

## Society for American Baseball Research

# BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

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### Comments from the Chair

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I'm saddened to report that Frank Phelps has stepped down as the Co-Chair of the Bibliography Committee. Frank founded the Committee in 1984 and has been chair or co-chair since. Under Frank's leadership, the Committee started *Current Baseball Publications*, produced 15 Research Guides, and began several projects. Frank won the Bob Davids Award for service to SABR, the organization's highest honor, in 1991.

At the recent SABR National Convention in Pittsburgh, the SABR Board of Directors confirmed me as Chair of the Bibliography Committee. I appointed Skip McAfee, our newsletter editor, as Vice-Chair. This chair/vice-chair arrangement brings us into line with the practice of most other SABR committees.

I also appointed Frank as Chair Emeritus as I will continue to seek his advice on issues that affect the Committee and hope that he will weigh in with newsletter articles on a regular basis. In effect, there is a guiding body to the Committee, consisting of myself, Skip, Frank, Ted Hathaway (who is sharing with me the duties of Baseball Online), and Rich Arpi (who so ably edits *Current Baseball Publications*). We are always looking for more people to take an active interest in Committee business, direction, and projects. Please contact me if you have any interest in doing some work for the Committee.

For the future, I will do most of the administrative work and spend most of my Committee time on Baseball Online. I will delegate most other Committee tasks (except *Current Baseball Publications*) to Skip, who has done a fine job on the Committee newsletter for several years.

In Pittsburgh, 29 people attended the Committee's meeting, including half a dozen people who expressed an interest in joining the Committee. I've sent them questionnaires.

Probably the best news I received in Pittsburgh came from Jack Carlson and (indirectly) Bill Hugo. Just as the Committee meeting was about to start, Jack walked up to me with copies of the index to Fred Lieb's *The Pittsburgh Pirates* in the Putnam team histories series. Frank passed on to me the news that Bill had finished the index to Lee Allen's *The Cincinnati Reds* in the same series. It was the first time in two years that we had any additions to the list of books for which the Committee has created indexes, and I was especially pleased that they were from the Putnam series. See the following article on the availability of the various completed indexes.

Frank may have left the Committee Chair, but he has not left Committee projects. Frank has completed his index to *The Sporting News' Baseball Register* (1940-1994). John Green has expressed interest in converting Frank's work into computer format and creating a database to allow updating. Anyone who is interested in helping with this project should contact Skip. In addition to

typists, we will need proofreaders as this kind of detailed work is extremely open to typos and other mistakes.

In general, Pittsburgh was a very good convention. I saw two inartistic games featuring multiple errors, baserunning gaffes, and walking the pitcher with the bases loaded. We had a long talk at the committee chairs meeting about good ideas we were working on as well as common problems. SABR Board members endorsed the Bibliography Committee's move and similar tactics by other committees to weed out members who aren't participating in committee projects.

The only problem in Pittsburgh was cramming more and more into the schedule. Each succeeding convention committee seems to come up with more good ideas for activities. Unfortunately, those activities are then packed into the same amount of time. I'm hoping we can get the Board and its convention committee to push the start of next year's Convention back to Thursday morning so that attendees won't have to make so many choices among interesting activities.

Joe Murphy and I had what I hope will be a productive conversation with SABR Publications Director Mark Alvarez, who is interested in preparing an update to the index to SABR publications, which Phil Bergen produced in 1987. Joe has already produced an update following Phil's formula, which basically includes authors, titles, and a few general topics and names. Mark would like to expand that to a fuller index of names and topics so that material will be identifiable even if it isn't the main focus of the piece. At the SABR annual business meeting in Pittsburgh, Mark said he hopes this index will be part of the publications package in 1996. Joe, who has already cataloged all of SABR's publications for Baseball Online, promised to get to work on the expanded update.

Those of you who were not in Pittsburgh will soon be receiving the new SABR membership directory in the mail. One new feature this year is e-mail addresses. I'd like to add that information to the list of Bibliography Committee members. If you have an e-mail address, or when you get one, please send it to me. I've put mine at the top of this article. Please feel free to use it. One of the projects discussed in Pittsburgh was a SABR e-mail mailing list. John Gregory is setting this up with Apple Computer and it may well be a reality for all of you with e-mail addresses by the time this newsletter reaches you. It will be used to post and answer research questions as well as handle other general SABR business.

Baseball Online continues to progress, as you'll see from the numbers on the next page. Ted Hathaway (5645 Fremont Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55419; e-mail: hathae@msus1.msus.edu) has still obtained no positive responses to our attempt to get some kind of foundation money to help with this project. We were especially disappointed that the Pew Charitable Trusts, which supported the Ken Burns documentary, turned us down. Ted is pursuing every avenue he can think of and if you have any ideas, he'd be happy to hear them.

One idea that Ted and I are pursuing is to find someone with the technical expertise to help turn Baseball Online into something available to a broader range of people. We hope to post the database on the Internet, but we need someone with expertise in several areas: the Internet and web pages, gateways (which will permit us to allow SABR members in for—we hope—free, while charging others a fee), and databases and search engines for them. We hope that demonstrating just how useful this project could be will make it easier for us to get volunteers, funding, and donations. If you have even some of this expertise, or know somebody who does, please contact Ted or me.

Meanwhile, we continue to need volunteers within the Committee. If you are interested in working on the books side, contact me. If it's periodicals you're interested in, contact Ted.

If you have any ideas for the Committee, please contact me. Thanks.

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(phone 410/730-5847)

## Baseball Online Statistics

<u>Level</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% change over last year</u>
<i>Books</i>		
5	2,375	39.1%
4	1,198	20.3%
<u>Other</u>	<u>9,050</u>	<u>-2.2%</u>
Total	12,623	5.6%
<i>Book Sections</i>		
5	4,721	109.4%
4	750	336.0%
<u>Other</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>371.4%</u>
Total	5,504	126.2%
<i>Magazine/newspaper articles</i>		
5	8,226	76.5%
4	1	0.0%
<u>Other</u>	<u>7,323</u>	<u>35.6%</u>
Total	15,550	54.6%
Total	15,322	77.7%
4	1,949	66.9%
<u>Other</u>	<u>16,406</u>	<u>11.9%</u>
Total	33,677	37.7%

## Book Indexing Project

Here is the status of the Bibliography Committee's project to prepare indexes for books which were published without them (an asterisk \* indicates a book in the Putnam series):

<u>Book title, author, and publication date</u>	<u>Indexer</u>
<i>The Boston Braves</i> , by Harold Kaese(*) (1948)	Bob Bailey
<i>The Boston Red Sox</i> , by Fred Lieb(*) (1947)	Jack Carlson
<i>The Brooklyn Dodgers</i> , by Frank Graham(*) (1948)	Rick Johnson
<i>The Cincinnati Reds</i> , by Lee Allen(*) (1948)	Bill Hugo
<i>The Cleveland Indians</i> , by Franklin Lewis(*) (1949)	Bob Boynton
<i>Connie Mack</i> , by Fred Lieb(*) (1945)	Bob Boynton
<i>The Detroit Tigers</i> , by Fred Lieb(*) (1946)	Bob Bailey
<i>McGraw of the Giants</i> , by Frank Graham(*) (1944)	Terry Smith
<i>The New York Giants</i> , by Frank Graham(*) (1952)	Terry Smith
<i>The Pittsburgh Pirates</i> , by Fred Lieb(*) (1948)	Jack Carlson
<i>Veeck ... as in Wreck</i> , by Bill Veeck (1962)	Bob Boynton
<i>The Boys of Summer</i> , by Roger Kahn (1971)	Bob Boynton
<i>Pitching in a Pinch</i> , by Christy Mathewson (1912)	Tom Shieber

Copies of these indexes are available from SABR's Research Library. Contact Len Levin, 282 Doyle Ave., Providence, RI 02906 (phone 401/351-3278), who will quote you postage and photocopying costs.

Howard Pollack is working on the index to Fred Lieb & Stan Baumgartner's *The Philadelphia Phillies* (1953) and Bob McConnell is close to finishing the index to Warren Brown's *The Chicago White Sox* (1952).

The following books in the Putnam series need to be indexed: *The New York Yankees*, by Frank Graham (rev. 1948); *The Baltimore Orioles*, by Fred Lieb (1955); *The Washington Senators*, by Shirley Povich (1954); *The St. Louis Cardinals*, by Fred Lieb (1944); *The Chicago Cubs*, by Warren Brown (1946); *The Milwaukee Braves* (an update of Bob Bailey's index to *The Boston Braves*), by Harold Kaese & R.G. Lynch (1954); *The Umpire Story*, by James Kahn (1953); and *The Story of the World Series*, by Fred Lieb (1949). Suggestions of other books that require index-

ing—as well as volunteers willing to index—are welcome; contact Skip McAfee, 5533 Colts Foot Court, Columbia, MD 21045 (phone 410/730-5847).

## Book Reviews

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### THE POLITICS OF GLORY: HOW BASEBALL'S HALL OF FAME REALLY WORKS

Bill James. New York: Macmillan, 1994. 452p. indexed. \$25

I suspect that anyone who might read this review has already read this book or at least knows about it. Bill James has a reputation for being a demon statistician, lively writer, and deep thinker on baseball subjects; and this book will not harm it. James always seems persuasive to me, even when I remain dubious about his conclusions.

*The Politics of Glory* seems at first a rather miscellaneous collection. Chapters on the history of the Hall of Fame turn up periodically among chapters devoted to understanding the sort of player who has been selected, to formulating ways players should be selected (his comment, "One of the things the baseball world *needs* is for some power to swing away from the players, away from the owners, and toward the fans" [p.379] seems especially appropriate these days), to comparing players in and out of the Hall of Fame, to arriving at qualities a Hall of Famer should possess. I found myself thinking I'd rather read *all* about the institutional history of the Hall, then *all* about Drysdale and Rizzuto (players James designates central figures, players "that we use to illustrate the statistical techniques, to examine the logic, to trace the controversy" [p.63]), then *all* about how to set things right in the Hall of Fame.

But the book is fun the way James has organized it. Keeping several different kinds of ideas in the air at the same time is a special challenge for any reader, and reading a chapter that is full of interest energizes one for one that is not. In my case, I am often muddled by the statistical analysis (the chapter "Fibonacci Win Points" is still something of a mystery to me), but I'm happy to grapple with it because I know that more chapters on the institutional history of the Hall (which fascinates me) are coming along. Others will have the opposite response, but my guess is that the experience of reading the book will be happier for all of us because of the way it is organized.

Actually, I liked reading every chapter of *The Politics of Glory* because Bill James is such a lively writer. I looked back at the other book I have on the Hall of Fame—James A. Vlasich's *A Legend for the Legendary: The Origin of the Baseball Hall of Fame* (Bowling Green State Univ. Popular Press, 1990)—which James describes (p.4) as telling its story "in fine detail", and found James' much more readable and entertaining. And my particular entertainment didn't include James' efforts at humor, which I've enjoyed in the past but found often intrusive in *The Politics of Glory*.

More importantly, the book is lively because James has a lively mind. There's an air of the expose about the whole thing, started by the subtitle, *How Baseball's Hall of Fame Really Works*. Early in the book he specifies (p.27-28) his goal: to bring some order to the chaos of the discussion of "What exactly is a Hall of Famer" and "What is a good argument for entry into the Hall?"

James portrays the "chaos", setting out the wide variety of bad arguments for entry into the Hall. What he proposes in their place is not a single method but a series of tests that can be used together to evaluate a player's achievement in somewhat different ways. James' scheme for electing players to the Hall has the same characteristic. Players must be elected, not just by sportswriters, but by several different constituencies. For me, this is the book's happiest

quality: its acknowledgement of a variety of appropriate perspectives. I am suspicious of James the statistician, and of the person who claims Olympian detachment, whether from politics (p.28) or from other kinds of partisanship. "I am here," James says (p.29), "to reinforce the truth in what other people say, and to squash the bullshit. I'm not trying to serve any candidacy for the Hall of Fame. I'm trying to serve the argument itself."

A noble goal, but an impossible one, which James recognizes with the word "trying". Later in the book he presents Minnie Minoso as "my off-the-wall Hall of Fame favorite, if I have one" and follows with an argument that immediately convinces this reader. The book contains fascinating analyses—some brief, some lengthy—of many players' careers, always with evidence that makes James' position comprehensible if not agreeable. I found only one moment in the book where I wanted more evidence. In speaking of writers' balloting for Hall of Famer candidates, he says that "writers bend to balance their ballots" but gives no evidence. Do they? I wonder.

*The Politics of Glory* is a wonderful book about a part of the world of major league baseball. That part's relation to the whole culture of major league baseball is made so clear, that the book becomes an essential one for all students of baseball, not just Hall of Fame enthusiasts.

#### BASEBALL: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994. 486p. indexed. \$60.

I found Ken Burns' film *Baseball* majestic, moving, and entirely too short. Although I often wanted to quarrel with the film's emphasis on race and worried sometimes about the emphases and omissions which that led to, although I worried about the overemphases on Organized Baseball and the twentieth century, and although I fretted over the occasional errors of fact, I found the film finally a quite overwhelming visual experience. The companion book is not quite so overwhelming as the focus falls inevitably on its text even though it's called an "illustrated history". I find myself wondering if it's worth sixty bucks.

There's certainly much of value in the book. It features many photographs, some of which were used in the film, but many of which were not. The photographs don't just repeat the film, and they are primary, as the images of the film are, not secondary. In addition, though Burns uses many commentators in the film, sometimes they seem intrusive. In the book they are not. Brief personal essays follow each of the book's nine chapters, and they are all of high quality, those of David Lamb, Thomas Boswell, and Gerald Early standing out particularly. Bill James (who isn't heard in the film) also contributes an essay.

It's the text itself which seems of uncertain value. It's the text of the screenplay, sometimes augmented. Oddly, the preface of the book is signed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, the film's producers, but not by Geoffrey Ward. The preface announces the understanding of the authors of the meanings of their subject (p.xviii):

"We quickly developed an abiding conviction that the game of baseball offered a unique prism through which one could see refracted much more than the history of games won and lost, teams rising and falling, rookies arriving and veterans saying farewell. The story of baseball is also the story of race in America, of immigration and assimilation; of the struggle between labor and management, of popular culture and advertising, of myth and the nature of heroes, villains, and buffoons; of the role of women and class and wealth in our society. The game is a repository of age-old American verities, of standards against which we continually measure ourselves, and yet at the same time a mirror of the present moment in our modern culture—including all of our most contemporary failings."

Showing all this is a large task. The film is rather more successful than the book, though each has its shaky moments.

The book is actually better than the film on the nineteenth century,

covering (though rather briefly) the various changes in equipment and the rules of the game as it evolved, which the film ignores. Both the film and the book labor mightily to create a sense of baseball as a national game, which exists before, beneath, and beyond Organized Baseball (or even Major League Baseball), but neither is very successful, as the emphasis returns to "games won and lost, teams rising and falling, rookies arriving and veterans saying farewell". The effort to integrate this story with the others announced in the preface is not always successful.

And then there are the inevitable errors we all wish wouldn't creep into our work. In this case, the book has a chance to correct the film. The film identifies John Montgomery Ward as a second baseman; the book restores him to his actual position of shortstop. The film implies that the infamous "Williams shift" was invented by the Cardinals on the occasion of the 1946 World Series; the book acknowledges Lou Boudreau as the shift's inventor. The book itself is not immune, citing (p.365) the 1960 Yankees' total of 193 as "more home runs than any other team ever had in a single season"; but the 1947 Giants and the 1956 Reds each hit 221, and I seem to recall that the 1961 Yankees smacked 240. The book and the film quarrel a bit about just what happened during Kirk Gibson's only at-bat in the 1968 World Series: both agree that he hit the game-winning home run, but while the film shows Gibson swinging at two pitches before he hits the home run, the book says (p.455) that before his home-run swing "Gibson's bat never left his shoulder".

I realize I'm quibbling about a beautiful, well-designed book, but I think its authors had in mind to make something much more than a coffee-table book, and I'm afraid they haven't succeeded. Try to find this one at a discount.

#### SIX RECENT BASEBALL FICTIONS

So far as I know, there's nothing that connects these six novels, but they were published in the 1990s and found their way into my home. Though the first two were written long before 1990—Zane Grey's *The Young Pitcher* (1911) and Jackson Scholz' *Fielder from Nowhere* (1948)—they're both titles in a series of reprints for younger readers called Beech Tree Books from William Morrow and Co. The series also includes Grey's *The Short-Stop* and several titles by John R. Tunis. I wonder why these titles should start reappearing in the 1990s.

*The Young Pitcher* seems aimed at two audiences: the younger readers of Beech Tree Books and readers like ourselves for whom John Thorn provides an introduction. The book's plot is of no particular interest, though Grey tells the story briskly: a college freshman becomes his team's pitcher and leads it to the championship. What is of interest is the depiction of the world of college baseball, circa 1911. The style of play depicted is that which Ty Cobb and Christy Mathewson perfected and Ring Lardner loved: intelligence and speed on the bases and control of one's pitches are valued highest. Of interest too is the figure of the "professional coach", a controversial figure in amateur baseball in those days. Finally, the character of Reddy Ray, the offensive star of the team, is of interest because he returns in Grey's *The Redheaded Outfield*.

*Fielder from Nowhere* is a variation on a standard theme of boys' books, the integration of an individual into a community. Ken Holt makes the big-league Terriers, but keeps his ex-convict status a secret. Additionally, he involves himself with inner-city youth in forming a youth baseball league. His teammates accept his ex-convict status when it is revealed, but Holt does not regain his batting and fielding skills until he realizes the importance of the others' faith in him. Once he becomes truly a member of the club, the pennant is assured. The book is also a celebration of baseball as a road to respectability for inner-city youth. Urban poverty is real in the book, both in Ken's background and in that of the youths of the baseball league Ken starts. Baseball keeps kids "out of the gutters" and provides them with a "chance to make good". Beech Tree Books seems to be marketing this book for young adults, unlike *The Young Pitcher* with its original text and introduction by Thorn.

A note on the copyright page tells us that the Beech Tree edition has "changes that update the text for contemporary readers". I wonder what those changes are.

I found the paperback edition of Rick Norman's *Fielder's Choice* in a remaindered pile of books last fall. Published by August House in 1991, the paperback is dated 1992. An Arkansas publisher, August House specializes in fiction set in the American south. Like Ring Lardner's *You Know Me Al*, Norman's novel is narrated by its main character: Andrew Jackson Fielder of Smackover, Ark. He tells his story in 1946 to a major in the U.S. Army, which has accused him of traitorous behavior when a prisoner of war in Japan. In the course of denying this charge, Fielder recounts his life, focusing on his family, his career as a baseball player (which includes a stint with the St. Louis Browns wherein he becomes the goat of the 1941 pennant race), and his service in World War II (including his time as a prisoner). Baseball is the book's setting only about a third of the time, though it does tend to return to Fielder's mind and helps him through the worst of his incarceration. Like Lardner, Norman writes with humor; unlike Lardner, he places his main character in extreme situations and he depicts a character who, unlike Jack Keefe, makes definite progress toward wisdom in the course of the book.

It's easy to guess the outcome of Philip Goldberg's *This is Next Year* (Ballantine Books, 1992), a novel set in Brooklyn during the 1955 World Series. The book is a successful one in spite of the lack of suspense about who will win the World Series. That event, though, is very important to all the characters, particularly the Stone family, whose trials and tribulations are narrated by 12-year-old middle son Roger. As with historical novels, this one is dense with period atmosphere, and although it has the happiest of endings, Goldberg does not neglect the conditions that would lead to the Dodgers' departure to California two years later: Walter O'Malley, urban decay, population shifts, racism. It's not just a book for Dodger fans either; as Hubbell Stone says (p.291): "This World Series was special. It was fought not just for a baseball team, not just for the borough of Brooklyn, but for all the underdogs and all the dreamers and all the Joe Blows who have to fight for what they want."

Peter Lefcourt's *The Dreyfus Affair* (Random House, 1992) may be the best read of this group of books. It's subtitled "A Love Story"; and it's the story of what happens when Richard Dreyfus—all-star shortstop and Steve Garvey type with a beautiful wife, twin daughters and a shopping center named after him—falls in love with his second baseman during a tight pennant race. Lefcourt is alert to baseball nuance, but by far the best part of the book is its satirical portraits of various baseball types: the commissioner, the owner, the sportswriter, the substance-abuse counselor, several kinds of ballplayers. *The Dreyfus Affair* is a very funny book. Naturally, the sportswriter's name is Zola.

I'm not sure W.P. Kinsella's *The Dixon Cornbelt League and Other Baseball Stories* (HarperCollins, 1993) will expand the author's reputation any, but Kinsella fans will like it. *Box Socials* disappointed me, but this one is better. It consists of nine stories, each previously published "in an earlier form" in such publications as *Baseball History*, *Spitball*, and Peter Bjarkman's anthology *Baseball and the Game of Life* (1991). My own favorites here are the Latin-tinged stories: "The Baseball Wolf" and "How Manny Embarquadero Overcame and Began His Climb to the Major Leagues", both of which have to do with Kinsella's invented Latin American country of Courteguay, and "Searching for January", an oddly moving tribute to Roberto Clemente.

Though none of these books is up to the best baseball fiction, there is much to enjoy in each and an increasing variety of theme.

## Book Review

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### BUMS NO MORE! THE CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON OF 1955

Stewart Wolpin. New York: St. Martin's Press. 130p. illus. \$25

Today's fans, what few there may be left, may find it inconceivable, but there once was a time when players actually lived in the neighborhoods in which their team played; that they did their own shopping at the local grocery store; that they were a part of the community.

Stewart Wolpin recalls such a story-book era in *Bums No More!*, a slim volume concentrating on the only world championship Brooklyn ever garnered. It is also an affectionate look not only at the Brooklyn Dodgers, but of this unique relationship they shared with their followers. Wolpin uses fans' anecdotes along with a recounting of the dramatic season to illustrate this sense of family. We learn how the blue-collar franchise overcame advancing age and injuries of such beloved characters as Jackie, Oisk, Pee Wee, Newk, and Campy, dotting the roster with relatively untested youngsters to give the borough a gift it would never forget. At last they were out of the shadows of the Yankees and their smug fans, proud to the point of hysteria. We can picture them, outside their brownstones and apartment buildings, listening hard to the game on the radio. Amid all this joy, however, the author points out, there was always the specter of the chance that their Bums might soon depart.

Wolpin does a good job of explaining the sociological effects of the war and postwar eras on the Dodgers: "The war—or, more precisely, movies about the war—solidified Brooklyn's standing as a unique, colorful community. Every film platoon or ship contained prototypical characters ... [including] the streetwise city boy [who] was almost always from Brooklyn, and always needed to know how the Dodgers were doing before charging the enemy."

Wolpin also notes how something as innocuous as improvements to New York's highways foretold the postwar exodus to the suburbs of Long Island and the toll it took on the Dodgers' fan base, sealing the inevitable move to the West Coast.

Wolpin peppers *Bums No More!* with news events in America and the world in that seemingly more relaxed decade. Baby boomers might fondly recall those carefree days, before the stresses of adulthood took over. Indeed, that may be the joy of most books of this nature: recalling the heroes of the 1950s and 1960s, before we grew up and before professional ballplayers moved out of the places in our lives reserved for comic books, candy shops, and stickball, and into the dark corners inhabited by browbeating bosses, IRS agents, and ulcers.

Maybe it's the chauvinism of having grown up in Brooklyn, with all the preconceptions "outsiders" have about its natives—the brashness, the aggressive attitudes, the harsh accents, etc.—but I wonder if fans in other big league towns had such a connection. There's always been a "romance", if you will, surrounding the New York teams (more so for the charismatic Yankees and the daffy Dodgers than the hard-playing Giants). Literature abounds with reminiscences of summer afternoons walking to Ebbets Field or taking the elevated train to Yankee Stadium that does not seem to exist for other clubs. The old "redoubtable fans of Flatbush" probably believe that's the way it oughta be.