

The Wood Pile

Newsletter of the Smoky Joe Wood Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research

Summer 2021 🏆 Volume 3 🏆 Issue 1

Stephen Krevisky (President) - Alan Cohen (Vice President/Treasurer)

Stan Dziurgot (Membership Director) - Karl Cicitto (Communications Director)

Stan Osowiecki (Wood Pile Editor)



LEADING OFF

By: Steve Krevisky

Greetings, SABR-ites! It's June already, and can you believe it? Last week, May 26 was the Anniversary of the famous Harvey Haddix game, where he had a perfect game for 12 innings against the Braves, but lost the game in the 13th inning. Who pitched for the Braves?



June 2 is Lou Gehrig day, commemorating the Iron Horse, who tragically passed in 1941 from the ALS disease, which bears his name. June 15 marks the anniversary of Johnny Van Der Meer's second consecutive no hitter. What Hall of Famer was born on that day? The Yogi Berra stamp will be issued around June 24, which I look forward to seeing.

Later in the summer, we will have a luncheon at Rein's Deli in Vernon and an outing to the Hartford Yards Goats. The SABR convention will again be virtual.

We have had good webinars with interesting speakers, and good discussions. Hopefully, we can get back to in person meetings when the time is right. Two of our authors, Bill Ryczek and Paul Hensler, have books coming out, so we look forward to seeing them soon.

Please enjoy the newsletter and we hope to see you soon at one of our events.

Regards,
Steve Krevisky, Chapter President

FUTURE EVENTS

Events for Connecticut and National Events can be found online at:

www.smokyjoewood.com/events (Connecticut)

www.sabr.org/events (National)

NEW MEMBERS

New chapter members (since January 15, 2021)

- Seth Bienstock (Westport)
- Keith Crook (Westport)
- Mark Kolier (Norwalk)
- Bruce McClure (West Hartford)
- Barry Rathy (Weatogue)
- Roger Ratzenberger (Milford)
- Michael Ruscoe (Middlefield)
- Evan Wologodzew (New Milford)

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Baseball Biography Project

The lofty goal is to write a high-quality journal-length biography of every player who ever played in the major leagues. 5,600+ biographies have been written by 500+ SABR members as of June 18, 2021. Your subject can be anyone who ever played in the major leagues and has been retired for at least 5 years, or any manager, executive, umpire, scout, or broadcaster. In fact, we welcome your ideas for any subject who impacted the history of the game — someone from the Negro Leagues, the minor leagues, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, and even Japan.

Web-site: sabr.org/bioproject

Things you should know: sabr.org/content/bioproject-resources

Request an assignment: Lyle Spatz at lspace@comcast.net

SABR Book Projects

Biographers are needed for several books. Status of assignment availabilities changes daily. Please contact Bill Nowlin (bnowlin@rounder.com) to request an assignment.

EDITOR'S NOTES

As you may notice, the Wood Pile has a new look. It felt like it was time to give the newsletter a fresh look and we hope you like it. Please provide your feedback at osowiecki@sbcglobal.net. Thanks.

CORRECTION: In the Winter 2021 newsletter, the article on Carl Willis listed his won-loss record as 22-126. His correct win-loss record was 22-16.

Members are welcome to submit articles, book reviews or other information that might be interesting to other chapter members. Please send information to Stan Osowiecki at osowiecki@sbcglobal.net.



THE TEAM THAT CAME TO SPRING TRAINING

By: Alan Cohen

When asked to submit a spot for the newest edition of *The Wood Pile*, I thought about discussing my travels in spring training in 2020 and 2021. I had left the ballpark after working the game in West Palm Beach on Tuesday March 10, 2020, fully expecting to return on Saturday to see the Astros play the Red Sox amidst the controversy over the cheating scandal. But things shut down.

On to 2021 and a spring training like no other. "Go to press box, wear mask, work the game (as both stringer and official scorer) with a computer system called BARS (Baseball Alternative Rules System), don't leave press box. Finish game. Go back to motel." It was a crazy four games fraught with challenges. But I made it through and perhaps I will at some point discuss robbing Altuve of a double, etc. along with a great day on the golf course where I holed out for a birdie with a perfect 50-yard chip shot, in front of a former major-leaguer, no less.

But other things were going on at the other end of Florida in the City of Dunedin, spring training home of the Toronto Blue Jays and the summer home of their Florida State League (or whatever it is being called these days) affiliate. The Blue Jays could not fly back to Toronto. In 2020, they migrated Buffalo's Sahlen Field, the home of their Triple-A affiliate, the ungrammatically named Bisons. And with that my mind went back to one of the earliest of my baseball research projects.

I have been a baseball fan for as long as I can remember and after I retired from my day job, I became involved in research. My first research involved short biographical essays for SABR's bio-project. SABR (about which I knew nothing until 2010) is the Society for American Baseball Research and the folks at the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown told me to join SABR if I was serious about doing research.

My project began with a trivia question and evolved into something far more significant. It is a story not only of home runs and players, but of research and the changing face of baseball and baseball stadiums not only during my lifetime which spans the second half of the twentieth century and takes us into the 21st century, but also as far back as organized baseball's beginnings in the 19th century.

I was doing a biography of R.C. Stevens for the SABR Bio-Project book on the 1960 Pirates. Stevens made several stops in the minors and majors during a career that stretched from 1952 through 1965. His best year in the majors was 1958 with Pittsburgh. In an article that I found in *The Quad City Times*, he had spoken about one memorable home run against the Giants at Seals Stadium on May 5, 1958. In researching his minor

["Jays in Dunedin" continued on Page 8](#)

ED KRANEPPOOL ON BASEBALL'S GOLDEN AGE

By: Marc Gold

I spoke with Ed Kranepool at length about his days with the Mets, the people he played with and against, and the state of baseball in general.

Marc Gold (Questions appear in italic type): ***How are you feeling?***

Ed Kranepool (Responses will appear in regular type): It's two years now, all is fine no side effects, Dr. Frank S. Darras was great at Stony Brook. They've taken good care of me. I'm feeling great. It's a good year for me.

What's it like all of a sudden being 76?

You don't know the difference as long as you're feeling good. Before my new kidney I was struggling to walk 20 feet. Now I do what I want, no restrictions.

What was highlight of your career?

It would have to be the 1969 World Series no question about it. If you sign a contract you want to be in the World Series, you want to win something. To me it was seven years of frustration. We lost over 100 games for 7 years. It's never fun losing. The writers have nothing good to write about. Constant negative publicity surrounding the ball club and ball players. So, if you have a good day, you're never

going to read about it. You are going to going to read about it. You are going to read about something that's negative because you lose. So, when you finally win there's a reason to go to the ballpark. We never had a reason to play during the second half of the season. We were always eliminated by the All-Star break. In 1969 we were able to go to the ballpark with a smile on our face. It was something to look forward to at the end of the tunnel. We played great, won 100 ballgames, went to the playoffs, beat the Braves three times then went on defeat Baltimore in five games and win the World Series.

Aside from '69, what was a highlight?

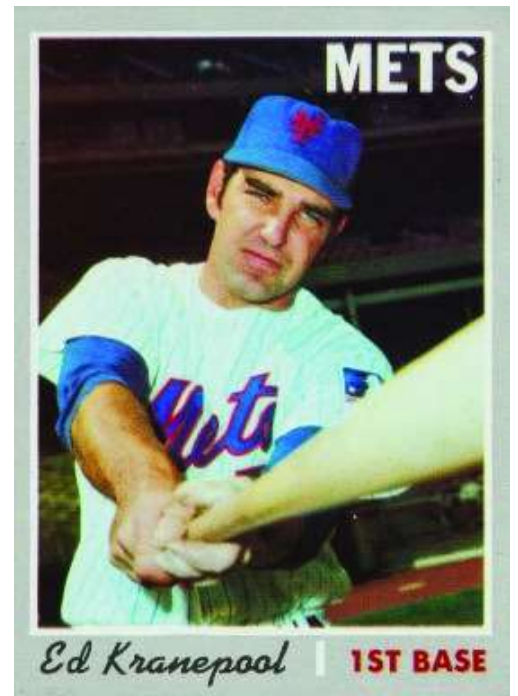
Well In '73 we came back in the last six weeks of the season. We played well. It was the same familiar situation for us as we had to win every game we played. Then we were in the playoffs. We were underdogs against Cincinnati and people didn't expect us to beat the Big Red Machine. But we did! Our pitching was outstanding and we scored enough runs to win. Unfortunately, we lost a World Series that we should have won. It was the most frustrating time in my career. We were up 3 to 2 going into Oakland with Seaver lined up to pitch game seven, if necessary.

We had the A's where we wanted them, but Yogi played his cards wrong. We lost game six by using Seaver too early, and we lost the seventh because we were down and out. We didn't have to use Tom in the sixth game. Yogi did not figure that out. George Stone should have pitched game six. Stone was 12 and 3. There is no question about it, he had won a few games in a row and Seaver should have been saved for game 7, and then you have the whole pitching staff backing him up if need be.

The highlight of course were the two World Series, but what about your beginnings 1962, '63, '64, when you had those great hot streaks... What about the 1965 All-Star game?

Making the All-Star game when you're 20 years of age is a great individual accomplishment. Sure, it's a highlight, but the real highlight is the World Series because not anyone gets in there. An individual can make an All-Star game but it takes a team to win the World Series. I had highlights but we had more downs than ups because the ballclub was bad and one player is not good enough to bring a pennant to a team.

You've got to surround yourself with good players. In '69 we all produced during the course of the year. That's why we were so good. 25 guys contributed. We swept past Chicago who ran out of gas. We had to beat them and we did sweeping series after series against them. We beat the teams we had to and that's how you win the pennant. You can't back into it. We had to keep going, plugging away. There were good teams in the league. We kept performing. The same thing with Atlanta. They had the best team in baseball. We outscored the best offensive club in the playoffs while their pitching fell asleep. Then of course came the World Series. Our righty platoon starred in the World Series. Not everybody liked platooning but we accepted it. Gil was a great manager and he convinced us that it was in the best interest of the ball club.



GIVE ME BACK MY GAME

By: Bill Ryczek

In the 19th century, writers often referred to the “glorious uncertainty” of baseball, those deliciously unforeseen, remarkable moments that made the sport America’s National Game. Baseball lore is replete with unlikely heroes like the Athletics’ Howard Ehmke setting a World Series strikeout record and light-hitting Bucky Dent’s big home run for the 1978 Yankees. In the 1969 World Series, it was not Met stars Tommie Agee or Cleon Jones who produced the key hits; it was puny infielder Al Weis, who couldn’t hit the broad side of a barn with a paddle. Who could have predicted any of those magic moments?

Baseball is now dominated by analytics, whose purpose is to predict *everything* and eliminate chance and uncertainty. Quantitative-based strategy usually results in a better outcome, but baseball is entertainment, not accounting or chemistry. The goal of baseball is to enchant and amaze, which one does not achieve through predictable outcomes.

One of the most appealing aspects of competitive sports is watching an athlete test themselves against long odds in an attempt to achieve greatness. Since the odds of achieving greatness are minute, analytics dictates not making the effort; their goal is to avoid putting players in challenging situations.

The reason we have an endless parade of pitchers coming and going from the mound is that each is removed from the game before the point where statistics tell us they are likely to become vulnerable. Today’s pitchers aren’t allowed to test themselves against their limits and most seem to accept that. One can now hear a pitcher, before starting a big postseason game, say he hopes to give his team four good innings. A rookie making his first major league start doesn’t dare dream of a complete game shutout; he just wants to throw his prescribed number of pitches and turn things over to the next guy, who’ll do the same. Relief pitchers rarely work more than an inning. Are they good? Who knows? They’re in and out so fast it’s hard to tell. And there are so many of them it’s hard to remember their names.

The offensive side of the game has also been impacted by analytics which, for example, says that stolen base attempts are not sound strategy. But what is more entertaining? Watching a man stand at first base waiting for something to happen, or seeing him break for second, causing the catcher to throw to head him off and the entire infield to go into motion? If analytics indicated that the optimum strategy was to give Mike Trout an intentional walk every time he came to bat, would anyone enjoy watching that day after day?

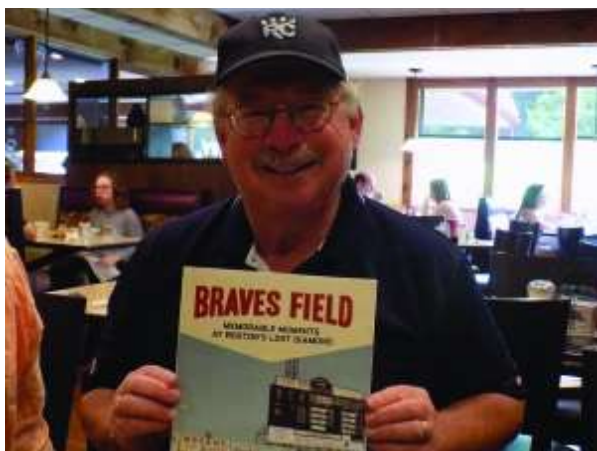
Old curmudgeons have lamented changes in baseball since the 1850s, and some dismiss current complaints as more of the same. But there are many people who aren’t old who are convinced that today’s game isn’t as interesting as that of 50 or 60 years ago. A telling statistic is the interval between balls put in play. It’s nearly doubled, meaning there’s only half as much action.

What can be done? I have two suggestions. The first is to limit pitching staffs to ten and not allow the daily roster moves that make a 12-man staff a 15-man staff. With just ten pitchers, managers would be forced to use each one more often and fans would get to see more of the best pitchers. The pitchers would have to pace themselves rather than throwing each pitch with maximum effort, which would cut down on the rash of strikeouts that have made today’s game so frightfully boring. But if pitchers let up, one might say, we would substitute an epidemic of home runs for a rash of strikeouts.

That leads to my second suggestion, which is to deaden the ball. For a hundred years, it has been unassailable gospel that fans like home runs, but do they want home runs at the cost of the lack of action that characterizes today’s game?

If they couldn’t sit back and wait for the home run, teams would be forced to resurrect the stolen base, the hit and run, and the sacrifice, which put players in motion and create excitement. Pitchers, not having to worry that any hitter in the lineup will beat him with a home run, can allow batters to put the ball in play and rely on their fielders. They won’t have to try to overpower the hitter on every pitch or be afraid to throw the ball in the strike zone. Pitch counts would go down and we might actually see complete games. Further, if home runs weren’t the primary goal of every hitter, they might start training for baseball rather than Olympic weight lifting competitions. Then we would see the best players on the field more often, rather than on the injured list with pulled, strained, or tweaked muscles.

Everyone who watches baseball these days seems to believe the game has become slower-paced and less interesting, but few in authority seem inclined to do much about it. Rob Manfred isn’t a regular reader of *The Wood Pile* so I don’t think we’ll see 10-man staffs or a deader ball in 2022. But let’s hope it won’t be long before we see something that will make baseball more exciting and more like the game we knew and loved.



SABR PROFILE: ALAN COHEN

By: George Pawlush

After retiring from a long career as an underwriter in the insurance industry in 2011, it didn't take Alan Cohen long to find new ways to spend his free time.

"It all began with a visit to Cooperstown with my 15-year-old grandson shortly before my retirement," Cohen remembers. Part of his Hall of Fame visit included a tour of the Giamatti Research Center. "I mentioned to a Giamatti staffer that I was interested in doing baseball research. The person suggested that I join SABR," he says. Cohen wasted little time and completed a SABR application, checking off "BioProject" as his major interest. This began his now ten-year relationship with SABR.

Since writing his first bio on Gino Cimoli for a book on the 1960 Pittsburgh Pirates in February 2012, Cohen has authored over 40 BioProject profiles. In addition to the biographies, he has written articles for various SABR publications, including 16 for the Games Project. His first was about baseball's longest day, May 31, 1964, when the San Francisco Giants beat the New York Mets, 6-4 in the second game of a doubleheader that went 23 innings. At that time, in terms of time, it was the longest game in MLB history – seven hours and 23 minutes. The total time for that May 31 twin bill was nine hours and 52 minutes, still a MLB record.

This past December Cohen was selected to join the BioProject's leadership team, assuming the role of chief fact checker. This is the second stage in the committee's extensive bio review process. During the initial vetting stage, committee volunteers ensure that all basic requirements for biographies are met. This includes that every biography is properly sourced and covered and that the document has sufficient quality.

According to Cohen the job of a fact checker is to look at statistics. "We rely on baseball-reference.com to double-check the facts and figures for each submission," Cohen says. Once this is accomplished the bio moves on to the copy-editing group for the final stage. The BioProject committee is kept pretty busy "Since I took on the job in December, we have produced 187 biographies as of mid-May. This adds up to approximately 40 new profiles each month," he adds.

Cohen is recognized nationally for his research into the Hearst Sandlot Classic that operated from 1946 to 1965. It was an annual youth all-star game that helped launched the careers of 88 major-league players. Cohen detailed the history of the contest in the Fall 2013 edition of the *Baseball Research Journal*.

He has continued to expand his primary research to include the Negro Leagues, particularly the Homestead Grays and the great Josh Gibson. His first involvement in the subject was with a book "Bittersweet Goodbyes," about the 1948 Grays. Cohen was tasked with finding information about a little-known player named Willie Smith. He searched black newspapers, wrote to SABR experts Larry Lester and Leslie Heaphy, and finally scoured mainline Pittsburgh dailies to learn more about Smith.

During his search, Cohen discovered that Smith had played for Cincinnati in the Negro League at Crosley Field in 1946. The fact that the Negro League played at Crosley became part of later book about the Cincinnati Reds. "Now, whenever we consider writing a MLB team book, we always look to see if there is a Negro League connection to the MLB home field," Cohen offers. "And this has proven true in recent books that includes Negro League teams that played at Ebbets Field, Shibe Park, and Griffith Stadium."

Despite his rather busy SABR involvement, Cohen still enjoys another facet of the sport, serving as a data caster (stringer) for the Hartford Yard Goats, the Colorado Rockies Double A affiliate. His role during home games with the Yard Goats is to input pitch by pitch into a computer program for MLB Advanced Media, the internet and interactive branch of the league. The data he inputs feeds MiLB's First Pitch graphics and the post-game box scores.

Cohen also serves as the vice president/treasurer of our Smoky Joe Wood Chapter. He is a native of West Babylon, Long Island and graduated from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. Alan and his wife, Frances, who live in West Hartford, are the parents of four children and have eight grandchildren.

BASEBALL FUNFACT:

Devon White, who played for six major league teams, was born in Kingston, Jamaica as Devon Whyte. His name was changed when he immigrated to the U.S. and it was spelled incorrectly. He changed his last name back to Whyte in 2003 but still signs autographs as "White".

TO THE HALL OR NOT TO THE HALL

By: Stan Dziurgot

The character clause is a phrase that has been heard more and more in recent times when there is voting for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

PED use has been near the top of the character clause issues. Most players who were known PED users have not gotten support in the Hall of Fame voting. That being said; two players – Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens have been trending up to try to get to the required 75%. Neither ever had a positive PED test but with their increased body size they were assumed to be PED users. The thought may be that they were Hall of Fame worthy before they started juicing. Possibly in an effort to change public perception, Clemens was very receptive to the public at the 2014 Houston SABR Convention.

Fred McGriff played in the Steroid Era, hit 493 homeruns but has never come close to election. He played on winning teams in Toronto and Atlanta and has never been linked to PED use. Unless someone knows something and is not saying anything, it remains a mystery. It will be interesting to see how the voting goes for Alex Rodriguez (a twice suspended PED user) and David Ortiz who had a positive test that wasn't supposed to be revealed in 2003.

The Commissioner of Baseball during the Steroid Era, Bud Selig, is in the Hall of Fame, Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis was responsible for the Major Leagues not being integrated during his term. The policy goes back to the 1880's with another Hall of Famer Cup Anson and continued with the 20th Century owners until 1944 with the death of Landis.

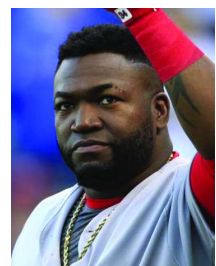
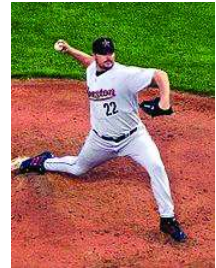
Pitchers have been doctoring baseballs since the beginning of organized ball and continued after the spitball and foreign substances were banned in 1920. There are pitchers in the Hall of Fame who have broken that rule and at least one, Gaylord Perry, wrote a book about it. Modern pitchers have been known to use sunscreen and pine tar, supposedly to get a better grip on the ball.

Babe Ruth was fined and suspended during the Roaring 20's for such things as: illegal barn storming, possibly holding his manager out the window of a moving train, drinking illegal prohibition booze and the "stomach heard round the world" which didn't have anything to do with eating too many hotdogs.

Gambling has long been a problem in baseball with Pete Rose and the 1919 Black Sox being the prime examples. But while Judge Landis gave the Black Sox a lifetime ban, Ty Cobb, Tris Speaker and Smoky Joe Wood avoided the ban for fixing a game after accusations were made by Dutch Leonard who refused to testify against the three players. There were players in the 1900's who are in the Hall, Speaker for one, who were rumored to be in the Ku Klux Klan.

Sometimes it seems that voters think that teams from a certain era have enough players in the Hall. The 1950's Brooklyn Dodgers have Robinson, Reeves, Campanella, Snider and Alston in but no Gil Hodges. The 1970's Boston Red Sox have Yastrzemski, Fisk and Rice in but no Luis Tiant or Dwight Evans. Evans had more career home runs than Rice and was a topnotch defensive outfielder. The 1970's Yankees had Hunter, Jackson and Gossage in but no Thurman Munson (career cut short after 10 years) and Graig Nettles. Nettles and Brooks, Robinson were both stellar third basemen who were showcased in the World Series. Nettles did have an incident concerning his bat and superballs in a game that the author of this article actually attended.

When Eddie Murray was elected to the Hall, the congratulatory call from the head of the Baseball Writers Association of America was a difficult one because Eddie would not talk to sports writers for most of his career. Complicating matters, Murray's sister had died and the family was on the way to the funeral. Steve Carlton used the Bob Meusal method of not "saying hello until it was time to say goodbye" by not talking to sportswriters until his final couple of years. Albert



["Hall" continued on Page 9](#)

FRANK OBSERVATIONS

By: Michael Frank

Here are some personal remembrances of the Hall of Famers who died recently:

- I caught Tom Seaver (who lived in Greenwich, CT) at a card show with no line. I told him Fresno was the biggest city in the lower 48 I'd never been to. Basically, he told me not to bother. Later this was the tipping point on my retiring from visiting all the Hall of Famer graves.
- Another show, it was Whitey Ford's last appearance, so I made sure to go in last. It seemed sentimental. A few grandchildren were helping. His frailty was apparent.
- At a White Plains show, I saw Bob Gibson and the late Lou Brock at the same table. This show is close enough to attract Connecticut collectors.
- Shortly after he retired, Hank Aaron made appearances for Magnavox. I caught him at a Long Island store, where I ask him about appearances at card shows. Everybody said what a good man he was, but he was totally lost. I guess he found later.
- Once I landed in Los Angeles on a red-eye from Connecticut New Year's Day morning. I went right to Pasadena, the staging area for the Rose Bowl parade, and found Tom Lasorda to be approachable. I suggested they trade for Brett Butler; they didn't then but did a few years later. Mike Scioscia, still a Dodgers catcher, was around.



Photographs courtesy of Michael Frank

BOOK REVIEW: WORKING A PERFECT GAME

By: Stan Osowiecki

For many years, my Dad would always complain when a certain Connecticut native was an umpire in a Mets game, feeling that the umpire often made calls against the Mets for one reason or another. While I did not necessarily see things that way, I still did have a thought in the back of my mind that maybe he was correct. Those thoughts have since been wiped away after reading Bill Nowlin's "Working a Perfect Game".

In preparation for writing this book, Mr. Nowlin spent numerous hours interviewing Major League Baseball umpires, primarily at Fenway Park, then assembled the interviews into a detailed story that highlights the trials and tribulations of being an umpire in the big leagues. While it may seem like an umpire's job may be one of glamour, Mr. Nowlin's interviews feature the amount of time, patience and perseverance needed in umpire school and as a minor league umpire, undergoing regular assessments and hoping they have what it takes to make it to the "big show".

In reading the book, one of the most notable things for me was in regards to travel. Many of the umpires tend to live close to major airports so that on the rare occasional off day, they might have the chance to stop by and see their families, as unlike the Major Leaguers they officiate each day who are home for half of the season, the umpires are on the road for most of the time. While they have a travel office to help them with their plans, each umpire is responsible for booking all aspects of their travel to and from the ballparks. This leads to many interesting stories of booking multiple flights, hotels, etc. based on weather and the next location they are traveling to.

Overall, the book has a nice flow where you can read it for hours or just read one interview and go back at another time, both ways without missing any key information. If you are someone who is interested in learning more about the life of an umpire, you cannot go wrong with getting a copy of this book.

CHAPTER MEETING RECAP

By: Stan Osowiecki

While the pandemic continued to cause concern and with limitations to social gatherings still discouraged, the Connecticut SABR chapter held a members' meeting on April 27, 2021. After some early technical difficulties, the meeting began with a welcome from chapter president Steve Krevisky and an update on the next newsletter from Stan Osowiecki. The meeting then turned to the featured members of the evening, Paul Hensler and Bill Ryczek. Mr. Hensler began the discussions with an overview of his new book, *Gathering Crowds: Catching Baseball Fever in the New Era of Free Agency* (rowan.com; 30% off with code RLFANDF30). The book focuses on the economic impacts on baseball when the reserve clause was eliminated and free agency began. Mr. Ryczek closed out the evening with his book due to be released in June titled *Dr. Strangeglove: The Life and Times of All Star Slugger Dick Stuart* (mcfarlane.com/Amazon). The book discusses the very colorful character that Dick Stuart had not only during his baseball career but beyond as well.



Photograph courtesy of Stan Osowiecki

JAYS IN DUNEDIN (continued from page 2)

career, I discovered that he had also hit home runs at Seals Stadium as a member of the Hollywood Stars, for whom he played during the 1955-57 timeframe. The first of his homers at Seals Stadium came on April 24, 1955. Stevens also homered on July 15, 1956, during a season when he hit 27 home runs, good for third in the Pacific Coast League.

I got to thinking, "How common is this?" and did some research. I quickly realized that the feat was quite common. I determined that over a hundred players had accomplished the feat, and more than a dozen ballparks were involved. Jackie Robinson had accomplished the feat at Jersey City's Roosevelt Stadium, as had Dodger teammate Duke Snider; Harmon Killebrew had mashed balls at Metropolitan Stadium, as had Carl Yastrzemski.

I was told about other ballparks, and, at the presumed end of my research, there were 15 ballparks and 164 players – and that was on what I like to call the migration-expansion era. I was asked about the early days of baseball and went on to discover baseball's early years had many instances. As far back as New York's original Polo Grounds and going through Baltimore's Terrapin Park (aka Oriole Park) 50 players had gone long at 16 ballparks as minor leaguers and major leaguers.

I thought my story was finished back in 2015 when Travis Shaw was added to the list. Each summer from 2006 through 2014 the Red Sox had a "Futures" game at Fenway Park featuring minor league affiliates playing a regular season game in Boston. Playing for Double-A Portland in 2012 Shaw homered at Fenway. The first of the 11 big-league homers that he hit at Fenway came in 2015.

Then came the pandemic and the Blue Jays. In 2020, they played 26 games at Sahlen Field in Buffalo, and, in 2021, they played 21 games at TD Park in Dunedin, Florida. And my list has grown, seemingly exponentially.

In 2020, a grand total of 65 homers were hit in the games at Sahlen Field and Randall Grichuk (7), Teoscar Hernandez (6), Vladimir Guerrero Jr., and Rowdy Tellez (5) were the most prolific of those players who had previously homered at the ballpark when it was used by the Buffalo Bisons. In all, 14 players were added to the "list." And the Blue Jays are returning to Buffalo as this article is being submitted so – more to come.

In 2021, a grand total of 71 homers were hit in the games at TD Park, and Guerrero (11) was by far the most prolific of those who had previously homered there in the minors. 10 players who had homered there in the minors, duplicated the feat in the big leagues. Of those 10 players, seven had also homered at Sahlen Field in both the minors and majors adding to the list of those who had done it in multiple ballparks. To date 23 players have done it at two ballparks and one, the legendary Steve Bilko, has done it at three.

Now the count is 181 migration-expansion era players at 17 ballparks. By season's end there will be more players. You never know!

HALL (continued from page 6)

Belle would be a tough call to make. His personality and a problem with a corked bat may keep him out. Leo Durocher was not popular with the opposition and rumor has it that the Veterans Committee elected him after he died so he couldn't smell the roses.

Curt Schilling is getting close to election. If he makes it, he should be told during the phone call that the Hall of Fame Weekend in Cooperstown should be thought of as a dinner at Thanksgiving. Be thankful that you're here and no mention of politics or religion at the dinner table.

After a year of waiting, Derek Jeter goes into the Hall of Fame this year. It's too bad that Doc Adams (represented by Marie Adams) won't be going in with him. After all, among his accomplishments was he did create the position of shortstop.

Sources:

1. Baseball reference.com
2. Baseballhall.org
3. www.sabr.org/biopproject
Eddie Murray by Alan Cohen
Tris Speaker by Don Jensen
Albert Belle by Tom Wancho
Cap Anson by Davit Fleitz
Steve Carlton by Cosme Vivenco
4. The Big Ban: The Life and Times of Babe Ruth by Leigh Montville
Doubleday 2006
5. The Babe: The Legend Comes to Life by Robert Creaner Simon
& Schuster 1+74



KRANEPOOL (continued from page 3)

Were you ever nervous when you came up to the plate?

I guess early in the season you might have some butterflies. Every season is the same, you've been off for six months so now you're getting back into the groove.

Who was the toughest pitcher you ever faced?

For me it was Phil Niekro. He was a knuckleballer and I couldn't hit it. It was a 60-mph pitch that bounced up and down. That's all he threw to me. He didn't care if he walked me; he was going to make me hit his pitch. Over my career we played against great pitchers. Sandy Koufax was the best pitcher we faced. There was also Bob Gibson.

How did you do against Koufax?

Koufax, I got my hits, I mean he was not intimidating. He was over-the-top and had a great curveball. He was the best in baseball no question about it. He had a lot of stamina. But the guy that could change your batting was the Braves Niekro with that slow knuckler. No one could catch it, not even with the big glove.

MG note: When I told Kranepool that he hit homered against Niekro on 09/14/67. Down 2-0, two out Swoboda and Tommy Davis on base. He said, "That must have been the only time he did not throw me a knuckleball."

What about Marichal, Drysdale and Gibson?

Juan was probably the best right-hander in the league.

How would you compare Marichal and Gibson?

Marichal was more consistent than Gibson who had that one great season, revolutionizing baseball. They brought the mound down. Gibson lost 11 games that year ('68). Marichal won 20 games virtually every year. Juan's windup was beyond spectacular. Magnificent is not the word for what he did in 1968; 30 complete games in 38 starts. The whole league doesn't do that now, both leagues combined. You weren't going to get him out of a game, great control, walking nobody.

What other great pitchers?

Those were the best, later on you had Carlton and Seaver who belong in the same group. There were plenty

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KRANEPOOL (continued from page 9)

of Hall of Famers when I played. Bob Veale and Tony Cloninger were great pitchers who are not in the Hall of Fame. They're letting a lot of people in the Hall of Fame and it's being watered-down. There were some great pitchers in the 60's.

Were there any players that you particularly liked, any friends?

My closest friends were my roommates, Swoboda, McGraw. I grew up with them and we played together quite a few years. When you room with somebody you know everything about them. I mean, you spend 24 hours a day together. We spend more time together than with our wives. You're on the road, you sleep in the same room. We travel two weeks a month three meals a day.

How was Torre as a manager with the Mets?

It was tough for him. When you're a player and become a manager on the team it's tough. You travel with the guys and then you have to break away a little bit.

Was Elroy Face one of the best relievers?

Yes, and the pitching coach on the Mets in 2019 was one of the best, Phil Regan.

You worked with some amazing talent like Mays and Snider.

Willie joined the team in '72. He had an impact on the ballclub. He had so much to offer off the field. He would always talk to the players. Willie Mays was wonderful; one of the great players in San Francisco, an idol to everyone. He was the best in baseball. If he wanted to talk to you, you better listen.

How would you compare Willie with Mickey and the Duke?

Willie was the best player because he could do everything, Mickey's career was shortened because of his legs. He couldn't physically do the things that Willie could do. Willie was sound his whole career, never injured. Mickey had bad legs and I don't think Snider had the ability of the other two. Duke was a good player but if you had to pick he would be the third. Mickey was number two. Willie hit more home runs and was a better fielder. I never saw Duke in his prime really. Willie had a fair arm, not great but he caught everything in the outfield. If it was in the air he was going to catch it. Was Willie better than Clemente as a fielder? It's hard to say. Clemente had the best arm but Willie did everything so smoothly. It is difficult to say that he was not number one in everything. It was a disgrace that when he went into the Hall of Fame he was not unanimous,

Why do you think Gil Hodges is not in the Hall of Fame

People that are voting now never saw him play. They don't know anything about Gil Hodges. They're reading about Mike Trout and the younger players today. They don't know the old-timers. Unless you've seen the player you can't evaluate them from what you're reading. He was a great defensive player who was always up there with homeruns.

Who was the best defensive first baseman you have ever seen?

Might be Keith Hernandez. Wes Parker was a great fielder, Gil was a great fielder.

How did you feel moving from the Polo Grounds to Shea stadium in 1964?

The Polo grounds was a tired ballpark, but fun to play in it. Short right-field, short left field. But centerfield and right center were disaster — 420 to the gaps, 480 dead center.

Aside from Gil, what managers did you learn from?

Wes Westrum and the masterful Roy McMillan. Roy would help Buddy Harrelson more than he helped me because they were both shortstops. Westrum replaced Casey and he was always looking to teach. I learned the most from Gil. In 1962 Gil helped me learn the fundamentals. He was the best first baseman around. Yogi was not a leader, a nice guy, everyone liked him.



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How as Yogi as a strategist?

He was three innings behind while Gil was three innings ahead. Gil is thinking in the third about what was going to happen in the 7th. Yogi was thinking about moves he made in the third when it was the 7th, when it was too late. The horse was out of the barn. It cost you games. Even though you might like him and I did, as a friend, but I wouldn't want him running my company.

Were you a teacher at all? What first basemen did you mentor?

I worked with Alonso in '19. He is a good kid and a listener. He is someone the ballclub can build on, a hard worker who became adequate in the field, not good, but adequate, and he will get better, and the kid can hit. They have about seven kids who can really perform. If they fill in a couple of spots, they'll win in 2021. Alonso, McNeill, Nimmo, Conforto, Davis, DeGrom, and now Lindor. Seven guys that you can build on. They have the nucleus.

What is your biggest regret?

I made the All-Star game and a World Series. Those are the major goals a player has. I could have played longer but you don't control your destiny. The ballclub controlled it when I played. There was no free agency. There was no place to go. They hurt my career in the long run. I stagnated because they platooned me. Made me a pinch hitter. I was in my prime, hitting .300. They should have left me alone.

How did you feel when they got Clendenon in '69?

Individually you don't like that because it limits you. Gil convinced us that as platoon players we were All-Stars combined: Clendenon/Kranepool, Shamsky/Swoboda, Boswell/ Weiss, Charles/Garrett etc. I didn't like it and nobody did. We could have been better players if we weren't platooned. You cannot convince me that putting a guy in who's hitting .180 when I'm hitting .300 is a good idea. There were times I didn't play and it was ridiculous. We didn't always have Donn Clendenon.

Who should have been great?

Strawberry and Gooden should have been in the Hall of Fame.

What about Nolan Ryan as a Met?

Ryan never would have performed in New York as he did in California. He was always pushed back here. We didn't think he would have the career he did. His arm was amazing, never hurt it throwing 175 pitches a game still throwing 95 MPH in the ninth, striking people out. Gary Gentry (13 wins in '69 plus 6.2 shutout innings in Game 3 of the World Series, including a two-run double) should have been better. He had bone chip, and they didn't know how to heal it in those days. He would have been a better pitcher. Ryan was the odd guy out after Seaver, Koosman and Gentry.

What ballpark had the toughest fans?

Chicago had the toughest fans, the bleacher bums. Chicago's stands was closer to the field so you'd hear the fan. If you played the outfield, you were right under them. They would throw beer on you and you'd hear them cursing your family. Cub fans were the worst, although they were true baseball fans. In Philly, they were truly rowdy. They would take the name plates off the back of the box seats and throw it on the field. You could cut up someone's face. Look what Philly did to their own players. They ran Richie Allen out of town. No room for abusiveness by the fans. They can root but there is a line.

What was it like when Gil and Duke joined the Mets in '62 and '63?

I was fortunate. The smart players who came to New York liked it here and were willing to offer something to the young players. Every one of them helped me along the way. Thomas, Ashburn, Gil, Snider.

How was Casey Stengel?

Casey had a thing about young players. He tried to help us all, Harrelson, Swoboda... It was the same with the Yankees, with Billy Martin, Whitey, Mickey. He was not a theatrical clown when he would talk to you. When the press would come in he would talk about something that happened 50 years ago that made no sense.



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Did anyone ever throw at you?

Of course, to intimidate you. They'll never throw at your head. If they throw at your head, they'll never hit you because you can see it and you can duck. If they aim for your shoulder, you'll duck and it will hit you in the head. If they throw at your shoulder that meant they're trying to hurt you.

Did any pitchers do that?

Sure, they didn't care.

Who was the meanest, who was a bad guy? Ron Hunt didn't like Gibson.

Gibson would try to intimidate you and get you off the plate. That meant he respected you because you did well against him. He wouldn't do it to a guy who wasn't much. We shared St. Petersburg with the Cardinals in Spring training in those days. When Tommie Agee joined the club in 1968, we told him to be careful with Gibson. Bob would always pitch opening day in Spring training. On the first pitch, Gibson hit him in the head. He didn't get over it for a year. Gibson was trying to teach him a lesson to make him worry all year. Gibson tried to intimidate you in the spring. If you put someone on base during spring training, it didn't mean anything. Koufax and Marichal would never hit you on purpose.

What is your all-time All-Star team made up of players you played with or against?

First base, probably McCovey, catcher Bench. Schmidt was probably a better third baseman than Eddie Mathews, might even take him over Brooks Robinson. There was not a better fielder than Cleve Boyer. In the outfield, Clemente, Aaron and Mays. Shortstop was Dave Concepcion, man he could hit. (19 years with the Reds, 9 time all-star.) Second base no doubt Pete Rose.

Was Rose a jerk?

Yeah, he was over aggressive. There were times to be aggressive but he hurt people unnecessarily, Fosse in the '70 All-Star game (Fosse was 23 at the time and his career was for the most part over three years later) and Buddy in '73. He knocked over people when it was uncalled for. Sometime you can overdo it. Nobody will top his records, 200 hits for half of his 24 years, never complaining about playing different positions. He was the greatest competitor I ever played against.

...and he never got hurt.

He got traded to Philadelphia when he was 38 years and hardly missed a game averaging 150 games and 180 hits for five years. Now it's unheard of. These guys now can't go a week without pulling a muscle. Look at Stanton and Cespedes. Best lefty pitchers were Koufax and Carleton, Righties, Marichal and Gibson. Rivera was number one out of the bullpen. Nobody dominated like him.

Gil was the best manager, always ahead of the game. I thought Aaron Boone did a pretty good job in 2019 with all those injuries, but he made a mistake in the playoffs. The guys who got him there weren't on the roster. He changed the makeup of the team bringing guys back that weren't sick anymore. Stanton and those guys should not have been brought back.

I was 17 when I came up. They thought I was going to lead the team to the promised land. I struggled, but at that age you should be in the minors, against your own age group, dominating. The "experts" said that since I didn't hit .300 then I'm not good. The difference between .260 and .300 is not that many hits, but the difference between 17 and 23 years of age is major as far as maturing. When I finally caught up with the league, they said I had been around forever although I was only 25. I was around 8 years, and they said, "He's an old man by now," but I was not. I learned and was ready to dominate, and I did, hitting .290, .300 but they said I was over the hill and it screwed me up.



Photo Courtesy of Stanley P. Osowiecki



Who was your first hitting coach?

We didn't have any real hitting coaches. Our first was Rogers Hornsby, all he told us was to "...swing at a strike." He didn't last a season. The Mets got rid of him because he was a total waste. He didn't like young guys. He didn't offer anything. He had to tell me to swing at a strike? We learned that in little league. Then we had Yogi all those years. He wasn't a batting coach. He said "swing, but if you can't hit it don't swing." But what happens when you have two strikes? He said then "then swing at it." That's a batting coach? come on. Today they have coaches.

What are you doing now?

I've been in the credit card business for 25 years, one office in Boca and one in Calverton. I don't go there, especially now. In a normal world If I'm meeting an owner, I make an appointment and make a presentation. I can be anywhere and pick

up a client. If you know someone on Staten Island I'll go there and open up an account.

When I worked for Pfizer, they sent me to Dale Carnegie to learn how to get their message across. They didn't care that I was a baseball player and a member of the '69 World Series winners. I was selling their drugs across the country, meeting with the press. They wanted me to mention the drug on national TV. That was my message. And if I didn't get my message about the drugs across during the interview then I'd get fired. Once I got the message across, I was home free.

...and you get better at it. Mickey Callaway said nothing, couldn't even speak. To me if you're working for an organization like the Yankee or Mets, you're major. You have a platform. The team should have the best guy going to help you out.

I'm the only guy around who knows what happened in the 60's. I don't want to hear people talk about the 60's if they weren't there. Otherwise, it's hearsay, third party. Words from someone else.

You'd be great doing what Ralph Kiner was doing on the later Met broadcasts. He had such a perspective on baseball for so many years. You'd be great, a bunch of games. You'd be another Ralph!

Thanks for that.

I hope when there's real baseball again you can get a chance.

I have faith. Just as I, baseball and the world will survive and outlast this horror.

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THE WOOD PILE

Newsletter of the Smoky Joe Wood Chapter
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SABR Games Project

The SABR Baseball Games Project is a new initiative to research and write articles on major-league and Negro League regular, postseason and All-Star Games. These game accounts will complement Retrosheet and Baseball-Reference box scores as well as BioProject essays on the players involved. All games, regardless of their historical significance, are eligible to be written up.

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