

## Society for American Baseball Research

### BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

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## Comments from the Chair

Andy McCue

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I'd like to welcome Joanne Hulbert to the Committee. Joanne lives in Holliston, Mass., collects books, and is interested in indexing. Most importantly, at least from my point of view, Joanne is also active in the Music and Poetry Committee, where she's heading its effort to find and catalog baseball poems over the years. We're hoping her efforts there can dovetail with The Baseball Index (TBI) and we can get more poetry into our database.

Paul Cammarata agreed to prepare a subject index to supplement Wayne McElreavy's excellent name index to SABR's *Deadball Stars of the National League*. Paul will then prepare both a name index and a subject index for *Deadball Stars of the American League*. Both indexes will be published in the American League volume, which is on the publication schedule for 2005.

Joel Dinda stepped forward to digitize and update Frank Phelps' *The Index to The Sporting News Registers; 1940-1995* (1996). Joel has worked out an excellent system, which should reduce the amount of typing that will be necessary. This is a time-consuming project, but Joel is off to a good start.

The one task that didn't draw a volunteer is creating indexes for the baseball classics that McFarland intends to reprint. The next in line is Ernest J. Lanigan's *Baseball Cyclopedia* (1922, plus 11 annual supplements). If you're interested, please contact me.

A recent query on SABR-L touched off an idea for a Committee project. The inquirer asked for a list of the "best" baseball books. Now, over the years, there have been several works dealing with this topic. In 1987, Paul Adomites compiled "The Essential Baseball Library" in the late, lamented *The SABR Review of Books* (v.2, p.9-19), but that was many good books ago [see next page]. In 1989, Mike Shannon wrote *Diamond Classics: Essays on 100 of the Best Baseball Books Ever Published*, also many good books ago. Two editions of *How to Do Baseball Research* (the latest edited by Gerald Tomlinson in 2000) have included chapters on books, but they emphasize various types rather than attempting to pick "all-stars".

This topic is clearly one for our Committee. Is anyone interested in organizing a discussion that would lead to a list? I would assume we would do this first among ourselves, and then throw it out for modification by the rest of SABR. This project could be a lot of fun for someone, and of some value to newer SABR members. The organization may have tools we can use to do polling.

Please continue to remind people about the existence and value of TBI.

"I can happily talk baseball with people I find otherwise obnoxious, and with whom I agree on virtually nothing else. ... As long as there is baseball, millions of Americans will know how to tell a story."

George Weigel, "Politically Correct Baseball",  
*Commentary*, Nov. 1994, v.95, no.5, p.47

## Book Reviews

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### DOUBLE PLAY

Robert B. Parker. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004. 288p.  
ISBN 0-399-15188-5. \$24.95.

Parker is best known for his detective fiction, set in Boston, featuring a detective named Spenser. *Double Play* might qualify as detective fiction, and its setting might best be described as the major leagues in 1947. Its protagonist, Joseph Burke, is hired to guard Jackie Robinson during his first season with the Brooklyn Dodgers. The book is not strictly fiction, though; its dust jacket describes it as "part novel, part history, part memory."

The historical part of the book mostly concerns the events of the 1947 National League baseball season. For the most part the historical details are accurate, at least the ones I checked or thought I knew. I was uneasy about Parker's announcement (p.96) that "in October of that year [1946], Brooklyn Dodgers GM Branch Rickey announced the signing of a Negro Player, Jack Roosevelt Robinson, a four-sport star at UCLA, to a minor league contract with the Dodgers' Triple-A farm club, the Montreal Royals." Here he's off by a year. Parker also includes in the book the box scores of nine different Dodgers games during the 1947 season (they are on pages 104, 117, 124, 132, 148, 162, 176, 215, and 283). These certainly look authentic, though no dates are given, and they serve to establish the rhythms of a major-league season. Occasionally game action is described in the narrative.

Interspersed among the fictional chapters are brief chapters titled "Bobby" that describe growing up between 1941 and 1947. These comprise the dimension of memoir. In 1941, nine-year-old Bobby becomes a Brooklyn Dodgers fan through listening to radio broadcasts of Sunday doubleheaders, "the shaman incantations of a magic sect" (p.14). When we last see Bobby, in 1947, he is attending his first game in Ebbets Field. This part of the book is a fine evocation of what it was like to be young and a Dodgers fan in the 1940s.

The main fictional narrative features a portrait of the historical Jackie Robinson, who serves not just as the fellow Joseph Burke is supposed to guard but is himself vividly portrayed by Parker, who selects from the historical qualities of Robinson for his fictional Jackie. Parker's Robinson is proud, persevering, idealistic, and honorable. He serves as an ideal of human behavior for his bodyguard Burke. The book is finally the story of Burke's progress from a man whose body, marriage, and spirit have been broken during World War II to full humanity. In conversation with Branch Rickey, Burke says (p.230-231):

"Jackie's my chance."

"For what?"

"Not to stay destroyed."

But even in presenting Robinson as an ideal, Parker remains true to the language and culture of the 1940s. Burke's wife-to-be attributes his rebirth to the example of "that colored baseball player" (p.277).

*Double Play* is aptly named, for it delivers both a vision of life in the 1940s and a version of Jackie Robinson. It's also an action story and a quick read. I haven't read much of Parker's fiction, but I do know that one of his early Spenser novels, *Mortal Stakes* (1975), concerns the problems of a Boston Red Sox pitcher, so Parker's interest in baseball has been ongoing.

**BEYOND THE SHADOW OF THE SENATORS: The Untold Story of the Homestead Grays and the Integration of Baseball**  
Brad Snyder. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2003. 418p. Notes, bibliography, index., photographs. ISBN 0-07-140820-7. \$24.95

A finalist for this year's Seymour Medal, Snyder's book is an engrossing read. Taking the story of the Homestead Grays in Washington as his center, he rides off in all directions. The result is a stimulating book about race in the United States at the end of racial segregation and the beginning of an integrated America.

Here is Snyder's own statement of his subject matter (p.xiii): "This is the story of the lost era between the Babe and Jackie, of a crusading journalist named Sam Lacy, an immensely talented black ballplayer named Buck Leonard, and a stubborn major league owner named Clark Griffith. It's the story of why the fight to integrate major league baseball began in Washington and not in Brooklyn, why black Washington ultimately lost the fight, and why the Senators were not the first team to integrate. And it's the story of the greatest baseball dynasty that most people have never heard of, the Homestead Grays, whose wartime popularity at Griffith Stadium moved them beyond the shadow of the Senators."

Even this rather stunningly ambitious statement doesn't do justice to Snyder's subject. In addition to Lacy, Leonard, and Griffith—three individuals at the heart of his story—Snyder focuses chapters on the impact of Satchel Paige in Washington, the career of Josh Gibson (particularly the 1943 season, during which he hit more home runs in Griffith Stadium than the entire American League), and the owner of the Grays, Cumberland Posey.

Snyder's study extends academic work on race in baseball history and on baseball and urban life. It's a nice adjunct to Jules Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment* (1983). I wonder if there aren't books to be written that focus on integration in baseball in other major- (and minor-) league cities. Surely race does get treatment in such studies as Rob Ruck's *Sandlot Seasons: Sport in Black Pittsburgh* (1987) (which also has a chapter on Posey and the Grays in Pittsburgh), Patrick Harrigan's *The Detroit Tigers: Club and Community 1945-1995* (1997), and Bruce Kuklick's *To Every Thing a Season: Shibe Park and Urban Philadelphia, 1909-1976* (1991). But each of them has something other than the integration of baseball as its focus.

Students of major-league ballparks will appreciate Snyder's treatment of Griffith Stadium and its urban environment. In addition, *Beyond the Shadow of the Senators* perhaps establishes a genre of its own, insofar as it treats major-league baseball in relation to Negro league baseball in the context of a single city. The focus is on the Homestead Grays, but it's also on Clark Griffith and his stadium, and on the economic interdependence of the Senators and Grays. And should students of the game (but not the business) be inclined to skip this stuff, he shows—particularly in the chapter on Josh Gibson—the painful differences in style and quality of play that emerged under segregated baseball in Washington. This book will prove a useful and unusual one to readers of diverse interests.

## The Essential Baseball Library

(from *The SABR Review of Books*, v.2, 1987; Paul Adomites, comp.)

### History

Eliot Asinof. *Eight Men Out*  
The Sporting News. *Daguerrotypes of Great Stars of Baseball*  
Gordon Fleming. *The Unforgettable Season*

Donald Honig. *The American League and The National League*  
Bill James. *The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract*  
Roger Kahn. *The Boys of Summer*  
Frederick G. Lieb. *Baseball as I Have Known It*  
Okrent & Lewine, eds. *The Ultimate Baseball Book*  
Harold Seymour. *Baseball in America* (3 vols.)  
J.G. Taylor Spink. *Judge Landis and Twenty Five Years of Baseball*  
Jules Tygiel. *Baseball's Great Experiment*  
David Quentin Voigt. *American Baseball* (3 vols.)

### Statistics

Neft, Cohen, Deutsch. *The Sports Encyclopedia: Baseball*  
Macmillan. *The Baseball Encyclopedia*  
*The Sporting News Baseball Guides and Registers*  
Thorn & Palmer. *The Hidden Game of Baseball*

### Team Histories

William B. Mead. *Even the Browns*  
Putnam team histories

### In Their Own League

Tristram Potter Coffin. *The Old Ball Game*  
Larry Gerlach. *The Men in Blue*  
Kevin Kerrane. *Dollar Sign on the Muscle*  
Lawrence S. Ritter. *The Glory of Their Times*

### Fiction

W.P. Kinsella. *Shoeless Joe*  
Bernard Malamud. *The Natural*

### The Minors

Robert Obojski. *Bush League*  
SABR. *Minor League Baseball Stars* (vol. 1 & 2)

### Biography

Charles Alexander. *Ty Cobb*  
Jim Bouton. *Ball Four*  
Jim Brosnan. *The Long Season and Pennant Race*  
Robert W. Creamer. *Babe and Stengel: His Life and Times*  
Leo Durocher, with Ed Linn. *Nice Guys Finish Last*  
Doanld Honig. *Baseball Between the Lines*  
Donald Honig. *Baseball When the Grass Was Real*  
Pat Jordan. *A False Spring and Suitors of Spring*  
Eugene C. Murdock. *Ban Johnson: Czar of Baseball*  
Marshall Smelser. *The Life That Ruth Built*  
Bill Veeck, with Ed Linn. *Veeck ... as in Wreck*

### Anthologies and Collections

Lee Allen. *The Hot Stove League*  
Roger Angell. *Five Seasons and Late Innings and The Summer Game*  
Thomas Boswell. *How Life Imitates the World Series*  
Thomas Boswell. *Why Time Begins on Opening Day*  
L. Robert Davids, ed. *Insider's Baseball*  
Charles Einstein, ed. *The Fireside Books of Baseball* (3 vols.)  
Charles Einstein, ed. *The Baseball Reader*  
John Thorn, ed. *The Armchair Book of Baseball*

### Negro Leagues

John B. Holway. *Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues*  
Robert Peterson. *Only the Ball Was White*

### Ballparks

Philip J. Lowry. *Green Cathedrals*  
Reidenbaugh & Carter, eds. *Take Me Out to the Ball Park*  
Shannon & Kalinsky. *The Ballparks*