



## BIOGRAPHY

# The secret second career of catcher Moe Berg

BY GORDON WARREN, member of SABR Magnolia and author of [The Athlete Archives](#) on YouTube



Moe Berg with Chicago in 1930 or 1931. Photo: Conlon Collection

Most SABR members have probably heard of Moe Berg. Not necessarily because of his athletic prowess, but more so his post-baseball work for the OSS.

There was a (terrible) movie in 2018 based on Berg's life. If the movie is your only exposure to his story, I hope that you'll forget what you think you know. I highly recommend Nicholas Dawidoff's book, "The Catcher Was a Spy." This was the source for the movie, before Hollywood got its hands on the script and, unfortunately, turned it into

something else entirely.

That being said, I did about 40 hours of research into Moe Berg for my fledgling YouTube channel ([The Athlete Archives](#)). This article is based on my notes.

—G.W.

Morris Berg was born in Harlem on March 2, 1902. He was the 3rd child of Bernard and Rose Berg, who emigrated to the US from Ukraine.

Bernard bought a pharmacy and moved his family to New Jersey in 1906. And this is where

Moe spent his childhood. This part of Newark was a figurative melting pot of immigrants from Italy, Ireland, Russia, etc.

All of the Berg children were apparently gifted students. What separated Moe from his siblings was his passion for baseball.

Moe played pickup baseball in the neighborhood, something his father wasn't crazy about but Moe was having enough academic success for it not to become an issue. He was voted "Brightest Boy" in school at age 16, the year he graduated from high school.

## PRINCETON & BROOKLYN

Moe spent one year at NYU and played baseball and basketball before transferring to Princeton and majoring in "modern languages." He played shortstop at Princeton but reportedly was a loner with no apparent friends. Even though he wasn't practicing Judaism, anti-Semitism in the early 1900s probably kept him fairly isolated.

Moe excelled academically with a gift for languages. When he graduated, he had learned seven languages: Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Sanskrit.

After finishing at Princeton, Moe wanted to travel and see the places he had only read about. But that required money.

Fortunately, the Brooklyn Robins (later the Brooklyn Dodgers) were looking for a Jewish baseball player to draw in Jewish fans, a big part of the Brooklyn citizenry. Moe signed for \$5,000 in 1923 (a nice salary of \$86,782 today).

Bernard Berg was not pleased. He wanted Moe to go to law school or become a doctor like his older brother, Sam. Moe played that rookie season at shortstop, struggling to hit .186 in 49 games with Brooklyn. After the 1923 season, he left for Paris.

## PARIS & HIGH MINORS

Once in Paris, Moe decided to enroll at the Sorbonne to further study his passion, languages. While in Paris that first year he was walking the city streets and bumped into John McGraw and Hughie Jennings. They couldn't believe a ballplayer would spend his off-season studying foreign languages in Paris.

The story would be carried back to the US and the legend of Moe Berg and his affinity for languages would become well known.

On reporting for spring training in 1924, Moe failed to make the big league club and was sent to the Minneapolis Millers. He split the season between the Millers and the Toledo Mud Hens and then the

Reading Keystones in 1925.

His bat came alive in Reading where he hit a solid .311. After the season, Moe enrolled at Columbia and took classes in Spanish and French. Just a casual Ivy League semester between seasons.

### CHICAGO & CATCHING

Charles Comiskey had a \$6,000 option on Moe and exercised it in the off-season, bringing Moe to Chicago and the White Sox.

Moe wasn't thrilled and decided to skip spring training and instead go to law school. Berg was getting pressure from his father, and the fact that he didn't make the big club in 1924 had him thinking about backup plans and law school.

He told Comiskey he would join the team when the school year ended in May and that's exactly what he did. He played sporadically that year (41 games) and returned to Columbia after the season.

Moe had a decision to make, and Comiskey was pressuring him. So, in 1927 Moe joined the White Sox in spring training. For most of the season, he rode the bench again as a backup infielder before an unlikely series of events produced three injured catchers.

Moe Berg, who hadn't caught at any organized level, became the Chicago starting catcher. He held his own, hitting .246 in 35 games to finish the season. Moe had a negative WAR (-0.4) but given that he was the 4th catcher in line, that's not as bad as it seems.

In 1928 and 1929, Moe's career peaked. He played in 107 games in 1929, but in early 1930 he caught his spikes while running and tore his knee, effectively ending his full-time catching opportunities. At the same time, he successfully finished his law degree at Columbia.

He played only 20 games in 1930 and after the season ended,

he went to work as a corporate lawyer in Manhattan. He would work as a lawyer in New York and return to play ball each spring.

### CLEVELAND & QUIRKS

In 1931, Moe was put on waivers by the White Sox and claimed by the Indians. So Moe headed to Cleveland and this is where reports of odd behavior, possibly some mental health issues started to appear. After finishing my research, I believe all three of the Berg children had some sort of mental illness. They were all extremely intelligent but all three had very odd behavior.

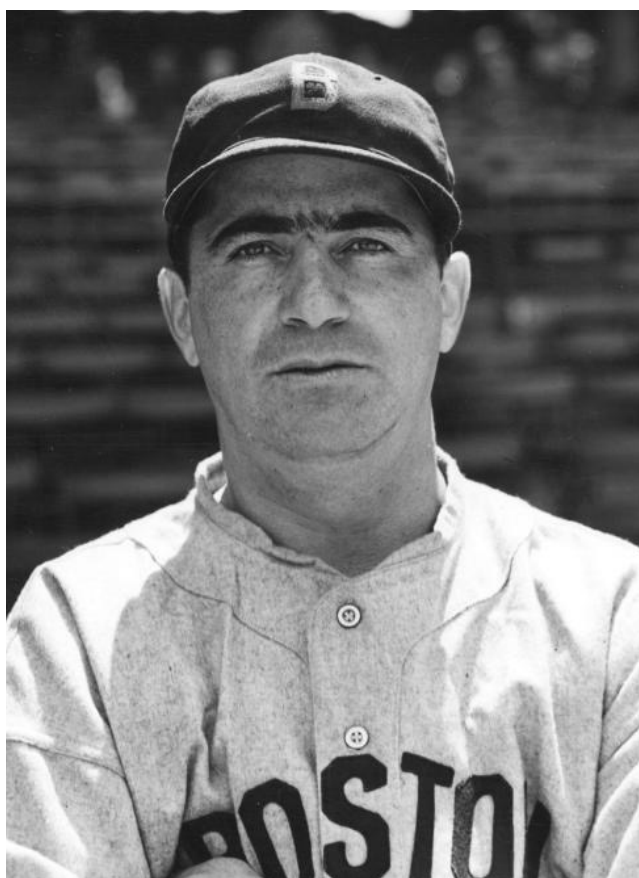
Notably for Moe, it started with his clothes. Moe wore a dark gray suit, black tie, black shoes and a fedora. But Moe wore this suit like his baseball uniform. He wore the same clothes, every day, for the rest of his life. Teammates were sure he only had one suit, one shirt and one tie.

Another quirk: he was obsessed with newspapers. Time after time I read about Moe and his penchant for newspapers. He would read every newspaper he could buy every day. He carried them around all day like prized possessions. Nobody could touch his newspapers until he had read them. He said they were "alive" until he was finished, and then they were "dead".

Throughout his life story he is described as carrying newspapers under his arm and he'd dedicate hours each day to reading them. First in the morning and then again when the afternoon editions were published.

### BOSTON & COACHING

In 1932, Moe went to play for the Washington Senators. Now we're about half way through Moe's baseball career and I'll summarize the back half fairly



*Moe Berg played for Boston from 1935 to 1939, then was a bench coach for the Red Sox. Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame*

quickly. He spent 2.5 years with Washington, and went back to Cleveland for the back half of 1934. He played the last 5 years of his career in Boston, playing in 148 games over 5 years there.

In his last 9 years he never played even half the games in a season. He was a career .243 hitter with 6 home runs over 19 seasons. He struck out more than he walked.

Once his playing days were over, Moe elected to stay in baseball rather than go back to practicing law. He was hired on as a coach for the Red Sox under manager Joe Cronin. He would coach for a few years, with no real area of responsibility. It's thought that Cronin just liked having him around.

So, in summary, his playing career was nothing special. At no point in his career did he have a positive WAR. His

coaching career was nothing special. In other words, he was not someone I would ever be writing about if his life only consisted of baseball.

But I am. Because the next phase of Moe's life is what makes him unique. As of January 13, 2023, there have been 20,272 men who have played major league baseball since 1876. Of those 20,272 men, one man is celebrated in a small museum, inside a building not open to the public, in the peaceful Virginia town of Langley, the headquarters of the CIA. That man is Moe Berg.

### FILMING TOKYO

So...how exactly does a baseball player end up doing work for the CIA, or at that time, the OSS, the Office of Strategic Services?

Let's go back just a bit. An American missionary, Horace Wilson, introduced baseball to Japan in 1872. For decades, the game grew there. Then, in 1931, a Japanese newspaper sponsored an American all-star team to come and play against Japanese colleges. Lou Gehrig and Lefty O'Doul were on this team. The following year, three players went to Japan to give seminars. O'Doul went as a hitting specialist, Ted Lyons to work with pitchers. And to work with catchers, Moe Berg.

Berg reportedly spent 2.5 weeks aboard a ship on the way to Japan cramming as much Japanese as he could to add to his plethora of languages. He impressed the Japanese on that trip with his language and even learned some katakana (syllabic writing). This 1932 trip set the stage for Moe to return two years later with a true all-star club.

In 1934, baseball sent future Hall of Famers Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx and Lefty Gomez back to Japan, along with Moe Berg. Moe had contracted with *MovietoneNews* to do some filming on the trip and they sent a 16mm movie camera along with him. No

small thing, this movie camera, as you're about to learn.

Babe Ruth, of course, was the main attraction in Japan. The Americans played 17 games in 12 Japanese cities in front of huge crowds, upwards of 50,000 fans at a game.

Berg carried his *MovieTone* camera everywhere, filming everything. In Tokyo, Moe snuck through a door at the top of a hospital and filmed the skyline. He could see everything up there. He filmed the shipyard, military installations and industrial buildings of the city.

This film would serve as Moe's gateway to service in the OSS. His newsreel gave US intelligence a rare look at Tokyo. The B25 Doolittle Raid in 1942 reportedly used Moe's footage in planning the famous attack.

### THE OIAA

When Moe left the Red Sox, it was in the service of the OIAA, the Office of Inter-American Affairs. He was to work in Central and South America as a "propaganda official." This wasn't exactly the role Berg wanted, but it was a stepping stone. Upon his return to the US, he met with Ellery

Huntington, a baseball fan and fellow lawyer at Moe's early firm.

However, Huntington wasn't just some old law buddy. He was now a colonel and Deputy Director of Operations for the OSS. Colonel Huntington sent a memo to the Lt. Commander of the OSS Special Ops vouching for Moe and suggesting him for field work. On Aug 2, 1943, Moe Berg became a spy.

### THE OSS

While in South America, Moe's Spanish greatly improved, as well as his Portuguese. We know he spoke French and had learned Japanese. His father taught him Hebrew and Yiddish. He knew Latin, Greek and Sanskrit from Princeton. He also apparently dabbled in Slavic languages: Russian, Polish, Bulgarian. He knew some Arabic, German and even Mandarin Chinese. Clearly a gifted man and what an asset he must've been when he was hired into the OSS.

His salary for 1943, a paltry \$3,800. Less money than he made as a backup catcher at the end of his career. (\$64,000 today). Welcome to government work, Mr. Berg.

OSS field training involved teaching agents everything from lock picking, codes and ciphers, hand-to-hand combat and how to kill a man with various common instruments.

Moe spent the latter part of 1943 and 1944 first in Italy and then various parts of Europe trying to entice scientists who had missile or rocket expertise to leave for the US. He was successful in recruiting a number of key scientists.

### THE HEISENBERG MISSION

A year before Moe had joined the OSS, Robert Oppenheimer introduced the idea of kidnapping German scientist Werner Heisenberg in an effort to thwart Germany's chances

of building a nuclear weapon. By the time Moe joined the OSS, there were two missions in the planning stages for an abduction.

The kidnapping scenarios were pretty complex. Through the Freedom of Information Act, we now know there was a proposal to kidnap Heisenberg in Berlin and get him to Switzerland on foot. From there a plane would fly over the Mediterranean where Heisenberg and the abductor would parachute into the water and be picked up by a submarine.

The eventual mission, given to Moe, was much simpler. Moe was sent to surveil Heisenberg. First, he went to Rome and tried to learn what German scientists were working on. It was learned that Heisenberg had scheduled to give a lecture in Switzerland. Moe's orders were simplified:

1. Attend the lecture and ascertain whether Heisenberg has the bomb
2. If so, assassinate Werner Heisenberg.

Moe's academic prowess paid incredible dividends. To prepare for the Heisenberg lecture, Moe crammed nuclear physics. He studied quantum theory and mechanics. He poured over Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. He was briefed by rocket and guided missile specialists. He consumed doctoral level texts on neutrons and particle physics. One Nobel prize-winning physicist who met Moe after the war remarked that Moe understood Heisenberg's work at least as well as he did.

Meanwhile, Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, announced that the Nazi's were working on a "uranium torpedo" and on Berlin radio, Germans were threatening to "blow up half the world". Moe's mission suddenly became priority #1.



*Moe Berg in kimono with his MovieTone camera.*  
Photo: public domain



**MOE BERG'S CAREER** spanned the years 1923-1939. Not many baseball cards were produced during this era. Moe was a good 12 years too late for the infamous T206 tobacco cards, too early for Bowman and Topps.

Fortunately, the Goudey Gum Company produced a beautiful 240-card set in 1933. Players include Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, and on card #158, Moe Berg.

PSA reports a total population of 451 #158 Moe Bergs have been graded by the company. SGC has graded 263 copies. I was determined to add Moe to my vintage baseball card collection. It took me nearly 6 months to find a copy that was in my budget and that wasn't cut or severely creased. I am thrilled to own my '33 Berg.

—Gordon Warren

## THE SWISS ASSASSIN

Moe's crash course in physics paid off. His ability with languages allowed him to attend the symposium in Switzerland, posing as a Swiss physics doctoral student. His German reportedly had a Swiss accent and fit the role perfectly.

Moe struggled to keep up with the presentation. The physics being hurdle one, but then to have to hear it in German it must've taken incredible intelligence just to follow along.

Berg worked his way to an evening dinner with Heisenberg after the lecture with other scientists. Moe was convinced Heisenberg was not a Nazi. Berg left the dinner with Heisenberg and walked the city streets together talking. Heisenberg could have no idea that there was a real possibility the man he was casually walking with was carrying a gun and an L tablet. L for lethal, a cyanide tablet Moe carried in case he killed Heisenberg and was caught. He was to take the tablet and kill himself to protect OSS secrets.

Fortunately for Moe, for Heisenberg... and I guess for us, Heisenberg (and the Germans) did not yet have the bomb. Moe was awarded the Medal of Freedom for his actions, but he declined to accept it.

## TRUMAN AND THE OSS

After the war, Harry Truman wanted to disband the OSS. I was curious why and I found an article written in 1995 by John Hollister Hedley, a former CIA officer. Hedley said that eighteen days after VJ day, Truman issued an order to end the OSS and gave its director, Bill Donovan, ten days to cease all operations.

Yet interestingly, only four months later the President created a central intelligence group and then eventually the CIA in 1947. So why kill the OSS? Hedley believes either Truman was initially too optimistic about the idea of a lasting global peace, or he just simply didn't like Bill Donovan and the "swashbuckling" way he ran the OSS.

No matter the reason, the OSS was gone and Moe found himself without purpose. The structure in his life was gone and, as author Nicholas Dawidoff puts it, "Berg's became a life without calendar". After the war, Moe seemed lost. To make matters worse, he came home from the war to serious problems with the IRS.

A company in which he was a founding investor went into debt during the war and failed to pay its taxes. The co-founder declared bankruptcy, which would have put an end to Moe's IRS problems. But Moe refused

on principle and it ended up having a lifelong impact.

He did return to work for the CIA briefly in 1953 when he was sent to Europe to ascertain Soviet nuclear capabilities. But when his contract ended, he stopped working completely. His total income for 1954 was \$0. He had \$200 in a bank account to live on.

It seems odd that Moe didn't want to work. He was offered jobs in coaching and he certainly could have gone back to being a lawyer. It seems he was adrift. Moe traveled all over, dropping in on friends for days or weeks at a time only to move on to someplace new. He traveled light, possibly with just the clothes on his back.

## FINAL YEARS

Moe had a strained relationship with his brother, Sam. Even though Sam was kind enough to support Moe in his post-CIA days, they were often at odds.

Sam had begun to notice declining health in his younger brother. Moe was bumping into things, spending long periods of time alone inside the house, often not even getting dressed for days. He refused phone calls, letters and generally tried his best to avoid people. He started napping a lot and couldn't keep up with his newspapers.

Finally, in 1972 Moe fell

out of bed and injured himself. He refused treatment and he stopped eating. Five days later, he was admitted to the hospital. He had an aortic aneurysm and he was bleeding to death. Two days later, on May 29 in Belleville NJ, he was dead.

His last words to a nurse at the hospital, "How are the Mets doing today?"

## EPILOGUE

In the end, Moe Berg loved baseball and he loved America. He put himself at great risk for his country at a time when he could have ridden out his retirement in baseball as a bench coach.

It's sad to learn that his father never once attended any baseball game at Princeton or in professional baseball to see Moe play. His father also passed away before Moe started working for the OSS, so he was gone before knowing the impact Moe had.

It's unfortunate that he never married or had children, nor did his brother or sister. That branch of the Berg family tree ended with that generation.

There will probably never be another professional baseball player like Moe Berg. ♦

See more baseball stories from Gordon at his YouTube channel, [The Athlete Archives](#).

## MEMORABILIA STUDY

# The strange case of Ty Cobb's dentures

BY RON COBB, member of SABR Magnolia and of the Board of Advisors, [Ty Cobb Museum](#), Royston, Georgia.

*A collectible purported to be the dentures of baseball legend Ty Cobb sold for more than \$18,000 in 2022. Turns out the dentures are fake and were never owned or worn by Cobb.*

*The following edited article was published in its entirety online on April 10, 2023, at [Sports Collector Digest](#) and is the sole viewpoint of the author.*

*Dr. William "Ron" Cobb is a retired Engineer and Management Consultant who spends his time researching and writing history —mostly baseball and the Civil War. He has nine books to his credit. Ron served on the Board of Advisors of the Ty Cobb Museum from 2004-2014, rejoined in 2018 and continues to serve in this position.*

—C.B.

There was a flurry of news articles in July 2022 when a set of dentures showed up in an SCP Auction that were said to have been personally owned and worn by baseball Hall of Famer Ty Cobb. The dentures sold in September 2022 for \$18,840.

SCP Auctions enticed potential bidders with this description of the item: "Offered here is one of the most unique pieces of sports memorabilia you will find in the hobby: The Georgia Peach's personally used dentures. The upper and lower dentures come with Cobb's original plaster denture holder and brass opening device. Originally sourced from the collection of Cobb's biographer Al Stump, our consignor acquired them in the famous Barry Halper sale back in 1999 and has owned them ever since. At one point, Cobb's famous

jaws were loaned to the Baseball Hall of Fame where they were displayed in the museum in Cooperstown, N.Y."

Photos displayed in the electronic catalog included the dentures from various angles, and a photocopy of the Hall of Fame and Museum loan receipt was shown as well.

## FIRST APPEARANCE IN HOBBY

These dentures first appeared publicly in a May 22, 1995, *Sports Illustrated* article titled "Sultan of Swap" by Franz Lidz. The article described collector Barry Halper's extensive memorabilia collection, emphasizing items from some of baseball's most famous players, including Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Jackie Robinson and, of course, Ty Cobb. The photo of "Cobbabilia," the term Lidz coined for Ty Cobb memorabilia, showed a Cobb-used glove, uniform, pipe, dentures, and the now infamous shotgun. Halper told Lidz that he had obtained all his Cobbabilia from sportswriter Al Stump.

In 1999, the entire Halper collection was sold by Sotheby's at a seven-day public auction that netted more than \$22 million. Among the items offered in the Sotheby's catalog were the Ty Cobb dentures, with a pre-auction estimated sale price of \$300-\$500. They were



*Photo of the Ty Cobb memorabilia sold by Al Stump to Barry Halper from a 1995 Sports Illustrated article. Photo: Sports Illustrated/Ron Cobb.*

purchased by Karen Semonsky, the daughter of a dentist, who was not previously a baseball memorabilia collector but was attracted to bid because of her recollections of her father's dental career. After submitting the winning bid of \$6,500 and receiving the dentures at home, she displayed them proudly under a glass dome on her dining room table surrounded by "... a glove, a ball and books about Ty Cobb."

In 2001, the Baseball Hall of Fame agreed to display the dentures, apparently at the request of Semonsky. The same *Sports Illustrated* article described her reaction when the agreement to display the dentures was finalized: "She was thrilled last week when the Baseball Hall of Fame accepted, on loan, Cobb's disencruiumated dentures, which will be displayed in Cooperstown under glass, like roast pheasant, all summer long."

When the HOF display ended in 2003, Semonsky

approached the Ty Cobb Museum in Royston, Ga., Cobb's hometown, about displaying them there. On June 20, 2003, a meet-and-greet event was held at the museum, with Semonsky and her husband in attendance, and the dentures display was unveiled. The dentures remained on display in Royston until March 20, 2014, when they were removed without fanfare and returned to the owner. After that, the dentures dropped out of sight and nothing was heard about them until their recent offering at auction.

In the years between 2003 and 2014, when the dentures were displayed at the Ty Cobb Museum, there was much research done on the myths of Cobb and the authenticity of Cobb memorabilia that came to the collectors market in the 1980s and early '90s. Among the principal findings was the fact that Stump, Cobb's biographer, had forged and sold into the hobby a virtual treasure trove of letters, autographs,

diaries, scrapbooks, annotated magazines and photos. In addition, he had created a large number of fake personalized items that he claimed had belonged to and been used by Cobb. Among these now discredited items were practically all of the Cobbabilia that was part of the Barry Halper Collection, including the shotgun, bat and diary.

In July 2021, the Cobb dentures showed up at auction by Goldin Co., formerly Goldin Auctions. In their description of the dentures, Goldin stated that they were displayed for 10 years in the Ty Cobb Museum. The executive director penned a letter to the auction house asking that any reference to the Ty Cobb Museum be removed from their description because that would surely be interpreted by potential bidders that the museum vouched for their

authenticity. In fact, based on the research findings during and after it had displayed the dentures, the museum no longer believed that the dentures were authentic. Within hours of receiving the letter, Goldin removed the dentures completely from the auction.

When the dentures appeared in the July 2022 SCP Auction, it also made reference to their previously being displayed at the Ty Cobb Museum. The museum sent a similar letter to SCP Auctions, asking that it not be referred to in the description of the dentures because it now disputed their authenticity. SCP Auctions' response was to modify the description as requested, removing all references to the Ty Cobb Museum. But in its place, SCP Auctions then added a reference to the Baseball Hall of Fame having displayed the dentures,

and they also added an image of the 2001 HOF loan agreement with the owner to prove that point. Based on the 12 bids received and the \$18,840 high-bid sales price, it seems that the inference of authenticity based on the HOF Museum display was indeed believable to some.

#### WHERE DID STUMP GET COBB DENTURES?

We know from the 1995 *Sports Illustrated* article that the source of the Cobb dentures in Halper's collection was Stump, Cobb's biographer. That naturally brings up the question: Where did Stump get them?

Stump was the co-author of Cobb's autobiography, "*My Life in Baseball: The True Record*," which was released shortly after Cobb's death in July 1961. Almost 20 years later, Stump began to offer for sale

in the collectors market a large number of memorabilia items he claimed were given to him by Cobb. Stump stated that Cobb had given these items to him in 1961 as they finished collaborating on the book. What Stump offered for sale in 1980 was extensive, including both personal and baseball-related items, as well as numerous letters, signed photos and signed magazine pages.

Conspicuously missing from this long list of items Stump offered are dentures that Cobb purportedly owned and wore. The absence from Stump's 1980 list of his Cobbabilia strongly suggests that Stump did not have the dentures in his possession at that time.

Many of the items Stump offered to Howard Smith in 1980 ultimately wound up in the Barry Halper Collection. Most of these items are now well-known to the hobby as fakes or forgeries that were actually created by Stump.

#### PROVING AUTHENTICITY

Definitive proof of authenticity of a relic like Cobb's dentures is likely impossible. However, it seems that something more than SCP Auctions showing a loan receipt from the Hall of Fame is needed. No doubt the Hall of Fame Museum believed in 2001 that the dentures were authentic based on the Stump source and Halper Collection provenance — as did the Ty Cobb Museum in 2003.

But believing that something is authentic does not make it so, as one directly relevant case in point clearly shows. In 2001 the Baseball Hall of Fame displayed with great fanfare a 1946 Ty Cobb diary which came to it with the exact same provenance as the dentures — from Stump through the Halper Collection. This was part of the gift of Halper memorabilia from Major League Baseball. After autograph experts visiting the



The Ty Cobb dentures as displayed at the Baseball Hall of Fame Museum from 2001 to 2003. Photo: Ron Cobb.

Museum questioned the 1946 diary's authenticity, it was sent to the FBI for examination and determined to be a forgery, later attributed to Stump.

Apparently using prior displays as a statement of authenticity has been a problem for the Hall of Fame in other instances. In reply to my inquiry about the dentures, they stated: "Currently, the Hall's loan agreement has language that prohibits lenders from mentioning the Hall in any printed sale advertising. This was not the case when the dentures were loaned in 2001. Now that this language is in place, it prohibits anyone from mentioning the Hall's name or using images of Hall of Fame documents to add authenticity to a piece."

#### PROFESSIONAL OPINIONS

To investigate further, I asked three different dentists, who are all baseball fans as well as SABR members, to examine the photos of these dentures and provide a professional opinion.

Dr. Howard M. Elson of Pittsburgh described the dentures as a dental articulator, a plaster cast of the mouth of a patient, and two sets of removable dentures. A dental articulator is a device normally used only in the lab, whose purpose is to test and confirm the fit of a set of dentures. In this case, there is an upper denture with six teeth, three molars on each side, and a lower denture with three front teeth. Both dentures would be worn by the patient as removable devices and not permanently installed.

Dr. Elson stated that it would be quite unusual for a patient to be in possession of the complete apparatus, since the articulator device and the plaster cast of the mouth are intended for laboratory use only.

"There is no reason that Cobb should have them. They

wouldn't be used to hold the dentures when not being worn," Elson said. "If the dentures broke, a new impression would be taken. If these are an extra set, they also would not be stored dry. They should be kept moist, or they can lose their shape. The dentures themselves look pristine, almost as if they'd never been worn."

Dr. Harvey Frankel, another dentist and baseball fan from Pittsburgh, is also a long-time memorabilia collector. He examined the photos of these dentures and weighed in with this professional opinion: "These partial dentures were not likely delivered to the patient," he said. "There is not sufficient evidence or documentation to attribute these prosthetic dental appliances to Ty Cobb."

As an experienced collector, Dr. Frankel also recognized the obvious insufficiency of a Hall of Fame loan agreement as the sole piece of physical evidence of these dentures having been owned or worn by Cobb.

Dr. Gary Livacari of Park Ridge, Ill., a SABR member

and recognized dead-ball era historian, had this to say after examining the auction photos: "In my 43 years of dental practice, I have never seen an instance where a set of partial dentures still affixed to the mouth cast and articulator has been delivered to a patient. And, I can hardly conceive of a case or circumstance where that would ever happen. ... After carefully examining the photos here, I see no evidence of wear at all, which would certainly be visible if these dentures had ever been worn by anyone."

#### COBB RECOLLECTIONS

Herschel Cobb is a grandson of Cobb, the son of Ty's youngest son, Herschel R. Cobb. Herschel was 8 years old at the time of his father's death, and for the next several years spent many of his summers and holidays at Ty's home in Atherton, Calif., or at his cabin on Lake Tahoe.

When I asked about his recollections of his grandfather wearing dentures, Herschel said: "... I was fortunate enough

to spend part of every summer from 1954 thru 1958/59 with him, either at his home at 48 Spencer Lane, Atherton, or his cabin at Cave Rock, Lake Tahoe, NV. At the cabin, I usually used a bedroom that shared a bathroom with him. It was between the two bedrooms on the South side of the cabin. I never saw him with dentures — either wearing them, removing them, cleaning them or otherwise. ..."

Dr. Rex Teeslink is a vascular and interventional radiologist in Augusta, Ga. At age 88, Dr. Teeslink remains very active in this profession and still travels worldwide teaching physicians how to use his life-saving vascular tools and inventions. He also met and developed a close personal relationship with Ty Cobb — a connection probably unlike that of any other person living today. So close was Teeslink to Cobb and his family that he was asked to serve as a pallbearer at Cobb's funeral.

Teeslink was between his freshman and sophomore year



*Ty Cobb, later in life. Photo: Getty Images.*



Photo of Ty Cobb's funeral on July 19, 1961, in Royston, Georgia. His young personal assistant, medical student Rex Teeslink, who was asked by Ty to serve as a pallbearer, is fifth from the right. Photo: Ron Cobb

in medical school in the late spring and summer of 1961. His parents had recently moved to Cornelia, Ga., where his father was in the poultry business, and he had come home for the summer break. Cobb was living in Cornelia at that time, having purchased mountain-top acreage nearby to build his final retirement home and having rented a house there in the interim. A friend of Teeslink's father knew Cobb and invited Teeslink to join him for lunch at Cobb's house so he could "meet the famous baseball player."

During lunch, Teeslink noticed and commented on a veritable mountain of mail that was piled up on Cobb's dining room table. After lunch, Cobb asked Teeslink if he would like to assist him in getting the

replies already written mailed out and to help him get the remaining mail sorted and organized. Teeslink agreed, and he and Cobb spent the rest of that afternoon, May 14, 1961, working together on the mountain of Cobb's fan mail. That day was life changing for both of them.

At the end of that day, Teeslink was surprised when Cobb asked if he would stay with him and become his personal assistant. Cobb wanted assistance in daily activities like mail, shopping and housework. He had also decided, no doubt, that Teeslink, as a medical student, would also be a great help to him in managing his taxing medical routine for dealing with diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease

and advanced prostate cancer.

Very politely, Teeslink responded that he could not, as he desperately needed to find a job to earn money for next year's medical school costs. Cobb was insistent, however, and proposed that if Teeslink would agree to stay with and assist him during this summer break from school, there would be no future worries for him about school money.

They never discussed money after that. From that day forward, Teeslink stayed with and assisted Cobb continuously, first in the rented home in Cornelia and later, in Cobb's final days, at Emory Hospital in Atlanta. He went everywhere with Cobb — to the grocery store, pharmacy, doctor, diner and to visit the Cobb Hospital in nearby Royston. There was nowhere Cobb went during those 64 days, day or night, that Teeslink did not accompany him.

When asked about Cobb's dentures in a recent phone conversation, Teeslink replied emphatically: "I was literally in the presence of Ty Cobb continuously, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from May 14, 1961 until July 17, 1961. For the last two months of his life, I watched each day as Ty Cobb tended to his daily toiletries. ... I stayed with him day and night at his home in Cornelia, and then while he was at Emory Hospital in his final days, I slept each night on a cot that was brought into his room. Not once during this entire time did I ever observe any removable dentures, or see him take dentures of

any kind out of his mouth. Simply and unquestionably stated: Based on my firsthand experience in 1961, which I vividly remember, Ty Cobb did not wear removable dentures. Period!"

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information above, it is reasonable to conclude that the purported Cobb dentures were not actually owned or worn by him.

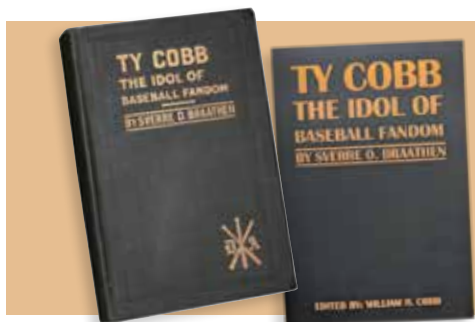
After examination of photos of the dentures, three experienced dentists gave an opinion that these were most likely not Cobb's dentures and probably were never worn at all.

Secondly, statements by two individuals who knew Cobb well assert clearly and emphatically that he did not wear dentures at all.

Thirdly, the provenance provided by the auction house sourcing the dentures to Al Stump places them directly within the massive and well-known fraudulent memorabilia enterprise that Stump carried out in the 1980s. Hence, this provenance strongly denounces their authenticity rather than proving it.

Additionally, the proof of display of the dentures in the Hall of Fame Museum has been shown to be worthless for the same reason that display of the forged Cobb diary would be worthless as an element of any claim of authenticity.

So, were the purported dentures outright fraud? According to the evidence, the answer would be yes. ♦



**THE TY COBB MUSEUM** in Royston, Georgia, has recently reprinted the 1927 biography, *Ty Cobb: The Idol of Baseball Fandom*, by Sverre O. Braathen. Original copies (far left) typically sell in the \$500 range today, the reprint sells for \$21.99 and is available at the museum and the [online store](#). The museum makes a few bucks off this reprint which helps to pay our operating expenses. Every little bit helps! Thank you.

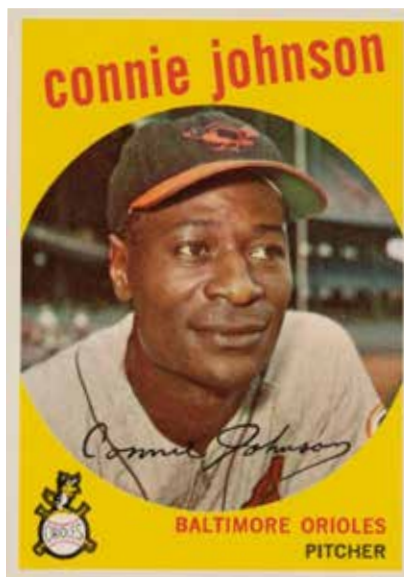
—Ron Cobb



## BIOGRAPHY

## The Best Pitcher You Never Knew

BY ALAN MORRIS, member of SABR Magnolia



1959 Topps baseball card

It was the summer of 1956 and my first Little League season was over. My mom, dad, sister and I were visiting my grandparents in Aberdeen, Maryland, when my grandfather said to dad, “do you think Alan would like to go to see the Orioles play ball today?” I could not have been more excited if Mickey Mantle had walked into the room.

Memories fade over the years but I’ll never forget my first major league ballgame at Memorial Stadium in Baltimore. The park was huge, far bigger than the Cracker’s Ponce de Leon Park that dad had taken me to earlier in the summer. It was the greenest grass I’d ever seen, and I wondered how long it would take to mow it.

The Orioles were playing the White Sox and I noticed the starting pitcher was named “Connie.” I’m sure I commented to my dad and grandfather about the Oriole pitcher with a girl’s name because eight-year-old boys knew that girls did not play Major League baseball. And then I was even more surprised

when the Orioles took the field for the National Anthem, and standing tall on the mound was a black man with his hat over his chest.

Clifford Junior “Connie” Johnson was born in Stone Mountain, Georgia, December 7, 1922. His family lived in Atlanta for a few years during primary school years but moved back to Stone Mountain where Cliff attended high school. He was not fond of school and soon dropped out to work with his father

at the quarry next to Stone Mountain. Drilling granite out of the ground was even less fun than school and he dreamed of travel to New York, Chicago, New Orleans, and California. His older brother had told him about these places where he had worked as a chauffeur. Clifford was thinking seriously about

striking out on his own.

Clifford’s path changed dramatically in the summer of 1940. He attended an exhibition game between the Kansas City Monarchs and Toledo Crawfords at Ponce de Leon ballpark in Atlanta. The Crawfords were short of pitchers and the word went out that they could use some local talent. Joe Greene, a friend of Cliff and former Monarch catcher, suggested the seventeen-year-old Johnson. He protested saying he was no “hardball” player but the Crawfords found him an XX-large jersey that caused some young girls in attendance to holler, “Who’s that Ichabod Crane on the field?”

In the second game of the series, the Crawford’s starting pitcher was being roughed up so Johnson was called to the mound. He held the hard-hitting Monarchs scoreless for several innings which greatly impressed Jesse Owens, part owner of the Crawfords, and team player-manager, Oscar Charleston.

The next day, Owens and Charleston visited the Johnson home and asked Clifford if he would join the team as they traveled to their next stop—Indianapolis. They were able to convince mom and dad that Oscar would watch out for Clifford, who was sitting with his glove and spikes already packed, and a professional baseball career was begun.

Clifford’s first start was June 28, 1940, against Indianapolis. He pitched well, giving up only 4 runs and with a late inning rally, he got his first victory, 5-4. He was so impressive with his blazing fast ball, the 17-year-old was named to the West All-Star team. Although the West fell to the East in the annual All-Star game, Clifford entered the game in the sixth inning with two men on base, no one scored on his watch.

The Crawfords folded after the 1940 season, but Clifford was immediately offered a job with the Kansas City Monarchs. He joined the legendary pitching rotation that included



Connie Johnson, second from right, and the 1942 Kansas City Monarchs pitching staff. From left: Hilton Smith, Jack Matchett, Booker McDaniels, Lefty LaMarque, Johnson and Satchel Paige. Photo: twitter@BSmile

Satchel Paige and Hilton Smith and helped them win the Negro League Championship in 1941 and 1942. It was during this time Clifford earned his nickname—"Connie." As he tells the story, "My favorite song was *Basin Street Blues*, sung by Connie Boswell and Bing Crosby. I began calling teammates Connie as I sang the song on the field and in the dressing room. Soon, they began calling me Connie and the name stuck."

Following the '42 season, Connie and many of his teammates, joined the army and spent the next three years fighting for his country. He served in the European theater and played a lot of baseball pitching in military contests. He received an honorable discharge and returned to the Monarchs for the 1946 season. When Jackie Robinson broke the color-barrier with the Dodgers for the '47 season, friends and family members told Connie he might soon be pitching against the best players in the game. His response was, "I've been doing that for 10 years."

Connie continued to pitch for the Monarchs and was

again selected for the West All-Stars in 1950. He pitched three innings in that game and was rewarded with the victory. He also contributed a triple as the West won 5-3. After the season ended, Connie asked the Monarchs for a raise in salary but the decline of the league was evident. Attendance was falling rapidly, so the Monarchs sold him to the Chicago White Sox.

By this time Connie's fastball had lost a lot of its zip, but he commanded excellent control of his pitches and he added a curve and slider to his repertoire. He had terrific minor league seasons with Saint-Hyacinthe (Quebec) in 1951 and Colorado's Sky Sox in 1952.

When the '53 season started he was a member of the White Sox earning his major league debut on April 17. After 4 wins and 4 losses, he was sent back down to the minors. He started the '54 season with triple-A Toronto going 17-8 and then after a 12-2 start in '55 the White Sox called him back to the big-league club. He earned a 7-4 record starting 16 games.

As the '56 season opened he got off to a slow start but his former White Sox manager,

Paul Richards, was now managing the Baltimore Orioles. Richards was successful in wrangling a trade for the long, tall veteran. He knew Connie could still pitch and he was pretty sure the Sox would include him in the trade. In his first game with his new team, Connie beat the White Sox 3-2, pitching a 5-hit complete game. By the end of the season, Richards proclaimed, "Connie Johnson is the best right-



1956 Topps baseball card

hander in the league."

The following year, Connie was the ace of the Oriole staff. He was 14-11 with three shutouts. He struck out 10 or more batters five times and ended the year with an ERA of 3.20. His 14 wins set the American League record for wins by a black pitcher, eclipsing his former teammate, Satchel Paige who won 12 in 1952. He was third in the league with 177 strikeouts.

With a now very tired, 35-year-old right arm, Connie's record slipped to 6-9 in 1958 and a youth movement was beginning with the Orioles. With a weak performance during spring training, he was sent to Vancouver of the Pacific Coast League. The *Baltimore Sun* beat writer wrote, "The tall statuesque Great Stone Face from Stone Mountain, GA . . . contributed always the ultimate in effort during 2 and a half years with the flock (Orioles)." In the words of his SABR biographer, Alan Cohen, "Johnson's flirtation with greatness in 1957 could not be replicated." Connie's major league career was over.

Connie moved his family to Missouri where he took a job with the Ford Motor Company. He had met his wife, Harion Caver in Kansas City in 1847 while playing for the Monarchs. They married in 1953 and had

three children, Denise, Clifford and Kevin. Connie worked for Ford until he retired in 1985. He was a major supporter of the Negro League Baseball Museum working with Buck O'Neil to make it a reality. He was a regular visitor to Kansas City Public Schools talking about his baseball career and he was on hand at the White House on the eve of the Ken Burns' Baseball series shown on Public TV.

Connie passed away on November 28, 2004, in Kansas City and was buried in the military's National Cemetery in Leavenworth. He was remembered by his former teammate and manager Buck O'Neil: "Connie was a good pitcher in the major leagues, but he was a great pitcher in the Negro Leagues. No comparison. He threw hard for the Monarchs. Hard. He had good control. Could have won 20 games in the big leagues. Oh yeah. Could have won 20 games every year. That's Connie Johnson." ♦

*Connie Johnson's 1957 season with Baltimore, at age 34:*

14 wins, 11 losses  
3.20 ERA  
30 games started  
242.0 innings pitched  
14 complete games  
66 walks  
177 strike outs  
17 HR allowed  
1.149 WHIP



1957 Topps baseball card



## An Analysis

# The '82 Braves

### Hot Spring Training Breeding Optimism That This Is Year It All Comes Together

By George Cunningham

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — With the best spring training record in baseball, the Atlanta Braves approach the Tuesday night start of the regular season with optimism. The only thing new about this feeling is that, this time, it is based on solid evidence.

Lack of hitting and defense were the downfall of the Braves during a 50-54 season in 1981, and a comparison of their spring records for 1981 and 1982 suggests not only improvement there but also in an area where they were strong last year. The pitching is dramatically better.

Led by shortstop Rafael Ramirez with eight and second baseman Glenn Hubbard with six, Atlanta committed 40 errors during a 15-15 spring in 1981. This time the Braves, while compiling an 18-7 record, committed 23 with both Ramirez and Hubbard trimming their totals in half.

Atlanta batted .269 in the spring of 1981. The team increased that to .340 this spring and averaged better than 19 hits a game the final week.

If these improvements in spring training can be translated into the regular season, there should be

joy in Atlanta this summer because baseball's most important facet — pitching — should be even better than it was a year ago.

In the spring of 1981, Braves pitchers combined for two shutouts and walked 93 batters in 279 innings. This time they collaborated for six shutouts and walked 65 in 223 innings. A spring earned run average of 3.74 shrunk to under 2.00 in 1982.

New manager Joe Torre definitely is a winner thus far, and he deserves the credit for injecting the young team with the confidence it so badly needs. And in conjunction with the new manager, here's a new look at some mostly old faces:

**CATCHING** — The Braves are much stronger here and not just because All-Star Bruce Benedict seems stronger and is more experienced. Rookie Matt Siaturo is his backup and has an outstanding arm. Veteran Bill Pucirolo will see spot duty but mainly punch out.

**INFIELD** — The Braves yield to no one on the right side where Hubbard and first baseman Chris Chambliss make few mistakes. Although 33, Chambliss hasn't lost a thing in the field or at bat. Hubbard

See ANALYSIS, Page 3-C

How the Atlanta Constitution saw the Braves on opening day, April 6, 1982. Source: newspapers.com.

## ATLANTA BASEBALL HISTORY

# Sweet Memories of a Winning Streak

BY FRANCIS KINLAW, member of SABR Magnolia (North Carolina branch)

For more than a decade after the Atlanta Braves of 1969 captured first place in the National League's West Division most of the team's seasons ended in disappointment.

Between 1970 and 1975, the Braves finished in fifth place three times, in fourth once, and in third place twice. The situation grew even worse beginning in 1976 with the club landing in the division's cellar for four consecutive years.

Limited improvement occurred in 1980 and during a 1981 season abbreviated by labor-management issues, the team moved slightly toward the middle of the division's standings.

A championship of any kind remained a long shot at best. But to use an old southern expression, "the worm turned" in the summer of 1982 as good fortune was at long last experienced by the team and its fans. And in the latter stages of

that season, my six-year-old son and I were among thousands of fans who experienced joy within the circular confines of Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium.

The 1982 season is still recalled fondly by Braves fans for two reasons: (1) an unexpected capturing of the National League East title and (2) a 13-game winning streak to begin the season.

## PRESEASON TALK

Preseason predictions by prominent baseball publications of the 1982 Braves campaign reflected a degree of cautious optimism, but also skepticism regarding the organization's ability to reverse its unimpressive trend of recent seasons.

Phil Collier of the *San Diego Union* wrote in *Street & Smith's 1982 Yearbook* that "The Braves appeared to be one of the National League teams

of the future in 1980. . . . The pitching improved in 1981, with the Braves advancing to fifth place in the National League's earned-run average tables. But, to everyone's surprise, Atlanta developed a serious power shortage. Horner, who clubbed 35 homers in 1980, produced only 15. Murphy went from 33 homers to 13. Chambliss dropped from 18 to 8. . . . As he succeeds Bobby Cox this year as Ted Turner's new manager, Joe Torre's starting rotation will likely include 43-year-old Phil Niekro, Rick Mahler, Larry McWilliams, Bob Walk, Tommy Boggs, and possibly Steve Bedrosian. . . . The Braves should improve, but they're a dark horse as a contender."

Tim Tucker joined a chorus of doubters in an article in *The Sporting News' 1982 Baseball Yearbook*: "New manager, same team. Only Ted Turner, the Braves' enthusiastic and controversial owner, could

be confident of a team's improvement as it enters a new season with the same cast that finished six games under .500 the year before. . . . No one expects the 1982 Braves to be a disaster, but it seems unrealistic to expect a simple change of managers to reverse the direction of a team whose troubles went much deeper last season than occasionally questionable strategy. . . . The Braves may not be ready to move into the company of the Dodgers, Astros, and Reds in the National League's West, but they are one of those teams that, with a few breaks and a few surprises, could do a lot more than expected."

Douglas S. Looney expressed similar views in the baseball preview edition of *Sports Illustrated*: "Since 1975, Atlanta has never finished better than fourth in its division. Last year, the Braves finished in fourth and then fifth place in 1981's split season, with a team

batting average of .243, next to last in the league...Overall, depth is shallow...The pitching staff, however, includes some promising young prospects. Big things are expected---and desperately needed---from Larry McWilliams and Steve Bedrosian, who were 13-10 and 10-10 at Richmond respectively...Understandably, interest in the Braves is lacking. Last year's average attendance was 10,927 per game, and the team is losing between three and four million dollars a year. But General Manager John Mullen says, 'Atlanta is an instant success town. People will get excited and come out when we win a few days in a row.'"

**HEADING TO ATLANTA**

Despite these qualified but certainly not encouraging forecasts, my young son and I knew that we would be regular viewers of Braves games on *Superstation WTBS* in 1982, but neither of us expected to see a game in person. But that was before I perused a list of the Braves' promotions in my Greensboro, North Carolina, home approximately one month prior to the beginning of the season.

I noticed that the Braves would be playing a game in Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium against the Mets on the Saturday evening of August 21st and that the club would be honoring members of the Milwaukee Braves' championship team of 1957 in a ceremony prior to the first pitch!

Having lived in Michigan as a young boy until my family moved to North Carolina in 1954, I normally rooted for midwestern teams against eastern ones. Because the Braves of the mid- and late-1950s were the best team in the Midwest (and because I admired players such as Henry Aaron, Warren Spahn, Eddie Mathews, Del Crandall, Billy Bruton, Joe Adcock, Johnny Logan, Wes

Covington, Lew Burdette, and Bob Buhl), my thoughts were immediately drawn to spending a baseball-filled weekend in Atlanta. Perhaps "Hurricane Bob" Hazle, a South Carolina native, would also be on hand for the reunion with his former teammates.

My wife and I decided after a brief discussion that this would be a splendid opportunity for me to take our six-year-old son to his first major-league game on Saturday night, spend the night in a hotel, and then also attend a scheduled Sunday afternoon game.

Our hotel for the weekend was selected because it was conveniently located within walking distance of Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, and an unexpected benefit was to be derived from my choice when my son observed Braves center fielder Brett Butler eating breakfast on Sunday morning in the hotel's restaurant. The sight of watching Butler consume scrambled eggs is less memorable, however, than recollections of the absolutely fantastic locations of our seats, directly behind home plate in the lower rows of the lower deck for the Saturday night and Sunday afternoon games.

My purchases of those seats had become possible only because our tickets had been purchased in the early spring when much of the Braves' fan base was anticipating yet another so-so (or worse) result to the Braves' approaching season.

Fortunately for my son and I, events transpiring in the Land of the Braves between April and August differed drastically from the expectations of the masses, and it all began with the stunning 13-game winning streak that gave an immediate boost to perceptions of the team's fortunes and its ticket sales. By the time many Braves fans became "true believers" exhibiting genuine enthusiasm, our tickets were tucked away in

a drawer in our home.

Before taking a nostalgic trip back in time to relive that winning streak of more than 40 years ago, I should mention that I was indeed able to satisfy my desire to observe my old boyhood heroes from Milwaukee before the Saturday evening game---although the pregame program was limited to several former players riding around the field in fancy convertibles and waving to fans. No speeches were given, and the fan experience was almost entirely visual in nature, but I was quite satisfied since the prime locations of our seats afforded us great views.

Now for the happy events in Atlanta's stadium and a trio of other ballparks that the Braves visited in the fourth month of 1982...

**1-0. April 6th in San Diego:** Rick Mahler allowed two hits while pitching a shutout. The

Braves scored the game's only run in the fifth inning when Brett Butler drew a walk and scored on a hit-and-run double by Glenn Hubbard.

**2-0. April 7th in San Diego:** Dale Murphy had a single, double, homer, and two RBIs. The Braves scored three runs in the third inning on run-scoring singles by Butler and Claudell Washington and Murphy's RBI double. Murphy hit a solo home run in the sixth inning. Bob Walk pitched seven innings in Atlanta's 6-4 win.

**3-0. April 9th in Atlanta:** A two-run homer by Murphy highlighted a five-run opening inning against the Astros. The final score was 6-2 as Don Sutton absorbed the defeat.

**4-0. April 10th in Atlanta:** The Braves took a 2-0 lead over the Astros in the first inning on a RBI double by Washington

Report on the April 6 opening day victory and Rick Mahler's two-hit shutout from the Atlanta Journal, April 7, 1982. Source: newspapers.com.



Owner Ted Turner was all smiles Friday night as his Braves upped their 1982 record to 3-0 with their home-opener 6-2 victory over the Houston Astros. And a big reason for the victory was the pitching of Tommy Boggs, right, who picked up the win. Staff Photos — Beverly Crawford.



Scenes of the April 9 home opener from the Atlanta Journal, April 10, 1982. Source: newspapers.com.

and a sacrifice fly by Murphy. They scored three more runs in the second inning when Butler had a two-run single, stole second base, and scored on a single by Hubbard. The final score was 8-6.

**5-0. April 11th in Atlanta:** Mahler pitched his second consecutive shutout, this one against the Astros with Nolan Ryan (who like Sutton would be elected to the Hall of Fame) hurling for Houston. The Braves scored three runs in the fourth inning on a walk to Bob Horner, Murphy's two-run homer, and an RBI single by Rafael Ramirez. Horner hit a solo home run in the eighth inning to close out the scoring in a 5-0 victory.

**6-0. April 12th in Cincinnati:** Horner hit a solo home run in the second inning. Chris Chambliss led off with a solo homer in the seventh inning, and his round-tripper was followed by a triple by Ramirez, a single by Walk, and a sacrifice fly by Washington. Four runs crossed the plate in that frame. Walk surrendered only four hits in seven and 2/3 innings. The final score was 6-1.

**7-0. April 13th in Cincinnati:** The Braves rallied for three runs in the seventh inning.

Butler led off the frame with a base-on-balls, Rufino Linares singled, Horner doubled, and an intentional walk to Murphy loaded the bases. Bruce Benedict singled to drive in Linares and Horner. The final score was 8-5.

**8-0. April 14th in Cincinnati:** The Braves were extended into extra innings but emerged victorious. Atlanta trailed by a score of 2-1 after eight innings but Linares singled with one out in the ninth. Benedict followed with a double, driving in Linares with the tying run. The Braves then loaded the bases with one out in the 10th inning on two walks and a single by Horner. Benedict walked to put the Braves ahead, 3-2. Ramirez drove in two more runs with a single to make the final score 5-2.

**9-0. April 16th in Houston:** The Braves scored all five of their runs in the sixth inning to victimize Nolan Ryan for the second time in five days. Benedict doubled and Ramirez walked. Both eventually scored on Butler's single. Butler stole second base, reached third base on an infield putout, and scored on Ryan's wild pitch. A base-on-balls to Murphy and a double by Horner followed the errant

pitch, as did a throwing error that permitted Horner to cross the plate. Atlanta won, 5-3.

**10-0. April 17th in Houston:** A quartet of Braves pitchers (including winning hurler Preston Hanna) combined on a four-hitter in a 2-1 Braves victory. The Braves scored both of their runs in the first inning when Hubbard singled, Murphy walked, and Horner doubled down the left-field foul line.

**11-0. April 18th in Houston:** A pinch-hit double by Biff Poceroba in the eighth inning, following a double by Chambliss

and an intentional walk to Benedict, was the key hit in a 6-5 Braves triumph. Reliever Al Hrabosky held the Astros at bay and received credit for the victory.

**12-0. April 20th in Atlanta:** The Braves trailed the Reds, 2-1, until they scored three runs in the bottom of the third inning on a lead-off home run by Ramirez, a walk to Hubbard, a triple by Washington, and a wild pitch. Atlanta's first run had come in the second inning on a home run by Chambliss. Steve Bedrosian was the winning pitcher.



Celebrating 12 straight on April 20, published in the Atlanta Journal, October 4, 1982. Source: newspapers.com.

**13-0. April 21st in Atlanta:**  
Washington's two-run single against Cincinnati with two out in the bottom of the ninth inning gave the Braves their 13th consecutive victory by a 4-3 margin.

**13-1. April 22nd in Atlanta:**  
The Braves' streak finally came to an end. After they were defeated by one run in a low-scoring game with the Reds, the crowd of 20,701 gratefully rewarded the home team with a standing ovation.

Reasons for the Braves' success at the beginning of the team's memorable season are provided by several statistics compiled by individual players during the 13-game streak. Murphy, hit four home runs and recorded an OPS of 1.017. Chambliss posted an even better OPS (1.067) and a batting average of .356 while hitting three round-trippers. Horner's low batting

# The Beat Goes On

## Braves 13-0 As Washington's Hit In Ninth Beats Reds



Only The Batting Helmet Of Claudell Washington (Center Background) Can Be Seen As The Braves' Right Fielder Is Mobbed Following His Game-Winning Hit

**Box Score, Page 2-D**  
**By George Cunningham**  
*Contributor Staff Writer*

Cincinnati manager John McNamara tossed Claudell Washington's intentional two-run single Wednesday night at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, and the Braves' outfielder was not found lacking.

He hit the second pitch by left-handed reliever Joe Price up the middle for a two-out, two-run single in the bottom of the ninth for a 4-3 Atlanta victory that kept the Braves undefeated after 13 games.

Atlanta goes for No. 14 Thursday night (WED 7:30 at 7:30) with Bob Walk (2-0) pitching against the Reds' Bruce

• Joe Torre: Braves might as well win the pennant. A Glass Sledge column, Page 4-D.

• Braves' Tuesday night telecast dominated Atlanta television. Page 4-D.

• Former manager Bobby Cox has seeking best praise for Braves' last start. Page 4-D.

• Reds' Dave Concepcion denied chance to foil the Braves. Page 4-D.

Beverly (2-1).

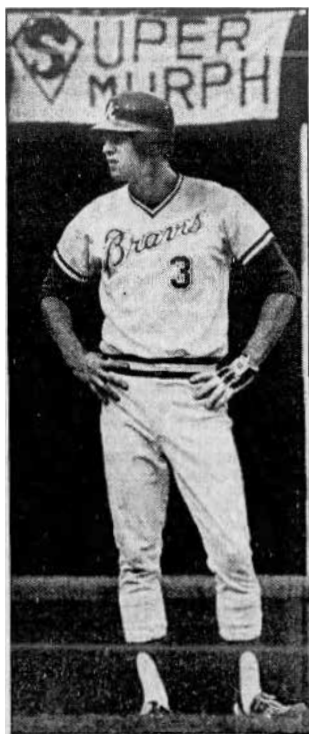
Atlanta continued to add to baseball's longest winning streak at the start of a season, and an audience of 21,151 will agree that no prior victory has been more exciting.

Trailing 3-0 after Larry Bittner's three-run homer in the third, the Braves got a run back in the fifth on Chris Chumbley's third home run of the season, another in the seventh on Rafael Ramirez's sacrifice fly and that set up two wild final innings when Atlanta missed one opportunity, then received a generous amount of luck to provide Washington with the chance for his third game-winning hit.

But first the ending, which dropped Cincinnati 10 games behind the Braves in the National League West standings: Pitcher Walter Johnson was occasionally walked to load the bases with two out in the ninth so that Price could pitch to left-handed Washington. But McNamara's reasoning went deeper than that.

A week ago Tuesday in Cincinnati, Washington had been hit in the head and hospitalized by a pitch from Bob Shirley, and the Braves would be facing a left-

See BRAVES, Page 4-D



SuperMurph, from the Atlanta Journal, October 4, 1982. Source: newspapers.com.

Celebrating 13 straight on April 21, from the Atlanta Constitution, April 22, 1982. Source: newspapers.com.

average (.186) was offset by two homers and an OPS of .764. Butler hit at a .264 clip and had an OPS of .635. Washington hit .250 with an OPS of .668. Hubbard's comparable numbers were .261 and .708; Benedict's were .268 and .778. Even the often-criticized Ramirez was impressive with a batting average of .333, one home run, and an OPS of .948!

Among the pitchers, Mahler stood out with two complete-game victories and an earned-run average of 1.98 in 27 and one-third innings. A pair of other hurlers, Camp and Walk, had two victories each with very low ERAs, 1.74 and 0.96 respectively. McWilliams also won two games despite a relatively unimpressive ERA of 4.26 ERA and only six and one-third innings of work. The other five victories were credited

to Bedrosian, Garber, Hrabosky, Boggs, and Hanna.

### AFTER THE STREAK

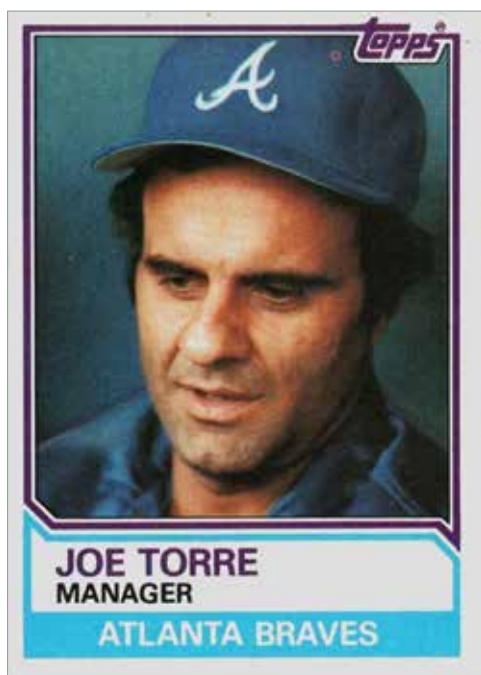
Following the loss on April 22nd to the Reds, the Braves lost four more games in succession, two to the Padres and two to the Pirates. Their five-game losing streak was brought to an end by a defeat of the Pirates, and they then won two of three games against the Cubs. The Braves' record was 17-6 when a 12-game homestand concluded on May 2nd, and on that date they led the Padres in the National League West standings by two games, the Dodgers and Giants by six games, and the Astros and Reds by seven games.

The Braves won only 11 of 26 games in the month of May, but rebounded in June to win 18 times and lose only

nine. Their won-loss record in July was an acceptable though unsensational 16-11, and the winning percentage dropped below .500 in both August and September. But on the evening of August 21st when the former Milwaukee Braves were honored and their relocated club nailed down a 6-5 victory over the Mets, the Pirates defeated Los Angeles in Pittsburgh to reduce the Dodgers' lead over the Braves to a meager two games.

That lead would be cut in half the following day when the Braves again beat the Mets while the Dodgers lost in 14 innings to the Pirates. For my son and me (and many other fans in the southeastern United States), it was a wonderful weekend!

The Braves eventually passed the Dodgers (who played their best baseball in the month of August) to gain a spot in the



1982 Topps baseball card. Torre played 16 years with the Braves and managed the team from 1982-1984.

National League Championship Series, but the subsequent set of playoff games against the St. Louis Cardinals failed to replicate the excitement of the exhilarating regular season.

The Cardinals dominated the first game in a best-of-five format to roll to a 7-0 victory

in Busch Stadium behind fine pitching by Bob Forsch. Pascual Perez took the loss for the Braves.

Atlanta's team delivered a better showing in the second game and held a 3-2 lead as the Redbirds came to bat in the bottom of the eighth inning.

But the Cardinals tied the score in that frame, and Ken Oberkfell spoiled the night with a walk-off single in the bottom of the ninth. Bruce Sutter was the winning pitcher for the Cards, and Gene Garber suffered a very disappointing loss.

The Braves' season came to a close on the night of October 10, 1982 on their home field as the Cardinals swept the series with a 6-2 victory. Juaquin Andujar was the winning pitcher, and Rick Camp was charged with a loss.

#### DOWN, THEN UP

The disappointment resulting from these October defeats failed to eradicate hopes that the Atlanta franchise had turned a corner competitively within its division and the National League. Two subsequent seasons brought second-place finishes (three games behind the Dodgers in 1983; 12 games behind the Padres in 1984).

The situation went in a downward direction for "the South's team" in 1985 as the

Braves dropped to fifth place, 29 games behind the Dodgers, and the outlook remained bleak for the next five seasons (1986-1990). The club escaped last place only once, rising to fifth place in its six-team division in 1987.

The competitive situation again changed abruptly and significantly in 1991 as the team rolled to its first of three consecutive divisional titles. The divisions of Major League Baseball were restructured in 1994, with the Braves moving into the National League East where they have enjoyed a large measure of success.

Much has changed since 1994 in regard to the Braves and baseball in general. Now, more than four decades after a remarkable winning streak and the numerous twists and turns that followed, an older man and his adult son in North Carolina continue to follow the current team and cherish indelible memories of the wonderful summer of 1982! ♦

## Events

### SABR Magnolia Chapter Meetings in Atlanta

Our chapter meets every third Thursday of the month, 6:45pm, at Taco Mac, 5600 Roswell Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30042. Join us for food, friendship and baseball trivia by Dave Washburn. All are welcome, you do not have to be a SABR member to attend.

### Upcoming Third Thursday Meetings

September 21, 6:45pm  
October 19, 6:45pm  
November 16, 6:45pm

### Magnolia Magazine. Designed and edited by Craig Brown.

Contributors to this issue are Gordon Warren, Ron Cobb, Alan Morris and Francis Kinlaw. Articles in this newsletter are the sole creation and copyright of each respective author and cannot be reproduced in any manner without the written consent of the author.

If you would like to submit an article, viewpoint, media review, memory or musing for the next issue, please email your content to Craig Brown: [craigb59\(at\)gmail\(dot\)com](mailto:craigb59(at)gmail(dot)com)

Join the baseball history conversation in Atlanta. Join the SABR Magnolia Chapter.

## Links

### Magnolia Chapter website

<https://sites.google.com/site/magnoliasabr/home>

### Magnolia Chapter Twitter feed

<https://twitter.com/MagnoliaSabr>

### SABR website

<https://sabr.org/>



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Go to the SABR website here

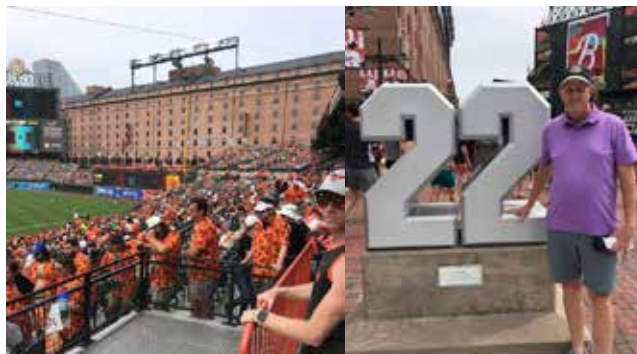


# Last Page Pics

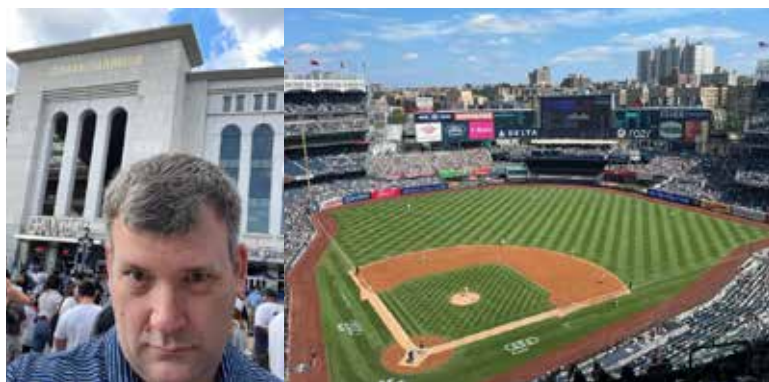
RECENT BALLPARK PHOTOS FROM SABR MAGNOLIA MEMBERS



At Milwaukee, by Dave M.



At Baltimore, by Alan M.



At New York Yankees, by Dave W.



At Pittsburgh, by Alan M.



At Toronto, by Alan M.



At Chicago White Sox, during the national SABR Convention



At Philadelphia, by Alan M.



At Boston, by Alan M.



At New York Mets, by Alan M.