

# Baseball Lives

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## Words from Mark Armour

This last summer our project passed its fifth anniversary, and it is amazing how much has changed in this short time in the field of baseball research. Five years ago I prepared a document describing how one could go about researching a biography. SABR had published *How to Do Baseball Research* in 2000, but just two years later it already seemed out-of-date or not applicable to the project we were creating.

Five years later, events have again passed us by. I am planning to update my document again, with the hope that it will last another five years. In the meantime, I want to reiterate a few points for any of you beginning your research into your subject.

Granted, the way one would approach the research of Jiggs Parrott is different than one would tackle Richie Ashburn, but there are some similarities. Most of this I have harped on before, but none of this can be repeated too often.

1. The very first thing you should do is consult the Baseball Index, SABR's baseball bibliography, at [www.baseballindex.org](http://www.baseballindex.org). You should then try to track down every book or article listed. If it is listed there, it can be found.

2. Get the person's file from the National Baseball Library in Cooperstown. You can contact the Hall of Fame directly to have the file copied and mailed to you. For better known players, the files might be large--tell them what you are looking for and they can save you some money in copying. If you are lucky enough to live close enough, visit them and do it yourself.

3. Read *The Sporting News* (for free) at [www.paperofrecord.com](http://www.paperofrecord.com). The search mechanism is quite good after about 1930. Before that, you need to just read it.

4. For post-1954 players, Retrosheet ([www.retrosheet.org](http://www.retrosheet.org)) is essential. There is no reason to get game details wrong in the Retrosheet era. Before that, the web site is still invaluable.

5. Use Google. Searching for "Stan Lopata" and "baseball" yields 789 hits, most of them uninteresting but several very useful and informative. Using Google books leads to 60 book excerpts on-line. A lot of what you will find is more breadcrumbs that will lead you somewhere else. The important thing is to realize how much material there is on-line in 2007.

This is not the whole story by any means, and many of you will want to go much further than this, tracking down grand-children or former teammates. As I said, I am working on a better guide. But for most players the above steps will put you well on your way.

Take care,  
*Mark Armour*



## Salute to the BioProject and Dick Thompson

During the summer of 2002, Brad Lidge, Jake Peavy, Jason Jennings, John Lackey, Oliver Perez, and Mark Prior were showing the world they could throw strikes. Hank Blalock, Eric Hinske, Carl Crawford, Austin Kearns, Victor Martinez, and Travis Hafner were proving they could hit strikes. Chone Figgins, Coco Crisp, and Wily Mo Pena were giving us names Dickens would have loved.

Meanwhile, Mark Armour was ensuring the immortality of these gentlemen and their pals in the rookie class of 2002 because he was at the SABR convention in Boston announcing the establishment of the Biography Project, which quickly became known as the BioProject. In days to come, after they've completed their careers, biographies of these rookies of five years ago, we hope, will join the biographies of ballplayers already accumulating as a result of Mark's vision.

Mark's idea was bold, brilliant, and not a little daunting—an article-length biography of every one of the 16,000 or so men who have appeared in the Major Leagues. It was never-ending; it would outlive us all, given that 200 or more players make their debuts every year. Not surprisingly, some people said it couldn't be done.

Now, just five and one-half years later, the BioProject has placed online approximately 600 biographies of players, managers, umpires, executives, writers, broadcasters, scouts—not to mention a ballpark.

None of this has occurred in a vacuum. We have a large crew of enthusiastic writers (ranging from professional authors to distant cousins of a particular player) and editors who provide our product. We benefited almost immediately from the generosity of Tom Simon, who graciously permitted us to upload bios from his pioneering collections *Green Mountain Boys of Vermont* and *Deadball Stars of the National League*. (Thanks to David Jones, bios from the companion volume *Deadball Stars of the American League* will be available in a year or so.)

Moreover, the BioProject has inspired collected biographies focusing on a particular team or group. Beautiful volumes have already appeared on the 1967 and 1975 Red Sox. In the works are volumes on the Braves and Red Sox of 1948, the 1959 White Sox, the 1968 Tigers, and Minnesota natives. The possibilities for future volumes are endless—as examples, the 1960, 1971, or 1979 Pirates, the 1969-71 Orioles, the 1972-74 Athletics, the 1954 Giants or Indians, the 1955 Dodgers.

And, just last month Mark announced a cooperative effort with the All American Girls Professional Baseball League Players Association that will bring biographies of AAGPBL players, executives, and chaperones to both the SABR BioProject and to the AAGPBL website.

We've come a long way since 2002. The future looks promising. There's just one thing left to do: give a big thank-you to Mark Armour for his vision and to every writer and editor who's made the BioProject what it is today. With Mark, our writers and our editors,

***The Best is Yet to Come*** — *Jan Finkel*

Charlie Bevis on the late Dick Thompson: "Dick was the master SABR researcher. His latest work on Cannonball Jackman in *TNP 2007* was a marvelous piece of research. Dick ferreted out this ballplayer's career on the undocumented semi-pro black baseball playing fields of New England through sheer hard work—combing through newspaper microfilm at local libraries.

"What I'll always remember about Dick was his willingness to help out - - and his incredible baseball library, seemingly on par with Cooperstown. He was also the keeper of the Shea files; boxes of envelopes that contain newspaper clippings about long-forgotten ballplayers from New England. Ask Dick about some obscure NE-born ballplayer and he'd dig into the Shea Files and you'd quickly get back an e-mail with the salient points from the clippings.

"Dick will surely be missed."

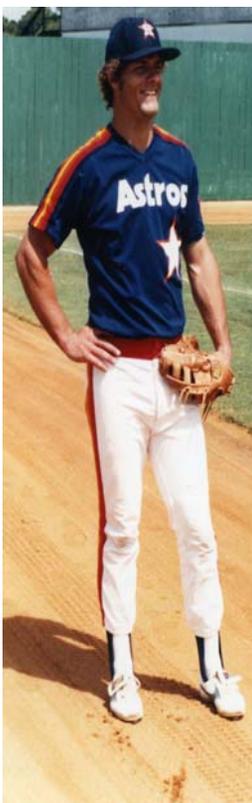
"This isn't life or death. We're like those surfer dudes out on the ocean. When you get up on a good wave, you ride it out as long as you can." *Barry Bonds*

## Contest #1

The Player below played for the Houston Astros during the 1980's. (This contest is being repeated from the last issue of *Baseball Lives*. since there were no correct answers.)

Let's try again. (Hint: player is shown in his minor league uniform.)

### Who Is He?



### Who is this Astros player?

First Correct Answer wins a 1947 Bantam Book - *Babe Ruth* by Tom Meany

Submit your entry to Mike Cooney at [mwc2002@hotmail.com](mailto:mwc2002@hotmail.com)

## Rory Costello- BioProject Author

Back in 1998, I decided I wanted to write an article for *The National Pastime*. I thought to myself, "What's a topic that has never been covered before?" I didn't realize then that the history of baseball in the Virgin Islands would develop beyond a journal article into a website that I designed myself (learning HTML) and a self-published book! The "About the Author" note there reads, "As a boy collecting baseball cards, he noticed the birthplace of Elrod Hendricks and Horace Clarke, and that Horace was always on top of the Yankee box scores. Then after visiting the Virgin Islands on a family vacation not long after, this idea took root deep in his subconscious."

Well, over 20 years later, it surfaced. So I started collecting information – something that's always appealed to me because I work on Wall Street in financial research. And the more I dug, the bigger the project became. One door opened another, and I got to meet the vets. I made a contact down in the islands, a man who was then the baseball coach at the university on St. Croix, and decided to take a little vacation down there. He made some introductions, and that's how I met Valmy Thomas and Horace Clarke – they'd actually already gotten the letters I sent. I also started by sending letters to Al McBean and Ellie Hendricks, and those turned into in-person meetings too. After hearing loads of terrific stories from these men and finding out that it was really a special little fraternity, I wound up giving each of them their own chapter. The history went live in late 1999.

A few years later the BioProject started, and I signed up because I knew it would be easy to convert these stories into SABR entries with just a little extra work. I must admit, though, that I let it lie for quite a while until I got a reminder from Mark Armour. But it was a great opportunity to get back in touch with the ballplayers, get some updates, and fill in some more facts that I hadn't gathered the first time around.

As for some of my other pet topics, I'm an alumnus of Williams College (like George Steinbrenner and Fay Vincent). I asked our SABR colleague Cappy Gagnon from the college committee who were the Ephmen who played in the majors, and he sent me the list. Ted Lewis stood out as the most accomplished, and when I read about his remarkable life, I decided I wanted to profile him too. That piece got published in the *Williams Alumni Review* with a sidebar on the

other eight players. I got an e-mail from the grandson of Henry Clarke, one of those men. The grandson's daughter was a classmate of mine. It always stuck in my mind, and then this past summer I got back to the family and with their help built up the Clarke story. Much the same happened with Mark Filley of the 1934 Senators, whose daughter lives in Williamstown. Williams is a small college and the community is very tight-knit.

I like writing about ballplayers from other unusual places. In 2000, that led me to Tony Solaita, the only man born in American Samoa to make the majors. I knew that he'd passed away at a young age, and guessed it was ill health. But after finding in his file at the Hall of Fame Library that it was murder, I thought, "I have to do this story." I discovered that one of Tony's nephews was playing baseball at a school in Michigan, and that young man put me in touch with his father, who was closer to Tony than anybody.

As I mentioned, one door opens another – I keep on encountering new subjects

### Rory Costello



In this issue, I have included two contests, each with a prize every baseball fan would love to have.

The first contest is a repeat from the last issue of *Baseball Lives*. (Name the Astros player)

The second contest is to name the AAGPBL player pictured at the top right of this page.

The first person to identify the AAGPBL player will receive a 1975 Baseball Guide and two autographed Frisch AAGPBL cards.

In recognition of the new joint effort between SABR and the All American Girls Professional Baseball League Players Association, all of the non-contest pictures in this issue of *Baseball Lives* are of AAGPBL players.

The rules of the contest are easy.

- ◆ You must be a Bio-Project member
- ◆ You may submit only one entry for each contest.
- ◆ Submit your entry to [mwc2002@hotmail.com](mailto:mwc2002@hotmail.com) with the subject line of **Baseball Lives Contest**
- ◆ The first correct entry for each contest wins.

**Good Luck**

## Jim Sargent—BioProject Author

### Interviewing, Researching, and Writing about Old-Time Baseball

Regarding **interviews**, I always write first and request an interview. I *never* call, without first writing. I have some questions, based on my preliminary research—info I got from the Internet, or from the Baseball Hall of Fame, or from a book or books. So I have questions, but I go through the player's career asking things in *chronological* order. Whenever something interesting comes up, I expand upon it. I can do that because I already know the outline of the player's career and some key events.

Mostly I do the actual interviews from my office at the college. (I used to do them from home, where I have a tape recorder set up in a back bedroom, next to a phone.) I use the speaker phone and have a small cassette recorder running, while I ask questions and take detailed notes. Later, the notes will serve as a guide to the tape.

Regarding **research**, the first thing I do is get a copy of the player's file from the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library. The HOF's research department is always most helpful. Next I check on certain dates or events in the *New York Times* on microfilm in our library. At least the NYT has a box score and a few comments about every major league game played. If I want good info on older, say, Tiger games, I get the *Detroit News* or the *Free Press* on microfilm.

Also, the way I go about **writing** is to work on two or three stories at once—each at a different stage of progress. For example, the Otis Davis "pinch runner" story is a rewrite of a short article on Davis I did for an autograph magazine in 2003. I published the original version of Rufe Gentry in *Oldtime Baseball* in 1997. For Gentry, I actually skimmed through the NYT and printed out *every* Tiger story for the entire 1944 season. I wanted to make sure I could summarize Gentry's season accurately. Also, I first wrote the Jim Northrup story for *Baseball Digest* in 2004, but I expanded it greatly for Bio-Project. Seeing the 2006 Tigers beat Oakland in the ALCS motivated me to rewrite Northrup's story and add material, including about the 1972 ALCS when Oakland beat Detroit, three games to two. On the other hand, I researched and wrote the Carl Scheib article in December and January—while working on some of the others. First, I interviewed Scheib by phone in early November. Later, I printed out every A's game story with Scheib's name from 1948 to 1954 using ProQuest. That was a great tool, but I found I had too much material. In any event, I concluded the story and moved on to Jerry Staley. I first completed the Staley article in 2004, but I had knee replacement surgery and I never got it published. Thus, I revised it for Bio-Project. And that's the way I work

I try to combine oral history and biography as "seamlessly" as possible. I started doing that when researching for my doctoral dissertation in 1969 on FDR and the Hundred Days of 1933. I interviewed a number of former Roosevelt aides, such as Raymond Moley, the original Brains Trustee. I used to tape Oral History interviews for Columbia University's Oral History project in the 1970s. I probably conducted twenty such interviews, mostly related to my work on FDR and the New Deal in the 1930s. I love interviewing older people who have useful experiences to recollect. But since I like writing history, I have learned to combine my interest in sports—and I do a lot with football, too—with my skills in interviewing, research, and writing.

That's what I call *playing the game*. **Jim Sargent**



*"There is no crying in baseball" - Tom Hanks in A League of Their Own.*



## More from Rory Costello

Al McBean is the single most entertaining character I've met while doing biographical research, but my favorite anecdote concerns how I got to meet and talk with the late Elrod Hendricks.

I live in New York, and I know that visiting ballclubs stay at the Grand Hyatt. So I looked at the schedule in 1999 and saw that the Orioles would be in town in April. I wrote a letter to Ellie, their longtime bullpen coach, and left it at the Hyatt. I'd heard that he was remarkably fan-friendly, so I was rather surprised when I didn't hear from him.

But I decided to try again when the Orioles came to face the Yankees again that July. This time I played it smarter and spoke to Bill Stetka, Baltimore's media representative. He was very agreeable and said he would help.

It was the Friday before the Independence Day weekend. I was at work when I got a call around 2:00 in the afternoon.

"Mr. Costello?"

"Yes?"

"Please hold for Elrod Hendricks."

Ellie invited me up to Yankee Stadium. My boss at the time said, "Sure, go ahead – it's a holiday weekend and everybody's leaving early anyway."

So I hopped on the subway, made my way inside The House That Ruth Built, and explained my mission. I was led back to the clubhouse, whereupon Elrod emerged. Beaming broadly, he stuck out his hand and rumbled, "I thought I was gonna meet you in April!"

He told me stories as I rolled my tape recorder for over an hour. I put together my book, *Baseball in the Virgin Islands*, and mailed Ellie several copies in late 2000. Then the following spring, we enjoyed another visit at the Stadium. He said, "I didn't think you'd have it done so fast!" I had the pleasure of watching batting practice from the visiting dugout, and from the bench, I spied a familiar lanky figure. I asked Bill Stetka, "Do you suppose Jim Palmer would have a minute for me?" He said, "Sure, go ahead."

I explained my work and that I would love to have his views on what Ellie was like as a receiver. Jim Palmer came right back with some terrific insights – he's one of the few major-leaguers you'll hear use the word "subjugate" in everyday speech. Then he said, "Thanks, gotta go!" and headed up to the broadcast booth.

That was the magic of Elrod Hendricks – he reached out to fans and brought them inside the game. *Rory Costello*

**Help! Help!**

This page will be dedicated to material written by our SABR BioProject members

**ARE YOU NEXT?**

**Help make this Your Newsletter**

## Numbers and Abbreviations

In a recent exchange of email thoughts with the BioProject group, Editor In Chief Jan Finkel provided the following reminders on the use of numbers and abbreviations:

- ◆ Always spell out states and months in the text; post office state abbreviations are acceptable in charts and source lists.
- ◆ Generally spell out numbers nine and under. Some exceptions are:
  - ◆ Numbers below 10 remain as numbers in tables and when part of a series with numbers of 10 or above.
  - ◆ Scores are always listed as numbers.
  - ◆ Numbers used with percent (1 percent, 2 percent)
  - ◆ Heights are given in numbers (6-foot-2, 5'6")
- ◆ Numbers are hyphenated when spelled out. (twenty-one, not twenty one)
- ◆ Years (1914 for example) that start sentences need to be spelled out.

For more, check out Jan's email to the BioProject Yahoo Group dated January 15, 2008.

Recent discussion topics on [sabrbio-project@yahoogroups.com](mailto:sabrbio-project@yahoogroups.com) include:

"Place-Holder" Biographies

Team Projects

Browsing Functions

Numbers



- ◆ **Rockford Peaches**  
1943 - 1954
- ◆ **South Bend Blue Sox**  
1943 - 1954
- ◆ **Kenosha Comets**  
1943 - 1951
- ◆ **Racine Belles**  
1943 - 1950
- ◆ **Milwaukee Chicks**  
1944
- ◆ **Minneapolis Millerettes**  
1944
- ◆ **Grand Rapids Chicks**  
1945 - 1954
- ◆ **Fort Wayne Daisies**  
1945 - 1954
- ◆ **Muskegon Lassies**  
1946 - 1950
- ◆ **Peoria Redwings**  
1946 - 1951
- ◆ **Chicago Colleens**  
1948
- ◆ **Battle Creek Belles**  
1951 - 1952
- ◆ **Kalamazoo Lassies**  
1951 - 1954



## Finding Ken Poulsen by Bill Nowlin

On the numerous anniversaries of the 1967 Impossible Dream season, there is one ballplayer who neither the team nor reporters ever seemed to be able to locate. He is Ken Poulsen, who filled in for Dalton Jones while Jones was on a two-week Army Reserve stint. Poulsen had five at-bats during his short stay with the Sox, played six more years in the minors but then seemingly disappeared. As early as the 15th reunion in 1982, the *Boston Globe* reported that Poulsen “couldn’t be tracked down.” Later researchers routinely struck out.

SABR members believe it is important to gather, document, and share information on all major league players, whether a Yastrzemski or a “cup of coffee” player who only had a handful of games in the big leagues, and it just seemed like Poulsen represented a loose end – and a challenge – to try and locate this former Red Sox player who had dropped off the map.

Charlie Bevis wrote an excellent biography based on available material. It nagged, though, the way Charlie was forced to conclude his piece. Ken Poulsen was out there somewhere. Was he reluctant to talk? Wanting to put baseball behind him like Tony Horton does? We learned through a mutual friend - a SABR member and former major leaguer - that Tony preferred not to open those pages in his life, which we respected. With Poulsen, no one seemed to know.

Web searches had turned up nothing. A private search firm turned up nothing. Finally, while the book on the 1967 team was literally being laid out by the designer, I decided to give it one last push. I decided to try to take advantage of SABR’s network of researchers. SABR’s online membership directory found three members living in Van Nuys, California, where Poulsen attended Birmingham High School. I contacted them by e-mail and asked for help in perhaps locating a copy of his graduating class’s yearbook, which would list the names of classmates. He was at one time engaged to be married to a Vicky Swaton; perhaps some Swatons could be found who could shed light on the “missing” Poulsen. There were 1,593 Poulsons with listed telephone numbers in the United States

SABR member Barry Rubinowitz of Van Nuys came up with phone numbers for Poulsen’s two high school baseball coaches, but neither had heard of him since the mid-1960s. This wasn’t going anywhere, and I hit the point where there were maybe just 48 hours remaining before it would truly be too late to add anything to Charlie Bevis’s bio. Then an idea popped off the typeset page of Charlie’s work: Poulsen had had a father named Ralph. If living, he’d likely be in his 80’s, but maybe there was a Ralph Poulsen listed. Yes, indeed there was. In Oakhurst, California.

Without wasting time, I called. Ken answered.

His father, a former pilot for Western Airlines, still lived on a 60-acre ranch but was progressively losing his sight. Ken’s mother Betty had suffered a stroke in 1988 and a couple of years later Ken left his construction work in southern California to live on the ranch near Yosemite and take care of his parents. He was divorced (he did marry Vicky Swaton) and his daughter Kendra and son Brett were on their own, an investment banker and a design and aeronautical engineer, respectively, today.

Ken had been successful enough he could retire very early; expenses were low on the ranch. Betty Poulsen passed away in 2004. Ken is still looking after his father in early 2007. He remembers his baseball days with clarity, but modestly says, “Hell, I wasn’t anything to begin with.” He enjoys living where he does. They have about a dozen head of cattle and 40-50 fruit trees where they grow pears, plums, and apricots. “This is just about like paradise,” he says.

*Bill Nowlin*

## From Editor In Chief Jan Finkel's Notebook

Attribution and documentation—"acknowledgment" might be a better word—have reared their heads in the last few weeks. Whatever we call the process, questions have arisen as to when to do it, where to put it (footnotes, endnotes, in-line citations, and so on), and what style to use.

We've never had a hard and fast rule or policy, and that's fine with me. What follows is my take on the situation. The key is that acknowledgment must be clear, complete, and consistent.

When to acknowledge is simple up to a point. The sources of direct quotes obviously must be acknowledged: "I couldn't control my curve," said Smith. Then there's the indirect or summarized quote: Smith said he couldn't control his curve. You also have to acknowledge any map, chart, graph, or diagram that you've reproduced from another source. Similarly, you have to acknowledge any map (granted, probably not on the BioProject), chart, graph, or diagram that you've constructed from a source. Suppose, for example, that you chart or graph Pete Rose's plate appearances: hits, singles, doubles, triples, home runs, walks (intentional and unintentional), sacrifice hits and flies, strikeouts—the whole bit. You'll probably consult the SABR Encyclopedia, Retrosheet, Baseball-Reference, or any of the print encyclopedias. Accordingly, you have to identify the source(s) of the numbers.

The exception is "common knowledge," factual material that may be found in at least two reputable, reliable sources. There's no need to document that Ted Williams was born in San Diego even though you didn't know that before beginning your research.

Where should acknowledgment go? There are several options. In-line citation works well as long as it doesn't intrude on the text. You can smoothly write, "Roger Kahn notes in *The Boys of Summer* that everything seemed to center on Jackie Robinson." Why make a note of that? Footnotes or endnotes are up to you. For the relatively brief pieces on the BioProject end-

notes are perfectly accessible and acceptable; footnotes have a purpose in long works. Paradoxically, you shouldn't note the obvious but may want to err on the side of caution. That is, if you're in doubt, note it and let the editor delete it; it's better than having an editor ask why something isn't acknowledged.

(Nevertheless, a wise man once told me, scholarship and research are not defined as four notes per page, nor are quotes a substitute for one's own writing.)

What style to use? They're all good as long as they're clear, complete, and consistent. I cut my researching teeth on MLA and can practically do it in my sleep. Other writers were trained in AP, APA, Chicago, and a host of other styles. Go with whatever style you're comfortable and familiar with.

Finally, the bibliography. Some researchers say that we need only identify the items we've cited in the text. Others, and I'm one of them, believe we should identify everything we find helpful. We've all had the experience of finding a source we didn't cite but couldn't have lived without. Source lists and source essays are both acceptable.

We sometimes make matters more complicated than they need to be; life in the academic world taught me that. Acknowledgment, attribution, or documentation—call it what you will—is neither brain surgery nor a root canal. It's common sense and common courtesy. We naturally have to avoid the fact or appearance of plagiarism or any kind of dishonesty. Just as important, we should think of acknowledgment as doing a favor for a friend. Someone has been interested enough to read our work. If we've done our work well, we've kindled that reader's desire to explore our subject. Acknowledgment shows a reader where to find more information. We're grateful when a friend helps us; we should do the same for our friends.

*Jan Finkel*



**"It's pretty hard to be lucky when you have bad pitching." Walter Alston**

### AAGPBL - The All American League Song

Batters Up! Hear that call? The time has come for one and all to play ball.

For we are members of the All-American League  
We come from cities near and far.  
We've got Canadians, Irishmen, and Swedes  
Were one for all, We're all for one! We're All American!

Each girl stands; Her head so proudly high: Her motto do or die.  
She's not the one to need or use an alibi!  
We've got a President that really know his stuff!  
Our Chaperones are not too soft or not too tough!  
They're really on the ball!  
We're all for one, one for all! We're All-American

**SABR BioProject**  
**Committee**



**BASEBALL LIVES  
WITH  
BASEBALL LIVES**

**Bioproject.sabr.org**



The Baseball Biography Project is an ongoing effort to produce comprehensive biographical articles on every person who ever played or managed in the major leagues, as well as any other person who touched baseball in a significant way. The project is run by the BioProject Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research. (SABR)

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