

Robert “Lefty” Barnes (LB)

12/18/1991

Interviewer: Tom Liley

Well, there's going to be a meeting of the Joliet Old Timers' Baseball Association next month. Are you involved with that, by any chance?

LB- No.

I'm looking forward to becoming involved with that.

LB- No, I played part of one summer up at a little town, can't think of it now. I get so darned old forgetful. It was north of Ellicott a ways. I was up there one summer. Somewhere in the late 20's, sometime.

And you're celebrating your 90th birthday next month, isn't that correct?

LB- Yes.

Congratulations. That's quite an accomplishment.

LB- Yep. I'm very fortunate to have good health. Haven't tampered much either, that's it.

You were born in this area, in Washburn, is that correct? Is that where you got your start as a ballplayer?

LB- No, I played just a little bit in high school over at the Washburn and then I went to the University of Illinois. I played down there as a freshman and then two years varsity and the last year I got kicked out because they caught me playing for money. As a matter of fact, baseball put me through school.

Oh?

LB- I'd played one summer up in North and South Dakota, summer of uh, well that would be about my sophomore *year*, summer of '21. Before that I played at Peaked(?), good semipro team there. You know, back in those days some of the larger sized towns around the state had baseball teams. Most of them semipro teams. Semipro doesn't mean anything but they were all paid players.

Right.

LB- Pitchers in those days, ordinarily, good pitcher, could pitch for \$50 Sundays, sometimes a little more. I made enough in the summertime to go to school in the wintertime down at the university. It didn't cost so much in those days as it does now.

Right.

LB- So it worked out very well. Now, of course, the summer of '21 I was up in Dakota and that's too far away and so in the following summer I played at Mandota all the summer.

Can you tell me about that North Dakota-South Dakota League? Is that what, about a Class C League or...?

LB- It was a semipro team. They played around there. I was at Devil's Lake, North Dakota and then, of course, they started early up there and the season was over by the first of August. And, I had a call from down at Gettysburg, South Dakota. A town of about, oh, fifteen hundred, which is about 60 miles northeast of Pierre. People up there, they had money, because feed had been a good price after World War I and they were great baseball fans, so anyway I got a call from down there. The fellow that called me was a varsity catcher from the University of Illinois. He was managing the team down there and catching in this little town of Gettysburg. So, he says come on down there, we could use you for another month. So, Labor Day they all quit. So, I went down there and there was the varsity third baseman, the varsity second baseman, the varsity left fielder, the varsity catcher, and I think two other pitchers, all from the university! So, we played there for a month and then came home, of course. That was quite a summer. When I got done, I had \$800 in the bank and that was enough to go to school on.

That was a good deal of money back then.

LB- Yes it was. So, the next year I made even more than that, but when the spring came along and the old coach, he was an old professional ballplayer, Carl Lundgren, down there, and I had to stay in the fold, so I used to go out and pitch batting practice to get in shape in the spring and I started playing at Peaked (?) in the middle of April, the first of May. Then I graduated in '24 and went from there right up to the White Sox.

Did they call you up or did you go to them for a tryout? How did that work out?

LB- There was some old professional ballplayer over there someplace, was he around Champaign or someplace? Anyhow, he knew of knew of him and I don't think he was playing any more but he sent my name in and said he thought they could use me. So, I went up there and signed a contract the first day I got there. Old Harry Grabner. He was the first one to get my name on the line. Three hundred fifty dollars a month. So, I was on the payroll.

Was that at the start of the season or in the spring?

LB- It was right after graduation which I'd say now was just about the middle of June. I went in there then and you can't break into a team really in the middle of the season that way unless you're exceptionally good.

Uh hmm.

LB- I wasn't that good, by any means, but as old Red Fabver told me, "Well," he said, "you've got to come to spring training and have a practice game." Then, of course, you'd get some idea of working that way. He said, "We'd go on the road and lose four or five games and then attendance drops off. So that's what they try to keep you away from." I was there about two months and then they sent me up to Muskegon on the east side of the lake. That was one of their little farm clubs so I went up there at the tail-end of the season. I could get along with that league all right. And, I enjoyed it more because, I was in the rotation. The trouble with being in the big leagues, of course, is if you were in the regular rotation, ordinarily you'd pitch a day and then rest, and maybe the next day you'd throw a little and maybe work out a little, and another rest and pitch about the fourth day again. That was usual. Of course, fellows like me, I'd be telling them that they have the lefthander against us that day, why I'd pretty always pitch their batting practice. I was lefthanded, see? So, I did that as just a matter of course. If the other teams use their left hander, I was the batting practice pitcher and then down in the bullpen and you'd be getting up and warming up and I was large enough and strong enough to stand all that work. Because when I got in there my arm was half dead. I didn't have any, what little fastball I had, I didn't have it like it should have been. That was the way they work. That was it. So, it was quite an experience. Very enjoyable and I have many memories about it. I don't regret it, not for a minute. Then I came out the following winter and I've been here ever since.

So, you finished your minor league season in Muskegon and that was the end of your professional career?

LB- Yeah. Outside of, I played semipro ball after that then when I came here. I played down at Peaked, oh, two or three years down there. We had a good team, a Class B team. In fact, we used to play Peoria. They were in the Three-I. We used to play them. All of the games were either in the spring or in the fall. We got along with them all right. We'd hold our own.

Any coaching or managing around here after that? Any involvement with youths or anything like that?

LB- No. I never did any of that. I sometimes, oftentimes thought, maybe I should have devoted a little time to the local high school team, but I never seemed to get around to it.

Well, you had a busy law practice.

LB- You get into law and that takes your time, pretty well. That's right.

Were you pitching in the summers through working on your law degree or was that after your career?

LB- No, I was pitching in the summer. I was down at the university. Just five years I was down there and then I went on to law school right there. So it all tied together. That's right.

I see. What was it like playing in the Michigan-Ontario League? Did you have trains? How did you get from one city to the other? What were the conditions like?

LB- Trains, yeah. We traveled by trains entirely. It was pleasant and it was the same class class league as the Peoria Three-I. Well, there was Hamilton and another town over there in Ontario that was in that league. There was two Canadian clubs and then there was Flint and Muskegon and Grand Rapids. That's all I can think of right now.

Do you recall any of the players who were with you in that league?

LB- Nope. I can't. There was one but I can't tell you his name but there's a fellow who went to law school down at the University of Alabama that was at Muskegon. An outfielder and I don't remember now what his name was but we used to kind of pal around together because he had gone to law school down there and I'd been down here.

You had several similar interests, obviously.

LB- But otherwise, I don't know. It just got away from me because I was never really very close to any of them.

Well, it was a short period.

LB- Right.

You were a pitcher the whole time, is that correct? You said that, you spoke modestly about your fastball. What was your best pitch?

LB- Oh, I had a good curveball. The fellows in the big leagues were all in stitches. They recognized that I had a good curveball and I had reasonably good control all the time. That's why I let me do batting practice. Batting practice only goes up there about waist high, about half speed or better. But, the curveball was my mainstay when I got in trouble. I had to fall back on it. But, you know, in the big leagues, you've got to have a little fastball. A real good one. One that you can blow in there once in a while. And see, then you build on that, you get your changeup, your slow curve, and your other stuff, too. So it works in better that way. So, it's sort of a foundation for it.

Um hmm. Can you describe how you threw your curveball?

LB- Oh, mine really went off this finger.

The middle finger.

LB- The middle finger. It's the longest. And, I had this lying right along the seam so when it went off there, the seam was here so you'd give it all the spin you could get and I'd know others that turn the wrist a little bit but it wasn't this, it was more like that. And, I used to use that for a changeup, too. For righthand hitters, a changeup over the outside corner, if you could.

Was it an over-the-top motion, or three-quarters?

LB- Three quarters, that's about it. It broke down and in to a righthander. In the old days you know, there was a few spitballers left, which I never did at all, but those fellows up there, when they changed the law and outlawed the spitball, all the old timers could still use it.

Well, there was one on the team with you, Red Faber. Did he ever discuss the spitball with you and how it was thrown?

LB- No. I knew how it worked. The ball left their thumb last and the spitballers would have it slick up under their fingers and it left their thumb last.

I see.

LB- That would give it a pretty good downspin, you know. A sharp breaking turn down and they'd throw it so it would probably go over the outside corner low.

Faber was approaching the end of his career. But, there was somebody who broke in the same year you were just starting. Ted Lyons.

LB- Oh yeah. I roomed with him when I was there. When we were at home in Chicago. Yeah, he had joined the club the fall before. Of course, he was established and it turned out he was exceptionally good pitcher.

That's right. Hall of Fame material.

LB- That's right. He was a good pitcher. But he was getting pretty well started at that time. Nice fellow. Yeah, there was Lyons, of course, and Buck Crouse who was doing most of the catching. Ray Schalk was still there but he was catching now and then. Ray was an excellent catcher. Of course, you never got any chance. They couldn't put, the hitters, you didn't know what was the best way to pitch to 'em and Crouse, I never thought was any great shakes. Figure that out! Schalk, of course, was a different story. Eddie Collins was playing second base and he was, to my mind, the smartest ballplayer I ever saw.

Well, he's still probably the greatest second baseman ever.

LB- He was excellent one and a very nice fellow.

Well, it amazed me that he led the league in steals that year and he was 37 years old. Eddie Collins was 37 years old that year and he still led the league in steals.

LB- In '24. I didn't know how old he was. Yeah, he had been with Philadelphia originally and then he came to the Sox sometime long there before the World Series in '17 and then of course he was with the Sox in time with that Black Sox mess. Of course, he wasn't involved in that. Nobody that was smart enough didn't get involved in it.

Did any of the Black Sox players, the 1919 team, ever come around to the ballpark, five years later?

LB- No. When I was playing semi-pro ball, when I went up there with the Sox, I pitched a game up in Kankakee. I was pitching then for an American Legion team out of Champaign. The fellow around the paper down there, the sports page, he was the guy that sponsored it. We played against a team up there and Buck Weaver was playing third base or shortstop, and he'd been on this Black Sox team.

Right. He was the one who kept protesting his innocence, I believe. He was the one that kept saying he was innocent.

LB- Yeah, I don't think he was involved as much as some of the others. Of course, Shoeless Joe Jackson, all I've ever been able to know or learn about it, was that Jackson got a bad deal. He should never have been expelled. All he did was he just didn't tell on them. He knew about it but he didn't tell on them. That's as far as I ever put in.

With you law background, that's very interesting to hear that opinion.

LB- And, of course, I didn't hear otherwise. They never did talk about that much. I heard Collins talking one time. This is interesting. He said that he thought that Jackson, Shoeless Joe Jackson they called him, was the best natural hitter he ever saw. He said it didn't matter who was pitching or whether they were throwing curves or fastball or anything, he always hit the ball hard someplace. He hit the ball hard. And I had a lot of respect for his opinion because he said he's the best natural hitter he ever saw.

I think Babe Ruth said he patterned his swing after Jackson's swing.

LB- Well, he could have been. Although Babe had what we would call, a golf swing. Believe it or not, he had a kind of swing where he'd come around, swinging up, like up up...

He was trying to elevate the ball, right?

LB- Apparently. You never pitched him low inside. He'd lose that for you, easy.

Did you observe Ruth only or did you pitch against Ruth?

LB- No, I pitched against him a couple of times, two or three times. He hit a ground ball to the shortstop, I recall that particularly. I think he bunted once and did that. The Yankees, they were the king of the walk at that time. '24. I never got in a game unless we had a big lead or unless the game was lost before I got in there. Then they'd try to make you look bad. All I pitched him was curveballs, low outside.

That's what McGraw said to do. John McGraw said that's the way to pitch him and he'd had some success, I guess, the season before.

LB- Yeah. I had pretty good control of the curve and I could just try to play with the outside corner. I remember the first one was a strike and the second one was just outside about six inches. He never batted an eye. Then back in over the corner again. That's what he was swinging and hitting. He was a good hitter, there's no question about that.

I understand he was a very aggressive base runner, too.

LB- Yeah. So, all very interesting. I was around the circuit.

Most of those ballparks don't even exist anymore. Did you have a favorite ballpark, one that you thought was beautiful or one that was particularly good to play in?

LB- I don't know. I don't think so, particularly. I was up in Detroit, Philadelphia, New York. Of course, Yankee Stadium, was I think, almost new.

Right, I think it opened in '23.

LB- '23, that's when it was. We were there the next summer. It was a reasonably good park. The White Sox had the best playing field in the league.

Oh.

LB- I mean it was uniform and the foul lines were about the same distance. You know, and about the same distance and the same around. The Yankees had their left foul line, they had a oft(?) in it and then out like further. And then down to St. Louis. That was the hottest place in the country, always. It has the reputation of being the hottest place.

That's what everybody has said.

LB- I was in Washington, but I didn't see the Washington park. I got in the paper a notice to come back and report to go to Muskegon, but we were in Washington at the time. But I hadn't gone to the game at the time the day before and we weren't playing the day before. We got in there ahead of time and we were playing someone else. I didn't go out to watch it and I never been back east before and I wanted to do a little sightseeing.

Sure.

LB- So, the next day I got the notice to go back to Chicago to report to Muskegon. Boston had a very unusual park. They had that big, high, and they still got it and that great big long left, er, right field. Jeez, it looked like you were right over in the next county. I remember when we were up there, Collins, believe it or not, who was not a particularly long ball hitter, hit one into that right field stands. He said the only time he ever had the whole time he'd been in the league.

Well he did a lot of things but he wasn't exactly a power hitter. So, that would've been a little unusual. But, he did just about everything else. Superbly.

LB- He was a little like Luke Appling. At first, he wasn't there. He came later. But Luke would stand up there and foul off those pitches and see what he'd like and Collins would do the same thing. He'd foul the ball, he batted lefthanded and he'd foul the ball over behind third base, foul it off. Foul it off. Foul it off. I remember he had a bat that was not very big around. Kind of small. He had them all rubbed down all the time. But, he was a good hitter and a smart hitter. There's a old fellow named Harry Hooper, an old outfielder.

Right, from the Red Sox originally, yeah.

LB- He was playing right field. And, they were batting in the lineup, I think second and third, or something like that. And, after the first inning, I could hear them getting together and they'd say, "Well, at first he threw me a curveball and then I got one outside and then he threw another one and that's the one I should have hit." But, they were always comparing. They both batted lefthanded and they were comparing notes about how this fellow pitched to them, whoever's pitching.

Who had the best arm that you ever saw? Like outfield or infield arm? Hooper was supposed to have a particularly good arm.

LB- Yeah. He had a good arm. I saw him one time in particular. There was a man on third which is important in the games. One out and a fly ball hit to right field. Not too deep. And, you could see Hooper getting squared away to throw.

Position himself to throw.

LB- He had it all ready and when he caught that ball, he wheeled her in there and he threw the fellow out at the plate by about ten feet, see. But, it didn't happen very often. But, I think, he had an accurate arm. Felsch was there. He was a young fellow that's from the south, Alabama or someplace.

Felsch?

LB- Was it Ray Felsch?

Happy Felsch?

LB- Happy Felsch. Anyhow, he was playing left field. He had come up, I think, as a pitcher. He was playing the outfield and they...

Do you mean Bibb Falk?

LB- Yeah.

OK, now I'm with you.

LB- Kamm was on third.

Right. I guess a marvelous fielding player.

LB- A fellow named Barrett was trying to play short. He didn't do a very good job.

Another good outfielder that I wanted to ask you about. Johnny Mostil. Is that the right pronunciation?

LB- Yeah. M-O-S-T-I-L. Yeah, Johnny Mostil played center field. He and Archdeacon were alternating against right and left hand pitchers. Archdeacon was very fast. He could lay a bunt down and be at first base pretty near before you could pick it up. Mostil batted righthanded. If there were any lefthanders pitching, why Mostil was always in center field. Generally, with righthanders, Archdeacon played a good deal anyway. Mostil was a little bit weak on curveballs. Righthanders curveballs. He'd hit mine that would come breaking in to him. But I used to in batting practice, I'd throw a fellow two or three fast ones and then I'd throw it, maybe just like this at them. They knew what was coming, see? So, they could see a curve now and then. Yeah, Johnny Mostil and Archdeacon. They each played center field.

You know, Mostil attempted suicide just a couple of years after that. I was wondering if you'd heard anything about that or observed anything? Unusual obviously, but a first-rate player.

LB- Yeah, that's right.

What about Earl Sheely, the first baseman.

LB- Oh, big Whitey Sheely! He was a big fellow. A good hitter, a little slow. He wasn't very fast, you know. Even he was that good a hitter and so one year he led the league in doubles or almost.

Wow!

LB- And he had to do it, it probably would have been triples, if it had been anybody else. Yeah, Whitey Sheely. Big, strong fellow. Any arguments started, you got right behind him.

You'd be pretty safe there!

LB- He was ah, Whitey Sheely. Nice, they were all nice fellows. Thurston was pitching.

How did he get that nickname "Sloppy" Thurston? Hollis Thurston, but I'd see in a nickname as "Sloppy."

LB- I wasn't familiar with that. He was a junkball pitcher. He threw a lot of slow stuff.

Maybe that's where the nickname came from.

LB- Yeah. That might have been.

He was a twenty game winner that year.

LB- That's right. I remember just as well, we'd walk around and we were talking about pitching and what to do, and where to throw, and I'd tried to pump him all I could. We were walking down, we were in Boston and we hadn't played that day and so this is the evening. We played that day, and this is evening and there was a game going on at The Commons there, and so we stopped and watched a little bit. Kids were playing, just like kids would be. He says, "Now you can see now why they pay us a little more to play." Of course, I was in Boston. Now Boston, they had the blue laws, where they had no Sunday ball.

Blue Laws, no Sunday ball.

LB- So, I used that for a sightseeing trip over to the war was, you know, the battle was.

Oh, Lexington and Concord, yeah.

LB- And over there, across there to where they call that, where they come up the hill at that fort there.

Oh, I can't think of it. I know what you mean. I can't think of the name, either.

LB- They'd come up there and charge up there and so finally they ran out of ammunition.

Oh, Bunker Hill!

LB- Bunker Hill. I saw that. I walked around most time. Of course, in Boston, the distances aren't very great, really. I think I got lost. Walked around in a big circle and finally found out where I was. I had one of these maps from the bus company that had

tours. I was following that. When I would go there to Bunker Hill and sign the book. I was back there again in '34, not in baseball, I was there on another trip. So, I was over there. I got the book out and looked back and there I was. Same registration there. Very interesting. Good, I think probably, we stayed in an old hotel, but wonderful food there. Wonderful food. Probably the best on the circuit.

Major league life was pretty good, I suspect.

LB- To me, at that age, I could eat most anything.

How did you get from the hotel to the ballpark? Was it busses?

LB- Busses, it was very far. Of course, you never were really far enough away. In New York, we went by trolley.

So, there wasn't a chartered bus. You were just sort of on your own.

LB- That's right. I trailed right along with some of the older guys who had been around, because I didn't know it.

Sure.

LB- I remember coming back from there one evening and something happened and we went didn't stop at our station and we went clear down to 42nd Street, I believe it was. And, we got off there and got on another one and rode around a block or two and got off there and jumped on another one and went back up the street. We were staying at the New Something Hotel, at about 72nd or 73rd Street. And, we went out on the trolley. I remember particularly. In Detroit, I don't recall how we went now or St. Louis. Never walked to it unless it was a couple of blocks.

Well, those would have been all afternoon games, at that time, obviously. How did you spend the evenings?

LB- Oh, I sometimes went to the show. I didn't do much of anything. Some of the fellows run around, of course. Some boys have girlfriends around different places.

Some things never change.

LB- There was one fellow named Mac something. They called him Rubber Armed Connelly, I believe it was.

Oh, Sarge Connally, Yeah.

LB- Sarge Connally. Rubber Armed Connally. And he was a relief pitcher and he had a little black book with him. He had the names and addresses. Well, he says, I got a hundred and eight girls in there. I got two or three the last trip. I haven't got down yet. He

was something. I remember I was rooming with him one time one place. We roomed together and they always had pitchers and catchers meetings in the morning when you're on the road at the hotel. Old Tom Neely was a coach there at that time. He said, he called up and said, "Is Sarge there?" and I said, "No." He said, "Do you know where he is?" I said, "By God, I don't." He had never showed up. He'd been out all night. I was afraid he was going to ask me if he was in. I believe Old Tom suspected that he didn't want to put me on the spot. I says, "No," and he says "Well, if you see him, tell him I'm looking for him." I said, "OK, I'd be glad to." He never showed up or anything until everybody's out at the ballpark and suited up and out to the bench, see. And pretty soon, here comes Sarge. Batting practice was over and here comes Sarge. He says, "All ready to go, all ready to go," he said. I don't know what they ever did about it. He was a character.

You mentioned the coach, Tom Neely. Who were some of the other coaches?

LB- Uh, you know, he's the only one I remember. They didn't have many in those days.

How helpful were the coaches?

LB- Oh, they weren't any good to you. I'll tell you, we had an old pitcher there. He was a coach and he was helpful to us. He was Ed Walsh.

You say he was or wasn't any help?

LB- Wasn't any help. Old Ed Walsh. He'd pitched back then in '10, '12, long back in there is when he pitched. He had a good fastball then as I did, back in '24! Ed Walsh was there but Old Tom Neely. That's all I can remember now. Walsh didn't go along on the trips but Neely was along. And, they had a traveling secretary too. I can't remember what his name was. I remember that first one we started out on that trip was we caught the New York central, out on the south side of Chicago, at about 6:30 and we pulled into New York long about five o'clock the next day.

Yeah.

LB- Of course, good accommodations. Pullman, diner and so forth. Of course, I'd been around then, the University of Illinois, we'd travel first and we'd been down south for spring training a couple of years and end up in North Dakota.

You're used to train travel, certainly.

LB- Oh, yeah I'll tell you, this isn't a baseball story and I don't want to take your time.

Oh, go ahead.

LB- I was in North Dakota and this call came from Gettysburg, South Dakota. I looked at the map and I looked up the train schedule and there was train service into Gettysburg on weekdays. But, the main lines in those days ran east/west across the country. Once you

started traveling north and south, you had trouble. Well, they told me I could get out of there Friday morning. They wanted me to get down there for Sunday to pitch. And, so I get up at five o'clock in the morning there at Devil's Lake there and I walk down through the railroad yards to catch a freight train out of there about six o'clock in the morning. I was on that and got down as far as Bismarck by evening and stayed all night. I figured out if I go out of Bismarck the next morning and get on down to the mainline, the northwestern, then I could get west to some little station which is about thirty miles south of Gettysburg. I could get in there and I could just lay around someplace, no rooms or anything. I just camp out until morning and then somebody would come down and get me. Well, that was the nearest I could get to it as quick as I could see. I figured it out from the railroad. So, I did that and got down to western and got on this train here and went west. Pulled into this little station. It was just a light or two. You couldn't see. It was dark. Pulled in there at two o'clock in the morning and got off the train and a couple fellows stepped up and said, "Is your name Barnes?" I said, "Yes," he said, "Well, we're glad to see you." I said, "Don't think I'm not glad to see you." They'd figured out the same damned thing. They had driven down there in an old Model T on the chance that I'd be on that train. That is just as true, so help me, if you can tie that.

Smart ballplayers.

LB- They weren't ballplayers. They lived there. They were just fellows that lived there at Gettysburg that come down to get me. They were ball fans.

Well, they did want you to pitch that next day, didn't they?

LB- That's right. That was interesting, a great time.

Well, according to the records I've got, the White Sox had two or three managers in 1924. I guess Eddie Collins managed them some.

LB- Evers was supposed to be the regular manager. If I got the story, he was in the hospital for an operation for something or another. Something happened and he was out for a while and when I had joined up there, Collins was managing. The team was going pretty good. But, when Evers got a little bit, he'd come back, and he'd took over as manager, see?

OK.

LB- He was, well, I don't like to run anybody down but he wasn't a good manager. He didn't know anything about pitchers at all.

What do you mean when you say he didn't know anything about pitchers? Do you mean he didn't know how to use them or he gave them bad advice? Did he call the pitches that you were supposed to...did he call them from the bench?

LB- No. The catcher did that for us. But, he didn't know his pitchers so that they had the rest in the rotation and all that.

Was it the old story that he was an infielder and he played every day and he figured a pitcher probably could also, if they'd just get off their duffs.

LB- He was a good ballplayer and he was a good second baseman. He played second base for the Cubs, you know. That was all I could say about him. He was the only one that I had. It was just those two. Collins was a nice fellow. I'd travel on that trip and his wife went along.

That was unusual, wasn't it?

LB- Uh hmm. She was on a trip. They'd come from a decent ways and she'd go back to visiting. I remember we played a little bridge along on the road, see? Nice folks.

You mentioned the trip to Washington. That reminds me that Washington won the championship that year. You said you saw Washington play. Do you remember anything about that particular game?

LB- Oh, no, I don't. I saw what's-his-name pitch.

Johnson?

LB- Yeah. I think that was in Chicago. I saw him pitch and he could blow them through there.

He'd been up for about fifteen years by that time, I guess and approaching the end.

LB- He was known as a fastball pitcher, really, you know.

Who was the best pitcher you saw, in '24?

LB- Oh, I don't know. That would be hard to say, to be honest about it.

Was anybody throwing with a better fastball than Johnson in '24? Did he still have the best fastball?

LB- I think that I ever saw. Of course, I wasn't batting against any of them so maybe I'm a poor judge. I don't think he was, of course, at that time he was on his way down. I don't remember, I didn't see the lefthander back in New York. There was some fellow that pitched there that day, I remember one day there, was pitching there.

Herb Pennock?

LB- No. He never pitched there. Pennock was a darned good pitcher. Good lefthander. He was good. He had good control and a good curveball and a good change of pace and he could, and besides that he was smart. So he knew what he was doing out there. And, that of course, was very important. That was uh, I can't think of this fellow who pitched against us that day was something Shawkey.

Bob Shawkey?

LB- Shawkey. That kind of sticks in my mind. He was pretty rough. He had eight or nine strikeouts that day. But, I remember I was up there batting. He threw a couple by there and I choked up on the bat because he was getting it by me and I was finally hit a little flyball out toward the rightfielder.

How much success did you have as a hitter? Were you a good hitter? A good fielder?

LB- No. I used to play centerfield up in the Michigan-Ontario League right at the last couple of weeks when I wasn't pitching. They had an injured centerfielder and so I filled in at centerfield for maybe two or three, three or four games. I always liked to play the outfielder. With the Sox, at batting practice, if you weren't pitching batting practice, you were probably out in the outfield shagging flies. Get the ball back in, see? I don't know much of anything else.

Well, let me ask just a couple of other questions. You mentioned Ruth, certainly, but there were a lot of other wonderful hitters around at that time. Any that you'd care to mention?

LB- Well, of course, the Meusels were there in Chicago and they were righthanded hitters which made it a little rough for me.

Well, Cobb was still around obviously.

LB- But, I never pitched against him. He was a good hitter and he was a competitor, you know. There in the ballgame, all of the time. Cobb had an unusual thing that everybody knew about. He had the bat with his hands about three or four inches apart. That was something that was a little unusual that you didn't see. I don't think anyone else did.

Did you pitch against him?

LB- No, I didn't. I never pitched against him.

George Sisler?

LB- He was a first baseman?

He played in '24 but he had a low average for him, just a little over .300.

LB- Yeah. He'd come down there from the University of Michigan.

Right. Branch Rickey helped bring him down.

LB- As I recalled now. He'd come down and went right into playing. He didn't...

Right. He had no minor league experience.

LB- We had fellows at Illinois. When Wally Roettger went to Galesburg back in semi-pro days, they had a Grover Alexander Day, because he had started his baseball career back in Galesburg. So they had an Alexander Day over there and they had me pitch the game against him. And, of course, they beat us 5-3 or something like that but they didn't try to make any big deal out of it, you know.

When you say an Alexander Day, was he in attendance, was he there?

LB- No, Grover Alexander.

Right. But, you said it was a Grover Cleveland Alexander Day. Did he come back for that?

LB- He was there. He pitched two or three innings.

OK, now I follow.

LB- I think he pitched three innings so everybody got a chance to hit against him. It was in Galesburg. He was about at the tail-end of his career. He was with the Cardinals at that time.

Yes.

LB- That must have been in '28 or '29.

I was going to guess '28.

LB- Yeah, I think see.

I want to say that '27 was his last season.

LB- Wally Roettger was with the Cardinals, playing the outfield and he'd been with the University of Illinois. He was a year behind me. He was a freshman when I was in my sophomore year. Then he went on and he played after I'd left and he went to the big leagues and stayed there. A fellow named McCurdy was a catcher. He'd been down to the Cardinals but he didn't stay too long. Another pitcher named Jackson, a righthander that played when I did at the university. He went to Baltimore in the International League for several years.

That was a good league in those days.

LB- Good league.

Sure. I should ask you about Tris Speaker.

LB- I don't, yeah, he was with Cleveland.

Right.

LB- I don't remember now. I wasn't at Cleveland entirely. He was an outfielder.

Right.

LB- Yeah.

I believe you pitched five games for the White Sox. Do you recall the teams that you pitched against?

LB- Just the Yankees were the only one I did.

Just the Yankees. I see.

LB- I say the only chance I ever got was when you were behind about ten runs and then you get in for an inning or two and...

Mop up.

LB- Right.

What about the umpiring in those days? Obviously, it was a big chance moving from the semi-pro and college ball that you did to the majors. What differences were there in umpiring?

LB- Well, about the only difference there was that I could see was they didn't call strikes as high up there. It was always a bone of contention. They say the armpit is supposed to be the top. Honestly, you wouldn't get a strike if it was over six inches above the belt, at the most. They just didn't call high ones. That's all there is to it. Well, of course, in college ball, you got strikes clear up and semi-pro ball, too, you would. That makes quite a difference too, because what we used to call the high hard one, the one through here, you know, is a good pitch. A relief pitcher with the White Sox, you know who I mean, that big relief pitcher they got here last year that had so many saves. You see him, he throws a lot of those through there. And that, and the slider low outside. For a slider that's a new term. We never heard slider in my days. We'd have curveball, of course.

I've heard it called a nickel curve back in the old days.

LB- I never heard that expression. There a different ways of throwing your curveball so you got different results. Maybe a shaper curve and then a long, sweeping curve which I think they must mean a slider, and that's what they're talking about. And then, of course, you use it on a changeup and it didn't break as much, you know. But, they used to have the old spitball and then there was the emery ball. They outlawed that, too back then. I saw a fellow that still used it in semi-pro ball. That was a vicious pitch, I'll tell you. You could take a new ball and rough up a spot inside of the seam, about as big as a dollar or less and then throw it so that rough spot always stayed on one side. In other words, if you had it on this side, you'd throw the ball this way or this way, so it's fun. But, it went down there on this side. Then, the ball would break away from that, always.

It would really sail, I understand.

LB- Then, if you put it underneath, it would sail up maybe even raise up. Put on top and it would break down and you could break it actually four ways. When you were up or down you threw it a little more sidearm, you see? Of course, I never used it because it was illegal before I started. But, I saw some fellows use it once in a while in semi-pro ball.

What do you think they made it illegal?

LB- Well, I think, well, they claimed it was a little dangerous. They'd break in on fellows some times and I think then it was too much of an advantage for the pitcher, I think.

Do you think they were trying to elevate the hitting game?

LB- That's right.

Do you think Ruth was responsible for that?

LB- Oh, I don't know about that. Ruth, of course, had been a pitcher, but I wouldn't think that. I think primarily because it was dangerous and hard to control. You tell that to a fellow that had a pretty good fast one to throw that and you know, for hitters it was bad.

Do you still follow baseball? Do you watch many Cubs or White Sox games, for example?

LB- Oh, I watch the White Sox. I don't pay much attention to the Cubs. I'm like old Sox fans. They don't give the Cubs fans the time of day! I watch White Sox when they're playing, a good deal.

What are the biggest changes in the game in the last, gee, almost seventy years now?

LB- Well, I don't know. I think the most I notice really, of course, I am interested always in the pitching and the hitting, that part. It seemed to me as if there are more, I don't want

to call them dumb players, but not smart players, I'll put it that way. Because, I see lots more fellows swinging at bad balls than they used to. You take a fellow like Collins or Hooper or those fellows. When they played, why, if they swung at a ball that missed the plate by two inches, they'd think they'd committed a sin. Nowadays, you see a lot of fellows swinging at bad balls. You see them striking out on them sometimes.

In the dirt, even.

LB- Yeah, a ball in the dirt. I see that much more. That's a difference otherwise. The control pitchers are still effective as usual and to my mind, the fellows with the good changeups are getting by the best. Getting by better than fellows that are busting them in there. Because, they try to keep them off stride. The fielding is good or better, probably. The gloves are about half again as large. I had an old bellnose and that was the largest glove that you could get in those days. I said you need something out there to protect yourself. But, the fielding is good, no doubt about that. The pitching distance has never changed. Sixty foot, six inches. There's more fellows that are fastball pitchers than there used to be because I was up there I weighed a hundred and forty five pounds. Believe it or not. Now, you don't see hardly a pitcher that is less than, oh, a hundred and eighty or ninety and most of them are around two twenty, two twenty five.

That's right.

LB- They are big strong fellows. Well, they don't have to throw any further than we ever did. I don't know what but the batter seemed to compensate for it, one way or another.

I've had a couple pitchers mention to me that one of the things that they thought was a great difference between say the thirties and forties and now is holding runners on. How did you hold runners on in the twenties. And, how was it different today, or is it different?

LB- No. I never saw much difference. We all tried, all lefthanders tried to develop some kind of move to first base. I never had or picked a good one, get a fellow leaning the wrong way, but in other words, when you're standing there and ready to pitch, why there are certain moves you make first. Your hip drops or your shoulder drops, and all that. We tried to do the same thing whether you threw to first base as you're going to pitch. So, maybe that's you'd look over there and then you'd start your move and looking toward the plate and then throw to first base. That's the way I did it because I never had a picked, a good move. I've seen some real good moves and I've watched them and I've tried to figure out what the hell did it. I don't know why. I saw a fellow named Big Tim Murchison. He'd been in the big leagues and somewhere he got kicked out of the Federal League but I pitched a couple of games against him up here in Ottawa. When I was at Mandota. Beat him once and once they beat us 4-3 and we beat them 2-0 then. Don Peardon(?), who was playing with us up there and we a varsity leftfielder, at the university, and I remember it yet, up in this game. His brother Butters, who was playing with him too, but hadn't gone to school, he got on first base and got picked off. This fellow picked him off. Brother Don said, "Damn, don't you know anything? Don't you know how to run bases any better than that?" He got on next and he got picked off! But, I

never understand just how. Of course, he used that full pivot in pitching most of the time. I never used that too much. It's all right. It was a good delivery. I never did. It's harder to develop your control when you got that, so I never did.

You said you pitched semi-pro ball for what, two or three years after the White Sox and Michigan-Ontario League. Is that right?

LB- Oh yeah, that was in '24 when I was there. I pitched then in '25, '26, '27, '28. I pitched about four or five years after that.

About until you were thirty and about time the Depression started.

LB- That's right. In '28, I was only 26 and of course, I made more money in the summertime for two or three years in the law business than I did playing baseball.

What were the playing fields like in the semi-pros at that time?

LB- Pretty fair. Pretty good. They generally had good mounds. That's what I was interested in. They were reasonably good.

Did they charge admission or did they pass the hat?

LB- Well, Peaked had some way. I don't know how they collected. They weren't supposed to charge any out there at that park. There was no charge for any event but they had some way of getting the money anyway. Most of them were charges.

What was the usual fee?

LB- Oh, it might be as high as a dollar. Fifty cents. Seventy five. Of course, this is back in the twenties. A dollar went much farther than it does today.

You mentioned several former major leaguers who played in the semi-pros at that time. Can you mention any more? There are probably players on the way down, right?

LB- That's right. They had some kind of Midwest League up here in Chicago. I never knew exactly just what it was but I know they had a semi-pro, you might say, but they were fellows that weren't part of organized ball but they had good semi-pro teams there. We got hooked up with one of them, down at Peaked. They'd come down there for a 4th of July weekend and play. They were rough-nosed. You had to pitch pretty careful to them. We got along with them in good shape. But, they were better than we used to run into around down state. They were fellows that weren't quite good enough or fellows that had their jobs up there that couldn't play organized baseball. Fellows like that. They had some good ball teams.

There used to be a lot more minor league teams than there are now. I think that's one of the real losses that we've had. That might be some of the reasons we have dumb players

that you've mentioned. They haven't had the minor league seasoning and experience or they haven't had the college or semi-pro experience that you've had and they've had to learn on-the-job and it's a big job up there.

LB- Yeah. That's right. Here, our locals here was the Three-I League. That included Terre Haute, Indiana and Springfield and Peoria and another here in Illinois and a team or two out in Iowa. That was the three I. That as a class B League, really. That's what it was classed as. Well, the towns around used to have a team. Any town years ago, before my time, when I was a kid, every town had a ball team that used to play. Of course, those were old home boys that were playing just for the fun of it. Then of course, when they got on with the bigger towns, they'd hire teams. At that time, we used to play Galesburg, we'd play Canton and we'd play Lincoln. Down at Jacksonville, we'd got down that far. Then we'd get two or three teams out of Peoria. They'd have that Sunday morning league that'd get two or three teams to come down and play. Those were the fellows that we were playing with. We had a good team down there. It was good semipro team.

Did local business provide uniforms and equipment or what?

LB- I don't know who provided the uniforms. We had, of course, you always had your own socks and shoes and sweatshirt and gloves and that part. Of course, the rest of that, they had, but I don't know who provided the rest of it. I never knew.

It had to come from somewhere. Are there any ballplayers today that remind you of twenties ballplayers? In other words, are there any players you could say...you know some people think that the game isn't as good as it was and others think the game is better game that it was thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years ago. Do you have any thoughts on that?

LB- No, I think that if you could take the old White Sox team in '24 and that was a poor team and you could pick a half dozen fellows out of that team and they wouldn't have any trouble playing today. At least that's my notion and I'm not so sure you could take a half dozen out of some of these teams and put them back in those days and I'm not sure they'd get along so well. I don't know. As I said before. The hitters are just up there swinging. I believe that they, of course, fellows with two strikes with two strikes on them, you never see anybody choked up with two strikes. They're still clear down at the end of the bat, swinging away. Anybody knows you could be a little more accurate and you could hit the ball plenty far enough if you choked up an inch or two. A couple inches or three and four inches. But, it's still a swinging game. I don't think that's good. I think smart hitters, the last thing they want to do is strikeout.

Right, there's nothing to be gained by a strikeout. Did most of the players then choke up when they had a couple of strikes?

LB- Oh, a little bit. A lots of time they did, yeah.

Did a lot of them choke up all the time?

LB- No. They didn't all do it the time, no But, it was common for them to do it.

Now, I looked on some of the averages on that last place team which was the '24 White Sox. Collins hit .349 and that was fourth in the league. Just ahead of him was Bib Falk, whom we mentioned, who hit .352.

LB- Bibb was playing left field.

Now, I don't know much about him.

LB- I don't remember much. He was a good ballplayer.

Oh, I'm sure of that, but Collins had just what I think, I would think was a tremendous year, especially for someone 37 years old. One hundred and eight runs. Eighty nine walks. Forty two stolen bases. Wow.

LB- Eighty nine walks. You don't see many walks nowadays, really. A pitcher has got to be awful wild today.

With those free swingers. Whitey Sheely had 95 walks, too. So, there were some solid, solid players on that team.

LB- Yeah.

Well can you think of anything that I've missed?

LB- Well, I can't think of what it would be. Of course, lots of little details you forget about.

Of course.

LB- I don't think much about it. It was pleasant memories. Same thing that I experienced. I cherish very much and think how fortunate I was to do it, even for a little bit, just as an experience. And all that.

I have heard so many players say they wouldn't trade it for anything.

LB- No. That's right. I wouldn't trade it for anything. You just like it. And, you knew people, people that were very important, of course. And very good and you had a chance to associate with them a little bit. Of course, at the university, we get that. For instance, I knew Red Grange very well. Knew him, last year he died down in Florida. He was about a year behind me. He was out for baseball at our tail end.

I didn't know he played baseball.

LB- He didn't really. He never made much. He was a natural athlete, that's what he was. But, I mean just the experiences that you've had when you're around the gym. When you're around the gym, you get everybody acquainted. That's what you do.

I thought of one more thing, I should ask. What about National League teams? You said you went around the circuit with the White Sox. Of course, in those days, a lot of those towns would have National League teams as well. Boston, Philadelphia, New York and so forth. What about the National League? We didn't tough on that at all.

LB- I don't know anything about them either. I was trying to learn something about the American League.

That as a good answer.

LB- So, I never...I think one time we had a day off and we went up to see the Cubs play. Of course, they didn't charge us. They had a courtesy that way. You didn't have to pay to get in.

Did the White Sox return the favor to any Cubs that came down?

LB- I would think so.

Good.

LB- I would think so. Otherwise, we never that connection to the National League.

Well, I wasn't sure. But I thought I shouldn't leave that stone unturned. Just in case.

LB- That's right.

Well I ask then is there anything else that you would care to mention that I haven't thought of?

LB- Well, I can't think what it would be. I've said my baseball experiences pretty well.

I think you have. Excellent interview.

LB- So I enjoyed it very much, enjoyed the game. And yeah, and playing around here, I enjoyed the game, anyway. After I came here and was playing semi-pro ball, they got quite a publicity stirred up by the Farm Bureau. Well, of course, I'd belonged with the Farm Bureau since 1926, I think. Maybe it was a matter of business, if nothing else. And, my folks belonged. I was raised on a farm over at Washington. So, I belonged and of course, they had a baseball team. And they competed with others. They had a baseball team in which I played center field. I didn't pitch any for them. I guess I pitched one game at a picnic. I didn't ordinarily. We had a good semi-pro catcher, a fellow that had played a lot of semi-pro ball and a first baseman. They had a Methodist preacher in town

and he'd been in the Three-I League a little bit. He was a preacher here. He pitched on Sunday. So, they signed him up for the Farm Bureau and he pitched most of the games for us. And, we went clear down to Marion one summer. They had the state picnic down there and we won the state championship. My God, we had half a dozen ballplayers that were weren't playing because they were farmers. We used to bunt quite a bit and we'd used the squeeze play and you'd get another team nuts that way. I've seen men on second and third and a fellow up there, a good bunter, the runners would start, the fellow from second would start anyhow for third and you'd score both runs on a bunt. And the third baseman would come in and field the ball and throw to first and the fellow who had been on second he was going to go right behind him and head for the plate. That's neither here nor there. In other words, we just had a lot of fun. That's what it was. The next year after that they had quite a little celebration.

Not an Octoberfest? A fair?

LB- A fair there. Yes, one year they scheduled a couple of ball games up there and we got beat the first game. I pitched the second game and this old boy up there, this fellow he was catching for me, he's about ninety-five years old, a good catcher. Anyway, he was the catcher and I was the pitcher. It was one of those games where everything seemed to click just right. I had good control and was ahead of the hitter all of the time and they were swinging at your pitch all the time instead of theirs. We had them beat 5-0 going into the ninth inning. The old fellow that was managing them, we'd played quite a bit with him, an old fellow named Red Williams, old ballplayer. He wasn't playing because of goiter. He wasn't in very good shape. So, he came up to pinch hit in the ninth inning. And the catcher came out to me and said, "Let's let the old boy hit one." I said, "OK." So, we had them beat 5-0 and one out or two. So, I threw him two or three right down the middle about waist high, just about half speed. Good batting practice. He told him you better hit the next one, it was the last chance you're going to get. He hit a ground ball past the third baseman. He said he talked about that all winter. The fellow didn't know how to hit.

Yeah, it makes everybody feel good.

LB- That's kind of a sidelight on it.

That's a good story.

LB- But, we played Princeton. They always had a good semi-pro team. They were the ones that were down there that day. I used to play them up there when I was at Mendota. They had quite a little rivalry between them. They used to bet a little money, they got their money out. Fritz Kreisler...

Fritz Kreisler, the violinist?

LB- No, this is Fritz Kreisler, the director of athletics for quite a long time at the University of Michigan and he went to the University of Chicago. And, he was going to

the University of Chicago in his summers playing baseball. In fact, he got done. In fact they are ones that turned me in and got me kicked out. Anyhow, he was playing and he'd come from Earlville, that's his home up there. There's Earlville, then Mendota, then Princeton. So, he went down to play to Princeton and Mendota thought they should have played with them. They were mad about it. So they used to tell me, every time you strike out Kreisler, an extra five bucks of pay. That wasn't overlooked, either.

Yeah. So, was there much throwing at hitters back then?

LB- No. No.

I guess that was something that came along in the thirties and forties more.

LB- I never threw at anybody. I hit fellows but never, because if you were trying to pitch inside and you got it in a little too much...

Sometimes a pitch will get away and sometimes a hitter's there and sometimes it's the other side of the plate.

LB- Yeah, I knocked a fellow down up in North Dakota. We played down at some town down in the southeast corner of North Dakota. I can't think of the name of it now. A fair-sized town.

In South Dakota?

LB- North Dakota. Right down in the southeast corner. I remember I hit him in the head. I didn't intend to.

Pre-helmet days. That could be pretty serious.

LB- Yeah, I never saw anybody throw at hitters intentionally. Sometimes you had some wild pitchers but maybe one would be at you and the next would be down in the dirt someplace and the next would be over your head. That's just somebody who was wild, that's all.

Did people slide with their spikes high sometimes, come in hard?

LB- No, not much of that either. No. Fellows mostly were taught in sliding not to get their toes caught and sprain their own ankle. That's what you had to look out for. That's it. You live right in Jolliett?

Yes sir, I do.

LB- I thought you said something about Iowa.

No. I didn't mean to.

LB- Oh I misinterpreted it.

Well, I want to thank you for your time and for a very, very interesting time and this was a wonderful interview. I know there are a number of people that are going to listen to this with great interest.

LB- Well, that's just about the way it was. I'd say up until the time I was thirty it was quite a bit of my life. I even played kittenball with the local boys up here. We had a pretty good kittenball team. Kittenball, that's about a half-sized ball. It's about halfway between baseball and a big softball. They used to throw that thing around and bat it around. A pretty fair game, it was. I played first base for them. The young fellows here in town, they all wanted me to play for them, which I did.

Of course.

LB- I played that for two or three years. After it got so you can hit the ball coming up, there was nothing to it. But God, I always thought about old Grover Alexander. I batted against him over in Galesburg. And he threw me a couple of balls down through there. Honest to Christ, they looked as big as a basket. And, I swung at and missed them both and I'll be damned. It must have been a ball that raised a little bit. In other words, ninety percent of all balls you swing at were on the level or going down. See? I could always remember that these were rising and looked like good balls to hit. You know.

That's how they were supposed to look, like good balls to hit!

LB- That's right. So, that's that. I don't do much here. I quit practice practically. I do a little something once in a while with some old friend that I've done something with for years. I started here in '25.

You've been practicing law for about sixty-five years, haven't you?

LB- That's along time.

It is.

LB- State's attorney. I was up there for about two of three terms, I guess it was. I've got a son now that came in here back in the sixties. He was out two years in the Army and then he was back and now he's one of the local judges. He likes the judiciary better than the practice. Of course, I tell him. They get paid about twice what they're worth. Their pension is out of this world. If the state doesn't go broke, why, you'll be all right.

Do you have any grandchildren?

LB- Oh yeah, I have a daughter that's married and lives over there in Dunlap. That's a little town northwest of Peoria. She married a fellow named Kidder. K-I-D-D-E-R. They

operate a music business. Maintenance and all, one of those deals where Johnny wants to join the band and you have to have a horn and they rent him a horn for three months. He makes it why they keep it and that goes on the pay or if he don't why they turn it back in. That's it. But they've done very well with that business and getting on fine. They have two children.

It's not an easy business in which to do well.

LB- No, well they cover, they go as far east as Kankakee and as far north as Morris and on through there and over to Galesburg. They do fine.

Well, our paths may cross then because that's very similar to what I do. I teach music at Joliet Junior College.

LB- Oh, you do?

Yessir!

LB- Is that right?

So, that would be your grandson-in-law?

LB- No, that's my daughter and my son-in-law.

Yes, your son-in-law and our paths may cross some time.

LB- That's right. A little short, chunky fellow. Not tall at all. But, a hell of a good fellow. He's all right. You teach music at where, you say?

Joliet Junior College.

LB- Junior College, they have a junior college there, don't they?

That's right.

LB- What is your name?

Tom Liley. L-I-L-E-Y. I'll give you a card when I get ready to go.

LB- OK. I'll tell Kidder, if I get any better, to come in and see you.

Well, I enjoy that. Are any of your children or grandchildren baseball fans or players?

LB- The oldest one, a granddaughter, she's going to Bradley. She works here in the office now. Her dad, of course, he's probably very prejudiced, but he says she does damn well in the office. Then, the younger one, Matt, Matthew, he's in his first year over in

Wesleyan. I don't know if he's going to specialize in music, but at Wesleyan, they have a pretty good music program.

Right.

LB- In fact, that's where Kidder went to school. Kidder taught band here in our local high school afterwards and that's he got acquainted with my daughter. She went to the university but she got her Masters in English. She writes pretty well and is pretty opinionated. She gets that from me, I suppose. Then, I got a daughter that lives out in Bellevue, Nebraska. Do you know where that is?

That's a suburb of Omaha, at the Air Force Base.

LB- Right down from the river. In fact, her husband was in the Air Force when they got married and he was stationed there. Then he stayed and went to law school at Creighton, in Omaha. They're still there. They've got three children. They've got a boy that's, how old is he, he must be fifteen or sixteen, and then he's got a daughter that's about twelve and a little fellow that's ten. The little fellow is the ballplayer. And, I was showing him out when he was fielding ground balls and I was showing him you've always got to be in position to throw to get rid of it. Of course, that didn't mean anything to him. He didn't know enough. He sleeps with a baseball glove.

Well, that's a good start. Do you have any memorabilia? Do you have anything from those days in the twenties? Did you keep any balls or gloves or bats or anything like that?

LB- Well, you know, my glove, a Bill Doak model, my wife gave that to Bill Veeck, who was up there at that time, and they put it in their collection up there.

Oh.

LB- I said to her, you better keep it, but that's what she did. I don't have anything else. Everything else is all gone.

It passes on.

LB- She gave it to him. We was up there a time or two. He had it up in lights, the big flashing lights, "Welcome the ex-White Sox pitchers" and so forth, Barnes. The bank over at Toluca was ticket outlet for the Sox. They used to have a party over there, dinner, and they'd invite, and there'd be some people out there in the spring, before spring training. This Ollie was the manager at one time. A good baseball man, I thought, they never should have got rid of him. But he wasn't the manager on the field.

A general manager?

LB- No, he wasn't a general manager. The fellows that were out trading and that part.

Some front office type.

LB- What's his name? Anyway, he was down. Early Wynn was along one time. Early Wynn, that's my name and do you know why I'm named Early Wynn? My folks were only married four or five months before I was born. He was making a big speech and there was over a hundred people at this big gathering.

Are you the oldest former White Sox player?

LB- I don't know.

I suppose I could do some research. I wouldn't be surprised if that's the case.

LB- The old style McGrory's. Maybe you saw it. They got out a picture of the old park. Comiskey Park. Have you seen that?

No, I haven't seen that.

LB- This was about a year or so ago, a picture of the park and around the outer edge were the names of all the fellows that had played there. I don't know how many thousands. But clear around the edge. It was in alphabetical order. There was my name. Robert Barnes, 1924. It was there. We've got one of them out home. The barber over here was a big White Sox fan. He's collected stuff and I wanted to give it to him. He was all right.

You should hang on to it for a while.

LB- As a matter of fact, the fellow that runs this little restaurant and motel and tavern right at the foot of the hill as you go east. You come in from the east.

Yes I did.

LB- You come down the hill. Well, when you get about halfway down the hill before you come to the motel, it's right at the bottom of the hill, go back up the hill about a block, the road turns off to the south, back up on the hill, we live back in there about a quarter of a mile. Back in the timber. Been there since '52. I didn't try to tell you to come there because it would be too damned hard to find.

Well, I had no trouble finding this place.

LB- Yeah, well. I would suggest that you take the road this side of the Courthouse, 26. That's good blacktop, good shape. It goes up about seven or eight miles. You'll run into 18 and you turn to your right on 18 and you follow that then it will run straight right on into the old 51 or further. I understand that this new 39, which is a four-lane road, I've never been on it, but it is opened up as far as 18. So, when you get on that you can take that right up to 80 and you're right in business.

26, 18, 39. I'll do that.

LB- That might be better for you. Or, probably even shorter but that a good drive, but take 17 clear on through to 55 and then take 55 up to. It angles more.

I drive 55 a lot. I think I'll take a different route. That first one you suggested. I drive down to Decatur frequently.

LB- You drive down to 51 and then on down to get on down to Decatur.

Yes.

LB- Hmm.

That's right. I do some teaching down there as well.

(end of tape)

-Transcribed by J. Thomas Hetrick, April, 2006.