

The INSIDE GAME



The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

VOL. XIII, No. 2: "LET'S GET THIS LUMPY LICORICE-STAINED BALL ROLLING!"

MAY 2013

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

by John McMurray

Since movies set in or around the Deadball Era have traditionally focused either on Babe Ruth's rise to prominence or on the Black Sox scandal, it is especially noteworthy that a different topic will be the subject of a feature film to be released late in 2014: the death of former Cleveland Indians shortstop Ray Chapman. The movie will be an adaptation of Mike Sowell's 1989 book *The Pitch That Killed*, which chronicles the death of Chapman on August 17, 1920, the day after he was hit by a Carl Mays pitch. The expected prominence of the movie invites discussion of how the plot and characters will translate to the movie screen.

Given that the working title of the movie is "Deadball" — a play on words to highlight Chapman's tragic end from a pitch — it is ironic, as Tom Simon noted to Sowell, that the movie technically takes place just outside of the Deadball Era. Still, the primary characters are well-established Deadball Era figures and therefore relevant to the Committee. According to Pam Sullivan, who is producing the film

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RITTER AWARD WINNER: DANIEL R. LEVITT'S THE BATTLE THAT FORGED MODERN BASEBALL: THE FEDERAL LEAGUE CHALLENGE AND ITS LEGACY

SABR's Larry Ritter Book Award subcommittee has named *The Battle that Forged Modern Baseball: The Federal League Challenge and its Legacy* by Daniel R. Levitt as this year's winner. The Levitt work was published by Ivan R. Dee and reviewed in the February 2013 issue of *The Inside Game*. In announcing the award, subcommittee chair Gail Rowe observed that the Levitt work is "that rare book that brings fresh perspectives and insights to conventional wisdom. Although a good many authors have written about the Federal League (1913-1915) in treating closely-related topics and Marc Okkonen and Robert Peyton Wiggins (the 2010 Ritter Award winner) have written laudably on the Federal League itself, Daniel Levitt offers readers a gracefully-written, deeply-researched and original look at the Federal League's history and legacy."

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DEADBALL ERA MEETING AT SABR CONVENTION

The Deadball Era Committee will conduct its annual meeting during the SABR Convention. A highlight of the meeting will be presentation of the Larry Ritter Award to author Daniel R. Levitt and remarks by Dan about his superb book on the Federal League. The meeting will also feature the unveiling of the Deadball Era All-star Team as selected by the committee membership by chairman John McMurray, with discussion doubtless to follow. The floor will then be opened for consideration of other committee business. All convention attendees are cordially invited.

The exact date, time, and room of the committee meeting had not been determined as the newsletter went to press. That info will be conveyed in due course as it becomes available.



The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

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The Rowe statement continues: "Focusing more intently on the architects of the league and those who sought to sustain it rather than on its players and the results on the field, Levitt identifies new personnel in the drama of the league's origins, history, and eventual collapse, and fleshes out the personalities of many better-known participants. His account provides a more complex and nuanced story than that previously drawn. He illuminates the Byzantine-like economic, legal, and corporate maneuvers that characterized the Federal League's challenge to the American and National Leagues, and Organized Baseball's response to that challenge. In so doing, Levitt clarifies developments that led in 1922 to the US Supreme Court's exemption of Organized Baseball from federal ant-trust laws. His compelling story not only advances our understanding of baseball's evolution between 1913 and 1922, but it casts light on how Organized Baseball developed into the closed monopolies so familiar to us today."

Levitt is the twelfth author to win the coveted Ritter Award. His work was chosen from finalists that included *Jimmy Collins: A Baseball Biography*, by Charlie Bevis (McFarland); *The Barnstorming Hawaiian Travelers: A Multi-ethnic Baseball Team Tours the Mainland, 1912-1916* by Joel Franks (McFarland); and *John Tortes "Chief" Meyers: A Baseball Biography* by William A. Young (McFarland). Each year, the subcommittee selects the best book published on baseball's Deadball Era. In addition to Dr. Rowe, the panel consists of Jack Carlson, Mark Dugo, David Fleitz, Craig Lammers, John McMurray, Mark Pattison, Tom Simon, Doug Skipper, and Trey Strecker.

Baseball players are public characters and photographers may take their photographs in action without their consent, according to a ruling of Magistrate Butts this afternoon.

The case decided was brought by the National Baseball Commission and the New York baseball club against a moving picture concern which had taken pictures of games without a permit from the management.

The (Pittsburgh) Gazette Times, May 23, 1913

Q & A WITH DAN LEVITT

In response to questions posed by newsletter editor Bill Lamb, Ritter Award winner Dan Levitt elaborates on matters covered in his superb chronicle of the Federal League.

Bill: Dan, congratulations on winning the Ritter Award. How did you get started writing about baseball and what was your first published piece?

Dan: I've always been interested in baseball history and had been an avid consumer of the *Baseball Research Journal* for many years. Around 1995 I came across an entry in an old sports encyclopedia that credited Ferdie Schupp with the single season ERA record of 0.90 in 1916, more recently usually credited to Dutch Leonard for his 0.96 ERA in 1914. After further research it was clear that Schupp was the acknowledged leader at the time and for many years thereafter. Based on the tenet that we don't retroactively re-award titles because of changes in the qualifications for league leadership, only actual errors in the playing record, I concluded that Schupp should still be recognized as the ERA leader for 1916 and consequently, the single season record holder (Schupp pitched only 140 innings that season). I decided to write up my findings and submit the article to SABR. It was a thrill when my article was published in the 1996 BRJ.

One of the great things about SABR is all the friendships one forms. Over the next several years I corresponded with Mark Armour, whom I had met at a convention, on various aspects of team building — why some teams are successful and some aren't. After a year or two, we thought we might have the makings of a book. We put together a couple of chapters on specific teams we thought were interesting and contacted Christina Kahrl, the sports editor at what was then *Brassey's*. We knew Christina a little through SABR, and



Daniel R. Levitt

Mark also knew her through *Baseball Prospectus*. Essentially we asked Christina to review our work and let us know if she thought we had the makings of a publishable book. And if so, did she have any advice on how to proceed. Fortunately, not only did Christina think we had a book, she said *Brassey's* would publish it. That submittal eventually became *Paths to Glory: How Great Baseball Teams Got That Way*, which came out in 2003.

Bill: What prompted you to select the Federal League as a book subject?

Dan: My book really focuses the struggle between the Federal League and Organized Baseball, which I believe is both an interesting and significant story. As the last league to challenge major league baseball as a major league, the Federal League posed a real and substantial challenge to baseball's prevailing structure. The existing American and National leagues, along with the minor leagues, fought back furiously in the press, in the courts, and on the field, making for many fascinating

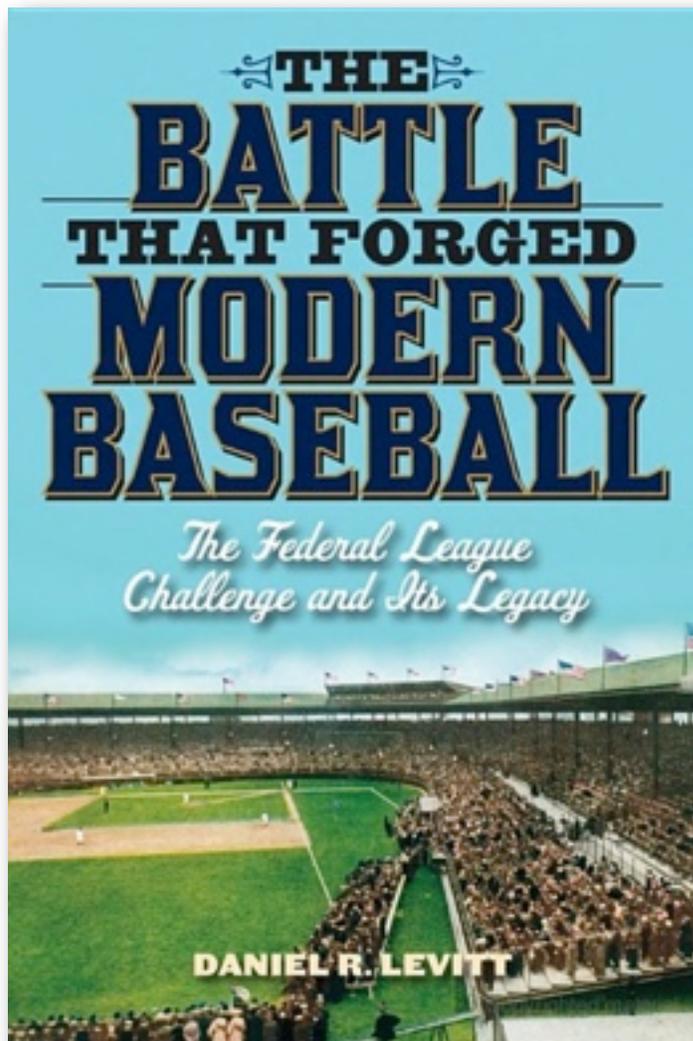
and fun-to-read stories. Moreover, this bitter struggle was consequential: it represented the last chance that baseball's organizational structure would develop along a different path. After the final settlement with the Federal League, baseball's monopoly and hierarchical structure never again faced more than a token challenge.

Bill: Robert Peyton Wiggins's excellent work *The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs* won the Ritter Award in 2010. To what extent, if any, were you influenced by Wiggins's work and how would you distinguish your account of the Federal League from his?

Dan: I like Wiggins's book and recommend it for anyone wanting an authoritative account of the Federal League. My book looks not so much at the Federal League itself and what happened on the field — except as it relates to the overall story — but on the struggle between the leagues. It spends as much time in the board rooms of Organized Baseball as it does within the Federal League. To this end too, I look at a long story arc, introducing the battle with background dating back to the introduction of the first sports leagues in the mid nineteenth century. Another book I strongly recommend is Marc Okkonen's book on the Federal League published by SABR in 1989, especially for its photographs, rosters, and park diagrams.

Bill: As a financial expert, how would you have rated the Federal League's prospects for long-term success in the Spring of 1914? Would you have advised a client to invest in the FL? Why/why not?

Dan: I think that from the perspective of early 1914, one could have reasonably believed in the Federal League's eventual success — defined as being either partially or fully absorbed or recognized within Organized Baseball's structure. Previous new leagues had succeeded with some regularity, and America had seen huge



urban growth over the previous 40 years. The number of cities with over 300,000 people grew from three in 1870 — New York (lumping Brooklyn and New York together), Philadelphia and St. Louis — to eighteen in 1910. Moreover, the Federals had lined up a pretty solid group of owners and had a reasonable expectation that they would receive some protection under the federal antitrust statutes.

Bill: In your estimation, who were the most competent FL executives/club owners? Who were the weakest?

Dan: Interestingly, ownership of Federal League franchises fell into two distinct classes based on the location of the team. Those teams competing directly with major league franchises — Brooklyn, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis — were

principally owned by wealthy individuals. The wealth of these owners compared favorably with those in the major leagues, and all were aggressive in signing players and establishing respectable ballparks. Robert Ward in Brooklyn and Charlie Weeghman in Chicago were particularly aggressive in fielding quality teams in quality ballparks. Weeghman saw an opportunity for a team on the North side and its 800,000 or so residents (at the time the Cubs played on the old West side). He built a nice facility (now Wrigley Field) and probably outdrew the Cubs (In the book I discuss the various estimates of Federal League attendance and my educated guesses). Unfortunately for Ward, though, the Dodgers consistently outdrew his Tip Tops, and he could never really differentiate his squad. The other two, Phil Ball in St. Louis and Edward Gwinner in Pittsburgh, were both engaged and capable.

On the other hand, the four teams located in cities with only minor league franchises — Baltimore, Buffalo, Indianapolis, and Kansas City — were initially owned by large syndicates of several hundred smaller investors. Many residents of these cities felt that their city was “major” and should be represented by major league baseball. Moreover, in those days before the Securities and Exchange Commission, all sorts of claims could be made regarding how investing in a team could lead to great wealth. One prospectus used Charles Comiskey as an example of how a person could amass wealth owning a baseball team. Unfortunately, this method of capitalization left little margin for error. When the teams lost more money than anticipated, they ran through their meager reserves quickly and were left with no obvious avenue to raise more funds. The small investors had little interest in putting up more money as the losses mounted. In fact, Robert Ward funded much of the deficit for Kansas

City, Indianapolis, and probably Buffalo, in addition to his own team. Baltimore drew the best of these teams and was also the best capitalized; it was the only one of the four that was still solvent at the end in 1915.

Bill: American League President Ban Johnson looms large in your account of the FL’s struggle for survival. Can you give us a thumbnail sketch of the role that Johnson played in the FL’s demise?

Dan: Ban Johnson took as a hard a line against the Federals as anyone in Organized Baseball. First of all, he actively enforced the blacklist. For example, in one instance he sent an obscure newspaper clipping from a small town newspaper to National Commission chairman Garry Herrmann noting a minor leaguer playing with Federals. He included a note reminding Herrmann to make sure that player was put on the ineligible list. Johnson was also outspoken in the press, publicly touting the Federal’s weaknesses, that they had no chance of success and should just be ignored.

Johnson also deserves most of the credit for Organized Baseball’s brilliant legal strategy relative to player contracts. In previous battles Organized Baseball went into court to keep players from jumping — even those who had expired contracts — by claiming that they were still bound to their existing team by the reserve clause. Organized Baseball almost universally lost these cases, as the courts ruled the reserve clause non-binding. Johnson did not want to give the Federals the moral boost of having the courts again declare the reserve clause non-binding. He discouraged distraught Organized Baseball owners from suing over the reserve clause to pursue any players they had lost. Instead, he counseled a strategy of simply ignoring Federal League contracts and re-signing any player that had signed with the Federals — by offering

more money, telling the player the Federals were doomed to failure and threatening the blacklist. This worked in a surprising number of cases and forced the Federals to be the ones to initiate the court cases against the players for jumping *their* contracts. The players who re-signed with Organized Baseball often did better in court than one might have expected given the facts of the cases, due to generally better lawyers and the ostensible moral standing of the big leagues. Johnson's legal strategy significantly limited the potential damage from player defections.

Bill: Late in the 1914 season, challenges for a post-season match were issued by various baseball organizations, with the Federal League being challenged by both the Double AA American Association and Rube Foster. How would you handicap a seven-game series between the FL champion Indianapolis Hoofeds and the AA Milwaukee Brewers? How about the FL Chicago Chifeds against Foster's American Giants?

Dan: I think the Federals fell somewhere between the majors and top minors in terms of playing strength, and the Hoofeds would likely have beaten the Brewers. I'm not enough of an expert on Black baseball from the era to predict how the Chifeds would have fared against Foster's club. My guess is that it would have been a pretty good series.

Bill: In your opinion, did the Players Fraternity fumble the chance to advance its interests presented by the arrival of the Federal League? If so, what accounts for that?

Dan: The major league owners feared the existence of the FL at least as much for its boost to the players union as to the economic impact of the new league itself. With the demise of the FL, Organized Baseball could turn the full weight of its financial and moral authority against the union. The first major clash came in the

1916-17 offseason when union leader Dave Fultz threatened to have the players — both major and minor leaguers — strike over what were essentially minor league work rules. It is hard to understand Fultz's decision to risk a strike over these demands. Many of the major league players had absorbed large pay cuts and may have been willing to take some sort of collective action, but it would only have been over issues directly affecting their pocketbook. To expect major league players, unaccustomed to collective action, to strike against prepared employers for several uninspiring demands was naïve. Fultz also completely misread the intransigence of the owners. When they rejected the players' demands, the players quickly caved, and the owners effectively repudiated their previous recognition of the union.

As I discuss in the book, I believe it unlikely the Players Fraternity could have survived as a viable entity even if run differently. The baseball magnates, like owners in other industries, despised and feared collective action by employees, and without meaningful competition for player services the owners had little to fear from hard-line tactics. And as Marvin Miller proved in the long incubation period he believed he needed to solidify the players, sports are a particularly difficult arena in which to build the solidarity necessary for collective bargaining. Because of an ingrained loyalty to team and a heightened sense of individual accomplishment, players need a sustained organizing campaign to prepare them for the rigors of collective action. All that being said, the major league owners and the National Commission still paid lip service to the union in 1916. Had the Fraternity concentrated solely on the most egregious individual cases of player exploitation at the major league level and stayed away

from unimportant confrontations, it is just possible that some sort of independent union could have survived.

Bill: In retrospect, is there anything that you think the FL could have done – in terms of player recruitment strategy, choice of venues, litigation tactics, etc. – that might have enhanced its chances to succeed? Or was the Federal League doomed to failure from the start?

Dan: Previous leagues that had succeeded – again, defined as being either partially or fully absorbed or recognized within Organized Baseball’s structure – did so relative quickly. I think that one of issues for the Federals was that they did not realize the full enmity or solidarity of Organized Baseball. The National League had been a much more fragile and fractured entity when the American Association and American League respectively achieved recognition. The Federals needed to prepare for a longer battle, though in fairness, with the undercapitalized ownership syndicates in the minor league cities, this may never really have been possible. The Feds also suffered a huge blow when Robert Ward died in October 1915. Had Ward survived the Feds might have held out for another year or two and put a team in New York.

The lack of antitrust protection also hurt the FL. They would have had a much better chance at success had Organized Baseball not been able to implement a blacklist, publicly denigrate their product and chance of survival and virtually ignore their contracts. The last was not only an antitrust issue; the courts were often surprisingly generous to Organized Baseball in their interpretation of the contract disputes.

Bill: It has been almost 100 years since the Federal League departed the baseball scene and since that time, random plans for another third major league have never gotten off the drawing board. In your opinion, is there a third major league anywhere in the foreseeable future?

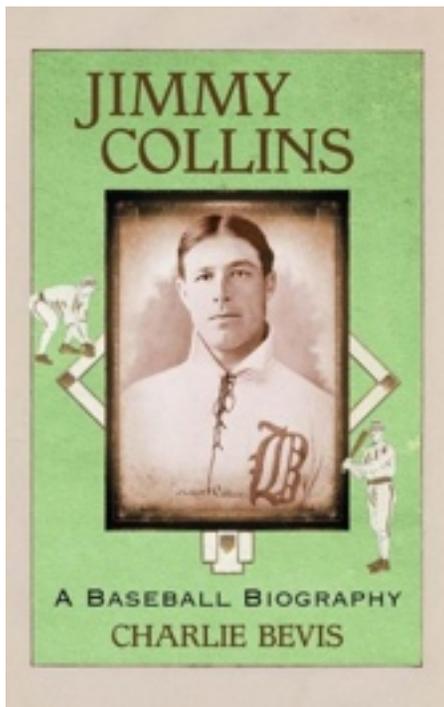
Dan: I don’t really see how. All the largest cities have teams and population growth has slowed. A third major league would have to succeed by placing second teams in established major league cities. The biggest issue here would be playing venues. Teams and their host governmental bodies have spent hundreds of millions of dollars building stadiums. Any new team would be relegated to a substandard location. Moreover, finding players would be much more difficult. Now that players are paid their market wage with the advent of free agency, they would have much less incentive to jump to the new league.

It would be a long shot, but the only new league I could envision would be an international one. If several very wealthy investors, the majority from offshore, looked at a league with one or more teams in some of the middle and upper income baseball hungry countries, such as Mexico, Venezuela, Japan, Korea, several cities in the US, and potentially some other South American, Asian or even European cities, they might get some traction.

Daniel R. Levitt of Minneapolis oversees capital markets for a national commercial real estate firm and is the author of several acclaimed books on baseball.

DEADBALL BIOGRAPHIES

Since the last issue of *The Inside Game* went to press, the BioProject has continued to publish biographies that should be of interest to committee members. The latest Deadball Era subjects include: Tracy Baker, Frank Barberich, Ralph Comstock, Pat Duncan, Ed Hearne, Connie Mack, Jack Lewis, Joe Marshall, Walter Moser, Judge Nagle, Billy Purtell, Newt Randall, Joe Riggert, Frank Schneiberg, Socks Seibold, Charlie Smith, Tubby Spencer, Elmer Steele, Rip Williams, and Les Wilson. If you have not done so already, please check them out.



**JIMMY COLLINS:
A BASEBALL BIOGRAPHY
BY CHARLIE BEVIS**

2012. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland & Company
[ISBN 978-0-7864-6359-6.
238 pages. \$29.95 USD,
Paperback (6" X 9")]

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The main theme for this biography of Jimmy Collins is that he was "a man who used, and sometimes abused, baseball to achieve other things in life through his entrepreneurial real estate investments" (p. 3). This is an excellent premise that Bevis successfully demonstrates. Bevis starts with Collins' early days growing up in Buffalo, the circumstances of his early life, and the conditions in the 1870s

and 1880s in the many wards, districts, and neighborhoods where he lived. He draws upon many sources to describe the political climate of Buffalo, and Collins' father, Anthony's association with the police and politics, issues that affected and inspired Jimmy Collins in the years to come.

Bevis shows how finances governed the way Collins made many of his baseball decisions, from contract negotiations with the Boston Beaneaters of the National League (and the temporary "arrangement" to loan Collins to Louisville and to permit his return to Boston if recalled), to jumping to the new American League (as both player and manager) with a multi-year contract. Each season is portrayed, along with Collins' dealing with the different owners and American League President Ban Johnson.

Bevis employs a great many sources from the different cities where Collins played and managed, from Buffalo in the early years to Boston (1895-1907), Philadelphia Athletics (1907-1908), Minneapolis (1909), and finally

Providence, RI (1910-1911). Included are accounts of the pennants won by Boston of the National League in 1897 and 1898 and Boston of the American League in 1903 and 1904. Also analyzed is Collins' attempt to be an owner or part-owner of a minor league team. Bevis covers Collins' partial ownership in the Worcester, MA team of the New England League from 1906 until the focus changed in the minor leagues from independent teams to teams being used as "farm clubs" for major league teams.

Little is mentioned about year-to-year details after Collins' departure from minor league ball after 1911 because Collins was an extremely private person who gave very few interviews. Still, Bevis was able to piece together his real estate holdings as well as family circumstances, which caused Collins to move from Buffalo to Boston and back to Buffalo. He was also able to recreate Collins' role as president of the Buffalo Municipal Baseball Association (or Muny, as it was called), which organized and

BALL PLAYERS LIVE HIGH

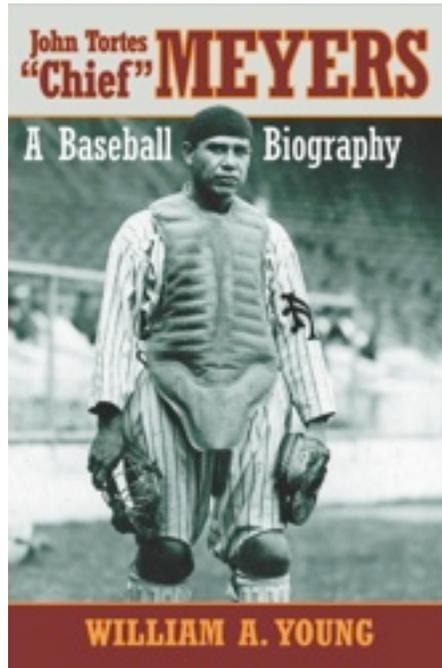
"It is surprising," said an old-timer one day recently, "how many men leave the big league broke. I know of men with good habits, making a salary of \$4,000, who play in the big league for years, and when they get through they will not have a dollar. A man getting that much money should quit the big league with at least \$25,000 after ten years of service if he is at all careful and works in the winter."

The Spartanburg Herald, May 27, 1910

sponsored youth baseball in Buffalo. Two notable players who came from this environment were Frank Pytlak and Warren Spahn.

Bevis describes Collins' eventual selection to the Hall of Fame in 1945 (two years after his death) as the first third baseman to be selected for the Hall, as well as the circumstances leading to Collins' eventual selection. He also offers comparisons and evaluations of third basemen enshrined after that, and explains why Pie Traynor was picked at third base for the Centennial All-Time team in 1969 instead of Collins, and why the Boston Red Sox All-Time team selected Frank Malzone instead of Collins. Bevis discusses the ways to evaluate players changed with the passage of time. He argues that fewer of Collins' contemporaries (if any) were around to remind the public of the significance of Collins' accomplishments as player and manager. All in all, this is a very informative book. Bevis does an excellent job of describing the many different facets of Jimmy Collins' life in and out of baseball. A thoroughly enjoyable read, I would highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in learning more about Jimmy Collins.

Sheldon Miller is a computer programmer/analyst and currently is involved with play by play data entry of Deadball Era games for Retrosheet.



**JOHN TORTES
"CHIEF" MEYERS:
A BASEBALL BIOGRAPHY
BY WILLIAM A. YOUNG**

2012. Jefferson, NC:
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251 pages. \$29.95 USD,
Paperback (6" X 9")]

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The early years of the twentieth century saw the brief emergence of remarkable American Indian talent in baseball's major leagues. Albert Bender, Chippewa (Ojibwe) Hall of Fame pitcher for the Philadelphia Athletics, was a man that manager Connie Mack always addressed with unique respect as Albert, never "Chief." The Sac & Fox/Potawatomie Jim Thorpe, the greatest multi-sport athlete of

his, and probably any, time struggled with the game, but ultimately, playing for the Boston Braves, mastered it enough to sustain the leading batting average in the National League through most of the summer of 1919, before an injury cut back his times at bat.

In William A. Young's *John Tortes "Chief" Meyers: A Baseball Biography* (McFarland, 2012), the third great Indian player of that Deadball Era — one of the great catchers of the game and Thorpe's teammate on the New York Giants — gets the biography that he deserves. Young sets up two major points on which to build this book. First: Meyers's California Cahuilla heritage from his mother (his father was German-American) was the foundation of his strong ethical character and productive approach to his baseball craft. Second: Meyers's achievements as a catcher have not been adequately recognized and the book aims to set the record straight.

There is indeed a group of fans who believe that the Veterans Committee should consider Meyers for induction into Cooperstown's Hall of Fame and Young presents their case, which includes the statistic that Meyers's .291 lifetime batting average "is the highest among *all* catchers of the Deadball Era." On the other hand, Young also points out that Bill James rated Meyers only 60th among the top 100

catchers in baseball, using his Win Shares method. The argument, like all baseball arguments, goes on forever.

As a biographer of Thorpe, what I found particularly interesting were Young's careful and sensitive setting out of Meyers's Indian background, his time at Dartmouth (and lifelong loyalty to the school), and his life after the major leagues. Young is particularly good at presenting the "stranger in a strange land" syndrome of the Indian players of the era. Assimilation, allotment, racism and lesser prejudice made the experience of this, by then, very small minority of indigenous people unique and often heartbreaking. Young is an emeritus professor of religious studies, and perhaps that background gives him a particular empathy with the existential challenges men such as Meyers, Bender and Thorpe faced. However, though Young carefully parses the use of the word "Chief" as a common and racist moniker of the era, the book's title perpetuates the problem. Meyers is also repeatedly referred to as "Chief" throughout the book. There are certainly contemporary American Indians who would have preferred if the nickname had

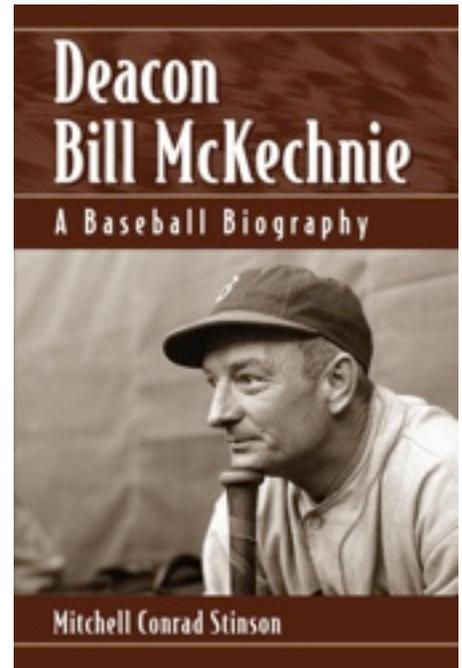
been brought up once, dealt with, and dropped.

Young relies on – and credits – important recent works in the field such as Jeffery Beck's *The American Indian Integration of Baseball*. In his recreation of the World Series games of 1911, 1912, and 1913 Young cites contemporary sources to excellent effect, recreating the grit and feel of the time. And his discussion of Lawrence Ritter's classic *The Glory of Their Times* brings the older Meyers vividly to life.

Although Young writes with grace and clarity, the book could have been tighter. Young tends to repeat points that only need to be made once, such as the theory that Meyers never lost sight of his Cahuilla heritage. Some may find that there is too much detail about each World Series game; others will love every crack of the bat and stolen base of the old "inside baseball," before the home run took over. These are minor quibbles, though. *John Tortes "Chief" Meyers* is a serious and welcome contribution to the literature of the Deadball Era.

Kate Buford is the author of the Larry Ritter Award-winning Native American Son: The Life and Sporting Legend of Jim Thorpe (Knopf, 2010).

The Inside Game thanks McFarland & Company, Inc. for supplying the bios reviewed in this issue. These books, and others from McFarland's extensive baseball catalog, can be ordered by telephone (336-246-4460) or email (journals@mcfarland.com) directly from the publisher.



**DEACON BILL
MCKECHNIE:
A BASEBALL BIOGRAPHY
BY MITCHELL CONRAD
STINSON**

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McFarland and Company.
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246 pages. \$29.95 USD,
Paperback (6" X 9")]

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Considered one of the best managers of his time, Bill McKechnie knew how to win. He is the only manager in the history of professional baseball to take four teams to the World Series. He is also the only man to do it in three different cities. Mitchell Conrad Stinson's *Deacon Bill McKechnie: A Baseball Biography* covers McKechnie's life from his birth in 1886 to his death in 1965.

McKechnie was one of the most noteworthy role players in baseball history. Kind of a “Forrest Gump” of baseball with his unassuming style and grace, he helped usher the Deadball Era into the Lively Ball Era and, eventually, into the Integration Era. As a player, he was mentored by greats like Honus Wagner. McKechnie’s career batting average was .251, with 127 stolen bases and 240 runs batted in. In his twenty-five years as a manager he brought the pennant back to St. Louis and brought World Series championships to Pittsburgh and Cincinnati.

Johnny Vander Meer once said “[McKechnie] knew how to hold on to a one or two-run lead better than any other manager” (National Baseball Hall of Fame Website). As a coach, he helped Larry Doby come into his own in Cleveland and stopped Jimmy Piersall from self-destructing. McKechnie played a role in more baseball history than even knowledgeable fans could imagine. Nonetheless, when the great managers of the game are discussed, often he is forgotten. Stinson looks to uncover why.

Although references to McKechnie can be found in other scholarship, Stinson was largely in uncharted territory in his quest to expand upon McKechnie and his legacy. Carol McKechnie Montgomery, McKechnie’s last surviving child, the only other author to publish extensively on

McKechnie, provided Stinson badly-needed depth and detail on McKechnie’s personal and professional life. It was her priceless accounts of her father in her autobiography, and how he actually thought and felt about the history in which he played such a vital role, that filled out Stinson’s history, and finally showed McKechnie as the three-dimensional historical figure he was. Those accounts along with the photographs provided by the family made Deacon Bill McKechnie appear current. Readers will find it hard to believe they are reading about a subject who died almost a half-century ago.

Stinson still had his work cut out for him. His subject was a man born the year the Statue of Liberty was dedicated in New York harbor. He played in eras where men like Ruth and Cobb dominated the sports pages. McKechnie was known for his quiet demeanor, and left few quotes. To make matters worse, he has been dead for over forty-five years. Primary accounts aren’t falling from the trees.

Stinson’s prose is clear and precise. Because McKechnie’s entire professional career as a player, manager and coach stretched over such an amazing breadth of nineteenth and twentieth century American History — nearly fifty years — Stinson provides his readers with guide markers. The impact of American developments on baseball, and the game’s on the country, are

clearly demonstrated. Stinson’s approach has almost a *Ladies and Gentlemen, The Bronx is Burning* feel. Without its historical perspectives *Deacon Bill McKechnie* would run the risk of being a history of baseball statistics in a vacuum. Stinson’s two-perspective account makes *Deacon Bill McKechnie* a more relevant read.

Bill McKechnie was an unusual kind of manager for his era. He took a very modern psychological approach. If a player was having problems, McKechnie didn’t yell or fume. He roomed with him and tried to get to the root of the player’s problems. He compiled 1,896 wins and 1,723 losses for a .524 winning percentage. His teams won four National League pennants (1925, 1928, 1939 and 1940) and two World Series championships (1925 and 1940), and he remains the only manager to win National League pennants with three different teams (Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Cincinnati).

Stinson’s *McKechnie* is an absolute must for the bookshelf of any Deadball Era fan or scholar.

Trish Vignola is a graduate of Rutgers University's American History Department.



**A TALE OF
TWO (OR MORE) O'NEILLS
AND
A CONVOLUTED TRANSACTION
INVOLVING GEORGE STONE
AND FRANK HUELSMAN**

by **Dennis Pajot**

As I know that there are plenty of Boston Red Sox fans and historians in SABR, and I know of at least one Washington Senators historian, I think of it as my duty to write about an error in Baseball-Reference and the SABR Encyclopedia that relates to a player named Bill O'Neill. Both Baseball-Reference and the SABR Encyclopedia record William John [or just "Bill" in the SABR Encyclopedia] O'Neill, born in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada on January 22, 1880, as playing with American League teams in Boston and Washington during 1904. Minor league references list Bill O'Neill as playing in 1905 with the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association. Bill is also listed as a member of the 1906 World Series champion Chicago White Sox. These entries are correct.

The problem that I have discovered arises from misidentification of the player named O'Neill who was a member of the 1903 Milwaukee Creams of the Western League. Both Baseball-Reference and the SABR Encyclopedia list the Creams' O'Neill as John J. O'Neill, born in New York City, date unknown. This same John J. O'Neill caught two games for the New York Giants during the 1899 and 1902 seasons, going a combined 0-for-15 at the plate. There is no evidence, however, that John J. is the O'Neill who played for Milwaukee in 1903. Rather, contemporary references indicate that the Creams' O'Neill was actually the aforementioned William "Bill" O'Neill.

Numerous reports in *Sporting Life* issues of late 1899 state that Boston of the National League had signed a young infielder from St. John, New Brunswick, named J.F. O'Neill, and had turned him over to Worcester of the Eastern League for development. And an O'Neill is listed in the box



***Baseball authorities have commingled
the playing records of infielder Bill
O'Neill (above) and catcher John O'Neill.***

scores of several games that Worcester played in late-August and September 1899.¹ As Bill O'Neill was an infielder from St. John, New Brunswick, it seems reasonable to infer that he is the player mentioned in the 1899 *Sporting Life* reports. (Regarding the initials J.F. in *Sporting Life* reportage, one must keep in mind that turn-of-the-century newspapers were notoriously incorrect on the first names of players, and frequently altered or misspelled player surnames, as well.) In the meantime, other reports in *Sporting Life* mention that John J. O'Neill, who debuted with the NY Giants on September 6, 1899, was a local New York catcher.² It seems, therefore, reasonable to assume that two different players named O'Neill were being discussed in the *Sporting Life* pages of 1899. Neither Baseball-Reference nor the

SABR Encyclopedia provide any information regarding the whereabouts of John J. O'Neill and/or Bill O'Neill during the 1900, 1901, and 1902 seasons, apart from the two games with the Giants played by John J. in 1902. But a report in the *Sporting Life* issue of March 17, 1900 revealed that Boston had released the young outfielder named O'Neill who had played on its Worcester farm team the previous season.²

Gaps in our knowledge of Canadian Bill O'Neill's whereabouts are filled in by a brief article that appears on page 132 of the 1907 Reach Baseball Guide. The article states that the William John O'Neill who played for the Chicago White Sox the previous season was born in St. John, N.B., on January 22, 1880, a place/date of birth that confirms that the article is talking about our Bill O'Neill. According to the Reach Guide, O'Neill "first got into fast company in 1902 when he played second base for the Worcester team. He then joined the Milwaukee Western League team in 1903 and played 1904 with both Boston and Washington in the American League. O'Neill then went back to Milwaukee in 1905 and played

left field, doing such good work he was purchased by [Chicago White Sox] owner Charles Comiskey."

The evidence provided by the Reach Guide is reinforced by an article that was published in the *Milwaukee Journal* on February 11, 1905. That article informed readers that the O'Neill who would play for the Brewers in 1905 was the same man who had played for the Creams in 1903. A brief item in *Sporting Life* on October 10, 1903 which pertains to "O'Neill, the young outfielder whom the Bostons secured from Milwaukee" provides additional proof that the Baseball-Reference/SABR Encyclopedia attribution of playing for the 1903 Milwaukee Creams to the record of four-games New York Giants alumnus John J. O'Neill needs to be transferred to the record of William John O'Neill.

To rectify the errors in the career records of the two O'Neills, and to add additional information about Bill O'Neill, the current entries in Baseball-Reference and the SABR Encyclopedia should be amended to read as shown below.

JOHN J. O'NEILL

Born: date unknown, New York City

1899 NY Giants (NL) — 2 games

1902 NY Giants (NL) — 2 games

Delete 1903 Milwaukee Creams

WILLIAM JOHN "BILL" O'NEILL

Born: January 22, 1880, St. John, New Brunswick, Canada

Add: 1899 Worcester (Eastern League)

1903 Milwaukee Creams (Western League) — 102 games

1904 Boston (AL) — 17 games, and

1904 Washington (AL) — 95 games

1905 Milwaukee Brewers (AA) — 99 games

Delete 1905 Lynn (New England League — see text below)

1906 Chicago (AL) — 94 games

1907 Minneapolis (AA) — 146 games

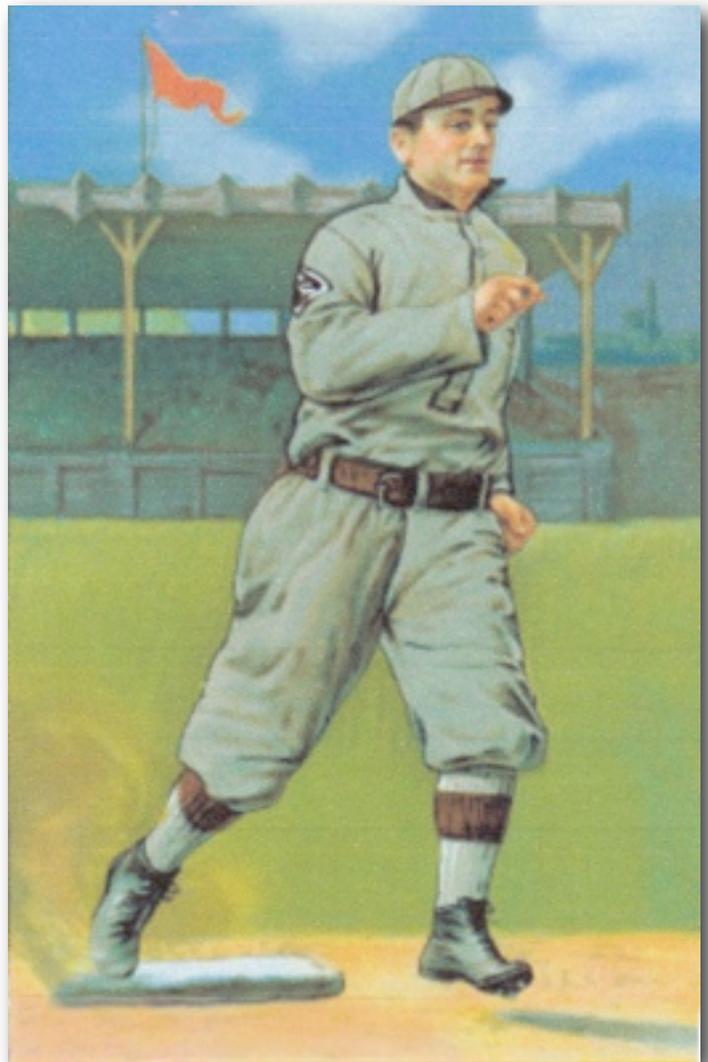
1908 Minneapolis (AA) — 151 games

1909 Minneapolis (AA) — 144 games

1910 Minneapolis (AA), and Louisville (AA) — 63 games (combined)

Note that while the Reach Guide article quoted above states that William John O'Neill played in Worcester in 1902, I do not include that year in his career resume. A search of *Sporting Life* and the Spalding and Reach Baseball Guides of 1903 revealed no mention of Bill O'Neill playing for Worcester in 1902. To add to the O'Neill confusion, Baseball-Reference and the SABR Encyclopedia list Bill O'Neill as having played with both the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association and the Lynn Shoemakers of the New England League during the 1905 season. But again, these reference works have confused two different players with the surname O'Neill. Checking box scores for the two leagues, I found that Milwaukee and Lynn often played on the same date but in different parts of the country, thus making it impossible for the same player to have been a member of both clubs. The O'Neill playing for the Milwaukee Brewers was clearly Bill. He appeared in 99 games for the Brewers before he fractured a bone in his leg on August 2, 1905 and was lost for the remainder of the season.³ Later in August 1905, Bill O'Neill was sold by Milwaukee to the Chicago White Sox⁴ (for whom he played in 1906, including one game of the 1906 World Series). The identity of the O'Neill who played for Lynn is unknown.

Confusing? No doubt. But the minor league information on the various O'Neills provided by Baseball-Reference and the SABR Encyclopedia needs to be corrected before the misidentifications and resultant confusion find their way onto additional websites, articles, and reference works, and thereby become harder to erase from the minds of baseball researchers and readers. Happily, this is in the process of being done. Prior to putting the finishing touches on this article, I was in contact with some SABR members who sit on the committees that are in charge of player information. I am informed that the Minor League Committee is currently in the process of making changes in its database in order to accept and integrate changes for players like John J. and Bill O'Neill. So perhaps by the time that you read this, or very soon thereafter, the corrections for the O'Neills will have been made.



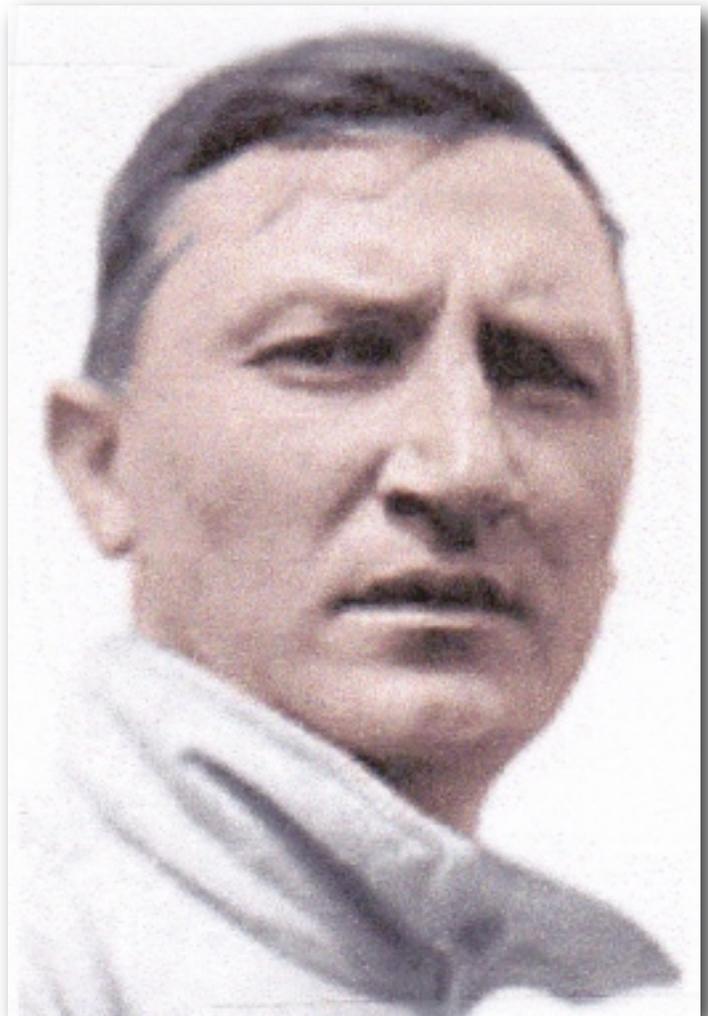
George Stone was one of the principals in a convoluted player exchange.

As we all know, researching one player almost always leads the researcher into other areas and other players — and sometimes these are more interesting than the original subject. Moving one entry currently credited to John J. O'Neill to Bill O'Neill's record does not begin to tell the story of how Bill found himself in a Milwaukee uniform for the second time. In his BioProject biography of Bill O'Neill, Bill Nowlin correctly states that O'Neill was "let out to Milwaukee" by Washington, along with Barry McCormick, "in consideration of the Brewers relinquishing their claim to [Frank] Huelsman." But the entire story is more interesting, intriguing, contradictory, and confusing.

On August 9, 1904, it was announced that the American Association Milwaukee Brewers had

traded outfielder George Stone to the American League Washington Senators in exchange for outfielder Frank Huelsman and a reported \$3,500.⁵ George Stone would finish the 1904 season as the American Association's batting average leader, his .406 BA being the highest ever recorded in the AA. Stone was born in 1877 in Lost Nation, Iowa. He began the 1901 season playing with a country team in Salix, Iowa, a small village a few miles south of Sioux City. A scout saw Stone play and recommended him to William Rourke of the Omaha club in the Western League. Rourke gave the prospect a tryout, liked what he saw, and signed Stone for \$70/month.⁶ Stone began 1902 on the Omaha roster but was transferred to Western League rival Peoria for the start of the season. Around June 1, he was reclaimed by Omaha. Stone hit league pitching well, batting a combined .346 between the two clubs.⁷ In August 1902, Boston of the American League acquired the rights to Stone and signed the outfielder for the 1903 season. But later that August, Boston manager Jimmy Collins telegraphed Omaha to have Stone report to his team at once, as Boston had incurred a number of player injuries and needed lineup replacements.⁸ Stone, however, remained in Omaha and finished the season with the Omahogs.

Stone started the 1903 season with Boston. Club owner Henry Killilea said that he liked the outfielder but had no place for him on the squad. So after he had played only two games with the Pilgrims, Stone was relinquished to the Milwaukee Creams of the Western League — a team managed by former Boston (NL) Beaneaters star Hugh Duffy.⁹ Stone's transfer caused a controversy between the American and Western Leagues. First, Omaha boss William Rourke protested, claiming that he had not gotten a cent for Stone when the player left Omaha, and that he had been promised the return of Stone in the event that Stone were not needed by Boston.¹⁰ Then, Chicago White Sox owner Charles Comiskey lodged a claim, contending that Stone should not have been permitted to leave the American League without his club having first received the chance to sign



Bill O'Neill and Barry McCormick were sent to Milwaukee by Washington in February 1905 so the Senators could retain the rights to Frank Huelsman (above)

him.¹¹ In the end, Stone would play the remainder of the 1903 season in Milwaukee, hitting .298 for the Creams in 100 games.¹² After the season was over, Stone and infielder Jack O'Brien were purchased from the Milwaukee Creams by Boston.¹³ But in February 1904, Stone was sent back to Milwaukee, traded by Boston to the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association for infielder Bob Unglaub (who would later be dealt to the New York Highlanders).¹⁴

This brings us back to the August 9, 1904 Washington Senators-Milwaukee Brewers/Huelsman-for-Stone trade mentioned at the

outset. In addition to Huelsman, the Brewers were also to receive outfielder Ollie Pickering. On that date, Pickering was a member of the Philadelphia A's and was somehow to be routed through Washington on his way to Milwaukee.¹⁵ But what Philadelphia was to receive in return for Pickering, I did not discover. As it turned out, Philadelphia owner Connie Mack decided to keep Pickering when another A's outfielder was injured. Later, Mack sold Pickering to Columbus of the American Association.¹⁶ So to make it simple, the matter can be reduced to Washington trading Frank Huelsman to Milwaukee for George Stone, even up. The player moves would take place after the 1904 season ended.

At the time, Frank Huelsman was a 30-year old journeyman outfielder. The 1904 season was his first full season as a major leaguer, his previous experience being confined to a two-game stint with St. Louis (NL) in 1897. Huelsman had bounced around the minors since 1899, playing in various leagues in the Midwest, South, and West Coast. He was also one of those rare individuals to play for four different major league teams in a single season, via being traded at least three times. According to Baseball-Reference, Huelsman had been drafted by the Chicago White Sox in September 1903 and began the 1904 season in a Chicago uniform. In May, Huelsman was sold to the Detroit Tigers, for whom he played four games. On June 16, the Tigers sold Huelsman to the St. Louis Browns. But prior to beginning his tenure with the Browns, Huelsman somehow rejoined the White Sox, grounding out as a Chicago pinch-hitter in a June 11 game against the New York Highlanders. Then after 20 games in St. Louis, Huelsman was traded along with third baseman Hunter Hill to the Washington Senators for infielder Charles Moran.¹⁷

To add to the strange 1904 odyssey of Frank Huelsman, he was also involved in a dispute about traveling expenses. In July 1904, a grievance was presented to the National Commission by Spokane of the Pacific National League, the club from which Huelsman had been drafted by the Chicago White Sox in late-1903.

Spokane contended that its contract with Huelsman for the 1904 season required the club to pay for the transport of Huelsman and his wife from Spokane to their home in St. Louis at season's end. Fulfillment of this contract obligation had cost the club \$92.50. But as Huelsman had been drafted by Chicago and had not returned to Spokane for the 1904 season, Spokane sought recovery of the Huelsman transportation expenses. When Huelsman offered no rebuttal to the claim, the Commission ordered him to reimburse the Spokane club.¹⁸

Back to the Huelsman-Stone trade. There was always some mystery surrounding this deal. The Washington, DC press reported that the Senators had purchased George Stone from the Brewers, with the price paid reputed to be the largest ever paid for a minor leaguer. Milwaukee had been offering Stone for sale with a \$4,000 price tag, but the *Washington Times* was skeptical that the Senators had paid that much.¹⁹ There was no mention of Frank Huelsman in these reports.

Enter another team. The Boston Pilgrims of the American League also wanted George Stone. According to one report, Boston offered pitcher George Winter to Washington for Frank Huelsman, whom Boston would then send to Milwaukee in exchange for Stone.²⁰ But within a week it was being written that Boston club president John I. Taylor had purchased Stone outright from Milwaukee.²¹ Later, an official statement issued by Taylor on August 28, 1904 addressed the question. According to the statement, Taylor and AL President Ban Johnson had finalized the Stone deal during a recent trip to Milwaukee. It was further revealed that the Washington Senators had held an option on Stone, but had surrendered same, as Washington declined to meet the high price demanded by Milwaukee for Stone's release.²² The Taylor statement, however, did not resolve the matter. The *Sporting Life* issue of January 7, 1905 reported that Milwaukee had gotten \$2,500 for Stone. But on August 19, 1905, the *Milwaukee Journal* declared that Boston had paid the full \$4,000 asking price when it had acquired Stone in Fall 1904.

Figuring out exactly what happened is difficult. Even various correspondents of *Sporting Life* were at odds regarding the transaction.²³ Questions remain to this day. For example, if Milwaukee had already traded Stone to Washington for Huelsman (as announced August 9, 1904), why would Boston have to give Winter to Washington in order to acquire Huelsman, and then deal Huelsman to Milwaukee for Stone? And if the trade between Milwaukee and Washington had been consummated, would not Boston have proposed a straight trade — Winter for Stone — and left Milwaukee entirely out of the mix? Likewise, if Boston had purchased Stone directly from Milwaukee, how did Milwaukee acquire the rights to Huelsman for the 1905 season? Remember, the Boston claim that it had purchased Stone directly from Milwaukee seems to have been confirmed in commentary about the Stone-Huelsman-Winter affair in the *Sporting Life* edition of February 5, 1905.

Perhaps key to solution of this puzzle is keeping in mind that George Stone had bounced between Boston and Milwaukee during 1903 and that he had been released to Milwaukee by Boston in February 1904 in exchange for Bob Unglaub. Given this intermittent Boston connection, I am inclined to believe that Boston still retained some sort of hold on Stone — even after Stone received his official release from Boston in mid-March 1904. Then came the convoluted August 1904 transaction that ticketed Stone back to Boston once more. But Stone would never play for the Pilgrims again. When the 1904 American Association season ended in September, Stone played some games with a barnstorming Milwaukee team in Wisconsin cities and in Chicago.²⁴ After this barnstorming tour ended, Stone was supposed to report to Boston. But as early as September 26, the *Boston Daily Globe* stated that Stone would not join Boston that season. On October 7, 1904, the *Milwaukee Journal* revealed that Stone would be heading home to Nebraska. The Journal further related that Stone had reported to the Pilgrims while the club was in Detroit and had been used in one game as a pinch-hitter. Stone had then been

granted permission to go home by Boston manager Collins. But this report is doubtful. I checked the box scores of the Boston games in Detroit and did not find Stone's name in any of them. It was also during this same Boston-Detroit series that the *Boston Daily Globe* reported that Stone would not join the Pilgrims that season. Thereafter, the October 15, 1904 *Sporting Life* observed that Stone had failed to join the Boston club in the West: "He wants to be with the team at the start not the finish." Finally on December 26, 1904, George Stone and Boston parted company permanently, with Stone and cash sent to the St. Louis Browns in return for Jesse Burkett.²⁵ Two seasons later, Stone would lead the American League in batting (.358).

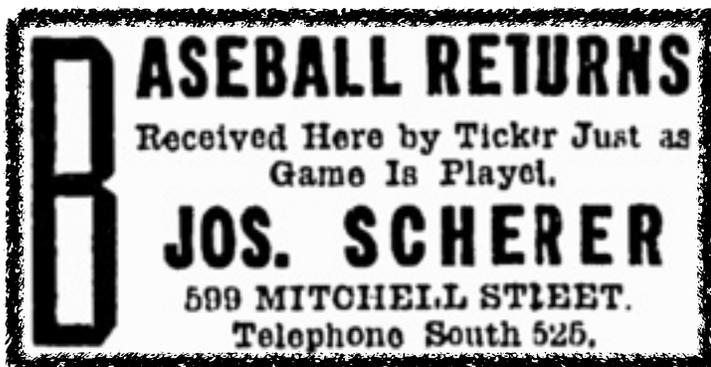
Whatever the true particulars of the Stone-for-Huelsman transaction, there is no dispute that the Milwaukee Brewers acquired the rights to Frank Huelsman for 1905. For some time, it had been rumored that Huelsman did not want to play for Milwaukee.²⁶ And some in the American League believed that it had been a mistake to let him out of the league. Connie Mack, for one, said that he would have made a bid for Huelsman had he known that Huelsman was available.²⁷ This, however, is another report that I find odd, as it was also published that Mack's Athletics were agreeable to the three-party trade that would have delivered Huelsman (and Ollie Pickering) to Milwaukee. Then again, perhaps reports of that aborted trade are not to be believed. In any event, by February 1905, Washington had decided that it wanted to keep Huelsman, offering Milwaukee Bill O'Neill in his stead²⁸ and bringing our story full circle.

As mentioned above, O'Neill had spent the 1903 season playing for the now defunct Milwaukee Creams of the Western League, posting a solid .333 BA in 102 games. In 1904, Bill had been promoted to Boston, but hit only .196 in 17 games. On July 4, O'Neill was traded to Washington where he batted a Deadball Era-respectable .248 in 95 games with the Senators.²⁹ When subsequently offered to Milwaukee, Brewers manager Joe Cantillon wanted more than just the 25-year old O'Neill for

the surrender of its rights to Huelsman. So, Washington added Barry McCormick to the package. The 30-year old McCormick was a veteran second baseman, having reached the majors in 1895. In 1902, Barry had played with the St. Louis Browns. In July 1903, he was traded to Washington, where he hit a meager .218, not all that much lower than his modest lifetime .238 BA. Still, McCormick was one of the best defensive infielders in baseball and a heads-up veteran who would strengthen the Brewers infield.³⁰ Accordingly, Bill O'Neill and Barry McCormick headed for Milwaukee while Washington retained Huelsman. Thus, in a roundabout way, George Stone may have been responsible for bringing O'Neill and McCormick to the Brewers.

In dissecting the convoluted events of the George Stone-Frank Huelsman matter, it is easy to become confused, particularly when the George Winter angle is factored into the equation. In researching the matter, I did not have access to every newspaper that may have reported trade details, and it is, of course, possible that I may have missed something revelatory in the material that was available to me. Perhaps some newsletter reader can add a clarifying final touch on this murky affair. Or reveal unknown aspects of the O'Neill misidentifications. For the present, however, this is my reading of these obscure but interesting aspects of Deadball Era history.

Dennis Pajot is the Deadball Era Committee's resident expert on early Milwaukee baseball and a frequent contributor to The Inside Game.



The Milwaukee Sentinel, August 10, 1912

- 1 *Sporting Life*, September 2, 1899, 6 and 9; September 9, 1899, 8; September 16, 1899, 7; September 23, 1899, 10; and March 17, 1900, 7.
- 2 *Sporting Life*, September 16, 1899, 6, and December 16, 1899, 8.
- 3 *Milwaukee Journal*, August 3, 1904.
- 4 *Sporting Life*, September 9, 1905, 17.
- 5 *Milwaukee Journal*, August 10, 1904, and *Sporting Life*, August 20, 1904, 2; September 24, 1904, 2; and December 24, 1904, 6 and 8.
- 6 Baseball-Reference.com, *Sporting Life*, August 9, 1902, 16, and *Milwaukee Journal*, December 30, 1905.
- 7 *Sporting Life*, April 15, 1902, 6, and June 7, 1902, 18, and Baseball-reference.com.
- 8 *Sporting Life*, August 23, 1902, 11; August 30, 1902, 5; and December 6, 1902, 6.
- 9 *Sporting Life*, March 21, 1903, 1, and May 30, 1903, 9.
- 10 *Sporting Life*, May 30, 1903, 11.
- 11 *Sporting Life*, June 27, 1903, 9.
- 12 Baseball-Reference.com.
- 13 *Sporting Life*, September 26, 1903, 4, and November 14, 1903, 4.
- 14 *Milwaukee Journal*, February 10, 1904.
- 15 *Sporting Life*, August 24, 1903, 3 and 8.
- 16 *Sporting Life*, July 16, 1904, 2 and 4, and December 24, 1904, 6.
- 17 Baseball-Reference.com.
- 18 *Sporting Life*, August 20, 1904, 9 and 10, and October 15, 1904, 14.
- 19 *Sporting Life*, July 23, 1904, 2, and *Washington Times*, August 10, 1904.
- 20 *Sporting Life*, December 24, 1904, 8.
- 21 *Washington Times*, August 19 and 27, 1904.
- 22 *Washington Times*, August 29, 1904, and *Sporting Life*, September 3, 1904, 7.
- 23 *Sporting Life*, December 24, 1904, 8; January 21, 1905, 6; and February 4, 1905, 3.
- 24 *Milwaukee Journal*, September 19 and 25, 1905.
- 25 Baseball-Reference.com and *Sporting Life*, January 7, 1905, 3.
- 26 *Milwaukee Journal*, January 10, 1905.
- 27 *Milwaukee Journal*, December 14, 1904.
- 28 *Milwaukee Journal*, February 11, 1905.
- 29 Baseball-Reference.com.
- 30 Baseball-Reference.com, *Milwaukee Journal*, February 11, 1905, and *Sporting Life*, February 25, 1905, 9.

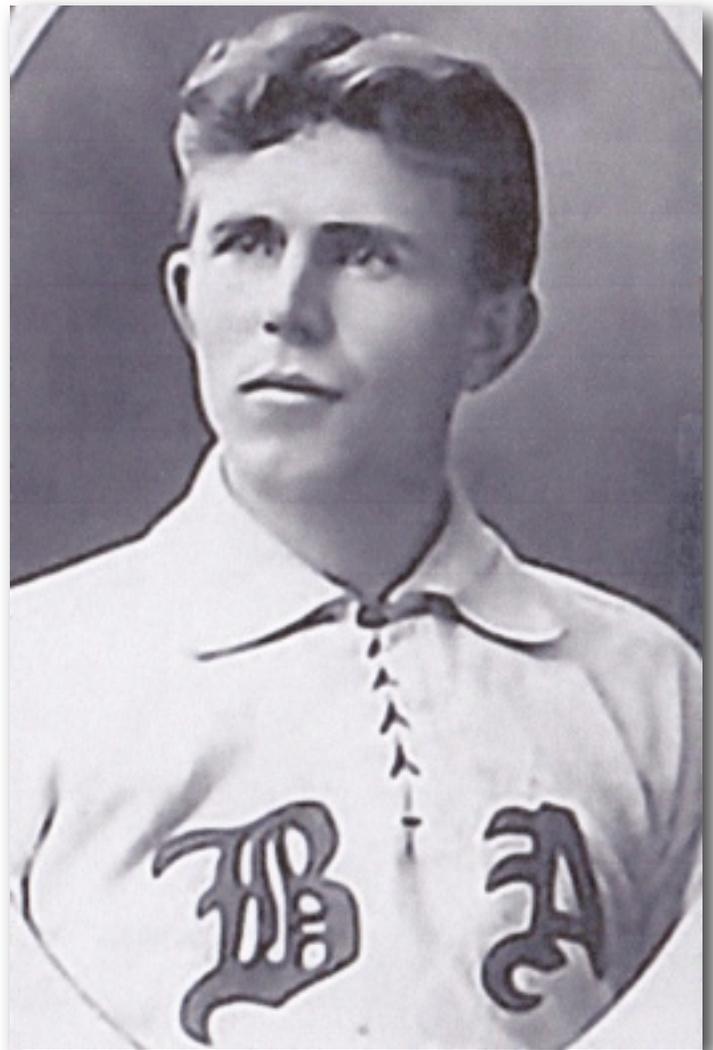
LOU CRIGER MONUMENT DEDICATION

by **David Stalker**

Sunday, June 3, 1912 marked the 100-year anniversary of Lou Criger's final major league baseball game. It was, therefore, the perfect day to honor him with a monument, dedicated amidst his family, admiring fans, and residents of his hometown of Elkhart, Indiana. Family members traveled to the dedication ceremony at Elkhart's Riverview Park from as far away as Arizona, Louisiana, and North Carolina, as well as from various places in Indiana.

After handing out pins that commemorated the event, Steve Krah, SABR member, baseball historian, and sportswriter for the *Elkhart Truth*, led off the event, speaking about Lou's time in Elkhart and his professional career. Tying Lou into local history, Steve told about Criger playing for the Elkhart Lakeviews and Elkhart Truths, and then later returning to his hometown for an exhibition game as a member of Boston's 1903 World Champions team. The game took place just across the railroad tracks from Riverview Park on June 17 1904, and pitted the champs against a local team named the Colts. The contest attracted 2,000 fans who observed Criger score twice and Cy Young throw four no-hit innings before retiring. Boston won handily, 10-0.

Elkhart Mayor Dick Moore then spoke about Cy Young's many achievements, bringing to everyone's attention that Lou Criger was right there with him, helping Cy along the way to his record-breaking career. Granddaughter Jeanette Criger Done followed, telling stories about Lou's personal life. "Through family members who did know him, I learned that he became a devoted Christian in his later years and was not afraid to share his feelings," she said. "While ballplayers could often appear 'macho' in their demeanor, I was told that Grandpa was not hesitant to express his gratitude for what he viewed to be the many good things he had experienced in his life in spite of the physical trials he went through. He lost his leg and developed tuberculosis, which



An outstanding defensive catcher, Lou Criger was Cy Young's primary battery mate from 1897 to 1908.

eventually took his life, but he obviously had a sense of humor about losing his leg and wearing an artificial one. I was told about Grandpa going for walks in Tucson, and sitting on a bench near the downtown library. Grandpa could unhinge his wooden artificial leg and when someone walked down the sidewalk by him, he would put his leg around his head, which was both startling and funny to those who witnessed this. But it backfired on him one time ... he had his leg up around his head and the hinge locked and he could not get his leg back down. A family member had to run back to the house and tell Grandma Belle Criger what had happened and she came back and rescued her husband."

“I deeply regret not having had the chance to know my grandfather personally but am grateful for the heritage he left his family,” Jeanette continued. “I can honestly say I grew to love him through doing research about his life and talking with family members who did know him, including my own father. He is much more than a great baseball player to me. He is an honored part of our family who gave us an example to live up to.” She concluded with a quote about how the Criger family in a personal way feels about the game of baseball:

Some people think that baseball is just a game. They are wrong.

Baseball is about reaching deep inside yourself to catch the ball that can't be caught and hit the pitch that can't be hit. It is about soul.

Baseball is about bad hops, bad breaks, bad throws, and bad calls. It is about striking out and making errors. It is about overcoming all of those things.

Baseball is about kids who become stars, stars who become heroes, and heroes who become legends. (From Heroes Baseball, author unknown).

After Elkhart Park Board President Betty Kegerreif gave thanks to all who made the memorial possible, I concluded the event by thanking the Criger family, Steve Krah, the City of Elkhart, and Archie Monuments for making the ceremony possible. The Early Baseball through Deadball Era Memorial Series began in 2005, with a dedication of a monument to Fred Merkle in my hometown of Watertown, Wisconsin. The series has now expanded into five states, with Lou Criger being the 14th player recognized. Other Criger honors include the naming of a Michigan-area SABR chapter for Criger in 1999 and his induction into the Indiana High School Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2004. After his death in 1934, Lou also received consideration from the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown during its early years, garnering induction votes from 1936 through 1939, and in 1946.



Pictured standing from left to right: Steve Krah, David Stalker, Carson Criger, Logan Criger, Doug Criger, Jeanette Criger Done, Marie Criger, Harold Criger, Robert Criger, and Raymond Shrader. Front row: Richard Flicker and Yvonne Budreau.

When Steve Krah inquired whether we could do a memorial for Lou Criger, my instant reaction was yes, of course. Lou Criger has always been one of my favorite players. After learning more about Criger's personal life, I can now say that he is to be admired equally, or more, for his off-the-field character. I agree with Jeanette that Lou Criger is a hero. Here is a thumbnail biography: Born in Elkhart, Indiana on February 3, 1872 to Charles J. and Lovina Stutsman Criger, the city's first major leaguer was known as one of the best catchers of his day and caught most of Cy Young's victories between 1897 and 1908. An outstanding defensive backstop, Criger led American League catchers in assists in 1903 and 1905. He also led the AL in games caught (1903), double plays (1903), caught stealing (1903), and caught stealing percentage (1902, 1903, and 1905). Lou was on the winning side for the Boston Americans in the first modern World Series of 1903. A pitcher-turned-catcher, Criger began playing town ball for the Elkhart Truths,

and thereafter for minor league teams in Kalamazoo and Fort Wayne. He made his major leagues debut on September 21, 1896 as a member of the National League Cleveland Spiders. Lou also played with St. Louis (NL), Boston, St. Louis, and New York of the AL. In 1911, he played for minor league teams in Milwaukee and Boyne City (Michigan). Coaching for the St. Louis Browns, Lou played his final major league game on June 3, 1912. The Lou Criger monument placed in Riverside Park is inscribed:

DONATED ON JUNE 3, 1912

THE CRIGER FAMILY

**STEVE KRAH, DAVID STALKER
AND ARCHIE MONUMENTS**

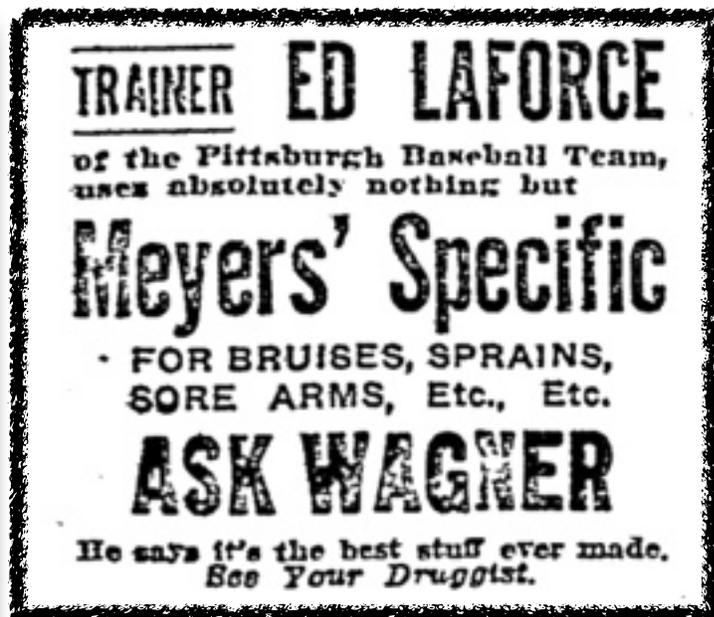
David Stalker of Watertown, Wisconsin is the driving force behind the Early Baseball through Deadball Memorial Series and a frequent contributor to this newsletter.

**NEW DEADBALL ERA
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

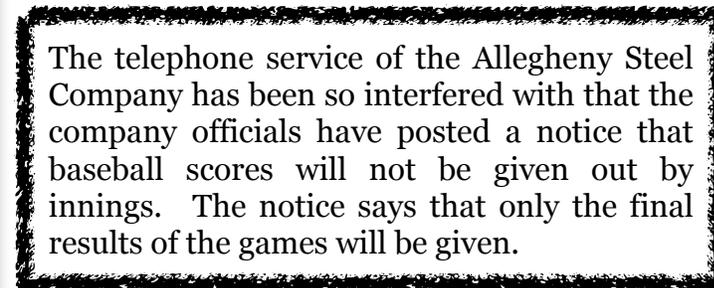
The Inside Game is pleased to welcome the following SABR members who have expressed interest in the Deadball Era:

- Adam Arnold*
- Gary Ashwill*
- Thomas Drake*
- Mark Evans*
- Stephen Ginader*
- Christopher Grauer*
- Mike Hauptert*
- Steven King*
- James Mallinson*
- Robert Murray*
- Adam Nelson*
- William St. John*
- Fred Veil*
- Jeff Wallner*

These new committee members, as well as all contributors to this newsletter, can be contacted through the SABR directory. We look forward to their active participation in Deadball Era committee endeavors.



The (Pittsburgh) Gazette Times, April 18, 1913



The (Pittsburgh) Gazette Times, April 26, 1913

BLACK SOX SALARY HISTORIES, PART II

by **Bob Hoie**

[Editor's note: The February 2013 issue of The Inside Game featured Bob Hoie's informative analysis and commentary upon the salary history of Shoeless Joe Jackson. This issue provides the Hoie take on the other seven Black Sox. For a broader perspective on Black Sox salaries, members should consult Bob's definitive article "1919 Baseball Salaries and the Mythically Underpaid Chicago White Sox," in Base Ball, A Journal of the Early Game, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 2012.]

Buck Weaver was the third baseman on all-time All Star teams selected by Billy Evans in 1930 and Ty Cobb in 1946. But Weaver only played 427 games at third and the metrics (BFW, Win Shares, WAR) rate him not much better than an average player, and a less-than-average defensive third baseman. The metrics place him well below such contemporaries as Larry Gardner, Heinie Zimmerman, and even the New York Yankees version of Home Run Baker. And Heinie Groh is light years ahead of Weaver. Buck was never named to *Baseball Magazine's* transcendent "All America" team, as that honor was always bestowed on others during Weaver's playing career: Groh four times, Zimmerman and Baker twice each, and Gardner once. Weaver did, however, make the magazine's American League team in 1917 and 1919. Otherwise, *Baseball Magazine* selected Gardner (1912-1916-1920), Baker (1913-1914-1918), or Fritz Maisel (1915) as the American League's premier third sacker.

During Weaver's years as a third baseman, only Baker received a higher salary than Buck – and Baker should not count. Home Run Baker may have been the greatest salary negotiator of all time, an accomplishment achieved largely through the use of mirrors. After signing a three-year contract with the Philadelphia A's for \$6,667 per year in 1914, Baker held out the entire 1915 season, demanding more money. At the end of the season, the A's sold Baker to the Yankees

for a reported \$25,000. The Yankees then gave Baker a new three-year contract that paid \$9,167 per season. In his final four seasons with Philadelphia, Baker had been a Deadball Era force, averaging over 100 runs scored, over 110 RBIs, and batting in the mid-.330s. But in his first three seasons as a Yankee, Baker's offensive numbers shrank dramatically. He averaged less than 60 runs scored, a little over 60 RBIs, and hit about .280. Still, the Yankees expressed their intention to re-sign him for the 1919 season. Magnanimously, Baker responded: "My probable return is prompted by my deep desire of duty to the owners of the New York American League Club who have expended a great deal of money for my release from the Athletics, who have not yet received due return for the investment because of tough luck in the matter of injuries to myself and other players and the bad conditions surrounding baseball in the seasons of 1917 and 1918. The consideration of money has never entered into my calculations. I feel I owe the game of baseball a great deal, for it has done me a great deal of good physically, morally and financially. It is because of my sense of duty and devotion to the game that I felt it almost obligatory on my part to return."

As the New York Yankees had lost \$46,651 in 1918 alone, and \$136,994 over the 1915-1918 seasons, one might have expected Baker to announce that he was going to play for New York pro bono. Instead, Baker allowed himself to accept a \$1,000 signing bonus for inking a \$2,000/month contract that worked out to \$11,583 over a 140-game season. Notwithstanding being on the back side of his career, Home Run Baker had managed to become the fourth highest paid player in major leagues baseball, his salary trailing only that of Ty Cobb, Eddie Collins, and Tris Speaker.

While not in Baker's peerless class as a salary negotiator, Buck Weaver had done well for himself. He had been drafted by the White Sox from York of the Class B Tri-State League after the 1910 season, and optioned to San Francisco of the Pacific Coast League for 1911. Recalled by the Sox for the 1912 season, Weaver signed a contract for \$1,800. He hit only .224, but played

brilliantly at shortstop, earning a raise to \$2,400. In 1913, Buck raised his batting average to .272 and continued to excel defensively. In 1914, Weaver signed for \$4,000 but his BA dropped to .246 and his defense began to decline. The following year, he signed a three-year deal at the same \$4,000 per season and improved his average to .268. His defensive play, however, remained average, at best. In 1916, the Sox moved Weaver to third base and began searching for a new shortstop (first candidate Zeb Terry did not pan out). While Weaver's BA fell to .227, the metrics suggest that he was better than average defensively during his first year as a third baseman. In 1918, Buck signed for \$6,000 and hit .300, a deceptive figure as he drew few walks and had no power, generating an OPS of just .

675. In 1919, he signed a three-year contract that paid \$7,250 per season. In the first year of that pact, Buck batted .296 and his power picked up. His defense, while brilliant in the eyes of many contemporary observers, was no better than average based on the numbers. In 1920, Weaver tried to renegotiate his contract, but when that failed, he went on to post career-best numbers in runs scored (102), BA (.331), slugging (.420), and OPS (.785) in his final major league season.

Eddie Cicotte was an anomaly. Has any other pitcher had a win sequence of 15-28-12-29 or ERA progressions of 2.04-3.02-1.75, followed by 1.53-2.77-1.82-3.26? On July 12, 1912, Cicotte came to White Sox on waivers after he had started the season 1-3, with a 5.67 ERA, for the Boston Red Sox. In his fifth full season in the



**Top Row from left: Swede Risberg, Fred McMullin, Lefty Williams, and Chick Gandil.
Bottom Row: Buck Weaver, Joe Jackson, Happy Felsch, and Eddie Cicotte.**

majors, Cicotte had signed a \$3,600 contract that year and had been a reliable middle of the rotation starter for the Red Sox. Once he started pitching for Chicago, Cicotte continued his losing ways, dropping his first four decisions as his combined record fell to 1-7. From there, Eddie turned it around, going 9-3 for the rest of the season to finish 10-10. For 1913, he signed another \$3,600 contract and had his best season to date, going 18-11, with a 1.58 ERA. The following season, Cicotte signed for \$4,250. (This amount may actually be \$4,750. There is a discrepancy on the Cicotte transaction card, and given his record and the salary inflation provided by the arrival of the Federal League, I suspect that he signed for the higher figure.) After going 11-14 in 1914, Eddie signed a three-year deal that paid \$5,000 per season.

In 1915, Cicotte posted a 13-12 record. He was clearly outperformed by fellow Sox hurlers Jim Scott (24-11), Red Faber (24-12), and Joe Benz (15-11). Like Cicotte, Scott was at the start of a three-year contract, but one that paid only \$4,000 per season, the salary level at which he would remain for the rest of his White Sox (and major league) career. Benz had signed a three-year contract that paid \$6,500 annually, while Faber had signed a one-year \$6,000 pact for the 1916 season. This made Cicotte the third highest-paid pitcher on the 1916 Sox staff (with Scott fourth) regardless of win/loss record. But Cicotte earned his keep that season, going 15-7, with a sparkling 1.78 ERA, and pitching better than Benz or Faber. Faber dropped back to \$4,000 in 1917 and then enlisted in the Navy. Cicotte, meanwhile, had a breakout season as a 33-year old in 1917. He went an unexpectedly great 28-12, with a 1.53 ERA, leading the AL in both wins and earned run average.

For 1918, Cicotte's base salary remained at \$5,000, but he also received a \$2,000 signing bonus (which the Cicotte transaction card inaccurately labels an advance). In addition, Cicotte and the Sox had an off-contract performance-based bonus agreement. The amount of the potential bonus is not disclosed on the transaction card, but is a moot point. Cicotte did not have to worry about collecting any bonus

checks as he went 12-19 and lead the AL in losses. In 1919, Eddie's base salary continued at \$5,000. He went a superb 29-7, for which he belatedly received a \$3,000 bonus (which I believe was a carryover from his 1918 off-contract agreement). He then signed for \$10,000 in 1920 and posted a 21-10 mark.

In sum, the 1918-1919 Cicotte contracts and bonus payments gave him a two-year income of \$15,000. The only major league pitcher to make more money during this period was Walter Johnson at \$19,000. (Grover Alexander spent most of 1918 in the US Army). Including 1920, Cicotte salaries and bonuses aggregated to \$25,000, again second only to Johnson's \$31,000. *[For space reasons, The Inside Game is unable to re-print Bob's deconstruction of the bonus fictions presented in Eight Men Out. For more on this, please see the Hoie article in the Spring 2012 issue of Base Ball.]*

Happy Felsch was acquired by the White Sox in early August 1914. His 1915 contract called for a \$2,100 salary but Felsch was something of a disappointment, playing regularly in center field but batting only .248. In 1916, he got a raise to \$2,700 and had a very good season, batting .307 (ninth in the AL), with seven home runs (tied for third). This performance earned Happy a three-year \$3,700 per season contract with the Sox. He repaid the club with a great season, hitting .308 (fifth in the league), with 102 RBIs (tied for second) and six homers (tied for fourth). In addition, he was brilliant in the outfield. As a result, Felsch joined Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker as an outfielder on the *Baseball Magazine* "All America" team.

The 1918 season was a disaster for Happy Felsch. On May 9, his BA stood at .262 after 15 games, with only three extra-base hits and five RBIs. He then left the club to visit a brother who had been seriously injured in an Army training exercise in Texas. Felsch returned to the Sox ten days later and promptly went on a batting tear, hitting .348 over his next 15 games and raising his season BA to .311. Then, the bottom began to fall out. In his final ten June games, Felsch managed only four singles in 38 at-bats, with one RBI, shrinking his

BA to .252. After picking up his pay check on July 1, 1918, he left the club for his home in Milwaukee, taking a job with a local gas company and playing ball for the Milwaukee Kosciuskos of the Lake Shore League. Playing Sundays and holidays, Happy hit .488 in 11 games.

Felsch never publicly explained why he left the Sox, but a December 31, 1918 column by Sam P. Hall, sports editor for the *Chicago Herald Examiner*, intimated that Felsch had been miffed by club failure to pay him a promised \$1,100 bonus in 1917. Hall also mentioned rumors that Felsch had been angry about having his pay docked for the time that he had spent visiting his brother. The following day, Sox owner Charles A. Comiskey informed a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter that Felsch had been paid by the Sox for the ten days that he had been away in May 1918. As for the bonus claim, Comiskey stated that Felsch had been “promised an additional amount if he would refrain from drinking, and although he violated this agreement, and so admitted himself, nevertheless he received the additional amount.” Comiskey then added that when Felsch left the club on July 1, “the only reason, as he is supposed to have said, was due to some trouble he had with Eddie Collins. After he left, he [Felsch] conferred with a club official and gave no reason for leaving, but promised to return and gave his word to that effect, but his word did not hold.”

On January 23, 1919, Felsch declared that he would not attempt to break his three-year contract with the White Sox. Then, for some reason perhaps having to do with his jumping the club and being placed on the suspended list, Felsch signed a new a new one-year pact on January 29, for \$714.50 per month. As aggregate payment under this pact totaled \$3,751.12, Happy thereby got himself a \$1.12 raise. For the season, Felsch hit just .275, suggesting, at first glance, that his career was in decline from 1917. His BA was 33 points lower than his 1917 mark, but in 17 fewer games, he had hit twice as many doubles, more triples and home runs, and his OPS was nine points higher. In late-February 1920, Felsch signed a \$7,000 contract for the upcoming season and enjoyed his most

productive year. He posted career-highs in virtually every offensive category, including homers (14, fourth in the AL), RBIs (115, sixth), and batting average (.338, ninth) in his final major league season.

Chick Gandil broke into the majors with the White Sox in 1910, but hit only .193. Sent back to the minors, he hit over .300 in a little more than one season with Montreal of the International League before he was acquired by the Washington Senators on May 26, 1912. Gandil signed a \$500 per month contract with the club and hit .305, with 81 RBIs in 117 games, exceptional for the Deadball Era. In 1913, he got a raise to \$3,600 (\$600 per month) and responded by batting .318. This earned Chick a three-year contract at \$4,000 per season for 1914-1915-1916. In the first year of the pact, Gandil’s average dropped to .259. But he was back up to .291 the following year. The Senators, however, wanted to make first base available for Joe Judge, who had hit .415 in 12 late-season games for the club. So in 1916, Gandil was sold to Cleveland for \$7,500. Gandil batted .259 for the Indians and then, again supplanted by another prospect (Louie Guisto, a 22-year old first baseman acquired from Portland who proved a bust), sold to the White Sox for \$3,500.

By then, Gandil’s three-year contract had expired. For the 1917 season, Gandil and Chicago agreed to a new \$4,000 pact. Chick hit .273, but with only 16 extra-base hits in 149 games, soft numbers for a rugged 6’1½” first baseman who doubled as a boiler man in the off-season. Yet at a banquet held in Boston to honor the pennant-winning Sox, Buck Weaver cited Gandil and Eddie Cicotte as the reasons why the Sox had prevailed. In 1918, Gandil signed another \$4,000 contract (his fifth in a row at that figure) and hit .271. Over the ensuing winter, there were rumors that Gandil wanted to remain on the West Coast and hopefully manage a PCL team. But that seems doubtful, as Chick quickly re-signed with the Sox at \$666.67 per month which, given the reduced 140-game schedule set for the 1919 season, effectively dropped his stipend to \$3,500, his lowest wage since 1912.

After the 1919 season, Gandil told a reporter that he wanted to play on the West Coast if he could get his release from Sox owner Comiskey. Gandil claimed that he had been a candidate to manage Seattle but felt that rumors of a World Series fix killed his chances. As he informed vacationing Chicago sportswriter Harry Niely in January 1921, Gandil had been sent a \$4,000 contract for the 1920 season by Comiskey. Gandil demanded \$6,000. Comiskey countered at \$5,000. But Gandil held his ground. Thereafter, Sox club secretary Harry Grabiner wrote that contract negotiations were off. On April 24, 1920, Comiskey sent Chick a letter notifying him that he had been placed on the club's suspended list. As it turned out, Chick Gandil's career in Organized Baseball was now over. Two months later in an interview with sportswriter Harry Grayson, Gandil said, "I have always been an underpaid ballplayer, never got the big money but always gave my all." In 1919, the only first basemen in the American League making more money than Chick Gandil were George Sisler, Stuffie McInnis, and Wally Pipp, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to make the case that Chick was their superior.

Lefty Williams had pitched briefly for the Detroit Tigers in 1913-1914, going a combined 1-4 before being sent to the Pacific Coast League. In 1915, Williams went 33-12 with Salt Lake City, leading the league in wins and strikeouts. Acquired by the Chicago White Sox, Williams signed a \$3,000 contract and then went 13-7. Given a raise to \$3,300 for 1917, he posted a 17-8 mark for the pennant-winning Sox, but took a cut to \$3,000 for the 1918 campaign. At first appearance, this appears to make no sense. But Williams' 1917 log was misleading. His ERA was the worst on the staff, and when possible Chicago starters for the World Series were discussed, Lefty's name was scarcely mentioned. His 30-15 combined record for his first two seasons was likewise deceptive. His cumulative ERA was 3.28, or about 30% above the Sox staff average, and he had been the beneficiary of exceptional run support – nearly a half-run more than the Sox hurlers as a whole had received. In 1918, Williams was 6-4 when he and backup catcher

Byrd Lynn jumped the club, taking a job and playing for the Harlan & Hollingsworth, the Delaware shipyard that would become his off-season place of employment for the next two years.

While Comiskey had made noises about never letting a defense plant jumper play for his team, Williams made a threat of his own, informing Chicago manager Kid Gleason that he would not rejoin the Sox until the club paid him the \$183.16 that Williams claimed to be owed for the first 11 days of June 1918. (Williams' claim was later considered and rejected by the National Commission.) Eventually, Lefty re-signed with the Sox for \$500 per month on January 29, 1919. This was the same pay rate as 1918, but covered only a 140-game schedule, reducing Williams' actual 1919 pay to \$2,625. The pact, however, contained a \$375 bonus clause that would raise Lefty's total salary back to the \$3,000 level if he won 15 games. The parties also entered an off-contract agreement whereby Lefty would receive an additional \$500 bonus if he became a 20-game winner. Thus, Williams' 23-11 mark yielded a career-high \$3,500 in 1919. Williams had pitched well that season, with his 2.64 ERA being nearly a half-run under the staff norm, but his run support remained the highest on the club.

On March 1, 1920, the soon-to-be 27-year old Williams signed for \$6,000, with an off-contract agreement calling for a \$500 bonus if he won 15 games and an additional \$1,000 for winning 20. Lefty earned both, going 22-14. He was suspended by Comiskey in late-September before he could collect the full \$7,500, but the \$6,933.33 that Williams was paid was near double his previous earnings best.

Swede Risberg was only 22-years old when the White Sox acquired him from Vernon of the Pacific Coast League in 1917. But by that time, Risberg had already played five seasons in the minors. Swede immediately became the Sox starting shortstop, but hit only .203 and was benched for the 1917 World Series, with Buck Weaver assuming the position and Fred McMullin assigned to third. Risberg had a great arm but was considered a somewhat erratic

fielder, and the metrics suggest that his defense was terrible in 1917. In 1918, he signed for \$2,500, raised his batting average to .256, and improved his defense – although it was still below average. In 1919, Swede signed a two-year contract for \$3,250 per season. He again hit .256 but his great defense in the latter part of the season impressed Chicago sports reporters. (From a review of 1919 box scores, there was a 33-game stretch late in the season where Risberg’s range factor went up a play a game, and his errors dropped significantly. But the Risberg range factor during that time was not off the charts.) Like Weaver, Risberg tried to hold out in the middle of a multi-year contract but he eventually reported to spring camp in 1920. For the regular season, Swede hit .266 and drove in 65 runs, which placed him third in RBIs on the Sox behind Joe Jackson and Happy Felsch, all while batting in the seventh spot for the entire season.

Longtime Yankees executive Ed Barrow selected personal all-time all star squads in 1929, 1939, and 1950. Barrow also selected an all-time best team. In 1939, Barrow selected the 1938 New York Yankees as his all-time best team. In 1929 and 1950, however, he opted for the 1919 Chicago White Sox. But here is the ultimate head scratcher, courtesy of an article entitled “Ed Barrow, Yankee President, Picks All Time Baseball Team.” In a February 19, 1939 interview with sportswriter Jimmy Powers of the Chicago Tribune-New York Daily News syndicate, Barrow declared that, “I hold no grudges. That’s why Risberg is my second choice at short [behind Honus Wagner], Black Sox scandal or not.”

Fred McMullin was purchased from Los Angeles of the PCL by the White Sox in 1916. He signed for \$500 per month, or \$3,000 per season – which was unusually high for a rookie. McMullin hit .256 as a utility man, a post that he would fill his entire Sox career, as he never played more than 70 games in a season. In 1917, he took a cut to \$2,750 and hit .237. Fred signed for the same in 1918 and hit .277. In 1919, he agreed to \$500/month, which was facially a raise but, with the scheduled reduced to 140 games, actually lower pay. He hit a career-high .294 and

then signed for \$3,600 in 1920, and proceeded to bat a career-low .197. McMullin was a very capable defensive third baseman, and handled that position for the Sox throughout the 1917 World Series. Because there was little drop off when Fred McMullin was in the lineup, he was one of baseball’s higher paid utility men.

Bob Hoie, a retired urban planner for Los Angeles County, is a long-recognized expert on West Coast baseball and the Black Sox scandal. He was the Bob Davids Award winner for meritorious service to SABR and the game in 1987.



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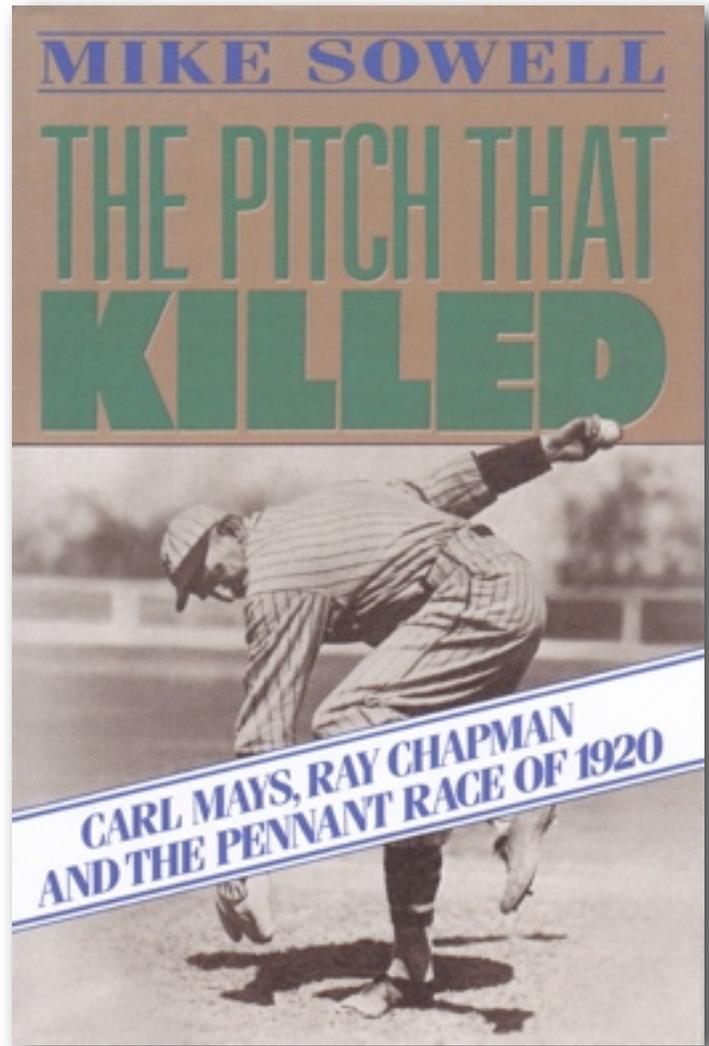
CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

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through her company, Come Aboard Productions, LLC, the story will be told through the eyes of Tris Speaker, then a first-year manager, a notable change from the book where Carl Mays is the central figure throughout. The movie will also begin and end in modern times, with Cleveland's manager discovering Chapman's lost Cleveland Indians Hall of Fame plaque in 2007, thus opening a window to the vintage story.

The movie derives from Sullivan's script rather than directly from Sowell's book, in large part because, as she noted, the movie is focused on characters and incidents which complement baseball. The actual playing of the game on the field, in other words, is secondary to the events that happen outside of it. Still, Sullivan remains committed to making the film as historically accurate and as faithful to the book as possible. "We're trying to make a representative baseball story," said Sullivan. "It's going to be very studied with very accurate portrayals of how the era was." To that end, Sullivan said that the bulk of the movie will be filmed using historic Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama as a backdrop. "It's a good replica of a baseball stadium which can be adapted to the needs of the film," said Sullivan. The precise details of filming, including the actors to be cast, have not yet been determined, pending the hiring of a director, which Sullivan said is imminent.

In order to help the story flow, one character has been created to facilitate interaction among the players, said Sowell. "That player is in there as a vehicle to keep the story moving. To me, if it isn't a documentary, things like that are necessary." Sowell cited Eliot Asinof's inclusion of a fictional character in *Eight Men Out* as a parallel example. Therein, Asinof created a long-acknowledged fictional character called Harry F. to pressure Lefty Williams into throwing Game 8 of the 1919 World Series. "You do some things to keep the story moving, like to show the camaraderie among the Indians players," Sowell added. "They had been going out, one day they



Winner of the 1989 Casey Award for the best baseball book, The Pitch That Killed is slated to become a major motion picture in 2014.

were out fishing to try and loosen up to relieve some of the pressure during the season, and that's a vehicle to show them as people and to bring in some of the humor and the joke-playing that they had."

The choice of Speaker as the prism through which to tell Chapman's story was made out of practicality. Since Chapman dies in the second act and Carl Mays was such an unsympathetic character due to his combative personality, Sullivan saw Speaker as the natural choice, especially considering that he was very close to Chapman since the two had been teammates with Cleveland since 1916. Artistic devices aside, Sullivan stressed that the script retains its

fidelity to the original text. “We think it’s very close to the book,” said Sullivan. “People who have read the script and read the book think it’s a very close presentation.”

Though Sowell had been approached many times previously about making his book into a movie, Sullivan was the first to do so with a script in hand. She had become aware of Chapman’s story after reading an April 20, 2009 article by S.L. Price in *Sports Illustrated* titled “Hit in the Head.” Sullivan contacted Sowell last spring, and they have together reviewed four different versions of the script to this point. “When I was researching *The Pitch That Killed*, I said to myself: “This is just like a Hollywood movie,” said Sowell. “With Joe Sewell coming up and imagining that he’s Ray Chapman reincarnated and then he plays out Chapman’s career, and the tragedy that followed Chapman’s family with his widow eventually killing herself and then the little girl dying a year later on the anniversary of her mother’s death, it seemed like a Hollywood movie. And it had the happy ending with the Indians winning the pennant and the World Series.”

For Sowell, the most striking part of the Chapman incident was how little attention it seemed to receive in the popular press at the time. “When I began conducting my research, that was one of the most surprising things,” said Sowell. “Why wasn’t more written about it? I could never find anything Grantland Rice ever wrote about it. The New York writers really didn’t stay with this incident. So it died out in the papers pretty quickly, and in Cleveland, it was mostly just tributes to Chapman after the team finally prevailed.” The lack of contemporary coverage inspired Sowell to keep researching the incident more than sixty years later. Beginning his research in 1985, Sowell spent two summers in Cleveland to conduct research for the book, “pretty much living in the basement of the Cleveland library reading the papers.” He looked through the 1912 to 1920 Cleveland newspapers on microfilm each day. Personal interviews with Cleveland second baseman Bill Wambsganss, the only one of Chapman’s teammates living when Sowell did the interview; Joe Sewell, who



Popular Ray Chapman was 29 years old at the time of the fatal beaming.

replaced Chapman at shortstop; Margaret Chapman Joy, Ray Chapman’s sister; as well as Chapman’s brother-in-law, Dan Daly, who witnessed the beaming at the Polo Grounds, helped Sowell to re-create the scene.

Chapman, whom Sullivan described as being “beloved” by teammates, stands in stark contrast to Carl Mays, who was combative and recalcitrant. Mays got into a well-documented brawl with Ty Cobb in 1915, and Mays was later accused of throwing World Series games. Though he lived until 1971, Mays never reached out to Chapman’s family or apologized for the incident. “Mays’ attitude for the rest of his life was ‘I did nothing wrong. I was doing my job,’” said Sowell. “Mays made the comment that he had a wife and a child to feed and that he was only doing a job.

But the question is whether he was throwing at his Chapman's head or was he just trying to brush him back?"

In conducting his research, Sowell learned that Chapman had disliked Mays previously. "Chapman's sister told me that Mays was the only player she ever heard him say anything negative about," said Sowell. "Chapman really liked all the players and was popular, but he did not like Mays. Whether there was some kind of a feud or hard feelings between them, I don't know. The other thing is not only do we not know what Mays' true intentions were, but we'll never know why Chapman didn't move when the pitch was coming at him. Maybe there's a possibility he lost the ball in white shirts that made up the background in the stands. Perhaps it was because of the lighting, but, for whatever reason, Chapman just froze."

Chapman's death likely was also hastened by poor medical care relative to modern standards. "They did everything wrong in caring for Chapman," said Sowell. "They helped him up after he was hit and let him start walking, to try and get him to the clubhouse. They shouldn't have done any of that. They should have kept him down, they should have carried him on a stretcher, and they should have put ice on it. But, in 1920, they just didn't know."

The many unanswered questions surrounding the incident lend themselves to examination in the movie. It is very difficult, as Sullivan noted, to get a baseball movie made today, in part because of the challenges of translating baseball into a comprehensive storyline. The movie, which Sullivan said has a "big budget," will have widespread national distribution when it comes out.

One by-product of the movie is that it may galvanize support for Ray Chapman's Hall of Fame candidacy. Chapman, a sharp fielder and a consistent hitter, was considered, along with eventual Hall of Famer Rabbit Maranville, to be the top shortstop of his time. Chapman was enjoying the best season of his career at the time

of his death, but any potential Hall of Fame candidacy has stalled because he played only nine seasons. Considering that the Hall of Fame's requirement of playing ten years was waived previously to accommodate the untimely death of Addie Joss, both Sowell and Sullivan hope that Chapman will eventually be elected.

Mays, interestingly, may also see his Hall of Fame candidacy revived by the film. Considering that Mays won 20 or more games in five different seasons, was a central figure on four World Series teams, and was in the top ten in the American League in wins in seven different seasons, he is among the best players from the period who has not been elected. At the same time, the beaming of Chapman combined with Mays' alleged association with gamblers will surely be held against him. Sowell thinks Mays' case should be re-considered and that he likely had some redeeming qualities. "I have sympathy for Mays," said Sowell. "Mostly I have respect for him because he was such a tough character and kept playing in the face of that adversity, with that black mark against him and being tagged as the only pitcher who killed someone and to go on and have an outstanding career. He would have been hard to get to know and to talk to. He did teach baseball camps up in Oregon, and he was a scout for several teams. Players like Johnny Pesky just swore by him, and once you got to know Mays, I think he was pretty loyal to the friends he did have."

Sullivan's other projects include an examination of Jeff Thomason, a construction worker who came back after two years out of the NFL to appear in Super Bowl XXXIX with the Philadelphia Eagles, and a study of the life of jazz musician Dave Brubeck during the years he created the iconic jazz album *Time Out*. She specializes, she says, in presenting stories which have previously been underappreciated. The uncertainties surrounding the Ray Chapman incident and the characters involved potentially make for one of the most compelling baseball movies involving Deadball Era figures that we have seen in many years.