black community wanted to see their

stars play in the majors. Vernon Jordan recalls getting a chance to see Robinson play at Ponce de Leon Park in April 1949. "Robinson's arrival was a big moment, and there was no way my father, Windsor, or I would have missed it. We went to Ponce de Leon Park, thrilled at the prospect of getting a glimpse of Robinson."²⁵ The opening game, between the Dodgers and the white Atlanta Crackers, drew an overflow crowd of 15,119 fans, including more than 5,000 blacks, at Ponce de Leon, which seated only 14,500. Large crowds did not always come out to see the Black Crackers play the Homestead Grays, Cleveland Buckeyes, and other Negro League opponents. Barnstorming and playing league contests during the 1946 season kept the Black Crackers alive and hoping for a good 1947 team, under new management.

John Harden saw the large crowds who came out to see Robinson play and did not know how that might affect his ballclub in the long term. He worried that the integration of the majors might hurt Black Crackers attendance, so he sold a portion of his shares in the club to local businessman Claud Malcolm. Harden made other changes as well. Sammy Haynes gave way to Bill Perkins as player/manager. As a veteran catcher, Perkins brought a strong knowledge of his own hurlers and opposing batters to the helm along with a savvy gained while playing with the Philadelphia Stars and New York Black Yankees and catching Satchel Paige.²⁶ While no final-season records have been found, the Black Crackers further solidified their reputation as one of the finest Southern ballclubs in the country with solid play against a range of opponents such as the Birmingham Black Barons, the Indianapolis Clowns, the Jacksonville Eagles, and others.

The Black Crackers' fine play carried over into 1948 under their manager Curry and their sensational rookie pitcher "Double Duty" Wyndner, an 18-year-old phenom. Reporters claimed his fastball kept hitters guessing, and he was also a consistent hitter at the plate. The Black Crackers joined the NSL in place of the Danville Aces, but by midseason they had gone back to barnstorming as a more lucrative opportunity. With the help of the radio, fans could now follow the pitching exploits of their ace "Lefty" Bell even when the Black Crackers were on the road. Bell won 15 games for the team in 1948.²⁷

In 1949, the Black Crackers got some new competition: a new club that became the Atlanta Stars (formerly the Scripto Black Cats) and compiled a 42-10 record by midseason. The Stars benefited from the reputation of the Black Crackers, as their opponents clearly respected them and were willing to book games with them. A

Michigan writer before a game in Benton Harbor described the Stars as "loaded in the pitching department and bringing in themselves an array of fine hitters."²⁸ The leading player on the club was infielder Harry Hatcher, a former college player at Alabama A&T, while the pitching staff boasted the services of former Memphis pitcher William Morgan and former Black Barons hurler John Wade. This would be the last season for this Atlanta ballclub, as black baseball gave way to the integration of the major leagues and the growth of television, which allowed fans to follow their favorite players wherever they played. The Atlanta Cubans replaced the Stars and played through 1952 before also folding due to financial struggles.

After the Crackers called it quits in the Negro Leagues, for many years, few wrote or talked about the team or the leagues. It was not until Robert Peterson's book *Only the Ball Was White* revived an interest in the Negro Leagues that researchers started looking for the old players and their stories. This focus led people to well-known teams such as the Kansas City Monarchs and Homestead Grays and eventually to lesser-known clubs like the Atlanta Black Crackers. Former player George McFadden explained why people should be interested in the Crackers in a 2005 interview, saying, "I shut out the Atlanta Black Crackers, and they had a big name. They was a big name in baseball."²⁹ The city of Atlanta responded to this interest.

A reunion of Southern ball players from Atlanta, Memphis, and Birmingham took place in Atlanta in 1989. The weekend celebration was called the "Living Legends of Baseball." Players were honored between games at Atlanta Fulton County Stadium. One of the players present was Chico Renfroe, who helped push the idea for the celebration. In 1990, the Alliance Theater also recognized the former Black Crackers players at the premier of August Wilson's play *Fences*. Again, one of the players present was Chico Renfroe, star shortstop of the Kansas City Monarchs, who went on to become a writer for the *Atlanta Daily World* and a radio broadcaster for WIGO. Renfroe got his start in the Negro Leagues as a batboy for the Black Crackers.³⁰ These were opportunities for the city to say thanks for the fine talent of the Black Crackers and other local black teams who played in the city for over 30 years. These reunions and other such gatherings have also helped rekindle an interest in the history of black baseball in Atlanta and the rest of the country.

PARTIAL PLAYER LISTS

The list that follows is not complete.³¹ There are no official records of the Black Crackers, and newspapers such

as the *Atlanta Daily World* did not become dailies until 1932. Northern African American papers such as the *Defender* and *Courier* did not tend to cover the NSL teams unless they were playing one of the major black

teams. This list is meant to give readers and researchers a glimpse of the talent and to show how much research still needs to be done to tell their story. ■

Alexander (p) 1921	Glenn, Oscar "Pap" (3b) 1937–38	Neal, Bobby (of) 1947
Allen, "Little Satchel" (p) 1943	Golden, Claude (p) 1947	Neal, Charlie (2b) 1947
Anderson, (p) 1926	Green, Jimmy "Pea" (c) 1935–38	Neal, Jimmy (ss) 1947
Barnes, Harry (c) 1944–45	Grier, Eddie (c) 1949	O'Neal (c) 1921
Barnhill, Herbert (c)	Grimes, Adolphus "Happy" (of/1b) 1943	Owens, Dusty (of/2b) 1943, 1946, 1949
Baynard (c) 1920	Grimes (c) 1921	Peatross, Maurice (1b) 1947
Bell, Lefty (p) 1948	Hadley, "Red" (cf) 1937–38	Pelham, Don (of) 1938
Bennette, George "Jew Baby" (of) 1935	Hampton (of/p) 1921	Perkins, Bill (mgr/c) 1947–1949
Bird, Early (c) 1947	Harp, Johnny (3b) 1948	Perry, Alonzo (p) 1945
Boone, Oscar, 1939	Harper, Dave T. (of) 1943, 1946–47	Phillips, Richard (p) 1949
Boyd, Lincoln "Linky" (2b) 1948–49	Harris, Ben (p) 1921	Pritchett, Drew (p) 1943
Branson, Robert "Bob" (p/of) 1946–47	Hatten (c) 1947	Randolph (p) 1938
Brichett, Dee (p) 1943	Hatcher, Harry (ss) 1949	Ray, Johnny (1b/of) 1947
Brigham, Eddie (of) 1947	Haynes, Sam (c/mgr) 1946	Reid, Ambrose (util) 1920–21
Bunn, Willie (p) 1943	Henderson (p) 1925	Renfroe, Othello Nelson "Chico" (ss/batboy) 1938, 1950
Burke, "Ping" (p) 1937–38, 1946	Hicks, Alonzo (of) 1947	Reese, "Slim" 1937
Butts, Thomas "Pee Wee" (ss) 1938	Hill (p) 1937	Reeves, Donald "Rabbit" (of) 1935–39
Byrd, Charley (3b) 1946	Holder, William (2b) 1949	Richardson, Johnny "Dude" (ss) 1947–48
Christopher, Thaddeus (c) 1947	Holiday, Flit 1935	Robinson (p) 1921
Cleveland, 1920	Holmes, Phil (of/3b) 1947	Sadler, John (p) 1945
Coleman, Melvin "Slick" (p) 1944–47	Howard, Twelosh (p) 1937–38	Sampson, Ormand (ss/mgr) 1937–38
Colzie, James (p) 1938–40	Humphrey (of) 1937	Saylor, Al "Greyhound" (1b) 1939
Cornelius (p) 1925	Idlett, Arthur "Kid" (3b) 1925	Sheppard, Fred (of) 1943, 1947
Cooper, Bill "Flash" (c) 1938, 1946	Ingram, Alfred (p) 1949	Smith, Chip "Tiny" (util) 1938
Cottingham (of) 1920	Jackson, Bob "Bozo" (ss/2b/3b) 1944–48	Smith, Milton (2b) 1948
Cowan (inf) 1920	Jefferson, Ellison (c) 1946	Smith (of) 1921
Cross, Norman (p) 1935	Johnson (p) 1920	Steward, Bob (of) 1945–46
Curry, Homer (p/of/3b) 1948	Jones, Eugene (p) 1943	Stewart, Richard (of) 1949
Daniels, "Jumping" Joe (p) 1926	Jones, Ralph (p) 1948	Stokes, Jim (c) 1943
Davis, Lomax "Butch" (of) 1944–46, 1948	Kemp, James "Gabby" (2b) 1937–39	Streeter (p) 1921
Davis, James, 1945	Kendrick, Leo (c) 1943	Swanson, Roy (c) 1948
Davis, Big Preacher (2b) 1921	King, Brennan "Early" (p) 1944–47	Terrell, Bill (3b) 1946–48
Davis, Spencer (3b) 1938	Lacey, Raymond (3b) 1947	Terry (of) 1948
Dixon, "Bullet" (p) 1938	Linarn, Boyd (of) 1948	Thompson, Sammy (inf) 1935
Dixon (of) 1921	Lomax, Butch "Fence Bustin" (of) 1946	Thompson, Will (p) 1945
Duncan (p) 1938	Long, Ernie (p) 1947	Thorton, Jack (p, 1b/2b) 1937
Echols, Melvin "Sunny Jim" (p) 1943, 1947	Lumpkin, Norman "Geronimo" (of) 1938	Torriente, Cristobal (of) 1934
Edwards (p) 1925	Manning, Felix (p/mgr) 1944	Wade, John (p) 1949
Ellison, Roy "Early Bird" (c) 1946, 1948	Marlin, Martee (p) 1925	Welch, James "Ike" (1b) 1948
Emerson, Carl (ss) 1946	McCarver (p) 1921	Wellmaker, Leroy "Snook" (p) 1936–37, 1943, 1945
Evans, "Chin" (p) 1937–39, 1943	McCoy, Andy (p) 1943	Wesley, "Two Sides" (ss) 1921
Favors, Tom "Monk" (1b) 1945–46	McFarland, John (p/3b/2b) 1943, 1948	Williams, Nish (p/mgr) 1925, 1938, 1943
Ferrell, Willie (p) 1938	Means, Louis (ss) 1921	Williams, John (p) 1948
Fisher, "Tipper" 1921	Merritt (p) 1946	Wyatt, Leon (p) 1946–47
Fletcher, George (1b) 1943	Michael (2b) 1947	Wyndner, "Double Duty" (p/c/of) 1948
Foster, John (p) 1937	Monroe, Lee (1b) 1949	Yancey, William James "Bill" (mgr) 1945–46
Franklin, Henry (p) 1949	Moore, James "Red" (1b) 1938–39	Young, Harvey (ss) 1943
Frederick (p) 1920	Moore, Terry (of) 1948	Zapp, Jim (lf) 1947
Gilliam, Ted (1b) 1920–21	Morgan, William "Sack" (p) 1949	
Gissentanner (p) 1921	Murden, Shugarty (2b/of) 1921	

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Red Moore

He Could Pick It!

JAMES A. RILEY

Whenever a Negro Leagues veteran is asked about James “Red” Moore, the response is almost automatically: “He could pick it!” Then the player adds anything else that he has to say. Such is the reputation that the Atlanta-born former baseball star earned during his career in the Negro Leagues.

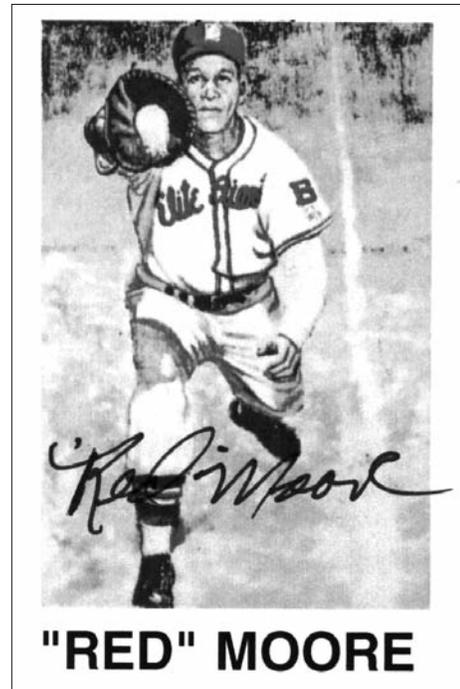
Described by *Atlanta Daily World* sports editor Ric Roberts as the “most perfect” first baseman ever, Red was expert at handling ground balls, excelled at making a 3-to-6-to-3 double play, and was masterful at digging low throws out of the dirt and gloving other errant throws while making it look easy.

Buck O’Neil, a star first baseman for the Kansas City Monarchs and a contemporary of Moore, said of his rival: “He could pick it! He was quick around first base and had outstanding hands. He could handle that low throw in the dirt better than anybody. Nobody had better hands than Red Moore. Most first basemen back then used two hands, but Red was a one-hand first baseman. As far as playing first base, nobody was better. People came to see him play.”

And Red, who liked to showboat on occasions, never disappointed them. Frequently, the fancy fielder would take throws behind his back in pregame infield practice and make other trick catches to entertain the fans. The home folks adored him, and he became a crowd favorite everywhere he played.

The second of four children born to James Benjamin Moore Jr. and Sadie Robinson Moore, Red reflects back over his early years living in the Bush Mountain neighborhood of southwest Atlanta. He learned his craft the hard way. As a left-handed youngster, he made his first mitt by taking apart a standard right-hander’s glove, turning it inside out, and restitching it. From that rudimentary beginning with a makeshift glove, the aspiring young ballplayer developed into a flawless “one-hand” fielder whose defensive skills would eventually attract the attention of top black baseball teams.

His creativity carried over to his hitting and, early in his professional career, he pioneered the use of a batting glove. Red describes his role in the development of this new piece of equipment: “The pitchers



Red Moore was a slick-fielding first baseman.

were throwing me inside and the ball came right in on my fists, right up on my left hand—my top hand—and when I hit the ball, it would sting. So I got a glove like we used to use in cold weather—a good leather dress glove we would wear in the wintertime—and cut the fingers off. I wore that on my left hand. I could grip a bat pretty good and when I hit the ball it would take the sting out of it. That was in ’36 or ’37, and I used it the rest of my career.”

It was around this same time that Moore, as a raw rookie with the Newark Eagles, received an unforgettable welcome to black baseball’s big time from Satchel Paige. Red now laughs when he recalls the first time he faced Satchel. Speaking to a group of schoolchildren in the Hank Aaron Room at Turner Field in 2006, the aged veteran looked back 70 years to that first encounter with the legendary pitcher.

Actually, it was an encounter with *two* legends. Satchel’s batterymate that day was Josh Gibson, the great slugger known as the “Black Babe Ruth.” Gibson

was noted for talking “trash” to hitters—especially young ones—in an attempt to intimidate them or at least to shake their confidence and break their concentration. This time was no exception, and Gibson bantered with the “green” batter as he stepped up to the plate. Red remembers his initiation vividly: “Josh said, ‘Young man, I heard you’re a pretty good hitter—can you hit laying down? When Satchel faces a rookie the first time, he kinda lays ’em down. You better watch, young buck, we’re going to have to check you out.’ Satchel was on the mound and I’m listening to Josh and then all of the sudden the ball popped like a shot in Josh’s mitt. He said, ‘That was pretty close and next time it’s going to be a little closer. You know you can’t hit laying down.’ And while Josh is talking, another fastball zipped by me. Then another one. I just kind of waved at ’em.”

After Satchel hummed three straight fastballs by him before he had really settled into the batter’s box, the rookie had to face his manager’s ire in the dugout. A smile creases Red’s face as he describes his discomposure at the time: “W. Bell was manager then. When I got back to the dugout he said, ‘You’ve been hitting good ’til now—what happened?’ I said, ‘Mr. Bell, Josh is back there and he made me nervous. I was listening to him and didn’t watch the ball.’” The old warhorse chuckles, recalling the experience, and adds, “The first time I faced Satchel, I didn’t do nothing. And I never did do much against him.” Red’s rookie experience was not unique. Few players—rookies or otherwise—hit Satchel.

After this disquieting experience, Red settled into his role with the Newark ballclub. The fielding wizard added finesse to his team’s defense everywhere he

played, but nowhere was it more apparent than with the Eagles in 1937, where he was part of their famed “million dollar infield.” Slugger Mule Suttles divided his time between first base and the outfield during his career but, when Red arrived on the scene, the big slugger spent more time in the outfield in deference to the youngster’s sterling defensive skills.

Once ensconced at the initial sack, Red teamed with second baseman Dick Seay, shortstop Willie Wells, third baseman Ray Dandridge, and catcher Leon Ruffin to give the Eagles Gold Glove quality at each infield position. Dandridge said, “Now, when *he* was at first base, that was our million-dollar infield.” Wells echoed that sentiment, praising Red’s defensive play lavishly. Dandridge and Wells are now members of the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Two of Moore’s other teammates at Newark, Leon Day and Monte Irvin, are also among the Cooperstown elite, and both concurred with their former teammates’ assessment and added their own high praise of Red’s superior defensive prowess.

Following his stint in Newark, Red returned to his hometown in 1938 and helped the Atlanta Black Crackers become the first Atlanta team in any major-league sport to win a championship. Although winning his greatest acclaim with his superb defensive skills, the left-handed batsman also had some good seasons at the plate, batting .320 with the 1938 Atlanta Black Crackers, when the team captured the second-half championship of the Negro American League’s split season. The resulting playoff with the first-half champion Memphis Red Sox was not completed, and the NAL president subsequently declared a co-championship.

COURTESY OF JAMES A. RILEY



Red Moore (in lower right corner) and Atlanta Black Cracker teammates.

Although he could pilfer a base when the game situation called for it, Red did not present a base-stealing threat. In fact, a base-running mishap led to an injury sliding into a base and put him on the shelf for an extended time during the Black Crackers' title run. The irony is that this occurred in an exhibition game. Red describes the incident: "I cracked my left ankle going into second base. I made a late slide, and my spikes hung up under the base. I was out about six weeks, and it kept me from playing in the East-West game. I wore an ankle brace, and that kind of stabilized it. They didn't put it in a cast, but I was on a crutch for awhile. I was in the dugout for our home games, but I didn't do no traveling. I was kind of incapacitated. I wasn't a fast man anyway, even before the injury. After I got back in the lineup is when we began our big winning streak and won the second-half championship."

Although Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe was 102 years old and in poor health, his memory remained sharp about the 1938 Atlanta Black Crackers and one of the best first basemen he ever saw: "They had a heck of a ballclub. I managed the Memphis Red Sox in the championship playoff against them. Red Moore was a great fielder. *He could pick it!* And he was a good all-around ballplayer."

Off the field, Red was quiet, unassuming, and practical. Radcliffe also voiced his respect for his opponent as a person and spoke of how well liked he was. "He was one of the best fellows I ever met." Buck O'Neil concurred: "I knew Red on the field and, after he stopped playing, I'd see him every time we would play in Atlanta. Red was always a good person. He was always a churchgoer."

This admiration of the Black Crackers' star was not isolated, and Red Moore's contribution to the team's success did not go unnoticed in Atlanta, where the fans held a special day for him at Ponce de Leon Park to show their appreciation. Despite the restrictive economics of the Great Depression, the grateful fans presented the star first sacker with \$350 worth of gifts and merchandise.

In addition to the fans, another Atlantan who admired the way that Red Moore played the game was Earl Mann, president of the white Atlanta Crackers, who earlier in the season had tried to sign the flashy fielder to a contract with his ballclub and pass him off as a Cuban. Red explains why he declined the offer: "Earl Mann wanted me to learn a little Spanish to help the ruse to succeed, but I knew that wouldn't work. Everybody around Atlanta knew me. They all had seen Red Moore play, and I knew what would happen. They

would've been calling me all kind of names, and I didn't want any part of that. I stayed where I was with the Black Crackers."

The press also noted his sterling performance, and at the end of the season, the *Southern News Service* selected Moore to the Negro American League's All-Star team. What more could a young ballplayer ask than to be an All-Star in his hometown?

In 1939, the Black Crackers relocated to Indianapolis and played briefly as the ABCs before disbanding early in the season. Afterward, Moore was quickly signed by the Baltimore Elite Giants, where he roomed with Roy Campanella, who later became an All-Star catcher with the Brooklyn Dodgers and subsequently was voted into the Hall of Fame.

Both players were respected by their opponents and well liked by their teammates, and their similar personalities made them compatible roomies. Red remembers the years with his young roommate fondly: "I was about six years older than Roy. At that time he was just a teenager. He was a nice young fellow, good to be around. He was always telling jokes. He loved baseball—he loved the game. His dad would ride with us on the bus. He loved the game like we did and would be with us. He was Italian, but there was no problem with meals, accommodations, or anything—he would go where we would go."

Both young players were easygoing off the field but competitive on it, where the Elites battled Red's old team, the Newark Eagles, and the dynastic Homestead Grays for the Negro National League pennant. In the end, the Elites lost out to the defending-champion Grays. Absent a championship playoff, the top four teams played a postseason tournament, and this time the Elites emerged victorious over the Grays to claim the championship trophy. Photographs snapped after the final game, which was played at Yankee Stadium, show the jubilant young roomies in the front row of the team picture.

When I mentioned his old roommate to Campy one year at Cooperstown, his face lit up and a smile spread across his face. "Yes," Campy agreed emphatically, "*He could pick it!*"

Both Campy and Red returned to the Elites the following spring and, at that point in Red Moore's life, the world looked rosy to the young star. Little did he know what changes lay just around the corner.

Late in 1941 Red was married, but soon afterward the United States entered World War II, and he was inducted into the army in 1942. During the next three years, he served in England, Belgium, and France in a combat-engineer battalion attached to General George

WYN/MPX



Red Moore still devotes much of his time to keeping the Negro Leagues alive for young fans.

Patton's Third Army. After the war ended, he was discharged in 1945 and returned to Atlanta. However, the years of athletic rust had taken their toll and, although he resumed his baseball career on a part-time basis, he never again played at the major-league level.

Leaving baseball in 1948, Red took a job in Atlanta with Colonial Warehouse until retiring in 1981. In retirement, he has retained a quiet demeanor and still loves chicken dinners, his favorite meal.

At age 93, Red resides in Atlanta with his wife Mary and remains active in his church and community. He

serves as Deacon Emeritus at the Springfield Missionary Baptist Church and has given talks about his baseball career at a wide range of venues, including public schools, colleges, civic clubs, and SABR meetings. During the past four years, he has spoken to over one thousand school children in the Hank Aaron Room at Turner Field, as part of the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame educational program.

Recognition came late in life for Red Moore. Once ignored to the point of invisibility, the Negro Leagues legend is belatedly receiving honors and recognition all across the country. He has appeared at numerous special functions and has been featured on television and in newsprint. In his hometown, the Mike Glenn Foundation presented him with a Pioneer Award, and the Georgia House of Representatives honored him at the state capitol with a resolution acknowledging his accomplishments. All of these recognitions were gratifying to Red, who was genuinely appreciative in accepting the accolades. Only in recent years has he come to grips with the fact that he is truly deserving of the awards.

The honor that was most personally fulfilling for him came when he was inducted into the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame in 2006. When he received the call informing him of his election, Red shouted with joy. "I was so elated, I just shouted," he explained. "I'm living and I can get to smell the roses. I'm glad that I will be able to do that. A lot of time some of us get awards and everything after we're already gone." ■

Sources

The information for this article came primarily from the author's interviews with Red Moore, Roy Campanella, Ray Dandridge, Leon Day, Monte Irvin, Buck O'Neil, Ted Radcliffe, and Willie Wells.

Help in High Places

RICHARD McBANE

ON MAY 3, 1897, the ministers of Atlanta announced their determination to stop Sunday baseball. They weren't alone in their campaign: Protestant clerics all over the country were involved in a cultural war to protect the sanctity of the Sabbath not only from baseball but also from other secular threats as well.

The Atlanta *Constitution* reported: "Nearly every preacher in Atlanta has joined the movement and they say that they will not stop until there is no such thing as Sunday baseball at Fort McPherson, Sunday concerts or any other form of amusement that they regard as demoralizing."¹

Indeed, the Atlanta Evangelical Association was aiming at prominent targets, including the federal government. The *Constitution* reported that the most important target "and the one that would be most widely felt if successful is the abolishment of Sunday mails [which] they claim . . . is unnecessary and totally in violation of the law laid down in the scriptures." The group even declared, "The war is on and . . . Sunday must be respected in Atlanta."²

As serious as that sounds, things were peaceful in Atlanta compared to other communities throughout the country where preachers pushed for quiet Sabbath observance. The baseball magnates who operated teams all united in pushing back—the amateurs in pursuit of pleasure, the professionals in pursuit of dollars.

Fort McPherson, headquarters of the U.S. Army in the South, was an important and integral part of Atlanta's economy and social life. The city had worked hard to land the fort and was proud of it, although its presence was not without problems. In April 1897, thirty gamblers came before Judge John D. Berry in the City of Atlanta's criminal court for indulging in their favorite pastime at the fort. Their defense was that city and state courts had no jurisdiction over offenses committed on a government reservation.³

Gambling, however, was not the target of the Evangelical Association. Dr. R. V. Atkisson, pastor of the Central Congregation Church, had identified that target for the association a month earlier when he decried "the evils of the practice [baseball games], showing that large crowds went out from the city every Sunday; that as a rule, an objectionable class of people were at the garrison on that day; that by the yelling and noise the whole place was disturbed."⁴

The Evangelical Association had first gone about its business quietly, appointing a committee to call on the fort commander, who had in turn referred them to the War Department in Washington, D.C. While the ministers undoubtedly resorted to prayer, they also turned to a more earthly source of help in high places. They wrote to Col. Alfred E. Buck, a former Republican chairman in Georgia, who was then in Washington. Buck immediately took the letter to the War Department. That approach worked like an answered prayer.

Dr. Atkisson soon reported that "an order had been received at the fort preventing any more games. The *Constitution* added: "There seems to have been no game Sunday, and the order has gone forth that no more shall be played. The other ministers of the city are equally jubilant, and consider it a great victory for their cause."⁵

The biggest change in the local baseball scene, however, wasn't due to the ministers' victory. The Atlanta team in the Southeastern League, which hadn't been playing on Sundays anyway, played its last game on May 29, because the entire league had folded due to "poor patronage."⁶

The Fort McPherson baseball team continued to play, just not on Sunday. And the fort continued to be an integral part of Atlanta society. The *Constitution* reported on Sunday, June 6: "Next Saturday afternoon the ladies of the Episcopal church of West End will give a bicycle meet at Fort McPherson. Captain Cook has generously consented to keep open the fort till 10 o'clock in the evening."⁷

Moreover, Atlanta continued to have Sunday entertainments, including two separate band concerts on Sunday, August 1. Extra streetcars were scheduled to run for both events.⁸

Despite losing Sunday baseball thanks to help in high places, Atlanta's other Sunday amusements continued, demoralizing or not. ■

Notes

1. *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 May 1897, 5.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 11 April 1897, 13.
4. *Ibid.*, 5 May 1897, 5.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 30 May 1897, 10.
7. *Ibid.*, 6 June 1897, 8.
8. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1897, 16.

The Empire State League

South Georgia Baseball in 1913

WILLIAM F. ROSS III

They played six days a week, May through August, under the punishing South Georgia sun and in swamp-like humidity. They traveled by rail, seemingly always on the go. They were off on Sundays, their only day of rest before another round of games and trains. Some played for hometown pride and some played for the pay, but all of them hoped that they would find a lasting job in professional baseball. For most, one season in South Georgia would be as far as they got. For some, it was the tail end of a career. For a few—a lucky few—it was the beginning of a career. This was the Empire State League; this was South Georgia baseball in 1913.

But baseball is not just the romance of victory and defeat on the playing field; it is also a business. The game was intertwined with business promotion. Following the Cotton States Exposition of 1895 in Atlanta, town fathers, elected officials, and chambers of commerce across the state were under local pressure to get on board with the growing industrialization of the South and to attract Northern business investment to their communities. Among other tools, they sought to use baseball as a national calling card for their cities. The local team was the public face of the town. A city with a professional baseball team was a city to be reckoned with; a city with a winning professional team was a winner. This, too, was South Georgia baseball in 1913.

THE LEAGUE

The Empire State League did not emerge fully formed and without precursors. The sandy soil of the region had proved to be fertile ground for baseball. The sport was long popular in South Georgia, and amateur nines had been playing the game for several decades before the league was organized. Amateur and semipro teams played in many South Georgia cities by the last decade of the nineteenth century. Most towns had a local team, as did many churches and schools. The larger towns and county seats also had teams sponsored by local businesses and associations (YMCA, Elks, etc.) or organized around certain professions (waiters, firemen, etc.). It was the “town” team, however, that

proved most important to the fans. These groups of home-grown talent would play nearby towns for prizes and bragging rights, and the contests were often part of a larger celebration. The teams were organized to take on all comers and typically looked for challengers of equal status and ability, most often from a similarly sized town. County seats, such as Thomasville or Valdosta, often met one another for contests that had repercussions beyond the playing field, not unlike modern-day high-school football in the region.

Attempts to organize these “town” teams into a league went back at least to 1900, when a Southeastern Base Ball League was proposed; it never began play. In 1903, two attempts failed: a Wiregrass League and a South Georgia League. In 1906, the Georgia State League, Class D, got off the ground, played a partial schedule, and then collapsed as teams failed and dropped out. Five of the towns that would later make up the Empire State League—Americus, Brunswick, Cordele, Valdosta, and Waycross—were members of this six-team league.¹ The breaking point for the 1906 league was the Fourth of July holiday. Traditionally, teams would play a doubleheader on this date, sometimes traveling between towns for a home-and-home series. With most workers off for the day, box-office receipts could be high, as games were played amid picnics and other outdoor events. Excluding any post-season play, this holiday was a team’s largest payday. For the Georgia State League, this was also the time to cash out. Following the holiday, the 1906 league collapsed, with Waycross left as the lone solvent team, issuing a challenge to other nines in a bid to keep going. It would be six years before another attempt was made to assemble a league.

Population and employment growth, spurred by civic promotion, may be the least recognized component of the drive to professionalize the town teams. New jobs, especially in the timber and related industries, attracted workers to the area; banking and other services followed. Between 1900 and 1910, population in each of the six towns that would make up the league grew by an average of 49 percent; between 1910

and 1920, each town continued to grow by an average of 26 percent. Even with high growth rates, these were still small towns, with populations ranging from 6,000 (Cordele) to just over 15,000 (Waycross). The “boomtown” of the group, Waycross, had increased in population by 145 percent between 1900 and 1910. Brunswick (11,000 residents in 1913) and Valdosta (8,300) had population growth rates of 41 percent from 1910 to 1920, and employment in Brunswick grew by 93 percent between 1909 and 1914. These high growth rates were partly the result of, and further argument for, the self-promotion of the region, with the towns vying with one another to attract Northern investment. In general, business in this era and region meant employment based on extracting natural resources, such as cotton and timber, in order to provide raw materials to Northern factories. Much like the contemporary view that a modern city is “major” if it has a major sports franchise, the presence of a professional baseball team became part of the self-image of these towns.

The Empire State League was the brainchild of one man—James Sinclair—carried to success by many other men. An executive with the South Atlantic Line

Railroad in its Waycross offices, Sinclair sought to gain entry for his local team into the South Atlantic League (Sally) for play in the 1913 season. The Sally, stretching from South Carolina to Florida and including four teams in Georgia, had no room for another member, and no team was looking to be replaced. By August 1912, the rebuffed Sinclair was publicly contemplating creating a new league in the southern part of the state. He envisioned a six-team circuit that would include five of the cities that were later part of the league, with Tifton, Moultrie, or Fitzgerald originally considered instead of Thomasville. At Sinclair’s invitation, representatives from the interested cities met several times in different locations to discuss the idea. James Sinclair was elected chairman of the committee formed at these meetings. The circuit would be named the Empire State League.² Teams would pay \$100 to the league as an entry fee, demonstrate that they had at least \$300 on hand, and post a \$500 bond to guarantee compliance with the salary cap. Each team was required to have local ownership. Six teams, representing Americus, Brunswick, Cordele, Thomasville, Valdosta, and Waycross, raised the required funds and formally



COURTESY OF THE THOMAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, THOMASVILLE, GEORGIA

Past and present members of the Thomasville Hornets pose with the team’s Empire State League pennant before the start of the 1914 season. Standing, left to right: Mitchell Davenport, Klump, Harry Champlin, “Red” Murch, Mabry, Manager Martin Dudley, Hal Barnett, George Wilkes, Hall, Vincent Roth, “Professor” Day, Schultz, Ealen, Telken, Kane. Front row, left to right: E. R. Jerger, Club Secretary; R. G. Mays, club president (1914); J. B. Jemison, club president (1913).

joined the league by the end of February. In a hint of things to come, however, Americus had a difficult time raising sufficient funds in these early months.

Following their initial meetings, the group assembled in Valdosta to continue their talks, formalize the organization of the league, and elect Sinclair to the office of league president. It would be a short reign. The league's board of directors, made up of a representative from each of the member cities, scheduled a meeting for February 19 in Brunswick to finalize plans for the season. Sinclair, however, was done. Citing his growing need to attend to his business matters, he announced his impending resignation. In Brunswick, the league quickly moved to fill his place, electing a local businessman, C. C. Vaughn, to the presidency. Oscar Groover of Thomasville was elected vice president, and L. J. Leavy of Brunswick was elected to the post of secretary/treasurer. Leavy was immediately instructed to contact the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues in order to apply for entry on behalf of the league.

An important step for the nascent league was to seek membership in the National Association, which was granted in March. The Empire State League could have gone into the season as an "outlaw" league simply by organizing a schedule for the member teams. This would not have been much different from the current situation. But the teams would still just be playing for bragging rights, not national recognition. Membership in the National Association provided a level of stability that was important to the league's organizers. As a member of the association, the league gained protection for its players, because all association members were required to respect the contracts of other member leagues. In addition, only a limited number of players could be drafted by leagues with a higher classification, and only at the end of the season. The league was admitted as a Class D minor league; teams in this class made up about half of all the professional leagues in 1913.³

Empire State League rosters were limited to twelve players, and no more than three of the men could have prior service with higher-classification minor-league teams (C or above). Salaries were capped at \$1,000 for the season (about \$21,000 in today's dollars), though few if any of the players received the maximum allowable salary.⁴ Because of these constraints, we can reconstruct some of the organizational logic behind the make-up of team rosters. This was the era of the player-manager, so the highest-paid roster spot would presumably go to such a player. For most teams, this accounted for one of the three spots limited by "prior

service." Any remaining "prior-service" spots, and the higher salaries that would go with them, might be used for pitching or hitting, depending on the manager's preference. A player-manager would also typically be a position player, rather than a pitcher, meaning that seven more roster spots would be taken by position players. This leaves four roster spots, which were taken up by four pitchers or three pitchers and a utility player. Many of the pitchers could play the outfield when they weren't on the mound, providing a little flexibility in the roster. In this league, an injury generally meant the end of a player's season, as a roster spot could not be held while the man recuperated.

More than 180 men played in the Empire State League—enough to fill the team rosters two-and-a-half times over. Most of these players were from other Class D leagues, "on loan" or released from higher-level minor-league teams, or trying to break into professional baseball for the first time. There was no formal arrangement between the Empire State League and any other leagues, though many of the teams entered into agreements on a player-by-player basis. For example, Tom Bowden, property of the Boston Braves, was "farmed out" to Cordele, and Americus's "Mr. Popularity," Dick Manchester, was property of the Albany, Georgia, South Atlantic League team. Several players from Macon (Sally) "rehabbed" with a league team. During the season, more than forty men from higher-classification leagues found playing time in the Empire State League.

The creation of the Empire State League should be seen as a "professionalizing" of the game in South Georgia rather than as introducing something entirely new. Many of the players from a 1912 "town" team roster played for the same team in the league the next year. The towns that made up the league had been playing each other for years, and rivalries were well established. Some of these were continued in the Empire State League, but some, such as the fierce rivalry between Thomasville and Monticello, Florida, faded out when one of the teams involved was not part of the new league. In the seasons leading up to the creation of the league, Americus, Brunswick, and Waycross fielded the strongest teams in the region. Ironically, these three finished out of the running in 1913.

THE SEASON

The Empire State League scheduled a 90-game season, with teams playing three home and three away games each week, taking every Sunday off. No doubleheaders were scheduled—save for the Fourth of July holiday—though several would be held in order to make up rainouts. Games would typically start around

3:30, and a nine-inning contest lasted an average of just under two hours. Average take at the ticket booth was a bit less than 50 cents per person.⁵ Teams traveled by train and dressed for the game in a local hotel or boarding house. Based on available evidence, the parks can charitably be described as “unrefined,” with sandy ground that made growing grass difficult. Seating was provided in covered band-box “pavilions” and open-air grandstands, set to one side of the field, usually along the first-base line. Bullpens didn’t exist; pitchers warmed up down the foul lines. The ballpark might also be used for other events. In Valdosta, the field was within a dirt track oval used for motorcycle races.

The Empire State League began play on May 1, with Waycross visiting Brunswick, Americus appearing in Cordele, and Valdosta hosting Thomasville. Businesses closed early, parades were held, city officials strutted, and the ballparks were mobbed. Special trains ran from each visiting team’s city and the surrounding towns. But even before the season was properly underway, there was controversy. The league had announced a contest to award a trophy to the city that had the largest home-opener crowd; determining the winner became clouded by allegations of over counting by some teams. Brunswick claimed the opening-day attendance title with 3,000 fans—exactly 3,000—and over 2,700 were claimed by Waycross for its opener on May 5. Given that the other teams reported more realistic figures for the period and ballpark sizes (1,200 to 1,500 fans), and given that the postseason games averaged 770 spectators, it seems likely that some over counting did, in fact, occur. Still, the opening-day scenes must have been impressive, and the overflow of fans would have been accommodated along the foul lines and in the outfield. When Thomasville held its first game at home, the team reported almost 1,200 fans in attendance in a park that was described to have a capacity of about 800.

The league scheduled a meeting to discuss the attendance prize, but more important matters took center stage. Two weeks into the season, it was time to change league presidents again. On May 19, C. C. Vaughn, who had been elected to the position just three months earlier to succeed James Sinclair, gave notice of his intention to resign. Actually, Vaughn had tried to get out earlier but had withdrawn his previous resignation. Now he had a good excuse—he was moving to New Orleans. Vice President Groover was elevated to the presidency and would retain that post for the remainder of the season. (And no attendance trophy was awarded.)

Like the rest of the teams, the Americus Muckalees,⁶ named for a local tributary of the Flint River, actually

began play before the regular season was underway, facing off with minor-league and college opponents in a sort of preseason exhibition tour. Americus’ 13-game schedule was more ambitious than most. In addition to the practice time, the team may have needed the gate receipts just to start the season. The Americus team was an uneven nine. They had the bats, but not the arms, to be successful. Numerous four- and five-game losing streaks, along with a few winning streaks, gave the team a certain mediocre consistency. Three managers came and went over the course of the season: Harry Weber, Hal Griffin, and Bill Kuhlman. Weber quit after two weeks; Griffin then took over but shortly gave way to Kuhlman. The team finished fourth in both halves of the season, and its overall record also placed it fourth among the six teams of the league. The season for Americus was not without its bright spots, however. Late in the season, catcher Dick Manchester was voted the “most popular player” in the league by the fans; he won the title, and a loving cup, over the second-place finisher, Valdosta’s Otto Jordan.

With the offensive prowess of outfielder Henry Chancey, Americus should have fared much better. Chancey led the team—and the league—in batting with a .386 average and also led in home runs (10), hits (142), total bases (212), and extra base hits (46).⁷ He was second in the league in doubles (32) and third in runs (68). Third baseman Grady Bowen was close behind, batting .324, and was ranked fifth in the league in hits (118). The team’s pitching was led by “Red” Dacey, with a 9–3 record, and Pratt, who went 9–6. First baseman Hal Griffin led the league in putouts (983), with Bowen at third base and Kuhlman at second ranking fourth and fifth, respectively.

The Cordele Babies played in the smallest city in the circuit but in front of some of the most rabid fans in the league. “Babies” seems like an unusual team name to us today, but was a common nickname around the country for teams of the period and was also used in 1913 by the South Atlantic League (Class C) team in nearby Albany, Georgia.⁸ The team was managed by Eddie “Rip” Reagan, a former Sally and Southern Association player.⁹ Reagan was well known to Cordele fans, having played for the city in the 1906 Georgia State League. The team’s strength was its pitching, led by Cleo “Kid” Wilder (16–10) and Dana Fillingim (15–10), who pitched back-to-back no-hitters in a doubleheader against Waycross on July 23.¹⁰ Evidently, the Babies had that team’s number; Wilder also recorded 15 strikeouts on May 17 against Waycross. Wilder and Fillingim had faced each other as pitchers

on top high-school teams in 1912; ten years after being teammates in Cordele, Dana would be in the majors and Wilder would be pitching against Shoeless Joe Jackson in an outlaw league. However, pitching was also Cordele's weakness; no other moundsmen on the staff posted a winning record. With a 12–16 record, Hall recorded the most losses in the league. Outfielders Brazier (.308) and Wassem (.306) led the team in batting. Catcher Carl Eubanks finished fourth in the league in putouts, the only player in the top five in that category who was not a first baseman.

By the third week of the season, Cordele and Valdosta separated themselves from the rest of the league and stayed close to each other in the standings for the next several weeks. After 45 games, the halfway point of the schedule, the two teams were well out in front of the others. They seemed destined to leave the rest of the field behind, fighting it out to the end for the league championship. However, there was concern among league directors that only two teams—three if the strong Thomasville nine was included—were really in a race for the championship. At the midpoint of the season, Brunswick, Waycross, and Americus were all within a few games of each other, grouped together seven to ten games behind the leaders. The lack of interest in noncontending teams could have a negative

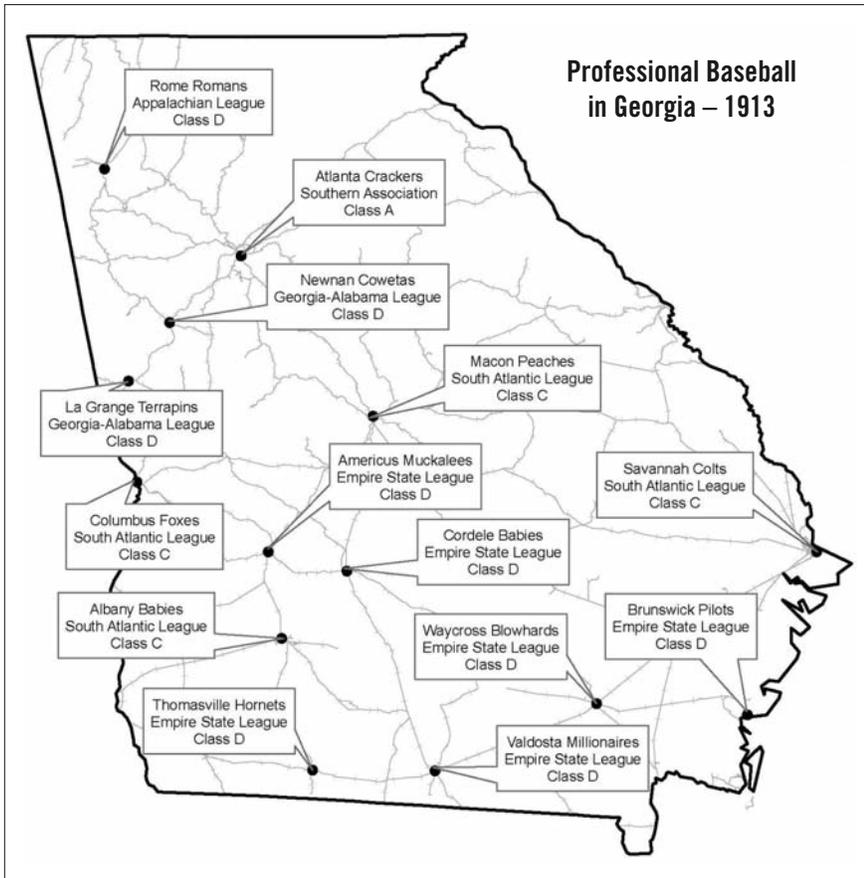
impact at the box office. On June 11, President Groover announced that the league's directors would gather to discuss splitting the season. At that point, Cordele trailed Valdosta by one game in the standings.

League officials met on June 13; up for discussion were possible changes to the playing schedule. The proposal for the league champion to meet the champion of the South Atlantic League in a postseason series had died on the vine. With the teams in relatively good financial health and with no other postseason opponent available, the league decided to extend the schedule from 90 to 102 games, splitting the season in order to set up a championship contest between the first- and second-half winners. There was also some hope that, by dividing the season, currently weak teams would have an opportunity to compete for the second-half crown and thus build interest—and ticket sales—in their cities. Whether or not that would be the case, the decision did have an immediate effect on the race to win the first half. At the time the new format was announced, Valdosta's lead over Cordele was only two games, with fewer than two weeks left to play in the first half.

The Empire State League directors had more on their minds at that June meeting than just adjusting the season schedule. Umpiring had become a problem. For

league officials, the math was simple. With six teams in the league, there would be three games going on at any one time. Thus, to their minds, just three umpires would be required, with perhaps a few more identified as potential substitutes. Lamar Ham, who had played in the 1906 Georgia State League, Robert Carter, and M. J. McLaughlin were the first "men in blue" for the league. Umpires were hired and paid by the league and, given the financial uncertainties before play began, it made sense to be conservative. For the umpires, however, facing potentially hostile crowds alone, without knowing what level of support to expect from the league, could make their jobs unnecessarily difficult and sometimes dangerous.¹¹ The umpires pushed for two-man umpiring crews, but the season began with umpires working games alone. The league turned out not to be a

ILLUSTRATION BY WILLIAM F. ROSS III



weak partner in this arrangement; President Groover handed out several player suspensions for actions on the field during the season. Even so, the issue of crew size came to a head in mid-June, and the umpires disappeared from the field. Players filled in, at least fourteen of whom umpired games from June 11 to June 27. Typically, these were two-man umpiring crews, drawing a player from each team, though a few games featured three-man crews. One of the players—the Valdosta pitcher Gentle—evidently found the task to his liking, and he quit his team to finish out the season as an umpire. As the season progressed, the league, recognizing that it was in good financial shape, capitulated. More umpires were hired, and two-man crews became the norm. By the end of the season, about a dozen umpires, not counting players, had worked for the Empire State League.

The Valdosta Millionaires, led by player-manager Otto “Dutch” Jordan, a former major leaguer and Southern Association All-Star,¹² were one of the best teams in the league. Jordan replaced opening-day manager “Whitey” Morse just one week into the season, to the delight of the locals, who welcomed the “prince of the second sackers.”¹³ The “Millionaires” nickname was the result of a newspaper contest; the team was more often referred to locally as “Otto’s Otters.” Jordan paced his team in batting with a .344 average in 96 games, but the defense showed some unevenness. Jordan at second base was second in assists in the league with 262, while third baseman Leininger was second in the league in errors (45). Valdosta’s best pitcher was Wingses, who compiled a 17–7 record; also notable was pitcher “Rube” Zellars, who posted a 15–13 record, tied for the second-most losses in the league.

With a week to go in the first half, Valdosta held a two-game lead over Cordele. But was there just a week left to play? Back on June 13, Secretary Leavy had identified July 3 as the starting point for the second half. But that would have resulted in an uneven schedule, putting more games in the first half than the second. President Groover issued a statement on June 25 that the end of the first half would be June 28—three days hence. This caused an immediate outcry in Cordele. With three games left to play, Valdosta’s lead was down to one game. In the final series of the first half, Valdosta would host Cordele, who would have to win two of the three games to gain a postseason berth. In the end it wasn’t much of an issue, however, since if the first half ended on July 3 as originally announced, Cordele would have had to play three more games against Valdosta, for a total of six straight, and would have had to win four of them. As it was, Valdosta won the first two games

of the set and secured a place in the postseason championship series. The first half of the season ended on a good note for the league, with half of its teams finishing above .500. So far, so good.

First Half (May 1 to June 28)

	Won	Lost	Pct
Valdosta	32	15	.681
Cordele	29	20	.592
Thomasville	25	23	.521
Americus	21	28	.429
Waycross	19	28	.404
Brunswick	19	31	.380

The second half of the season began on June 30, with Americus in Waycross, Thomasville hosting Brunswick, and Valdosta visiting Cordele. Perhaps Cordele came out of the gate looking for a little payback; in the second game of the series they prevailed over Valdosta by a score of 13–0. It would be one of the few bright spots in what remained of their season, as the team—which had been vying for a playoff berth just a week earlier—would finish the second half in last place. With the first half of the season in the books, fans were now looking forward to that Friday’s Fourth of July holiday, which would feature home-and-home twin-bills between Thomasville and Valdosta, Americus and Cordele, and Brunswick and Waycross. Team owners around the league were also looking forward to the holiday payday.

The Brunswick Pilots, their nickname derived from the river pilots who were hired to guide ships in and out of the town’s busy port, were the most poorly run team in the league. The Pilots had three managers during the season: Bert Kite, Charlie Moran,¹⁴ and “Whitey” Morse (who also had a brief managing stint with Valdosta at the start of the season). Brunswick fielded the largest number of players during the season in an ultimately frustrating attempt to find a winning combination. All the league teams rotated players on and off their rosters, but none did it with Brunswick’s verve. The team went through enough players to fill the rosters of three league teams. The Pilots had some good hitters, but many of them did not play with the team long enough to make a difference. First baseman/manager “Whitey” Morse was second in the league in putouts (873). Only one Brunswick pitcher—Hartner—had a winning record (15–8). In the first half of the season, the team had a six-game winless streak and two five-game winless streaks, which guaranteed a poor finish. The team performed better in the second half, avoiding any lengthy losing streaks, but they still could not consistently win games. Only the

poor play of Cordele kept Brunswick from a last-place finish in the second half of the season. Cordele faded in the last third of the second half, suffering through an 11-game winless streak late in the season, followed by one win and then a six-game losing streak. When the 11-game streak began, the team was in second place; a week and a half later, Cordele was in last place to stay.

When the Empire State League was created, attention was paid to ensuring a balanced geographic reach for the league. In doing so, obvious rivalries were created or, as in the case of Valdosta and Thomasville, were carried over into the new league. Cordele and Americus were separated by 30 rail miles; Brunswick and Waycross were 57 miles apart; Thomasville and Valdosta had just 44 miles to travel to meet one another. Because of these pairings, the league could celebrate the Fourth of July with games in every league city. Special trains were run so that fans could see their team in both cities where they played that day. Picnics and other events were scheduled to coincide with the games.

Although the league made it past July 4 with all its teams in good shape, trouble was brewing in Americus, creating a crucial test for the league. For a number of other minor leagues, not just the aforementioned 1906 Georgia State League, the Fourth of July was often the make-or-break point. If the league lost a team now, no one could tell how far reaching the effects might be. Even if the season could be completed with a five-team circuit, the fact that South Georgia could not fully support a minor league would be embarrassing for business leaders and civic promoters, potentially affecting business recruitment in the region. Thankfully for all involved, Americus limped along, though it was forced to hold a fund-raising drive to sell subscriptions in order to keep the team in operation through the remainder of the season.

The Waycross Blowhards represented the most populous city in the circuit, but the highest average attendance in the league couldn't help a team with the worst batting average. The origin of the "Blowhards" nickname was the result of a fan contest and reflected the major industry in town—railroad-engine construction and repair. Waycross was managed for most of the season by Charlie Wahoo, formerly of the Carlisle Indian School. He was followed in the manager's seat by Jack Hawkins and then Willie Clark. Infielder Charles Anderson was the standout on the team, batting .301 in 85 games. Outfielder Fenton batted just .259 but was second in the league in home runs, with 7 round-trippers. Pitcher "Wild Bill" Clark led the team with a

16–9 record, tied for third most wins in the league; no other Waycross pitcher had a winning record.

The league's decision to split the season helped to make the races in the second half more competitive, as all the teams stayed within four or five games of each other. But with two weeks to go in the season, Thomasville took off, eventually finishing six and a half games ahead of second-place Valdosta. The team posted an 11-game winning streak from August 12 to 25, which put the top spot out of reach for any other team. The Thomasville Hornets—the nickname was literally picked from a hat—were managed by Martin Dudley, who played the previous few seasons in the Class D Cotton States League and had appeared in the South Atlantic League in 1910. Shortstop Herbert "Dummy" Murphy¹⁵ led the team in batting with a .338 average, followed by second baseman "Piggie" Parker, who batted .321. Murphy also led the league in errors (47 in 73 games). The team featured a strong pitching staff with three moundsmen posting winning records: Vincent Roth (18–8), who also batted .283 and led the league in wins; "Red" Day (16–6); and Larry Cheney (10–6).

Thomasville walked away with the second half of the season, which ended on August 27.¹⁶

Second Half (June 30 to August 27)

	Won	Lost	Pct
Thomasville	31	17	.646
Valdosta	26	25	.510
Waycross	24	25	.490
Americus	24	26	.480
Brunswick	23	26	.469
Cordele	20	29	.408

The average attendance for the regular season was about 400 fans per game, and all six teams were close to that average. Waycross led the league, with an average of 431 paid admissions per game, followed by Brunswick (411) and Thomasville (405). Cordele had the lowest average attendance for the season (364), with Americus (380) and Valdosta (394) doing somewhat better. To tell the whole story, however, these figures have to be considered in terms of the total population in each town. Waycross, for example, had the highest total attendance, but, being the largest city in the league, actually drew the smallest proportion of its population to the park on average (2.8 percent). Cordele, about one-third the size of Waycross and with the lowest total attendance, actually did the best in terms of the percentage of its total population attending its games (6 percent), with Thomasville, half the size of Waycross, coming in right behind (5.7 percent).

THE POSTSEASON

The championship series began on Friday, August 29, using a best-of-seven format. It was somehow appropriate that Thomasville and Valdosta were playing for the championship. Four months earlier, these two teams faced each other to open their seasons; they also faced each other on the Fourth of July. Since the two towns involved were so close to one another, the games were scheduled to alternate between the two cities, with Valdosta hosting the opener as winner of the first half of the season. That game attracted 741 fans. Otto Jordan had kept his team sharp, winning seven of nine games in the closing weeks of the regular season. In the first game, Valdosta walked away with a win. Thomasville pitcher Cheney loaded the bases in the first inning, which allowed the Otters to score a run on an error by shortstop Murphy. Thomasville came back in the next inning, scoring two runs to edge ahead. This score held up until the bottom of the fourth, when Valdosta erupted for five runs, assisted by two errors and several walks. Valdosta added two more runs in the fifth; Thomasville started a rally in the seventh but could only get two runs across. Final score: Valdosta 8, Thomasville 4. It was a good start for the Otters, and the series moved to Thomasville.

The second game of the series was held on Saturday in Thomasville before a crowd of 595. This game would prove to be a bit tighter than the first one, but the outcome was the same. Both teams scored a run in the first inning; Valdosta's Van Landingham hit the second pitch of the contest over the center-field fence for a home run—the first in the series. By contrast, Thomasville scored its first run on a walk, a sacrifice, and a double. The Otters went ahead in the top of the second, with Van Landingham, on his way to a three-for-five day at the plate, getting the RBI. The Hornets tied the score in the bottom of the third via a double, a bunt, and a single. Valdosta went ahead for good in the fourth inning, scoring a run and then building on this lead with two additional runs in the seventh, including the second home run of the series, this one hit by left fielder Jack Hawkins. Final score: Valdosta 5, Thomasville 2. Valdosta now led the series two games to none.

There was no baseball the next day since it was a Sunday. However, it was not an off day for the Thomasville team. That day, Hornets shortstop Murphy got married to Miss Ella Sanford of Thomasville. It would make a nice story to report that Murphy, up to now hitting a combined two-for-nine, suddenly came alive at the plate. Or that he settled in and reduced his league-leading error rate. Unfortunately for

Murphy, neither was the case. Fortunately for the team, on the other hand, the good spirits of the wedding party carried over to the next game of the series.

On Monday, September 1, the two teams were back at it. If Thomasville wanted to stay alive, the team needed to start winning. The series had returned to Valdosta, and the largest crowd of the series—1,018 cranks—was present to root for the teams. Special trains from the surrounding towns ran for this game, and it was the Hornets' turn to shine—although that wasn't immediately apparent. Valdosta started the scoring off with a run in the bottom of the second inning and increased their lead with a second run in the fifth. But the Otters' pitching failed them late in the game; Thomasville scored five runs over the final four innings. The Hornets tied the game in the seventh, chasing Vaughn, the starting pitcher. The relief pitcher, Zellars, walked in another run, giving Thomasville the lead, and allowed single runs in the next two innings. On the mound for Thomasville, Cheney, who had a rocky start in Game 1 of the series, came through for the Hornets, allowing just two runs on nine hits. Newlywed Murphy led all players with two errors; perhaps he was tired. Final score: Thomasville 5, Valdosta 2. The Hornets had made a good showing, although Valdosta still led the series, two games to one.

On Tuesday, the contest returned to Thomasville. The 732 fans who turned out to see the game were treated to a pitching beauty. Vincent Roth went the distance for the Hornets, keeping Valdosta off the scoreboard and surrendering just two singles. He helped his own cause by swatting a home run in the third inning; Thomasville second baseman Murch also hit a home run, his coming in the first. The Hornets scored two runs in the opening frame and three in the third. The Otters, meanwhile, could not solve Roth, who struck out six, walked two, and stranded five on his way to a complete game shutout. Final score: Thomasville 5, Valdosta 0. The series was now tied at two games apiece.

Game 5 was on Wednesday, September 3, in Valdosta, before a crowd of 742. Valdosta came out swinging, outhitting the Hornets through nine innings but ultimately falling short of victory. This game was a defensive gem, with Thomasville's "Red" Day facing off against Wings for the Otters. Both men struck out three batters; Wings walked three to Day's two. Valdosta opened the scoring in the third inning with a run scored off a single, a sacrifice, and another single. The Hornets came back in the sixth inning, scoring two runs on a walk, an error, a single, a sacrifice, and another single. This was the epitome of "small ball"

in the Deadball Era. Day made those two runs hold up, going the distance for the victory. Final score: Thomasville 2, Valdosta 1. Thomasville now led the series three games to two—just one win away from a championship.

Thomasville got that win the next day, September 4, at home in front of a crowd of 789. In his third start of the series, Cheney's performance on the mound, combined with the defense behind him, cemented victory for the Hornets. Valdosta managed five hits off Cheney but produced no runs. The big bats of the Otters were generally silent; Jordan went one-for-four, as did Van Landingham. Thomasville got on the scoreboard in the bottom of the first, scoring one run on two singles and an error. The Hornets added another run in the second on two singles and a sacrifice and then put the game out of reach in the seventh, with three runs scored off a round-tripper hit by left fielder John Wagnon. It was his first home run of the entire season, and fans responded by collecting \$30 in the stands, which they then delivered to the player. Appropriately enough, Hornets manager Martin Dudley caught a popup to end the game and the series. The Thomasville pitching staff had its second complete game shutout of the series. Final score: Thomasville 5, Valdosta 0.

The City of Thomasville was ecstatic. The Hornets had won the "rag"—the championship banner—in the inaugural season of the Empire State League. People cheered, honked horns, and rang bells. There was also cause for celebration of a financial sort. Each team received \$774 from gate receipts; players on the winning team received \$266 to divide among themselves, while players on the losing team got \$177 to split.¹⁷

At a banquet on the day after the series win, Manager Dudley had more good news: his own wedding plans. Dudley's announcement came in the form of a telegram; he was in Valdosta with his betrothed. Present at the banquet was the team's shortstop, newlywed "Dummy" Murphy, who was now looking north to the major leagues.

THE LEGACY

The Empire State League made it to the finish line with all six franchises intact. This outcome was not always assured and was quite an accomplishment for a first-year circuit. *Sporting Life* reported that the season "was an artistic and financial success, all of the clubs that entered the race finishing in good condition for another fling at the game next year."¹⁸ The men who played in the league had demonstrated day in and day out that the desire to succeed at their craft could carry them through the rough times and muggy afternoons

of South Georgia. More than 30 of them went on to play in higher-classification minor leagues; two—"Dummy" Murphy and Dana Fillingim—made it from the Empire State League to the major leagues.

In November 1913, the Empire State League changed its name to the Georgia State League for the upcoming season, a nod to the 1906 circuit.¹⁹ The salary limit was raised to \$1,200. There was also a change at the top of the league. At the November 11 league meeting in Cordele, I. J. Kalmon of Americus was elected president, replacing Groover, who had retired. Kalmon was not the group's first choice; J. B. Jemison, the brother of *Atlanta Constitution* sports editor Dick Jemison, was selected but turned down the offer. In a surprising turn, James Sinclair, the man whose idea had launched the league, returned to the fold, winning election as vice president. All six teams from the 1913 league stayed on as members of the Georgia State League, and 35 players from 1913 (70 percent of the 50 men on the "reserve" lists of the teams) returned for 1914. Seven players were drafted from the Empire State League to play in higher leagues for 1914, most going to Class C clubs.

The 1914 season was a complete success and finished with Cordele beating Thomasville in four straight games for the championship. By 1915, however, problems began to overtake the league. The major liability of the circuit was the size of its member cities. Operating costs (equipment, travel, and lodging), player salaries, and team profits were all directly related to the number of people each team could attract to its games. Smaller cities had less of a population base to draw from, even though some of these cities were fairly successful at putting people in the seats. Cordele dropped out before play began in 1915 and was replaced by a franchise in Dothan, Alabama. Americus, again struggling financially as it had in 1913, disbanded three weeks into the season; the league filled its spot with a team from Gainesville, Florida. Bowing to the obvious, the circuit was renamed the FLAG (Florida-Alabama-Georgia) League on June 15. But the changes weren't enough; the league folded on July 17, 1915. A playoff series was attempted but not completed. It would be 20 years before the Empire State League cities were back in professional ball to stay. Still and all, two years of sustained operations had convinced many that professional baseball could work in South Georgia. By proving that Class D baseball could be successful, the Empire State League laid the foundation for later minor-league ball in the region, though events conspired against an immediate continuation of the South Georgia Class D circuit. World

War I, an influenza pandemic, the Great Depression, and a second world war, each in their way, delayed the return of the six cities to professional baseball, just as those events delayed the population and business growth of the region. By the end of World War II, five of the six cities once again hosted minor-league teams; in 1951, Brunswick became the last Empire State League city to welcome back minor-league baseball. The dream of professional baseball in the region turned into a nightmare in 1906; it was made a success in 1913. The Empire State League proved that business and sporting interests could come together to field professional teams in South Georgia. ■

Sources

The majority of the information presented in this article is based on contemporary newspaper and other periodical accounts. Primary sources include the *Atlanta Constitution*, *Sporting Life*, and *The Sporting News*. The author also wishes to recognize the assistance provided by Ephraim Rotter, Curator of Collections with the Thomas County Historical Society. The following sources were also consulted:

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Notes

- Seven cities were represented in the 1906 league; Columbus and Albany were the other two. The Columbus franchise relocated to Brunswick in June. Albany and Columbus were in the South Atlantic League in 1913. Thomasville's Empire State League entry was that town's first minor league team.
- Georgia's Empire State League should not be confused with the longer-lived league of the same name in New York, which was operating as an "outlaw" league in 1913. The league names are the same because the root nickname is the same. New York is and long has been referred to as the "Empire State." Georgia business promoters adopted the nickname "Empire State of the South," a sobriquet in common use from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. The National Association denied entry to the New York Empire State League, based on the reputation of the proposed owners, at the same session where it allowed entrance to Georgia's Empire State League.
- The classifications of minor leagues in the National Association in 1913, and the total number of leagues at each classification level, were: Class AA (3 leagues), Class A (2 leagues), Class B (9), Class C (6), and Class D (22). In all, there were 130 Class D teams, representing 47 percent of the total number of minor-league teams.
- Based on the cost to enter the league and operating costs during the season (including travel and lodging), the 10 percent of gate receipts that went to the league, and accounting for the average attendance and admission price, each team would have roughly \$3,000 to \$3,500 to spend on player salaries and/or retain as profit.
- The per-ticket average is based on contemporary attendance and receipt accounts. The teams charged different rates for grandstand and pavilion seats and frequently held special promotions, such as "Ladies' Day," which introduces some variability into this average.
- Team nicknames were seldom if ever used in press accounts of the games. Four of these teams would keep the same names for the 1914 season; Cordele changed its team name to the Ramblers, and Waycross became the Grasshoppers or Moguls.
- The batting, fielding, and pitching statistics in this article include appearances in the postseason and/or tie games. The author is currently at work on calculating more accurate regular-season figures based on contemporary box scores. Suffice it to say that whether or not postseason or tie games are counted, the individuals identified here were the best on their respective teams.
- No formal relationship between the two teams has been found, and it is unlikely that one existed, as the two cities were bitter rivals in attracting businesses and industrial development.
- Reagan played in a different league every year from 1906 to 1912.
- The two games of the doubleheader were each seven innings, and both games were umpired by another pitcher—Gentle of Valdosta. Also of note, Cleo Wilder has been misidentified in at least one source (Johnson and Wolfe) as "Percy" Wilder. Percy, manager of a team in Jacksonville in 1913, did play a role in the creation of the league, as a member of the committee assembled by James Sinclair, but he was not on the roster of any Empire State League team.
- On June 28, 1913, an umpire was killed by a bat-wielding player at an amateur game in Louisville.
- Otto Jordan played in the New York State League from 1901 to 1903; with Brooklyn (National League) from 1903 to 1904; and in the Southern Association from 1905 to 1913, mostly with Atlanta. As captain of the Atlanta Crackers, he was once arrested in New Orleans for stealing a baseball from the Pelicans during a game—but that's another story.
- Atlanta Constitution*, 8 May 1913, 11.
- Beginning in 1902, Charlie Moran had a long and varied baseball career and was later a major-league umpire.
- Murphy was deaf and received the standard nickname of the time for deaf players. His given name was Herbert Courtland, but he was called "Pat" by friends.

16. The results shown for the second half of the season do not match those previously published in other sources. This variance is most likely due to several transcription errors in the *Atlanta Constitution's* reporting. The *Constitution's* final standings for the second half appear to have been directly copied by both *Sporting Life* and *Sporting News*. Simple addition demonstrates that the overall team totals for wins (150) and losses (149) do not agree in those results. (You can't have a win without someone else having a loss, and vice versa.) From these sources, especially the oft-cited *Sporting News*, the erroneous results have been repeated in later publications. *Baseball Reference* cites a different set of totals also at variance with the results presented here. The "won/lost" figures shown in the included tables are based on game accounts from multiple contemporary sources. The corrections do not affect the order in which the teams finished for the second half of the season. It is also worth mentioning that one game in the second half was protested and officially dropped from the records by the league (July 9, Thomasville at Americus). The *Atlanta Constitution* correctly reflected this change.
17. Members of the winning team received about \$22 apiece (\$462 in today's dollars); players on the losing team got \$15 each (\$315 in today's dollars). Each team received over \$16,000 in today's dollars.
18. *Sporting Life* 62, no. 1 (6 September 1913): 29.
19. Two unrelated Georgia State Leagues, which operated in the Middle and Western Georgia regions, fielded teams in 1920–21 and 1948–56.

Who's Going to Pitch?

RICHARD McBANE

WHILE CONTROVERSIES RELATED TO BASEBALL in the nineteenth century focused mainly on the playing of ball on Sundays, it was the noise, confusion, and occasional violence of unorganized pickup games of ball by troops of boys that frequently led to complaints and confrontations.

Thus, in 1884, Macon, Georgia, was merely one among the thousands of places, large and small, throughout the United States that had ordinances banning the playing of baseball on Sunday. And, just as would happen in those other communities, a group of boys gathered on a vacant field, just outside the city limits, on Sunday, July 13, for a game of ball. There weren't enough boys to make up two full teams, so this became a game called, in the local vernacular, "scrub."¹

Whatever it might be called in other locales, in this game two or three boys were the batters, and the others took defensive positions. When an out was made, the batter who was put out went to the outfield, and the other players moved up in position, with the pitcher being the last stop before becoming a batter. It sounds simple enough, but in Macon on that Sunday afternoon, an argument arose over who was going to pitch.

Oney Cauley and Dan Lucas, each 20 years old, both claimed to have been playing first base, and therefore they both insisted on advancing to the post of pitcher. In the heat of the moment, Lucas removed a knife from the pocket of another player and stabbed Cauley in the chest. As the *Atlanta Constitution* described it: "The blade struck the breast bone and would not enter and Lucas then drew the blade across the left breast and arm of Cauley, cutting a deep and fearful wound and severing an artery from which a

stream of blood freely flowed and Cauley was in great danger of bleeding to death, had not parties present tightly bound cords above the cut artery and stopped the flow of the life crimson fluid."²

The *Constitution* began its story by quoting the Biblical line "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy" and reported that Cauley, when first cut, endeavored to get a bat but was so weakened from the loss of blood that he could not raise the bat to strike Lucas. Cauley was confined to bed at home; Lucas was not arrested.³

The newspaper made no further reference to the incident, but ironically, about a month later, the *Constitution* took editorial notice of Sunday baseball problems in Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga, gloating: "Fortunately we have no trouble over the Sunday law in Georgia. As a rule our people are in favor of properly observing the Lord's day."⁴

But a year later, Macon residents were still complaining about games of baseball being played on Sunday afternoons by crowds of boys, white and black, who "disturb the quiet of the day by yells and shrieks emitted, while handling the ball and bat." Added the *Constitution*: "As the police will be called on to abate the nuisance it is probable that next Sunday will be a quiet one in the neighborhood of the park."⁵

Of course, there was no mention of Lucas and Cauley; they'd had their moment of notoriety.

Notes

1. *Atlanta Constitution*, 15 July 1884, 4.
2. *Ibid.* Punctuation appears as it was in the original.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 August 1884, 4.
5. *Atlanta Constitution*, 1 September 1885, 2. Punctuation appears as it was in the original.

Memphis Bill in Newnan

SCOTT McCLELLAN

As the last National League player to bat .400 in a season, Bill Terry is best remembered for racking up hits for the New York Giants. But he showed he could also be good at preventing them with the no-hitter he threw in 1915, when he went 7–1 as a pitcher for the Georgia-Alabama League club in Newnan, 39 miles from the Atlanta neighborhood where he was raised.¹

Terry was born into a prominent Atlanta family. His great-grandfather, Tom Terry, ran the only sawmill in the city before he died from injuries sustained in an assault. His grandfather, William M. Terry, was an alderman, police commissioner, and founder of the Decatur Street Bank—and did so well that he bought a large house a few blocks from the Atlanta Crackers' ballpark.² Terry's father, William T. Terry, was less successful and moved his family in and out of his father's house several times before settling there permanently around 1915. By that time Terry's mother, Bertha, had left for good, and he was ready to strike out on his own. He had little contact with his parents after that time, and neither of them attended his Memphis wedding to Elvena Sneed, who grew up in the same area of Atlanta as Terry.³

The young Terry sometimes sought escape by watching Crackers' games from the trees beyond the outfield fence—when he wasn't busy loading trucks at the railroad yard to make money or playing for the Edgewood Avenue squad in the Grammar School League. However, he had a much closer view of the field in 1914, when the Crackers signed him to his first pro contract on the recommendation of former Cracker Harry Matthews. Terry worked out in the park but did not get into any games that year. "During the early practice at Ponce de Leon" the next year, according to the *Atlanta Journal*, "he showed a bunch of stuff, and older members of the team predicted that he would develop into a great pitcher with a few years of experience."⁴ But Terry was only sixteen at the time, and he struggled with his control. The Crackers farmed him out to Dothan, where he suffered through a terrible start to the season, with an ERA over 15.00 in his brief



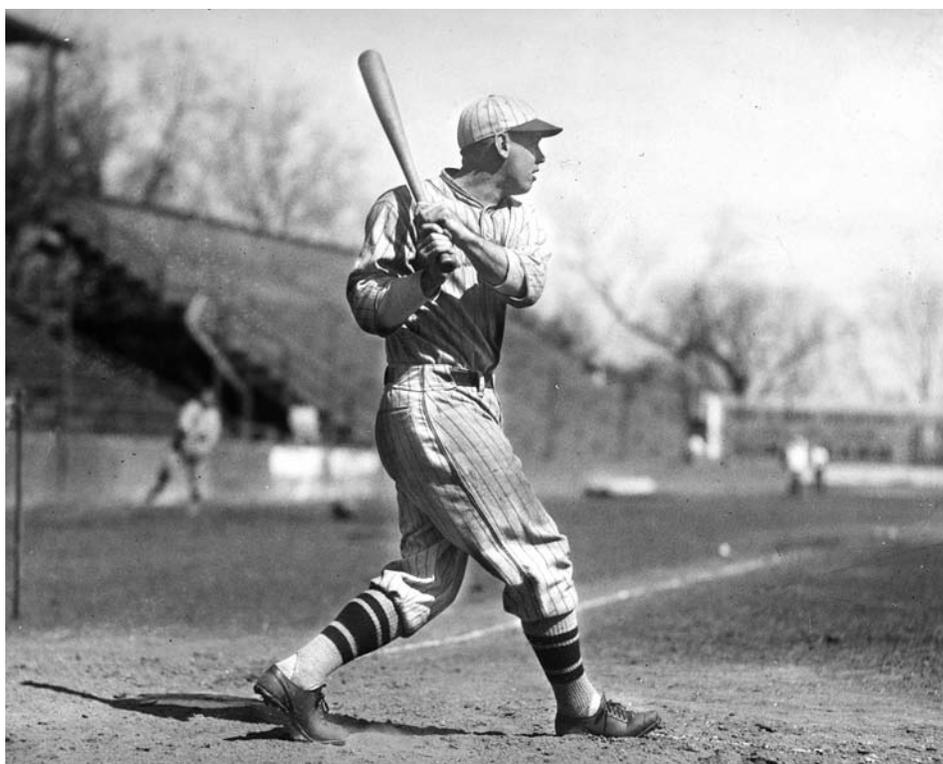
NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

Bill Terry led the New York Giants to three pennants and one World Series title in ten years as manager, amassing an overall record of 823–661, a winning percentage of .555.

time in the Florida–Alabama–Georgia (FLAG) League. But Matthews still liked the hard-throwing youngster and arranged to sign him for his Newnan team, where Terry played his first game on June 16.⁵

The star pitcher on the Newnan team was Jack Nabors, who led the league with 12 wins in 1915,⁶ but Terry began to attract attention in his own right after his no-hitter on June 30. According to the *Newnan Times-Herald*:

Scout Bobby Gilks, of the New York Americans, was in Newnan yesterday looking over Pitcher Jack Nabors, who recently twirled the 13-inning no-hit game against Talladega. Mr. Gilks was in Anniston last Wednesday to observe the work of Pitcher Glazier [sic], of the Anniston team;



Terry, National League MVP in 1930, was described by *The Sporting News* as the “leading batter in the National League.” Fred Lieb, in choosing the greatest first baseman from 1926 to 1950, declared it a tie. “Lou [Gehrig] had a clear edge in every batting statistic except lifetime average, where Memphis Bill edged him, .341 to .340. But Bill Terry was the greatest fielding first baseman I ever saw.”

but while there he saw Southpaw Terry, of the Newnan team, shut out the Moulders in a hitless game. We understand that Mr. Gilks was sent here to watch Pitcher Nabors in action, but since young Terry has risen to a place in ball-dom’s hall of fame he will have two of Newnan’s pitchers under observation.⁷

Terry later remembered “the last guy up hit a line drive into right field, and I knew it was a no-hitter, you know, and it scared me; but the right fielder came up with it, anyway.”⁸

The Newnan paper opined the no-hitter was “due to the coaching of Matthews,”⁹ who had seen Terry pitch in Dothan and was determined to teach him to pitch to spots. When Terry joined the Newnan club, Matthews took him to a drug store and bought a bottle of ink that he used to mark a spot in the middle of his chest protector. Matthews told Terry he was to throw to that spot no matter how Matthews set up—with good results.¹⁰ The importance of having a target like this should not be discounted: the authorities at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam had the image of a housefly etched into the middle of each urinal at the facility—and later found spillage was reduced by 80 percent.¹¹ Terry’s control did improve during his first season pitching for Newnan; he walked only 1.9 batters per nine innings in his eight starts for the club, while striking out 4.0 batters per game. Terry did not

allow more than two runs in any of his starts, four of which were shutouts.¹²

Newnan won the pennant with a 39–20 record, beating out Talladega, which finished 39–22. Matthews was awarded fifty dollars in gold by Newnan fans before the final game of the 1915 season, which Terry won 1–0,¹³ as Newnan defeated LaGrange for the 11th time in as many games that year. After receiving the gold, Matthews told his Newnan fans that their town was the best he’d ever played in.¹⁴ Terry seemed to enjoy his time with Newnan as well. He later remembered a night when he and three friends, all of whom could sing well, went to the fair in Anniston and walked around the fair, singing and taking in the sights. Matthews was waiting up for them when they returned to the hotel, wanting to see what kind of shape they were in, and found they had enjoyed themselves without touching alcohol.¹⁵

Terry pitched for Newnan again in 1916, compiling an 11–8 record for a second-place team. After the short-season Georgia-Alabama League ended play on July 21, his contract was purchased for the stretch drive by the Shreveport club in the Texas League, and he went 6–2 over the rest of the season for a team that missed a pennant by a single game. Terry went 14–11 for Shreveport in 1917 but no longer saw much of a future in minor-league baseball.¹⁶ Over breakfast at a Shreveport coffee shop, Terry and his wife decided that he would seek a more promising line of work if he

didn't receive any major-league offers.¹⁷ He did not, and so he went to work for Standard Oil, first as a clerk and eventually as a salesman. While working there, Terry managed and played for the company baseball team until 1922, when he finally got his major-league offer.

John McGraw, acting on the recommendation of former big-league shortstop Kid Elberfeld, wanted to sign Terry.¹⁸ Typically, Terry asked, "For how much money?" When McGraw pointed out he was offering an opportunity to play for the New York Giants, Terry responded: "That doesn't mean a thing to me, Mr. McGraw. I've got a wife and baby to support. I quit in the minors because it didn't pay enough. I've got a good job with Standard Oil and a nice house here in Memphis. If the Giants make me a better offer, all right."¹⁹ Fortunately for both, they came to an agreement.

Terry sometimes gave McGraw the credit for his move to first base, but at other times insisted it was his own idea. In any case, Terry made the most of the change. *The Sporting News* described him as the "leading batter in the National League" when announcing him as National League MVP for 1930.²⁰ Longtime sportswriter Fred Lieb, in choosing the greatest first baseman from 1926 to 1950, would not "declare anything other than a tie. Lou [Gehrig] had a clear edge in every batting statistic except lifetime average, where Memphis Bill edged him, .341 to .340. But Bill Terry was the greatest fielding first baseman I ever saw."²¹ This was high praise from a man who saw most of the great players of the twentieth century, especially since he was a close friend of Gehrig.

Life after baseball was also good for Terry, who was married for 67 years and said he never fell out of love with his wife.²² Keeping a home in Memphis after his wedding, Terry bought and sold real estate in the

area quite successfully during his playing career and parlayed the profits and his baseball earnings into a fortune. He eventually owned a Buick dealership in Jacksonville, Florida, and worked there right up to his death at age 90. Terry proved he could excel at many positions. ■

Notes

1. Lowell Reidenbaugh, *Baseball's Hall of Fame: Cooperstown* (New York: Arlington House, 1986), 301.
2. Peter Williams, *When the Giants Were Giants: Bill Terry and the Golden Age of New York Baseball* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1994), 17–20.
3. *Ibid.*, 22.
4. *Atlanta Journal*, 1 July 1915.
5. *Atlanta Constitution*, 17 June 1915.
6. *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball* (Durham, N.C.: Baseball America, 1993), 142.
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10. *Ibid.*, 31.
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19. Lee Allen, *The Giants and the Dodgers, the Fabulous Story of Baseball's Fiercest Feud* (New York: Putnam, 1964), 151.
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22. Williams, 26.

Joe Reliford

The Inning of a Lifetime

JERRY GRILLO

One inning of Class D ball made Joe Louis Reliford a baseball immortal. Reliford stepped into the record books on the night of July 19, 1952, when, four months shy of his 13th birthday, he became the youngest person to play in a professional baseball game—simultaneously breaking the racial barrier in the segregated Georgia State League.

But all he wanted to do was earn a few bucks to help his mother, Luronie Gillis Reliford, who was raising 10 children on her own while suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. Joe, her ninth child, was four when his father, Roscoe Reliford, died.

“I had to do something to help her, had to make a little money,” Reliford says. “I was 10 years old when I walked up to the manager of the Fitzgerald Pioneers, Ace Adams, and asked him if I could be their batboy.”

Adams, who’d been an All-Star relief pitcher with the New York Giants during World War II, took one look at the 4-foot-11, 68-pound kid and “did everything he could to discourage me,” Reliford recalls. “He told me how the batboy would have to keep up with all the bats and balls, shine all the players’ shoes, travel with the team. It was a lot of work.”

There was another pro club in Fitzgerald at the time: the Lucky Stars, part of a minor Negro League. They weren’t hiring, but the all-white Pioneers were. Reliford grew up watching both. He says he watched Satchel Paige—a big-leaguer at the time—pitch in Fitzgerald after the major-league campaign.

The Pioneers, meanwhile, restricted their paying African American fans to a section along the right-field line in Blue Gray Park. Reliford remembers perching in trees outside the park to catch glimpses of practice and games.

“I just loved baseball, and I badly needed that job,” Reliford says. “I kept at Mr. Adams and he finally gave in.” Joe remembers that the job paid \$68 every two weeks—more than a lot of grown men in South Georgia were making at the time (an article at Baseball-Reference.com claims his biweekly salary was \$48).

Reliford was all of 12 years old and in his third season as the Pioneers’ batboy that historic night in 1952. He was the only African American wearing a Fitzgerald uniform and one of the few black people in packed Pilots Field, where the hometown Statesboro Pilots were clobbering their visitors, 13–0, on Elks Night. Both teams, playing well below .500 ball, were battling for fourth place in the eight-team circuit.

“That ballpark was full—5,000, maybe 6,000 people—and they started yelling, ‘put the batboy in,’” Reliford, now 70, says. “Every time they saw me grab a bat, they’d yell like that. They were beating us really bad, and the crowd was just rubbing it in.”

In the top of the eighth inning, Charlie Ridgeway, an infielder who took on managerial duties during some road trips, had a “what the hell” moment. He followed the crowd’s advice. He decided to insert Reliford, by now barely 90 pounds soaking wet, as a pinch hitter for right fielder Ray Nichting, the Pioneers’ best hitter, who was batting around .330 at the time and leading the team in RBI.

“I was having a good year. But we’re getting killed, and Charlie asks me, ‘Do you care if I let Joe bat for you?’ I didn’t have a problem with it,” says Nichting, who now lives near Cincinnati.

Reliford, Nichting, Ridgeway, and the rest of the Pioneers knew something the crowd didn’t: the kid could play. “He was a great athlete. But it was a different time, down in South Georgia.



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

Joe Reliford was 12 when he became the youngest person to take the field in a professional game.

They thought it was a big joke, this scrawny, young black kid, the batboy,” says Nichting, who played two years of pro ball before getting drafted and deployed to Korea. He fought on Pork Chop Hill and lost a leg. After the war, he redirected his baseball IQ into Little League, twice taking his teams to the World Series.

“Joe would take batting practice, pitch batting practice, warm up pitchers, shag fly balls. Stuff like that,” Nichting recalls. “A real good kid, and he worked his butt off for us.”

So Ridgeway, who died in 2008, told the home-plate umpire, Ed Kusick, that he was putting Reliford—who wasn’t on the Fitzgerald roster—into the game, with the understanding that if the kid got a hit, the Pioneers would forfeit the game. Reliford feebly protested, but Ridgeway was insistent.

“I grabbed a bat and went out there to hit, and that really revved up the crowd,” says Reliford, who now lives in Douglas, Georgia, about 30 miles from Fitzgerald. “I’ll never forget it, like this was yesterday. Their pitcher was Curtis White, and I figured he was gonna throw the ball to me like I was a child. I was a child.”

White, working on a two-hitter that night, was Statesboro’s ace and one of the league’s top pitchers that year, posting an ERA of 2.63 with a 16–11 record. He was just as surprised to see the batboy step into the batter’s box as Reliford was to see a fastball zip past him.

“He pitched to me like I was Mickey Mantle up there, threw it hard! And I got angry,” Reliford says, laughing. “I thought he was trying to show me up, and I told myself that I’d hit the next one out of the park.” He did hit the next pitch, lining a sharp grounder down the third-base line. But the third baseman backhanded it and threw Reliford out by a step.

In the bottom of the eighth, after White had retired Fitzgerald, Ridgeway told Reliford to grab a glove and go to right field. “I thought he was kidding,” Reliford says. “I told him, ‘Mr. Ridgeway, we can’t do this!’ But he just said, ‘Go ahead, get out there. Everything’s gonna be all right.’”

Better than all right. The Pilots put a man on first with one out in their half of the inning. “The next man hit a grounder to right, a base hit, and the man on first tore around second and went for third,” Reliford recalls. “He must have figured I was just some little kid. Well, I had a rifle arm, and that ball was waiting for him at third.”

The next batter was Harold Shuster, who was working on a 21-game hitting streak but had gone hitless in Statesboro’s offensive onslaught. He would knock in 100 runs that year and lead Statesboro with

a .339 batting average. A right-handed hitter, Shuster sliced a drive to deep right, but Reliford flagged it down at the fence. “That kid picked it off like a champion,” Nichting says.

That’s when the place went nuts. The fans came pouring out of the stands toward Reliford. Consider the scene: it’s 1952 in segregated South Georgia, and this 12-year-old kid, still numb after playing an inning of baseball with and against hardened professionals, sees a mob of white people running at him.

“All those white folks came straight at me, and I was so scared I shut my eyes and expected the worst,” Reliford says. “I didn’t know they just wanted to congratulate me.”

The fans clapped him on the back and stuffed his pockets full of money. The game was forfeited to Statesboro, and Reliford’s greatest moments on a ball field were behind him. The league suspended Ridgeway, fined him \$50, and fired Kusick, the umpire. At the end of the season, the club also dismissed Reliford.

Joe Reliford joined the Lucky Stars for a while, and the team tried to capitalize on his new-found fame as baseball’s youngest professional. He got into a few games, but his career didn’t last. Reliford went on to become a four-star athlete at Monitor High School. He had a number of scholarship offers from historically black colleges and chose to play football at Florida A&M. But he broke his collarbone in practice, ending his playing career.

Reliford says he gave New York a short try after college but only lasted a few months. Otherwise, he’s spent his entire life in South Georgia and has lived in Douglas with his wife Gwendolyn, a schoolteacher, for more than forty years. Reliford worked for years as a jukebox repairman, served as a police officer in Douglas for a time, coached football and basketball at the local high school for African American students, and served a term as city commissioner.

His achievement that hot July night 58 years ago has been recognized in the *Guinness Book of World Records* and on the *Ripley’s Believe It or Not* television program. In 1991, his record also earned him inclusion in the National Baseball Museum, which erected a display honoring his accomplishment, and he spun the growing awareness of his record into a book, *From Batboy to the Hall of Fame*. Reliford says he recently signed a contract with a movie producer for a big-screen treatment of his story.

He’s made occasional appearances the past few years, throwing out honorary first pitches at big-league parks and signing autographs. He doesn’t charge a dime for his signature. “My wife might charge you,

but I won't," Reliford says. "As long as God gives me the strength to write my name, I won't charge for my autograph."

The kid who loved baseball, the poor kid who only wanted to make a few bucks to help his family, unwittingly became famous and put his name on a record that probably won't be broken.

"That one inning of ball made me a celebrity," Reliford says. "They put me in as kind of a joke, and

that joke got turned around and became a blessing for me." ■

Notes

This article is based primarily on telephone interviews with Joe Reliford (May 2009, July 2009, and February 2010) and Ray Nichting (August 2009). Other sources consulted: *Georgia Trend* (March 2003), *Minorleaguebaseball.com*, Associated Press (May 1995), *JockBio.com*, and *Baseball-Reference.com*.

Shootout at Hardscrabble Church

RICHARD McBANE

THE AFFAIR OF HONOR that began on Saturday, October 20, 1883, at a baseball game in Burke County, Georgia, continued the following afternoon at Hardscrabble Church near McBean. On that Monday, a coroner's inquest was held at the church.

No two accounts of the events were identical. In fact, the *Atlanta Constitution* concluded from the number of versions in circulation that imagination was the clear victor over veracity. Picking up a report from the *Waynesboro Citizen* on October 31, the *Constitution* explained: "We have been able to learn very few reliable facts concerning the terrible tragedy which occurred near McBean on last Sunday. We have seen twenty or more statements in the public prints, all of which probably contain some facts, but none of them can be correct, and we deem them all the statements of the rumors of the hours. We do not care to give these rumors currency, as we feel satisfied that none of them are correct, and may bias the public mind."¹

Most accounts agree that Thomas Syms, a spectator, insulted Rufus McNorrell, one of the players, at the Saturday baseball game. Both sides then showed up at the Hardscrabble Church on Sunday afternoon. From what occurred, both sides must have been armed, although that conclusion was disputed at the time. One contingent consisted of Thomas Syms and his two sons, Frank and Duff. McNorrell's group included John M. Rodgers, T. Britton Rodgers, Warren Rodgers, and John Cox. While it is clear that McNorrell had been insulted at the ballgame, it is unclear whether Thomas Syms had slapped him in the face on Saturday at the game or on Sunday, when the two groups met outside the church.

Beyond that, the matter of who did what and to whom becomes even more confused. However, there is no doubt that Thomas Syms was killed at the scene, while Frank and Duff Syms were wounded, Frank fa-

tally. Britt Rodgers was shot in the face but survived. The five members of the Rodgers side then rode into Waynesboro, the county seat, and "voluntarily delivered themselves to the sheriff."²

Newspaper reports described the participants as well-to-do farmers belonging to respectable families. Both sides promptly employed lawyers, Judge H. D. D. Twiggs by the Rodgers side and the firm of Foster and Lamar by the Syms side. In due time T. Britton Rodgers and Rufus McNorrell were charged with murder and tried in the Superior Court of Burke County.³

During the trial, a female witness who had seen the affair from a church window testified that she had not been frightened by the shooting. In closing arguments, Judge Twiggs, representing the defense and known for his great oratorical ability, used her statement to support a disquisition on the bravery of Southern women, including a story about a general who envisioned his wife at his side during the fighting at Gettysburg. Twiggs' presentation was so vivid and dramatic that one of the jurors delivered a Rebel yell. The trial judge promptly held the juror in contempt of court but later remitted the \$10 fine.⁴

The jury deliberated just half an hour before acquitting Rodgers and McNorrell. Whether that verdict was a reflection of the views of a segment of society that still considered firearms a proper recourse in affairs of honor, a tribute to Twiggs' eloquence, or simply an acknowledgment that no one knew what had really happened must remain a mystery.⁵ ■

Notes

1. *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 October 1883, 2; 31 October 1883, 2.
2. *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 October 1883, 2; 31 October 1883, 2.
3. *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 October 1883, 2; 31 October 1883, 2; *New York Times*, 1 February 1884, 1; *New York Times*, 3 February 1884, 2.
4. *Carroll* (Carrollton, Ga.) *Free Press*, 15 February 1884, 1; www.hickory-hill.org/tom_watson.html.
5. *New York Times*, 3 February 1884, 2.

That Was Quick!

WYNN MONTGOMERY

The average time required to play a major-league baseball game continues to hover just under three hours; the average game in 2009 took two hours and 55.4 minutes. However, games taking longer than that average are becoming more common—especially in the postseason, when the average grows to 3:36.6. In 2009, only one of the 30 postseason games was completed in less than three hours.¹ Long gone are the days when Atlanta fans could see Greg Maddux regularly finish off opponents in less than two and a half hours and sometimes even faster. During his time in Atlanta, Maddux pitched in at least one game every season that ended in 2:16 or less, and on August 20, 1995, he beat the St. Louis Cardinals 1–0 in an hour and 50 minutes.

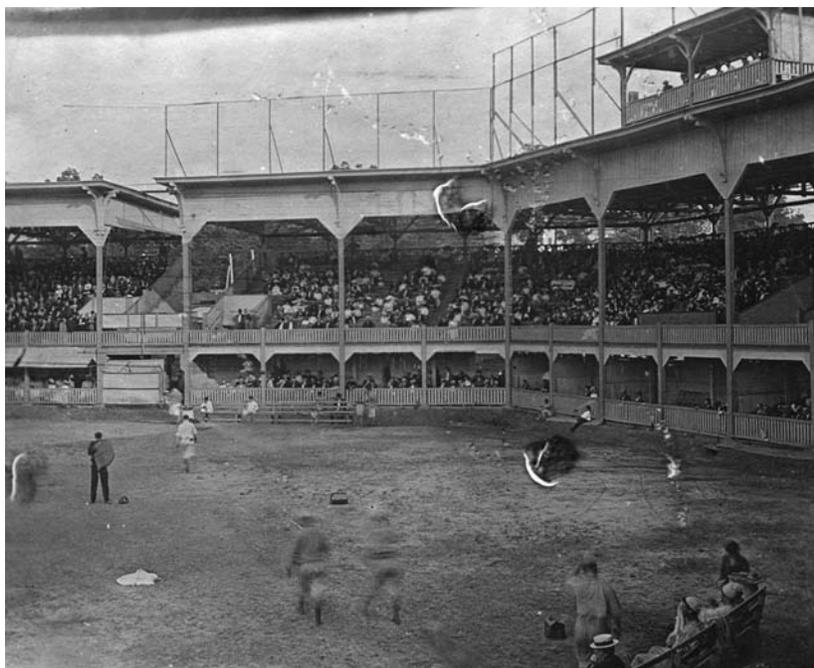
Despite his well-deserved reputation for efficiency, however, Maddux never came close to matching the efforts of an earlier Atlanta moundman and his teammates. That last word is the key—because playing a game quickly is a *team* effort. In truth, it is a two-team effort; both teams must consciously work toward a timely conclusion.

On Saturday afternoon, September 17, 1910, at Ponce de Leon Park, the Atlanta Crackers and the Mobile Sea Gulls demonstrated how quickly a baseball game can be played. Newspaper accounts of that game do not discuss the players' motives, but we know that the game was the season finale for each team, both of which were out of contention for the Southern League crown. The New Orleans Pelicans, led by 20-year-old Shoeless Joe Jackson (who was in his third and final year of tearing up the minor leagues),² had long since clinched the pennant. Atlanta was in third place, three games behind second-place Birmingham and comfortably ahead of Chattanooga, and sixth-place Mobile was one game behind Nashville. Atlanta's standing could not change with a single victory or loss; Mobile had no hope of escaping the second division.

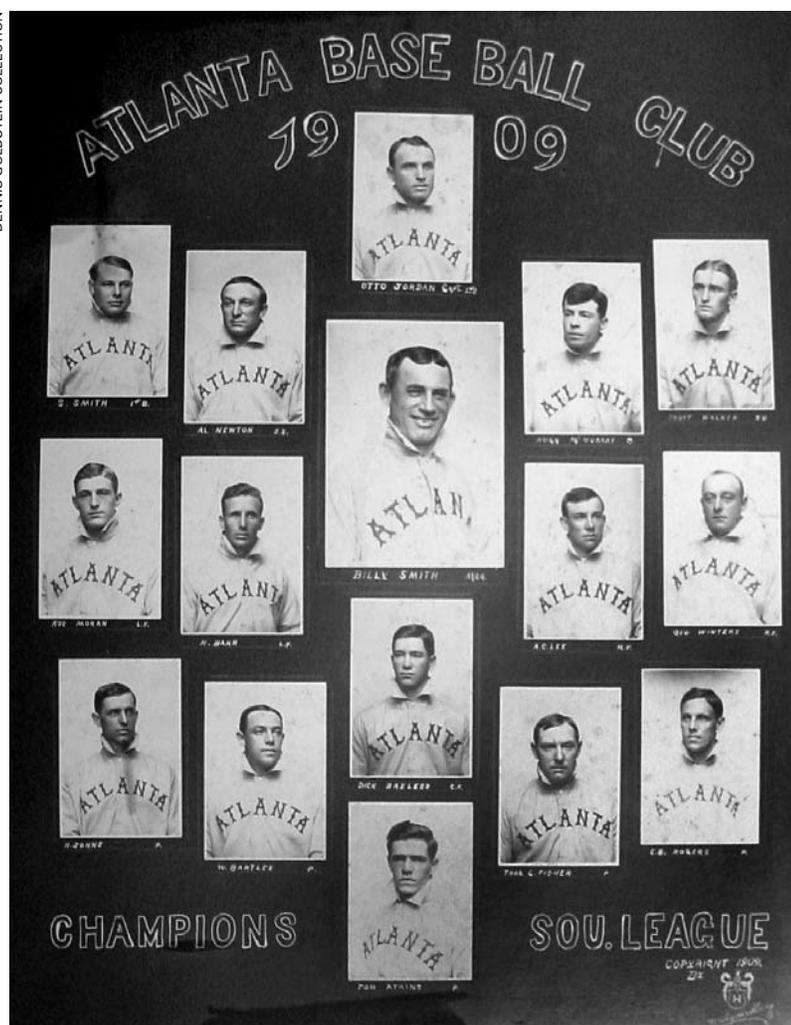
Perhaps the players simply wanted to break the existing record for rapidness—a 44-minute game played by Atlanta and the Shreveport Pirates on September 24, 1904.³ Perhaps some players had big plans for Saturday night. Perhaps some had a train to catch; it is true that many of them left immediately after the game.⁴ Perhaps a wager was involved—or is it mere coincidence that on that same day two teams in the same league played a nine-inning 6–3 game in only 42 minutes?⁵ Whatever their motivation, the two teams completed the game in only 32 minutes, setting a new record for “the fastest nine innings ever played in the organized baseball world.”⁶ The game received coast-to-coast attention, from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to the *Oakland (Calif.) Tribune*. It even made the front page of the *Nevada State Journal*.⁷

According to the *New York Times*, both teams ran on and off the field between innings. Batters even “came

DENNIS GOLDSTEIN COLLECTION



Atlanta's Ponce de Leon Park in 1910, site of the fastest baseball game ever played.



The 1909 Atlanta Crackers. Jordan (top, center), S. Smith (top, far left), Walker (top, far right), Moran (middle, far left), and Bayless (third row, center) returned in 1910 and played in the record-setting game.

to bat on the run” and typically swung at the first pitch they saw—and usually hit it.⁸ They mostly hit grounders, allowing the fielders to record 35 assists, including nine by the pitchers.

Both pitchers—Atlanta’s Hank Griffin, a 23-year-old Texan with a .500 record, and 29-year-old “Big Bill” Chappelle, whose 18 wins made him one of Mobile’s aces—“pitched excellent games . . . and despite the terrific pace, each was as steady as the old clock in the belfry, and that’s some steady.”⁹ The batters’ aggressiveness minimized strikeouts (Griffin recorded the game’s only one) and walks (one by Chappelle). The defense contributed “some sensational stops and throws as well as some clutch catches by the outfielders.”¹⁰

The defensive gem of the day came in the second inning, when Mobile turned an unusual (9–3–2) triple play. After Pete Lister and Scott Walker singled to put runners on first and third, John Berkel hit a fly to right field, where Julius Watson made the catch and then

doubled Walker at first base. Lister tried to score on the play, but first sacker Harry Swacina gunned him down at the plate.

Both pitchers worked “like demented steam engines,”¹¹ and each limited his opponents to five hits to ensure a low-scoring contest. Atlanta took the lead in the bottom of the first inning. Dick Bayless led off with a double to center (or, as described by the *Atlanta Journal*, “Don Ricardo Bayless slammed one to the middle meadow for the keystone sack”). He then moved to third on an infield out. After another out, Atlanta’s leading hitter¹² Pat Flaherty drew a walk as “four punk ones floated past.” Bayless then scored on a perfectly executed “double Raffles” (a double steal).¹³

That lead held up until the top of the sixth inning, when Mobile’s Charlie Seitz, who had started the season with Atlanta, tripled and scored on a wild pitch as “Griffin tried to knock a hole in the pressbox with one of his fast ones.”¹⁴

The Gulls scored the winning run in the ninth when Howard Murphy sandwiched a single between two flyouts and then “burglarized the second story [i.e., stole second]. Wagner was then so ungentlemanly as to swat the sphere to the left garden for one base, and Murphy meandered home.”¹⁵

Chappelle retired the Crackers in order in the ninth to nail down a 2–1 victory. The teams had given the fans an exciting game with a bit of everything (except a home run) and had set a still unequalled (and probably unapproachable)¹⁶ benchmark for baseball brevity by playing a nine-inning game in less time than most teams now take to complete two frames. Each plate appearance took an average of approximately 30 seconds;¹⁷ watching the game must have been akin to a preview of the frantic pace of the “Keystone Kops” movie chase scenes that became popular a few years later. The *Atlanta Journal*, whose coverage of the game contained so much flowery language throughout, became the epitome of understatement, saying simply, “viewed from every angle, the game was a hummer.”¹⁸ ■

THE BOX SCORE (*Atlanta Journal*, September 18, 1910)*

MOBILE	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Charlie Seitz, 2b	4	1	2	1	5	0
Joe Berger, ss	4	0	0	2	4	0
Howard Murphy, lf	4	1	1	0	1	0
Harry (Swats) Swacina, 1b	4	0	0	17	1	0
Otto Wagner, cf	4	0	2	4	0	0
Julius Watson, rf	2	0	0	1	4	0
John (Scotty) Alcock, 3b	3	0	0	1	1	0
Owen Shannon, c	3	0	0	2	2	0
(Big) Bill Chappelle, p	3	0	0	0	3	1
Totals	31	2	5	27	21	1

ATLANTA	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Dick Bayless, cf	3	1	1	5	0	0
Roy Moran, lf	3	0	0	1	0	0
Syd Smith, c	3	0	0	1	0	0
Patrick (Patsy) Flaherty, rf	2	0	0	0	2	0
Otto (Dutch) Jordan, 2b	3	0	1	3	0	0
Pete Lister, 1b	3	0	2	14	0	0
Scott Walker, 3b	3	0	1	1	2	0
John Berkel, ss	3	0	0	1	4	0
Hank (Pepper) Griffin, p	3	0	0	0	6	0
Totals	26	1	5	27	14	0

Mobile	000	001	001	2
Atlanta	100	000	000	1

Summary: SO (by Griffin, 1); Walks (by Chappelle, 1); Wild Pitch (by Griffin, 1); Doubles (Bayless, Wagner); Triple (Seitz); Sacrifice Hit (Watson); Stolen Bases (Bayless, Flaherty, Lister, Murphy); Double Play (Berger-Seitz-Swacina); Triple Play (Watson-Swacina-Shannon). Umpire: Bill Hart. Game Time: 32 minutes.

*First names added by author.

References

Baseball-Reference (www.baseball-reference.com) was my source for team records and the first names of most players. Retrosheet (www.retrosheet.org) allowed me to review Greg Maddux's game times and provided the information on modern-day game times.

Notes

1. Mike Zuckerman, *Washington Times*, 16 December 2009.
2. Jackson batted .354 for the Pelicans, almost 100 points higher than the team's next best hitter, Frank Manush (.256), the older brother of Hall of Famer Heinie Manush.
3. *Atlanta Constitution* (25 September 1904). NOTE: The *Atlanta Journal*, 18 September 1910 lists the time of that 1904 game as 42 minutes.
4. Tom Akers, *Atlanta Journal*, 18 September 1910.
5. Nashville defeated New Orleans, 6-3. This game, which included 29 hits and 9 runs, may be even more remarkable than the Mobile-Atlanta contest.
6. Akers, *Atlanta Journal*, 18 September 1910.
7. These newspapers represent a sampling of the many found at NewspaperARCHIVE, available at www.newspaperarchive.com.
8. *New York Times*, 18 September 1910.
9. Akers, *Atlanta Journal*, 18 September 1910.
10. *New York Times*, 18 September 1910.
11. *Atlanta Journal* sports page headline, 18 September 1910.
12. He was also their leading pitcher with an 18–10 record and told the *Atlanta Journal* that he had once pitched a 40-minute game against a native Japanese team.
13. Akers, *Atlanta Journal*, 18 September 1910.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. As noted, this game was at least 10 minutes faster than the previous record. It also took 19 minutes less than the fastest major-league game, which (according to Answers.com) was played on September 28, 1919, in Philadelphia, with the Phillies losing to the New York Giants, 6–1.
17. This is a rough estimate, because the *Atlanta Journal's* box score (at left) contains a few obvious errors. It shows 33 official at bats for Mobile, but the individual numbers tally to only 31. From the narrative, we can deduce that Watson made the final out and should be credited with one more plate appearance, so the actual total seems to be 32. Watson's sacrifice gives Mobile 33 plate appearances. Atlanta's AB column totals correctly to 26, and the one walk to Flaherty raises the team's plate appearances to 27, but we know that at least two more appearances occurred, because 27 Atlanta batters were retired, one scored, and one was left aboard in the first inning. Thus, we know that at least 62 plate appearances occurred during this 32 minute game—an average of just under 31 seconds. The teams also had to run on and off the field 17 times, which must have reduced actual playing time by at least a minute.
18. Akers, *Atlanta Journal*, 18 September 1910.

Memories of a Minor-League Traveler

NORMAN L. MACHT

Once upon a time in a faraway place—a place so far away no one under the age of sixty today has ever been there—there was a land called Organized Baseball, consisting of two major leagues of eight teams each and fifty-one minor leagues with names like Kitty, Pony, Cotton States, and Three-I. There were six levels of minors with teams in more than four hundred cities and towns. At the top was the AAA Pacific Coast League, which was just that: eight cities on the Pacific Coast. At the bottom were the Class D leagues—nineteen of them in towns such as Sweetwater, Pennington Gap, Donna-Robstown, Chickasha. The smallest town in OB-land was Landis, North Carolina, population 1,815. The ballpark was the high-school field.

Most of the lower-classification clubs were locally owned and operated. Many had working agreements with major-league organizations that provided the players and manager. But some were independent, scrounging for players as well as money. In 1951 I was the 21-year-old business manager of one such independent team, the Valley Rebels of the Class D Georgia-Alabama League. This is the story of how I got there and what I did there.

I arrived in Atlanta in the spring of 1948 at an age when the idea of conquering the world still seemed feasible. I knew only one person in the city, though I'd never met him. While a prewar student at Georgia Tech, my brother became friendly with the young sports director at radio station WSB (“Welcome South Brother”)—Ernie Harwell, who did a lot of interviews of present and past sports figures on his daily 15-minute show. After four years in the Marines, Harwell came home in 1946. Finding that WSB had cut back its sports coverage, he decided to go freelance and pursue his dream of becoming a play-by-play broadcaster. While stationed in Atlanta in 1943, he broadcast a few games for the Atlanta Crackers of the Southern Association (at that time, Class A-1) before the Corps put the kibosh on that activity. The club president, Earl Mann, welcomed him back in 1946, and he had been the voice of the Crackers ever since.

Ernie helped me get a job as a copywriter at the

station that carried the games, WBGE (“Benton’s General Elevator”) and employed me as a gofer and statistician in the broadcast booth. There were no media staffs, no handouts with all the stats. We relied on newspapers and our own record-keeping. Before the game I went to the managers and picked up the lineups. I updated the batting averages and other basic, rudimentary stats of the time. After each Cracker time at bat during the game, I recalculated (by looking in a little book of batting-average calculations) the player’s numbers. The radio booth was separate from the press box. If there was a question for the official scorer or something about the rules or the past or a record, I went and got the answer. I brought Ernie the scores of other games in progress.

Broadcasters didn’t travel with the team. Road games were recreated sitting at a table in a small windowless studio in the basement of the Georgian Terrace Hotel. A Western Union operator sat across from us, an empty Prince Albert tobacco tin stuck between the key and the side of the wooden container to amplify the clicky taps. The operator, whom we knew only as “Buck,” typed the bare-bones result of each pitch and handed the slip of paper to Harwell, who had to bring it to life. Working a few batters behind the action, we got so we could recognize the sound of the brief clicks signifying a home run or double play to come.

In the southern tradition, Harwell was a storyteller. He was long on stories and anecdotes, lean on stats-rattling. Stories have characters as well as action, but there were no media guides. During spring training and the first visits of the other teams to Atlanta, Ernie would go to the team hotel and talk to the players and coaches to learn their personal information: hometown, schools, family, hobbies, height and weight, off-season jobs—stuff he would refer to during the game that helped the listener know the players as individuals. Sometimes, when a new player joined a team between visits to Atlanta, I would gather that information for him.

An index card was made up for each player with his past records on one side and this personal info on

COURTESY OF THE KENAN RESEARCH CENTER AT THE ATLANTA HISTORY CENTER



Legendary announcer Ernie Harwell got his start in the radio booth of Atlanta's Ponce de Leon Park.

the other. Ernie had designed a thin wooden case that opened flat. On each side was a place for the roster, lineups, scorecard, and defensive alignment for each team. Along each side were overlapping plastic sleeves for the index cards.

The delivery style that took him to the Hall of Fame was there from the beginning. I listen to an audition disc he cut in 1946 and a tape of an Orioles-Tigers game nearly fifty years later. He sounds the same.

I knew Ernie for sixty-one years. He never changed. He wore like a pair of old slippers. He was completely unpretentious, easygoing, hospitable, courteous to everyone he met no matter who they were or their station in life. Even then, when I was a teenager, and throughout the next half-century, if he was with a group of broadcasters, writers, managers—whoever—and I appeared on the scene, he never failed to introduce me. In the 1980s and '90s, when I was working in the Orioles' press box and the Tigers were in town, I would bring friends into the tiny visitors' broadcast booth to listen to him on the air; he treated them as if they were prospective sponsors. He never ate or drank anything while he was on the air. (I don't think his weight varied a pound from the first time I saw him to the last.) Certainly his beret size never grew.

He was just as unflappable at home as he was on the air. He would sit in a wingback chair while his two little boys, Bill and Gray, would swing through the air from a trapeze bar secured high in a doorway behind him, and climb on or over him from the front or back, and he would carry on a conversation as though they didn't exist. He was comfortable with a mike in his hands but not a hammer or screwdriver.

Let me say here that no two finer people ever trod the earth than Ernie Harwell and his wife, Lulu. I had no place to stay when I first arrived in Atlanta in 1948. The Harwells kindly took me into their home until I found a rooming house near the ballpark. My stay with them was the most sleep-depriving experience of my life. It wasn't their two little boys or a noisy neighborhood that kept me awake. My bed was in Ernie's office, a room lined with bookshelves filled with baseball and other sports books and file cabinets stuffed with fascinating clippings on players past and present. What future SABR member could

waste time sleeping in such surroundings?

It was the start of a friendship that continued all our lives. Later, when he was retired and writing a column for a Detroit newspaper, he would sometimes call me with a question about the old Crackers or Connie Mack or something he thought I might have researched. More often I would call him with questions about old-timers he may have met or interviewed. He always made me feel that he was glad I called.

In late July 1948, Brooklyn announcer Red Barber was hospitalized with a bleeding ulcer. Branch Rickey had had his eye on Harwell and called for him to come and fill in for Barber. The ad agency for the Crackers' sponsor, Old Gold cigarettes (Ernie never smoked), was okay with it, because they sponsored the Dodgers' games, too. The Crackers' president, Earl Mann, wouldn't stand in his way, but Mann wanted a player in exchange, a catcher at Montreal named Cliff Dapper. Mann wanted him to manage the Crackers in 1949; Rickey agreed. Dapper managed the Crackers for one year; and never again managed above Class B. Ernie Harwell was still broadcasting in the major leagues almost sixty years later.

But before Ernie left for Brooklyn, I had a job to do. He needed cards full of personal information on

the 200 players in the National League—pronto. Back I went into his office for a few days and sleepless nights to turn them out. I requested as compensation a few books from his library. I still have them.

For the next two years, I worked for Harwell's successor, Jim Woods, a native of Kansas City, who later broadcast in New York, Pittsburgh, Oakland, and Boston. Woods, who wasn't known as "Possum" then, was a cat of a different cut from Ernie. He was more of a party person. He and Earl Mann became good buddies. He introduced me to bourbon and Coke, a drink I called "A Babe in the Woods." Part of my job was to get the Coke, pour a little out of the bottle, pour in the bourbon (which he handed me), and shake it up. In the booth. On the air. It never affected his work. He was an outstanding play-by-play man—nothing folksy—with a deep resonant voice. There were no cards with player information. He had a phenomenal memory. Among other things, he could name every Kentucky Derby winner. Jim's wife Ramona, a sweet lady, was a buyer at Rich's department store. Later when I visited Jim when he was with the Yankees, he had a huge English bulldog named Bogey. I never saw Bogey move a muscle.

Another announcer, Les Hendrickson, did pre-game interviews. Les was a big man well over 6 feet tall and 200 pounds. On the field they were a colorful pair, Woods in a flamingo pink suit and Hendrickson in a creamed spinach outfit.

On Saturday afternoons we did a major-league game of the week from the subterranean studio at the radio station.

The Atlanta Crackers were an independent team backed by Coca-Cola; all the other clubs in the league were affiliated with big-league clubs. The president and general manager was Earl Mann, and the Crackers operated the old-fashioned way. They had their own full-time scout, Joe Pastor, and their own working agreements with lower clubs. They signed players, developed them, and sold them to the major leagues. The team was a mix of men on their way down (like Jim Bagby Jr.), young men on their way up (like Art Fowler, Davey Williams, and Gene Verble), and career AA minor leaguers like outfielder Ralph "Country" Brown, a fast left-handed batter who taught me the beauty of the drag bunt. Earl Mann hired his own managers, and Kiki Cuyler had been his manager since 1944.

The entire operation consisted of Mann and two other men in the office—Jasper Donaldson and John Stanton—plus a concessions manager named Raul Ovares and groundskeeper Howard Hubbard. That's all.

Ponce de Leon Park was located in a light commercial pocket on Ponce de Leon Avenue surrounded by

residential neighborhoods. The field was below street level. Railroad tracks ran behind the right-field embankment. A lone magnolia tree bloomed on the steep slope in right center field more than 400 feet from home plate, undisturbed by fly balls since Babe Ruth's time until Eddie Mathews arrived in 1950.

It was there that I had my one brief meeting with Connie Mack on the afternoon of April 13, 1948. As I described in the preface to my Connie Mack biography, Atlanta was a regular stop for major-league clubs barnstorming north from spring training. The Athletics were in town for two games.

Connie Mack was sitting on a park bench in left field while his team took batting practice. I decided I'd like to meet him. He was 85. I was 18. I walked out and introduced myself and shook hands—I remember bony but not gnarled fingers—and sat down. I asked him something about some team that was in the news—it might have been a clubhouse fight or something of that nature. He answered politely, patiently, assuring me that whatever it was wouldn't affect the team's performance on the field. I asked him about this and that—an 18-year-old's questions, devoid of any great insight or import. After a few minutes I thanked him for the opportunity to talk with him and took my leave. I had no idea that I would be writing his biography sixty years later.

I was there when Jackie Robinson made his first Atlanta appearance with the Dodgers April 8, 9, 10, 1949. The Dodgers had broken attendance records in Texas and Oklahoma the spring before, avoiding their usual southeastern stops. Before the Friday night game, the KKK Grand Dragon announced that 10,000 people had signed a petition to boycott Crackers' games, threatening large financial losses to the club, if any black players appeared on the field with whites.

Earl Mann ignored the threats. Anticipating a capacity crowd, he had the outfield roped off from left to where the right-field wall began. The ropes were needed; the Friday night opener attracted 15,119 fans, one-third of them blacks, overflowing the stands. Hundreds sat on the embankment or atop the three tiers of billboards between the fence and the railroad tracks. The Dodgers won, 6–3, and Robinson and Roy Campanella were cheered loudly for every step they took. Almost 9,000 turned out for the Saturday afternoon game, won by Atlanta, 9–1. There was no hint of what was to come on Sunday.

The estimated capacity of Ponce de Leon Park was between 12,500 and 15,500. In those days, blacks were restricted to the outfield bleachers. Imagine the scene, then, when 13,885 blacks bought tickets, just over

half of the total paid attendance of 25,221, which far surpassed the previous record of 21,812 at the 1948 opener.¹ Standing room in the outfield and in the grandstand was packed solid. The embankment was covered with more people than the total attendance would be at most games.

For many of the fans, the highlight of the game, won by the Crackers, 8–4, was Robinson’s steal of home on the front end of a double steal in the second inning. There were no fights, riots, or disturbances of any kind at any of the games.

In 1950, Earl Mann gave me a job in the office so I could learn the business. On the side I also worked for the Howe News Bureau as the stats-compiler for three Class D leagues. The official scorers sent me their score sheets—sometimes coffee- or mustard-stained, written over, reworked beyond legibility. A 16-inning, 12–11 game with eight pitchers was a nightmare; the rare 1–0 game was a joy. I updated each player’s and team’s stats as I received them, and once a week cut a stencil (you’re old if you remember stencils) for each league, ran them off on the ink drum, and mailed them out to subscribers. I also brought the stats for the

Southern Association’s top hitters and pitchers up to date each day and turned them in to the two Atlanta newspapers.

That was the year the Crackers signed a working agreement with the Boston Braves that brought them then 18-year-old Eddie Mathews, making the jump from Class D, where he’d hit .363. The Braves also supplied Bob Thorpe, Don Liddle, and Ebba St. Claire. Among the veterans were Ellis Clary, Hugh Casey in the last year of his life, and the perennial Atlanta favorite, Country Brown. The manager was Dixie Walker; the coach was Whitlow Wyatt.

Mathews, with 32 home runs and 106 RBIs, led the Crackers to the pennant. Earl Mann allowed me to go with the team to Nashville for the playoff series. After the last game Whitlow Wyatt, who had driven there, invited me to go back to Atlanta with him. The Georgia native was the epitome of a courtly southern gentleman, but I had had it in for him ever since he dusted off my hero Joe DiMaggio, touching off a brawl in the fifth game of the 1941 World Series. When I confessed my grudge, he laughed it off. By the end of the ride, I had forgiven him.



COURTESY OF THE KENAN RESEARCH CENTER AT THE ATLANTA HISTORY CENTER

The April 1949 exhibition games between the Atlanta Crackers and the Brooklyn Dodgers featuring Jackie Robinson drew huge crowds.

COURTESY OF NORMAN L. MACHT



Jennings Field, a typical Class D ballpark of the 1950s, home of the Valley Rebels of the Georgia–Alabama League.

Toward the end of the season, I heard a team in the Georgia–Alabama League was looking for a business manager for 1951. The league had teams in Rome, Griffin, and LaGrange in Georgia; Opelika and Alexander City in Alabama; and the Valley Rebels, who straddled the border and the Chattahoochee River. The Valley consisted of five West Point–Pepperell textile towns: West Point, Georgia, and Lanett, Langdale, Fairfax, and Shawmut in Alabama. The population was about 15,000 to 20,000.

Jennings Field was in Lanett. Named for 77-year-old Robert Jennings, known as the Dean of Valley Sportsmen, it resembled the ballpark in “Bull Durham”— wooden grandstand, small bleachers from home to first and third, a capacity of about 3,500.

The mills sponsored the team. I was interviewed and hired by the club president, Robert Rearden, manager of the Langdale Mill. Our public-address announcer was his son-in-law, a fact I did not know when I became dissatisfied with his performance and fired him. I was quickly “advised” to reverse that decision—advice I heeded.

For the previous two seasons the Rebels had had a working agreement with the Red Sox, but no longer. LaGrange was the only team with a major-league affiliation—the Yankees. We were on our own to round up players as best we could. In the end, 25 players came and went. Only one of them would ever set foot on a triple-A field, leaving no footprints. The manager, a veteran minor-league catcher named Perley “Gabby” Grant, signed up some of his friends, including 30-something semi-pros who were technically rookies in OB. Our first baseman, Mal Morgan, worked in one of the mills while playing every summer for the Rebels. Several of them put in five to eight years playing

Class D ball, a breed that has been made extinct by baseball evolution.

And some were kids, like 18-year-old Gene Black, a big right-hander who won 10 games and pitched a no-hitter against LaGrange one night, the pinnacle of his brief career.

The “front office” was a one-man operation—me. Everything the staff of a minor-league club does today, I did. Everything: player transaction paperwork, promotions, selling ads for the outfield fence and scorecards, making speeches, hiring the ticket seller, stocking concession stands, counting the sticky dimes from the sno-cone stand after the game. My wife sold the scorecards and was my best PR asset.

An old man, Isham Corley, was the groundskeeper. He had been there for thirty years, through two previous incarnations of the league. I don’t remember if he was a county or a mill employee; perhaps I never knew.

For the past few years the Rebels had averaged under a thousand a game in attendance. I tried every corny promotion I could put together. On the afternoon of opening day, the players rode on a West Point fire engine, preceded by the high-school band, in a parade through the Valley. I climbed into a little two-seater Piper Cub and flew over the towns, one hand holding open the door and the other tossing out flyers promoting the game, while the plane dipped and swooped. Fortunately, I went up on an empty stomach; when we landed I was as green as the outfield grass.

There were prizes every night for lucky scorecard numbers: pens, lamps, dishes, radios, little ballplayer pins, even a television set. We had a cow-milking contest for the players, crowned a Miss Valley Rebel, and elected a Number One fan, whose prize turned out to be the least-valuable prize ever won—a lifetime pass to the Rebels’ games.

We had kids’ nights that drew over 200 youngsters free and brought almost 700 paid adults through the gates—and greatly increased the concessions sales. After June 30th all kids wearing a \$1 Valley Rebel T-shirt came in free to all games. Fat Man’s Night (remember this was 1951) admitted free anyone denting the scale at the gate for more than 200 pounds; 85 qualified. An old-timers game between the Rebels and local diamond heroes of yore drew 913.

We were in first place on July 4th and hosted the league all-star game, but the league was already on life support. Our attendance was averaging about 600, a little more than half of what it would take to break even. At that, we were drawing better than anybody

COURTESY OF NORMAN L. MACHT



The jury box was a section behind third base at Jennings Field reserved for the most vocal fans. When George Trautman, president of the Minor Leagues, visited in August 1951, he insisted on sitting there. Trautman, third from the left in the front row, inscribed this photo: “All parks should have a jury box. I enjoyed it.”

else in the league, except maybe Rome, a city of about 30,000.

By then, Opelika had thrown in the Cannon towel, and 10 days later Alexander City would do the same. So the league directors split the season. Griffin won the first half by a game over LaGrange and us. LaGrange won the second half. There were no playoffs.

In May I had set out to break the single game-attendance record for a Class D club. But the National Association had no idea what the record was. They received attendance reports by leagues, not individual clubs. I went ahead anyhow and launched a three-month campaign of advance sales. The target game was August 16.

On August 14th National Association president George M. Trautman came to the Valley and sat in our “Jury Box,” a section of the third-base bleachers I had set aside for a bunch of regulars who were the most vocal riders of players and umpires. A photo of Trautman in the Jury Box ran in *The Sporting News* on August 29, 1951.

Two nights later our “record-breaker” didn’t break any records that we knew of, but we did sell 2,428 tickets. The season—and my job—ended on August 25. The Georgia-Alabama League never saw another season.

Then there was a fracas in Korea, and I spent the next four years working in the farm system of the U. S. Air Force. When I came out of the service in 1956, I became the business manager of the Milwaukee Braves’ Class C farm at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in the Northern League for two years. That’s where my friendship began with Roland Hemond, who worked in the Braves’ minor-league office. During the season I hosted a weekly 15-minute TV show, “Let’s Talk Baseball,” featuring a different player each week. One of those players was a fast-talking, sharp-dressing, .171-hitting catcher, Bob Uecker. (He improved to .284 the next year.) In 1958, I moved to the Knoxville Smokies in the Class A Sally League.

By 1959 I realized that moving up the ladder to the major leagues meant constantly moving from one rented apartment and city to another, something I had been doing between the service and baseball for the last eight years. I was no longer a boy wonder. And the opportunities had shrunk. Minor-league baseball had been hit by the spread of major-league radio and television broadcasts. Expanded television programming and the increased availability of home air conditioning kept people at home during cold April and hot mid-summer evenings. Whereas fifty-one minor leagues operated in 1951, only twenty-one opened the season in 1959.

My baseball travels were over. I’m glad I made them. ■

Note

1. *New York Times*, 11 April 1949.

Risqué Business

RICHARD McBANE

FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS in July 1886, crowds gathered around a window on the Pryor Street side of the Kimball House in downtown Atlanta. The attraction was a set of cigarette-advertising cards that purported to represent what the *Atlanta Constitution* called “nine handsome female baseball players in attitudes common in that popular game.”¹

According to the *Constitution*, “it has been a daily occurrence for crowds to gather around the window and gaze admiringly upon the graceful forms depicted by the photographer’s art. All sorts of people have been there, from the ragged boot black to the merchant prince.”

A captain in the Atlanta police department examined the pictures but lodged no charges. The *Constitution*, however, was determined to make the most of this small sensation, reporting that “a number of staid citizens have expressed themselves as being opposed to the exhibition of the pictures, and have declared their intention to request Mayor Hillyer to interfere. It is claimed by these citizens that the pictures are indecent.”

The *Constitution* also reported that New York City newspapers, aided by Anthony Comstock, an agent for the Society for the Suppression of Vice, had joined in a crusade in that city against the photographs, while the cigarette dealers responded that the pictures were no more immoral or indecent than the pictures of well-known actresses exhibited in the bars of leading hotels. Atlanta cigarette dealers followed the same line of argument, declaring that “several of the Atlanta

photographers exhibit pictures similar to those of the female baseball players, and that if the latter should be suppressed, so should the former.”

The *Constitution* also reported that an unidentified but prominent lawyer from a Georgia community had attempted to buy a set of the pictures. When he was told that they were not for sale but were given to tobacco dealers to be used as advertisements, he represented himself as a tobacco dealer who wanted a few sets for advertising purposes. “All right,” said the agent, “buy five or ten thousand cigarettes and I’ll give you half a dozen sets.” Away went the lawyer under a cloud.

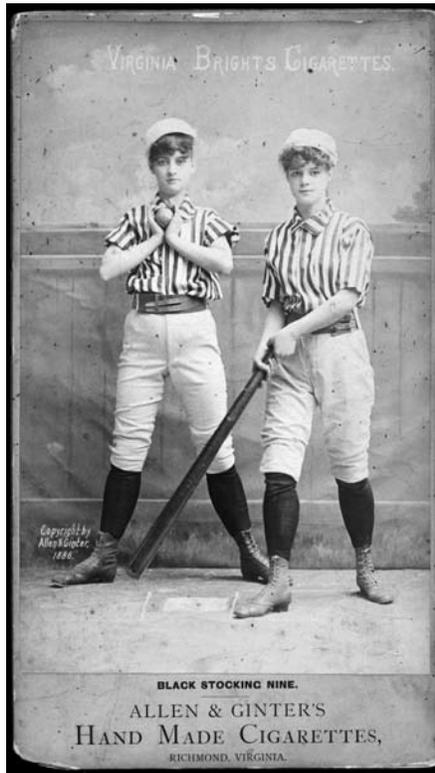
That tale was but a puff of smoke compared to widely circulated rumors, again picked up from New York newspapers and repeated by the *Constitution*, that rich old bachelors who had sought out the girls (who had been portrayed in another set of advertisements as “cigarette makers” rather than female ball players) had suffered disappointments leading to suicides.

The *Constitution* reporter, at least, finished with a note of realism, writing: “For the benefit of the dudes, it may be said that the cigarette pictures in no instance represent real cigarette makers. They are all taken in New York, from young women specially employed to sit for them.” Or, in the case of the supposed female ball players, to stand for them. ■

Note

1. *Atlanta Constitution*, 16 July 1886, 7. This is the sole source for this account.

IMAGE PROVIDED BY ROBERT EDWARD AUCTIONS, LLC, WHICH RECENTLY SOLD ONE OF THESE CARDS FOR \$1,800.



Allen & Ginter “Black Stocking Nine” cabinet card from 1886, an example of the pictures that caused controversy in Atlanta and elsewhere.

Three Georgia-Born Former Dodgers Lead the Crackers to a Pennant

LYLE SPATZ

A 1950 preseason poll of Southern Association sportswriters picked the Atlanta Crackers to finish in the second division of that league.¹ The pick surprised almost no one. After three consecutive first-place finishes—under manager Doc Prothro in 1944 and Kiki Cuyler in 1945 and 1946—the Crackers had slipped into the second division. They had finished fifth and sixth under Cuyler in 1947 and 1948 and fifth under 29-year-old player-manager Cliff Dapper in 1949. At the end of the season, Earl Mann, the team’s president since 1935, let Dapper go.

Mann, the leader of a group of businessmen who had purchased the club from the Coca-Cola Company in August 1949, had two tasks for the offseason. He wanted to establish a major-league affiliation for the Crackers, who were the only team in the Southern Association without one, and he had to find a new manager. He hoped for the Crackers to have a working agreement with the New York Giants, with whom he was negotiating, but the deal fell through. Mann was also unsuccessful in securing his first choice to manage the club. He wanted Mel Ott, but the former Giants skipper was not interested.² When Mann learned that the recently retired outfielder Dixie Walker was available, he offered him the job. On December 5, 1949, Walker

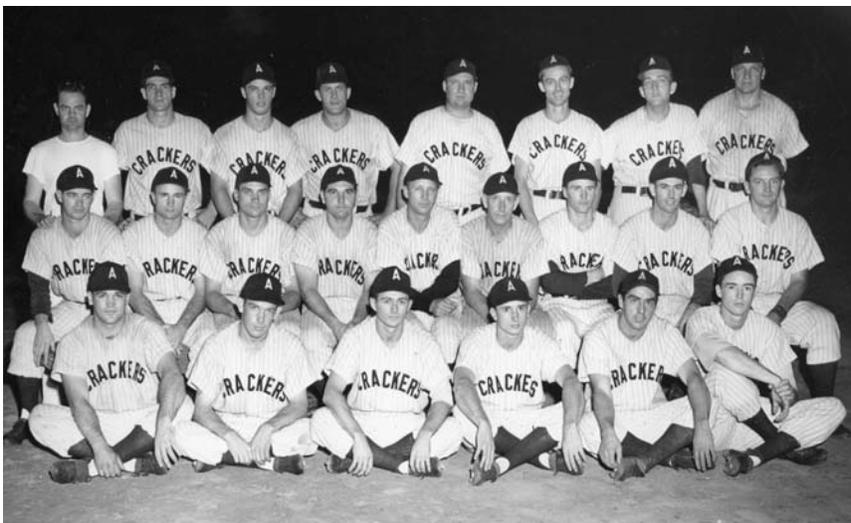
signed to manage the Crackers for the 1950 season. “We are happy to have Dixie back in Dixie,” said Mann.³

Walker, a native of Villa Rica, Georgia, had ended his 18-year career after two seasons with the Pittsburgh Pirates. Before that, he had played for the Yankees, Tigers, White Sox, and, most famously, the Brooklyn Dodgers. Playing for the Dodgers from 1939 to 1947, he had earned a reputation as the most popular player ever to wear a Brooklyn uniform. During that time, he helped lead the Dodgers to two pennants (1941 and 1947) and had won the National League batting championship in 1944 and the runs-batted-in title in 1945. He finished his career with more than two thousand hits and an excellent lifetime batting average of .306.

The arrival in 1947 of Jackie Robinson had posed a dilemma for Walker. Like many Southern-born players, and quite a few from the North, Walker did not approve of Robinson’s joining the Dodgers. The primary reason for his opposition, he would later say, was the fear of how playing with a black man would affect his business interests back home in Birmingham, Alabama. He asked team president Branch Rickey to trade him, which Rickey agreed to do, but Walker was himself still a very valuable asset, and when Rickey could not get fair value for him, no trade was made.

So Walker remained in Brooklyn, and while he and Robinson had an uneasy relationship, there were no incidents and the two men were instrumental in the Dodgers winning the 1947 pennant. Dixie told Rickey he was sorry about having asked for the trade and that he wished to remain with Brooklyn in 1948. But the Dodgers had a stable of young outfielders, and Rickey saw no future for Walker as a player in Brooklyn. However, aware of Walker’s baseball acumen and wanting to keep

DENNIS GOLDSTEIN COLLECTION



1950 Atlanta Crackers.

him in the organization, Rickey offered Dixie a job managing the St. Paul Saints, Brooklyn's affiliate in the American Association.

Walker had long expressed an interest in managing, and he had spent the previous few years of his career studying the game from a managerial viewpoint. Nevertheless, he felt that he still had some playing time left and turned down the offer. Rickey sent him to the Pirates in December 1947, where he had a good year in 1948 but struggled in 1949. The Pirates released him at the end of the season, and now at age 39, he was ready to become a manager.

"This is a great opportunity for me. It is what I have always wanted to do when my playing days were at an end," said Walker.⁴ "I'm gonna see what I can do with this old cerebellum," he said tapping his head. "Shucks, I've been squinting at fast balls in the twilight and chasing fly balls back to the screen long enough."⁵

In his 18-year big-league career, Dixie had played under a variety of managers: Joe McCarthy with the Yankees, Mickey Cochrane and Del Baker with the Tigers, Jimmy Dykes with the White Sox, and Leo Durocher and Burt Shotton with the Dodgers. His greatest success had come under Durocher, but he said that he had no particular model in mind. "I hope I have learned something from each of them that will help me as a manager."⁶

One thing that Walker had learned was the importance of a strong pitching staff, and so not long after he got the job with Atlanta, he headed to Buchanan, Georgia, to ask his former teammate Whitlow Wyatt, now 42, to be his pitching coach. Wyatt and Walker had both come to Brooklyn in 1939 after stints with three different American League teams. The new president of the Dodgers, Larry MacPhail, was signing every player he thought had even an outside chance of bringing his team back to respectability. With Walker and Wyatt, he struck gold. The two would be Dodger teammates for six years and in 1941 played instrumental roles in bringing Brooklyn its first National League pennant in 21 years. Wyatt agreed to come out of retirement and work as Dixie's pitching coach and chief assistant. "The Boston Braves," said Mann, referring to Atlanta's new major-league affiliation, "are tickled to get Whit into the system."⁷

Two days after landing Wyatt, Walker drove to the Atlanta suburb of Buckhead, where he paid a visit to Hugh Casey, another former Brooklyn teammate. Casey too had joined the Dodgers in 1939 and pitched for them through 1948, with the exception of three wartime years in the U.S. Navy. Casey was moderately successful as a starting pitcher in his first three years with Brooklyn. In 1942, Dodgers manager Durocher shifted him to the bullpen full-time, where he emerged as the National League's best relief pitcher. After a poor, injury-riddled season in 1948, the Dodgers decided that he was no longer big-league quality and let him go. He signed with Pittsburgh and had a combined 5-1 record for the Pirates and Yankees in 1949, although he did not pitch well for either team. The Yanks released him after the season. But Walker believed that Casey could still be an effective pitcher, at least at the Double A level, and signed him to pitch for the Crackers. For the Atlanta-born Casey, this would be his third stint with the Crackers. He had gone 0-3 for them as an 18-year-old in 1932 and 8-6 two years later.

Not much was expected of the Atlanta club at the start of spring training, but Walker was not discouraged. He spent most of his time at training camp teaching what he knew best—hitting—and while he turned his pitchers over to Wyatt, he was not without his own thoughts on the subject. "More pitchers get sore arms because their legs are not in condition than for any other reason," Dixie said. Wyatt agreed. "A



Atlanta Cracker owner Earl Mann with evangelist Billy Graham (May 1950).

COURTESY OF THE KEMAN RESEARCH CENTER AT THE ATLANTA HISTORY CENTER

pitcher can never do too much running. I realized that early on in my career, and I guess that's why I lasted as long as I did."⁸

Many experts had labeled Casey a "has-been," and his early spring performances seemed to prove them correct. The 36-year-old veteran was hit hard in his first couple of exhibition appearances against major-league teams, including an embarrassing outing against the Dodgers. Casey's problems continued early in the regular season. The fans booed him and urged Walker to let him go. But his old teammate still had faith in him. "I know he can win," Walker said.⁹

Casey eventually did turn it around, and by mid-summer Dixie had the Crackers in first place. Cardinals outfielder Harry Walker, at Ebbets Field for a series against Brooklyn, was happy for his brother's success in Atlanta. "Nobody thought Dixie had a chance to win when he took the job of manager," Harry said. "But he's got his kid team right up there fighting for a pennant. I would like to see him make it. I sure would like it."¹⁰

Well, he did make it. Dixie led the Crackers to a Southern Association best 92–59 record, finishing four games ahead of Birmingham. Atlanta then won four straight over Memphis in the first round of the playoffs but was ousted four games to one by Nashville in the finals.

The three former Dodgers played significant roles in Atlanta's success. Wyatt cajoled 92 wins out of a rather nondescript pitching staff, led by Art Fowler with 19 wins and Dick Hoover with 16. Working mostly in relief, Casey led the club in appearances with 45 and compiled a 10–4 record.

Most of the credit, of course, went to Walker, who in addition to managing, served as the third-base coach. Dixie also played in 39 games, mostly as a pinch hitter, and batted a respectable .273. Walker may have done his best work in coaching Eddie Mathews, a scared young kid with only Class D experience. Under Walker's tutelage, the 18-year-old third baseman and future Hall of Famer batted .286 with 32 home runs.

For finishing first with a team given little chance of even having a winning record, Walker won the league's Manager of the Year award. The difference, according to *Atlanta Constitution* sportswriter Guy Tiller, was Walker's "patient and intelligent handling of each player, and his detailed instructions on how to correct faults and avoid mistakes."¹¹

Walker managed another two years in Atlanta before he and Mann agreed to part ways. Although thought to be in the running for the open managerial job in Pittsburgh, he lost out to Fred Haney. He took a job as the first-base coach for the St. Louis Cardinals,

managed by his old Dodger teammate Eddie Stanky. Walker remained with St. Louis until July 30, when the Cardinals chose him to replace Al Hollingsworth as manager of the Houston Buffs, their affiliate in the Texas League.

Gene Mauch replaced Walker in Atlanta for a year, and in 1954, the Crackers named Wyatt as their manager. "I guess the best thing that ever happened to me was when Dixie talked me into returning to baseball," said Wyatt, who had been out of the game until Walker brought him back as the Crackers pitching coach in 1950. "I haven't regretted a minute of it."¹² As Walker had done, Wyatt finished in first place, but unlike Walker, his Crackers also won the playoffs.

But for Hugh Casey, the third member of the Atlanta Crackers' Brooklyn connection, 1950 was the end of the line. He tried to rejoin the Dodgers for the 1951 season but failed. No longer involved with baseball, drinking heavily, and plagued by tax problems and a paternity suit, the 37-year-old Casey took his life in an Atlanta hotel on July 3, 1951. The funeral was held the next day, July 4, with Walker and Wyatt serving as pallbearers. Casey was buried beside his parents in Atlanta's Mount Paran Church of God cemetery. The minister referred to the pressure that the paternity suit had placed on Casey. "You never know what is in a man's mind at such a time," he said. "But I think Hugh believed that he had been knocked out of the box, unjustly perhaps, and he didn't want to go back to the bench."¹³

After leaving the Crackers, Dixie Walker would spend the rest of his life in baseball, as a manager, coach, and scout. He was 71 when he died in 1982. Whit Wyatt stayed in baseball until 1967, serving as a coach for the Philadelphia Phillies and the Milwaukee Braves, and finished his career, appropriately, with the 1966–67 Atlanta Braves. He died in 1999 at the age of 91. ■

Notes

1. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 July 1950.
2. *New York World Telegram*, 6 December 1949.
3. *Hartford Courant*, 6 December 1949.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 29 January 1950.
6. Guy Tiller, "Prospect for Majors: Dixie Walker," *Baseball Digest*, October 1950, 86.
7. *Hartford Courant*, 1 March 1950.
8. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 March 1950.
9. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 21 June 1950.
10. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 July 1950.
11. Guy Tiller, "Prospect for Majors: Dixie Walker," *Baseball Digest*, October 1950, 85.
12. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 20 November 1953.
13. *New York World-Telegram and Sun*, 5 July 1951.

The 1954 Dixie Series

KENNETH R. FENSTER

On September 21, 1954, the Atlanta Crackers, champions of the Double A Southern Association, and the Houston Buffaloes, champions of the Double A Texas League, squared off in Atlanta's venerable Ponce de Leon Park in the first game of the 32nd annual Dixie Series, the South's version of the World Series.¹ Houston finished the regular season in second place one game out of first and then defeated Oklahoma City (4 games to 1) and Fort Worth (4 games to 1) in the playoffs to earn the honor of competing for the championship of Southern baseball. For the Crackers something more—something much more—than becoming the undisputed champion of Southern baseball was at stake in the Dixie Series. Atlanta had already captured three of the four prestigious events its league offered. The Crackers won the annual All-Star Game 9–1, finished first in the regular-season standings two games ahead of New Orleans, and had then defeated Memphis (4 games to 2) and New Orleans (4 games to 1) to take the playoffs. A victory in the Dixie Series would give the Crackers a clean sweep of everything the Southern Association offered, allowing the club to join the 1938 Crackers as the only teams in history to win the Southern Association grand slam.²

Offensively, the Houston ball club led the Texas League in runs scored, hits, total bases, stolen bases (by a huge margin), RBI, and batting average. The Buffaloes also grounded into the league's fewest double plays.³ The everyday lineup boasted six players who batted more than .300. Houston finished last in the league in home runs, but the team had remedied this deficiency with the late-season acquisition of former Negro League slugger Willard "Home Run" Brown.⁴ Playing for Dallas and Houston, he batted .314 with 35 home runs and 120 RBI. Brown, an outfielder, and "the Killer B's," three future major-league starters, first baseman Bob "The Rope" Boyd (.321, 7, 63), third baseman Ken Boyer (.319, 21, 116, and 29 SB), and shortstop Don Blasingame (.315, 5, 53, and 34 SB), drove Houston's potent attack.

Houston's four starting pitchers were Willard Schmidt (18–5, 3.69 ERA), Hisel Patrick (10–3, 3.77

ERA), Luis Arroyo (8–3, 2.35 ERA), and Hugh Sooter (14–13, 3.28 ERA). Among league pitchers with 10 or more decisions, Schmidt led in winning percentage, Patrick was second, and Arroyo was fifth. Schmidt, a power pitcher, finished third in the league in strikeouts with 186, and Arroyo, a screwball specialist, fanned 130 in only 115 innings. Arroyo, promoted to Houston in the middle of the season from the Class A Sally League, pitched the only no-hitter in the Texas League in 1954. Houston's ace reliever was future major leaguer Bob Tiefenauer, a knuckleball pitcher. According to *Houston Post* sportswriter Clark Nealan, Tiefenauer preserved many small leads during the season and was indispensable to the success of the Buffaloes.⁵

Atlanta's offense depended on the power hitting of its outfielders, Bob Montag (.305, 39, 105) and future major leaguers Pete Whisenant (.285, 20, 94) and Chuck Tanner (.323, 20, 101). When one of them hit a home run, the Crackers usually won the game.⁶ Montag's 39 home runs were second in the league and set an Atlanta franchise record for most circuit clouts in a season. He led the association in walks with 122 and in on-base percentage at .450. He also led the league in strikeouts with 121. Montag was third in the circuit with 293 total bases and second in slugging percentage at .648. Tanner was second in the league in total bases with 311 and second in hits with 192.⁷ Second baseman Frank DiPrima (.316, 12, 68) and first baseman Frank Torre (.294, 9, 74) also contributed to the Cracker attack. They, especially Torre, anchored the infield defense. Torre played 112 consecutive games and handled his first 1,006 chances before making an error, establishing two Southern Association records for defensive excellence.⁸ Longtime Atlanta sportswriter Ed Danforth described him in one of his regular columns as the finest fielding first baseman in the history of the Southern Association.⁹

For most of the season, Atlanta had only two reliable starting pitchers, Leo Cristante (24–7, 3.59 ERA) and Dick Donovan (18–8, 2.69 ERA), a future major-league star. Cristante led the league in victories by a wide margin and in winning percentage. Donovan,

who did not join the team until mid-May, when the Detroit Tigers returned him to Atlanta, was second in the league in ERA and tied for second in the league in wins. Once the moody and capricious Donovan had learned to control his volatile temper on the mound and added the slider to his repertoire, he became the best pitcher in the league.¹⁰ In the final two months of the season, Donovan compiled a stellar record of 11 wins against only two losses. He won many crucial games for the Crackers, and the Atlanta sportswriters frequently referred to him as the team's "money pitcher."¹¹ His teammates recognized his contributions to their success when they selected him as the club's most valuable player.¹²

In late July, the Crackers acquired a third dependable starting pitcher when Triple A Toledo sent the team Glenn Thompson. When he joined the Crackers, the 6' 5" Thompson had a blazing fastball but little control. He stumbled in his first four starts with the Crackers, winning one and losing three with 15 walks in 20 innings and an ERA of 5.40. Then in mid-August he harnessed his speed, and for the final few weeks of the season, he overpowered Southern Association hitters. In a game against New Orleans, he used his fastball to fan 19 batters, establishing a Southern Association record for most strikeouts by a pitcher in a nine-inning game.¹³ In his last five starts of the regular season, Thompson pitched five complete games, went 5-0, gave up only 34 hits and eight runs, and struck out 49 batters.

Atlanta's fourth starting pitching slot rotated among Bob Giggie, Bill George, Dick Kelly, and Virgil Jester. None of them pitched well consistently. They combined for 68 starts during the season, compiling a mediocre record of 25 wins and 27 losses. The team's top relief pitcher was another future major-league star, Don McMahon. In 46 appearances (all but one in relief), he hurled 91 innings, struck out 90 batters, and won eight and lost five with a 3.56 ERA.

As a team, Atlanta was greater than the sum of its individual parts. At catcher the Crackers had an excellent platoon, with the right-handed hitter Jim Solt and the left-handed hitter Jack Parks. Almost always batting in the lower third of the order, they combined to hit 17 home runs, drive in 84 runs, score 68 runs, and bat .317.¹⁴ Billy Porter, the starting shortstop, was equally adept at third base. Donovan was both a star



Souvenir program of the 1954 Dixie Series, featuring rival managers Dixie Walker of Houston and Whitlow Wyatt of Atlanta.

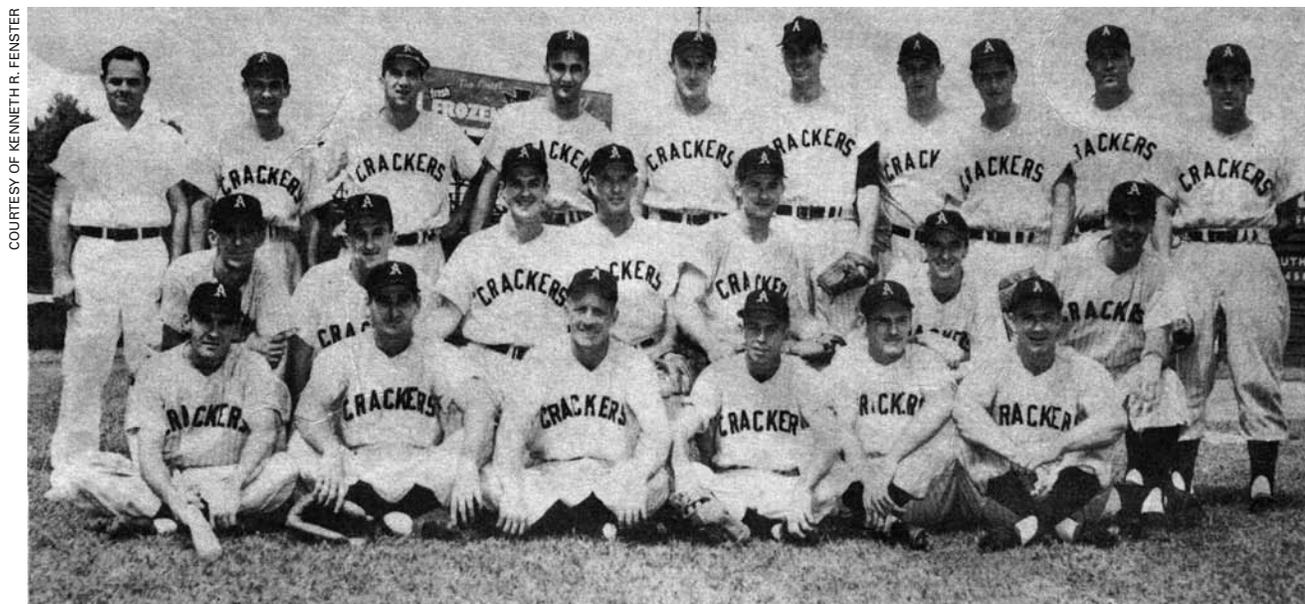
pitcher and an excellent hitter. He pinch-hit regularly, and he even started a few games in the outfield to take advantage of his powerful bat. In 114 regular-season at-bats, he hit .307 with 32 RBI and 17 extra base hits, including 12 home runs, which tied a league record for most homers in a season by a pitcher.¹⁵ The two most versatile players on the team were super utility man Paul Rambone and Earl "Junior" Wooten. The fiery and tempestuous Rambone appeared in 133 games and accumulated 481 at-bats without having a regular position. On numerous occasions, he played more than one position during the same game. For the season, Rambone played 82 games at shortstop and 25 games at both third and second base. He also played both corner-outfield positions, first base, and even catcher. At the plate, Rambone contributed 89 runs scored and 52 extra base hits, including 19 home runs. Wooten, the club's elder statesman and leading comedian,¹⁶ had played with the Washington Senators in 1947 and 1948 and had already spent a decade in the Southern Association. The decline of his offensive skills pre-

cluded him from a starting berth on the team, but he remained a superb defensive first baseman and outfielder.¹⁷ When he substituted for the slick-fielding Frank Torre at first base, the Crackers lost very little defensively. When Wooten replaced the weak-fielding and weak-throwing Montag in the late innings of close games, his most frequent role on the club, the Crackers had the best defensive outfield in the league: Whisenant in left, Wooten in center, and Tanner in right.¹⁸ Wooten also pitched in emergency situations, pitched batting practice regularly, coached first base, and managed the team whenever manager Whitlow Wyatt was unavailable.

The 1954 Dixie Series was full of irony.¹⁹ Atlanta made history at the beginning of the season when it integrated its team and its league. The Crackers broke the color line in the venerable, tradition-rich Southern Association when outfielder Nat Peeples, a former Negro League player, made the team's opening-day roster. Peeples appeared in the first game of the season, playing in Mobile, Alabama, as a pinch hitter. He started the next game in left field. Two days later, he returned to Atlanta to open the home season. But before he played in a regular-season game in Atlanta's Ponce de Leon Park, the Crackers demoted him to Jacksonville, in the Class A South Atlantic League. Peeples never again played in the Southern Association. He was the first and only African American to play in the league.²⁰ Houston also integrated its team in 1954. In the middle of the season, the club

purchased the contract of first baseman Bob Boyd, another former Negro Leaguer, from the Chicago White Sox, and later the team acquired Willard Brown from the Dallas Eagles of the Texas League. Houston manager Dixie Walker attributed much of the team's success to Boyd and Brown, who became extremely popular with Houston fans, who affectionately nicknamed them Mr. Boom and Mr. Bam.²¹ So even though the Crackers had integrated at the beginning of the season, when Boyd and Brown played in the opening contest of the Dixie Series on September 21, 1954, they became the first African Americans to play in an official game at Ponce de Leon Park.²²

The 1954 Dixie Series was more than just a championship playoff between competing teams and leagues. It also formed the backdrop to an intense personal drama and rivalry between the two managers, Houston's Dixie Walker and Atlanta's Whitlow Wyatt. They had been teammates for six years with the Brooklyn Dodgers, including the pennant-winning 1941 squad. The two men were also the closest of friends. Almost immediately after Earl Mann, the Crackers' owner, hired Walker to manage the 1950 Atlanta Crackers, Walker lured Wyatt out of retirement to serve as his pitching coach and chief assistant. Together, they led the 1950 Crackers to a Southern Association pennant. They remained at the helm of the Crackers for two more years, finishing sixth in 1951 and second in 1952.²³ Collaborators no longer, they now confronted each other as the fiercest of rivals.



ATLANTA CRACKERS

Third row, standing: Trainer Doc Jarvis, Frank DiPrima, Paul Rambone, Frank Torre, Don McMahon, Glenn Thompson, Dick Donovan, Bob Giggie, Bill Ayers, and Vigil Jester.
Middle row, seated: Pete Modica, Bill George, Chuck Tanner, Whitlow Wyatt, Pete Whisenant, Billy Porter, and Dick Kelly.
Front row, seated: Bob Montag, Leo Cristante, Jack Parks, Earl Wooten, Vern Petty, and Jim Solt.



HOUSTON BUFFALOS

Third row, standing: George Condrick, pitcher; Dick Rand, catcher; Hisek Patrick, pitcher; Dick Atkinson, pitcher; Kenny Boyer, 3rd base.
Middle row, standing: Joe Pastor, Assistant to General Manager; Charles "Doc" Foley, Trainer; Jim Atchley, pitcher; Bobby Tiefenauer, pitcher; Fred Marolewski, utility; Willard Brown, right field; Fred McAlister, utility; Willard Schmidt, pitcher; George Lerchen, center field; Art Routzong, General Manager.
Front row, seated: Hugh Sooter, pitcher; Hal Smith, catcher; Russell Rac, left field; Bob Boyd, 1st base; Dixie Walker, Manager; Don Blasingame, short stop; Howard Phillips, 2nd base; Louis Arroyo, pitcher.

Even before either Houston or Atlanta had won their leagues' playoffs, Clark Nealon, sports editor of the *Houston Post*, yearned for a Walker-Wyatt showdown in the Dixie Series. In his regular column, Nealon wrote: "Should the Buffs make it to the Dixie Series, nothing would please Manager Walker more than for Atlanta to win the Southern Association play-off."²⁴ The Atlanta papers also relished the personal confrontation between the two managers brewing in the upcoming Dixie Series. Two days before the first game, an anonymous author wrote in the *Atlanta Journal*: "As the Texas League season sizzled to a stop, Walker envisioned a triumphant return to Atlanta, scene of his first managerial assignment in 1950. It's no secret that the soft-spoken Alabaman yearns to send his Buffs against his old club, now managed by Wyatt, a former Brooklyn teammate. He wired Whit his personal congratulations immediately after Atlanta clinched its playoff berth. Plainly, a Houston-Atlanta-Walker-Wyatt series would have immense appeal for all concerned."²⁵

The editorial boards of both Atlanta papers made the dramatic, personal rivalry between Walker and Wyatt the central theme of the upcoming games. According to the editors of the *Atlanta Journal*: "For the first time in many years, there will be a real rivalry between Atlanta and the Texas League champion. Hous-

ton is managed by Dixie Walker, late of the Crackers. And of course Walker's former assistant, manager Whit Wyatt, now leads Atlanta."²⁶ On the day of the first game of the Dixie Series, the *Atlanta Constitution* editorial board wrote: "Technically it is Atlanta versus Houston and the Southern Association versus the Texas League for the championship of the whole wide South. Locally it is all that and something more. Houston's boss is Dixie Walker, formerly the manager of the Crackers. Whitlow Wyatt, who has piloted Atlanta through a great season, was Walker's assistant when he was in Atlanta. When an ex-hero returns to his old home stand as an enemy, there's more at stake than just prestige, and usually there's blood in more than one pair of eyes. . . . It's not only a matter of winning the Dixie, but stomping old Dixie while we're at it."²⁷ Even the *Constitution's* editorial cartoonist, Clifford Baldowski, got caught up in the drama of the Walker-Wyatt showdown. His cartoon of September 22, 1954, appropriately titled, "When Old Friends Get Together," shows Walker and Wyatt soaring high above Ponce de Leon Park tenaciously clutching the 1954 Dixie Series pennant while they clobber each other with baseball bats.²⁸

On September 20 and 21, Crackers owner Earl Mann placed large ads on the first page of the *Constitution's* sports section, promoting the first two games of the Dixie Series. Game time was 8:15 P.M. Box seats cost

\$2.60; grandstand seats a more modest \$1.85; bleachers went for \$1.25. Children could sit in the grandstand and the bleachers for \$1.00 and \$0.50, respectively. Patrons could purchase tickets at the Ponce de Leon box office or at Muse's clothing store in downtown Atlanta. A large but not sell-out crowd of 11,495 attended the first game of the Dixie Series on September 21, a balmy Tuesday night.²⁹ The game drew the largest African American attendance of the season to Ponce de Leon Park, and the Negro grandstand and bleachers overflowed with a standing-room-only crowd. Blacks also flocked in great numbers to Game 2 of the series. They came not to watch the Crackers but to see and cheer Houston's two African American players.³⁰

Houston won the first two games of the series convincingly. The Buffaloes took the opener 10–4. Left-hander Luis Arroyo hurled a complete game and gave up only seven hits. The Killer B's had three extra-base hits, scored five runs, and drove in three. Outfielder Fred McAlister hit a long three-run homer in the sixth inning to put the contest out of reach. Houston trounced the Crackers in the second game, 7–2. Willard Schmidt gave a masterful pitching performance, and the Killer B's continued their hot hitting with two more extra-base hits, four runs scored, and two driven in. In both games, Atlanta's pitching collapsed. Glenn Thompson started the first game and lasted less than two innings, yielding five hits and four runs. He and five other Atlanta pitchers walked 11 batters. In the second game, Leo Cristante surrendered seven hits and five runs in two innings. Schmidt limited the Crackers to two hits and none after the second inning. He struck out 11 batters in the game that he, his catcher, and his manager agreed was his best outing of the year.³¹

In these two contests, the Buffaloes outperformed the Crackers—whom Houston sportswriter John Hollis described as “listless”—in every facet of the game.³² Houston's vastly superior speed impressed the sportswriters from both cities as that team's single greatest advantage over Atlanta. In both games, Houston dazzled Atlanta with its aggressiveness on the bases. The Buffaloes took the extra base on hits to the outfield, stretching singles into doubles and doubles into triples. Twice Houston scored on wild pitches. The highlight of the team's running attack was Bob Boyd's “ridiculously easy steal of home” in Game 2. As Atlanta left hander Bill George went into an elaborate windup, Boyd dashed for home from third. He was already three-fourths of the way to the plate before the Cracker hurler had even released the ball. The ball ar-



DENNIS GOLDSTEIN COLLECTION

Jim Solt's lone hit in the 1954 Dixie Series was one of the most memorable in Cracker history.

rived so late that catcher Jack Parks made no effort to tag the sliding Boyd.³³ Houston's daring base running reminded Atlanta sportswriter Bob Christian of the Gas House Gang, and Whitlow Wyatt pondered quizzically: “Those guys fly, don't they?”³⁴ Because of Houston's speed, Ed Danforth wrote in his regular column that Atlanta could not win the series and should surrender. He asserted:

On what they showed here, Dixie Walker's club could have won the Southern Association pennant by 10 games. No club in our league was nearly that fast. . . . On speed alone, Houston would have run our league ragged. . . . Bob Boyd . . . can outrun any of the Crackers or the [New Orleans] Pelicans. . . . The way they [the

Buffaloes] took out after the Crackers in the first three innings it looked as if the best strategy was to pull the light switch and start all over again. Whitlow Wyatt has a game club with a lot of power, but beside this Houston crew they were wearing gum boots. . . . When this Dixie Series came up they [the Crackers] ran into a club that was just too good for them. They must be given “A” for effort, but to insist on pinning the shoulders of that fast-breaking Houston club is asking too much.³⁵

The Crackers and Earl Mann, however, remained optimistic. When the team left for Houston for the next three scheduled games, the marquee at Ponce de Leon Park read, “Atlanta vs. Houston, September 27th.”³⁶

The series now shifted to Houston’s Buffalo Stadium, where Houston had not lost a three-game series since July.³⁷ Down two games to none, the Crackers faced a must-win situation in Game 3. Behind the team’s yearlong reliables, Dick Donovan and Bob Montag, Atlanta defeated the Buffaloes 7–4. Donovan pitched a complete game and contributed with his bat, collecting two hits, a walk, two RBI, and one run scored. Atlanta banged out 13 hits, more than the team’s combined total in the first two games. For the first time in the series, the Crackers scored first, plating two runs in the third inning on Rambone’s double, Donovan’s walk, Porter’s sacrifice, and Torre’s single. Three times during the game, Houston came from behind to tie the score, with the Killer B’s doing most of the damage. They scored three runs and knocked in two more. Then in the eighth inning, Montag hit a solo home run that put the Crackers ahead for good. The key play in the game came in the bottom of the ninth inning. With the score 7–4, the left-handed Earl Wooten went into the game to play center field as a defensive replacement for Montag. Regular center fielder Whisenant moved to left field, and Montag, the starting left fielder, came out of the game. Wyatt had used this strategy in the late innings of close games frequently during the season, and never was the move more important than in this game. With one out and a runner on first base, Houston outfielder George Lerchen, a left-handed hitter, smashed a terrific slicing line drive headed for deep left-center field. Wooten had shaded Lerchen toward right field, so he was a long way from the ball. Being left-handed gave Wooten a crucial advantage in making the play. He explained: “I remember that ball. It went out and I thought I could catch it all the way. I did. I ran toward left field. Yes I did, because that’s the one that my glove hand is

on, that side. That gave me a little more leverage over on my right side. I had my glove on my right hand, so I ran toward left field and that helped a lot. When the ball came off the bat, I thought I had it all the way.”³⁸

The sportswriters from both cities lavished effusive praise on Wooten’s catch. Dick Freeman of the *Houston Chronicle* described it as “one of the best fielding plays ever seen in Buff stadium.” Jesse Outlar of the *Atlanta Constitution* called it “a miracle catch. . . . No one thought Wooten could make the catch—but he did—a sensational diving, one-handed stab.” And according to Atlanta sportswriter Bob Christian, when Lerchen hit the ball, “Wooten took off like a coyote and never gave up on it. When he saw he might not catch it, he made a long, diving effort and caught the ball. He rolled over a couple of times, but still got up in time to keep the runner from advancing. That was the ball game. The crowd began to jam the exits.” Christian ranked this catch “as the best ever in the Southern Classic.”³⁹

In Game 4, after Atlanta starting pitcher Dick Kelly faced three batters and gave up three hits and one run, Wyatt replaced him with Bob Giggie, who held the Buffaloes scoreless for the rest of the frame. The Crackers plated two runs in the third inning to take the lead. Houston tied the game in the bottom half of the third on Bob Boyd’s solo home run and then scored three runs in the sixth off Atlanta’s ace relief pitcher, Don McMahon, to win the game 5–2. The Killer B’s scored all of Houston’s runs, had four RBI, and stole three bases. In the first three innings, Atlanta left six men on base, wasting several opportunities to score. In the last six innings, Atlanta had only two hits, both meaningless singles. With Houston now enjoying a commanding three-to-one lead in the series and with Arroyo and Schmidt available to pitch Games Five and Six, Atlanta sportswriter Jesse Outlar was ready to concede defeat.⁴⁰

Game 5 featured a rematch of Game 1’s starting pitchers, Luis Arroyo for Houston and Glenn Thompson for Atlanta. The Crackers scored the only run of the game in the first inning when Wooten raced across the plate on Pete Whisenant’s broken-bat, bloop single.⁴¹ Thompson, so ineffective in Game 1, pitched brilliantly, using his blazing fastball to overpower the hard-hitting Buffaloes. He yielded a measly three hits—two to Killer B Bob Boyd—and he struck out 11. Thompson allowed only two Houston runners to reach as far as second base. The Atlanta pitcher got into trouble only once in the game. In the bottom of the eighth, he walked the number-eight hitter to start the inning. After a wild pitch advanced the runner to second base,

Thompson walked the pitcher. With Houston having the potential winning run on base and the top of the order coming to bat, the Crackers faced imminent elimination. But Thompson remained poised and responded to this pressure-packed situation with great clutch hurling. Houston leadoff hitter Don Blasingame bunted Thompson's first two pitches foul. The Atlanta pitcher ran the count full and then induced Blasingame to hit a weak pop-up to shortstop. Thompson also went to a full count on the next batter, second baseman Howard Phillips, a .306 hitter during the season, and then struck him out. The third hitter in the Buff lineup was the dangerous Ken Boyer. With the raucous, partisan crowd cheering louder for Boyer on every pitch, Thompson ran the count full yet again. Then Thompson retired Boyer on a long but harmless fly to Pete Whisenant in left field. Jesse Outlar thought Thompson's performance was the best in the history of the Dixie Series, and Earl Mann believed it was the finest he had seen in his entire 25-year career as a minor-league executive.⁴²

With the victory in this tension-filled must-win game, the Crackers forced the series to return to Ponce de Leon Park for at least one more contest. Sunday, September 26 was an off day. Game 6 was scheduled for Monday night, and Game 7, if necessary, would be played on Tuesday. Thompson's sensational victory pumped new life into the team, and the Crackers were confident they could win the next two games. The players spent the off day relaxing at a steak dinner Earl Mann gave them at Aunt Fanny's Cabin, a popular Atlanta restaurant. Dick Donovan, known for his gregarious, fun-loving ways and good sense of humor off the mound, came to the banquet unconcerned about his scheduled start in the upcoming crucial Game 6 of the series.⁴³ He and his pal and roommate Bill George wore big cowboy hats, chomped on fat cigars, and lived it up.⁴⁴ Houston also anticipated victory. In fact, the Buffaloes arrived in Atlanta on Sunday so confident that they would win Game 6 and thus the series that they made hotel reservations for only that night. They checked out of their rooms prior to coming to the ballpark on Monday, convinced that the Crackers would not force a Game 7.⁴⁵ Such hubris—so reminiscent of ancient Greek tragedy—rarely goes unpunished.

When Atlanta took the field to start Game 6, the crowd of 10,447 gave the team a tremendous ovation. The Crackers did not disappoint their fans. Starting pitcher Dick Donovan, whom Bob Christian christened immediately after the game as "the greatest thing in Atlanta since sliced bread," pitched and hit the Crack-

ers to a 6–2 triumph and a tie in the series at three victories apiece.⁴⁶ The Atlanta pitcher, according to Christian, brought to the game an indomitable will to win. Donovan attributed the victory to the effectiveness of his slider.⁴⁷ He hurled a complete game, giving up only seven hits and shutting down the Killer B's, limiting Houston's most dangerous hitters to three hits in 13 at-bats, no runs scored, and one RBI. Donovan struck out eight and walked only one, and that was an intentional pass. At bat, Donovan had a double, was hit by a pitch, and scored both times he reached base. The Crackers rallied against Houston's ace pitcher, Willard Schmidt, in the fourth inning to plate five runs and overcome a one-run deficit. Third baseman Vern Petty, who had seen very little playing time since suffering a freak off-the-field injury⁴⁸ in mid-August, delivered a key blow in the inning, a two-run double. As Petty pulled into second base and catcher Jack Parks and Donovan crossed the plate to give the Crackers a one-run lead, the large crowd cheered loud and long. Later in the inning, Pete Whisenant drove in two more runs with a triple to right field. With this sizeable lead, Donovan coasted the rest of the way.

After the game, the Houston players stoically filed into their locker room and then went back to their hotel, where they had to re-register for rooms. The Crackers had spoiled their plans for an early return home. The Crackers stormed their locker room full of joy and jubilation. They chanted, "Sixty instead of forty!"—a reference to the percentage of the first four games' gate receipts that the players on the winning and losing teams received for the series.⁴⁹ Paul Rambone shrieked, "It belongs to the Crackers!" Leo Cristante shouted, "We're just getting warmed up." Billy Porter was ready to "take on the winners of the Little World Series. Then on to Cleveland."⁵⁰ This pandemonium quickly gave way to a quiet confidence and a sense of purpose, and the players calmed down and focused on the upcoming Game 7. One observer commented, "What's the funeral about in here? I thought these guys won something."⁵¹ Whitlow Wyatt explained this abrupt change of mood in the clubhouse: "They're just like that. They're not the hollering, screaming type. They can get as worked up as anybody about a ball game, but it comes out on the field. They don't use it up until they have to. They've been great that way. I guess that's the reason they've won."⁵² The players showered, dressed, and went home. On his way out, Bob Montag confided to Atlanta sportswriter Furman Bisher: "We got it now. We got it."⁵³

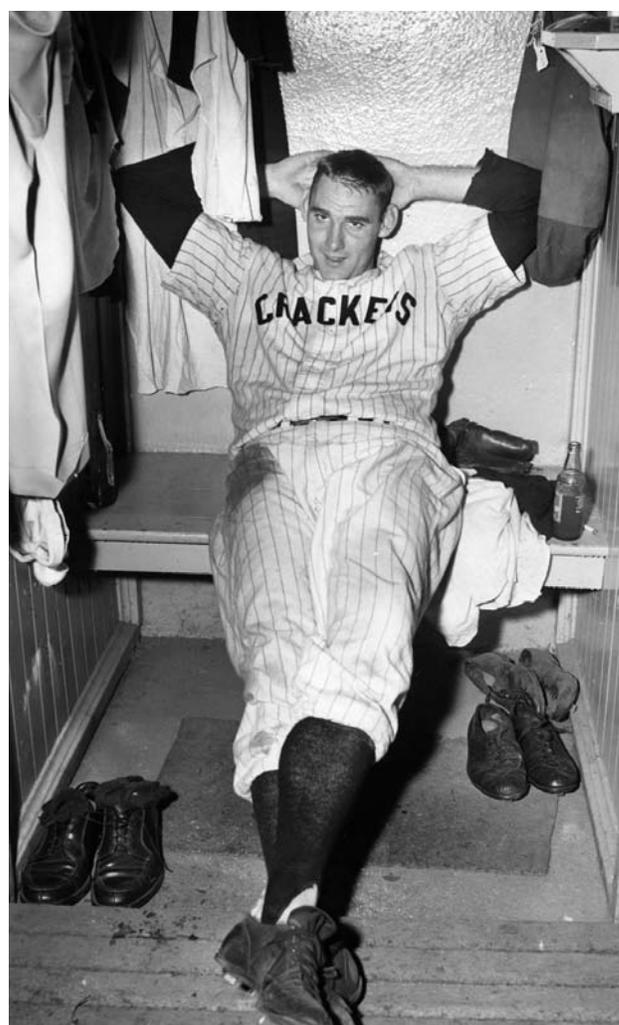
The Crackers, so moribund in the first two contests, had rallied from a one-to-three game deficit to knot the

series at three victories apiece. During the regular season, Atlanta had staged numerous comebacks to win. In late August, trailing the league-leading New Orleans Pelicans by two games, the Crackers swept the Pelicans in a four-game series to zoom into first place and to take the pennant. In both rounds of the league playoffs, the Crackers lost the opening game and then defeated their opponents. The team had one more game to play for dollars and glory. Could the Crackers come from behind one more time to win the Dixie Series and the Southern Association grand slam?

On Tuesday, September 28, a long line of people waited at the Ponce de Leon box office to buy tickets for Game 7.⁵⁴ When the gates at Poncey opened at 4:50 P.M. for the 8:15 P.M. game, more than 100 people had already queued up to enter the ballpark. By 6:00 P.M., fans had taken every parking space within several blocks of Ponce de Leon Park. At 7:15 P.M. they had filled every seat in the grandstand. A large, exultant throng of 13,293 fans, the third largest of the season, jammed every nook and cranny of the place to cheer the Crackers to what they hoped would be their third straight victory. An uproarious excitement and sense of anticipation pervaded Ponce de Leon Park. "People were sitting on soft drink crates behind the last row of grandstand seats. Others were on the rail behind them. They were practically hanging from the rafters. They overflowed into the left field section behind the fence. And there was a good crowd perched on the fence beside the railroad tracks."⁵⁵

In the game, Glenn Thompson, working on only two days' rest, started on the mound for Atlanta against Houston's Hugh Sooter, the winner of Game 4. The Buffaloes jumped off to an early lead. Believing that the left-handed batter Don Blasingame would not pull Thompson's fastball, the Cracker outfielders swung around toward left field. Blasingame led off the game with a pop-up down the right-field line that fell in between Frank DiPrima, Frank Torre, and Chuck Tanner. The speedy Buff shortstop raced to third base for a triple, sliding in ahead of the throw. The next hitter, Howard Phillips, lofted a long sacrifice fly to left field that scored Blasingame. Thompson retired the next two hitters, Boyer and Brown. In the second inning, Houston threatened again, putting runners on first and second base with no outs, but Thompson then struck out the next three batters. Houston had runners at first and third with one out in the third inning but again failed to score, with Thompson getting Brown and Boyd out on weak infield grounders.

Atlanta finally got on the scoreboard in the fourth inning. Chuck Tanner led off with a single. The next bat-



DENNIS GOLDSTEIN COLLECTION

Glenn Thompson's masterful performance in Game 5 of the 1954 Dixie Series was the best of his career.

ter, Bob Montag, powered a triple to right field, scoring Tanner and tying the game. Pete Whisenant then hit a routine ground ball to shortstop. Montag—in what could have been a serious base-running blunder—broke for home. He got caught in a rundown. Montag, a fast runner and a big man at 185 pounds, charged the plate standing upright. He slammed into Hugh Sooter at home with the full force of his body, jarring the ball out of the Houston pitcher's glove. Montag's run gave the Crackers a 2-1 lead. Meanwhile, Whisenant had raced all the way to third base. After DiPrima grounded out, Jack Parks hit a sacrifice fly to deep center field, driving in Whisenant for Atlanta's third and final run of the inning.

In the bottom of the fifth inning, Glenn Thompson led off with a single. After Vern Petty grounded into a force out, Frank Torre blasted a ground-rule double, putting Crackers on second and third base with one out and a two-run lead. At this point in the game, the wheels of managerial strategy began to whirl. Dixie

Walker replaced Sooter, a right hander, with Luis Arroyo, a lefty, to pitch to Atlanta's two left-handed sluggers, Chuck Tanner and Bob Montag. Arroyo intentionally walked Tanner to bring up Montag with the bases loaded. The crucial moment in the game and the series had arrived. If Houston could prevent the Crackers from scoring, the momentum in the game would revert to the Buffaloes. If Montag, the Crackers' best and most reliable power hitter, could drive in one or more runs, he could put the game out of reach. As Montag, who had struggled all season against left-handed pitching, approached the batter's box, Whitlow Wyatt pondered pinch-hitting for his slugger. As Wyatt explained immediately after the game: "I was thinking about it all the time, all the time he was walking to the plate. I was afraid Dixie might take out his left-hander and that would leave me with a right-handed lineup. . . . I looked over at first base and saw Chuck [Tanner] and Earl [Wooten in the first-base coach's box.] I could tell they seemed to think it was time for a pinch hitter. . . . Then I decided that two runs right there might mean the game. . . . That's when I sent for [Jim] Solt."⁵⁶

The fans in the stands rained a unanimous chorus of boos on Wyatt for his decision to pinch-hit the right-handed Jim Solt for Montag. In the press box, *Atlanta Journal* sportswriter Rex Edmondson moaned, "Whitlow has lost his mind!"⁵⁷ At this point in the series, Solt was 0 for 9. But then Edmondson realized that Montag—despite his power—was vulnerable to left-handed pitching. Edmondson also remembered that Solt, in a similar pressure-packed situation, had pinch-hit a three-run homer to win the game that gave Atlanta the honor of hosting the 1954 All-Star Game.⁵⁸

Jim Solt drove Arroyo's first pitch over the 350-foot left-field fence for a grand-slam home run. When Solt's bat made contact with the ball, sending it soaring beyond the infield, Dixie Walker, who was standing on the dugout steps, dropped his head to his chest, shaking. The moment Solt hit it, Walker knew it was out of the park and that the game and the series had ended for the Buffaloes.⁵⁹ Solt's teammates mobbed him at home plate, and the crowd was delirious. Atlanta sportswriter Rex Edmondson had "never . . . been on the scene more unforgettable. I wasn't in the Polo Grounds when Bobby Thomson's blast beat the Dodgers in '51, but I was listening and even then . . . although I was jumping with joy, it didn't match that night at Ponce de Leon when Solt's homer cleared the left field fence. I don't recall how long it took Solt to cross home plate as fans and players streamed out to greet him. It was pure bedlam."⁶⁰

With a 7–1 lead, Glenn Thompson coasted the rest of the way. He got stronger as the game progressed, retiring the last 20 men he faced. The big Atlanta hurler turned in his second brilliant pitching performance in four days. He limited Houston to five hits. He struck out six and walked only two. When the Buffaloes came to bat in the top of the ninth inning, the park organist, Mrs. Johnnie Nutting, serenaded them with "I'm Heading for the Last Roundup."

When the game ended, the jubilant Crackers hoisted a beaming Whitlow Wyatt onto their shoulders and carried him to the clubhouse. The Cracker "dressing room . . . was a bedlam. A turmoil. Like Lindbergh coming home from Paris. V-J Day."⁶¹ Earl Mann and Charlie Hurth, the president of the Southern Association, joined the celebration, congratulating Wyatt and the players. Mann gave Thompson a bear hug and a headlock. A forlorn Dixie Walker was there too. He came to congratulate his former teammate, his former collaborator, and his friend. Wyatt told Walker, "It's bad trying to beat your best friend, but you were trying to beat me."⁶²

Even after the victory and amid this joyous celebration, some of the players were amazed at what they had just accomplished. Dazed and stupefied, they sat nearly motionless, in various stages of undress. Frank DiPrima perched on a table wearing only his unbuttoned undershirt. Leo Cristante had on nothing but his undershorts. Relief pitcher Pete Modica, who had played sparingly in the series, rested on a bench, shirtless, smoking a cigarette. And Montag, one of the heroes of the game, sat on a rubbing table wearing nothing at all.

Earl Mann, who had won 10 pennants in his minor-league career, called the victory in the seventh game of the 1954 Dixie Series "the biggest thrill I've ever gotten out of baseball."⁶³ The 1954 Atlanta Crackers—their dramatic finishes and thrilling come-from-behind victories, Whitlow Wyatt's leadership, Montag's home runs, Thompson's nearly flawless pitching, Donovan's brilliant hurling and his prowess at bat, and Solt's pinch-hit grand slam—are all part of Atlanta's baseball legacy and the stuff of legend and lore. The 1954 Atlanta Crackers won the Southern Association grand slam in storybook fashion. Their victory was, as Rex Edmondson put it, "The Miracle of Ponce de Leon."⁶⁴ ■

FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE 1954 DIXIE SERIES

Game 1	September 21 in Atlanta	Game 4	September 24 in Houston	Game 7	September 28 in Atlanta
Houston	10	Atlanta	2	Houston	1
Atlanta	4	Houston	5	Atlanta	7
WP	Luis Arroyo	WP	Hugh Sooter	WP	Glenn Thompson
LP	Glenn Thompson	LP	Don McMahon	LP	Hugh Sooter
HR	Fred McAlister, Houston Pete Whisenant, Atlanta	HR	Bob Boyd, Houston	HR	Jim Solt, Atlanta
Attendance	11,495	Attendance	9,115	Attendance	13,293
			Totals		
Game 2	September 22 in Atlanta	Game 5	September 25 in Houston	Houston	3–4
Houston	7	Atlanta	1	Atlanta	4–3
Atlanta	2	Houston	0	Attendance	73,628
WP	Willard Schmidt	WP	Glenn Thompson		(42,065 in Atlanta)
LP	Leo Cristante	LP	Luis Arroyo		(31,563 in Houston)
HR	Frank DiPrima, Atlanta	HR	None	Gate Receipts	\$130,367.05 divided as follows:
Attendance	6,830	Attendance	10,876		\$20,576.40 for the Atlanta players
			Game 3		
Game 3	September 23 in Houston	Game 6	September 27 in Atlanta		\$13,723.99 for the Houston players
Atlanta	7	Houston	2		\$34,996.64 for each club
Houston	4	Atlanta	6		\$13,036.69 for each league ⁶⁵
WP	Dick Donovan	WP	Dick Donovan		
LP	James Atchley	LP	Willard Schmidt		
HR	Bob Montag, Atlanta	HR	None		
Attendance	11,572	Attendance	10,447		

Notes

- The principal sources on which this article is based are the two daily newspapers in Atlanta, the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal*; the two daily newspapers in Houston, the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Houston Post*; 42 interviews that I conducted with players from the 1954 Atlanta Crackers; Atlanta sportswriters, fans, and others in 1999–2000; and personal correspondence with former Atlanta sportswriters Bob Christian and Rex Edmondson.
The two leagues played the first Dixie Series in 1920, when the pennant-winning teams challenged each other for bragging rights as the best baseball outfit in the South. The following year, the two leagues formally arranged a best-of-seven postseason championship series, establishing the Dixie Series as an official playoff. The games in these first two years attracted large crowds, immediately making the Dixie Series a financial success, establishing it as the most popular and premier baseball event in the South, and guaranteeing its continuance. Except for 1943 through 1945, when the Texas League suspended operations, the series continued through 1958. For a general discussion of the Dixie Series and its importance, see Charles Hurth, *Baseball Records: The Southern Association, 1901–1957* (New Orleans: The Southern Association, 1957), 132–36; Robert Obojski, *Bush League: A History of Minor-League Baseball* (New York: MacMillan, 1975), 245–47; Bill O’Neal, *The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie, 1885–1994* (Austin, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1994), 42–43; Marshall Wright, *The Southern Association in Baseball, 1885–1961* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2002), 203–4; Tom Kayser and David King, *Baseball in the Lone Star State: The Texas League’s Greatest Hits* (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 2005), 55–59.
- Between 1938, when the Southern Association played its first All-Star Game, and 1954, four other teams had come close to capturing the grand slam. In 1940, the Nashville Vols lost the All-Star Game 6–1 and then took the pennant, the playoffs, and the Dixie. In 1943, the Vols won the first three legs of the grand slam but did not have the opportunity to play in the Dixie Series because the Texas League suspended operations. The 1946 Crackers won the All-Star Game, the pennant, and the playoffs but lost to Dallas in the Dixie. The 1949 Vols lost the All-Star Game 18–6 and then won the pennant, the playoffs, and the Dixie. Principal source: Hurth, *Baseball Records*, 13–14, 126–36.
- These team statistics and all the statistics in this and the following paragraphs came from the *Sporting News Guide and Record Book* (St. Louis: The Sporting News, 1954), 204–12 (Texas League), 196–203 (Southern Association).
- For a synopsis of Brown’s career, see James Riley, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1994), 127–29. See also John Holway, *Black Diamonds: Life in the Negro Leagues from the Men Who Lived It* (Westport, Conn.: Meckler Books, 1989), 107–18.
- Houston Post*, 19 September 1954.
- On the importance of the outfielders to Atlanta’s offense, see, for example, the photo of Montag, Whisenant, and Tanner in the *Atlanta Constitution* (10 September 1954). The caption reads: “They accounted for 300 Cracker runs batted in this year.” Combined, the three outfielders had 39 percent of the team’s RBI, scored 34 percent of the team’s runs, made 39 percent of the team’s extra-base hits, and hit 48 percent of the team’s home runs. These statistics are all the more impressive when one considers that Whisenant did not join Atlanta until May 11, missing the first month of the season, when he was with Triple A Toledo.
- In many seasons, Montag’s and Tanner’s numbers would have led the Southern Association, but not in 1954, when Nashville’s left-handed slugger Bob Lennon took advantage of Sulpher Dell’s short 262-foot right-field fence to win the triple crown (.345, 64, 161) and lead the league in total bases with 447, hits with 210, and slugging percentage at .733.
- Hurth, *Baseball Records*, 91.
- The *Atlanta Journal* first mentioned Torre’s errorless-games streak in its May 7 issue, when Torre had played in 25 games and handled 254 chances. The *Journal* referred to the streak again in its May 20 issue, and in its May 23 issue declared: “Frank Torre may be the slickest fielding first baseman in Southern history. No one can produce any statistical evidence to the contrary, for the Cracker whiz is operating at an unbreakable clip. Perfect is par for him thus far.” For Danforth’s evaluation of Torre, see the *Atlanta Journal* (28 May 1954). The *Sporting News* (9 June 1954) featured Torre’s errorless streak in its roundup of the Southern Association.
- On Donovan mastering his temper and the slider, see Dick Donovan, as told to Al Silverman, “I Almost Gave Up,” *Sport* 21 (February 1956): 46, 75; interview with Chuck Tanner, 8 June 1999; Rex Edmondson to the

- author, 21 April 1999; *Atlanta Journal*, 10 March 1960; Charlie Roberts Papers, Atlanta History Center, MS 552, box 11, folder 2; *Atlanta Journal*, undated clipping, Southern Bases Collection, Atlanta History Center, MS 735, box 2, folder 7, clippings (11 June 1955, 4 September 1957, 5 April 1958), Donovan File, National Baseball Library; *Atlanta Constitution* (31 July 1957) and clippings (March 1955, 6 July 1955), Donovan file, Sporting News Archives; David Condon, "Tricky Dick's \$30,000 Pitch," *Chicago Sunday Tribune Magazine*, 14 May 1958, 14; Sandy Grady, "Donovan's Up," *Sport* 27 (November 1962): 41, 74; Howard Roberts, "How Donovan Finally Found Success in One Easy Lesson," *Baseball Digest* 14 (September 1955): 46; Bob Vanderberg, *Sox from Lane and Fain to Zisk and Fisk* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1982), 172–73.
11. *Atlanta Constitution*, 24, 27 September 1954; *Atlanta Journal*, 27 September 1954.
 12. *Sporting News*, 15 September 1954.
 13. Hurth, *Baseball Records*, 96.
 14. The only catcher or catching platoon in the league that had more offensive success than the Solt-Parks tandem was Birmingham's Lou Berberet, who hit 18 home runs, scored 93 runs, drove in 118 runs, and batted .317.
 15. Hurth, *Baseball Records*, 87. Donovan hit two more home runs in the playoffs, including a 450-foot blast in New Orleans on September 19. The day after Donovan hit this mammoth home run, the *Atlanta Constitution* published a photo of the pitcher holding his bats. As a hitter, Donovan apparently inspired fear in some opposing pitchers. In the third playoff game against Memphis, Atlanta, with a 2–0 lead, had runners on second and third with no outs. Memphis pitched to the number-eight hitter, Paul Rambone, who had 19 home runs for the year. He struck out. Memphis then intentionally walked Donovan to pitch to leadoff batter Billy Porter!
 16. The *Atlanta Journal* (13 July 1954) described Wooten as the "wittiest" man on the team, who could earn a living as a gag writer. The *Atlanta Journal* (20 August 1954) wrote as follows: "Dick Donovan and Bill George, along with Junior Wooten, Paul Rambone, and Pete Whisenant, are comparable to a picnic with Martin and Lewis, Abbott and Costello, and Red Skelton." When I interviewed Wooten, he denied that he was the team's leading practical joker, prankster, or comedian. Interview with Earl Wooten, 10 April 1999.
 17. Wooten went to spring training knowing that he would not be a regular. Interview with Earl Wooten, 10 April 1999.
 18. When Wooten went in to play center field, Whisenant, the regular center fielder, shifted to left field, and Montag, the regular left fielder, came out.
 19. The idea for this and the next three paragraphs comes from the *Atlanta Journal* (7 February 1962), Charlie Roberts Papers, Atlanta History Center, MS 552, box 13, folder 5.
 20. On Peeples and the effort to integrate the league, see Kenneth R. Fenster, "Earl Mann, Nat Peeples, and the Failed Attempt of Integration in the Southern Association," *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 12 (spring 2004): 73–101.
 21. *Atlanta Journal*, 19 September 1954; *Atlanta Constitution*, 21 September 1954. After he retired from baseball, Brown made his home in Houston, where he remained extremely popular and a fan favorite until he died. See Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 128–129.
 22. Blacks and whites had competed against each other at Ponce de Leon Park every year since 1949, but only in exhibition games. See Fenster, "Earl Mann, Nat Peeples," 85–87.
 23. After the 1952 season, Walker accepted a coaching position with the St. Louis Cardinals. Earl Mann hired Gene Mauch as Cracker manager for 1953, giving Mauch his first managerial job. At their regular meeting in November 1952, Southern Association officials passed a rule prohibiting coaches, forcing Wyatt to retire to his farm in Buchanan, Georgia, for the 1953 season.
 24. *Houston Post*, 7 September 1954.
 25. *Atlanta Journal*, 19 September 1954. See also *Atlanta Constitution*, 20, 21 September 1954; *Atlanta Journal*, 20 September 1954.
 26. *Atlanta Journal*, 20 September 1954.
 27. *Atlanta Constitution*, 21 September 1954.
 28. *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 September 1954.
 29. This attendance was the sixth largest of the season to date.
 30. *Atlanta Constitution*, 22, 29 September 1954; *Atlanta Daily World*, 23 September 1954; *Sporting News*, 6 October 1954. See also Furman Bisher, "What About the Negro Athlete in the South?" *Sport* 21, May 1956: 88. In this article, Bisher writes, "Atlanta's Negro population nearly created a crisis when it turned on the Crackers to cheer for [Houston's] Negro stars. Passions arose on an occasion or two, but subsided abruptly and the series came off without incident."
 31. *Houston Post*, 23 September 1954; *Houston Chronicle*, 23 September 1954.
 32. *Houston Post*, 23 September 1954.
 33. *Ibid.* See also *Atlanta Journal*, 23 September 1954.
 34. *Atlanta Journal*, 22 September 1954.
 35. *Atlanta Journal*, 23 September 1954.
 36. *Atlanta Journal*, 29 September 1954.
 37. *Atlanta Journal*, 22 September 1954; *Houston Post*, 27 September 1954.
 38. Interview with Earl Wooten, 10 April 1999.
 39. *Houston Chronicle*, 24 September 1954; *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 September 1954; *Atlanta Journal*, 24 September 1954.
 40. *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 September 1954.
 41. In addition to the game write-up in the *Atlanta Journal* (26 September 1954), I have relied on the description of this hit found in Rich Marazzi, "The Tumultuous Life of Pete Whisenant," *Sports Collectors Digest* (30 August 1996): 90.
 42. *Atlanta Journal*, 26 September 1954; Earl Mann, "How Baseball Can Live with TV," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine*, 6 March 1955: 9. See also interview with Earl Mann by Loran Smith, undated, Georgia Sports Hall of Fame archives. This interview is undated, but internal evidence suggests early 1980s. Glenn Thompson called this game the best performance of his career. Interview with Glenn Thompson, 17 June 2000.
 43. On Donovan's personality off the mound, see Rex Edmondson to the author, 21 April 1999; Grady, "Donovan's Up," 39; Dick Gordon, "The Truth About Donovan," *Baseball Digest* 21 (July 1962): 23; "Baseball: Split Personality," *Newsweek* 59 (June 1962): 87; Vanderberg, *Sox*, 173–74; clipping (August 1961), Donovan File, Sporting News Archives.
 44. Photo of Donovan and George in *Atlanta Constitution*, 27 September 1954.
 45. Marazzi, "Tumultuous," 90; *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 September 1954; *Atlanta Journal*, 28 September 1954.
 46. *Atlanta Journal*, 28 September 1954.
 47. According to Bill James and Rob Neyer, Donovan had a "Hall of Fame slider in the 1950s" and had the ninth-best slider in baseball history. See *The Neyer/James Guide to Pitchers: An Historical Compendium of Pitching, Pitchers, and Pitches* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 38.
 48. After a bolt of lightning struck the chimney of the Kimble House Hotel in downtown Atlanta, Petty, who was taking a walk with his uncle, was struck in the leg by a falling brick. See *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 August 1954; *Atlanta Journal*, 20 August 1954.
 49. *Atlanta Journal*, 28 September 1954.
 50. *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 September 1954.
 51. *Ibid.*
 52. *Ibid.*
 53. *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 September 1954.
 54. See the photograph of this line in the (*Atlanta Journal*, 28 September 1954).
 55. *Atlanta Journal*, 29 September 1954.
 56. Whitlow Wyatt in the *Atlanta Constitution* and *Atlanta Journal* (29 September 1954). In the quotation cited in the text, I have combined Wyatt's statements as published in the two newspapers.
 57. Rex Edmondson to the author, 21 April 1999.
 58. On Solt's pinch-hit home run that gave Atlanta the All-Star Game, see Kenneth R. Fenster, "It's Not Fiction: The Race to Host the 1954 Southern Association All-Star Game," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Association Conference, Birmingham, Ala., 7 March 2009.
 59. Rex Edmondson to the author, 21 April 1999.
 60. *Ibid.*
 61. *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 September 1954.
 62. *Ibid.*
 63. *Atlanta Constitution*, 30 September 1954. See also Earl Mann in *The Sporting News*, 6 October 1954) where he is quoted as saying: "It's the greatest thrill I've ever gotten out of baseball."
 64. Rex Edmondson to the author, 21 April 1999.
 65. *Atlanta Journal*, 30 September 1954.

All-Time Georgia-Born All-Star Team

TERRY W. SLOOPE

On behalf of the SABR Magnolia Chapter

Manager—Bill Terry* (Atlanta)

Starting Lineup

OF—Ty Cobb* (Narrows)

2B—Jackie Robinson* (Cairo)

OF—Dixie Walker (Villa Rica)

C—Josh Gibson* (Buena Vista)

1B—Johnny Mize* (Demorest)

OF—Moises Alou (Atlanta)

SS—Cecil Travis (Riverdale)

3B—Ray Knight (Albany)

Starting Rotation

Kevin Brown (Milledgeville)

Tim Hudson (Columbus)

Spud Chandler (Commerce)

Dick Redding (Atlanta)

Kenny Rogers (Savannah)

Bullpen

Todd Jones (Marietta)

Hugh Casey (Atlanta)

Nap Rucker (Crabapple)

Jonathan Braxton (Augusta)

Jim Bagby Sr. (Barnett)

Bench

1B—Frank Thomas (Columbus)

2B—Tony Phillips (Atlanta)

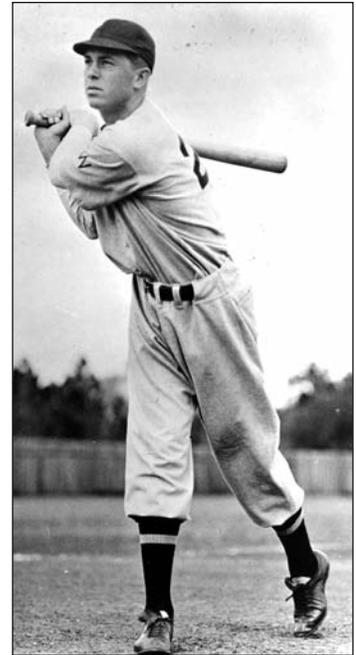
SS—Bucky Dent (Savannah)

3B—Chone Figgins (Leary)

OF—Marquis Grissom (Atlanta)

OF—Wally Moses (Uvalda)

C—Brian McCann (Athens)



Cecil Travis



Jackie Robinson



Kevin Brown



Josh Gibson

A discussion of individual members of the All-Time Georgia-Born All-Star Team can be found online at <http://s.sabr.org/sloope-georgia-2010>.

PHOTOS: KEVIN BROWN—COURTESY OF LOS ANGELES DODGERS
ALL OTHERS—NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

The Georgia Peach

Stumped by the Storyteller

WILLIAM R. COBB

INTRODUCTION

In his December 29, 2005, Internet blog, John Thorn, the noted baseball author and SABR member, mentioned that the shotgun that killed Ty Cobb's father in 1905 had been part of the famous Barry Halper collection of baseball memorabilia—an incredible, if not unbelievable, assertion.¹ How could such an artifact of tragedy have survived for 100 years to become part of the most famous collection of baseball memorabilia ever assembled? And more importantly, why?

As a lifelong fan of Ty Cobb (but not a descendant or close relative) and a member of the Board of Advisors to the Ty Cobb Museum in Royston, Georgia, I was fascinated by these questions when I discovered Thorn's blog in mid-2006. A discussion among the museum board members resulted in an e-mail to John Thorn, seeking further information about his assertion and about the relic itself. This exchange digressed quickly into a disagreement as to whether a pistol or a shotgun had actually been used in the incident that took William Herschel Cobb's life, and Thorn declined to discuss his statement further.²

A few months later, the Ty Cobb Museum received a phone call from a representative of the New York Yankees organization, inquiring about the shotgun that was used to kill Ty Cobb's father.³ The caller, who identified herself only as a member of the Yankees' marketing department, wanted to know if the museum had any information that could be used to confirm that a shotgun, which the caller said was now held in the collection of an undisclosed Yankee player, was actually the weapon that had been used in the shooting of W. H. Cobb.

These two events inspired me to begin a thorough investigation to review all of the information that could be located about the August 8, 1905, shooting of Ty Cobb's father at the hand of Ty's mother. I wanted, once and for all, to either confirm or disprove the shotgun element of this tragic event in Ty Cobb's life story. And, if disproved, I wanted to identify and understand the source of this particularly distasteful part of the myth. An unintended result of this investigation has been to

provide new insights into other myths about Georgia's most famous baseball player—where they began and how they grew. This investigation also demonstrates that new information to be found in the realm of high-end baseball memorabilia, often well known among collectors and authenticators but not widely publicized, can be highly relevant to the efforts of baseball researchers and historians.

THE SHOTGUN

The first step in my investigation was to review the Sotheby's catalog for the 1999 sale of the Barry Halper Collection, which had netted something over twenty million dollars.⁴ This unindexed, three-volume set, which provides descriptions, some photos, and the realized prices of the auctioned items, is practically a baseball history in itself and would be an interesting read for any SABR member. My first perusal, however, yielded no information on the Cobb shotgun.

Recalling that I had once read that Major League Baseball had purchased about twenty percent of the Halper collection before the auction and donated it to the Cooperstown Hall of Fame Museum, I asked friend and research director Tim Wiles if the Cobb shotgun was among the Halper items that had been received by the Hall of Fame. His reply a few days later was that no such item was in their collection and that he and his colleagues could not imagine that the Hall of Fame Museum would ever accept such a sordid relic were it to be offered.⁵

A subsequent e-mail exchange with Robert Lifson, the memorabilia expert who managed the auction of the Halper collection for Sotheby's, revealed that the John Thorn blog had indeed been correct.⁶ The Cobb shotgun had been listed in the Sotheby's auction catalog. This discovery prompted my second review of the Halper catalogs, in which I found this description on page 439 of volume 1, with no accompanying photo:

1227 Ty Cobb's Shotgun . . .

"Tyurus R. Cobb" is engraved near the trigger of this early twentieth-century double-barrel

shotgun. Cobb's biographer Al Stump told Barry Halper that this was the gun that Mrs. Cobb used to shoot Mr. Cobb, when Ty was still young. The younger Cobb kept the gun throughout his life and used it on many of his hunting expeditions.⁷

Lifson also replied that the shotgun originally was to be included in the auction and thus had been included in the catalog, but that ultimately it had been rejected because the only provenance was Al Stump's statement. There was also a question as to whether Sotheby's was licensed to auction such a firearm.⁸ The shotgun, as lot 1227, did not appear in the published prices realized list, confirming Robert Lifson's recollection that it had been pulled from the auction.

According to the Sotheby's catalog, the source of the shotgun in the Halper collection was sportswriter Al Stump, who had collaborated with Ty Cobb on his 1961 autobiography and during that process spent time with Cobb in the last year of his life. I was to later learn that Al Stump was very well known to experts and collectors of high-priced baseball memorabilia. But some obvious questions remained.

Why would Ty Cobb, who according to all accounts had been deeply and permanently affected by the untimely death of his beloved father at the hand of his mother, have kept the shotgun supposedly used in the tragedy for the rest of his life? Why would he have used this weapon in many of his later hunting expeditions? Indeed, why would he have had his own name inscribed on the weapon?

THE RECORD

The August 8, 1905, death of William Herschel Cobb, a former Georgia state senator, Franklin County school board commissioner, and owner and editor of *The Royston Record*, was widely covered in newspapers throughout the state. All discovered contemporary news articles that provided details of the shooting death of W. H. Cobb and the subsequent trial of his wife, Amanda Cobb, referred to the weapon used in the shooting as a revolver or pistol.

The August 11, 1905, *Atlanta Constitution* includes this description of Amanda Cobb's testimony before the coroner's jury: "When she heard a noise at the window during the night, she took a revolver from the reading table where she had left it and fired two shots at a figure crouching outside." Mrs. Cobb's full testimony before the coroner's jury was included in the same article (see exhibit 1).⁹

A diligent online search by researchers at the State

Mrs. Cobb's Statement.
Mrs. Cobbs' statement to the jury was as follows:
"Mr. Cobb left home Tuesday morning, telling me that he would not be back until Thursday. Mr. Cobb bought me a pistol in Atlanta since we moved here. This I generally kept under my head, but last night I was reading and had it on my table and left it there.
"I retired about 10:30 o'clock, and woke up some time during the night. I heard a kind of rustling noise at the lower window of my room. I got up and got my pistol. As I approached the window I saw a form some distance from the window. As it went behind the chimney I went to the upper window.
"I went from window to window, two or three times, maybe more. The form seemed to get nearer to the upper window, and I pulled down the shade so that I could see just below it. The form seemed to crouch down. I stood at the upper side of the window and pulled the shade to one side and shot twice.
"After shooting I thought everything I began to scream, and went to send Clifford Ginn after a doctor. I called Mr. Welborn. I couldn't call very loud.
"After shooting I threw the pistol down. I don't know how long it was between shots."

COURTESY OF WILLIAM R. COBB

Exhibit 1. A copy of an excerpt from the *Atlanta Journal* (August 11, 1905), article quoting Amanda Cobb's statement to the jury of the coroner's inquest. Amanda testified that she fired two shots from a pistol that her husband had bought for her. No newspaper or court records have been found that dispute her testimony. She also testified that Clifford Ginn was first to assist her and made no mention of Joe Cunningham having been the first to arrive on the scene.

of Georgia Archives discovered numerous other newspaper articles available digitally and some legal documents from the Franklin County court records.¹⁰ The weekly *Macon Telegraph* carried this description of Amanda Cobb's testimony on September 28, 1905: "According to a statement made by her soon after the shooting she was roused in the night by someone at her window. She rose quickly, and with a revolver fired at a crouching form. Then she screamed."¹¹

Several articles in *The State* (Columbia, South Carolina), the *Savannah Tribune*, and the *Augusta Chronicle* covered the 1905 coroner's jury and the March 1906 trial but failed to mention the weapon used.¹²

The Superior Court records found online at the State of Georgia Archives include the 1905 criminal docket, the 1905 application for bail, and the 1906 jury

verdict, none of which make any reference to the weapon used in the shooting.

In a 2004 SABR Deadball Committee e-mail group dialogue, some of these newspaper articles casting doubt on the shotgun theory were presented and discussed. From the ensuing e-mails, the consensus conclusion seemed to be that these documents were insufficient to dispel the well-known and long-accepted “fact” that a shotgun had been used in the shooting death of W. H. Cobb. The principal argument was that press coverage would have been friendly, even lenient, toward Mrs. Cobb, due to the prominence of W. H. Cobb and the entire family.¹³

This conclusion is contradicted by a close reading of the articles, which reveals that the coverage was in fact harsh, even discussing rumors of infidelity and the revelation that W. H. Cobb had a revolver and rock in his coat pocket at the time of his death, which served to heighten the speculation about this sensational case.

The court itself was hardly lenient on Amanda Cobb. Not until September 29, 1905, did the court grant her request for bail, requiring a \$10,000 bond “with good security,” an extremely large sum in 1905.¹⁴ When the trial finally began on March 30, 1906, the court denied a motion for continuance requested by Amanda Cobb on the grounds of the absence of a principal defense witness. Still further, in 1907, after being acquitted, Amanda Cobb had to file suit against the administrator of her late husband’s estate, forcing a division and sale of lands in order for her to receive the “twelve-months support” for her family as provided by Georgia law.

A notable result from this exhaustive search of the

record is the absence of any mention whatsoever of a shotgun in the press coverage or in the surviving Superior Court records. To conclude as a result of this study that a handgun was used in the shooting death of W. H. Cobb, against the widely held belief that a shotgun as used, would hardly be unreasonable. However, as described above, it is doubtful that such a conclusion would be widely accepted, even among the SABR community.

To finally conclude that the shotgun story is false, a more compelling piece of evidence is required. Thanks to the research of Wesley Fricks, also a board member at the Ty Cobb Museum, such a document has been discovered.¹⁵ The official Franklin County coroner’s report, dated August 9, 1905, which served as the arrest warrant for Amanda Cobb, states clearly and unequivocally that a pistol was used by Amanda Cobb and that the death of W. H. Cobb resulted from a pistol bullet. *Ecce signum!* (See exhibit 2.)

THE SHOTGUN STORY

Having proven the shotgun story false, my investigation turned to an interesting and obvious question: what is the origin of this sensational and widely believed story that Ty Cobb’s mother killed his father with a shotgun? I completed a thorough review of the biographical literature on Ty Cobb in a search for the answer.

Sverre Braathen’s 1928 biography *Ty Cobb: The Idol of Baseball Fandom*,¹⁶ did not mention the death of Ty Cobb’s father at all. Ty Cobb’s 1925 autobiography, *My Twenty Years in Baseball*,¹⁷ also fails to mention his

COURTESY OF WILLIAM R. COBB

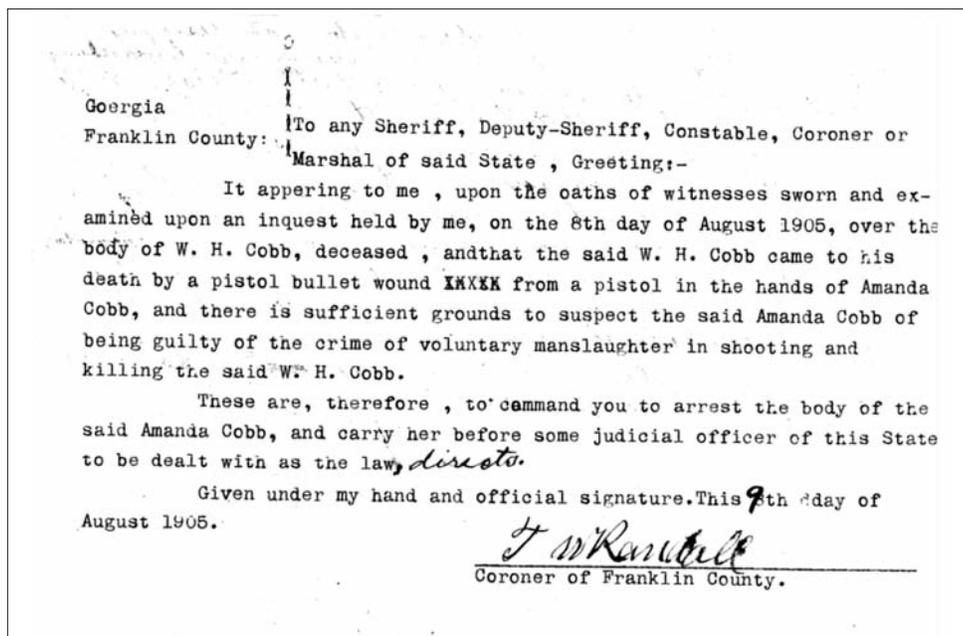


Exhibit 2. A copy of the coroner’s report and arrest warrant for Amanda Cobb, issued August 9, 1905, by the Franklin County coroner. The coroner concluded, based on his examination of the body of the deceased W. H. Cobb and on the sworn oaths of witnesses, that the death was a result of a bullet wound from a pistol fired by Amanda Cobb.

father's death, as does H. G. Salsinger's 1951 *Sporting News* biography.¹⁸

Gene Schoor's 1952 biography, *The Story of Ty Cobb: Baseball's Greatest Player*, stated only that W. H. Cobb was shot and killed "under circumstances which were clouded, in an atmosphere of enigma and cloaked in mystery."¹⁹

John D. McCallum's 1956 biography, *The Tiger Wore Spikes*, was essentially a juvenile biography and provided no specific details about the shooting incident. It did, however, state that W. H. Cobb was killed by a "bullet," which indicates that a handgun, not a shotgun, was the weapon used, since a shotgun shoots "shot" or "pellets," not "bullets." This wording is consistent with the coroner's report in the use of the term "bullet," but McCallum makes no mention of having seen that report.²⁰

Cobb's 1961 autobiography, *My Life in Baseball: The True Record*, written in collaboration with Al Stump, states only that his father had been killed in a gun accident. No details were provided.²¹

Shortly after Ty Cobb's death in July 1961 and the release of Cobb's autobiography, Al Stump wrote an article for *True Magazine* titled "Ty Cobb's Wild 10-Month Fight to Live."²² This article is the first recounting of the shotgun story in the literature that was reviewed in this investigation. It will be examined in detail in the following sections.

In 1975, John D. McCallum expanded his earlier 1956 book and published the first detailed Cobb biography, titled simply *Ty Cobb*. McCallum devotes a full chapter to describing the details of the shooting incident, even including supposed dialogue between Amanda Cobb and Clifford Ginn, a boy who lived nearby who had come to the Cobb house upon hearing the shots and then had gone upstairs to the bedroom where Amanda Cobb stood in shock. Amanda Cobb's testimony in 1906 was that she had summoned Clifford Ginn to come over. This chapter also included three lengthy quotations from articles in *The Royston Record* that ran in the days following the incident. In this 1975 biography, McCallum leaves no doubt that he believed the weapon that killed W. H. Cobb was a pistol. Within this chapter, McCallum states that Amanda "took a pistol out of a drawer"; that Amanda "clutched the pistol between her hands"; that Amanda "stood there clutching a smoking pistol"; and that she had "instinctively reached for her pistol, which she always kept on her nightstand alongside her bed when she was alone nights." McCallum also states that "one gossip said it was a shotgun, while another said it was a revolver." McCallum was thus familiar

with the shotgun story, and he apparently dismissed it completely.²³

Robert Rubin's 1978 juvenile biography *Ty Cobb, the Greatest* mentions only that Ty Cobb's father "had been shot to death by his mother, who mistook him for a prowler."²⁴

In 1984, Charles Alexander wrote a detailed biography of Ty Cobb, also titled simply *Ty Cobb*. In it he relates the shotgun story in much the same way that it appeared in Al Stump's 1961 *True Magazine* article. Alexander describes the incident as the "bizarre and ghastly" death of Cobb's father from two shots from a shotgun, with an intervening time interval between the shots. He also states that Joe Cunningham was the first person to come to the Cobb residence and identify the slain intruder as W. H. Cobb and then quotes Joe Cunningham's daughter as stating that her father had said that the sight of W. H. Cobb's body was "the worst thing I ever saw": he viewed a "gaping hole in the abdomen" and Cobb's "brains literally blown out."²⁵

Since its publication, Alexander's biography has become the nearest thing to the definitive biography of Ty Cobb. It was written by a professional historian and university professor and is presented as scholarly, comprehensively researched, and uncontroversial. It is thoroughly indexed and references a wide variety of sources. It is generally recognized as complete and, more important, unbiased. It is not without errors, however, such as the statement that W. H. Cobb had married Amanda Cobb when she was only 12 years old, an assertion that probably adds to the sensationalism of the shotgun story. Her actual age was 15, a not uncommon age for marriage at the time, as is clearly shown by examination of the available census and marriage records.²⁶

For the next twenty years, all of Cobb's biographers, including Richard Bak (in both his 1994²⁷ and 2005²⁸ biographies), Norman Macht (1992),²⁹ S. A. Kramer (1995),³⁰ Patrick Creevy (fictionalized biography, 2002),³¹ and Dan Holmes (2004),³² relate the shotgun version of the shooting story. Their shotgun stories vary only in the level of detail presented.

Included also is Al Stump's 1994 biography *Cobb: The Life and Times of the Meanest Man Who Ever Played Baseball*, which amplified and expanded on the 1961 Ty Cobb autobiography on which Stump collaborated. This biography also included a slightly rewritten and expanded version of Stump's 1961 *True Magazine* article. Stump prefaces this book by stating that he had lacked editorial control over the 1961 Cobb autobiography, asserting that what Cobb had allowed

into the book was self-serving and implying that this new book would correct the omissions of the earlier work. Stump retells the shotgun story along the same lines as his 1961 article, describing how Amanda “grabbed up a twin-barreled shotgun from a corner rack in the room and in fright fired one load” and then, panic stricken, had “screamed and triggered a second blast. . . . She could barely identify the body of her husband. From the neck up not much was left.”³³

Tom Stanton’s 2007 book *Ty and the Babe*, which focuses principally on the postcareer relationship of the two megastars, mentions the shooting only in passing, without providing any details.³⁴

Don Rhodes, a long-time reporter for the *Augusta Chronicle*, wrote *Ty Cobb: Safe at Home* in 2008. Rhodes quotes extensively from the 1905 and 1906 articles that were printed in the *Chronicle*, taking advantage of the full archives of the *Chronicle* that were available to him.³⁵ He quotes liberally from the “innuendo filled articles” published by the *Chronicle*, including one that relates Amanda Cobb’s testimony about using her pistol in the incident. He does not mention the shotgun story.

Based on this review of the available biographical literature on Ty Cobb, no account of the shotgun story is found prior to Al Stump’s 1961 *True Magazine* article. With the exception of John McCallum’s 1975 book and Don Rhodes’ 2008 book, every biography and every article written since 1961 that made mention of the weapon used in the shooting of W. H. Cobb has accepted and retold in one form or another this now-disproved shotgun story.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE SHOTGUN STORY

Ty Cobb’s autobiography was released shortly after his death in July 1961. In December, Al Stump turned to *True*, *The Man’s Magazine* to publish his article “Ty Cobb’s Wild 10-Month Fight to Live.” *True Magazine* was a leader at the time in the men’s adventure genre, which featured lurid covers and provocative titles that oversold allegedly true stories that were usually fictional or mostly so. Besides the “true stories” of war, demented rulers, love-starved Amazons, and so on, magazines in this genre often included pin-up photos, love-life articles, and exposés of vice in cities throughout the world. These often near-pornographic magazines were nevertheless sold openly at newsstands and drug stores—thus the provocative titles and covers to “hook” the macho-male population.

The cover of the December 1961 issue showed a full-color photo of four ornate and deadly swords as a lead-in to an article titled “They Live by the Sword.”

The cover byline for that issue trumpeted Al Stump’s article with: “Exclusive! The Strange, Wild, Tragic End of Ty Cobb.” Among the other articles in this issue were: “Psychic: The Story of Peter Hurkos,” who was world famous for using ESP to solve baffling crimes; “Daring Dive for Derelict Gold,” about the salvaging of sunken treasure in a deadly minefield of World War II ordinance; and “The Monster Makers,” describing various natural-born and intentionally mutilated human freaks of the middle ages, with grotesquely drawn illustrations. “Men’s adventure” is definitely not the genre from which scholars and historians usually seek truthful, insightful, and unembellished information about anyone or anything. Nevertheless, this is where the Cobb shotgun story began.

In the 1961 *True Magazine* article, Stump has Ty Cobb confess, as they visit the Royston, Georgia, tomb of his father and mother, that “my father had his head blown off with a shotgun when I was 18 years old—by a member of my own family. I didn’t get over that. I’ve never gotten over that.” Later in the article, Stump quotes “family sources and old Georgia friends of the baseball idol” as being his source for the story. He describes the shooting event simply by saying that Amanda Cobb “kept a shotgun handy by her bed and used it.” In this version of the story, he has the shooting occur inside the Cobb house, by placing Amanda in the bedroom “all alone when she saw a menacing figure climb through her window and approach her bed. In the dark she assumed it to be a robber.”

Among the many sports-related articles written by Stump, this was by far the most successful of his career and the most widely read. It received several awards and was later reprinted in two editions of *True Magazine Baseball Yearbook* (1962 and 1969),³⁶ in the resurrected *Baseball Magazine* in 1965,³⁷ and in the *Third Fireside Book of Baseball*.³⁸

THE SOURCE OF THE SHOTGUN STORY

In 1994, an ill and aging Al Stump wrote *Cobb: The Life and Times of the Meanest Man Who Ever Played Baseball*. This book went much farther than the earlier Cobb autobiography, adding details that Stump said had been withheld by Cobb in the 1961 autobiography. It also included an expanded version of Stump’s 1961 *True Magazine* article, which had achieved prominent recognition in sports literature over the years. This book was subsequently made into a movie titled *Cobb*, directed by Ron Shelton. The movie was a commercial flop that received mixed reviews, grossed less than \$850,000, and was pulled from domestic theaters just weeks after its opening.³⁹

Unlike his *True Magazine* article, in the 1994 book Stump identified his source for the details of the shooting of W. H. Cobb as Joe Cunningham, the childhood friend and next-door neighbor of Ty Cobb in Royston. Stump provides several quotations attributed to Cunningham detailing not only the circumstances of the shooting but also Ty's physical and mental reaction to the tragedy.

It is impossible that Al Stump ever had any interaction with Joe Cunningham. Stump never had occasion to be in Royston, with or without Ty Cobb, prior to the 1960 collaboration on Cobb's autobiography. Joe Cunningham died in 1956.⁴⁰ The quotations were therefore fabricated to enhance the believability of his story. Possibly, Stump's information came from interactions with Cunningham's daughter, Susie, who was still alive in 1960 and who had been interviewed and quoted by biographer Charles Alexander for his 1984 book. Or Stump could have fabricated this dialogue based solely on Alexander's 1984 biography.

The question naturally arises about Joe Cunningham, who, either directly as falsely asserted by Stump or indirectly as asserted by Charles Alexander, was the source of the shotgun story: If he was the first to arrive at the scene of the shooting, why was he not mentioned prominently in the widespread newspaper coverage of the incident and in the subsequent trials? If he was the first to arrive on the scene of the shooting, why was there no challenge to Amanda Cobb's court testimony that Clifford Ginn, her brother-in-law, was first to arrive? This type of controversy, if it occurred, would have been widely reported in the press, which sensationalized practically every other aspect of the incident. Yet there is no mention of Cunningham in any of the articles or other records that I was able to locate, and thus there is no evidence that Cunningham had even the smallest part in the shooting tragedy or its aftermath.

There are no clear answers to these questions for several reasons, first among them being that neither Stump nor Alexander had any direct interaction with Joe Cunningham. In Stump's case, the story was either fabricated, obtained at second hand from Cunningham's daughter, or copied and expanded from Alexander's 1984 biography. In Alexander's case, as he points out, it came second hand as a family story from Cunningham's daughter, and is highly suspect for this reason alone.

A recent interview with noted Atlanta sportswriter and editor Furman Bisher clouds the veracity of the Cunningham story even further.⁴¹ Bisher knew Ty Cobb well, having written a widely read 1953 article which

addressed the death of W. H. Cobb and an in-depth *Saturday Evening Post* article about Cobb's return to Georgia in 1958. Furman stated in this recent interview that he also knew Joe Cunningham well and had spoken to him on several occasions. Furman Bisher stated that Joe Cunningham had told him directly in the early 1950s that Amanda Cobb was not the one who shot W. H. Cobb but that the shots had been fired by her paramour when they were caught together by Professor Cobb after he returned home unexpectedly. However, Susie Cunningham Bond, Joe Cunningham's daughter and Alexander's source, told writer Leigh Montville in 1982 that "her father did not think another man shot Ty's father, that Amanda Chitwood Cobb did, indeed, pull the trigger, and that Amanda knew who her target was."⁴² These conflicting stories from Cunningham and his family about what Cunningham did and did not believe cast serious doubt on the truth of anything sourced to Joe Cunningham or his family. More likely, Joe Cunningham, who lived his entire life in the small town of Royston and became the town undertaker, found an outlet in his old age for foggy or perhaps fantasized recollections about the town's most famous citizen and recounted differing versions of the story to family and to visiting sportswriters and historians.

WHO WAS AL STUMP?

Alvin J. Stump was born in 1916 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was raised in the Pacific Northwest, attended the University of Washington, and shortly after graduation landed his first reporter's job at the *Portland Oregonian*. Following a stint as a correspondent in the wartime Navy, he settled in Southern California and worked as a freelance writer.⁴³

Prior to beginning his collaboration with Ty Cobb in 1960, Stump had written many sports-related articles on the lives and careers of other notables, including Mel Ott, Bob Lemon, Gil McDougald, Ralph Kiner, Eddie Mathews, Duke Snider, Jackie Jensen and Jack Harshman.⁴⁴ These articles appeared in *Sport Magazine*, *American Legion Magazine*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Argosy*, and *Saga* (as well as in *True Magazine*), and many were anthologized in a 1952 book, *Champions Against Odds*.⁴⁵ No doubt Cobb, an avid reader, was familiar with these articles and was impressed enough to hire Stump to work on his autobiography.

Ty Cobb's 1961 autobiography was the first book that Al Stump actually wrote. He went on to complete five more books, including a collaboration with Sam Snead in 1962 on another autobiography, *The*

Education of a Golfer. After the 1961 Cobb autobiography, Stump also continued writing sports-related articles for men's magazines, covering such notables as Albie Pearson, Brooks Robinson, Hank Aaron, Frank Howard, Vada Pinson, Curt Flood, Babe Pinelli, and Tommy Lasorda.⁴⁶

Stump always focused on the adventurous and provocative side of the subjects he wrote about, seeing himself as an investigative reporter who sought out the "truth" where others failed. Many of his subsequent titles bore out this approach, such as his 1969 book *The Champion Breed: The True, Behind-the-Scene Struggles of Sport's Greatest Heroes*.⁴⁷ He never again achieved the success his 1961 Ty Cobb efforts gave him—until his 1994 Cobb biography and its subsequent movie adaptation. But he did score a significant scoop in 1972 that brought him notoriety outside the sports world as a key player in the Marilyn Monroe murder conspiracy and cover-up investigation. Stump arranged and attended the first of many meetings between his friend Bob Slatzer, who claimed to have been Marilyn's husband for three days in 1952, and Milo Speriglio, a prominent Hollywood private detective. Slatzer claimed to have the inside scoop on Marilyn's murder and the cover-up that followed and had come to Stump with the story after his life had been threatened by powerful people. Al Stump thus became the first link and the principal channel for information through which many interesting questions were ultimately answered, such as whether the father of Marilyn's twelfth aborted child was Jack Kennedy or his brother, Bobby; whether Bobby Kennedy and Peter Lawford had been with Marilyn at the time she was murdered; and what explosive political and personal secrets Marilyn had intended to reveal at the press conference that was scheduled for the morning after her death. After a 14-year investigation, Milo Speriglio published his book *The Marilyn Conspiracy*, without listing Stump as an author. But Speriglio gave prominent credit to Stump for bringing him the story and convincing him to take on the case.⁴⁸

Stump's second wife, Jolene Mosher, also a writer, said in describing Stump's writing method that he "liked to sit back, have a few drinks, and egg someone on. . . . He'd encourage them to act up, to be really bad. He'd get good stories like that." She also disclosed about Stump: "His only hobby was drinking."⁴⁹ No doubt this tactic, and possibly this hobby, was at play as Stump interacted with Cobb in their 1960 collaboration, producing fodder for the sensational and fictionalized parts of the *True Magazine* story.

Al Stump's literary hero was Ernest Hemingway, a

role model for many young postwar writers who imitated his writing style, even if they were unable to live his adventurous lifestyle.⁵⁰ Hemingway died in 1961 at his own hand from a shotgun blast to the head—only two weeks before Ty Cobb died. This tragic but sensational event was widely reported around the world, and the resulting months-long flurry of articles was surely followed closely by an admiring Al Stump. Afterward, Hemingway's wife told Idaho authorities that the shotgun had discharged accidentally while Hemingway was cleaning it.⁵¹ His estate later sought to prevent the publication of details of the gruesome death scene,⁵² and a family friend took the shotgun that Hemingway had used, disassembled it into a dozen different pieces, and buried the pieces in widely different locations to prevent memorabilia collectors from later profiting from the gruesome relic.⁵³ There is no evidence on which to conclude that the widely publicized shotgun death of Hemingway, Stump's idol, influenced him as he crafted the fictionalized shotgun account of the death of W. H. Cobb. But the similarities to the W. H. Cobb shotgun story created by Stump are striking, particularly the gruesome descriptions of the death scenes. These similarities, and the coincidence of the shotgun death of Hemingway at precisely the same time as Stump's 1961 writing efforts, make for interesting speculation about a possible influence.

Despite the substantial volume of work that Stump produced in his otherwise mediocre 50-year career, he received no national publicity or recognition, and certainly no acclaim, for anything unrelated to Ty Cobb. His only real career success—and his only lasting legacy—was based exclusively on Ty Cobb. Having saved all his notes and papers from the 1960 collaboration to produce his magnum opus in the 1994 Cobb biography and movie, Stump never escaped from the shadow of Ty Cobb hovering over him as the defining subject in his life's work—but, perhaps he never really tried.⁵⁴ In the intervening years, he either saved or created a large amount of additional material relating to Ty Cobb to sustain a newly found and profitable fascination with baseball memorabilia.

AL STUMP'S COLLECTION OF TY COBB MEMORABILIA

At the time of Ty Cobb's death, Stump came into possession of a very large number of Cobb's personal effects. Stump claimed that Ty Cobb had given him many personal possessions that had been in his Ather-ton home when he died and ultimately offered a note from Ty Cobb as evidence of the gift (see exhibit 3). Almost two decades later, Stump began a concerted effort to sell a substantial part of his "collection," and

thus began an interesting but little-known story that illuminates another method that Al Stump chose—beyond gory shotgun stories and sports fantasy writing—to ride Ty Cobb’s coattails to personal fame and fortune.

On November 29, 1980, Stump wrote to Howard G. Smith, a memorabilia auctioneer in San Antonio, Texas, offering “museum-quality” Ty Cobb pieces itemized as follows:

Cobb’s leather-bound hip-pocket whisky flask, his silver-plated shaving mug and brush, straight-edge razor from the thirties, silver pocket knife, German-made, Damascus barreled shotgun used by Cobb in bird-hunting, a snake-

skin-wrapped cane he used in 1960 (real oddity), razor strop, tobacco humidior, wrist watch, pen-and-pencil set and set of decoy ducks. All of these items are prominently engraved or otherwise inscribed with Cobb’s name or initials. I also have numerous photos, autographed, of Cobb, with Babe Ruth, in action poses, at the wheel of his racing cars, posed formally at home, even his baby picture, etc.

He told Smith that these items were only a portion of his personal collection of Ty Cobb memorabilia, which was “the largest privately owned collection in the U.S.” He stated that had offers for the items from three New York-area collectors but that he wanted to

COURTESY OF WILLIAM R. COBB

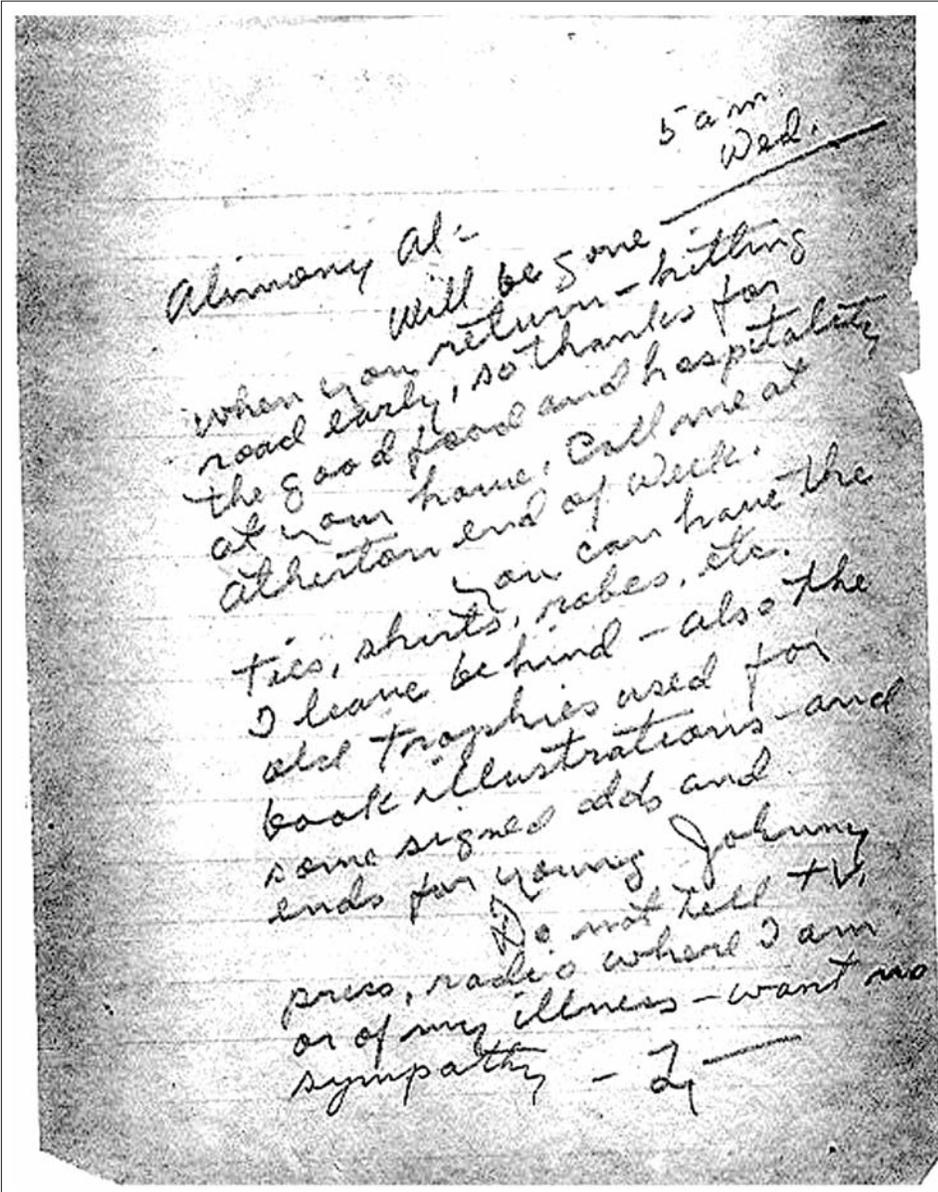


Exhibit 3. The note to Al Stump from Ty Cobb that gives Stump some of Cobb’s personal items, date uncertain. This note was offered in Stump’s letter (December 16, 1980) to auctioneer Howard Smith as evidence that Ty told him “to help myself to a bunch of his things stored at Atherton.” The original of this note was auctioned by Butterfields in 2001, and copies often accompany the sale of purported Ty Cobb items as evidence that they are authentic. Close examination of the content of the note shows that it refers to items left by Ty Cobb at the Stump residence after Ty departed from a working session there. Stump offered no other evidence that any memorabilia was gifted to him by Ty Cobb.

further explore the market for possible auction before deciding how best to dispose of this part of his collection (see exhibit 4).⁵⁵

In a follow-up letter on December 16, 1980, Stump sent Smith a list and photos of the 13 items he was offering, along with his asking price for the more

expensive items. Most pertinent to this investigation is the engraved double-barreled shotgun, offered at \$2,500 and shown in the set of photos that Stump provided to Smith (see exhibit 5). This is the shotgun that ultimately became part of the Barry Halper collection and was initially listed in (but withdrawn from) the

COURTESY OF WILLIAM R. COBB

Lake Tahoe - 60-61 - Book written - Died 7/61
 LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE • 1888 CENTURY PARK EAST, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90067
 Lived w/ Stump in 4/61 - died 7/61 -

Los Angeles

Our Fee is 20% + advertising -

Why are you selling? (IRS)

1) Did you list ALL in sale? - Yes

2) were your offers in bulk? For what you have for sale, what would you accept?

3) Why didn't you sell to the 3 NY Collectors?

Mr. Howard G. Smith, Jr.
 5122 Vance Jackson Rd.
 San Antonio, Tex.

Dear Mr. Smith:

In 1960-61, I collaborated with Ty Cobb in writing his official autobiography (see enclosed), during which he gave me a large number of his personal possessions. I intend now to sell of a portion of my Cobb collection, the largest privately owned in the U.S.

Noting the auction you held on the Herb Elk collection, it occurs to me that you might be able to handle a Cobb sale better than the undersigned. I've had very good offers from three New York area collectors, but would like to explore the market further.

Memorabilia of the greatest ballplayer of all time I intend to dispose of includes such museum-quality pieces as:

Cobb's leather-bound hip-pocket whisky flask, his silver-plated shaving mug and brush, straight-edge razor from the 1930s, silver pocket knife, German-made, Damascus-barreled shotgun used by Cobb in bird hunting, a snakeskin-wrapped cane he used in 1960 (real oddity), razor strop, tobacco humidor, wrist watch, pen-and-pencil set and set of decoy ducks. All of these items are prominently engraved or otherwise inscribed with Cobb's name or initials. I also have numerous photos, autographed, of Cobb, with Babe Ruth in action poses, at the wheel of his racing cars, posed informally at home, even his baby picture, etc.

My testing of the market in recent weeks indicates that Cobb's possessions can go for from \$200 to \$2500 each. If you're interested, please advise me at: 715 Plymouth Road, San Marino, Cal. 91108 (213)--799-9867.

Sincerely, *Al Stump*
 Al Stump
 Sports Editor

(also holographic letters to me from Cobb)

1910 BB Cap
 1934 Top
 3 Bats

Talked to Bill Madden
 Who's rec
 3 NY Collectors

what would be a \$2500 item?

Apr 29 1980

Smoking Pipes (3)

Telephone Area 213 • Advertising 553-7801 • Business 552-2749 • Editorial 552-1021 • Executive 553-0237 • Production 553-4194

Exhibit 4. A letter from Al Stump to auctioneer Howard G. Smith offering the sale of a portion of his collection of Ty Cobb memorabilia, which he describes as the largest privately owned collection of Cobb memorabilia in the country. The handwritten notes on the letter (other than Al Stump's signature) are questions and comments written by Smith as he reviewed the letter and subsequently discussed the sale in phone conversations with Stump.

1999 Sotheby's auction. Its description is precisely the same as that printed by Sotheby's, even including "Tyrus R. Cobb" being engraved near the trigger.⁵⁶

Weeks later, on January 15, 1981, Stump again wrote Smith to provide a more detailed list, now including 18 items, some with descriptions enhanced in ways that belie their credibility. In the first list, Stump itemized a "Benrus watch with leather band (watch doesn't work)." In the second list, this item had suddenly become even more valuable, as Stump implied that this was the watch that Cobb was wearing when he died: "Wristwatch—a Benrus of 1940–1950 period with his full name burned into the brown leather strap. Face of watch is worn. Watch is stopped at 1:20 P.M. Cobb died between 1:15 P.M. and 1:30 P.M., according to doctors. Fair shape."⁵⁷

The shotgun was described as: "Twin-barrel shotgun used by Cobb in bird hunting in the 1920s–30s: Damascus barrel makes it an antique. About 7 pounds with fancy scrollwork on the butt and 'Tyrus R. Cobb' engraved in the steel above the triggers. 'I killed a few hundred ducks with it,' he told me. Gun is Rusty." No mention was made of this gun having been the one used by Amanda Cobb in the shooting of W. H. Cobb—that only became part of the story when the shotgun was sold into the Halper collection and

ultimately described in the 1999 Sotheby's catalog for the Halper auction.

Apparently, no agreement was reached between Stump and Smith as a result of this exchange of letters, because the items they discussed all found their way into other auctions and collections, many ultimately landing in Barry Halper's. Even today, when an item from Stump's collection appears at auction, there most often is also a photocopy of the note, handwritten by Cobb, which tells Stump: "You can have all the ties, shirts, robes, etc. I leave behind—also the old trophies used for book illustrations—and some signed odds and ends for young Johnny." This note is the supposed permission that Stump had for having taken the very extensive number of personal items from Cobb's Atherton residence. Stump's December 16, 1980, letter offered a copy of this letter to Howard Smith, describing it as: "A copy of a letter Ty to me—in which he tells me to help myself to a bunch of his things stored at Atherton." But the letter actually gives Stump only a few items that Cobb left at Stump's Santa Barbara residence when he departed after a working session there on the 1961 autobiography. It is clear that the limited scope of what Ty Cobb actually gave to Al Stump was far exceeded by the essential cleanout from Cobb's Atherton home of every con-



Exhibits 5. Photos of the Damascus-barreled double-barreled shotgun sent by Al Stump to Howard G. Smith. Stump noted in his letter that the shotgun has "Tyrus R. Cobb" engraved in the steel above the trigger. Stump would later fraudulently claim that this was the shotgun used by Amanda Cobb to shoot Ty's father, William H. Cobb, in 1905. This is the shotgun that found its way into the Barry Halper collection and ultimately into the 1999 Sotheby's auction catalog, only to be pulled because of its questionable authenticity. (The complete set of correspondence from Stump to Smith, including letters, envelopes, lists, and photos, was purchased at auction by the author in May 2009 and remains in his personal collection.)



COURTESY OF WILLIAM R. COBB

ceivable item that could in any way be associated with Cobb—even his false teeth (see exhibit 6).

WHAT THE MEMORABILIA EXPERTS KNOW

Item 13 of the December 16, 1980, list sent to Howard Smith by Al Stump is described as: “Letters to me from Cobb, typed for him on his personal letterhead stationery and signed ‘Ty,’ in which he discusses what he wanted to go into his autobiography and other matters: 6 x 7 inches.” These letters, estimated by experts in the autograph business to be as many as 50 to 100 in number, created much excitement in the collecting community when they surfaced, principally because of their extensive baseball content—a fact that adds considerable value to any famous player’s correspondence. On cursory inspection, they appear authentic, since they are typed on apparently genuine Ty Cobb letterhead and signed in the green ink that Ty Cobb was well known for using. Ultimately these letters were sold into the market and then were discredited as forgeries by numerous authenticators. They were first offered to Mike Gutierrez, a prominent authenticator, who authenticated them as genuine and then sold them directly and at auction to trusting buyers. Although the signatures on these letters displayed a more shaky hand than authentic Cobb signatures, Gutierrez explained that to be a result of Cobb’s advancing age and declining health and strength—something modern authenticators have disproved through a thorough analysis of steady Cobb signatures dated as late as May 1961, only two months before his death. The fantastic baseball content contained in these forged letters has been quoted by unsuspecting historians, and the incorrect and falsified information has become part of accepted history.⁵⁸ One example of these Ty Cobb letters forged by Al Stump is in exhibit 7.

The forged Stump letters are very well known among memorabilia authenticators and collectors. Jim Stinson, a veteran authenticator and collector, wrote at length about the Stump forgeries in *Sports Collectors Digest*,⁵⁹ and Ronald B. Keurajian, the premier expert on Ty Cobb autographs, has covered them in detail in the definitive article on authenticating Cobb autographs.⁶⁰ Harvey Swanebeck, another long-time autograph collector who purchased one of the Stump-forged Cobb letters in the 1980s, had the unique experience of later finding for sale at a national convention a Ty Cobb letter with the exact same textual content as his own. Evidently Al Stump had created multiple “original” copies of some of the Cobb letters he forged, assuming that the duped purchasers would never meet and compare the content of their forged documents.⁶¹ Even

Ty Cobb Items offered or sold by Al Stump after 1980

Leather-bound hip-pocket whiskey flask
 Silver-plate shaving mug and brush
 Straight-edge razor for the 1930s
 Silver pocket knife
 German-made, Damascus-barreled antique shotgun
 Snake-skin-wrapped cane
 Engraved wooden cane
 Razor strop
 Tobacco humidior
 Wrist watch
 Pen-and-pencil set
 Set of Decoy ducks
 Numerous Photos, all autographed, 16x20 & 8x10
 Ty with Babe Ruth
 Ty standing at the plate
 Ty at the wheel of his racing car
 Ty posed informally at home
 Ty’s baby picture
 1910 Detroit Tigers uniform shirt game-worn by Ty Cobb
 1910 Detroit Tigers cap game-worn by Ty Cobb
 Ty Cobb Signed baseball
 Circular poker-chip holder & 200 chips
 Deck of cards
 Monogrammed dressing gown
 Yellow bone-handled knife
 Three smoking pipes
 Smoking pipe holder
 Corncob pipe given to Ty by Gen. Douglas McArthur
 Rusty cowbell from Cobb’s Ranch
 3 baseball bats
 Ty Cobb signed game-used bat – forged
 Fishing Hat
 Ty Cobb’s Dentures
 Cobb & Co. brass belt buckle – falsely attributed to Ty Cobb
 Christmas Card signed by Ty Cobb dated 1960
 12 Smoking Pipes
 Brass ashtray
 Brass and Leather ashtray
 Cigarette case with matching ashtray
 Wooden tea canister, “Ty Cobb” written in pencil on bottom
 Tape measure in leather case
 Servant’s bell
 Stampette set with three stamps
 2 cork lifters
 Small ceramic tiger
 Wooden key ring holder with mallard design
 Large carving knife set in wooden case
 Hunting knife in leather case
 Pocket knife
 Pen knife
 Comb in pewter case
 Wooden tackle box with lure
 6 Ty Cobb signed baseballs – forged signatures
 50 to 100 signed letters on Ty Cobb letterhead – forged
 Dozens of Ty Cobb signed baseball magazine pages – forged

Exhibit 6. A partial listing of the Ty Cobb memorabilia items from the Al Stump collection offered or sold at various times between 1980 and 2001. Comparison of this list to the six specific items gifted to Stump by Ty Cobb in the note of exhibit 3 raises the question of the legitimacy of Stump’s possession of these Ty Cobb collectibles.

COURTESY OF WILLIAM R. COBB

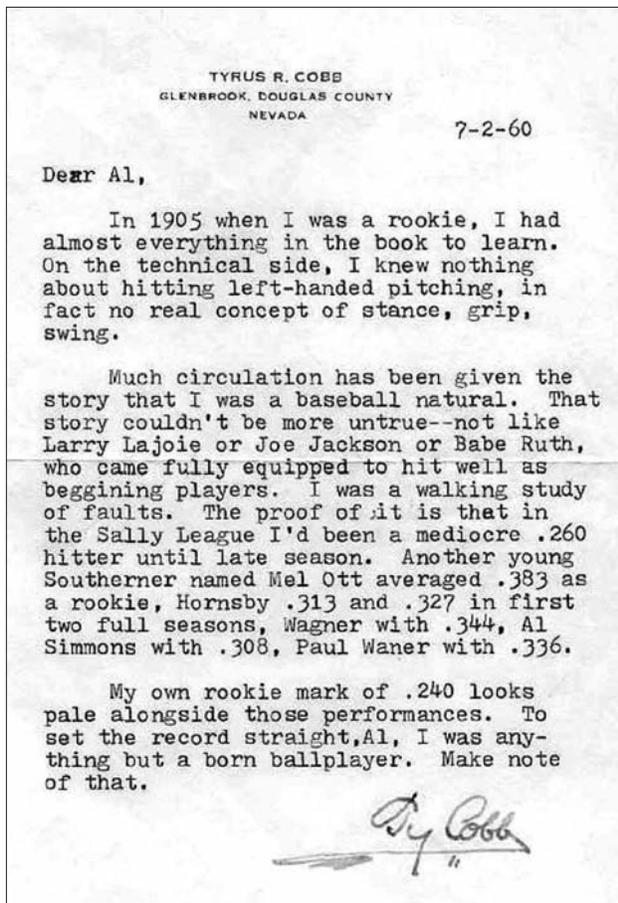


Exhibit 7. One of the estimated 50 to 100 letters from Ty Cobb to Al Stump that were forged by Stump on apparently genuine letterhead taken from Cobb's Atherton residence after Cobb's death. These forgeries contained much baseball-related content, which made them more valuable to collectors. Some of the questionable "facts" in these forged letters became part of baseball history when they were accepted by historians as truthful.

autograph expert Mike Gutierrez, who originally authenticated the Stump-forged Ty Cobb letters, later agreed that the Stump letters were indeed forgeries.⁶²

Stump's forgeries went far beyond written material he created using genuine Ty Cobb letterhead that he had taken from Cobb's Atherton residence. They also included many, many photos and pages from baseball-related publications on which were written tidbits of baseball history, wisdom, or advice (often personalized to Stump) along with a forged Ty Cobb signature in his trademark green ink.⁶³ Exhibits 8 and 9 are several examples of these fake artifacts, which were again offered at auction in 2009 and then withdrawn because experts pointed them out as forgeries. As another example of the extent of Al Stump's deception, in the mid-1980s Stump offered a lot of six Ty Cobb-signed baseballs to Ron Keurajian in a phone conversation. Keurajian declined the offer because he lacked the funds to complete the deal. A month later,

Keurajian met the Michigan collector who purchased this lot, and after inspecting the six Cobb signatures, he concluded that all six were forgeries.⁶⁴

Al Stump's efforts to create and sell off Ty Cobb artifacts was so blatant that the entire high-end memorabilia collectors' industry even today dismisses out of hand the authenticity of anything that has the name of Al Stump in its provenance. Ron Keurajian, now one of the country's leading Cobb autograph experts, recently confided, "I, personally, would not trust anything that originated from Stump."⁶⁵ Robert Lifson, the memorabilia expert who managed the 1999 sale of the Barry Halper collection, examined dozens of Ty Cobb artifacts and Cobb-signed documents sourced to Al Stump, many of them identical to those described by Stump in his 1981 correspondence with Howard Smith. Lifson said in a recent interview that all Stump items in the Halper collection became suspect after it was proven conclusively that a Ty Cobb game-used bat that Stump supplied to Halper was not authentic, based on the dating of the bat by detailed analysis. Of the large number of Ty Cobb documents from Stump that came to Sotheby's, practically all were judged by Lifson to be fraudulent. Lifson went on to say, after reading the content of these letters and examining the forged signatures, that "Stump must have thought that he was creating history, or something." His faking of so many Ty Cobb documents "must have been a pathological issue with Stump, something deep-seated within him. It was just crazy how Stump went to such elaborate lengths to create the forged Cobb documents."⁶⁶

Josh Evans, a widely respected memorabilia expert and principal in the very successful Leland's Auctions, has a much more serious indictment of Al Stump. Evans, a young collector and authenticator in the mid-

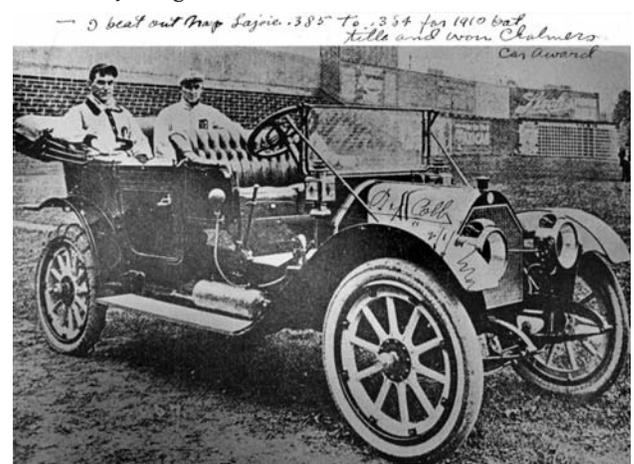


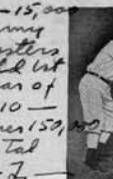
Exhibit 8. A copy of one of many photographs of Ty Cobb onto which Al Stump forged comments that he attributed to Ty Cobb along with Ty Cobb's signature. This photo was offered at auction in May 2009 but was withdrawn when experts notified the auction service that it was a forgery.

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BASEBALL MAGAZINE ADVERTISER

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BASEBALL GUIDE AND RECORD BOOK 153

WORLD'S SERIES ATTENDANCE, MONEY

Year	No. Games	Attendance	Receipts	Players' Total	Winning Players' Share	Loosing Players' Share
1903	5	186,429	\$ 59,000.00	\$ 21,612.00	\$ 1,182.00	\$1,316.25
1904	No Series Played.					
1905	5	81,725	28,430.81	27,394.20	1,142.00	832.23
1906	5	97,845	30,250.16	30,214.70	1,274.28	439.58
1907	5	78,968	161,128.53	94,822.59	2,142.82	1,945.09
1908	5	122,237	94,871.50	114,282.72	1,185.00	1,916.00
1909	5	145,895	183,972.80	96,924.06	1,325.22	1,274.78
1910	5	124,222	178,800.00	107,871.82	1,062.79	1,473.10
1911	5	121,024	112,848.50	117,494.25	1,364.88	1,936.39
1912	5	222,087	189,832.99	147,272.28	4,024.38	2,505.47
1913	5	211,000	225,384.16	125,174.16	1,646.30	2,164.22
1914	4	111,000	225,173.98	121,898.94	2,212.28	2,021.63
1915	5	182,859	144,909.50	144,909.50	1,746.30	2,280.17
1916	5	182,859	183,590.50	162,821.45	3,910.20	2,881.82
1917	5	182,859	425,874.00	151,888.26	1,010.70	2,421.23
1918	6	133,493	170,019.00	79,927.70	1,162.51	2,421.23
1919	6	236,928	722,414.00	200,349.06	5,207.61	3,284.00
1920	6	126,000	126,000.00	126,000.00	1,185.00	1,185.00
1921	6	269,376	999,223.90	392,222.23	5,205.00	3,619.00
1922	6	285,987	685,475.00	417,308.91	6,845.71	4,122.88
1923	6	391,430	1,062,813.00	308,782.27	6,148.49	4,122.88
1924	7	253,408	1,092,118.00	377,224.22	5,590.04	3,280.29
1925	7	282,848	1,182,854.00	374,191.19	5,322.72	3,784.05
1926	7	348,416	1,207,814.00	322,280.51	5,281.51	2,417.75
1927	7	348,416	1,207,814.00	322,280.51	5,281.51	2,417.75
1928	7	199,072	1,111,000.00	410,730.00	4,312.29	4,281.20
1929	6	190,700	1,000,000.00	300,000.00	4,200.00	3,000.00
1930	6	212,619	1,033,773.00	310,000.00	4,200.00	3,300.00
1931	6	222,507	1,000,000.00	300,000.00	4,200.00	3,000.00
1932	4	191,396	1,000,000.00	300,000.00	4,200.00	3,000.00
1933	4	148,000	1,000,000.00	300,000.00	4,200.00	3,000.00
1934	7	251,010	1,133,577.00	359,000.00	5,280.57	3,254.68
1935	6	250,072	1,111,000.00	307,000.24	6,044.76	4,184.53
1936	6	360,000	1,000,000.00	300,000.00	4,200.00	4,200.00
1937	6	238,182	1,000,000.00	450,000.00	6,471.11	4,880.95
1938	6	238,182	1,000,000.00	450,000.00	6,471.11	4,880.95
1939	4	183,849	1,000,000.00	431,117.84	5,611.89	4,192.80
1940	4	183,849	1,000,000.00	431,117.84	5,611.89	4,192.80
1941	5	235,723	1,107,502.00	474,284.54	1,182.21	4,229.40
1942	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1943	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1944	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1945	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1946	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1947	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1948	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1949	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1950	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1951	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1952	5	277,101	1,205,540.00	420,779.81	1,182.21	4,229.40
1953	6	307,339	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45
1954	6	348,416	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45
1955	6	348,416	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45
1956	6	348,416	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45
1957	6	348,416	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45
1958	6	348,416	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45
1959	6	348,416	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45
1960	6	348,416	1,279,330.41	691,841.61	5,280.65	6,178.45

Handwritten note: all of the money of the players' share was given to the players' share.

Handwritten note: Includes \$100,000 radio receipts each year from 1924 through 1945 (except 1931 and \$150,000 in 1946).

Handwritten note: Includes \$125,000 radio receipts and \$60,000 television receipts in 1947; \$157,000 radio, \$140,000 television in 1948; \$150,000 radio, \$200,000 television in 1949; \$175,000 radio, \$300,000 television in 1950; \$150,000 radio, \$225,000 television in 1951; \$200,000 radio, \$225,000 television and \$100,000 pre-game television program in 1953; \$150,000 radio, \$225,000 television, \$100,000 pre-game TV in 1954 and in 1955; \$125,000 radio, \$225,000 television, \$100,000 pre-game TV in 1956.

Handwritten note: Includes \$2,000,000 radio and television receipts in 1957-58-59 and \$2,550,000 in 1960; money was deposited in Major League Central Fund, with 50 per cent being turned over to players' pension fund.

Handwritten note: NOTE—Losers' shares in 1903-05-07 and winners' in 1906-07 include club owners' slices which were added to their teams' player pools. Players shared in broadcasting proceeds from 1924 through 1941 (except 1938) and 1945; money went to 1960 in 1941-43, to War Relief and Service Fund, Inc., in 1944 and Major League Central Fund from 1945 through 1959. For payments to players' pension fund. Television receipts retained by Commissioner's office in 1947-49 and deposited in Major League Central Fund (except for receipts from pre-game TV show) from 1950 through 1956.

— says I played 1B. When needed — the most unusual play so related here by me — true story

Excerpts from the 1956 book
BASEBALL'S FAMOUS FIRST BASEMEN

Ty Cobb

Quite Tricky, These First Basemen

By IRA L. SMITH

CONFIDENCE MEN operate on the theory that it's easy to victimize people who think they are "getting away with something." And Jake Beckley made use of that general idea when he developed a variation of the hidden ball trick in 1897.

He worked it for the first time on Hans Wagner, who joined the Louisville club in June of that year as a big league rookie.

Beckley had tried to trap Wagner with the ordinary hidden ball trick routine in the first game Hans played against Cincinnati. But the youngster knew Jake had the ball concealed somewhere on him and refused to move off first base until it came to light.

The next time Louisville came to Cincinnati for a series, Jake was ready to trap the alert rookie with his new plan.

Wagner singled to left field early in the first game of the series. As Hans made the turn toward second,

Jake slipped a ball out of his hip pocket and tucked it in his armpit. He took care to leave a bit of it exposed so that Wagner could see it when he returned to the bag.

Sure enough, Hans spotted the ball. "So this old geezer is trying to pull that trick on me again," he probably said to himself. "Well, I'll teach him a lesson."

Waiting a bit until he saw Tim Hurst, the umpire, wasn't looking in his direction, Wagner grabbed the ball and tossed it toward the grandstand. Then he broke for second base at top speed.

Hans didn't know the pitcher had the ball which actually was in play, having overlooked that important fact in his eagerness to beat Beckley at his own game. The pitcher, seeing Hans on the run, threw the ball to the second baseman for an easy putout.

The Louisvilles did some protesting about two balls being on the field at the same time. But Tim

PROPERTY OF TY COBB

BASEBALL 83

"town ball" as long as the game existed, which was into the 1880's. One feature of this game was that it had no hard rules limiting the number of players. Usually there were 11 or 12 on a side, but sometimes 15 and 16.

distance was 45 feet—not 46 as Cartwright had outlined. But there was no argument about the difference of 1 foot, and so 45 feet became the standard and remained so until a change was made to 50 feet in 1881, later changed to the present 90 feet 6 inches.

The Knickerbockers who took the field against the "New York Nine" in the first real ball game under organized rules on June 19, 1846, were: D. Anthony, H. Anthony, Lyon, Adams, W. H. Tucker, Birney, Turney, Pauling and Avery. The "New York Nine" line-up was Davis, Wainwright, Lalor, Thompson, Case, Trencark, Murphy, Ransom and Johnson. Cartwright, a leading player for the Knickerbockers, chose to umpire this historic game instead, and fined Davis \$4 of the New York Nine "six cents for swearing."

The "New York Nine" defeated the Knickerbockers, 23 to 1, in four innings. Immediately afterward they disbanded and their individual exploits thereafter are unknown. The unexpected defeat suffered by the Knickerbockers somewhat depressed the athletes, and there was no further interclub baseball by the Knickerbockers until 1851. But through the years between 1846 and 1851 they chose sides and played among themselves. Those were regarded as practice games, each practice presumably developing the Knickerbocker regulars in expertise.

For a practice game of baseball in 1849, the regular team of Knickerbockers appeared in what was the first baseball uniform. Since the equipment was almost identical with the cricket uniforms that were used elsewhere, there exists belief that those baseball uniforms simply were those which the Knickerbockers had used in cricket matches. The color scheme was blue and white.

On March 1, 1849, Cartwright, hearing of the discovery of gold in California, left New York to join the rush to the Pacific Slope. He traveled overland by way of Independence, Mo., and arrived in California in July, 1849, having with him the baseball used in the first game of 1846.

Cartwright soon decided he wished no further part in the gold stampede and in August determined to return to New York. He took passage on the Peruvian bark "Facilio," which was going back by way of China.

Cartwright became ill between San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands, as Hawaii then was known, and was put ashore at Honolulu, Aug. 28, 1849. After recovering, he determined to make his home in Honolulu. In 1851 his family arrived—a wife and 3 children.

Cartwright died in Honolulu, July 13, 1892. He left a diary dealing with his transoceanic trip, and among the interesting items was this:

"1849—April 23—Monday—Independence, Mo. —During the past week we have passed the time in fixing wagon-covers, storing property, etc., varied by hunting and fishing and playing baseball. It is comical to see the mountain men and Indians playing the new game. I have the ball with me that we used back home (New York). Our party consists of 22 wagons and 119 men."

In 1958—when there was so much tumult and shouting by Landis and his group over the cen-

Cartwright's layout was an excellent idea

I saw my first baseball game in 1893—when age 7

Ty Cobb

No. 1—Diagram made by Alexander Cartwright of New York City late in 1845 and introduced for practice sessions in spring of 1846 by Knickerbocker Baseball Club, New York, of which Cartwright was a member. Players voted in favor of it, and playing field for first game between organized clubs was marked off according to this diagram, with the pitching distance 45 feet. The game was played June 19, 1846, in Hoboken, N. J., and the New York Nine defeated the Knickerbockers, 23 to 1, in four innings. Since then the only changes in arrangement by Cartwright are that shortstop now plays back of the baseline, catcher plays closer to the plate, positions of umpire and scorer have shifted, and plate has been moved back into the corner of the triangle.

came from a group which called itself the "New York Team." However, when those men learned that, under the new rules, a team was limited to 9 players, they changed the name to the "New York Nine."

As time neared to select a field for play, none on Manhattan Island was found suitable. It was learned that there was an old cricketer ground in Elysian Fields, a summer resort in Hoboken, N. J., and this was found ideal for Cartwright's "baseball square." But in doing the plotting out, there was some blundering. The marked-off pitching

Exhibit 9. Four examples of the dozens of baseball-related pages from publications onto which Al Stump forged Ty Cobb's autograph and comments attributed to Ty Cobb. These four were again offered at auction in May 2009 but withdrawn when experts notified the auction service that they were forgeries.

1980s when Al Stump was actively trying to sell Cobb memorabilia, worked with Mike Gutierrez on selling the Cobb items that Stump supplied. Many of the items were sold to Barry Halper, one of Evans' best customers. After seeing multiple batches of purported Cobb items arrive from Stump via Gutierrez, and becoming ever more suspicious with each batch, Evans notified Gutierrez that, in his judgment, the items were all fakes—not just the now-infamous Stump letters on Cobb stationery, but many other personal items that had supposedly been owned by Ty Cobb. In a recent interview, Evans stated: “The Cobb stuff that was coming to me through Gutierrez all looked like it had been made yesterday. It seemed that Stump was buying this old stuff from flea markets, and then adding engravings and other personalizations to give the appearance of authenticity.” Young Evans was so distressed by the fake Stump material that Gutierrez continued to sell that he first told Barry Halper of his suspicions and then contacted the FBI in an attempt to get an official investigation of Al Stump started. Finally, he tracked down Al Stump and phoned him at home to tell him: “I know what you are doing, forging all this memorabilia. I’ve contacted the FBI. You had better stop!” Evans also related in a recent interview: “To this day, I’ve never seen any piece of Cobb memorabilia from Al Stump that could be definitely said to be authentic. And I have seen a lot of things over the years.” In closing the interview, Evans added: “It was not just Ty Cobb signatures that Al Stump forged. He did a Jim Thorpe signature that I identified as fake. Stump developed a ‘style’ in his illegal forgeries that I came to recognize, always accompanying them with fantastic content that he knew would increase the value to collectors.”⁶⁷

AL STUMP’S FORGED TY COBB DIARIES

The most recent and perhaps most embarrassing episode in the Stump forged memorabilia saga first came to light, as did the fake Cobb shotgun, via the Barry Halper collection. Among the 180 Halper items purchased in 1998 by MLB and donated to the Hall of Fame Museum was a 1946 diary of Ty Cobb’s (see exhibit 10). This diary was an important addition to the Cooperstown collection, which was accompanied by other truly significant relics such as Shoeless Joe Jackson’s 1919 White Sox jersey and the contract that sent Babe Ruth from the Red Sox to the Yankees.

The Cobb diary was a prized acquisition, covering the entire month of January 1946 and containing daily handwritten entries in Cobb’s famous green ink. The museum made a realistic looking copy of the diary

to assure that the valuable original would not be damaged while displayed from 1999 through 2001 in the “Halper Memories of a Lifetime” exhibit in the Barry Halper Gallery. Visitors to this exhibit could view the original Cobb diary, wall-mounted in a clear protective case, and then peruse this realistic-looking copy, turning page by page with their own fingers, reading and relishing each daily entry of very personal notes and comments that Cobb had made to himself. The entries were tantalizing to museum visitors and to writers and historians as well, providing new insights into this complicated icon of the game. The diary, never before seen by the public, included musings Cobb made to himself like “drinking too much” and “I stayed sober” and many other secret tidbits that Cobb wrote as comments or criticisms about other players. These entries had obviously been written with no inkling that they would ever be seen by the any but Cobb’s own eyes. Or, so it appeared.

In December 2008, Ron Keurajian, the Ty Cobb autograph expert, examined the HOF Cobb diary and compared its entries to known genuine examples of Ty Cobb’s handwriting. He concluded that the diary entries were definitely not written by Ty Cobb. Keurajian notified the HOF Museum of his opinion, and officials there ultimately told him that the diary would be submitted to the FBI for further investigation.⁶⁸

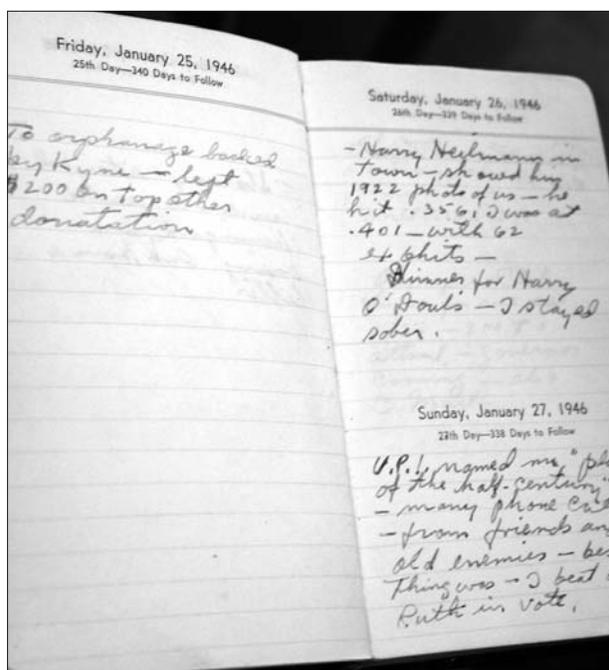
Concerns about the diary’s authenticity were closely guarded while the FBI investigation was underway in early 2009. The actual date that the FBI delivered their final report to the HOF was not released, nor was the FBI report itself. However, by July 5, 2009, Ernie Harwell, the veteran Detroit sportscaster, was onto the story and went public with it in a *Detroit Free Press* article titled: “Questions Remain about the Fake Cobb Diary.”⁶⁹ Harwell quoted Ron Keurajian’s opinion: “The quality of the forgery is rudimentary, at best. It is far from being well-executed, as the hand evidences unsteady lines and the handwriting seems almost child-like. The entries appear contrived. For example, there is one about Joe DiMaggio which states ‘he can’t putt for big money’ and another entry states ‘also drinking too much.’ Anybody who has ever read Cobb’s writings knows that he would not write in such a fashion. Cobb was well-versed in the art of the written word and would never write crude comments such as these.” Harwell closed his article with the remaining questions he alluded to in the title: “Who was the forger? How did he con Halper into buying the diary? Did Halper have it authenticated? If so, by whom? Do any other copies of the fraudulent diary exist?”

Evidently, Ernie Harwell was not aware of a 1995 *Sports Illustrated* article by Franz Lidz titled “The Sultan of Swap,” which provided an in-depth look at Barry Halper and his extensive memorabilia collection.⁷⁰ Along with details about many of Halper’s relics, this article describes in text and photographs many of the items of “Cobbabilia” that Halper had collected. Lidz had access to the entire Halper collection, and had grouped many Cobb items to be photographed for his article, including a game-worn Detroit jersey, Cobb’s dentures and the infamous Cobb shotgun. Lidz wrote: “Halper has the Georgia Peach’s straightedge razor, shaving cup, shaving strop, bathrobe, diaries, dentures, fishing hat, corncob pipe, pocket flask and even the shotgun Cobb’s mother used to blow away his father. *Halper wheedled all this out of Al Stump*” (emphasis added).

The first and second questions posed by Ernie Harwell seem to have been answered by Lidz in 1995. Al Stump was the forger of the HOF diary, just as he was for the large number of letters on Ty Cobb letterhead and the many autographed and annotated baseball publication pages and photographs so well known among collectors and authenticators. And, it was Halper who “wheedled,” i.e. persuaded and cajoled, Stump out of the forgery. To confirm beyond any doubt that Al Stump was the forger of the 1946 HOF diary, autograph expert Ron Keurajian recently made a detailed comparison of its entries to the Stump annotations on the baseball publication pages shown in Exhibit 9 and concluded that they were “all the same hand.”⁷¹

As to the last question Harwell poses: Yes, there are other forged Cobb diaries, as is clearly implied in Lidz’s use of the plural “diaries” in his 1995 article. The Elliott Museum in Stuart Florida has in their collection a Ty Cobb diary covering a full month of 1942. When asked to compare their diary with the HOF diary, Janel Hendrix, the curator there, replied that the HOF diary “. . . looks to be the same as ours. Although ours is a 1942 diary, it is the same type of diary and the writing samples appear to be very similar.” Hendrix added that she had been contacted by the HOF about the disproved authenticity of the diary in the HOF collection and, on that basis, had removed 1942 diary from the Elliott Museum display.⁷²

With this episode now in the public light, it is evident that the Ty Cobb fantasies and forgeries created by Al Stump have infected the very heart of baseball myth and history—the hallowed Hall of Fame at Cooperstown. The legitimacy of the Stump-forged items had seemed reasonable enough when they first began to appear in the 1980s, based on Stump’s well-known



COURTESY OF WILLIAM R. COBB

Exhibit 10. Ty Cobb’s 1946 diary purchased by Major League Baseball from Barry Halper and donated to the Baseball Hall of Fame Museum in 1998. This diary was exhibited from 1999 through 2001 in the Barry Halper Gallery at the Hall of Fame. An FBI investigation in 2009 determined that the diary was a forgery. A recent comparison of the writings in this diary to the writings of Al Stump on the baseball-publication pages shown in exhibit 9 lead autograph expert Ronand B. Keurajian to conclude that Al Stump was the forger who created this diary.

collaboration with Cobb on the 1961 autobiography. Stump had a believable reason to possess writings by Ty Cobb and other pieces of Cobb memorabilia. The apparent legitimacy of many of these items was further enhanced by the inclusion of the Stump fakes in the famous and highly publicized Barry Halper collection and by their prominent display in the prestigious Hall of Fame Museum. Nevertheless, we now know that Al Stump forged the Ty Cobb diaries, letters, and other autographed items that made up his memorabilia “collection.”

WHAT OTHER WRITERS KNOW

Furman Bisher, sports editor and writer for the *Atlanta Constitution* for 59 years, knew Ty Cobb well. He wrote several articles on Cobb and spent three full days with him in 1958 when he was writing the *Post* article about Ty moving back to Georgia and building his final retirement home. Furman knew Al Stump from his writings and as a result has a very low opinion of him. In my recent interview with Furman, he stated strongly that “the *True Magazine* article was a disgrace” and that “Al Stump took advantage of a dying man.” When asked about the provocative stories that Stump wrote about Cobb, he went further: I would

not believe a thing he said.” Furman Bisher felt so strongly about the injustice done to Ty Cobb by Al Stump that he took more than an hour away from the time he had devoted to writing the last column of his 59-year career with the *Constitution* to be interviewed on Cobb and Stump.

Historian Charles Alexander, in his more recent writings, took direct aim at Stump’s credibility, asserting that Stump had not actually spent the amount of time with Cobb that he had claimed, describing the Stump interaction with Cobb instead as a “14-month intermittent collaboration.”⁷³ Alexander also charged that much of Stump’s writings on Cobb had borrowed heavily, and without attribution, from the 1975 John McCallum biography. Alexander later said that the 1961 *True Magazine* article “read like a gothic horror story.” Alexander also wrote recently that he had been the first author to “pin down the particular circumstances of William Herschel Cobb’s death from gunshots fired by his wife, Amanda Chitwood Cobb, and her trial and acquittal the following spring.”⁷⁴ Charles Alexander did indeed “pin down” details on the shooting of W. H. Cobb, but unfortunately his source of information was both second hand and faulty. He was incorrect in the retelling of the now disproved shotgun story and, as a result, was incorrect in writing his own somewhat gory description of the crime scene.

OTHER STUMP STORIES IN THE TY COBB MYTH

This investigation dispels perhaps the most distasteful element of the Ty Cobb myth with definitive proof. A pistol, not a shotgun, was used in the shooting of W. H. Cobb, and therefore there was no crime scene in which W. H. Cobb’s head was practically blown off at the neck, nor did his abdomen pour forth its contents onto the porch roof of the Cobb home in Royston. Two pistol shots were all that were fired, and even at close range, these could not produce the grotesque scene that myth would have us believe.

Another of the more outrageous stories written by Stump was the “Cobb killed a man” story, which also first appeared in Stump’s 1961 *True Magazine* article and then was enhanced in his 1994 Cobb biography. In Detroit, on August 12, 1912, Ty Cobb and his wife were attacked by three robbers, whom Cobb managed to fight off, sustaining only a knife wound to his back. Ty then traveled by train to Syracuse and played in a game the following day. This attack was reported widely in the press in the days following the incident. Al Stump, who misdates the attack to June 3, 1912, has Ty confessing to having killed one of his three attackers. After Ty’s pistol wouldn’t fire, he supposedly

told Stump that he had killed one attacker by using the gunsight of his pistol to “rip and slash and tear him . . . until he had no face left.” To the 1994 Cobb biography Stump adds this substantiation of the story: “A few days later a press report told of an unidentified body found off Trumbull in an alley.” That a death occurred in this incident was conclusively disproved in the 1996 *National Pastime* article “Ty Cobb Did Not Commit Murder.”⁷⁵ SABR member Doug Roberts, a criminal lawyer, former prosecutor, and forensics specialist, performed an exhaustive study of the Detroit autopsy records for the time period around the 1912 attack and found not a single piece of evidence that a death such as Stump described had actually occurred. Further, Roberts found no Detroit newspaper article describing such a death or the discovery of an unidentified body, as Stump had asserted. Doug Roberts concluded that no murder occurred at the hands of Ty Cobb.

Practically all of Stump’s sensationalized story of the last ten months of Ty Cobb’s life is outrageously false. Stump would have us believe that these months were the alcohol-and-drug-crazed nightmare of a raging lunatic with whom Stump lived in a state of constant fear. Actually, Stump spent only a few days on and off with Ty Cobb, collectively no more than a few weeks during the 11 months between June 1960 and May 1961—three months before Cobb’s death.⁷⁶ Cobb’s constant companion for the last two months of his life told a much different story in a 1982 *Sports Illustrated* interview.⁷⁷ Dr. Rex Teeslink of Augusta, Georgia, then a medical student on summer break, was hired in May 1961 by Cobb as his full-time nurse. Teeslink describes a much different Ty Cobb from the demon Stump created. Concerned that he was becoming addicted to the strong painkillers he was taking for terminal cancer and end-stage diabetes, Ty Cobb proposed and withstood a 36-hour test during which he took no medication at all for pain—hardly the behavior of the addict of Stump’s fantasy. When Teeslink drove Ty to the Cobb family mausoleum in Royston, he was somber—but Ty was whimsical and upbeat. Cobb suggested that they should have a signal so Cobb would recognize Rex when he visited the tomb after his death, so they “could sit down and talk the way we do now.”⁷⁸ Throughout this experience, Teeslink saw none of the rage and unbalance that Stump described. He came to know and genuinely respect Ty Cobb. “He was a master of psychology,” Teeslink said. “Grantland Rice wrote about it. No one ever had done the things he did, thought the way he did. He was amazing. You always had the feeling he knew what you were going to say

before you said it. He'd always be looking around the room, sizing up people. If he was playing cards, he'd know what all six people were holding. He always was thinking, but he never wanted people to know what was going on in his mind. He always wanted the edge." Reflecting on Al Stump's *True Magazine* portrayal of Cobb, Teeslink added: "I'm talking now because I want to set the record straight. . . . The things that have been written, the way he has been portrayed. . . . None of them are true."⁷⁹

Other medical professionals who cared for Cobb in his last days also failed to observe the antics that Stump fictitiously portrayed in *True Magazine*. Jean Bergdale Eilers was a young nurse when she cared for Ty Cobb for a night in May 1961, filling in for his regular private-duty nurse, who was ill. Describing her experience with Cobb, which occurred barely two months before his death, she recently wrote: "Mr. Cobb was up most of the night. He sat in a chair and dictated letters to me. He required a lot of pain medicine and I remember giving him frequent back rubs. . . . He was pleasant and never caused me any problems. I took a baseball with me that night, and he gladly signed it for my 13-year-old brother. . . . When Mr. Cobb was re-admitted in June for his final days . . . I left another ball with him and after about three days I was told he had signed it. That was only about 3 weeks before he died."⁸⁰

So what other outrageous Stump stories about Cobb are either completely false or overblown and exaggerated? That Cobb's close friendship with Ted Williams ended completely after an argument over which players should be on the all-time All-Star team—refuted by Williams himself, who said Stump invented the story and bluntly generalized about Stump: "He's full of it."⁸¹ That Cobb refused to sign autographs for fans and was unfriendly to kids—refuted by Jean Eilers affidavit described above and further disproved by the hundreds of genuine Cobb-signed baseballs, postcards, photos, and other items, many personalized to children, which survive and now sell for thousands of dollars each in the memorabilia market. That he carried a loaded Luger with him to his last hospital stay in the same brown bag that contained a stack of negotiable securities—refuted by Jimmy Lanier, Cobb's personal batboy in 1925 and 1926, who with his son, Jim, visited Cobb in his last days at Emory Hospital, listened as Cobb showed and described the Coca-Cola stock and other securities in the brown bag, and saw no evidence of a gun, either in the bag or elsewhere in the room.⁸² That Ty Cobb's funeral was shunned by all but a few baseball players

and dignitaries—refuted by *The Sporting News*, which reported shortly after Ty's death that the family had notified Cobb's friends and baseball dignitaries that the funeral service, held only 48 hours after Cobb passed, was going to be private and asked them not to attend.⁸³

A more appropriate question would surely be: What Stump stories about Ty Cobb are *not* either outright fantasy or gross exaggerations based loosely on questionable fact?

Ron Shelton, who directed the movie *Cobb* based on Al Stump's writings, called Stump a "supreme storyteller" in the eulogy he delivered at the memorial service after Stump's death.⁸⁴ It is a longstanding Southern tradition to call someone a "storyteller" as a polite way of calling him a liar. Although Shelton surely missed this regional nuance, it nevertheless seems an appropriate moniker for Al Stump. There is no doubt that Al Stump is a proven liar, proven forger, likely thief, and certainly a provocateur who created fabricated and sensationalized stories of the *True Magazine* ilk. Can there be any doubt that scholars and historians should adopt the same approach to Al Stump-written material that the memorabilia experts have adopted toward Stump's forged memorabilia: dismissing out of hand as untrue any Ty Cobb story that is sourced to Al Stump?

CONCLUSION

Ty Cobb created more than the normal amount of controversy during his lifetime, and he lived to suffer the negative effects of his actions on his reputation. Until his death in 1961, Ty was genuinely concerned with his baseball legacy, often expressing concern about being remembered for spikings, fighting, and aggressive play. Even more controversy, beyond that related to Cobb's playing style, has arisen since his death, practically all of it deriving from the sensationalized and fictional writings of Al Stump. These are the writings that are responsible for many, if not most, of the more outrageous—and mostly untrue—elements of the Cobb myth.

I urge each SABR member, and indeed any baseball fan or historian who seeks to know and support the unexaggerated truth, to reexamine his own beliefs about Ty Cobb in light of the results of this investigation. For the others whose inquiring minds insist on believing untruths and exaggerations or who thrive on the excitement and provocation of the *True Magazine* style of history, there will likely never be a proof or revelation that will dispel their beliefs. Sadly, many widely read contemporary sports bloggers, writers, and commentators fall into this latter category, much to the continuing detriment of Ty Cobb's memory. ■

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Ty Cobb, Actor

ROB EDELMAN

During the first years of the twentieth century many of the most celebrated—and marketable—major leaguers supplemented their incomes by headlining in vaudeville or touring in legitimate plays during the off-season. A few even appeared in motion pictures: a new medium that was revolutionizing the way in which Americans passed their leisure hours. And so, given his status as one of the biggest names in baseball, Ty Cobb was able to earn hefty paychecks first by taking cues from a stage director rather than a field manager and then by trading in his glove and bat for a film script.

As his star rose in the major leagues, theatrical producers began approaching Cobb and proposing that he enter vaudeville or tour in a play. As early as 1907, the media reported that the Detroit Tigers' flychaser was regularly turning down such bids. Cobb himself explained that he had “often received offers to go before the footlights, but realizing that I am a ball player and not an actor, I declined all these propositions.” In contrast to his celebrated on-field ferociousness, he feared that a poorly received performance might make him a laughingstock.

All this changed in the summer of 1911. Cobb would finish the season leading the American League with 248 hits, 47 doubles, 24 triples, 127 RBIs, 147 runs scored, a .621 slugging percentage, and a .420 batting average. But before the campaign's end, he was approached by Vaughan Glaser, an actor-director who then was performing in and managing a Southern-based stock company. Glaser is one of countless long-forgotten theater professionals who toiled for decades on the fringes of the limelight, appearing in scores of stock productions. In 1938, he won fleeting mainstream notoriety when he originated the role of Mr. Bradley, a high school principal, in the Broadway production of *What a Life*—the Clifford Goldsmith comedy that introduced to the world a brash, awkward teenager by the name of Henry Aldrich. The following year, Glaser was cast as Bradley in the screen version of *What a Life* and reprised the part in Paramount's subsequent Henry Aldrich film series. He also was

seen in two Alfred Hitchcock features, *Saboteur* (1942) and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1942), and had small roles in three baseball-related films: Frank Capra's *Meet John Doe* (1941), whose title character, played by Gary Cooper, is a lanky ex-bush league hurler; the Lou Gehrig biography *The Pride of the Yankees* (1942), also featuring Cooper; and Capra's *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944), which opens with an Ebbets Field sequence that is a must-see for Brooklyn Dodgers aficionados.

FROM BALL FIELD TO FOOTLIGHTS

Glaser had known Cobb for several years, during which he had been constantly bugging the ballplayer to appear in one of his productions. Now, at last, Cobb relented. According to the *Atlanta Constitution*, he acquiesced because Glaser's wife “revealed to him that he possessed natural talents as an actor.” But he more likely agreed for a more practical—and altogether different—reason. At the time, Cobb was not a wealthy man. He had not yet amassed his fortune by investing in real estate, playing the financial markets, and accumulating Coca-Cola Company stock. But now he was married and starting a family, and he certainly could use the extra cash. So he agreed to tour in a Glaser-mounted stage production that would begin at the end of the baseball season. His salary for the tour reportedly was in the \$10,000 range: certainly a handsome sum for 1911-12, and far more than Cobb ever could earn accepting the kind of working person's job that many big leaguers then undertook during the off-season.

In early July, *Sporting Life* reported that Cobb “was seriously considering an offer to go on stage next Winter. . . . Several prominent theatrical men and outfielder Jimmy Callahan are said to be interested in the venture.” The deal became official in August. The production Glaser handpicked for the ballplayer was *The College Widow*, a comedy written by George Ade, which had lasted 278 performances when it debuted on Broadway in 1904. The plot centers on Billy Bolton, a star footballer who is intent on playing for Bingham College. Jane Witherspoon, the resourceful daughter

of the head man at Atwater College, Bingham's arch-rival, schemes to convince Billy to join her school's team. As the story progresses, romance blossoms between heroine and hero.

Cobb had seen a production of *The College Widow* in Detroit three years before and believed that, given his public persona, the play was an appropriate choice. When the tour was in its planning stages, Glaser briefly considered transforming Billy Bolton into a flychaser but decided to maintain the original characterization. After a brief rehearsal period, the tour began in early November. Its first stop was the Taylor Opera House in Newark, New Jersey. Also cast in the production was another big leaguer, albeit one who would transcend the fame of Jimmy Callahan. Glaser signed Shoeless Joe Jackson, who had just completed his first full season in the American League. Jackson was to appear in a supporting role, as a heavy, but his run was short-lived. "Just before the curtain was hoisted on the first night," *Sporting Life* reported, "Joe got to thinking of old Greenville, South Carolina, where everybody knows him, and he decided to go there instead of upon the stage."

Unlike Jackson, Cobb was determined to stick with the show. Throughout its run, audiences regularly applauded him not so much for his acting ability as his mere presence. While no John Barrymore, Cobb did not embarrass himself onstage. One of the first reviews of the production, which appeared in the *Trenton True American*, typified most of those that followed. "Not content with grabbing the top-most twig of laurel in the baseball world," the paper reported, "Ty Cobb . . . broke into the theatrical world last night . . . and, though he swung at some wild ones, managed to connect for a 'Baker' before the game ended . . . The 'Georgia Peach' isn't attempting to elevate the stage. He is out for the money, but, be it said to his credit, he is no lemon when it comes to the histrionic." Bert Cowan, who is alternately described as Cobb's "business manager during that brief fling at acting" and one of the performers in Glaser's company, noted that the ballplayer-turned-actor was "exceedingly sharp and quick. That was why he was able to handle the acting chore."

Several weeks into the tour, Cobb recalled, "Much to my surprise, I managed to get through my first night on the stage without that awful bugaboo, 'stage fright,' attacking my heart and dropping me in my tracks. But I had been warned so much regarding such an attack that I made every preparation to guard against it. It was just like figuring out what kind of a ball a pitcher was going to put over. I knew it was coming and

waited for it." Then he added, "A few appearances on the stage gave me reassurance and now I am perfectly at home. I find stage work wonderfully interesting and I like it."

One example of how Cobb maintained his stage presence was cited by Vaughan Glaser. In the middle of a performance, Glaser noticed that several sweaters used in the production were missing. He began questioning a stagehand, and his query was met with hostility. Cobb, who was waiting offstage for his cue, overheard the conversation and promptly stepped between Glaser and the stagehand. After knocking down the stagehand, he coolly strode onstage and flawlessly delivered his lines.

Another incident involving Cobb's swing-first-and-ask-questions-later behavior occurred during the show's run at New York's Lyceum Theater. Without his knowledge, the show's publicist planted a phony police officer in Central Park, through which the ballplayer was motoring. In his autobiography, *My Life in Baseball*, Cobb recollected that he was driving at a "moderate pace" when the faux cop stopped him—and informed him that he was under arrest. When he resisted, and the policeman persisted, the Georgia Peach "made a little pugilistic history. When the smoke cleared, the man in blue was sans his helmet and coat and bleeding variously. Picking himself up, he vanished over the horizon." Cobb was convinced that his action would land him in the clink. But then he spied a photographer lurking in a nearby bush, and he soon realized the incident was a stunt, fashioned to "grab off some Page One space."

TOURING ON HOME TURF

Almost immediately after its premiere, *The College Widow* troupe headed below the Mason-Dixon Line. As Cobb and company traveled from venue to venue, he was treated like reigning royalty. In Asheville, North Carolina, the Georgia Peach was feted with a pre-performance reception and post-performance banquet. The play was booked into two cities in Cobb's home state: Augusta and Atlanta. The ballplayer then was living in Augusta and the local paper, the *Augusta Chronicle*, gave the tour maximum coverage. First the *Chronicle* extensively detailed Cobb's reception in Newark. Then on November 11, the paper reported that his "friends in Augusta are preparing to give him a rousing reception upon his first appearance here as an actor. He will be at the Grand [Opera House] . . . next Saturday, matinee and night, and will be banqueted several times while in the city. He has friends in Augusta by the hundreds and there will be a fight to

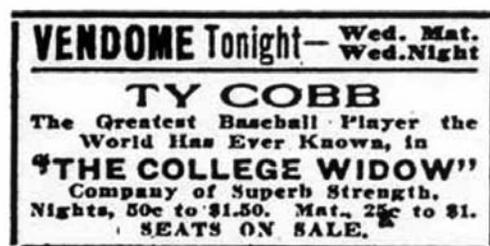
see which body of his friends will be able to do the most for him." In the flurry of items that appeared in the paper during the following week, the tour was dubbed one of the "biggest local events in theatrical history." The play was described as "Vaughan Glaser's mammoth revival and artistic production," "one of the most pleasant plays of the American stage," and "a story of college life which will remain as long as the American drama exists."

Of his acting, the *Chronicle* gushed that, "without doubt, [Cobb] has been the dramatic find and surprise of the current season." The paper further reported:

Since his advent on the stage Cobb has been making a reputation for himself which is second only to [what] he has achieved on the diamond . . . the simple fact that Cobb really acts and acts in a manner which ranks him high in his new calling is very refreshing. . . . His various speeches were delivered in a manner which would have made actors much longer in the business than he, proud of themselves. . . . his natural ease and grace stood him in good stead at all times . . . it might well be said that he is a better ball player than any actor and a better actor than any ball player.

The *Chronicle* also noted that, at each performance, "Ty Cobb's friends turned out in large and enthusiastic numbers, and showed their cordial appreciation of him . . . by heartiest applause upon his every appearance and repeated curtain calls at the end of each act." One of those in attendance was an American of note who had spent a goodly portion of his childhood in Augusta: Woodrow Wilson, current New Jersey governor and future United States president, who "joined a box party at the Grand" for one of the shows.

On his arrival in Atlanta, Cobb was welcomed by members of the city's Ad Men's Club. A photo of the ballplayer being greeted by the club was printed in the *Atlanta Constitution*. He also was "the recipient of a great reception" at the Transportation Club, which was attended by 75 community leaders. The show was booked into the Atlanta Theater and, after one performance, the *Atlanta Journal* gushed that "Tyrus Raymond was compelled to respond to vociferous curtain calls, and his speech, which set everybody laughing, proved his honest appreciation of the welcome accorded him." The paper added, "Entering the theatrical game without the least training for it Cobb has worked with a true Georgia Spirit." In a rewording of the *Augusta Chronicle* reportage, the *Atlanta Con-*



IMAGES PROVIDED BY AUTHOR



Newspaper ads such as these for performances at Augusta's Grand Theater (from the *Augusta Chronicle*, November 18, 1911) and at Nashville's Vendome Theater (from the *Nashville Banner*, November 28, 1911) appeared throughout the country during Ty Cobb's tour as an actor in *The College Widow*. One critic's analysis was that Cobb was "a better ball player than any actor and a better actor than any ball player."

stitution noted that Cobb "has proven the dramatic find of the year, and it can be truthfully said that he is a better ball/player [*sic*] than any actor, a better actor than any ball/player [*sic*] and as good an actor as many who make it their life business."

The College Widow then moved on to Nashville's Vendome Theater. The *Nashville Banner* reported that Cobb, "the greatest baseball player the world has ever seen . . . is the guest of Nashville [and] was given the royal reception by the people of the city." During his stay in town, he was afforded the company of various prominent Tennesseans, starting with the state's governor, Ben W. Hooper. Cobb also attended a couple of Vanderbilt University football scrimmages and, on his second visit, he donned a team uniform, practiced with the players—at one point, he reportedly punted a football for 50 yards "in the face of a brisk breeze"—and sat down for an interview that appeared in the school newspaper. Of his performance, the unidentified *Banner* writer opined, "On the stage Mr. Cobb is maintaining the same high average that has marked his work on the diamond."

Cobb met with similar receptions in other Southern cities—with one glaring exception. The story goes

that Allen G. Johnson, sports editor and drama critic of the *Birmingham News*, instigated the hiring of Cobb as the paper's sports editor while *The College Widow* was playing in the Alabama city. A black streamer across the paper's sports page announced Cobb as the new editor. But the ballplayer's job consisted of his dictating a statement in which he promised that his Tigers would cop the pennant during the upcoming campaign.

Even though that day's paper was a hot-seller, the News's managing editor was not amused. He promptly ordered Johnson to not just review *The College Widow* but to offer an honest judgment of Cobb's thespian abilities. While the ballplayer's performance earned him a curtain call at the second-act finale, Johnson harshly criticized his acting prowess. Upon learning of the review, Cobb wrote Johnson a cutting missive in which he retorted, "Your criticism is beneath my notice, but I just want you to see what a few real critics say about my work." Cobb included clippings of previously published critiques and added, "I am a better actor than you are, a better sports editor than you are, a better dramatic critic than you are. I make more money than you do, and I know I am a better ball player—so why should inferiors criticize superiors?"

With tongue steadfastly planted in cheek, Johnson answered Cobb with a letter of his own in which he declared, "I admit that you are a better critic, actor, sports editor, and money maker than I am, Mr. Cobb, but I refuse to admit that you are a better ball player. I have seen you play ball and know what you can do, but you have never seen me in action on a diamond. Therefore I now challenge you to a game at Rickwood Field, the Birmingham Southern League ball ground, July 4, for the championship of the world. If you do not appear to play me I will claim the championship by forfeit." Unsurprisingly, Cobb never responded to the challenge.

HEADING NORTH

After playing the various Southern cities, *The College Widow* troupe toured the Midwest. On December 5, the *Pittsburgh Leader* reported that Cobb's "coolness, familiarity with the lines, clearness of enunciation and absence of stage fright elicited much applause" during a performance at the Lyceum Theater. However, during one of the Pittsburgh performances, the ballplayer-turned-actor forgot his lines. His wife Charlie and his two children had come to town from Detroit and were seated in an upper box. Upon his initial onstage appearance, Cobb became distracted when Ty, Jr., his two-and-a-half-year-old son, blurted out,

"Daddy! Daddy!" "I was so confused," Cobb reported, "I couldn't say anything, but in the applause that followed I managed to recover." Several days after the incident, Cobb told the *Toledo Times*, "I am striving to do my best [onstage] and will continue to do so, just the same as I try to play baseball."

After a brief stay in Toledo, the troupe moved on to such venues as Toronto, Kalamazoo, and Detroit (where it followed Germany Schaefer's vaudeville act into the Lyceum Theater). On the final day of the year, *The College Widow* entertained an audience in Chicago. By this time, however, Cobb was becoming fatigued by the grind of traveling, performing night-after-night, and meeting and greeting well-wishers and hangers-on. Additionally, he now was concerned that this routine might negatively impact on his ball playing during the upcoming season. *The College Widow* was supposed to tour the Eastern United States through March, ending right before the opening of spring training. But after some additional play dates, the last in Cleveland, Cobb ended the show's run—in mid-January. Even then, the ballplayer and the tour still were earning positive press. "With Ty Cobb as star in a George Ade comedy," reported the *Cleveland Leader* on January 9, "the [Cleveland] Lyceum is 'knocking 'em off the seats' . . . the theater was packed last night from boxes to bleachers and 'Ty' kept his average well above .400 as Billy Bolton, Atwater College halfback."

Cobb explained his reasoning for cutting the tour short by declaring, "Here I am at the end of several months on the boards four pounds under my playing weight when under . . . more natural conditions I should be from five to ten pounds over that notch." He added, "I am becoming nervous and I miss my regular sleep. It was my ambition . . . to become a good actor, but in attaining that object I see that my usefulness as a baseball player is bound to suffer and so I have decided to cut out the stage for the pastime which first made me the reputation I enjoy." An anonymous writer in *The Baseball Magazine* noted that, "according to Tyrus, the month of one-night stands which he played through the south was worse than facing Walter Johnson or Russ Ford 154 games in the season."

After quitting the show, Cobb returned to Detroit to spend time with his family and rest up for the new season. Overall, he spent ten weeks playing Billy Bolton. "I believe I was fairly successful for a beginner," Cobb modestly declared afterwards. Decades later, he maintained that the stage actor's life was tough and demanding. Life on the road "proved to me

that actors of my day, more than ballplayers, had to be iron men.”

Upon reclaiming his spot in the Detroit outfield, Cobb viewed his time in *The College Widow* as a one-shot experience. In a bylined article published in the *New York Times* in 1919, Christy Mathewson observed, “Cobb was pretty good as an actor, too. I saw him do it. But I don’t think Ty cared much for the job, from what he told me, and because he never went back after more, in spite of big offers.”

FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

Big Six only was partly correct. While Cobb never revisited stage acting, he made a foray into the then-burgeoning motion picture industry. His old friend Vaughan Glaser again played a key role in introducing Cobb to the movies. The year was 1916, and Glaser now was the vice president of the Sunbeam Motion Picture Corporation, a newly-formed, New York City-based film production outfit.

Sunbeam had been incorporated in March “to manufacture, sell, and deal in and with motion picture films of all kinds.” Its capitalization was listed at \$2.5 million, and the company soon began running newspaper ads soliciting investors to purchase stock at \$5 per share. One such ad in the July 12 issue of the *Pittsburgh Gazette Times* announced “Work on the first production of the Sunbeam Motion Picture Corporation is well under way in New York City . . . The production on its release will make Sunbeam’s first bow in the picture world. . . . When you see this picture you will congratulate yourself on your connection with this company.”

Glaser viewed the project as tailor-made for Cobb. The title was *Somewhere in Georgia*, and it was based on a story by Georgia native Grantland Rice, then a *New York Tribune* columnist. At the helm would be George Ridgwell, an actor-writer who amassed over 70 screen directorial credits between 1914 and 1929. (In the Sunbeam stock solicitation ad, Ridgwell was quoted as promising that the film “will mean standing room only, wherever exhibited, and it will be a MARVEL of completeness and technique.”) The scenario would feature the ballplayer as “Ty Cobb,” a poor but upright bank clerk and part-time ballplayer who competes with a smarmy cashier for the affection of the boss’s daughter. Meanwhile, his ball playing is scrutinized by the Detroit Tigers and he is signed to a professional contract. After returning home to entertain the locals, he is momentarily foiled by some ruffians in the employ of his rival before winning both the climactic game and the girl.

Glaser assuaged Cobb’s fears of screen acting by explaining that shooting a film was entirely unlike touring in a play. There would be no traveling from city to city, no repeating his performance, no glad-handing and posing with well-wishers. Plus, he would walk away with what Cobb biographer Charles C. Alexander described as “at least as much as he got for his theatrical tour in 1911-12.” According to Al Stump, the Cobb biographer who also ghostwrote his autobiography, his *Somewhere in Georgia* salary far-surpassed \$10,000. It was \$25,000, plus expenses.

In October 1916, Cobb was one of several dozen major leaguers who earned extra bucks by playing in a series of exhibition games. After one in New Haven, he headed to New York to star in *Somewhere in Georgia*. Despite its title, the movie was not filmed somewhere—or anywhere—in Georgia. Given its status as a novice enterprise, Sunbeam wished to shoot the film as close to its West 42nd Street Manhattan headquarters as possible and in the shortest amount of time.

The entire six-reel feature was filmed in two weeks and, by all reports, the shoot went smoothly. Alexander noted that the ballplayer “again took his work seriously. Director George Ridgwell commented on how studiously [*sic*] Cobb was, how he seemed to anticipate instructions. ‘I’ve never had to tell him more than once what I wanted done,’ Ridgwell said. The main problem had to do with Cobb’s love scenes with Elsie MacLeod, playing his love interest. Cobb was quite timid, reported Ridgwell, so much so that it had been necessary to direct those scenes with extreme delicacy.”

Al Stump noted in his Cobb biography that, during the shoot, Douglas Fairbanks stopped by to say hello. According to Stump, the ballplayer and the actor, who then was cementing his status as a silent screen immortal, became friendly and Fairbanks “suggested that he direct a first-class movie on Cobb’s *real* life. Nothing ever came of it.”

MARKETING THE PRODUCT

Somewhere in Georgia was advertised as Sunbeam’s “initial offering to the Motion Picture Trade” in *The Moving Picture World*, an industry trade publication. In a puff piece which ran on November 11, 1916, the periodical reported that “Cobb has proved since he started to work on his first picture . . . that he is not only valuable because of his world-wide reputation, but because he is a natural born actor.” In the piece, Ridgwell declared, “I will never forget the first scene that Cobb worked in. He seemed to understand what

PROVIDED BY AUTHOR



Ty Cobb's career as a movie actor was brief, and his reviews were mixed.

he was to do the moment we set the camera. Well, I was so stunned that I instinctively yelled 'Shoot!' and started on the picture. Every move that Cobb made reminded me of a seasoned actor. And his facial expressions; it seemed that he could be happy and tragic at the same time."

Cobb's onscreen presence clearly was the film's selling point, and was the focus of its publicity campaign. The ad copy that promoted *Somewhere in Georgia* to exhibitors made the film sound like a cross between *Field of Dreams* and *The Natural*, circa 1916:

You know Ty Cobb and you know that everyone, whether a baseball fan or not, will want to see him on the screen.

The Greatest Star of the nation's Favorite Sport, featured in the People's Most Popular Amusement, 'The Movies,' with a story by Grantland Rice of the New York Tribune, America's best known Sporting Writer.

Can you see what that combination will mean at the box office?

'SOMEWHERE IN GEORGIA' is not merely a vehicle for showing Ty Cobb to advantage. It is a big, vital, interesting story by and for red-blooded human beings; a story of love, ambition and the National Game.

Without Ty Cobb and Grant Rice it would be a big feature. With them it will be a record-breaker. Ty Cobb is not only the greatest ball

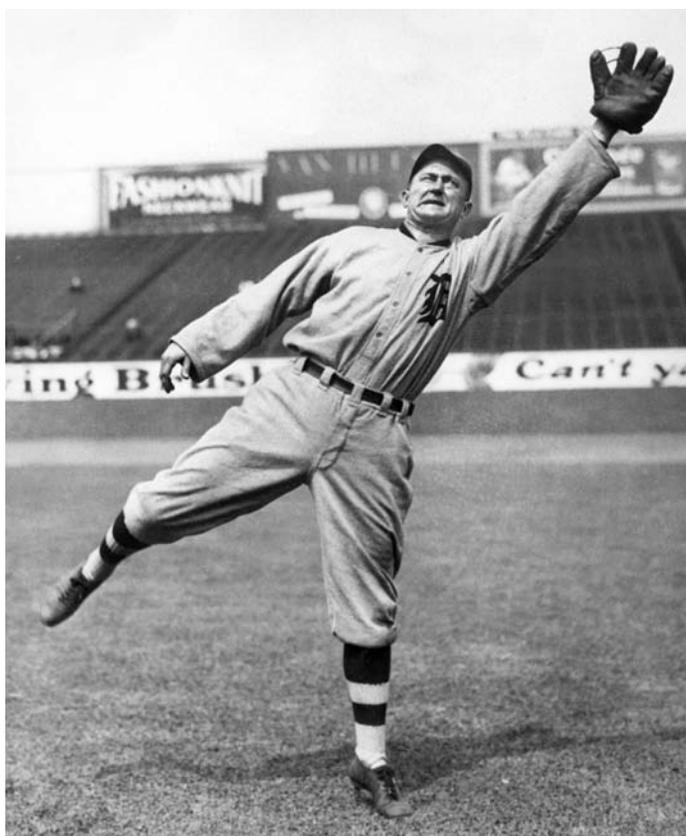
player of all time but an accomplished actor as well.

Somewhere in Georgia was marketed on a states rights basis, meaning that it did not have a national distributor. Instead, regional distributors purchased licenses from Sunbeam to show the film. The ad copy concluded, "We will release this picture on the open market. No territory has been sold in advance of this announcement, but hundreds of inquiries have been received. We therefore advise quick action."

Sadly, no footage from *Somewhere in Georgia* is known to survive. In fact, more than half of all films from this period are lost. Prints and master materials deteriorated because they were generated on nitrocellulose film stock. In some cases, they were abandoned or destroyed by producers who could not see their future value as commercial entities. Any of these scenarios might explain the fate of the *Somewhere in Georgia* prints.

Additionally, very little paper material relating to the film exists. In its June 2009 catalog, Lelands.com, a sports auction house, listed what it described as a "never seen before item that will probably never [be] seen again"—a lot consisting of two Sunbeam Motion Picture Corporation stock certificates, dated 1916 and 1917; a Sunbeam brochure; several letters, including one pertaining to the selling of screening rights to *Somewhere in Georgia* in New England; and, most significantly, a set of eight double-sided eight-by-ten-inch lobby cards, seven of which pictured Cobb. The entire lot was offered for a \$10,000 reserve.

Given its states-rights distribution status, *Somewhere in Georgia* had no discernable release pattern; the film played in venues that were scattered across the country, and indications are that it earned the most limited release. In March 1917, the film first was seen in New York City. The *New York Tribune* cleverly referenced its six-reel running time by reporting that *Somewhere in Georgia* "is described as 'a thrilling drama of love and baseball in six innings.' It is all of that, and as an actor Ty Cobb is a huge success. In fact, he is so good that he shows all the others up." In June, the film opened in Rochester, New York, and the *Rochester Express* labeled it a "good melodrama with comedy touches," adding that "Cobb's acting is almost as good as his ball playing."



Ty Cobb showed some acting talent, but one movie was enough to convince him that his future was on the diamond.

Inexplicably, no record exists of the film being screened in Cobb's home state. "I don't know if it played in Atlanta, but I doubt it," reported Ron Cobb, a self-described "distant Georgia cousin" of the ballplayer. "I have been through the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution* for the years Cobb played pretty carefully, and don't remember seeing anything about it." While the ballplayer's *College Widow* tour earned saturation coverage in the *Augusta Chronicle*, there is no record in the paper that *Somewhere in Georgia* played in one of the city's movie houses—or, for that matter, that the film even existed. Grantland Rice's column, titled "The Spotlight," was regularly appearing in the *Chronicle*. Around the time of the production and release of *Somewhere in Georgia*, Rice frequently wrote about Cobb, comparing his prowess to Tris Speaker and Shoeless Joe Jackson and making such observations as "Knowing Cobb as we do, we should say that the only element calculated to crush his ambition and break up his determination would be a pine box about seven feet long with the lid nailed over his remains." But Rice, too, kept mum regarding *Somewhere in Georgia*.

Not all reviewers were as enamored with *Somewhere in Georgia* as the critics in New York City and

Rochester. The film was lambasted in the June 7, 1917, edition of *WID's*, a journal that offered critical analysis and touted the box office appeal of new films. In a summary of the review's content, the anonymous *WID's* critic called *Somewhere in Georgia* a "very ordinary movie." Under the heading of "Direction," the reviewer noted that the "atmosphere lacked class and overplaying made [the] entire offering seem ordinary." The cinematography was "generally poor; occasionally acceptable." The lighting was "not good." Of Cobb, the critic observed: "As actor, good ball player, but better than [the supporting cast]."

The *WID's* scribe concluded the review by observing:

If your fans are of the intelligent, discriminating community class I'd say that you cannot afford to play this, despite the fact that it would bring you some money. The production is crude from start to finish, the story is ordinary and there is nothing about it to make it entertaining. Naturally there is some interest in watching Ty Cobb trying to appear unconscious of the camera without succeeding very well. . . . Even the boob fan will hardly consider this a good picture but they will overlook many of the shortcomings because of the fact that they all understand that the offering has been adjusted to fit the baseball hero's acting limitations.

Additionally, one highly respected and influential show business figure positively loathed the film. Ward Morehouse, a Savannah native and the longtime Broadway theater critic and *New York Sun* columnist, labeled *Somewhere in Georgia* "simply awful" and "absolutely the worst movie I ever saw."

Variety, the most eminent of all motion picture industry trade publications, also reviewed *Somewhere in Georgia*. This critique, printed on June 8, was more flattering. While predicting that the film would "make a ten-strike with Young America," the *Variety* scribe wrote that the "story holds interest to the extent that those familiar with baseball and Cobb's life . . . will obtain a lot of fun in watching Tyrus enact the role of a photoplay hero. . . . The story doesn't matter much. . . . It is one of those Frank Merriwell stories, with Ty doing the Merriwell stuff that catches the young folks." The reviewer concluded by predicting, "Some sections will fall hard for the film while others won't care much to have it hanging around. But it has a good, whole-

some atmosphere and a real, liveblooded, cleanlimbed [sic] athlete for a hero.”

DISAPPOINTING RETURNS

Apparently, not enough sections fell hard enough for *Somewhere in Georgia* to earn the film a profit. While the actual box office take has been lost in the annals of film history, the fact is that *Somewhere in Georgia* was the sole film produced by the Sunbeam Motion Picture Corporation. Sunbeam’s only additional involvement in the motion picture business came in 1921, when the company secured the distribution rights to and re-released *Rip Van Winkle*, a 1914 film originally produced by Rolfe Photoplays and distributed by the Alco Film Corporation.

Given the low profile of *Somewhere in Georgia* within the realm of the history of the silent cinema, plenty of misinformation exists regarding the film. For example, in his Ty Cobb biography, Dan Holmes noted, “It was the first motion picture featuring an actual athlete as the star, and it was the first widely distributed baseball movie.” Don Rhodes, another Cobb chronicler, wrote, “The film is said to be the first movie starring a major sports figure.” Associated Press writer Larry Rosenthal stated that Cobb was “the first professional athlete to star in a commercial motion film.” The declaration that Cobb “became the first ball player to star in a movie” is listed as a factoid on The Baseball-Page.com web site. The same claim is found on dozens of other Internet venues—including Cobb’s official web site. In truth, however, *Somewhere in Georgia* was not widely distributed. Additionally, before its release, a host of big leaguers—starting with Christy Mathewson, Frank Chance, Home Run Baker, Hal Chase, and Wally Pipp—top-lined one and two-reel films. *Right Off the Bat*, a five-reeler starring Mike Donlin and featuring John McGraw, was released in September 1915—before *Somewhere in Georgia* had gone into production.

A number of professional ballplayers have had lucrative careers as actors-entertainers-raconteurs. The list begins with Mike Donlin, Rube Marquard, Chuck Connors, Bob Uecker, John Berardino (who played in the majors as Johnny Berardino), and Joe Garagiola. Lou Gehrig acquitted himself nicely in *Rawhide* (1938), his lone screen appearance. Had he not died so young, he might have enjoyed a second career as a B-Western hero. Babe Ruth starred in the feature films *Headin’ Home* (1920) and *Babe Comes Home* (1927) and a short subject, *Home Run on the Keys* (1936); made a cameo appearance in the Harold Lloyd comedy *Speedy* (1927); played himself to fine reviews in *The Pride of the Yankees*; and appeared in a number of instruc-

tional films. His larger-than-life, overgrown teddy-bear persona registered well onscreen. If he had not been a ballplayer, he might have made an effective sidekick or foil for any number of screen comedians.

One cannot picture Ty Cobb clowning with the Stooges, cutting it up with Harold Lloyd, or toting a six-shooter and besting Old West varmints in gun battles. After *Somewhere in Georgia*, he occasionally appeared onscreen in such documentary and instructional short subjects as *The Baseball Revue of 1917*, *Cradle of Champions* (1921), *Ty Cobb and Grantland Rice Talk Things Over* (1930), and *Swing With Bing* (1940). In the 1950s, he guested on television’s *What’s My Line?* and *I’ve Got a Secret*. Easily his most high-profile screen credit was his surprise cameo, along with Joe DiMaggio, Bing Crosby, and Tin Pan Alley songwriter Harry Ruby, in the first version of the baseball comedy-fantasy *Angels in the Outfield* (1951).

Simply put, the Georgia Peach had neither the need nor the desire to emulate Donlin, Marquard, and the others. His appearances in *The College Widow* and *Somewhere in Georgia* were his lone forays into the world of stage and screen acting. ■

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Ty Cobb as Seen through the Eyes of a Batboy

JIMMY LANIER as told to MILLARD FISHER

COLLABORATOR'S NOTE: *My friendship with James Fargo (Jimmy) Lanier went back approximately eighteen years, to a time when I helped organize a local baseball conference and learned that the man who had been Ty Cobb's batboy and then lived in the Atlanta area. I contacted him, and he agreed to participate in the conference. We stayed in touch through notes and by talking at lunches and over the telephone. Through our discussions, three consistent threads stand out:*

He viewed Ty Cobb as a father figure, and Cobb in turn loved him like a son.

His steadfast loyalty, caring, and love pervaded all discussions of Cobb.

He vividly recalled specific incidents from 70 to 80 years ago.

Jimmy's image of Ty Cobb differs from the common perception of the man, but I found Jimmy to be honest and forthright—not one to “sugarcoat” any situation. He would tell it as it was! He often said, “I can tell you five good things for every disparaging remark made about Mr. Cobb.” Jimmy shared many memories of Ty Cobb with me, and I want to share some of them with you—just as Jimmy told them to me.

I was born and raised at 2317 Kings Way in Augusta, Georgia. Ty Cobb lived at 2425 Williams Street, about a three-minute walk away, so we were almost next-door neighbors. When I was a little boy, I did not realize that Mr. Cobb (which I always called him) was a baseball player. I knew only that he was Herschel's dad, and Herschel was my longtime playmate.

At the Cobb house, Mrs. Cobb would give Herschel and me a Ty Cobb candy bar, which was about the same as a Baby Ruth. She would also give us a little slice of cake. Then she would take us down to the baseball spring practice at Warren Park in Augusta.

HOW I GOT TO BE TY COBB'S BATBOY

I would often spend the night over at the Cobbs', and we'd sit in the living room talking. Mr. Cobb knew of my love for baseball, and one night he said, “Jimmy

m'boy”—Mr. Cobb always called me “Jimmy, m'boy,” from beginning to end—“how would you like to be my batboy this year?” I almost fainted. Mr. Cobb said, “Well, you ask your dad and mama if they'll let you go up to Detroit.” I did, and they said “yes” but that I would have to live with the Cobbs. Of course, I was in school, so I could not go until June.

So instead of beginning my batboy duties in Detroit, I began in spring practice in Augusta. The streetcar went right by my school, so Herschel and I would ride down to Warren Park, where the streetcar terminated. My first job as a batboy was to go into the spring-training dressing rooms, which looked like an old army barracks, and put out little bars of soap and towels. Then I'd pick up the towels and count them after practice. I also would take a shower after the players had taken theirs. I wanted to be a professional player, so I would get up under the shower just as they did.

The team gave me a cap and a uniform that my mother had to alter because it was too big. I was paid five dollars a week out of Mr. Cobb's pocket. Some of the other players would tip me at spring practice, and sometimes I got an extra quarter to clean Mr. Cobb's bat. I did lots of special work for Mr. Cobb in spring training. I would take big bones and I'd bone-rub his bats, and then I'd shine them. The shine didn't last long, you know, but the bats wouldn't break. I didn't like to do that work, but I had to; he wanted me to do it, and he hardly ever broke a bat.

The Tigers held spring training in Augusta for five years. When they were there, they did not stay in a hotel. Right across the river north of Augusta, there were some colonial homes in South Carolina. Mr. Cobb rented one of those huge homes and had it converted so the men could stay there and they would have home cooking. They did not eat in restaurants. They liked that. Also, they did not practice on Sundays. A lot of the players liked to play golf, so Mr. Cobb made arrangements for them to play at the Augusta Country Club. However, he did not let his pitchers go because he said that playing golf would tighten their shoulders.

After my school year ended, I worked all of Detroit's home games during the regular season and a few of the away games—if I had a relative or guardian whom I could stay with. For example, I made a trip to Chicago, when Detroit was playing the White Sox, and stayed with my aunt. I went to Chicago with the team, and my aunt met me. Of course the players spent the night in a hotel, and after the game I went back to Detroit with my aunt on the train.

TY COBB'S TRAINING AND PREPARATION FOR A GAME

Mr. Cobb said that two things all ballplayers should do is drink a lot of water and get plenty of sleep. From my batboy's vantage point, I would watch Mr. Cobb work out as a player (he was also player-manager) for hours at a time. He would set an example for the other players on the team by leading an unbelievably rigorous daily training and practice routine; the other players just could not keep up with him. He constantly said, "Practice, practice, practice!" Mr. Cobb would run several miles every day, run the bases "for time" over and over, and spend a couple of hours every day just bunting the ball. He had a way of drawing the bat back and hitting the ball into the ground so the ball would roll slowly. The third baseman could not get to it in time, and Mr. Cobb would be on first base.

He taught all his players how to bunt and hit. He taught Harry Heilmann how to hit, and later in Mr. Cobb's career, Heilmann regularly beat him in hitting. He would tell his catchers over and over—hundreds of times—not to throw the ball to the fielder but instead to throw it to the bag so that the ball would be there before the runner.

TY COBB'S COMPETITIVE SPIRIT AND HIS ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF A GAME

Mr. Cobb was a ferocious and fearless competitor! He always wanted to be number one in everything he did (and he almost was). The origin of this was his father's telling him, when he left home to play baseball, that if he was not successful not to come home. This message was ingrained in him! Of all the players that I ever saw, no other player had the heightened level of competitive spirit that Mr. Cobb had from the first day I saw him play to the last day.

Because of Mr. Cobb's ability to utilize his speed and base-stealing skills to intimidate the opposition, he was a constant threat to influence the outcome of any game. The opposing team knew that he was a fast and daring runner. When he was on a base, he would not hesitate to steal any base, including home. This not only put a tremendous amount of pressure on the

pitcher worrying about him as a baserunner, but it also took the pitcher's concentration off the batter. As you may know, in his major-league career, he stole 897 bases, including stealing home 50 times—a major-league record. Mr. Cobb was a threat to steal any base in any situation regardless of the score, the pitch count, or the batter, so the intimidation factor was always prevalent.

I feel that I must address the commonly held rumor—written and spoken by many as fact—that Mr. Cobb sharpened his spikes. I am telling you as Mr. Cobb's batboy who was there, it never happened. I cleaned his spikes every day, serviced his locker, and never saw a file or any indication that he sharpened his spikes. Moreover, I was in his home one day when several friends asked him if he sharpened his spikes, and he said he never did on any occasion. Although I never heard Mr. Cobb say so, I believe he used the "sharpening the spikes" rumor as an advantage, making the opposing players fearful of getting cut trying to tag him when he slid into a base.

MR. COBB'S VISITORS IN AUGUSTA

Some of the frequent visitors Mr. Cobb befriended were Tris Speaker, Eddie Collins, Lu Blue, Moe Berg, Joe Tinker, and Grantland Rice. They all came to visit Mr. Cobb's home in Augusta, where I was a frequent diner and always sat at the right of Mr. Cobb, and Herschel would sit by my father.

Mr. Speaker was a very friendly man, but he was abrupt. Eddie Collins was very funny. Grantland Rice was very nice, and he liked to "kid" (joke around with) me.

Even though Mr. Cobb said he was not going to play anymore after 1926, he signed up with Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics. Just prior to that, I asked, "Mr. Cobb, you're not going to stop playing, are you?" and he said, "Jimmy m'boy, I think I am." I could only reply, "Well then, I've lost my job."

When Mr. Cobb went to Philadelphia in 1927, he joined Eddie Collins. The following year, he helped convince Connie Mack to hire Tris Speaker, bringing the three great Hall of Fame players together for one year.

RECOLLECTIONS OF BABE RUTH AND CONNIE MACK

I liked Babe Ruth because he could hit a lot of home runs. Mr. Ruth was very friendly, and he particularly liked children. His bat was very heavy and oversized. On a hot day, the Babe would put a cabbage leaf on top of his head; he said it kept him cool.

Mr. Cobb and Babe Ruth were very competitive on and off the field in a friendly way. I recall one occasion



Ty Cobb's former batboy Jimmy Lanier (left) with author Mil Fisher.

when Babe Ruth hit a tremendous home run, and when he was coming around third base, he yelled at Mr. Cobb, "Now do you want to tell me how to hit?!" Off the field, they competed against each other playing a lot of golf.

I met Connie Mack in Philadelphia when Mr. Cobb was playing for the Athletics. I was no longer a batboy, but Mr. Cobb had me and his son, Herschel, visit him in Philadelphia. Mr. Cobb said, "Herschel, take 'Jimmy m'boy' up to the office." There I met Connie Mack, who was having his lunch—a sandwich and a glass of milk. He ordered the same thing for me, and we ate together and talked about baseball. Mr. Mack was very quiet and humble, and he never went down on the field before a game while the players were warming up.

FAVORABLE COMMENTS ABOUT TY COBB

Another inaccurate rumor about Mr. Cobb was that his teammates made negative comments about him behind his back. I had the run of the dressing room every day and always listened intently to what the players were saying. On no occasion did I ever hear any player make any derogatory comments about Mr. Cobb. Instead, I heard positive remarks and players talking to one another about getting him to help them with their playing skills.

One day, a foul ball by Detroit Tigers shortstop Jackie Tavener hit a woman who was sitting in the stands. Mr. Cobb went up to see if she was all right.

She said that she was okay; however, Mr. Cobb told her to go and see a doctor and he would pay for whatever expenses she incurred.

One day when the Tigers were playing the Yankees, another foul ball gave Mr. Cobb a chance to show his gentler side. When one of the Yankees hit a foul ball down the left-field line, a young boy ran onto the field and picked the ball up. But the umpire took the ball away from the boy. From his position in centerfield, Mr. Cobb saw what happened, and when he had the opportunity, he beckoned to the boy and gave him a new baseball.

Another incident involved a farm boy who had just been plowing the fields and did not

look well. Mr. Cobb heard him ask for directions to Lynnwood, a veterans' hospital in Augusta. A man told the boy how to get there on a streetcar, but Mr. Cobb said that he lived near there and would take him in his car. While they were riding, Mr. Cobb slipped the boy a twenty-dollar bill.

Mr. Cobb was accused of being a racist, but I never saw any evidence of such racism on or off the field. I saw black people who worked around the Cobb house treated with respect and friendliness. When the workers got sick, Mr. Cobb paid their medical expenses.

Mr. Cobb gave generously to many charities, including a retirement home and the hospital in Royston, Georgia, that now houses the Ty Cobb Museum. He also gave millions of dollars for the implementation of a scholarship fund for students who are residents of Georgia. Recipients did not have to be honor students, but their parents had to show a commitment to their children's finishing their education.

MY FRIENDSHIP WITH MR. COBB AFTER HE RETIRED FROM BASEBALL

After Mr. Cobb's playing days were over, he and I stayed in communication with each other and were close friends to the end. My office and home were in Atlanta. Mr. Cobb owned a lot of property in Augusta and still had many close ties there. Mr. Cobb made frequent trips to Atlanta; he would call me at my office, and we would meet for lunch at the Biltmore

Hotel. On a typical visit, we would have a sandwich and eat in Mr. Cobb's room because so many people recognized him that he was not able to eat his lunch downstairs in the restaurant. We would reminisce about "the good old days."

On one occasion, I asked Mr. Cobb whom he would pick as his all-time all-star team. He told me that he would select only players he actually saw play. His all-star team was as follows:

Catcher	Mickey Cochrane
First Base	George Sisler
Second Base	Eddie Collins
Shortstop	Honus Wagner
Third Base	Pie Traynor
Left Field	Joe Jackson
Center Field	Tris Speaker
Right Field	Babe Ruth

He played with or against most of these players in the American League. Wagner and Traynor were National Leaguers whom Mr. Cobb saw when they played for Pittsburgh against Detroit in the 1909 World Series or in exhibition games.

THE LAST TIME I SAW MR. COBB

Now I want to tell you about the last time I saw Mr. Cobb. I learned that my longtime friend was in Emory Hospital (in Atlanta), where he had been very sick for several days. On July 15, 1961, I hurriedly went to the hospital to see him. When I asked the

nurse on duty if I could go in and see Mr. Cobb, she said, "No. He wouldn't recognize you." So I called into the room in a low voice, asking members of Mr. Cobb's family if I could come into the room to see him. They responded by telling the nurse that I was a very close friend of Mr. Cobb's and to let me see him. I went slowly into the room toward the bed where Mr. Cobb was lying. He looked like he was asleep, but I bent over the bed and said, "Mr. Cobb, this is 'Jimmy m'boy.'" I thought he responded by moving his mouth slightly. I like to think I heard him speak, but it might have been just my imagination. I then squeezed his hand very gently and said again, "Mr. Cobb, this is 'Jimmy m'boy,'" and I thought he responded by squeezing my hand back. Again, I'm not sure he actually did react to me, but I like to believe he did. I knew it was time to leave, and when I got to the door, I saluted him and said, "Goodbye, Mr. Cobb." That was the last time I ever saw him. Two days later (on July 17, 1961), Mr. Cobb died. ■

COLLABORATOR'S NOTE: *On February 13, 2010, my dear friend Mr. Jimmy Lanier, Ty Cobb's former batboy, passed away peacefully in his sleep at age 93. He was a man of great character who exemplified all the good things in life. I shall miss our telephone conversations, lunches, and other visits—and all those wonderful discussions about baseball, with most of those focused on Ty Cobb. Just as Jimmy saluted Ty Cobb as he was dying at Emory Hospital, I salute Mr. Lanier and say, "Goodbye, my friend. Rest in peace; you played the game well."*

Spring Training in Georgia

The Yannigans Are Coming!

WILLIAM F. ROSS III

From the beginning of professional baseball in the nineteenth century and continuing through the first decades of the twentieth, Georgia was a popular site for major-league spring training. Between 1871 and 1953, more than 20 major-league baseball franchises from 14 cities held their spring training in the state (see table 1).¹ When minor-league squads are included, well over 100 different teams worked out on Peach State diamonds between 1871 and 1966. The heyday for major-league spring training in the state was from 1902 to 1917, with an average of five to six major-league teams visiting each year, at a time when there were only 16 such teams. The minor leagues came to Georgia in large numbers in later years, operating out of multiteam training camps from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. Boston (NL), New York (AL), Philadelphia (NL), and Detroit (AL) were the most frequent major-league spring guests. Augusta, Macon, and Savannah were the most popular training sites, closely followed by Athens, Atlanta, Columbus, and Thomasville. Beyond acting as host to teams, the state has a prominent role in the history of preseason practice. Spring training as we think of it today—an intense, multiweek period of practice, instruction, and games—was “born” in Macon, Georgia.

In general, the evolution of spring training in the South took place in three stages. Spring training in its first and shortest-lived form was a series of exhibition games played by one team that began in a Southern city and worked its way north toward the team’s home city. This Southern jaunt was the norm for major-league baseball’s earliest visits to the South in the nineteenth century.

The second stage of development, coinciding with the turn of the century, was the move toward spending a longer period of time practicing in one location, including exhibition games on site, followed by more games on the way home. At first, these visits involved a couple of weeks of “warm-up” before the exhibition tour, but they soon evolved into longer, more focused training sessions.

The final stage of spring-training development was

the establishment of permanent locations for training, with contracted annual return visits and a schedule of local exhibition games. Spring training in Georgia encompassed the first two of these stages but failed to make the transition to semipermanent training sites, at least at the major-league level. This failure was not due to a lack of vision. Better weather and stronger local promotion—including the willingness to construct facilities at the host city’s expense—proved to be the successful mix that ultimately put Florida ahead of the Peach State.

Professional baseball’s earliest visits to the South were not what we would consider today to be spring training. The Southern city was simply a starting point for an exhibition tour, not a location for any extended workouts. The team might be in the city a few days as players made their way there, and, once assembled, the club would kick off the exhibition schedule with a game against the local nine. While some exhibition tours passed through the state, Georgia was not a particular focus of these early trips. These tours were rarely if ever self-supporting, typically costing ownership more than they made in gate receipts. But as much as the owners might grumble about expenses, the perceived effectiveness of preseason practice made it essential. Working the team out in warmer weather was the focus of these swings through the South, with transportation and housing costs the price to be paid to get the team ready.² Teams did not carry a large number of bench players in these early days and did not generally hold large-scale competitions between rookies and established players for playing time. They played their exhibition games with pretty much the same lineup they would use in the regular season. Not all teams made Southern trips during this period; many would simply work out at home for a few days before the start of the regular season.

Cap Anson has been widely credited as “inventing” the practice of spring training during his tenure as manager of the Chicago White Stockings. However, it might be better to characterize his influence as popularizing, rather than inventing, the “Southern tour.”

Table 1. Major-League Spring-Training Appearances

Year	Team	Location	Year	Team	Location
1871	New York	NA Savannah	1907	Philadelphia	NL Savannah
1886	Detroit	NL Savannah	1908	Boston	NL Augusta
1887	Philadelphia	NL Savannah	1908	Cleveland	AL Macon
1894	Baltimore	NL Macon	1908	New York	AL Atlanta
1895	Baltimore	NL Macon	1908	Philadelphia	NL Savannah
1895	New York	NL Savannah	1909	Boston	NL Augusta
1896	Baltimore	NL Macon	1909	Cincinnati	NL Atlanta
1897	Baltimore	NL Macon	1909	New York	AL Macon
1897	Boston	NL Savannah	1910	Boston	NL Augusta
1897	Brooklyn	NL Columbus	1910	New York	AL Athens
1897	Philadelphia	NL Augusta	1910	Philadelphia	AL Atlanta
1897	Pittsburgh	NL Atlanta	1911	Boston	NL Augusta
1898	Baltimore	NL Macon	1911	New York	AL Athens
1898	Chicago	NL Waycross	1911	Philadelphia	AL Savannah
1898	Louisville	NL Thomasville	1911	Washington	AL Atlanta
1899	Brooklyn	NL Augusta	1912	Boston	NL Augusta
1899	Cincinnati	NL Columbus	1912	Cincinnati	NL Columbus
1899	Pittsburgh	NL Thomasville*	1912	New York	AL Atlanta
1900	Brooklyn	NL Macon	1913	Boston	NL Athens
1901	Boston	NL Thomasville	1913	Brooklyn	NL Augusta
1902	Baltimore	AL Savannah	1913	St. Louis	NL Columbus
1902	Boston	AL Augusta	1914	Boston	NL Macon
1902	Boston	NL Thomasville	1914	Brooklyn	NL Augusta
1902	Brooklyn	NL Augusta	1914	Cleveland	AL Athens
1902	New York	AL Savannah	1915	Boston	NL Macon
1902	Philadelphia	NL Thomasville	1915	Buffalo	FL Athens
1903	Boston	AL Macon	1915	New York	AL Savannah
1903	Boston	NL Thomasville	1915	Newark/Indianapolis	FL Valdosta
1903	Cincinnati	NL Augusta	1915	Pittsburgh	FL Augusta
1903	New York	AL Augusta	1916	New York	AL Macon
1903	New York	NL Savannah	1917	New York	AL Macon
1904	Boston	AL Macon	1917	Pittsburgh	NL Columbus
1904	Boston	NL Thomasville	1917	Washington	AL Augusta
1904	New York	AL Atlanta	1918	New York	AL Macon
1904	New York	NL Savannah*	1918	Pittsburgh	NL Columbus
1904	Philadelphia	NL Savannah*	1918	Washington	AL Augusta
1905	Boston	AL Macon	1919	Boston	NL Columbus
1905	Cleveland	AL Atlanta	1919	Detroit	AL Macon
1905	Detroit	AL Augusta	1919	Washington	AL Augusta
1905	New York	NL Savannah	1920	Boston	NL Columbus
1905	Philadelphia	NL Augusta	1920	Detroit	AL Macon
1906	Boston	AL Macon	1922	Detroit	AL Augusta
1906	Cleveland	AL Atlanta	1923	Detroit	AL Augusta
1906	Detroit	AL Augusta	1924	Detroit	AL Augusta
1906	Philadelphia	NL Savannah	1925	Detroit	AL Augusta
1907	Boston	NL Thomasville	1926	Detroit	AL Augusta
1907	Cleveland	AL Macon	1928	New York	NL Augusta
1907	Detroit	AL Augusta	1932	Boston	AL Savannah
1907	New York	AL Atlanta	1953	St. Louis	AL Thomasville

* Part of spring-training season.

AL—American League, FL—Federal League, NA—National Association, NL—National League

Author Charles Fountain points out that Southern exhibition trips began before Anson made his first trip and even before baseball was organized into leagues. (The first such trip was by an amateur team from New York preparing for the 1869 season by playing an exhibition schedule starting off in New Orleans.)³ Cap Anson was tremendously successful as a manager, winning five pennants between 1880 and 1886. His

success in the later part of this period followed spring exhibition tours in the South, and by 1886 Anson was beginning each exhibition season with training in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Between training and touring, Anson appeared to be on to something. Baseball is nothing if not imitative of success; more teams looked South for the training edge they believed Anson had achieved.

Site selection was ever important. Anson most often took his squad to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and so did many other teams.⁴ The attractiveness of the location was partly due to the amenities available in Hot Springs and, again in imitation, a suspicion that there might be something “in the water” of the resort town. Hot Springs held such a mystique that well into the first decades of the twentieth century veterans might be sent there to “boil out the poisons” before joining the rest of the team at a spring-training camp somewhere else. While Hot Springs was an early and popular spring-training site, New Orleans, Savannah, and Jacksonville were also regular starting points for Southern exhibition tours.

The change from simply beginning each spring with a Southern exhibition tour to a system where a team practiced in one place for a period of time before going North occurred during the last years of the nineteenth century. Fountain credits Ned Hanlon and his Baltimore Orioles for this shift. In 1892, playing for Pittsburg (spelled without the final *h* at that time), Hanlon suffered a serious tendon injury on opening day—the team had had no spring

warm-up. In the spring of 1894, now managing Baltimore, Hanlon took the Orioles to Macon, Georgia, and imposed an eight-week, eight-hour-a-day training regimen. Practice included on-field drills and strategy instruction. This entirely new approach at the major-league level was the true beginning of what we think of today as spring training. That season the Orioles won the pennant. Then they won it again. And again:

three straight pennants from 1894 to 1896. As before, success bred imitation. John McGraw, the Orioles' third baseman back in 1894, eagerly took all this in. When in 1902 he became manager of the Giants, he held the same type of intensive training. Fountain writes: "McGraw made spring training a spectacle. The players loved it; the press waxed poetic. All of baseball and no small number of southern towns and cities benefited, as America grew more intimate with spring training and the places that hosted it."⁵ More intimate, perhaps, though not necessarily better informed. One sporting magazine reported to its readers that Columbus, Georgia, was "almost on the Mississippi State line."⁶

Following Hanlon's successes, teams no longer found it attractive to take spring training in the North nor to make a perfunctory Southern swing of exhibition games. In 1897, as New York contemplated holding practice that year in Lakewood, New Jersey, *Sporting Life* stated that "the idea of making the New Jersey health resort the training grounds is not a very happy one."⁷ Hanlon had shown the way—success during the regular season was now contingent upon an intense series of warm-weather workouts. As a result, he also elevated Macon's role in spring training as teams sought to replicate his methods, right down to the selection of a training location.

A spring-training site had to meet several requirements. First, it had to be far enough south to provide warm weather. It also had to have convenient transportation. Thus, ports and cities well served by railroads were in the lead as host cities. Next, the site had to have accommodations for the players. A resort town, such as Thomasville, Georgia,⁸ or a larger urban area, such as Atlanta, was better able to house a team due to the greater availability of hotel rooms. Teams could, however, make alternate arrangements when

other conditions were favorable. In 1902, the Boston (AL) players stayed in a YMCA in Augusta.⁹ Next, obviously, the host city had to have a ball field. Most of the spring-training sites in Georgia were also home to a minor-league team and thus had at least one diamond available. Two Peach State towns that hosted spring-training visits didn't have minor-league teams, but Athens and Milledgeville were home to colleges (the University of Georgia and the Georgia College and State University, respectively) with collegiate ball fields. As a final consideration, the site had to be convenient for practice games with other squads, either in town or nearby. Again, minor-league cities and college towns could provide a local opponent, and Georgia's extensive railroad system provided ample travel options for the teams.

The selection of spring-training sites was also becoming affected by the growing size of spring rosters. Twenty to twenty-five men—a typical number as early as the late nineteenth century—could reasonably be accommodated in most small Southern towns, but larger groups all reporting at once could present a problem. One way to deal with the increasing number of men in camp was to have the "yannigans" (rookies and nonroster players)¹⁰ report to the spring-training site first, while veterans began at another location, such as the ever-popular Hot Springs. The arrival of the yannigans was the herald of spring for many Georgia cities in the Deadball Era. Some of the yannigans would be cut before the full team assembled on site. This crowding was also somewhat eased by sending pitchers and catchers to Hot Springs to limber up while the remainder of the team assembled in another city, or by having the batteries report earlier than the position players in order to get sufficient work—a practice that persists to the present day.

Spring training was a very hectic time for the manager. In addition to evaluating talent, training the players, and monitoring injuries, the manager was often responsible for arranging the exhibition schedule, securing housing, and scheduling transportation for the team. Sometimes other distractions, such as contract holdouts or the loss of a player to other duties, added to these responsibilities. In 1896, for example, Hugh Jennings left Baltimore's camp in Macon (with permission) to coach the University of Georgia team for two weeks, rejoining the Orioles when they came to Athens to play the college squad in an exhibition game.¹¹ On top of all of this, the manager was usually a player as well and needed practice time himself.

For the everyday players, spring training most often meant a combination of temptation and tedium. For

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Members of the Boston Red Sox mix with locals in Macon during spring training in 1904. Players are, from right to left, unidentified, Lou Criger, two unidentified players, Hobe Ferris, unidentified, Chick Stahl, Jimmy Collins, and Long Tom Hughes. Candy LaChance (with mustache) is at the top of the photo.

men who spent each season playing in the larger cities of the North and Midwest, small Southern towns provided few recreational opportunities off of the diamond—except perhaps for gambling and drinking, something the players could ferret out whatever the size of the city. In 1903, while training in Macon, several Boston (AL) players took advantage of a local racetrack—as well as the hotel bar—and departed camp “for about a week to gamble and drink their way into condition.”¹² Ballplayers generally were held in low regard in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and a small town could be very unfriendly to them. Couple this public perception with the fact that most of these men came from cities above the Mason-Dixon line, and tensions often ran high. Fountain relates an incident from the 1890s as an example. Denied a practice site in Jacksonville, perhaps because of the players’ reputation, the Cubs went to Waycross, Georgia, for training. “The townspeople received the northern interlopers coolly and warily, and the players exacerbated the tension with untoward and persistent advances on the young women of Waycross.” Following an incident wherein one player disrupted a tightrope act, the team was “invited to leave Waycross, not, as it turned out, for the assault on the aerialist—circus performers and actors had no more standing than ballplayers, apparently—but because the hotel manager claimed that his wife had been insulted by the ballplayers.”¹³ The team moved on to Savannah to begin its exhibition schedule.

In these small towns, field conditions could be rough and living conditions even rougher. Team discipline often suffered. “In 1898, after [Jimmy] Ryan had resigned as [Chicago] Colts captain, old Tim [Donahue] led the team in a mutiny at their spring training camp. The Colts were staying at a Podunk hotel in Waycross, Georgia. There were only two bathtubs for 18 men . . . and the cuisine outraged the ballplayers. ‘The murmuring,’ the [Chicago] *Tribune* reported, ‘rose into a strenuous kick. Tim Donahue said that [first baseman Bill] Everett had barnacles in his stomach from the food. The men filed hungrily out of the dining room and held an indignation meeting.’”¹⁴ Adding to their frustration, players weren’t paid during spring training, though they were provided with housing, their travel costs were covered, and they received meals or a daily stipend. In 1919, the lack of pay was just one item in a growing laundry list of disagreements between Boston owner Harry Frazee and American League president Ban Johnson. Frazee in effect wanted to change the standard player contract, which stipulated that players were paid from

opening day to the last day of the season. “[Frazee] wanted to pay the players during spring training, a plan the tight-fisted Johnson loathed. [The proposal] failed.”¹⁵ Players wouldn’t regularly be paid for spring training until after World War II.

Weather could be an issue in spring training. While teams came to the South for milder spring weather than they would have experienced in their home cities, March and April in Georgia can be stormy, and complaints about training time lost to rain were common. Teams sometimes changed location when the weather foreclosed any possibility of practice. In 1904, for example, both the Phillies and the Giants left their training grounds in Savannah early, chased away by rainy weather. The Phillies headed home; McGraw took his team to Birmingham, Alabama. In mid-1911, Connie Mack announced plans to take his next spring training in Texas, a decision based in part on the bad weather his team had experienced in Georgia that year. It certainly didn’t hurt that the good folks in San Antonio would build a facility for him, a portent of things to come.¹⁶

Other options were available, however. Teams could usually find an indoor location, such as a local gym, in which to exercise and discuss strategy. At least one team refused to stop baseball practice when the rains arrived, choosing to take their practice game inside. Little known today, indoor baseball was once a very popular sport, using equipment and rules modified to indoor use. Modified, but still dangerous. In 1902, Boston’s George Prentiss lost his grip on the bat during an indoor game in Augusta, knocking out two of a female spectator’s front teeth. “The lady bled profusely, and she and several others present fainted.”¹⁷ Other sports could provide just as intense a workout and be safer for the audience. In Atlanta one year, the Washington Senators played football when the weather created field conditions that precluded baseball practice.

Weather wasn’t the only outside influence that could affect spring training; sometimes conditions back home caused problems for a team. In 1911, the Washington squad was splitting practice time with the Atlanta team in Ponce de Leon Park. The Senators took the field each morning, and the Crackers followed in the afternoon. On March 17, the Senators’ home ballpark burned, prompting the team to extend its stay in Georgia. The fire destroyed the grandstand and bleachers, going on to damage a nearby hospital; within a few days the team contracted for a modern steel and concrete stadium to be built. Meanwhile, the Senators and Crackers were invited to a cookout in appreciation of the spring-training season just completed. The *Atlanta*

Constitution reported: “Ball Players Are Barbecued.”¹⁸ Perhaps not the best headline to use for a team whose home field was a burned wreck.

As training in the South became a regular activity in the first decades of the twentieth century, competition increased between Georgia cities to secure a team each spring. Clubs that liked their spring sites would attempt to secure the facilities for the next year even before the present year’s training was completed. Exhibition schedules began to be arranged and published in the winter, rather than simply a month or so before training began. Towns had come to realize the extent to which visiting teams could play into local efforts at business promotion, and thus they sought to attract specific clubs—or any professional nine—before a rival city won them over. Civic boosterism was growing in the South at the same time that the perceived disreputable character of ballplayers was on the wane. City councils had the responsibility to make the field ready for the visitors and the authority to approve the use of local facilities. Sometimes, however, a team might be prevented from getting its desired location. In the winter of 1913, the vice president of the Cleveland club traveled to Macon to secure a spring-training site for 1914. He met with local officials, newsmen, and hotel owners; together they finalized the team’s schedule for the following March. By the time he arrived back in Cleveland, a telegraph was waiting for him: Macon’s city council had voted to award its facilities to Boston (NL) for 1914. Working against Cleveland was the fact that the Boston club was managed by a well-known local—George Tweedy Stallings.

George Stallings, the son of a Confederate officer, was a prominent man in Georgia.¹⁹ Born in Augusta in 1867, Stallings graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1886 and enrolled at Johns Hopkins for further education. Baseball intervened, and George left medical school to begin what would be a successful 41-year career in professional baseball, including 13 years managing in the major leagues.²⁰ From his earliest stint as a manager, with Augusta in 1893, Stallings scheduled spring training in his home state whenever possible. This practice certainly lessened his travel time; most advantageous for him was to hold his spring training in the middle part of the state. Twelve times he brought his teams to the Peach State, including four times to Macon and once each to Milledgeville and Haddock. His 3,600-acre plantation, the Meadows, was located in Haddock, about three dozen rail miles northeast of Macon. Milledgeville was just up the road to the east of Haddock, closer than Macon but with less convenient transportation connections. Assembling

his players in the area, Stallings could have the team come to his house for practice or just for a cookout. In 1915, he would bring the Braves up from Macon once a week for what he termed a “frolic.”²¹ In the 1920s, while managing the Detroit club, Ty Cobb borrowed a page from George’s book and had his Tigers take spring training in Augusta, where the Georgia Peach made his home. But even the great Cobb could not trump the convenience of holding spring-training workouts in your own backyard, which is what Stallings did with his 1924 Rochester team.

Although no Federal League teams would train in the Peach State in 1914, the league did provide some excitement during spring training. Going into their first year as a self-proclaimed major league, the Federals disrupted the National and American Leagues, waging a battle for players and ignoring certain contract provisions that the two older leagues felt protected them from the loss of their players. In late March, the manager of the Pittsburgh Feds, Doc Gessler, arrived in Macon to scout some Boston (NL) players. This was a surreptitious trip—Doc registered under a false name. Gessler phoned Boston players at their hotel and succeeded in enticing Braves pitcher Hub Perdue to come by for a visit.²² Whether tipped off by a friendly hotel clerk or by Perdue himself, Boston manager George Stallings got wind of what was going on. Just as his father had been called upon 50 years earlier, it was now Stallings’ turn to fight the Federals. George appeared in Gessler’s room with a deputy sheriff in tow and served papers on Doc, preventing him from his undercover mission.²³ Stallings had been prepared for this eventuality, having earlier received a tip that the manager of the Kansas City Federals was coming to Macon to lure away some Boston players. That it was Gessler who showed up and not Kansas City’s Stovall didn’t make a bit of difference to the Georgia native. Stallings had armed himself with an injunction against any tampering by the Federals. Gessler left town that evening and traveled to Augusta in an attempt to contact some of the Brooklyn (NL) players who were in training there. Unfortunately for him, Stallings had already alerted the Augusta authorities, who served an injunction on Gessler upon his arrival. Doc’s visit to the state was ultimately unsuccessful.

To sum up George Stallings’ 1914 spring-training experiences: he wrested the use of Macon’s facilities away from Cleveland for his own team, fought off a raid by the Federal League, and, in an exhibition game in Macon, was credited with saving the life of Newark’s George Smith. First baseman Smith collapsed on the field “with heart failure,” and Stallings revived him “by

using artificial methods to induce circulation and breathing.”²⁴ Should we be surprised that he led the “Miracle” Braves to the world championship that season?

A change was coming, however, that even George Stallings could not combat. A growing and obvious problem with the current situation would change everything: as roster sizes increased, taking spring training in a city with a single ball field became less practical. Having several fields available in one town was no improvement if they were not close to each other, since the manager could only be in one place at a time. Teams needed multiple fields in a single location. Even beyond the concept of multiple fields, team owners had an increasing interest in developing facilities that could host two or more major-league teams at once. On the other side of the equation, some cities were now considering making major investments in their local facilities in order to attract a team each spring. It is hard to overestimate the extent to which these cities valued the promotional value of seeing their town’s name in national stories filed from training camp. Local expenditures were nothing new, as towns were routinely responsible for the upkeep and condition of the playing field before the arrival of their spring visitors. What was new was the idea of having local governments build facilities in excess of what they would need during their own minor-league regular season. It was on this issue that Georgia just couldn’t (or wouldn’t) compete.

During training in 1911, the Boston (AL) and Cincinnati (NL) teams considered sharing a multifiel facility in Georgia for spring training in 1912. Under this concept, the teams would be housed and served meals on site. President Taylor of the Boston club pushed this idea as a potential boost for a town, hoping to entice some municipality into constructing the facility.²⁵ No town stepped forward, and while both teams trained in Georgia in 1912, they did so on opposite sides of the state. Small towns in Georgia simply could not afford to construct such facilities. Nor was any help available from the major-league teams themselves. Already losing money each year funding spring training, they had no incentive to spend even more by building their own facilities. A city that could find the money to provide multi-field facilities would win the contest to host spring training in the future. Georgia came tantalizingly close to making this transition, with a privately financed project that was conceived as a multiteam facility but ended up as something very different.

In January 1915, newspapers reported the potential sale of a plantation in the Brunswick area—a parcel centered on an existing structure called Dover Hall—to a group of baseball men. Ty Cobb, George Stallings, and Boston (NL) team president James Gaffney were said to be examining the site, and early reports indicated that they were considering construction of a spring-training facility that could house “no less than a half-dozen clubs, including two or three big league teams and as many Class A organizations as will train in this county.”²⁶ Stallings was credited with the idea, something he had started working on two years earlier following a personal visit to Dover Hall. However, when the time came to put money on the line, the purchasers, now including many other team owners and league executives, elected to create a private lodge and hunting preserve on the site.²⁷

Minor-league teams also traveled to Georgia to train. One of the most frequent early visitors was Buffalo (1906, 1910, and 1911 as Eastern League members, and again in 1912 as members of the International League). This fact should not come as a surprise; George Stallings was Buffalo’s manager for three of those four years. Prior to World War I, most minor-league team appearances in the state were sporadic, and not always in the same town for each visit (see table 2). Between the wars, only a couple of minor-league teams came to Georgia to train. Most minor-league teams that called Georgia home took spring practice on their own fields, sometimes in combination with big-league teams. This relationship benefited both parties: major-league teams had some local competition for their first exhibition games, while the minor-league players could mix with, observe, and learn from the big leaguers. The Atlanta Crackers, however, sometimes traveled to take training,

Table 2. Minor-League Spring-Training Appearances

Year	Team	Location	Year	Team	Location
1906	Buffalo	EL Macon	1916	Indianapolis	AA Albany
1909	Toledo	AA Columbus	1917	Atlanta	SA Athens
1910	Buffalo	EL Macon	1917	Indianapolis	AA Albany
1910	Newark	EL Milledgeville	1917	Louisville	AA Athens
1911	Buffalo	EL Milledgeville	1924	Rochester	IL Haddock
1912	Buffalo	IL Athens	1931	Hartford	EL Macon
1912	Toronto	IL Macon	1932	Hartford	EL Macon
1913	Newark	IL Savannah	1947	Albany	EL Brunswick
1913	Toronto	IL Macon	1948	Albany	EL Brunswick
1914	Cleveland	AA Americus	1949	Albany	EL Brunswick
1914	Newark	IL Columbus	1950	Albany	EL Brunswick
1914	Toledo	SMA Americus	1955	Lancaster	PL Savannah
1915	Cleveland	AA Thomasville	1958	Stockton	CL Albany
1916	Atlanta	SA Valdosta			

AA—American Association, CL—California League, EL—Eastern League, IL—International League, PL—Piedmont League, SA—Southern Association, SMA—Southern Michigan Association

including a two-week trip to Hot Springs in 1910 and stints in other Georgia cities in 1916 and 1917.

With the approach of World War I and even after America's entry into that conflict, Georgia continued to be a popular spring destination for major-league teams. Spring training in 1918 featured numerous patriotic displays by the teams, including military drills with marching players, each man carrying a bat on his shoulder in place of a rifle. With the conclusion of the war, however, Georgia saw fewer major-league spring visitors. Three teams arrived in 1919, and two came in 1920. Manager Ty Cobb held spring training for his Tigers in Augusta from 1922 through 1926. No other major-league teams came to the state for training in those years, and none at all arrived in 1927. New York (NL) made a trip to the state in 1928, and Boston (AL) had a "last hurrah" in Savannah in 1932. St. Louis (AL), training in Thomasville in 1953, was the last major-league team to hold spring training in Georgia. With the Browns' departure at the end of the spring season, the sun set on major-league spring training in the state. Minor-league training in Georgia, on the other hand, was about to enter its "golden age." (See table 3.)

While the traditional spring-training destination cities in Georgia couldn't afford to construct the multi-team practice facilities needed to continue to attract spring tenants, the federal government certainly could. During World War II, the government built military bases and industrial facilities throughout the state. After the war, many of these sites were no longer needed and were made available for lease. Several were converted to baseball use, including an air base in Waycross, which became "Bravesville" (EDITORS' NOTE: See Papillon/Young article); a Veterans Administration complex in Thomasville, which housed the Baltimore Orioles' minor-league teams for 12 years; the Cardinals' 75-acre training complex in Albany, in use for nine years; and another air base—this one in Douglas—now owned by South Georgia College but leased to the Cincinnati Reds organization in the post-war era. These camps represented the last stage in the evolution of spring training—semipermanent facilities that housed multiple teams—applied at the minor-

league level.²⁸ With barracks and a mess hall already on site, room and board was not an issue at these new camps. The teams added ball fields and did some landscaping, but each site required few other improvements. "Bravesville" could accommodate eight of the parent club's farm teams on four diamonds; the Orioles, with five diamonds, could accommodate 10 farm teams in Thomasville. The Cardinals were able to handle 12 teams on seven diamonds at their camp, and the Reds could train eight teams in Douglas. Newspaper reports praised each of these operations for bringing an "assembly line" process to player instruction.²⁹ This heyday of minor-league camps, however, was not to last.

It looked as though it might end in 1957, when a bill was passed by the Georgia Senate that would have prohibited games played by interracial teams. (EDITORS' NOTE: See article by Papillon and Young.) Teams differed in their responses to the pending legislation. The Braves stated that they would simply have to leave Waycross, while the Reds' farm director, Bill McKechnie Jr., said, "we would have to adopt a policy of segregation," since the team did not intend to relocate their spring-training operations.³⁰ Ultimately, the bill failed, and the minor-league camps would survive for a while yet, but the end came when, once again, what the local government couldn't do, the federal government could. By the late 1960s, the federal government was looking to sell off the Waycross and Thomasville properties, pushing the remaining minor-league training operations to make a decision about the future use of the sites. The industry trend was for farm clubs to train with their parent club in one location, and rather than purchase these Georgia properties, the Braves and Orioles pulled up stakes. When the Braves left Waycross, the Athletics took over the site for two spring seasons before moving their own operation west for 1969, marking the last spring-training appearance in the state by any outside major- or minor-league team.

The focus of the major-league teams had shifted to Florida for spring training. Teams there visited each other's training grounds for exhibition games, which became the spring ritual referred to as the "Grapefruit League," a name coined by Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis in 1923.³¹ Those who had seen the coming trend toward camps built just for spring training—multiple baseball diamonds and sometimes multiple teams—would be vindicated as such facilities constructed in Florida became semipermanent bases of operations. These camps often were custom built for specific major-league teams, not federal "hand-me-downs" adapted by the organization. With good

Table 3. Minor-League Training Camps

Year	Organization	Location
1947–55	St. Louis Cardinals	NL Albany
1953–66	Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves	NL Waycross
1954–57	Cincinnati Reds	NL Douglas
1954–65	Baltimore Orioles	AL Thomasville
1954	Philadelphia Athletics	AL Savannah
1967–68	Kansas City/Oakland Athletics	AL Waycross

weather, improving transportation connections, increasingly aggressive self-promotion, and the willingness to pay for facilities and improvements to attract teams, the Sunshine State became the new home of spring training. Arizona, following Florida's blueprint of self-promotion and local willingness to build facilities, would also develop into a spring-training destination as more major-league teams were established west of the Mississippi. Georgia, the birthplace of modern spring training, would never again play spring host to the big leagues. ■

Sources

The majority of the information presented in this article and the accompanying tables is based on contemporary newspaper and other periodical accounts. Primary sources include the *Atlanta Constitution*, *Sporting Life*, and *The Sporting News*. In all, more than 200 articles from more than 20 periodicals were used to prepare this account. The following books were also consulted:

- Duren, Don. *Boiling Out at the Springs: A History of Major League Baseball Spring Training at Hot Springs, Arkansas*. Dallas: Hodge Printing Company, 2006.
- Fountain, Charles. *Under the March Sun: The Story of Spring Training*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Gillette, Gary, and Pete Palmer, eds. *The ESPN Baseball Encyclopedia*. 5th ed. New York: Sterling, 2008.
- Kaese, Harold. *The Boston Braves, 1871–1953*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004.
- Seymour, Harold. *Baseball: The People's Game*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Stout, Glenn, and Richard A. Johnson. *Red Sox Century: The Definitive History of Baseball's Most Storied Franchise*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
- Wiggins, Robert Peyton. *The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs: The History of an Outlaw Major League, 1914–1915*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2009.

Notes

- In order to prepare these tables, decisions had to be made as to what constituted a spring-training site. For the twentieth century, a two-week minimum stay in one town was used as the general criteria. One week in a town to play two or three games, for example, would not qualify as a spring-training camp. Stays cut short by weather but scheduled to run longer were included. Nineteenth-century visits posed more of a problem since, in the earliest days of professional baseball, the Southern city was often nothing more than the assembly point for the team and not an established training camp. The general criteria for including nineteenth-century spring-training sites was a minimum of one week stay in the starting city with the announced intention to work out before hitting the road. It should be noted that this list differs in a couple of instances from spring-training information presented in the fifth edition of the *ESPN Baseball Encyclopedia*. In cases of disagreement, the author has relied upon contemporary accounts. Minor-league team appearances in the state pose a special challenge. Before World War II, these teams were not given as much attention in the press, and as a consequence their visits to Georgia are not as well documented. Where sufficient evidence of a spring-training camp exists, it has been included here. Undoubtedly, there are other minor-league team appearances that did not make this list. College teams are perhaps the most difficult to trace in their rare spring-training appearances in Georgia. Harold Seymour mentions a 10-day spring-training visit by Yale players to Macon in 1920; little else is known of such appearances. The author welcomes any information that would improve the listings.
- In 1896, Baltimore reportedly spent \$2,000 on hotels and railroad trips for the 25 players taking spring training. In 1910, the 16 major-league teams were spending a reported combined total of \$150,000 in spring-training expenses; two years later this figure was up to \$200,000 (roughly \$4.4 million in 2009 dollars).
- Fountain, *Under the March Sun*, 10–11.
- At its height, Hot Springs would typically host four teams each spring—about as many as the entire state of Georgia did each year. In addition, many veterans would begin their training in Hot Springs before joining their teams in training camp elsewhere.
- Fountain, *Under the March Sun*, 16–17. Wilbert Robinson and Hugh Jennings were also on Hanlon's squad during this revolution in spring-training tactics.
- Sporting Life*, 31 December 1898, 1. The state of Alabama is between Georgia and Mississippi.
- Sporting Life*, 9 January 1897, 3. It's hard to know to what extent it may be the reporter who is making the argument; the same reporter, after all, would be traveling with the team for spring training.
- In the late 19th century, Thomasville became a popular winter getaway for the well-to-do; in 1887, it was described by *Harpers Magazine* as "the best winter resort on three continents."
- Stout and Johnson, *Red Sox Century*, 20.
- The term *yannigan*, denoting a second-string player, reserve, or rookie was in general use by the late nineteenth century. See, for example, "All Hail Yannigans," *New York World*, 4 April 1897, 8. In its time, the term could have the same positive or negative connotations that *rookie* has today, depending on context.
- Jennings also coached the university team to its signature win against the University of Pennsylvania in 1897—the first such visit by a Northern college to face a Southern opponent. Since college baseball seasons ended with the coming of summer, many major leaguers had the opportunity to coach college ball before their own regular season began.
- Stout and Johnson, *Red Sox Century*, 26.
- Fountain, *Under the March Sun*, 14.
- Bill Donahue, "Remembering Tim Donahue," *Elysian Fields Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 84.
- Stout and Johnson, *Red Sox Century*, 138.
- Sporting Life*, 3 June 1911, 5. Mack also cited a desire to train his players away from the presence of reporters.
- Atlanta Constitution*, 5 April 1902, 1.
- Atlanta Constitution*, 20 March 1911, 7.
- When George decided to change his principal crop from cotton to corn, peas, and hay, this was big enough news to be reported in the *Atlanta Constitution*, as was the time he gave up his drawing room in a railcar for President-Elect Taft. George Stallings' father, William Henry Stallings, entered the war in 1861 as senior first lieutenant with Blodgett's Flying Artillery (later Milledge's Battery). He later reenlisted as a private in a State Guard infantry unit in Augusta. National Archives, NARA M266.
- Stallings managed the Philadelphia Phillies (1897–98), the Detroit Tigers (1901), the New York Highlanders (1909–10), and the Boston Braves (1913–20), the latter stint including riding herd on the 1914 "Miracle" Braves. He managed seven different minor-league teams (some more than once), winning Eastern League championships with the Buffalo Bisons in 1904 and 1906. Connie Mack and George Stallings are reportedly the only two major-league managers to have regularly worn street clothes on the bench.
- Kaese, *The Boston Braves*, 168.
- Perdue himself would be back for spring training in Georgia as a manager, bringing his Louisville Colonels (American Association) to Athens in 1917.
- Labor law in Georgia at this time, written in part to strengthen the sharecropper system, made it illegal to offer a person employment when they were already under contract to someone else.
- Sporting Life*, 28 March 1914, 3. Perhaps that short time at Johns Hopkins paid off.
- In the same vein, in late 1911, Hot Springs took steps to build more fields to attract more teams to the town.
- "Dover Hall, Near Brunswick, May Soon Be Converted into Mammoth Training Grounds," *Atlanta Constitution*, 15 January 1915.
- For more information on this little-known but fascinating episode in Georgia's baseball history, see Brian McKenna's excellent article about Dover Hall on the SABR Biography Project Web site.
- A necessary condition for the development of this practice was the growth of the "farm" system tying minor-league teams to major-league "parent" clubs. Prior to World War II, many of the minor-league teams were without any formal major-league affiliation and thus made spring-training plans on their own.
- Due in part to the rise in public relations as a way to boost attendance for the upcoming season, virtually every hometown newspaper for each of the minor-league teams in training camp ran articles praising the operations. Often these were "canned" reports repeated verbatim in several papers at once.
- "Braves May Close Camp at Waycross," *Lawton Constitution*, 15 February 1957. Thanks to Wynn Montgomery for bringing this episode to the author's attention.
- Fountain, *Under the March Sun*, 35.

The Red Clay of Waycross

Minor-League Spring Training in Georgia with the Milwaukee Braves

DANIEL PAPILLON and BILL YOUNG

Other than being eaten alive and shot at, Waycross was great.

— Hank Aaron (1953)

On March 18, 1953, the Boston Braves did something no club had managed to do since 1903, when the Orioles fled Baltimore to become the New York Highlanders. They moved. To Milwaukee. Among the goods and chattels they brought along was a newly acquired minor-league spring-training facility located beside the Okefenokee Swamp on the outskirts of Waycross, Georgia.

We have a particular affection for Waycross. As natives of Quebec City, our baseball interests tend naturally toward the game's history in Quebec Province, and part of that story includes Waycross. From 1951 to 1955, Quebec's entry in the Provincial League (Class C) served as a farm team for the big-league Braves, and from 1953 until our league folded in early 1956, our Braves trained in Waycross.

In those days, spring training was thoroughly covered by our local newspapers—the French-language *Le Soleil and L'Evenement* and the English *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*, founded in 1764 and considered North America's oldest newspaper. Senior columnists filed lush, daily reports under the Waycross dateline, highlighting the happenings of baseball's early spring. Their stories were rife with images of summer games and summer splendor—and provided welcomed refuge from the next blizzard (there was always a next blizzard). Over time, Waycross acquired an aura of mystery and exoticism out of all proportion to reality. This article is our opportunity to restore that balance.

Waycross (the camp) was always about the minor leagues, specifically the lower minors, Class A to Class D. While the Braves' major-league team and higher affiliates utilized different spring-training venues, including Bradenton, Jacksonville, Kissimmee, and later West Palm Beach, Florida, Waycross remained primarily a "rookie factory,"¹ the preserve of the novice.

The Braves first introduced separate training for their farm affiliates² in 1949, at a camp built on a former Army air base in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. When the military wanted the base back four years later, the club relocated to the Waycross area, where it remained throughout the 13-year history of the Milwaukee Braves (1953–65) and one year beyond.³

In the beginning, teams came from such cities as Eau Claire, Wisconsin; Evansville, Indiana; Jacksonville, Florida; Lawton, Oklahoma; Quebec City, Quebec; and Wellsville, New York.⁴ Farm director John Mullen believed that by gathering together young players and subjecting them to scrutiny by as many managers and scouts as possible, the Braves might cut a year or more off the time it would take the youth to reach the big club.⁵ Indeed, by 1955, 11 such recruits had made it onto the Milwaukee Braves roster. It was a mass-production approach to be sure, but it delivered.

Following the Braves' migration to Atlanta in 1966, team president John McHale negotiated a deal with authorities in West Palm Beach, the major-league club's spring-training home since 1963, "to expand the operation to include the entire Braves' farm system."⁶ In no time the Waycross camp was shuttered, and a new chapter had begun.

In 1997, the Braves moved again, this time to Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex in Kissimmee, Florida. Today, the minor-league setup occupies an expansive area called the Quadraplex. It includes four practice fields positioned directly behind Champion Stadium and four others set aside for amateur teams. The operation is state of the art in every way—and a very far cry from the red clay of Waycross.

SPRING TRAINING AT WAYCROSS

The city of Waycross sits in the heart of southeastern Georgia, at the northern tip of the Okefenokee Swamp, once home to Pogo of the daily comics⁷ and more formally called the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

Set midway between Interstates I-95 and I-75, Waycross occupies a spot where road and rail naturally intersect. In other words, Waycross truly is the place where the ways cross. Today, surrounded by a regional population of 15,000, Waycross serves as the county seat for Ware County and is regarded as something of a tourist destination.

Long before the Braves arrived in Waycross, the town had crafted its own baseball history. In 1898, the Chicago Colts, the forerunners of the Cubs, set up spring training there, only to discover that Waycross was “a temperance town with few amenities”⁸ and that the team would be lodged at a “Podunk hotel with only two bathtubs for 18 men, the infields were weedy patches of sand, and the cuisine outraged the ballplayers.”⁹ In 1906, the town hosted the Machinists, a professional team in the Class D Georgia State League. Both team and league disbanded after one season. The same fate struck the Waycross Blowhards of the short-lived Empire State League in 1913.¹⁰ Efforts to reestablish baseball in the area in 1914 fared a little better but were abandoned in less than two years.¹¹ [EDITORS’ NOTE: See Bill Ross’s article on the Empire State League elsewhere in this journal.]

During the mid-1920s, a tarnished Shoeless Joe Jackson, by then banished forever to the shadowy world of semiprofessional baseball, played for and managed the Waycross Coast Liners, guiding them to the state championship in 1924.¹² Fifteen years later, the Waycross Bears joined the Class D Georgia-Florida League and in 1940 captured their first pennant. Milwaukee acquired the Bears as an affiliate in 1956, and the team (renamed the Braves) survived until the league shut down in 1958.¹³ In 1962, the Georgia-Florida League reappeared for one year as a Class D circuit and became Class A in

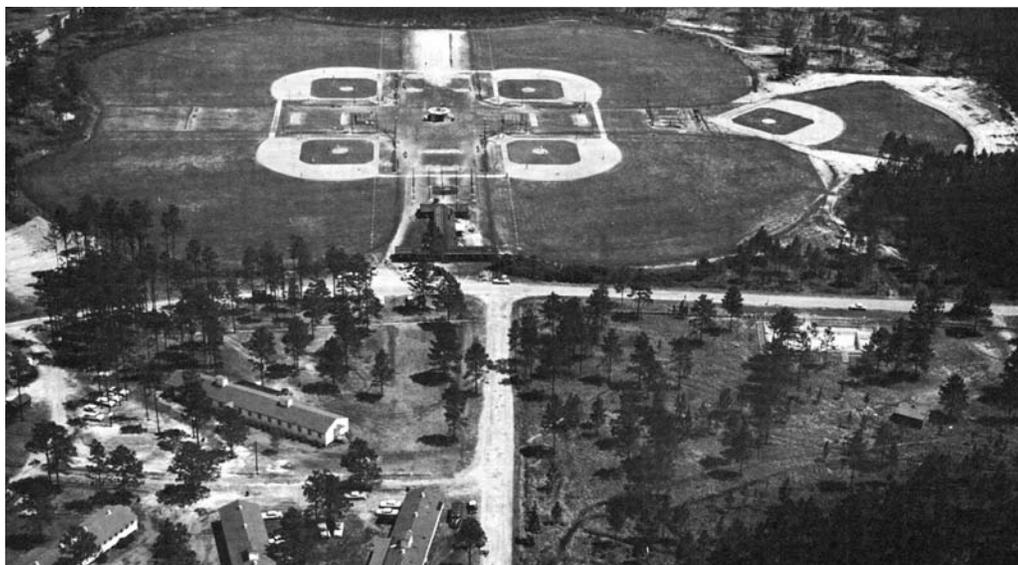
1963 when the minor leagues eliminated the lower classifications. Waycross fielded a team, again called the Braves, in that second and final season.

In 1954, the Bears signed two local Negro players, Silas Harmon and Perry Bellamy. While neither lasted more than a few games, they were, according to the *St. Petersburg Times*, “the first of their race to appear in the Class D Georgia-Florida Baseball League.”¹⁴ However, Lew Jones, a Milwaukee signee, also claimed this honor. That same year he put in six games with the Bears before leaving baseball altogether.¹⁵ All three names appear on the Bears’ 1954 roster although none played more than a handful of games.¹⁶

The April 23, 1954, edition of the *Milwaukee Journal* Sunday supplement includes a charming photo spread featuring the Braves’ Waycross minor-league spring-training camp. One caption declares that “the road to the major leagues is long and dusty more often than not. Along the way most boys must make several stops for seasoning in the ‘bush’ leagues.”¹⁷ Facile, perhaps, but appropriate. For in 1954, all roads around the Waycross camp were indeed surrounded by bush—slash pines and sawgrass—and were nothing if not “long and dusty.”

To a first-time visitor, the Waycross camp must have seemed remote and forbidding.¹⁸ Lurking well beyond the town along the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp, the camp’s only link to the outside world was a “thin tar road...that eventually snaked through the swamp to the highway that led to Waycross ten miles away.”¹⁹ Hank Aaron, who attended in 1953, said it was so “isolated from the main part of town [that] a team bus took the players into town once a week to do

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Waycross “Bravesville,” as it appeared circa 1960.

laundry and other needful things.”²⁰ Aspiring pitcher Pat Jordan first arrived in the early morning and was enveloped by the “low-lying mist [stretching] to the line of trees that marked the beginning of the swamp 100 yards away.”²¹

The training facility actually sat on the site of the former Waycross Air Force Base of World War II vintage, on a piece of land, mostly red clay, one half-mile square and completely surrounded by swamp. Built from scratch, it could accommodate 150 to 300 players.²² While comfortable, it gave lie “to the theory that modern baseball, at least in the minors, is like living at a country club.”²³ However, it was spacious and well removed from town, with little around to disturb or distract.²⁴

Braves scout Hugh Wise, a civil engineer from Purdue who would become the camp’s first director, was in charge, assisted by his wife and “the glib, joke-telling Doc Gautreau,”²⁵ a former Braves player from the 1920s. Of French-Canadian ancestry, Walter “Doc” Gautreau had spent five years with the Montreal Royals at the end of his career and was still conversant in French. Gautreau was a legendary figure at Waycross, acknowledged as an expert in the scouting and training of young hopefuls and famed for his good nature and generosity. As the unofficial host of the camp—they called him the “Greeter”—he oversaw the hospitality room and welcomed a steady stream of visitors to camp, often representatives from sporting-goods companies, who never missed a chance to visit. “Everybody loved to see Doc,” Roland Hemond, the Braves assistant farm director throughout the 1950s, remembers fondly.²⁶

Hemond married Margo Quinn, the daughter of Braves general manager John Quinn, in 1958 and, until he moved to the Angels in 1961, the young married couple spent spring training at Waycross. One year their quarters were next door to Gautreau’s hospitality room. “It was noisy,” recalls Hemond—“their room; not ours!” The following season, the club provided the couple with a trailer on the site.²⁷ In many ways, Hemond was the heart and soul of Waycross although, according to Jordan, Margo “was equally appreciated, as she was one of the few women who would occasionally visit the camp.”²⁸

That first year, Wise successfully fashioned “four diamonds out of marshland, an engineering feat regarded with respect by many experts.”²⁹ The diamonds were laid out in cloverleaf fashion around a two-story, cylindrical, tower-like brick rotunda. Home plate on each diamond sat about 30 yards from the rotunda, from whose top scouts and managers could watch any player in any game. The outfield fences marked the

beginning of the swamp,³⁰ although in the early years there were just “dirt piles out there that served as fences.”³¹ Says Hemond, “It was an outstanding facility. There was nothing else like it, except perhaps at Vero Beach. Hugh did a wonderful job of preparing excellent playing fields.”³²

Beyond the diamonds, set back in the woods, were nine wooden buildings, all of World War II vintage. The large one to the north was the clubhouse; another nearby served both as private office space for scouts, coaches, managers, and front-office personnel and as the recreation room. With a television set in the corner, tattered and faded armchairs throughout, and a card table where the veterans played bridge, the recreation room was the principal gathering place. Activities included “movies three nights a week, ping pong, shuffleboard, horse shoe pits, and a juke box.”³³ Curfew was set at 11:00 P.M. Pat Jordan, in his autobiographical *A False Spring*, describes the spring of 1960, which he spent at Waycross. “No matter how early, someone was always playing a fierce game of Ping-Pong.”³⁴

A False Spring provides many of the details offered in this article regarding the Waycross camp in the 1960s.³⁵ Jordan was a promising 18-year-old pitcher within the Braves’ system. He had begun the 1960 campaign at Bradenton, Florida, with the Louisville Colonels of the Triple-A American Association. When the Braves made their first roster cuts, he was sent down to Waycross, reflecting the team policy of giving “their young prospects a taste of life at the top . . . during at least one spring training, so that upon seeing such minor league camps as Waycross they would be inspired to a level of play that would guarantee their never returning.”³⁶



Milwaukee personnel at Bradenton in the early 1950s. Roland Hemond is in the front, second from left, and Doc Gautreau is in the second row over Roland’s left shoulder.

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At Waycross, everyone slept in one of six identical long and narrow army barracks—precociously called “teepees”³⁷—set 50 yards or so to the north of the administration building. Each building was supervised by a manager and a scout. Lou Fusk of the *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*, a scribe prone to overstatement, called these accommodations “the last word in comfort.”³⁸ In the first years, beds were double bunks, placed against the walls, just feet apart and facing each other across a central corridor. Doors at both ends of the building led either to the cafeteria or to basic bathroom facilities—a few sinks, a long stained urinal, and three open-stalled toilets. Because nights could become cold, the barracks were equipped with gas heaters. Some feared that a malfunction could asphyxiate half the rookie crop. “But this could never happen,” says Hemond. “The buildings were of war-time construction and so full of cracks that when the wind blew it went right through the walls, providing excellent ventilation. There was nothing to worry about.”³⁹

The cafeteria-like mess hall, owned and operated by the Braves, was further north and near the swamp. This simple square room equipped with trestle-style picnic tables and benches, and an open kitchen provided three meals a day. Players tended to eat lunch—typically consommé in paper cups, milk, a Hershey bar, an apple, and an orange—outside so they could quickly get back to their baseball duties. To Fusk, the dining arrangements were “splendid” and the “food dished out . . . ample and tasty.”⁴⁰ Don C. Trenary of the *Milwaukee Journal* wrote that the food was so good “that in eight years [*sic*] there has been only one complaint.”⁴¹ Jim Fanning, assistant general manager of the Braves before following John McHale to the Montreal Expos in 1969, oversaw camp operations in the mid-1960s and asserted “the food was fantastic.”⁴²

Braves general manager John Quinn was justifiably proud of the Waycross facility. “We have built four fine practice diamonds at Waycross and our housing for the kids sent there to work out is one of the finest anywhere.”⁴³ Willie O’Ree, a young black man from Canada who earned a brief tryout at Waycross before ultimately making his mark in hockey, concurred. “They had pits in which you could practice sliding,” he wrote. “They had pitching pits, and they had great equipment.”⁴⁴ Aaron noted that with batting practice and intrasquad games going on at the same time, “I got almost as much [hitting] as I wanted.”⁴⁵ Of course it helped that he had been tagged as a sure-fire

prospect. John Ambrose, who briefly was Aaron’s teammate at Jacksonville and who spent the summer with the Quebec Braves, remembers that whenever Aaron came to bat at Waycross on any of the diamonds, the scouts on the tower would automatically shift their attention to him. “Back then he couldn’t have weighed more than 150 pounds,” said Ambrose recently, “but could he hit home runs, especially to the opposite field.”⁴⁶

To Lou Fusk, Waycross possessed “every facility possible for the development of young talent.” Commenting in 1955, he called the camp “one of the most efficient in baseball, with any number of former players and coaches on hand to lecture on and teach such fundamentals as sliding, base running, and batting practices with mechanical pitching machines.”⁴⁷ To another Quebec writer it was simply “magnifique.”⁴⁸

It was also expensive. According to the *St. Petersburg Times*, the Braves’ 1957 annual budget designated \$150,000 for the Waycross camp, with \$60,000 targeted for the camp and \$90,000 for spring training.⁴⁹ By 1959, Waycross was hosting upward of 380 young men, with an average age of 20 years, and the number of clubs training there had risen to eight.⁵⁰ Of the 30 players on the 1957 Milwaukee Braves roster, more than half had come through “this camp or its predecessor at Myrtle Beach, S.C.”⁵¹

The Braves gave the camp a thorough overhaul in 1960, beginning with a name change. They replaced the cumbersome “Waycross farm system spring training camp” with a sharper “Bravesville.” They installed a public-address system that could “be heard on all five diamonds and other training areas,”⁵² put up portable outfield fences around the diamonds, built a road from the playing areas to the dorms, added a press box and sun deck atop the rotunda, upgraded the clubhouse by adding lockers, and installed new kitchen equipment in the cafeteria.⁵³

Although camp activity was centered on spring training, other short-term player-evaluation programs kept the place busy much of the year. One of these programs was the Braves’ Silver Slugger Schools for youngsters ages 16–21 directed by scouts such as Doc Gautreau. Top achievers were then sent to Waycross, where they received “additional major-league training” and the possibility of a minor-league contract.⁵⁴

On arrival at camp, players faced the task of registering, sorting out accommodations and meals, and so on—“stuff that anyone who has ever gone to college well understands.”⁵⁵ In the early years, each farm club

brought its own uniforms, leading to a considerable duplication of numbers and much confusion for managers and camp directors. Vern Handrahan of Prince Edward Island, who pitched briefly for the Kansas City Athletics, attended Waycross in 1959. As he recalls it, “there were about 400 [sic] of us trying out, and everybody had a big white number on his cap so the coaches could tell who you were. I was about number 340.”⁵⁶

Eventually the organization decided to issue standard gray practice uniforms to all players. Players were assigned numbers at registration and then required to sew them on. “There was something quite humbling about wearing a shirt with 299 on its back,” said Jordan.⁵⁷

The real work started after breakfast. Upward of 300 players would suit up in the dark and cold dressing area, with its concrete walls and floors smelling of sweat and mildew and floors “littered with chunks of red clay dislodged from hundreds of spikes.”⁵⁸ Everybody “dressed quickly and went outside where we could draw a deep breath, and the hot sun could begin to dry our wet uniforms.”⁵⁹

Morning workouts consisted of light calisthenics, infield and outfield drills, and batting practice held on every diamond. During the first three weeks, the routine included afternoon in-house games or occasional games against teams from other organizations training in Georgia. Later on, morning games were added. There were no workouts on Sunday morning so personnel could attend religious services.⁶⁰

Instructors were plentiful, says Roland Hemond, “experienced men of quality, men like Johnny Mize, Paul Waner, Billy Southworth, Quebec Braves manager George McQuinn, Roland Gladu, and Walter (Doc) Gautreau.”⁶¹ They saw their participation as a chance to give back to the game while enjoying a warm Georgia sun. In the mid-1950s, these men were joined by a woman. Alice Richardson was a University of Wisconsin professor specializing in improving the speed and accuracy of human vision. The Braves hired her to train minor-league players “for such useful chores as fielding the ball while men are running the bases.”⁶²

Throughout the spring, team lineups changed on a daily basis, and individuals regularly moved from squad to squad. Players learned their assignments in the morning from sheets of colored paper pinned to the barracks’ bulletin boards. There was a sheet for each of the camp’s minor-league managers, listing the players assigned to him that day. The distribution kept changing, right up until the last game, when the “manager under whose name you appeared would be the manager with whom you would begin the season.”⁶³ It

was chaotic. “You had hundreds of guys in camp,” recalled Aaron, “guys with numbers on their back like 195F—and nobody knew where they were headed.”⁶⁴

Nobody, that is, except for those whose names appeared on the dreaded pink sheet, the one cryptically headed, “Will the players listed below please report to [named executive’s] office before nine o’clock this morning.”⁶⁵ These players were about to receive their unconditional release. Or, as Willie O’Ree put it: “If your name appeared on this list, it meant you were being sent home.”⁶⁶ Decisions to keep or release a player were made at the end of the day by managers and scouts who evaluated each player.⁶⁷

The camp, already a beehive of activity, was made more so by the steady flow of visitors intent on chatting with players and watching them work out. Family, friends, writers, scouts, and general hangers-on all added to the hustle and bustle of the day. Girls from the local high school and other young women, drawn by the mystery of burnished strangers from afar, were regulars as well. Their presence sounded echoes of an earlier time, when airmen on their way to war passed through Waycross.

Nevertheless, regardless of what was happening, or when, or where, there was always someone watching—



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George McQuinn and Sibby Sisti experience the Carnaval de Québec with Bonhomme Carnaval, circa 1955. McQuinn managed the Quebec Braves from 1950 through 1954; Sisti managed in 1955.

usually from the top of the rotunda. It was here that the most influential decision makers (general manager John Quinn, John Mullen, and his assistant Roland Hemond) took in practice drills and games. “I realized,” wrote Jordan, “that not only would I be noticed but my every move would be watched.”⁶⁸

WAYCROSS: AN INCIDENTAL MELTING POT

Although Jackie Robinson had broken through baseball’s color barrier in 1946 with the Montreal Royals, most clubs were still wrestling with this new reality a decade later. A few, notably the Dodgers, the Giants, and the Indians, saw it as a boon. And so too did the Braves.

In 1950, Boston signed Negro Leagues veteran Sam Jethroe to a major-league contract, and he won the NL Rookie of the Year Award.⁶⁹ African American players Buzz Clarkson and George Crowe and Puerto Rican Luis Marquez followed, and the precedent was set. The newly minted Milwaukee Braves added Bill Bruton and Jim Pendleton in 1953, Hank Aaron and catcher Charlie White in 1954, and Panamanian pitcher Humberto Robinson, who had played in Quebec, the following year.⁷⁰ Along the way the club continued to invite young black and Hispanic players to spring training, most of whom started at Waycross. Racial integration had begun to make inroads throughout the Braves organization.⁷¹

Hank Aaron was a member of the first Waycross class in 1953, as were Felix Mantilla of Puerto Rico and Horace Garner, once an Indianapolis Clown. Other minority players in camp that year included Humberto Robinson, Ike Quarterman, and John Charles, the brother of future Mets third baseman Ed Charles, who was serving his military call-up at the time. Both brothers played in Quebec, though during different years.

The experiences of these early players—indeed of all the minority players who passed through Waycross—tell us something about the camp, the Braves organization, and race relations within the state of Georgia. In the Deep South, attitudes had changed little since the end of the Civil War almost 90 years before. Segregation was a fact. Social order rested on a precariously delicate and illusory balance. The customs and the laws of the state had to be respected, as when Aaron was being driven through the Okefenokee on his way to the Waycross facility for the first time. “The only reason [the mosquitoes]⁷² didn’t get me was that I had to stay in the car,” he said. “The other guys brought sandwiches out to me, and I ate in the back seat.”⁷³ He was forbidden entry to the eatery.

On the other hand, the Braves were intent on building winning teams—championship teams—where black and white, English-speaking and non-English-speaking players could achieve success by working together. It was a fine line, but one the Braves managed to walk with some considerable success. After finishing second in 1955 and 1956, the team made two straight trips to the World Series, winning it all in 1957. Throughout, their rosters reflected a definite multicultural flavor, such that by 1961 executive vice-president Birdie Tebbetts could say, “Half our club is colored and a player, white or Negro, has an equal chance to make the club and to make a living.”⁷⁴

If the Braves had a philosophy regarding race, it was probably weighted toward the minimal—respecting community norms without losing sight of the goal of winning ballgames. When, for example, infielder Edwin Charles attended spring training in Bradenton, where players were then housed in local hotels, his roommate was Jack Litrell, a white man.⁷⁵

Similarly, when Aaron played his first year of integrated baseball (which was also his introduction to organized ball) in 1952 with Eau Claire, Wisconsin, of the Northern League, he was named the league’s Rookie of the Year. Aaron regarded this recognition as a remarkable distinction, not so much because he was “the third straight Eau Claire player to win the award—after (Bill) Bruton and (Horace) Garner—but that I was the third straight member of my race to win it.”⁷⁶

Within the Waycross camp, issues with overtones of segregation most often related to sleeping accommodations. Here again, decisions tended to reflect community standards. In Aaron’s time, camp “was great . . . we slept in barracks, blacks and whites in the same long room.”⁷⁷ Aaron considered this a “pretty bold thing for that day and age” and attributed it in part to the fact that “the camp was far enough from town that none of the local people paid much attention to us.”⁷⁸ John Ambrose recalled that the players did everything together. “The Braves were good that way,” he mused, “they never struck me as prejudiced.”⁷⁹

Such was Roland Hemond’s recollection as well. Because the Braves were the sole occupants of the camp, “the atmosphere was more relaxed than perhaps in a different kind of facility. One of our strengths was that we all got along pretty well. If the barracks were divided I doubt it was something highly structured. Frankly, I can’t recall any incidents that might contradict that view.”⁸⁰

Hemond regards the Braves of the 1950s and the camp at Waycross as something special. “We were a small organization, we had great camaraderie, and we

worked closely together—everybody pitched in. It was a time of real personalities,” he adds, “personalities such as Doc Gautreau and Donald Davidson, the Braves travelling secretary.”⁸¹

However, by the time Willie O’Ree was flown down from Canada in 1956 to show his stuff, the barracks had become segregated. “I was assigned to a dorm with eight to ten other ballplayers, guys from the Dominican Republic, the West Indies, and Cuba,” he wrote. “Black guys like me. I was getting the picture all too well.”⁸² History professor Ken Fenster of SABR’s Magnolia Chapter suggests that “this change is not surprising because of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, [prohibiting racial discrimination in schools.] What whites were willing to countenance before *Brown*, integrated sleeping arrangements, eating arrangements, etc, they were not willing to accept after *Brown*.”⁸³ According to Fenster, the *Brown* decision “undermined the social fabric of the South. . . . Southerners rejected integration and wanted to rescind earlier efforts at integration.”⁸⁴

Bill Lucas’s story of barracks life suggests a darker side. An African American, he was a rookie infielder at Waycross in 1957. As recounted in his obituary, “there were old army [*sic*] barracks. . . . One was for blacks, the other for whites. At night, they would lock the blacks inside. All the blacks, that is, except Lucas. ‘There was no way they were going to lock me in that fire trap. No way at all,’ Bill said, and he told that to the coaches.”⁸⁵

Regardless what went on within camp, the organization was limited in what it could do to acclimatize nonwhite or foreign players to the broader, changing world beyond—and in the South that meant dealing with the intransigence of Jim Crow politics. At the personal level, offers of help usually came informally from caring individuals in a position to make a difference. A case in point is Ben Geraghty, manager of the Jacksonville Braves. “In all the years I played baseball,” wrote Hank Aaron, “I never had a manager who cared more for his players or knew more about the game.”⁸⁶

Jacksonville was part of the Sally League, a baseball icon revered in the Deep South. Unfortunately, the Deep South, as Willie O’Ree observed, “was not the most pleasant place for a black man to be.”⁸⁷ Aaron’s writing colleague Lonnie Wheeler was even more direct. “Placing a black player in the South,” he wrote, “was dangerous, at worst, and, at best, scandalous.”⁸⁸ Yet in 1953, here were the Braves sending the trio of Aaron, Mantilla, and Garner to the Sally League, in

Jacksonville. And to make the experience even more frightening, they would become not only the first black players on their team but in the league as well.⁸⁹ It fell to Geraghty to help them make it through.⁹⁰ “Wherever we stayed,” Aaron wrote, “Ben Geraghty would always make it a point to come over and see us . . . it meant a lot to us that the manger would go out of his way to make us feel like part of the team.”⁹¹

Cito Gaston remembers that when he first signed with the Braves, ten years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, “there were places we had to stay in black hotels in the woods.” He adds, “Sometimes, you couldn’t get off the bus at restaurants and the white guys would bring us food.” Once, when manager Andy Pafko discovered that a particular restaurant didn’t serve blacks, says Gaston, “he told us: ‘Okay, nobody goes there.’ But some of the white guys went, anyway. Sometimes, it was hard to figure out who had your back and who was trying to put a knife into it.”⁹²

At times there was no one to break the ice. Lew Jones was a black first baseman from Florida who attended Waycross in 1954. He began the season with Eau Claire but was transferred back to Georgia to play with the Braves’ Waycross affiliate in the Georgia-Florida League. It was not a pleasant experience. The Bears already had a first baseman, and Jones was struggling at the plate. Internet journalist Kevin T. Czerwinski wrote that “there were cities on the circuit that wouldn’t host an opponent if one of the team members was black, so Jones was left behind.” Following a major misunderstanding with his manager, Jones just walked away and out of baseball. He became a teacher, earning a master’s degree and Ph.D. along the way. “Baseball was a stepping stone for a great life,” he says today, perhaps ambiguously.⁹³

Among Hispanic and French-speaking Quebec players in camp, the need for comfort and guidance was equally great, for not only were they strangers to a system, but they were strangers to the language. Roland Hemond recalls that several Hispanic prospects found this mix too daunting and returned home, a malaise that probably touched certain Quebecois players as well. Don C. Trenary tells a story of a young Puerto Rican who, during a nighttime power failure, couldn’t find his way to the washroom and panicked, his unintelligible cries creating havoc in his teepee. When things eventually got sorted out, “everybody laughed heartily and went back to bed. Except for the bewildered Puerto Rican. He had thought he was caught in a riot and it took a sedative to quiet him.”⁹⁴

Aaron saw firsthand how this problem affected his Jacksonville teammate Felix Mantilla. Writing about racial taunts in the Sally League, Aaron said, “We [he and Horace Garner] were both accustomed to it, being from the South, but Felix never heard that sort of thing growing up in Puerto Rico. It wasn’t as easy for him to turn the other cheek.”⁹⁵

In camp, among those offering support to Hispanic players was Bill Lucas, the same man who had once removed the locks at Waycross. Following his playing days, Lucas joined the Braves’ front office, eventually working his way “through the ranks to farm director and then general manager of the team in Atlanta—the highest position of any black in organized baseball.”⁹⁶ His later efforts to bridge gaps between the black and white populations in Atlanta contributed immensely to the team’s acceptance by both communities.⁹⁷ Lucas was an outgoing and friendly man and when he “just saw a need” to assist the Hispanic contingent at Bravesville, he acted. He explained: “How much harder it must be for the players coming from a different country and speaking another language . . . so I just step in and help.”⁹⁸

One man he helped was Rico Carty, a native of the Dominican Republic. The two men first met at Waycross in 1960, when Carty was finding the going especially tough. At the time, Lucas spoke very little Spanish, and Carty had no English, but somehow the two men connected.

Carty says that when he first landed in Waycross, he “struck out 45 times. I mean without touching the ball. And when I saw those pitchers throwing the ball right by me, the first thing on my mind was, ‘Send me home because I don’t like it over here . . . it’s too cold. My English is no good. I strike out. I’d like to be home with my mother now.’ So I went to John Mullen and said, ‘Give me my release. I can’t play the game.’”

Mullen’s answer was, “If you want to go home, give me back my money.” Carty replied, “If you want that money, go to my country and get it.” Mullen was adamant: “If I don’t get it, you’re not leaving.”

“I felt the tears start to roll from my eyes, remembers Carty, “and I walk away.”⁹⁹

Fortunately, things changed. Coaches gave him another look; his confidence improved, as did his hitting, and soon Carty was on his way to a 15-year career as an outfielder in the major leagues.

In the early years, a number of Quebec ballplayers, all standouts in local baseball circles, also found their way to Waycross. The 1953 group included four—Georges Maranda and Jean-Marc Blais, holdovers from the 1952 Quebec Braves; Jean-Guy Hébert; and Claude

Sénéchal. In 1954, a solid third baseman, André Pratte, showed “plenty of finesse at the hot corner and at bat, poling the pitches to the far corners of the field.”¹⁰⁰ Others followed. For the most part, their English skills were minimal, and so they turned to folks like Doc Gautreau or Roland Gladu and especially to Roland Hemond for direction.

Today, Hemond is among the most respected administrators in the game; SABR presents an annual award for “lifetime achievement for long-term contributions to scouting and player development” in his honor. Back then, however, he was a young man just starting out. He had joined the Braves organization with Hartford in 1951, and after a brief stopover with the Boston club, he was appointed assistant farm director. In 1961 he became the scouting and farm director for the Los Angeles Angels.

“I can still speak French,” Hemond told Bill Nowlin for the SABR Baseball Biography Project. “French helped me earlier in my career with some of the young French players, like Claude Raymond and Georges Maranda and Ron Piché. They all made it to the major leagues. They were young pitchers attending their first spring training in the Milwaukee Braves organization in Waycross, Georgia, and they couldn’t speak English. They were thrilled when I greeted them, just like some of the Latin players appreciate it when some of the baseball people speak Spanish to them when they hit the country.”¹⁰¹ He believes his ability to help French-speaking players made a difference because it gave a



Quebec lads at Waycross with Billy Southworth (1953). Jean-Marc Blais, Georges Maranda, Southworth, Claude Sénéchal, Jean-Guy Hébert. Signed by the Braves in 1951, Maranda broke into the major leagues with the San Francisco Giants in 1960.

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more personal feel to their first professional baseball experience.¹⁰²

Waycross provided Piché's introduction to professional baseball, and with his limited English and the strangeness of the environment, he considers it perhaps the toughest of all his baseball challenges. It was here he learned the universal truth that confronts all non-natives: that to survive, one needs to be better than his counterparts. "I was the foreigner," Piché recalls. "I was taking the place of an American kid."¹⁰³

In the larger world outside the camp and beyond the team, there was little the club could do to shield its players from the prejudices surrounding them. When Willie O'Ree tried out with the Braves in 1956, the local scout who signed him put him on an airplane to Atlanta, but from there O'Ree was on his own. He knew things would be different but was still not prepared for the "Whites Only" and "Colored Only" washrooms that greeted him in the airport. "I walked into the colored one," he wrote. "I wasn't going to cause a revolution during my first few minutes in town."¹⁰⁴

O'Ree spent two weeks at Waycross. On the first Sunday, he and several dormmates left camp for an all-black Baptist Church. Following the service, they stepped into a drugstore. "There were these white guys sitting at the soda fountain," he recalls, "and sure enough, they started in with racial remarks and name-calling. We got out of there before there was any real trouble."¹⁰⁵

O'Ree was released a week later, but this time there was no flight home. This time he had to make the five-day, 2,000-mile trip by bus. For the first three days, he sat in the back. "I was only allowed to use the washroom or grab a sandwich at a rest stop. As we drove farther north I moved farther up the bus. By the time we got to the Canadian border I was sitting up front."¹⁰⁶

Henry Aaron's introduction to Waycross beyond the camp gates was more than unpleasant or awkward; it was almost fatal. Shortly after arriving, he took the camp bus into town for a haircut. Somehow he missed the return trip, which meant making the long walk back to the barracks. By the time he reached the outer reaches of the camp, darkness had set in. Rather than follow the road, he tried a shortcut through the woods. "I found my way," Aaron wrote, "and when I came out, the guard spotted me. All he saw was a black kid sneaking up on the barracks, so without further ado, *he opened fire*.¹⁰⁷ Bullets were flying past my ears. I could see my career ending right there in the red clay of Waycross, Georgia—to say nothing of my life."¹⁰⁸ Aaron did make it safely back to his

bunk, and the next day, "John Mullen gave me a Bulova watch and told me not to miss the bus anymore."¹⁰⁹

As the decade progressed, racial tensions in Georgia escalated and harder lines emerged. Distressed by the imposition of *Brown v. Board of Education*, state politicians became increasingly determined to entrench segregation by means of legislation. Versions of a bill—often called the "racial bill"—designed to prohibit integration in athletic competitions¹¹⁰ were introduced in both 1955 and 1956, without success.

However, the iteration of the bill brought forward in 1957 had a greater shelf life, and while it too ultimately failed, its echoes resonated for some time afterward. Georgia Governor Marvin Griffin had already made clear his position. Convinced that the South stood "at Armageddon: the battle is joined,"¹¹¹ he had called for a ban "on contests with other teams where the races are mixed or where segregation is not required among spectators."¹¹²

In early 1957, the Georgia State Senate unanimously adopted Bill 44, prohibiting "all athletic matches, physical games, social functions and entertainment events" that involved blacks and whites together, and sent it to the House of Representatives for approval. Sponsored by Senator Leon Butts of Lumpkin County, the bill identified professional baseball as its primary target.¹¹³ Butts explained that "many persons in his area refused to attend Sally League games in Columbus because Negroes played with whites." He suggested doing away with baseball altogether "if they can't get along without Negroes."¹¹⁴

The *Milwaukee Journal* immediately understood the implications for Waycross. Adoption of the bill, said the *Journal*, would mean "that the Milwaukee Braves minor league training base in Waycross, Ga. is doomed."¹¹⁵ John Mullen was equally unequivocal, insisting that should the bill pass "we would transfer our Negro players from Waycross to Jacksonville, Florida, and have them train with our Wichita and Atlanta clubs. Next year we would have to relocate the training center." General manager John Quinn was more cautious. "We have a contract at Waycross which we must fill this year," he said, "but we may decide to move our rookie camp operations to another state a year from now."¹¹⁶

Reactions elsewhere within the baseball community were similar. One newspaper opined that the bill "would force major league teams to move their minor league practice camps out of Georgia, where there has been much activity in towns such as Thomasville,

Waycross, and Albany.”¹¹⁷ To the scholar Charles Bett- hauser, the issue was fundamental to the future of America. Writing some years later with reference to the Minnesota Twins, he claimed that for the country to be considered fully integrated, “baseball’s spring training camps needed to be integrated as well. If it could not do that, then America would have to face a harsh reality: that its past-time would be forever tainted by discrimination and bigotry towards its own citizens.”¹¹⁸

Bill 44 never did become law. That failure led Georgia’s legislature to take a different, nastier approach: a petition to the U.S. Congress. Entitled the *1957 Georgia Memorial to Congress*,¹¹⁹ the document underscored Georgia’s “continuing battle for segregation” and, in language harsh and unfeeling, demanded the right to discriminate against racial minorities in public schools¹²⁰ and everywhere else.

By 1960, the Braves and the Orioles hosted the only minor-league training camps remaining in Georgia.¹²¹ In Bravesville life went on, shaken somewhat, but comforted by the camp’s self-imposed isolation. “At Waycross, you really had no way of knowing you were even in the South,” says Jim Fanning, who joined the organization in 1963. “Segregation was not a factor. To my knowledge there was never a [racial] incident of any kind at spring training.”¹²²

Nevertheless, it was some time before sleeping arrangements determined by rank or race were eliminated. In 1960, Jordon wrote “all the coaches, scouts, managers and front office people slept in the first

barrack; the white American players slept in the next three; the Spanish-speaking players in the fifth; and the black players in the sixth barrack closest to the swamp.”¹²³ Cito Gaston’s recollection was similar. When he entered professional baseball at Waycross as a 20-year-old, “we stayed in segregated army [sic] barracks, blacks and Latinos in one building, white players in another.” By his second year, however, “the barracks were integrated.”¹²⁴ Fenster suggests this was undoubtedly a consequence of the events leading up to “the passage of the Civil Rights Act.”¹²⁵

If, indeed, it took until 1964 for Bravesville to be fully integrated, this put them in arrears when measured against other organizations. According to Betthausser, by 1964 “teams, such as the Yankees, were enjoying integrated eating, housing and even theatres.”¹²⁶ The Cardinals had purchased a hotel of their own “to avoid such discriminatory problems.”¹²⁷ To the Braves’ credit, however, they achieved a significant first in 1961, when they fully integrated their spring ballpark in Bradenton, Florida.

Bravesville soldiered on, doing what it did best: preparing professional ball players. However, following the 1963 reorganization of baseball’s league-classification system and the elimination of the B, C, and D classes—the result of significant league and team contraction¹²⁸—its days grew numbered. When the now-Atlanta Braves began centralizing all spring-training operations at West Palm Beach, they built “a new clubhouse, lockers and three extra fields for Braves’ farm clubs”¹²⁹ and incorporated the five teams and 125–150 players remaining at Bravesville. And then they shut it down.¹³⁰

COURTESY OF JOE BALLENTINE (WAYCROSS)



Trembling Earth Recreational Complex, some six miles from the site of Bravesville, is the hub of youth sports in today’s Waycross. Note that the layout retains elements of Hugh Wise’s original design, a fitting reminder of a time and place mostly forgotten. Trivia alert: The word for “trembling earth” in the language of the local Creek people is *Okefenokee*.

The Waycross camp experienced a bit of a “dead cat bounce” in the spring of 1967, when the Kansas City Athletics left their minor-league center in Daytona Beach and moved in.¹³¹ But when the A’s decamped for Oakland, the minor-league operation also headed west.

And with that, *sans* bang and drawing barely a whimper, an epoch drew to an end.

Today, the Waycross camp is no more. After the baseballers moved out, local authorities converted the facility to a community recreational center. A concession stand went up where the rotunda once stood, a pool was installed, and the YMCA opened a summer day camp. Roger L. Williams says “that’s where I and many of my contemporaries learned to swim.”¹³² When the municipality replaced the center with a more modern facility some years later, the old Braves training grounds were incorporated into an expanding Waycross Ware County Industrial Park. The wooden Air Corps buildings were torn down, although the concrete changing room still stands; fences were removed; light standards disassembled; and the diamonds, still discernable beneath the unkempt grass, were left fallow. Little remains of once thriving Bravesville—except perhaps as a footnote in time.

Nevertheless, its legacy, the fruit of its many and varied accomplishments, will continue to ripen for years yet to come—and in the most unexpected ways. To Pat Jordan, “baseball was such an experience in my life that, ten years later, I have still not shaken it, will probably never shake it. I still think of myself, not as a writer who once pitched, but as a pitcher who happens to be a writer just now.”¹³³

When you get right down to it, Jordan’s encomium pretty well sums up the Waycross experience. It was a story of temporary denizens on a small piece of land hidden beyond the Okefenokee Swamp, young men who, over a period of almost 15 years, learned how to be baseball players—and, in so doing, brought change and deeper meaning to their lives and to the lives of others, sometimes in spite of themselves. ■

Notes

1. “Georgia Racial Bill Threatens Braves’ Base at Waycross,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 14 February 1957, 15.
2. “11 Braves’ Players Polished at Kids Camp in Six Years,” *The Sporting News*, 30 March, 1955, 21.
3. “Braves Shift Mass Farm Base,” *The Sporting News*, 3 March 1954, 22.
4. *Ibid.*
5. “11 Braves’ Players Polished at Kids Camp in Six Years.”
6. *The Palm Beach Post*, 4 October 1966.
7. www.georgiaencyclopedia.org.
8. Lyle Spatz, *Bad Bill Dahlen: The Rollicking Life and Times of an Early Baseball Star* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 53.
9. “The Old Ball Game,” ed. Bill Hicks, *The Oregonian*, 19 September 1994.
10. Peter Filichia, *Professional Baseball Franchises from the Abbeville Athletics to the Zanesville Indians* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 248.
11. The Waycross entry in the Class D Georgia State League in 1914 was called the Grasshoppers and later the Moguls. The following year, the league changed its name on June 15 to the Florida–Alabama–Georgia League (FLAG). It disbanded on July 17. Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball* (Durham, N.C.: Baseball America, 1993).
12. www.blackbetsy.com.
13. The manager of the renamed Waycross Braves was Mike Fandozzi. He is of interest to the authors because for seven years he played second base with the Quebec Braves and was perhaps the most popular player in the history of the club.
14. *St. Petersburg Times*, 30 June 1954, 23.
15. Kevin T. Czerwinski, “Class D Trailblazer Turned to Teaching,” MiLB.com.
16. <http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/league.cgi?code=GAF&class=A>.
17. “Braves of Future May Be Home Grown,” *Milwaukee Journal*, 25 April 1954, 3.
18. Not that Waycross itself was especially inhospitable. During the 1950s, according to a Waycross city profile, the town introduced a unique outreach approach to tourists. It seems that local police would stop motorists with out-of-state license plates and escort them downtown (one can only imagine the dismay that gesture must have generated). There, the friendly Waycross Welcome World Committee would greet them and offer “overnight lodging, dinner, and a trip to the swamp.” The program was eventually discontinued after the Interstate highways were built.
19. Pat Jordan, *A False Spring* (New York: Bantam, 1973), 112.
20. “Hank Aaron Biography,” *Oregon Post Magazine Online*, www.u-s-history.com/pages/h3753.html.
21. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 114.
22. Guy Lemieux, “A l’entraînement des Braves,” *L’Événement* (Québec), 1953.
23. Don C. Trenary, “Braves Will Take \$100,000 Gamble on Hopefuls in Rookie Spring Camp,” *Milwaukee Journal*, 3 March 1957, sect. 3, 3, 6.
24. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 114.
25. Trenary, “Braves Will Take \$100,000 Gamble.”
26. Telephone conversation with Roland Hemond, 5 February 2010.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 123.
29. “Hugh Wise, Braves’ Scout, Built Layout on Marshland,” *The Sporting News*, 21 March 1955, 21.
30. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 113.
31. Hank Aaron with Lonnie Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer: The Hank Aaron Story* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 54.
32. Telephone conversation with Roland Hemond, 5 February 2010.
33. “11 Braves’ Players Polished at Kids Camp in Six Years,” 21.
34. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 124.
35. *Ibid.*, 112–37.
36. *Ibid.*, 115–16.
37. “11 Braves’ Players Polished at Kids Camp in Six Years,” 21.
38. Louis J. Fusk, *Quebec Chronicle Telegraph*, 15 April 1955.
39. Telephone conversation with Roland Hemond, 5 February 2010.
40. Louis J. Fusk, *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*, 15 April 1955.
41. Trenary, “Braves Will Take \$100,000 Gamble.”
42. Telephone Conversation with Jim Fanning, 3 February 2010.
43. “Georgia Racial Bill Threatens Braves’ Base at Waycross,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 14 February, 1957, 15.
44. Willie O’Ree with Michael McKinley, *The Autobiography of Willie O’Ree: Hockey’s Black Pioneer* (Toronto: Somerville House, 2000), 41.
45. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had A Hammer*, 54.
46. Telephone conversation with John Ambrose, February 3, 2010.
47. Louis J. Fusk, *Quebec Chronicle Telegraph*, 15 April 1955.

48. Guy Lemieux, "A l'entraînement des Braves: rapports," *Le Soleil* (newspaper), April 1953.
49. *St. Petersburg Times*, 27 March 1957.
50. They were Austin, Texas; Boise, Idaho; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Eau Claire, Wisconsin; Jacksonville, Florida; McCook, Nebraska; Midland, Texas; and Wellsville, New York.
51. Trenary, "Braves Will Take \$100,000 Gamble."
52. "Time Will Tell but No. 243 May Play for Braves in '63," *Milwaukee Journal*, 29 March, 1960, 15.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 28 July 1957, section C, 7.
55. Lemieux, "A l'entraînement des Braves."
56. "Vern Handrahan, P.E.I. Pitcher, Struck Out 19 Batters in Game," in Jim Shearon, *Over the Fence Is Out: The Larry Walker Story and More of Canada's Baseball Legends* (Kanata: Malin Head Press, 2009), 153.
57. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 125.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*, 126.
60. "11 Braves' Players Polished at Kids Camp in Six Years," 21.
61. Telephone conversation with Roland Hemond, 5 February 2010.
62. *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 6 March 1956, 1.
63. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 117.
64. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 55.
65. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 118.
66. O'Ree with McKinley, *The Autobiography of Willie O'Ree*.
67. "11 Braves' Players Polished at Kids Camp in Six Years," 21.
68. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 130.
69. Sam Jethroe was traded from the Montreal Royals of the Triple-A International League to the Boston Braves in 1949 and made his National League debut in 1950. He was the first African American to wear a Boston uniform for a major-league team. The Red Sox were the last major-league team to integrate, when Pumpsie Green took the field in 1959. Larry Moffi and Jonathan Kronstadt, *Crossing the Line: Black Major Leaguers, 1947–1959* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994).
70. *Ibid.*
71. Shearon, *Over the Fence Is Out*, 153.
72. Okefenokee mosquitoes are not like other mosquitoes. According to one long-time Waycross resident, "they are not your regular mosquitoes; they are big and black, tiger mosquitoes, and when they swarm at night you don't want to be anywhere near the swamp. They will suck you dry and haul you off like a vampire."
73. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 53.
74. "Braves Seek Solution to Florida Segregation," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 9 February 1961, section 2, 14.
75. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 115.
76. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 46.
77. *Ibid.*, 50.
78. *Ibid.*, 54.
79. Telephone conversation with John Ambrose, 3 February 2010.
80. Telephone conversation with Roland Hemond, 5 February 2010.
81. *Ibid.*
82. O'Ree with McKinley, *The Autobiography of Willie O'Ree*, 41.
83. Ken Fenster, e-mail communication with coauthors.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Jimmy Smothers, "Tribute to the Passing of a Friend," *Gadsden Times*, 10 May 1979, 19.
86. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 56.
87. O'Ree with McKinley, *The Autobiography of Willie O'Ree*, 41.
88. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 50.
89. The Savannah Indians in the Sally League also began the year with two black players on their roster. Ironically, Jacksonville opened the season against Savannah in Savannah. That game drew about 5,500 fans, the largest opening-day crowd in Savannah history. Ken Fenster, e-mail communication with co-authors.
90. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 55.
91. *Ibid.*, 64.
92. Bill Lanchow, "Slam Sports," 7 June 2009.
93. Czerwinski, "Class D trailblazer Turned to Teaching."
94. Trenary, "Braves Will Take \$100,000 Gamble."
95. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 58.
96. *Gadsden Times*, 27 May 1967, 37.
97. Telephone conversation with Jim Fanning, 3 February 2010.
98. *Gadsden Times*, 27 May 1967, 37.
99. Pritt Vesilind, "Rico Carty Finally Makes It Big," *Baseball Digest*, August 1970, 69.
100. *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*, August 1954.
101. Bill Nowlin, "Roland Hemond," in The Baseball Biography Project, SABR. <http://bioproj.sabr.org>.
102. Telephone conversation with Roland Hemond, 5 February 2010.
103. Ron Piché, presentation to SABR-Quebec meeting, 2009.
104. O'Ree with McKinley, *The Autobiography of Willie O'Ree*, 41.
105. *Ibid.*, 42.
106. *Ibid.*, 42–43.
107. Emphasis added.
108. Aaron with Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer*, 55.
109. *Ibid.*
110. "Racial Ban Bill in Georgia," *The Sporting News*, 1 February 1956, 30.
111. Gilbert Caldwell, "Sugar Bowl 1956: A Southern Armageddon," *American Renaissance* 12, no. 12 (December 2001).
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Daily Times-News* (Burlington, N.C.), 14 February 57, 1.
114. *Ohio News* (Lima, Ohio), 23 January 1957.
115. *Milwaukee Journal*, 15 February 1957.
116. "Georgia Racial Bill Threatens Braves' Base at Waycross."
117. *Ohio News* (Lima, Ohio), 23 January 1957.
118. Charles Betthausen, "'Bigotry Is Bad for Business': The Desegregation of Spring Training Camps in the Minnesota Twins Organization, 1960–1964," thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2007, 2, <http://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/23504>.
119. "1957 Georgia Memorial to Congress," *Absolute Astronomy*, 8 March 1957.
120. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1957_Georgia_Memorial_to_Congress.
121. "Farm Camps Geared for Mass Production," *The Sporting News*, 9 March 1960, 11.
122. Telephone conversation with Jim Fanning, 3 February 2010.
123. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 113.
124. Bob Elliott, "Slam Sports," 16 February 2009.
125. Ken Fenster, e-mail communication with coauthors.
126. Betthausen, "'Bigotry Is Bad for Business,'" 23.
127. *Ibid.*
128. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minor_league_baseball#Reorganization_of_1963.
129. "Perini Certain W. Palm Beach Will Build Park," *The Sporting News*, 28 March 1962, 19.
130. *Palm Beach Post*, 4 October 1966.
131. *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 26 November 1966, 11.
132. Telephone conversation with Roger L. Williams, 9 February 2010.
133. Jordan, *A False Spring*, 10.

Braves Alphabet

WYNN MONTGOMERY

A is for AARON—“Hammerin’ Hank” and Tommie, too—
and young Steve AVERY and Felipe ALOU.

B is for BEDROSIAN, BLAUSER, and BREAM—
a reliever, a shortstop, and a slider supreme.

C is for COX, a manager for the ages,
and just as well known for his on-the-field rages.

D is for Dale—MURPHY, I mean,
a gentleman, a scholar, a hitting machine.

E is for EVANS, who guarded the hot corner,
and hit lots of homers—as did Bob HORNER.

F is for FRANCOEUR, FRANCO, FURCAL—
different in age, but good hitters all.

G is for GARBER and GRISSOM and GILES
and GALARRAGA, who could hit ‘em for miles.

H is for HUBBARD, a scrapper and a gem,
and also for HUDSON, that pitcher named Tim.

I is for Inferno, ‘cause our stadium was aflame
on the night that McGRIFF brought us his game.

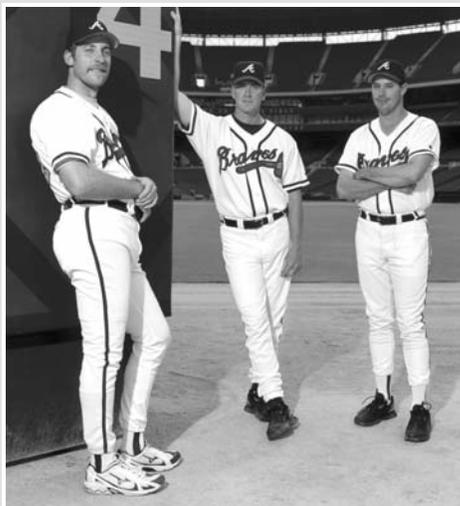
J is for the JONES boys—Chipper and ‘Druw—
and for David JUSTICE, a fine hitter, too.

K is for KLESKO, who swung for the fence,
and was known for his bat, not his defense.

L is for LOPEZ, LEMKE, and LUM,
and for LEMASTER, who made the ball hum.

M is for MATHEWS and MAHLER and McCANN,
and let’s never forget little Felix MILLAN.

N is for NIEKRO—“Knucksie” to all—
and for Otis NIXON, who oft climbed the wall.



Braves’ aces, who often drew a full house. (Left to right)
John Smoltz, Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux.

PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES



Braves dugout action: Leo Mazzone (left)
rocks while Bobby Cox juggles.



Hank Aaron

O is for two catchers, OLSON and O’BRIEN,
and Ken OBERKFELL, who never quit tryin’.

P is for Terry PENDLETON, once MVP,
and Biff POCOROBA and Gerald PERRY.

Q is for QUINONEZ. While others played better,
none gave us this needed letter.

R is for two noted ROCKERS—a hurler named John
and Leo MAZZONE, who swayed on and on.

S is for John SCHUERHOLZ, a stellar G.M.,
and “Neon Deion” SANDERS; we all remember him!

T is for TURNER—the Field bears his name.
He was a sailor, a mogul, and he managed one game.

U is for Cecil UPSHAW and Bob UECKER, too,
and the bevy of umpires whom we love to boo.

V is for Vinnie with “CASTILLA” on his back;
hitting home runs was his special knack.

W is for WILHELM, WALK, and WOHLERS, as well,
and for a WASHINGTON whose name was Claudell.

X is for the many “times” the CARAYS (father and son)
made the game come alive—run after run.

Y is for Yunel—ESCOBAR, that is,
a Cuban refugee and a shortstopping whiz.

Z is for the Zeroes that seemed to abound
with GLAVINE, MADDUX, or SMOLTZ on the mound.

The All-Time Atlanta Braves All-Star Team

TERRY W. SLOOPE

On behalf of the Magnolia Chapter



Fred McGriff

Manager—Bobby Cox

Starting Lineup

SS—Rafael Furcal

3B—Chipper Jones

OF—Hank Aaron*

1B—Fred McGriff

OF—Dale Murphy

OF—Andruw Jones

C—Javy Lopez

2B—Glenn Hubbard

Starting Rotation

Greg Maddux

Phil Niekro*

Tom Glavine

John Smoltz

Kevin Millwood

Bullpen

Gene Garber

Mark Wohlers

Steve Bedrosian

John Rocker

Rick Camp

Bench

1B—Chris Chambliss

2B—Mark Lemke

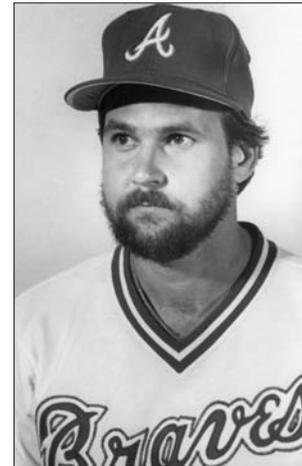
SS—Jeff Blauser

3B—Bob Horner

OF—David Justice

OF—Rico Carty

C—Brian McCann



Gene Garber

* Member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame



Manager Bobby Cox with Javy Lopez and Chipper Jones. All three are members of the Magnolia Chapter's All-Time Atlanta Braves All-Star Team.



"Knucksie" (Phil Niekro)

A discussion of individual members of the All-Time Atlanta Braves All-Star Team can be found online at <http://s.sabr.org/sloope-braves-2010>.

PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES

Milo's Memories

When the Braves Came to Atlanta

MILO HAMILTON as told to DAN SCHLOSSBERG

COLLABORATOR'S NOTE: *Between his big-league broadcasting debut with the 1953 St. Louis Browns and his current work as the radio voice of the Houston Astros, Milo Hamilton worked for the St. Louis Cardinals, Chicago Cubs, Chicago White Sox, and Pittsburgh Pirates. He came to Atlanta with the Braves in 1966 and stayed for ten seasons. What follows are his memories of that first year in Dixie.*

I will never forget the response the Braves received when they moved from Milwaukee to Atlanta. It was great. Before the Opening Day parade, the team had a caravan that went through Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Alabama. I went along as the new broadcaster and remember the unbelievable welcome.

It wasn't that the folks didn't know baseball; the Atlanta Crackers had a very rich heritage for many years under Earl Mann. And the Birmingham Barons weren't far away. There were a lot of minor-league towns in the South and a lot of mill towns where all the cotton mills had teams. Baseball was a big item, and the people were ready for big-league baseball. They welcomed us with open arms.

I had been working for the Chicago White Sox, where I was Bob Elson's sidekick. They told me I would get the number-one job because Elson was getting older, but I wondered how long I would have to wait, as Red Barber said, before getting into the "catbird seat."

I had known [Braves' General Manager] John McHale since I worked for Davenport in the old Three-I League. In fact, he took me out to dinner on my honeymoon! I also knew Bill Bartholomay, part of the Braves ownership group and a former Chicago insurance executive who was close to the White Sox owners. But the key man for me was Jim Faszholz, whose brother pitched for the Cardinals in the '50s. He had been an intern in the TV studio where I did the six and ten o'clock sports news during my two years in St. Louis. When he became director of broadcasting for the Braves, that helped make up my mind to go there.

The fans in Georgia already knew me; the White Sox had a big network, with more than 90 stations,

including one in Atlanta. We had gone there to play an exhibition game in May 1965—the White Sox against the Milwaukee Braves. The move to Atlanta had already been announced, so it was a lame-duck year for the Braves. Before the game, they had a big luncheon, and I got a tremendous reception. McHale and Bartholomay were there and came up to me at the game that night. "You really got a great welcome here today," they said. "Why don't we talk about you moving south with us?" In August, Jim Faszhold followed up, and I knew I was going to go to Atlanta to be their first announcer. I had been on a year-to-year contract with the White Sox anyway.

It was a good move for my family. They were all baseball fans, so that made it easy. Mark was ten, Patti Joy was 12, and Arlene was the team mother when Mark was in Little League. I started doing commercials and did about a thousand a year—more than all the players on the team combined. I had a clothing store, a car dealership, and a Sears store. Plus I was the voice of Delta Airlines. I did the six o'clock news before going to the ballpark. It was the first time I ever made any big-league money, so it worked out well for me.

It also happened to be a very interesting season for the Braves. The team led the league with 207 home runs and would have been in contention with any pitching at all. Hank Aaron and Eddie Mathews were still together and had a lot of firepower around them in the lineup; Rico Carty, Joe Torre, Gene Oliver, Mack Jones, and Felipe Alou hit a lot of home runs.

Tony Cloninger, a Southern boy from Iron Station, North Carolina, had won 24 games for the lame-duck Milwaukee Braves in 1965 and was supposed to be the team's number-one pitcher. He had earned the right to pitch the first game in Atlanta. Unfortunately for Cloninger, another Deep South native, Bob Veale, was announced as the Opening Night pitcher for Pittsburgh. Veale was a big lefty who was tough, so Cloninger knew he probably wasn't going to get many runs of support. Sure enough, Veale was on his game. Torre hit a home run but the Pirates hit two [including the game-winner by Willie Stargell] and won, 3–2. It was

a cold, rainy night, and Cloninger pitched the whole game—13 innings. He was never quite the same after that. Bobby Bragan, an Alabama native, had moved to Atlanta with the team and knew there was a lot of Southern pride involved in the outcome. But Pittsburgh won the opener.

I participated in the opening ceremony and all the things that go with the glitter of a great grand opening, welcoming big-league baseball to the Deep South. It was exciting to be part of everything new—a new city for the Braves and the fact that other teams were coming there for the first time.

I had been there several times at the end of spring training, when teams barnstormed north from Florida. The White Sox used to get on a train and stop in Savannah, Macon, and Atlanta en route to play their Triple-A team in Indianapolis.

Even though the Braves were not a really great ballclub, the fans came out. They increased the team's attendance by about a million more than they had drawn the year before. The fans knew Eddie Mathews, who had actually played for the Atlanta Crackers in Ponce de Leon Park. One of the great minor-league ballparks, it featured a magnolia tree in fair territory. Luke Appling started there, and Chuck Tanner played there. A lot of big-league ballplayers went through Atlanta on their way up.

So did Ernie Harwell, who later became a Hall of Fame announcer. He was working for Earl Mann when the Dodgers came through town. Branch Rickey heard him and asked what it would take to sign him for Brooklyn. Earl Mann wound up getting a player for him: a catcher named Cliff Dapper.

By coming south with the Braves, Mathews became the only man to play for the same team in three different cities. He had broken into the majors when the team was still based in Boston. In 1966, however, he was definitely on the downside of a great career. In fact, Bobby Bragan started platooning him, benching him against lefthanded pitchers. When Bobby got fired in the middle of the season, Billy Hitchcock put Mathews back into the lineup against lefties. In his very first game under Hitchcock, Mathews hit a home run to help Denny Lemaster beat Sandy Koufax, 2-1. That gave the ballclub a good feeling, and it responded to the new manager, posting a 33-18 mark.¹

Later that year, Paul Richards traded Mathews to Houston—a situation that did not make Paul many friends. Eddie found out when a reporter called to get his reaction. And then the team spelled his name wrong in the official press release. That was no way to treat a Hall of Famer.



HOUSTON ASTROS

Milo Hamilton

During their tenure as teammates (1954-66), Mathews and Aaron hit 863 home runs—a number not reached by Ruth and Gehrig, Mays and McCovey, Maris and Mantle, or any other tandem. I had known about them when they also had Joe Adcock and Wes Covington in the lineup up in Milwaukee. If you were a home-run hitter in that lineup, you always had a chance to get a ball to hit. There was always somebody behind you, so they couldn't pitch around you.

Aaron had been a pretty good home-run hitter before but had hit a lot of opposite-field home runs in Milwaukee. When he got to Atlanta and saw Fulton County Stadium, he became almost a dead-pull hitter. The ball just flew. But I don't think anybody thought Hank could challenge Babe Ruth's lifetime record until 1972, when he announced he was going for it.

It's funny how things work out sometimes; when the Braves announced they were moving from Milwaukee to Atlanta, Aaron said he didn't want to go. But he adjusted pretty quickly. He was from Mobile, so his parents were able to come to a lot of games. His brother Tommie was in the organization too. And the welcome he received helped to change his attitude, even though he got some vicious hate mail when he went after Ruth's record a few years later.

Rico Carty, who often batted behind Henry that first year, was the best two-strike hitter I ever saw. He was even better than Aaron. If Rico got two strikes against him, you could bet in Vegas that the next pitch was going to go to right field. He could hit with power

to all fields. And he hit some *long* home runs. It was always an adventure, though, when Rico was playing left field. Maybe that's why Bobby Bragan tried to make him a catcher. Because he was such a good hitter, nobody noticed he wasn't a very good catcher.²

Bragan loved versatility. Felipe Alou moved to first base from the outfield, Woody Woodward played second and short, and Mike de la Hoz played third, second, and short. Felipe Alou might have been the Player of the Year that first season in Atlanta. We always knew he was a doggone good ballplayer, but he put it all together that year. He hit 31 home runs, a career high for him, but he did it as the leadoff man because there were so many other sluggers on the team. He was a very popular player with a great smile, and he was always accessible.

Despite all the sluggers on the team, the best single-game performance came from a pitcher. On July 3, Tony Cloninger became the first National Leaguer—position player or pitcher—to hit two grand slams in one game. He also drove in another run for a nine-RBI performance when the Braves beat the Giants, 17–3. Nobody thought Tony would hit two—even when he came up a second time with the bases loaded. He was a good hitter, but we were hoping for a single or a fly ball.

Not too long after that, the team decided to change managers. Bobby Bragan had lost the club, and John McHale felt it was time to make a change. So they hired a former Auburn star, Billy Hitchcock, to keep the manager's seat in the Alabama family. He settled the ballclub down. He had been a pretty good ballplayer in his time, and the players felt he was the right guy for the job. The fact that he started Mathews in that first game against the left-handed Koufax gave the team a good feeling.

Hitchcock's biggest contribution came the next year when he brought Phil Niekro out of the bullpen as an emergency starter when Ken Johnson took ill in Philadelphia. Phil stayed in the rotation for the rest of his baseball life. I remember being at the booster luncheon when Hitchcock made the announcement. We couldn't believe it, since Phil had made no starts in 1966 and had only two saves and a 4–3 record.

When we first arrived in Atlanta, people kept asking me about the team's chances. I thought to myself that they weren't going anywhere unless they got

some pitching help. We had been a little hopeful going into a new town, especially with Cloninger as the bell cow of the rotation, but who knew he would drop from 24 wins to 14? Three years later, when they got into the playoffs against the Mets, they had Ron Reed and Pat Jarvis to pair with Niekro. In 1966, Reed had just come out of the NBA, and Niekro was in the bullpen. They didn't have a catcher who could handle his knuckleball until they traded Gene Oliver for Bob Uecker in '67.

Our pitching was pretty thin in '66. We had a 40-year-old rookie named Chi Chi Olivo, an over-the-hill closer named Ted Abernathy, and a former Rookie of the Year (Don Schwall) who never amounted to much after his first season. Ken Johnson turned out to be the ace with 14 wins, the same as Cloninger, but the only other pitcher in double digits was Lemaster (11). Wade Blasingame, a 16-game winner in '65, hurt his arm, and Pat Jarvis and Dick Kelley were just coming up. Clay Carroll, the late reliever, led the team with 11 saves.

As for me, I worked hard in 1966, too. I shared the broadcast booth with Larry Munson and Ernie Johnson. We went from booth to booth, changing in the middle innings, so I was doing both radio and TV. It was an interesting transition, to say the least. You could put it all under one banner—the newness kept the enthusiasm going.

More importantly, bringing major-league baseball to the Deep South did wonders for race relations. I don't think there's any doubt about it.³ The advent of the Atlanta Braves also opened doors for other cities, including Dallas, Miami, and Tampa Bay. It expanded the game and created legions of new fans. I felt honored to be part of it. ■

Notes

1. That's a .647 winning percentage; the winning percentage under Bragan had been .468.
2. Carty caught 17 games in 1966.
3. Just a few years before baseball came to town, segregation and discrimination had been almost universal, not just in Georgia but throughout the Southern states. The KKK had rallies not far from Atlanta. And let's not forget that Hank Aaron had been reluctant to move from Milwaukee to Atlanta. Fortunately, it turned out to be a move made in baseball heaven for both him and the ballclub. The Braves had other black stars, including Felipe Alou, Rico Carty, and Mack Jones, who also helped prove that color didn't matter.

The Franchise Transfer That Fostered a Broadcasting Revolution

FRANCIS KINLAW

When the Milwaukee Braves' baseball franchise was transferred to Atlanta for the 1966 season, the development carried considerable significance geographically. The extended period of stability in the locations of big-league clubs had ended in 1953, with the Braves' move from Boston to Milwaukee. Subsequently, the borders of the "major-league footprint" grew much larger when the Philadelphia Athletics jumped to Kansas City in 1954, and the coordinated leaps of the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles and the New York Giants to San Francisco in 1958 again expanded the landscape. The shifts of two key National League teams from the nation's largest city to California clearly reflected a desire of major-league owners to take advantage of the opportunities presented by changing demographics and population patterns in the United States. The move by the Washington Senators to Minnesota in 1961, the subsequent placement of an American League club in Los Angeles, and the establishment of a National League franchise in Houston in 1962 further demonstrated the mindset of owners, and improved transportation capabilities made road trips of greater distances possible for teams.

Upon the conclusion of the bitter and protracted legal proceedings that culminated in the Braves' move from the upper Midwest to the South, further geographical expansion by the major leagues became the dominant storyline. Yet, if fans and reporters (or the owners of other major-league franchises) had been able to foresee in 1966 that an aggressive visionary named Ted Turner would assume control of the Atlanta franchise within a decade and transform the face of baseball broadcasting, the effects of a forthcoming revolution in the nature of electronic communications would have undoubtedly received much more attention from the media.

The path that led to the Braves' move from Milwaukee to Atlanta had been long and unpleasant for anyone with emotional or financial interests in the outcome of that highly contentious process. The Braves had enjoyed several successful years in Wisconsin after their arrival from Boston, but by 1962 the total

attendance for home games had dropped to 766,921 (from a record 2,215,404 during the World Championship year of 1957), and the team was sold by Lou Perini to a business syndicate led by the Illinois insurance broker William Bartholomay. Local government officials in Milwaukee immediately grew suspicious that the syndicate planned to move the franchise to Atlanta in the near future, and the relationship between the team's management and those officials was set on a hostile and irreconcilable course. Team president John McHale threatened to sue Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors chairman Eugene Grobschmidt for slander in 1964, and after the plans to move to Atlanta had been confirmed, Milwaukee city officials attempted to retain the franchise by filing lawsuits alleging antitrust violations, disregard of stadium lease agreements, and refusal to negotiate with prospective local buyers of the franchise. When the Braves ownership countersued, the county board rejected a cash settlement of \$500,000 that would have allowed the franchise to move immediately to the Peach State.

The 1965 baseball season was consequently played in Milwaukee under extremely unfavorable circumstances, as the team's management and local government officials engaged in vigorous public disputes and courtroom struggles. Attendance continued to plummet; only 555,584 fans passed through the turnstiles during that tumultuous year. Needing to make a firm decision regarding the location of the franchise for the 1966 season, the club's ownership opted to move to Atlanta and its inviting television market. However, there were still legal questions relating to antitrust issues to be resolved. The trial began on March 1, 1966, and, on the evening of April 13, Circuit Judge Elmer W. Roller determined that the Braves and the National League had violated Wisconsin's antitrust statutes. He ordered that one of two steps be taken to rectify the injustice that had occurred: (1) Milwaukee was to be granted a franchise through expansion in 1967, or (2) the Braves were to be returned to Milwaukee by May 18, 1966.

Acting upon an appeal filed by National League

ATLANTA BRAVES



Ted Turner, cable-TV mogul.

attorney Bowie Kuhn, the Wisconsin Supreme Court set aside Judge Roller's decision and ruled that professional baseball had the authority to control franchise locations. The matter was then appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which, on December 12, 1966, by a 4–3 vote with two abstentions, refused to review the decision of the state court. The Braves were finally in Atlanta legitimately.

In certain ways, the fortunes of the Braves after their move to Atlanta echoed their earlier move to Milwaukee. From 1953 to 1960, the club had prospered in Wisconsin. Attendance rose to phenomenal levels, then declined as the team surrendered its consistent top-tier status and fell to the middle of the pack within the National League. Similarly, the number of paying customers in Atlanta–Fulton County Stadium was impressive starting from the team's arrival in 1966 until the early 1970s, and the significant declines in attendance could be traced in large measure to poor performance on the field. The latter development would be especially significant because it created an opportunity for Ted Turner to gain fame, prominence within the baseball establishment, and substantial revenue by executing a series of masterful and risky business decisions. As he did so, he would prove—to the consternation of many baseball insiders but to the great entertainment of his admirers—to be every bit as difficult to corral as a Phil Niekro knuckleball.

Turner, who in the 1960s had transformed his family's billboard company from a venture on the brink of extinction into a multimillion-dollar success, had purchased a low-powered and independent Atlanta UHF television station (WJRJ) in 1970, believing that he could revive it by adding spice to its existing programming menu of old movies and television reruns. After changing the call letters to WTCG—an acronym for Turner Communications Group—the bold entrepreneur was forced to play the role of a twentieth-century David against three Goliaths (the affiliates of ABC, CBS, and NBC) in a challenging business environment. Rather than using a mere stone as a weapon, Turner plucked the broadcasting rights to Braves games away from the Atlanta-based media giant Cox Enterprises and its prominent network affiliate WSB-TV by offering the club's cash-strapped ownership group \$600,000 for the right to broadcast sixty games for each of the following five years, beginning in 1974.

Because Turner's proposal tripled both the amount of the payment for broadcasting rights and the number of games to be telecast, his terms were accepted, even though at least one hundred thousand people in the Atlanta television market were unable to receive the relatively weak signal of Turner's station.

With this agreement in place, a heavily leveraged Turner was nevertheless able to employ microwave transmission and relays to send WTCG's signal to cable-television operators across the Southeast, thereby creating a Braves television network, giving regional exposure to the team. Then, in 1975, he leased a channel on RCA's SATCOM II communications satellite for the purpose of transmitting WTCG's signal to cable-television stations throughout the United States. As the nation's first "superstation," the once anemic WTCG now reached approximately two million cable-television subscribers by 1976. Having fulfilled its owner's expectation for growth, confidently proclaimed by its call letters, the station was rechristened WTBS (for Turner Broadcasting System) in 1979.

However, while these positive and exciting communications developments were occurring, the baseball situation in Atlanta was deteriorating. Bartholomay and his partners with the Chicago-based Atlanta-LaSalle Corporation were preparing to sell the Braves franchise to an interested party in either Toronto or Atlanta. Of course, given the serious complications that had been encountered a decade before in relocating

the franchise, a sale to a buyer with loyalty to the Georgia city was clearly preferable to a transaction with a Canadian individual or group.

Because the possible sale of the Braves threatened the security of a major programming component of his broadcasting enterprise, Turner had a strong incentive to purchase the baseball club. He was, however, daunted by the sale price of \$10 million that had been proposed by Dan Donohue, the team's president. After confessing to Donohue that he wished to buy the Braves but that he could not afford to pay cash, Turner offered a down payment of one million dollars and promised to pay the remaining nine—with interest—over a nine-year period. The ownership group promptly accepted Turner's terms, and the flashy 37-year-old's purchase of the franchise was completed in January 1976.

When Turner ascended to the dual status of television executive and major-league franchise owner, Commissioner Bowie Kuhn and other powerful people within major-league baseball became more determined than ever to limit the ability of cable operators to broadcast games. The threat to other major- and minor-league markets, which had been feared in many quarters as early as 1979, was a concern among club owners and general managers. For example, the Cincinnati Reds contended that 423 baseball games appeared on television in the Cincinnati market in 1986 but that only 11 percent of those contests were telecast by the Reds' network.

Commissioner Kuhn consequently testified frequently at hearings before the U.S. Congress and the Federal Communications Commission in the late 1970s and early 1980s, arguing that regulations applying to the cable industry permitted inappropriate competition to baseball clubs across the country. Turner often appeared in those same formal settings to defend vigorously his rights as a businessman.

Soon after Peter Ueberroth succeeded Kuhn as baseball's commissioner in October 1984, he served notice that he would also address problems that were attributed to the emergence of superstations. Among those perceived problems were the saturation of most television markets with telecasts of certain teams, the infringement of territorial rights of individual clubs that were not affiliated with superstations, a reduction in the number of viewers for telecasts by the National Broadcasting Company and the American Broadcasting Company, significant increases in player salaries made possible by free-agent signings subsidized by revenue from cable television, and competitive imbalance potentially or actually resulting from those signings. On January 24, 1985, Ueberroth was able to

convince Turner and the New York Yankees (whose games were televised on cable outlet WPIX) to pay an annual "superstation tax" into a central fund in amounts generally proportional to (1) the number of homes beyond their local markets receiving the signal from their respective cable channels and (2) the number of baseball games televised. In accordance with complicated and varying methods of calculation used to determine amounts to be paid by each club, Turner agreed to pay a total of \$30 million over a five-year period, and the Yankees agreed to pay at the same rate, although the actual dollar amount was less because WPIX's coverage reached fewer households outside the New York market. Then, between late January and May 22, 1985, the owners of three other clubs (the New York Mets, Texas Rangers, and Chicago Cubs) also agreed to deals under varying terms. Although the value of baseball broadcasting was certainly much more substantial to Turner and the owners of the other cable enterprises than the amounts paid into the fund, the "taxes" involved would likely increase annually as the reach of the superstations expanded. Furthermore, it was by no means insignificant that, as Ueberroth attempted to resolve a very persistent issue among major-league owners, revenue sharing had been used at an executive level within organized baseball to counter the effects of a new technology.

The serious issues relating to the appropriate use of cable television that were forcefully presented by Ted Turner to two baseball commissioners and all major-league owners in the 1970s and 1980s were reminiscent of the concerns of previous generations of owners, concerns inspired by earlier stages of the communication industry's evolution. Several owners had expressed grave concerns in the 1930s about the adverse effects upon attendance and concession sales that might result from the broadcasting of games on radio, and similar reservations were voiced in the early 1950s when games were initially televised in and near cities with major-league teams. But while the issues of basic over-the-air broadcasting and televising were controversial, the general environment surrounding cable television and the technical aspects involved in the cable process made the issues pushed to the forefront by Turner more complex and revolutionary, because the signal of his superstation—unlike the signals of local radio and television stations—invaded territories and advertising markets far removed from Atlanta. The financial stakes were also larger: a 13-game winning streak by the Braves at the beginning of the 1982 season, skilled players and exciting teams in the years that immediately followed, and well-liked

announcers (especially Skip Caray, Ernie Johnson, and Pete Van Wieren) made WTBS an extremely popular commodity. Within five years of the landmark 1982 season, which concluded with a loss to the St. Louis Cardinals in the National League Championship Series, the number of subscribers to WTBS had doubled from 20 million to 40 million.

The unique story of Ted Turner, his baseball team, and WTBS would continue for years. The Braves were promoted as “America’s Team,” and people in rural areas of the nation became familiar with the daily performances of rather ordinary players such as Glenn Hubbard and Bruce Benedict. When after three decades the close association of the baseball franchise and the cablevision entity came to an end in 2007, the club that Turner bought to serve essentially as extended television programming was estimated by Forbes to be worth slightly less than \$400 million!

To what extent did Turner’s superstition increase the value of his team? An endless debate could be waged over this question, but there can be no doubt that the widespread dissemination of the WTBS signal fostered drastic changes in the habits of television viewers in the final quarter of the twentieth century and, in the process, significantly enhanced the attractiveness of Braves merchandise and tickets. Furthermore, it is absolutely certain that neither professional baseball nor sports broadcasting has been the same since the creative Turner obtained the right to televise Atlanta baseball from his relatively obscure UHF station. ■

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Marvelous Murphy

Too Good to Ignore

DAN SCHLOSSBERG

The yardstick for enshrinement in Cooperstown is generally determined by a player's ability to dominate a decade. Dale Murphy more than met that standard.

Crippled by recurring knee problems that required mid-career surgery, Murphy retired with 398 home runs—one fewer than first-ballot inductee Al Kaline and 16 more than 2009 inductee Jim Rice. When he retired in 1993, the long-time Atlanta stalwart ranked 27th on the lifetime home-run list. Before Dale Murphy, only Ken Williams, Hank Aaron, and Willie Mays had a season that included 30 home runs, 30 stolen bases, and a .300 batting average.

Blessed with a keen batting eye, Murphy had more total bases during the '80s than any other player—including George Brett, Robin Yount, Paul Molitor, and Dave Winfield. He also ranked first in extra-base hits and runs scored, and he placed second to Mike Schmidt in home runs and second to Eddie Murray in runs batted in.

He was both durable, playing in 740 consecutive games while not missing a game from 1982 to 1985, and devastating, intimidating National League pitchers with his ability to hit with power to the opposite field. That skill, instilled by then-Braves manager Joe Torre, earned Murphy Most Valuable Player awards in 1982 and 1983 and a strong bid for a then-unprecedented third MVP in a row in 1984, when he led the league in home runs, slugging, and total bases.

The only other back-to-back MVP winner eligible for election but still outside of Cooperstown is Roger Maris, remembered mostly for a 61-homer season in the first year in modern times that pitching staffs were diluted by expansion.

Playing in a decade dominated by pitching, Murphy had one of five 40-homer seasons produced by National League hitters. From 1982 to 1985, he reached triple digits in RBI four years in a row, twice as often as any other hitter. In three of those four years, the Oregon native also scored at least 100 times. Even after cleanup man Bob Horner was sidelined with a broken wrist for the last month of the 1983 campaign, Murphy



Dale Murphy's number hangs on the façade at Turner Field. Should it hang in Cooperstown?

couldn't be stopped: from September 1 until the end of the season on October 2, he hit .327 with 10 homers and 29 RBI as the Braves made a valiant late run at the front-running Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West. [EDITORS' NOTE: Atlanta moved to the NL East in 1994.]

During his decade of dominance, Murphy not only finished second in both home runs (308) and RBI (929) but placed fifth in hits (1,553), made seven All-Star teams, and won five Gold Gloves—not bad for a scatter-armed catcher who moved to first base briefly before finding a home in the Atlanta outfield.

Murphy's misfortune was spending most of his career in obscurity playing for attendance-afflicted Atlanta teams more popular outside of Georgia because games were televised nationally via superstation WTBS. The Bad-News Braves of that era never made the World Series and reached the postseason only in 1982, when they went 0-3 in the National League Championship Series against the St. Louis Cardinals.

Hall of Fame pitcher Phil Niekro, Murphy's Atlanta teammate through the MVP years, pledges to vote for Murphy as a Veterans Committee member—assuming the Baseball Writers Association of America continues to overlook his candidacy. "The Hall of Fame is looking

for stars who were role models,” Niekro said last September.¹ “They couldn’t find anybody better than Dale.”

The National League’s answer to Cal Ripken Jr., Murphy had a crystal-clear reputation for integrity and an uncanny ability to command respect from both teammates and opponents, without braggadocio. A devout Mormon and devoted family man, he never drank, smoked, or swore. His only bad habit was ordering everything on a restaurant menu except “thank you for dining with us,” according to former teammate Jerry Royster. There were times, Royster said, when Murphy boarded the team bus to the ballpark with a box of Dunkin’ Donuts and ate them all during the short ride.²

Unlike dozens of stars during the steroids era that followed, Dale Murphy eschewed artificial means of inflating his natural ability. He also countered the prevailing clubhouse practice of blowing off requests from reporters and fans.

Murphy’s managers loved him. Joe Torre, who succeeded Bobby Cox as Atlanta pilot in 1982, just wrote his name into the lineup and let him play. “If you’re a coach, you want him as a player,” Torre once said. “If you’re a father, you want him as a son. If you’re a woman, you want him as a husband. If you’re a kid, you want him as a father. What else can you say about the guy?”³

On the field, Murphy’s record speaks for itself, especially when compared with incumbent Hall of Famers. He won two RBI crowns (two more than Willie Mays), back-to-back home-run titles (two more than Stan Musial), and a pair of MVP trophies—twice as many as Hank Aaron or Jim Rice. He led the NL in slugging two years in a row and also led his league in runs and walks.

Murphy’s five Gold Gloves all came after Cox, in his first term as Atlanta manager, moved him out from behind the plate. (Although he once caught a one-hitter for the knuckleballing Niekro, Murphy developed a strange case of Steve Blass disease that prevented him from throwing the ball back to the pitcher.)

Current Atlanta slugger Chipper Jones, often compared to Murphy, wonders what’s keeping the soft-spoken icon out of Cooperstown. If Jones had a Hall of Fame vote, Murphy would get it. “Dale was a dominant force in the game. He won the MVP two years in a row, won Gold Gloves in the outfield, and was an icon in Atlanta,” said the switch-hitting third baseman. “He was the total package: he was among the leaders in home runs every year, he could run, and he was a sparkling defensive player. When you look at his career, certainly he’s a guy who should be considered very, very hard for the Hall of Fame. I only hope I set

the same kind of example and play as hard as Murphy did. When anybody compares me to Dale Murphy, I take that as a tremendous compliment and hope I can carry the torch he passed along.”⁴

Missing the World Series might have hurt Murphy in the minds of Hall of Fame electors, according to veteran baseball author David Vincent. Except for 1982, when Torre took his team to the playoffs in his first year at the helm, Murphy was marooned on also-rans. For most of his career, he and Niekro were the only members of the Braves even resembling big-leaguers.

“People might think Dale wasn’t a winner, but Ernie Banks and Phil Niekro didn’t get to the World Series either,” said Vincent, author of *The Home Run Encyclopedia*.⁵ “There are a lot of guys who didn’t play in the World Series, but there aren’t many of them who made seven All-Star teams and played so well for so many years. Murph wasn’t one of those guys who sat down for a split fingernail. He’d go out and play every day, and there aren’t many of those guys around anymore.”

Missing the 400-homer plateau might also have hurt Murphy’s chances, said the SABR home-run guru. “Is 400 the magic number?” he asked. “Everybody talks about 500 being automatic and 400 being a good indicator. At the very end, Dale was struggling, trying to get to 400. Willie Mays struggled at the end, playing longer than he should have. Lots of guys don’t want to give it up. But when you think about the ’80s, Dale Murphy was one of the top players of the decade, regardless of numbers. He was always there, doing something to help the Braves when they weren’t very good.”

Murphy’s shot at Cooperstown may have been compromised when he first became eligible in 1999. Also on that ballot were Nolan Ryan, Robin Yount, and George Brett, all of whom garnered the necessary 75 percent of the vote. Murphy didn’t mind, remembering that Niekro was a nominee four times before finally hurdling the three-quarters barrier. But his percentage has never exceeded 24 percent, although such writers as Jayson Stark and Phil Pepe are recent converts to his cause.

“I don’t understand why he hasn’t gotten more respect from the voters,” said Pete van Wieren, the long-time Braves broadcaster who retired after the 2008 season. “He certainly deserves it.”⁶ Team president John Schuerholz seconded the motion. “I hope he gets in,” said Schuerholz, architect of the Atlanta teams that captured 14 straight division titles from 1991 to 2005. “He is a very deserving candidate and would be a wonderful recipient.”⁷

A final batting average of .265—the result of recurring knee problems late in his career—gave some

voters pause. But Murphy's mark was better than Harmon Killebrew's .256, Bill Mazerowski's .260, or Reggie Jackson's .262, and just a shade under Mike Schmidt's .267.

When healthy, Murphy did hit for average. The 6' 5" right-handed hitter compiled a .289 mark from 1982 to 1987 before the knee problems—probably the result of playing every day—held him to a .234 mark from 1988 until the end of his career.

"I would love to see Dale in the Hall of Fame," said Bobby Cox, the man whose foresight in moving the young catcher saved wear and tear on his knees and allowed him to concentrate on his offense. "He went from catcher to first base to left field to center field and became a Gold Glove winner. He was MVP twice. And his character, what he does for communities and all that, has to add in somewhere."⁸

Ironically, that character could have contributed to his exclusion from Cooperstown. As a religious man reserving his right to privacy, he regarded the locker room as his sanctuary—and campaigned against its invasion by media members of the opposite sex. That stand may have aggravated some beat writers, leading them to withhold Hall of Fame votes.

As both a man and an athlete, Dale Murphy had few peers.

By the time he retired, Murphy had more home runs than Tony Perez and Orlando Cepeda, nearly twice as many as Kirby Puckett, and more than Ralph Kiner and Jim Rice. Yet all but Murphy found their way to Cooperstown, as did seven of the ten men besides Murphy who won consecutive MVPs. (Two of these, Frank Thomas and Barry Bonds, are not yet eligible.)

Murphy's supporters also insist that Dale's defensive skills should boost his candidacy for Cooperstown—especially since Ozzie Smith and Bill Mazerowski were one-dimensional stars enshrined primarily for their fielding skills. "If you put Dale Murphy and Andre Dawson [now in the Hall] in the same outfield," said the late Philadelphia manager Danny Ozark, "you wouldn't need a third outfielder."⁹

Murphy had the arm for right and the range for center, playing both positions flawlessly.

But anyone who saw him catch could not have imagined the remarkable transition. "I couldn't throw, and it was very frustrating," admitted Murphy, who once beamed his own pitcher while trying to nail a potential basestealer at second. "I had all this God-given talent, and all of a sudden I couldn't play. I tried to keep it in perspective and not let it affect my relationships with people.

"I found myself much more relaxed in the outfield because I didn't get such tough defensive plays. Maybe the length of the throw compensated for my lack of accuracy. If you throw the ball 300 feet and you're off a little bit, the distance compensates. But if you throw it 90 feet to second and you're off four or five feet, you're in trouble."¹⁰ A psychological ploy helped settle him down: Murphy's dad once told him nobody would steal center field on him.

Although Bobby Cox was the man who moved Murphy around the diamond like a chess piece, it was Joe Torre who finished the game. A former Braves catcher who won an MVP award himself, Torre convinced Murphy to stop pulling every pitch. "I told him not to pull the ball, just to hit it," Torre remembered.

ATLANTA BRAVES



Dale Murphy: an all-time fan favorite in Atlanta.

“Dale was not a home-run hitter but a good hitter who happened to hit home runs. I didn’t want him to look at pitchers as faceless people but to recognize that each pitcher has his own style.”¹¹

Once an All-Star catcher in the Southern League, Murphy became an All-Star outfielder in the National League by 1980. Fans elected him to the starting lineup in both 1982, when he became the first Braves player to win a league MVP trophy since Hank Aaron in 1957, and in 1983, when he became the first Brave to win the award twice. Mike Schmidt had won the trophy two years in succession before Murphy stopped his streak and started one of his own.

“I saw Murphy win games every possible way,” said veteran pitching coach Billy Connors.¹² “I saw base hits in the ninth, home runs, great catches, and many times when he beat throws to first on potential double plays. I never saw anything like him before, and I saw Willie Mays play.”

Hank Aaron, a larger-than-life legend in Atlanta, agreed. “One thing that always told me a lot about a ballplayer was how he ran the bases,” said Aaron, the career home-run leader for 33 years.¹³ “One of the most valuable things a player can do for a team is go from first to third on a single. Murphy did that. He almost never got thrown out. When he saw a ball hit, he just knew he was going to get to third base. He had that baseball instinct you can’t teach.”

That instinct also helped Murphy at the plate, where he showed surprising discipline for a slugger prone to strikeouts. In 1987, his last great season, he reached career peaks with 44 home runs and a .417 on-base percentage.

Three years later, with his skills and knees in rapid decline, Murphy was traded to the Phillies in a five-man swap that brought relief pitcher Jeff Parrett to the Braves. He spent the next two years with the Phils before finishing up with the 1993 Colorado Rockies, an expansion team that signed him as a free agent because they needed a big-name player. After going six-for-42 and failing to produce the two home runs he needed for 400 lifetime, Murphy retired.

His number, 3, is also retired, joined on the Turner Field facade by numerals worn by fellow Braves greats Hank Aaron (44), Eddie Mathews (41), Phil Niekro (35), Greg Maddux (31), and Warren Spahn (21).¹⁴ Only a call from Cooperstown would be a greater honor.

The youngest man to win consecutive National League MVP awards, Murphy has been enshrined in the Atlanta Braves Hall of Fame for ten years. Cooperstown could be next—especially if electors pay attention to Baseball-Reference.com statistics that place Murphy higher than the average Hall of Famer in three of four comparative categories.

There’s little doubt that he dominated his contemporaries. During the 10-year span from 1981 to 1990, he led his league in total bases, games, at bats, and plate appearances. The sixth man to produce a 30/30 season, he was also the first to finish a season with a .300 average, 30 homers, 30 steals, 120 runs batted in, 130 runs scored, and 90 walks, while getting caught stealing fewer than 10 times. Not bad for a guy who suffered a serious knee injury in a home-plate collision with an incoming runner!

Despite the bad knees, Murphy was bad news to opposing pitchers long enough to leave an indelible mark in baseball history. At the time he retired, he was considered a virtual lock for the Hall of Fame.

Someone obviously dropped the key. ■

Notes

1. Interview by the author, September 2009.
2. Ibid.
3. “Quotes about Dale Murphy,” on the player page for Murphy at www.TheBaseballPage.com.
4. Interview by the author, July 2007.
5. Ibid.
6. Mark Bowman, MLB.com (25 December 2006).
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Dan Schlossberg, “Dale Murphy: One of the Nicest Guys in Baseball,” *World of Sport* (August 1984).
10. Dan Schlossberg, “Dale Murphy,” *Baseball Stars of 1985* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1985).
11. Interview by the author, December 2008.
12. Bob Klapisch and Pete Van Wieren, *The Braves: An Illustrated History of America’s Team* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1995).
13. Interview by the author, March 2001.
14. Tom Glavine (47) will join this elite group in 2010.

The Card in the Baseball Cap

“Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win!”

JEFFREY A. PORTNOY

All baseball fans can attest to the truism that baseball is a game that hinges on timing and inches. To the fans of a team eclipsing 100 victories, a season feels joyous and swift. Other seasons are made interminable by loss after loss. Line drives either just clip the foul line or miss wide by inches. Fly balls barely slip beyond the center-field wall and the reach of a desperate glove. Fans endure, despair, or revel in these slimmest of margins. My baseball experience as a young fan mirrored these highs and lows, and my team just missing World Series championships dominated the landscape of my baseball history and fate. Cubs fans always—and Boston fans until recently—certainly understand.

I was fortunate to grow up in St. Louis, one of the truly great baseball towns, when kingly Stan Musial was in his prime (and the teen idol of my future mother-in-law). I had an occasion this past summer to travel from my home in Atlanta to St. Louis for a weekend series with the Colorado Rockies, stay at a downtown hotel within walking distance of the newest incarnation of Busch Stadium, and see a game with friends, one of whom was three stadiums shy of having been to a game at every Major League Baseball venue. Sadly, the Redbirds were crushed. But for the entire weekend, downtown was an undulating pedestrian sea of Cardinals jerseys and hats. Even during the Braves' glorious run of championships and brilliant pitching, the energy in Atlanta rarely sustained the depth of the baseball passion of any given midsummer's eve in St. Louis. Of course, when Atlanta was truly galvanized during the early years of the Braves' 14-year streak of championships, the tomahawk chop and the chants of the often sleep-deprived Atlanta fans were phenomena to behold.

In the 1950s, like many youngsters, I pretended to the parental unit that I was off to sleep when in actuality I was listening to Harry Caray and Jack Buck broadcasting the Redbirds' games on KMOX. My transistor radio and its earphone, an unwieldy and wax-stained dinosaur by today's standards, was a precious item, especially during World Series games on

school days in the afternoon. I am still bemused by Cubs fans laying claim to Harry Caray. That raspy, gravelly, nasal voice, seasoned and steeped in Busch beer inning after inning, was the sound of CARDINALS baseball as he Holy Cowed: “It could be . . . it might be . . . it is: A Home Run!”

Musial and his memorable wriggle and swing were priceless. The defense was often brilliant, especially with Curt Flood prowling the outfield and Tim McCarver behind the plate and (fortunately) not a microphone. And that infield: Ken Boyer, Julian Javier, and Bill White! (Of course, for Ken Boyer, my youthful bitterness still smolders. He never had a clutch hit during his entire career! And with that last sentence, I have achieved a life goal of avenging in print all those childhood nights of disappointing at-bats by Mr. Boyer. But then again, none of us are perfect or perfectly bad. Some fans might even remember and cite Boyer's grand slam home run in the 1964 World Series; of course, facts cannot override cherished childhood prejudices.)

Yes, times and parenting were different then. As ten-year-olds, my friend Martin and I would ride our bicycles to my grandparents' apartment on one of the main drags in St. Louis, where we would catch the Redbird Express bus, journeying to and from old Sportsman's Park by ourselves to see a game. Once, we had the amazing good luck to be directly behind home plate, where we could watch the ever-glowing, always intense Bob Gibson at work, pitching a gem and yet another Cardinals victory. I doubt that any pitcher in all of baseball possessed a more intimidating demeanor, a fiercer, harder, meaner stare. Of course, all was not idyllic; one evening as the bus idled at a light in one of the rougher parts of town after a twilight doubleheader, we witnessed a knifing, in what appeared to be a love triangle gone tragically awry.

All those childhood years of following the Cardinals culminated in their being World Series champions in 1964, the team's first title since 1946, but timing was not my friend. My family had moved in 1963 to Jackson, Mississippi, to an industrializing South. My

father opened the first integrated factory in that state. (Think *In the Heat of the Night* without the murder plot.) By then, my transistor radio had lost much of its allure; despite the station's long reach into the region, KMOX did not find me, nor I it. I felt exiled from that championship run and the subsequent ones in 1967 and 1968.

The game in the South, I quickly discovered, is not baseball: It is football. This perception is obvious to anyone with a passing interest in sports and was something that I would witness countless times as an adult after I moved to Atlanta in 1977. Two-a-day practices by the University of Georgia Bulldogs or even a prominent high-school team too often usurped a dramatic pennant race from the headlines of the *Atlanta Journal* or *Constitution* sports section. The physicality and brutality of football prevailed over the nuances, subtleties, and intellection of baseball. Still today in Old South Mississippi or New South Atlanta, except for a few cherished interludes thanks to the Braves, football remains transcendent: Football is king.

Several desultory years later after living in Jackson and elsewhere up the Mississippi River, I graduated from a high school in Minneapolis, but I could barely muster an interest in the American League and the team of the Twin Cities. My indifference to the Twins from the late 1960s later became something more malignant, however, when in 1991 they defeated the Atlanta Braves . . . because of dome baseball exacerbated by those ridiculous diapers that Twins fans waved. All baseball is not equal. National League does not equal American League to those with an allegiance.

That allegiance, not to the National League but to the Cardinals, was to face a brutal challenge. I moved to Atlanta in the late 1970s to attend graduate school at Emory University. The woeful Braves lost game after game before slight crowds (unless Phil Niekro was throwing his knuckleball in the vicinity of flailing hitters and an oversized catcher's mitt). Attending games was easy. We could sit anywhere and loll comfortably across four seats. We could spot and wave to friends in distant corners of the stadium because they were the sole occupants. And the traffic congestion for which Atlanta is now infamous was never an issue going to and from Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. Although Harry Caray and I were both many years removed from St. Louis by then, I found solace in Skip Caray, Harry's son, broadcasting for the Braves and the transplanted St. Louis Hawks. Mindful of their history, the new Hawks proudly hung from the Omni's rafters the retired jersey of Bob Pettit, who had been a scoring

machine in St. Louis and the recipient of the NBA's first MVP Award. I had seen him play many times in St. Louis with my uncle. Skip and I were connected. Although Skip did not voice the verbal idiosyncrasies and mispronunciations of his dad, he exhibited a biting wit in his early days that was wonderfully appealing and contemporary, especially when the flailing of those two dismal franchises made them ready targets. Unfortunately, I think his cynicism softened in his later years, eventually becoming the irksome shtick of Skip identifying fans catching foul balls as being from some locale or another in the surrounding area. That some talk-radio fans thought him psychic or asked him on pregame radio shows what his trick was, or even how he knew, could elicit Skip's biting humor of old (or a quick hanging up of the phone), but those questioners also served as depressing and unwelcome commentary on the state of education in America.

A modicum of success finally graced the Braves in 1982. That year, the NLCS pitted the Cardinals, who had captured a playoff berth early, against the Braves, the last team to clinch, thanks to a Dodgers loss to the Giants on the final day of the regular season. St. Louis had last appeared in the postseason when they lost in the World Series to the Detroit Tigers in 1968; the Braves' most recent trip to the playoffs was in 1969, the first year of divisional play. The St. Louis roster was formidable: Keith Hernandez, Willie McGee, Darrell Porter, Bruce Sutter, and the acrobatic wizard himself—Ozzie Smith; the Braves answered with the crafty Niekro on the mound, the portly but powerful Bob Horner, and a free-swinging Dale Murphy, who would garner the first of his two consecutive NL MVP Awards for his season's work. I had tickets for Game 3 of the best-of-five series, the first two of which were happening in St. Louis. Niekro, of course, opened in Game 1 for the Braves and pitched masterfully as the Braves led 1-0, three outs from an official game. But then the rains came and refused to depart, washing away a likely victory by the Braves, the chance for Niekro to dominate the series, and any real hope that the Braves could vanquish the hot-hitting Cardinals, who would score 17 runs in the series compared to a paltry five by Atlanta. Baseball, that game of inches, was measured here not in slicing line drives toward the foul line but in precipitation.

Finally, after all those years of waiting, I was witnessing live playoff action for the first time. Before me was the team of my youth facing the team that, as an adult, I was coming to admire and then love. The Braves relied on a woebegone charm to attract charitable and tolerant baseball fans, because too often their

play was far from stellar; just being consistently competent would have sufficed in those years. The Braves would not return to the playoffs again until 1991. What the Braves did have going for them was Ted Turner's superstition. Because they were omnipresent, they became yet another team proclaiming themselves "America's Team." The whole country could witness their daily antics or feats, and the power of the familiar to generate loyalty should never be underestimated.

As I sat in the right center-field stands for 1982's Game 3 with a native Georgian who had grown up with the Braves, I conceded, at first only to myself, that I was a fan torn by competing attachments. This dilemma gnawed at my brain and belly with a discomfort tinged with betrayal. The tension of the game itself, however, was short lived. Hernandez, Porter, George Hendrick, and McGee scored off Rick Camp in the second inning before manager Joe Torre pulled him. The feeling that the overmatched and rain-thwarted Braves could not and would not counter that flurry was palpable, and the game took on that pastoral serenity that baseball offers when the conclusion is foregone, the weather is delightful, the field looks immaculate, and the joy of baseball becomes observing the nuances rather than fretting over the outcome. After that torching of Camp, I could candidly admit to my compatriot how difficult shedding the affections of youth can be. I felt an odd contentment. That yearning of my youth was partially fulfilled. This formidable St. Louis team, before my own eyes, was only four victorious games over the Brewers, the Braves' replacements in Milwaukee, from being crowned the 1982 World Champion St. Louis Cardinals.

The Braves of 1982 seemed to have taken an important, albeit incremental, step as an organization to being a franchise with promise. Promises, of course, may be easily and cavalierly made, but the fulfillment of a promise is another thing entirely, a matter of time at first and then of timing. The change from worst to first (with staying power) came at last to the Braves in 1991, with the gradual emergence of a pitching staff that would dominate a baseball generation for a 14-year run of division and league championships like no other in sports history. Three future Hall of Famers fueled the momentum: Tom Glavine, John Smoltz, and then Greg Maddux.

The nature of hometown newspapers is, of course, to offer bountiful coverage of the local teams and exhibit a depth of knowledge about them, especially when compared to the cursory reporting on the franchises in other cities, which invariably seems limited to game results unless the scandal du jour lurks there.

Thus time and coverage contributed to my growing attachment to the Braves throughout the remainder of the 1980s. But just as I had been separated from my resurgent Cardinals in the early 1960s, I was whisked away from Atlanta and the Braves in 1989 for postgraduate employment in the English department and honors program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. For three years I watched UNLV's Running Rebels dominate their opponents on the basketball court and win one glorious NCAA Championship with Jerry "Tark the Shark" Tarkanian at the helm, chomping on a waterlogged white towel. Larry Johnson, a future star in the NBA, soared above the competition, looking every bit like a grown man playing against boys. Presented with all the flash and pyrotechnics that Las Vegas could muster, UNLV basketball was clearly Showtime. Perhaps because a readership of gamblers found little to inspire a wager in the flailings of the Braves, coverage in the Las Vegas newspapers of Braves baseball was minimal. The Braves ended the 1990 season with the worst record in all of baseball (65-97). Las Vegas was a basketball and betting venue, a city pretending to be every other city: New York, Paris, Venice. The Las Vegas Stars, then a minor-league team of the San Diego Padres, were a delightful refuge from the tawdry, the tacky, or—to those generous of spirit—the postmodern glitz that is quintessentially Vegas. But the Stars (now the 51s—named for Area 51, that tourist destination in the Nevada desert for spotting aliens traversing the universe in UFOs—and an affiliate of the Toronto Blue Jays) were not going to satisfy my urge to witness championship baseball at the major-league level.

Meanwhile, back in Atlanta, the emerging storyline during the summer of 1991 was coming into focus; the Braves were clawing their way out of the basement and starting to roll. With surprising victories and unexpected rallies, the Braves became as hot as summer in Hotlanta or in the ovenlike desert of southern Nevada. Telephone conversations with family and friends in Georgia buzzed with talk of the surging Braves. For a time, if football two-a-days were not exactly taking a back seat, they were only riding shotgun and not driving Atlanta's sports vehicle. The magic of the Braves season, from all accounts, was astonishing, and I was missing it. My future wife, however, was not. Then finishing her graduate degree at Georgia State University in Atlanta, she was descended upon for every postseason game by a visiting family member from Florida or Alabama, wanting to share her playoff-ticket package and accompany her to each and every game. The magic was magnetic.

I was, of course, not on the scene to share in the fun: I missed out once more. The phrase “back-to-back seasons” resonates with ominous tones in Georgia. Typically the reference conjures the inept flapping of the afflicted Atlanta Falcons, who since their inception in 1966 never until 2009 enjoyed two winning seasons in succession, but the 1992 Braves would break that curse: They were poised by midsummer to repeat as champions. A 13-game win streak from July 8 through July 25 propelled them into first place, and around that same time, through those quirks of fate that often redirect professional careers, I was offered a position as a faculty member and honors program director back in Atlanta, at DeKalb College (now Georgia Perimeter College). I was returning for the Braves’ stretch run and a firsthand experience of the magic and the jubilation fueling the season and the city. For a second year in a row, these were heady times for baseball fans in Georgia, and this time I would be part of the madness.

While I may have missed the first go-round against the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1991 NLCS, with stars Andy Van Slyke and a sleek, unenhanced, and play-off-beleaguered Barry Bonds, fate would not allow me to miss the 1992 reprise and what many observers, myself included, consider the greatest moment in team history for the Atlanta Braves: Game 7. The series began with an auspicious reversal of 1991’s first game when the Braves had succumbed 5–1 at Three Rivers Stadium. In 1992, the Braves, with Smoltz pitching, easily prevailed, 5–1, at Atlanta–Fulton County Stadium. Game 2 featured timely run production by Ron Gant, David Justice, and Terry Pendleton: Braves 13, Pirates 5. And for the second year in a row, my friends caravanned to Pittsburgh for the games played there, witnessing mixed results: The Braves averted a hometown sweep by winning one game behind the pitching and second victory of the eventual series MVP, Smoltz. Ahead three games to two and with Glavine and Smoltz slated to pitch Games Six and Seven at home, the Braves and their fans surveyed the prospects and enjoyed considerable optimism . . . until inning two of the sixth game when the Pirates scored eight runs on the way to Glavine’s second loss of the series and a blowout win, 13–4.

Perhaps the two late runs in the ninth inning of Tuesday night’s Game 6 intimated that the Braves bats were resuscitating, and that prospect, conjoined with Smoltz and his two previous victories facing the twice-defeated Doug Drabek, offered some strands of hope. The headline in the Atlanta newspaper read: “It’s now or never!” I, however, despaired; I did not have tickets

to the game until the call came at noon on Wednesday. On the line was Hippie, one of the owners of my favorite neighborhood bar, the Euclid Avenue Yacht Club, in Atlanta’s Little Five Points. (The nautical motif, of course, in landlocked, often drought-riddled Georgia is irony incarnate.) Why he called me with the offer of two free tickets he could not use himself for Wednesday night’s Game 7 I will never know for sure, and this many years hence, I know Hippie will not remember why either. Nevertheless, thank you, fate, and thank you, Hippie.

The atmosphere at the stadium before the game encompassed all the clichés—charged, electric, dramatic, fraught—but clichés many times bespeak a truth. Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter shared the owner’s box with Ted Turner and Jane Fonda. Everyone was in place, including me. The ethereal Emmylou Harris sang “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which concludes with the perfect phrase for baseball games played in Atlanta: “and the home of the Braves!” And at the conclusion of the song, my friend Robert Byrd, a long-time season-ticket holder, uttered the refrain he, with his delightfully morbid charm, would sound often that night: “Oh, we’re doomed.” I was privileged to hear Bobby repeat that phrase as I was preparing to write this piece. Bobby found the video recording he had made of the game; it was located deep in the recesses of a storage closet, in a box of VHS cassettes commandingly labeled “Keep These.” We watched the tape of the game on his television while drinking beer from much-used and faded, but authentic, 1992 NL Championship Series stadium cups. In anticipation of the ninth inning coming our way, we left a Bud out on the kitchen counter to open and drink warm, in true late-inning stadium fashion, when Pendleton led off the final inning with a double to right field.

The first inning established the dominant motif for much of the game for Braves fans: anxiety and misery. The Pirates loaded the bases in the first and scored one run on a sacrifice fly by Orlando Merced; for only the second time in the series, they were ahead of Smoltz. Braves fans were not the only ones feeling queasy. John McSherry, the veteran plate umpire, was ill, and he went to the box of Bill White, president of the National League and a former Cardinals first baseman, to discuss being replaced; McSherry’s hospitalization that night was perhaps a sad and ominous precursor to his fatal heart attack at Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati on opening day of the 1996 season.

That lone run gave license to two fans from Pittsburgh sitting one row behind and to the left of us. Somewhere, batches of these alien fans are cloned and

then dispatched throughout home parks, one pair to every section. The mold is familiar: beer-bellied, loud-voiced, slovenly dressed, drunk, obnoxious, and emboldened when their team leads. (My caravanning friends to Pittsburgh, of course, were cast of finer stuff, a different, higher order of beings.) The futility of the Braves bats continued as the innings ticked past, tension and misery rising: "Oh, we're doomed."

Each pitch elicited a mercurial mood swing. The fans would cheer after a strike hurled by Smoltz or hold their breath in misery whenever he threw a ball, a Pirate reached base, or a Brave was put out. The fans were aching to chop and chant, and they would do so frantically for a bit, but then dread would prevail and misery return.

Van Slyke singled in Pittsburgh's second run in the top of the sixth to extend the lead to 2-0. Bobby captured the collective gloom: "Oh, we're doomed." But in the bottom of that inning, the Braves displayed some much-desired signs of life. They filled the bases with no outs. The Braves chant and tomahawk chop exploded into the night; the sound was wild and passionate, then deadened and silent. Jeff Blauser lined into a double play that erased the runner at third, and Pendleton hit a line drive to Bonds for the third out. The increasingly inebriated pair from Pittsburgh again gave voice to their elation and the promise of certain victory.

The bottom of the seventh sparked some hope for the Braves and their fans. Runners occupied first and second with one out, but even this did not seem like much of a threat after the failure to score under better circumstances in the previous inning. My ominous premonition came true; the Braves on base were left stranded once more.

In the top of the eighth inning, David Justice's great one-hop throw from right field on a double by Jeff King erased Merced at the plate, reinspiring some hope, as great defense can sometimes engender, that this talented Braves team might yet reappear with bats wielding timely hits before all opportunity and remaining outs were extinguished. At the very least, the succession of Braves pitchers to that point—Smoltz, Mike Stanton, Pete Smith, and Steve Avery—had kept the Pirates to only two runs. The bottom of the eighth, however, came and went. The Braves had mustered only five paltry and unproductive hits and nary a run, and those two Pirate tallies on the scoreboard appeared insurmountable. "Oh, we're doomed." Drabek was pitching a masterful game.

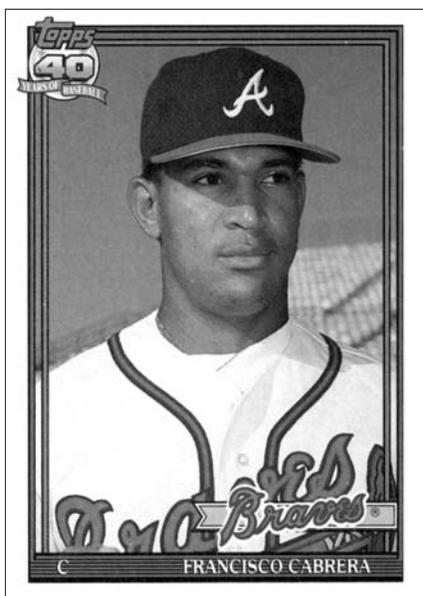
The changeover to the bottom of the ninth brought Braves fans to their feet yet again, and the chanting

and clapping and chopping began in fervent prayer. More disaster had been averted in the top half of the inning when Jose Lind sent a long and terrifying fly to Gant at the wall in left field for the first out, and a runner was later stranded on second after reaching it on a walk and wild pitch by Jeff Reardon. Leading off the bottom of the ninth, Pendleton laced Drabek's third pitch into the right-field corner for a double, making amends for his rally-ending out in the sixth inning. The chanting and clapping resounded with new vigor and mounting tension. Justice followed with a relatively routine grounder to second, but Lind, a talented fielder who had committed only six errors during the regular season, perhaps succumbed to the contagious tensions and pressures emanating from the Braves fans. His backhanded stab at the ball deflected it past him. Pendleton scurried to third on the error. Ray Miller, the Pirates pitching coach, and the infielders converged on the mound. Waiting to come to the plate was Sid Bream, hailed all the while by the screams of "Sid! Sid! Sid!" Bream had left Pittsburgh in 1991 for Atlanta, where his gangly frame and thick and distinguishing—if not quite distinguished—moustache immediately made him a favorite of Braves fans. Bream walked on four straight pitches. Manager Jim Leyland replaced Drabek with Stan Belinda. Gant, who had hit a grand slam in Game 2, jolted the crowd when he backed Bonds up to the wall in left. Pendleton tagged and scored, but the other base runners could not advance. Perhaps our fortunes were turning, but the anxiety was increasing—only two outs remained. Catcher Damon Berryhill, the late-season replacement for an injured Greg Olson, fouled off the first pitch and then walked on four straight, thanks to incredibly close calls by Randy Marsh, the umpire who had replaced the ailing McSherry.

Now, with the bases loaded, the crowd noise—the chopping and chanting—intensified. Brian Hunter, who in 1991's seventh game against Pittsburgh hit a two-run homer in the first inning, was the pinch hitter and primed to be a slayer of Pirates once again. After fouling off the first pitch, he looped a soft liner that fans longed to see glide beyond the reach of Lind in short center, but he cleanly snared this ball. The crowd quieted for a moment after that out but then regrouped, and the chanting and cheering resumed with passion.

To the plate, thrust forward by manager Bobby Cox, came twenty-six-year-old Francisco Cabrera, the sole remaining position player on the Braves bench. He had spent much of the season in Richmond with the Braves farm team, where he hit .272. His major-

FRANCISCO CABRERA, 1991, NO. 893, COURTESY OF THE TOPPS COMPANY



This was the card in the cap.

league experience in 1992 amounted to 10 at bats in the 12 games he played.

The drama was palpable, and the crowd was roaring. But my pal Bobby Byrd's thoughts of "Oh, we're doomed" had dissipated. He confidently pulled the baseball card of one Francisco Cabrera from inside the front of his Atlanta Braves cap. Since his youth, Bobby had kept the baseball card of a favorite player for that year inside his baseball cap to maintain its shape and keep the front erect. Francisco Cabrera was his choice in 1992 because *he was a hitter*. Not much of a fielder was he, but he was a pure hitter. As Cabrera came to the plate, Bobby stood. He held Cabrera's card at shoulder's height with a straightened arm and slowly pivoted, showing that card to everyone around him.

After two balls and a vicious liner foul to the left that would have easily won the game if fair, Cabrera laced a line drive through the infield to Bonds in left field. Justice easily scored from third, and he and Otis Nixon, who edged over from the on-deck circle, frantically signaled to Bream to slide once he had laboriously galloped past third from second and rambled toward the plate.

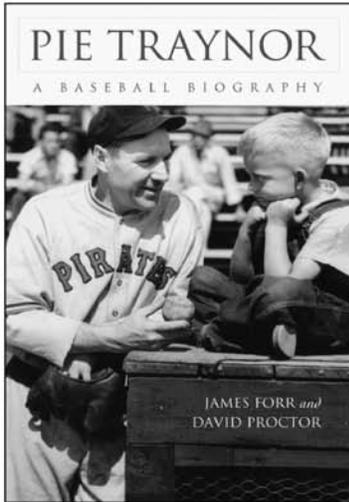
Walk-off home runs are a memorable means of capping a victory; they have all the climactic finality of a heavyweight's knockout punch. But even home runs cannot compete with a play at the plate in the ninth inning of a Game 7 when the World Series is on the line and the outs number two. The beneficiary—or victim—of five knee operations, Bream slogged toward

home as if in slow motion, as if the steam driving him was barely sufficient to maintain his momentum. Bonds's throw to the plate was off to the first-base side by several feet, and catcher Mike LaValliere's diving tag was late.

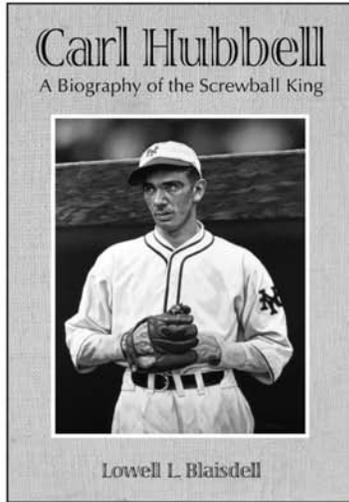
Justice seemed to be the first to hug and then throw himself upon Bream, and his teammates piled on top in wild jubilation. Fans were screaming at their loudest pitch. There was high-fiving and hugging and kissing everywhere in the vicinity. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the two suddenly sobered Pittsburgh fans slinking away. Soon they would understand the curse of Bream and Cabrera and the Braves, as they were destined to endure the plummeting fortunes of the Pirates and their ensuing 17-year streak of losing seasons. Perched on one knee, Bonds watched the infield madness for several minutes before departing the field, and Van Slyke, with his cap propped high on his head, remained sitting in center field as if in a daze, staring presumably in disbelief.

The crowd cheered and screamed and stomped and high-fived and hugged and kissed some more. The decibel volume reverberated like the amplifiers of Spinal Tap, which were calibrated not to 10 but to 11. No one wanted to leave. No fans *could* leave, at least not until they were too hoarse to scream anymore, and that was easily 30 or 40 minutes after Sid! Sid! Sid's! slide. The Braves would not win the World Championship that year against Toronto; in fact, they would win only once during their glorious streak, and thus finally bring home the first championship for a major-league team in Atlanta's history. In 1995, the Atlanta Braves defeated the Cleveland Indians in six games. Of course, I had tickets to Game 7. But of that or of missing any other game I will never complain: I had been a part of *the Game 7*, and this moment was truly the finest as a team for the Braves and their fans.

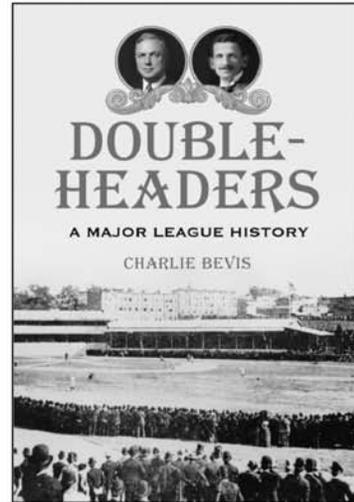
Broadcasting on the radio, Skip Caray immortalized this baseball event with his exuberant celebration after Bream's slide: "Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win!" Even now that call remains the one most often played to conjure the magic and majesty of the Atlanta Braves, and at the end of each Braves victory in our household, and I suspect in many others where Braves fans reside, we acknowledge a fresh Braves victory and remember that fateful ninth-inning turn from despair to sheer joy with that same call: "Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win! Braves Win!" ■



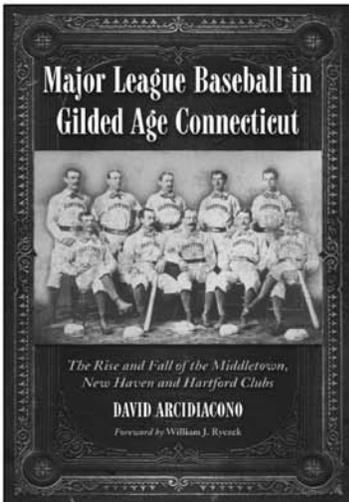
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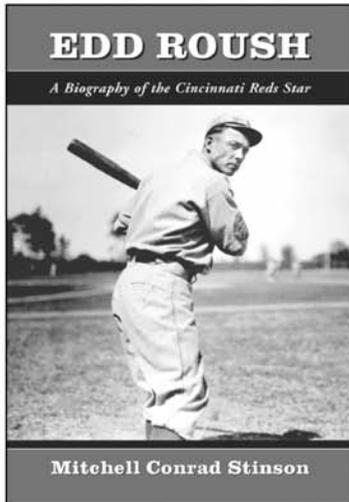
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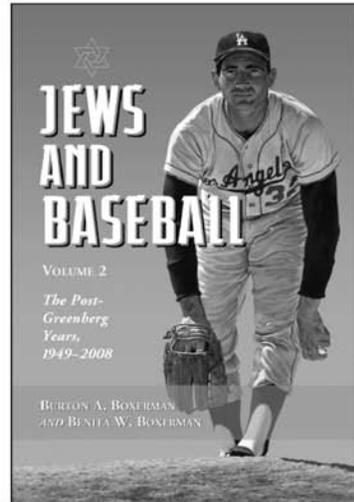
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