



# The Wood Pile



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

Volume I Issue 5

Summer 2017

## Leading Off: A Message from the Chapter President



We have been busy on many fronts! We had a good meeting in late March, highlighted by the Jeff Bagwell panel discussion, moderated by Karl Ciccitto, which included coaches and teammates. We will be working on a Bagwell book, and you will hear more about this.

We had another successful chapter outing to the Yankees Old Timers Day on June 25, and enjoyed seeing Don Larsen, Whitey Ford, Reggie, Gator, Willie and many others. Unfortunately for those of us who are Yankee fans, they lost, 7-6, falling behind, 7-0, then rallying back, and falling just short.

Over a dozen Connecticut chapter members enjoyed the recent SABR convention in the Big Apple. A number of our members had presentations, both oral and poster, and we expect a couple of new books to come out soon from chapter authors. Our members also write blogs and articles as well. We had a productive chapter leaders meeting, and I think we are doing well, considering that we don't have a major league team near us, but do cultivate relationships with minor league teams in our area. Alan Cohen is a stats stringer for the Hartford Yard Goats, and we hope to get there on August 18, when they will honor Roberto Clemente.

Numerous panels of interest took place, including ones about Casey Stengel, Yogi Berra, and Jim Bouton. It would have been good to be able to ask questions at these panels. For instance, in Ball Four, Bouton claimed that Elston Howard was a clubhouse lawyer. But in Arlene Howard's bio of her husband, she disputed this. Stan Dziurgot and yours truly reached the trivia team semifinals, but we weren't quick enough on the buzzers, or else things could have been different.

The Games and Simulation committee meeting was of interest, chaired by Joe Runde. We heard about more baseball simulation games, which are now also being emulated in other sports. The session about Charlie Dressen's 1945 Pacific tour, done by Karl, was good, along with the one about the Black Sox scandal, and the 7<sup>th</sup> game of the 1926 World Series. Marjorie Adams's presentation on Doc Adams was terrific, and nearly won Best Presentation, taking Honorable Mention. Seeing old friends was nice as well.

We also enjoyed our excursion on the #7 train out to Citi Field, where DeGrom pitched the Mets to a 2-1 win over the Phillies. Jacob lost his no-hit bid in the middle innings, when a routine fly ball (or so we thought, sitting out in CF) went over Granderson's head. He likely lost it in the lights.

When this issue of The Wood Pile comes out, we will have just held our latest Strat-O-Matic event, including a BBQ, at Joe Runde's house. We are thinking about our next chapter breakfast, along with plans for our next general meeting, toward the end of October. We could also be considering a Bees or Bluefish game as well.

Sincerely, Steve Krevisky, Chapter President.

## Upcoming Events

### Chapter Events

[www.smokyjoewood.com/events](http://www.smokyjoewood.com/events)

August 18, 2017 7 pm

Yard Goats Game

Dunkin Donuts Park

More: Contact Steve Krevisky

[SKrevisky@mxcc.comnet.edu](mailto:SKrevisky@mxcc.comnet.edu)

August 26, 2017 4 pm

Orioles at Red Sox

Fenway Park

More: Contact Karl Ciccitto

[kcicitto@cox.net](mailto:kcicitto@cox.net)

October 21, 2017 12 pm

General Meeting

Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT

More: Contact Steve Krevisky

[SKrevisky@mxcc.comnet.edu](mailto:SKrevisky@mxcc.comnet.edu)

*Watch for emails from Steve Krevisky for details on our chapter plans.*

### National Events

November 2-4, 2017

AZ Fall League Experience

Phoenix, AZ

[sabr.org/AFL](http://sabr.org/AFL)

January 27, 2018

8<sup>th</sup> Annual SABR Day

Multiple sites

[sabr.org/sabrday](http://sabr.org/sabrday)

March 9-11, 2018

SABR Analytics Conference

Phoenix, AZ

[sabr.org/analytics](http://sabr.org/analytics)

April 20-21, 2018

19<sup>th</sup> Century Base Ball

Conference

Cooperstown, NY

[sabr.org/icor-campbell19C](http://sabr.org/icor-campbell19C)

*More information at [sabr.org/events](http://sabr.org/events)*

## New Chapter Members

Welcome to new members (since January 2017):

Andy Babiak, Glastonbury

Bruce McClure, West Hartford

Troy Ciesco, Mansfield

Ray Montgomery, Simsbury

Franz Douskey, Hamden

William Norton, Stamford

Bryant Farley, Old Greenwich

Steve Scarpa, Wallingford

Daniel Gooley, Hamden

Raymond Sikora, Burlington

## On the Web

Society for American Baseball Research: [sabr.org](http://sabr.org)

Smoky Joe Wood Chapter: [smokyjoewood.com](http://smokyjoewood.com)

## Smoky Joe Wood Chapter Officers

Stephen Krevisky (President): [skrevisky@mxcc.comnet.edu](mailto:skrevisky@mxcc.comnet.edu)

Alan Cohen (Vice President/Treasurer): [adc0317@comcast.net](mailto:adc0317@comcast.net)

Stan Dziurgot (Membership Director): [stanyank5@yahoo.com](mailto:stanyank5@yahoo.com)

Karl Ciccitto (Communications Director): [kcicitto@cox.net](mailto:kcicitto@cox.net)

Members are welcome to submit articles, book reviews or other information that might be interesting to other chapter members. Please send information to Karl Ciccitto at [kcicitto@cox.net](mailto:kcicitto@cox.net).

## No Goats – Then Glory

By Alan Cohen

After years of hunting for the perfect retirement job (aka getting paid to watch baseball games), I secured a position with the New Britain Rock Cats in 2013. I became their stringer, inputting pitch by pitch data into a system that I thought was devised by the Marquis de Sade and using a computer dating back at least a decade.

Since then, there have been some changes. During the 2014 season, we learned that the team would be moving to Hartford, but there was baseball to be played and I even got to see a no-hitter pitched by the Rock Cats' Virgil Vazquez. At the end of the season, we learned that the team, going forward, would be affiliated with the Rockies after many years with the Twins, but before the Twins left, we did get a glimpse of Miguel Sano.

In 2015, prior to the season, there were changes in my system, otherwise known in MLB circles as the client. The system has been tweaked a bit over the years, and it is far better now than back in 2013. In 2015, the Rockies came to town, but the season would be bittersweet. It would be my last season working with Official Scorer Ed Smith and Scoreboard Operator Larry Michaels. Larry "the Legend" had been with the team since the 1980s, and had some great stories. He even remembered going to the World Series, as a teenager in 1957. He and a friend drove all the way from New England to Wisconsin. Ed and I were usually the last people in the building, waiting for the managers to approve the box scores before heading out into the parking lot. I see Ed occasionally at World Series Club meetings and Larry, who had become ill after the 2015 season, recently passed away.

In early 2016, I got an email from the team. They checked on my availability for some games in Norwich, and in May and June I trekked to Norwich for 19 games. As far as I had to travel, the team had a longer trip. The "Road Goats" as they came to be known were, when playing in Norwich, staying in a Hotel on the Berlin Turnpike. I worked with Chris Cote, who was and is the official scorer for the Class-A Connecticut Tigers. The folks with the Tigers treated us great (I even had a new laptop computer), even though we generally had only about 500 spectators at the games. The team was on the road outside of Connecticut for more than 120 games as construction in Hartford proceeded at a pace that ranged from slow to ultimately dead stop as the original contractor was fired.

What was going to happen in 2017? Well, somehow work resumed and as winter turned to spring, the call went out for seasonal employees. I made the trip to Hartford and met some of the new folks involved in the operation. Jeff Williams had taken over from Ted Seavey in the Press Box and our new official Scorer was Jim Keener, the former Sports Information Director at UHart. Jim had been hired prior to 2016 and did work a couple of games in Norwich.

On Opening Day, the joint was packed with 6,850 fans, but the team lost. We have seen a couple of players, most notably Ryan McMahon, who are destined for the big leagues, and felt the frustration of some players for whom Hartford may be their last stop. Our games are broadcast in Spanish as well as English and it



has been great to swap stories with Danny and Derek Rodriguez. You never know, on a given night, who will come by the Press Box and take a seat behind us. Jim Keener sits to my right and the *Hartford Courant* reporter is to my left. Dom Amore and John Altavilla have been sharing reporting duties. They are great guys and writers.

The biggest change at Dunkin Donuts Park is the location of our Press Box. Instead of being directly behind home plate, we are stationed along the third base line. And the technical folks, including the scoreboard operator and P. A. announcer are along the first base line. Thus, if the Official Scorer needs to review a play, he makes his way around to the first base side. This presents a couple of problems. We have been having big crowds and folks get in the way. Jim is a big guy, so he makes his way through. Of course, he has been known to stop at a food stand along the way.

We have new mascots. Rocky is gone and Chompers and Chew-Chew walk through the stands entertaining the large crowds. We keep selling out. Hopefully the fans will get to see the team win a few games and send some great players onto the major leagues.



## A Baseball Hall of Famer in Our Midst

By Paul Hensler

The male-dominated world of sports can be a difficult realm for women to venture into, and the complications faced by those of the fairer sex attempting to enter the domain of the male locker room can be exponentially more imposing. Two examples will suffice to support this claim: the vulgar nicknames generally given by the late Baltimore Oriole manager Earl Weaver to describe female reporters who dared to set foot in his players' clubhouse, and the notorious sexual harassment incident in which Boston Herald journalist Lisa Olson was targeted by several members of the New England Patriots. Pioneers, in whatever field they may choose, can pay a dear price as they try to break down old barriers.

Another trailblazer who suffered her own share of indignities is Claire Smith, a native of northeast Philadelphia, who as this year's winner of the J. G. Taylor Spink Award will become the first woman to be inducted into the writers' wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame. A quiet, humble, and diligent resident of Ellington, Claire began to ply her journalistic trade with the Bucks County Courier Times, and after graduating from Temple University, her name became familiar to readers of the Hartford Courant when she was a beat writer in the mid-1980s covering the New York Yankees. From 1991 to 1998, she served as a columnist for the New York Times before returning to her hometown of Philadelphia for a lengthy stint with that city's *Inquirer* newspaper. Her current position as news editor at Bristol-based ESPN takes her across the country to baseball assignments both on and off the diamond.

Several years ago at a Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, Claire was the event's keynote speaker and participated in a panel discussion on women and baseball. She related the story of her own trials early in her tenure with the *Courant*. During the 1984 National League Championship Series in Chicago, she was set upon in the visitors' clubhouse by several San Diego Padre players, who also happened to be members of the John Birch Society. Acting quickly upon observing the commotion, the Padres' Steve Garvey ushered Claire out of harm's way and gave her an interview in the corridor.

Ugly perils such as this did little to dissuade this intrepid reporter, and anyone who follows her postings on Facebook will see a cavalcade of baseball luminaries whom she has befriended over many years. In addition to Garvey, the likes of Sandy Koufax, Rachel Robinson – Jackie's widow – Don Mattingly, Dave Righetti, Rickey Henderson, and Dusty Baker are all more than just acquaintances, with former American League MVP Don Baylor holding a special place in her heart. During the recent convention of the Society for American Baseball Research in Manhattan, Claire interviewed former player agent Jean Afterman, who is now one of baseball's highest ranking female executives in her role as the New York Yankees senior vice president and assistant general manager. At the conclusion of this program and other portions of the convention, Claire was warmly greeted by other baseball personalities as well as other journalists and writers, all of which bears testimony to the respect she commands in the realm of our national pastime.



Following last December's vote by the Baseball Writers Association of America, Claire was accorded a distinction that has been earned by other esteemed writers now enshrined in Cooperstown. She will join, among others, Ring Lardner, Damon Runyan, Heywood Broun, Red Smith, Dick Young, fellow African-American Wendell Smith, and Peter Gammons as winners of the coveted Spink award, an honor well-earned & a product of both her talent and perseverance.

Claire Smith has come a long way since her childhood dream of owning a baseball team. During her college days, she took the job with the *Courier Times*, thereby embarking on a path that led to a career in sports journalism. Claire's demeanor impresses as that of an unassuming librarian rather than a reporter elbowing for space in a crowded, testosterone-imbued clubhouse, which makes all the more remarkable her journey from Philadelphia to Connecticut – with a return trip to each place over the years – and again on to New York, this time at the Baseball Hall of Fame.

(This article first appeared in the July 29, 2017 *Journal Inquirer*.)

## When Danbury Was a Minor League Town

By George Pawlusch

Danbury's flirtation with minor baseball ended 103 years ago with the demise of the Atlantic League. However, the "Hat City" can look back to six seasons, between 1887 and 1914, when they were part of organized baseball. Their first taste of minor league baseball occurred in 1887. The game was a little different than it is today. Players that year had four strikes and walks were counted as hits.

The first Danbury team played at the White Street grounds that was constructed a few months prior to the start of the season. Stadiums were generally built of wood with only marginal use of concrete and stone. General admission was 25 cents and the stadium grandstand accommodated 800 fans. One section of the grandstand was reserved for ladies and their escorts.

The team belonged to the six-team Eastern League which also included franchises in Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport, New Haven and Springfield. The clubs paid their own traveling expenses while the home teams pocketed all their gate receipts.

Danbury started the 1887 season on road on April 30, losing to New Haven, 27-18. After opening the year with eight straight losses the team came to life, winning 12 of their next 20 games. Unfortunately, by the end of the first month the league quickly began to deteriorate.

First to go was Springfield which was expelled on May 25, when they failed to put up their \$50 league dues. Circuit leading Bridgeport followed in early July because of high salaries, and poor attendance due to what one reporter attributed was "huge betting on the home team the days they lost." New Haven ceased operations on July 22. An Elm City paper reported that "If New Haven had a uniformly sober team they would be drawing as well as they had earlier in the season."

When league leading Hartford disbanded on August 2 with a 36-26 record, the last two teams standing, Danbury and Waterbury, agreed to play each other through to Labor Day. Their motivation was to collect a share of the \$750 in bonds posted by the six teams prior to the start of the season.

Danbury and Waterbury were very competitive throughout August. A 14-5 Danbury win on August 29 upped Danbury to 33-41 record, just a game-and-a-half behind Waterbury, which was 33-38 at the point. With three games remaining in the season, Danbury needed to sweep all three. Danbury's hopes ended the next day when Waterbury scored three runs in the top of the ninth to win, 5-4.

As a season ending exhibition side-note, Danbury played host to that year's American Association champion Louisville Browns, then considered a major league team. Danbury barely lost the game, 8-6, before 1,000 fans at the White Street Park. The Browns, 95-40, that year, featured future Hall of Fame first-baseman Charlie Comiskey in the lineup.

Despite the league's problems Danbury fans supported their team which reportedly made \$1,000 that year. The squad's roster was continually in flux throughout the season with only two players starting and finishing the year. One of those was 23-year-old catcher Grant Briggs, who later played parts of four seasons in the majors for Syracuse (AA), Louisville (AA), St. Louis (NL) and Louisville (NL), hitting .163 in 111 games.



Danbury returned to the minor league ranks in 1888 as a member of the Connecticut State League along with Norwalk, Meriden, Bridgeport, Stamford and Derby. The season was to be short-lived as the team started poorly at 4-13, and lost most of its fans in the process. The team disbanded on June 12 with a 9-14 record. The league folded soon after on July 4. Highlight of the aborted campaign was an exhibition game at the White Street Grounds on June 7 pitting Danbury against Chicago of the National League. Chicago edged Danbury, 4-3, with legendary "Hall of Famer" Cap Anson in the field.

Ten years went by before Danbury returned to the professional ranks in 1898. Again, the circuit was named the Connecticut State League that included clubs in Waterbury, New Haven, Bridgeport, Meriden, New London, Derby and New Britain. Since their last taste of professional ball, rule changes made in the preceding years had reduced the number of strikes to the present three, excluded walks as hits and extended the distance from home plate to the pitcher's mound from 50 feet to the current 60 feet, six inches.

The impact immediately proved dramatic for hitters just as the owners hoped, sparking offensive production that stimulated game attendance throughout the country. The return of baseball to the "Hat City" was clearly tempered for fans that year by the start of the Spanish-American War.

Jack Rose managed the 1898 team and was also one of co-owners. The league adopted a 98-game schedule, an even 49 games home and away, with the season extending a few days beyond Labor Day weekend. The team played their games at the South Street grounds.

Led by future major leaguer Ned Phelps, the team's catcher, Danbury was very competitive and owned a 16-16 record in mid-June. The team then went on a 19-10 spurt and six weeks later were 35-26 in third place, close on the heels of Waterbury, 39-21; and New Haven, 38-23.

*Continued on Page 9 (Danbury)*

## Baseball & the Scars of War

From Journal of Mike Sandlock; Edited by Karl Ciccitto

Mike Sandlock, a journeyman backstop for 3 MLB teams, kept a diary during the Dec. 1945 NL All Star tour of Pacific military bases. The signs of war and death were numerous. His touring team mates included Frank McCormick, Ralph Branca, Bill Voiselle, Whitey Kurowski, Clyde King and Red Barrett. Here are some select diary entries that mention the signs of battle and injuries observed by Sandlock.

### Dec 18, 1945 Tuesday

After work out we all went to see Pearl Harbor. Very interesting. Saw where the Arizona was hit and sunk. Went through a submarine, no. 264. The score was 4 war ships, 23 merchant ships and one island. Oldest shit here. Lt. Clayton was our interpreter (guide) – a football star of USC.

### Dec 19, 1945 Wednesday

Left for Furlong Field at noon and played the Navy team at 2:30 pm, Navy won 6 to 3. Keltner, Marshall, Lakeman, Shoun hit homeruns. Met young Max Macon from OG. Also met Lt. Comm. Roger Walsh who took Gerheuser and I into their quarters for a drink and dinner – steak too. After dinner we took in two good basketball games. Stopped just inside of the Pearl Harbor Gates to have a glass of beer which they call Private Stock. Roger had a jeep which was our transportation. It's midnight now. Good night!

### Dec 21, 1945 Friday

Hickham Field was our third game. Won it 10 to 1. Ate with the G.I.'s before the game. Spending a quiet evening tonight. Notes! The recreational hall that we dress in was a mess hall on Dec. 7, 1941 where 154 of our boys were killed. Building still has scars of machine guns. Also seen a tree which had quite a few holes right through it.

### Dec 29, 1945 Saturday

Arrived in Guam 12:59 AM (Guam time). Hung around for quite a while before we got anyone to put us up for the night. Finally they sent us to the furthest part of the Island. Where the woods were very thick. Had no. 22 barrack. A round top with a screen front and back. And no one wanted to go to the latrean which was about 50 yards away from our barracks. There was too much talk about Jap snipers picking off 4 Marines. It sure was a scary place. No game. Spent a quiet day. Eating with GI's and making a theater appearance. Stayed for the show. (Sightseeing was good.). Took pictures at Guam.

### Dec 31, 1945 Monday

Last Day of 1945. Take off time was 1:34 AM. Landed in Manila, Nichols Field, 9:36 AM. Had breakfast at the U.S.O. unit. Then made arrangements to get settled at Abenue Hotel, Room 401. Rode out to the park with Max Macon and Kirby Higbe. A very nice looking ballfield. Although it was shot up quite a bit. Clubhouse and all. Two pill boxes in centerfield. Tank coming right through left centerfield wall which is all ready replaced. The town and building area a mess. Stayed at Higbe and Macon's quarters until time for dinner. Had steak. It's a noisy New Year's Eve here and I intend to be quiet.



### Jan 4, 1946 Friday

We took a ride after breakfast to the post office and to a PX but nothing of interest at the PX. At one in the afternoon we had arranged to visit the hospital quarters. It was something you will never forget. Met a ballplayer who I played against in

the association. The name Vince DiBiasi who pitched for Kansas City and was to come up to the Yanks. Pretty nearly died that morning and was in a coma till noon. Was alright when we visited him, but according to the Doctor he has a 50/50 chance. Played that nite, won in ten innings 7 to 3.

### Jan 7, 1946 Monday

No game today! Made arrangements with Eddy Logan's brother-in-law who is in the Navy. For a trip over to Corregidor. We had a 63 foot rescue boat, It was a wonderful trip. Left for Corregidor 9:35 AM. Arrived 10:35 AM. They got a truck for us to travel the island round. Seen the 12" guns as well as others. Still a lot of live bombs lying around but no one touched. Also saw where Wainwright made his last stand and tunnel. Had a very rough trip back. Quite a few got wet but no one sick. Back at 2:30 PM. Had dinner at the Navy base and made appearance on stage.

### Jan 8, 1946 Tuesday

Left the hotel at 8 AM in a cattle truck for Batangas. What a ride as the roads were still torn up. Arrived in Batangas at noon. Had lunch at the officers club. Played Base R. Won in the last inning 7 to 4. Maltzberger (5) for Base R. King for us. Sleeping quarters were in the Hospital base. The only beds available. The boys across the way were very happy and gay and loose. We didn't get much sleep.

### Jan 9, 1946 Wednesday

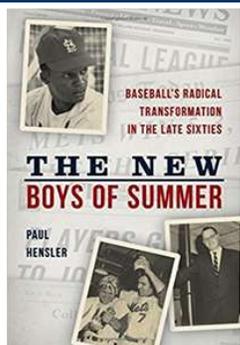
After breakfast we all got together at the Red Cross center where we divided up into two groups to tour the Hospitals. Kurowski, McCormick, Branca, Lakeman, Voiselle and myself were one group. Asked baseball questions and the first one to answer won an autographed ball. Met a fellow from Stamford, Conn. Who works for the Dani Tree Co. First fellow he met from Conn. In three years. Played Base R again and won 8 to 1. Shantz for Base R. Voiselle for us. Lakeman hit a homerun. Took a plane back to Manila. Took us 24 minutes to get back.

### Jan 10, 1946 Thursday

Went to see Charlie Dressen in the Hospital. Dressen will be out tomorrow. Had a little touch of the flu. While we visited Dressen, Gerheuser and I went over to see DiBiasi, who was in a terrible condition when we were there the last visit of that hospital. Vince DiBiasi was much better. Very remarkable difference. Dr. did say our visits were very interesting because of the way he snaps out of all the very next morning. A very lousy game today. Navy 1, our team 13. Branca.

## Upcoming Baseball Book Releases

Compiled By Karl Cicitto (Source: amazon.com)



### **The New Boys of Summer: Baseball's Radical Transformation in the Late Sixties**

(Available Now) by Paul Hensler

The 1960s were among the most compelling years in the history of the United States, from the intensifying clamor for civil rights to the tragic incidents of assassination and war. Caught up in this sea of restlessness was major league baseball, and the manner in which baseball addressed the challenges of this decade would have a lasting impact on the game. In *The New Boys of Summer*, Paul Hensler looks at the key issues confronting baseball during this tumultuous time. Hensler carefully examines how domestic racial issues, the war in Vietnam, assassinations of prominent public figures, youthful rebellion, and drug use each placed their imprint on the game just as baseball was about to celebrate its centennial season. The expansion of both the American and National leagues is also covered in depth, as are the new divisional alignments & major rule changes that were implemented in 1969.

### **Baseball on the Brink: The Crisis of 1968**

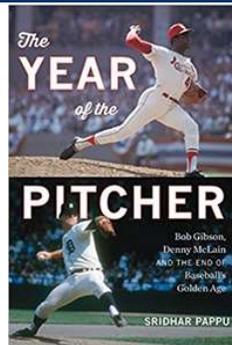
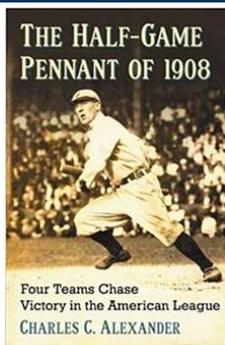
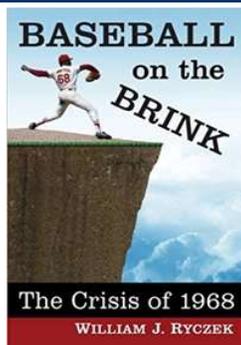
(11/15/2017) by William J. Ryczek

Major League Baseball was in crisis in 1968. The commissioner was inept, professional football was challenging the sport's popularity and the game on the field was boring, with pitchers dominating hitters in a succession of dull, low-scoring games. The League expanded for the 1969 season but the muddled process by which new franchises were selected highlighted the ineffective management of the sport. This book describes how baseball reached its nadir in the late 1960s and how it survived and began its slow comeback. The lack of offense in the game is examined, taking in the great pitching performances of Denny McLain, Bob Gibson, Don Drysdale and others. Colorful characters like Charley Finley and Ken Harrelson are covered, along with the effects dramatic changes in American society and the war in Vietnam had on the game.

### **The Half-Game Pennant of 1908**

(11/15/2017) by Charles C. Alexander

The 1908 American League pennant race was described as "a fierce and fluctuating fight." With five games left in the season, each of the league's four westernmost teams still had a shot at the championship. It was the height of the "dead-ball era" of spectacular pitching and mostly low-scoring, quickly played games, with an abundance of colorful characters and bizarre episodes. It was also a time when professional baseball truly came into its own as America's "National Pastime." This lively account details a neglected chapter in the game's history.



### **The Year of the Pitcher: Bob Gibson, Denny McLain, and the End of Baseball's Golden Age**

(10/03/2017) by Sridhar Pappu

In 1968, two remarkable pitchers would dominate the game as well as the broadsheets. Bob Gibson, together with the St. Louis Cardinals, embodied an entire generation's hope for integration at a heated moment in American history. Denny McLain, his adversary, was a crass self-promoter who eschewed the team charter and his Detroit Tigers teammates to zip cross-country in his own plane. For one season, the nation watched as these two men and their teams swept their respective league championships to meet at the World Series. Together, the two have come to stand as iconic symbols, giving the fans "The Year of the Pitcher" and changing the game. Evoking a nostalgic season and its incredible characters, this is the story of one of the great rivalries in sports and an indelible portrait of the national pastime during a turbulent year and the two men who electrified fans from all walks of life

### **Baseball Greatness: Top Players and Teams According to Wins Above Average, 1901-2016**

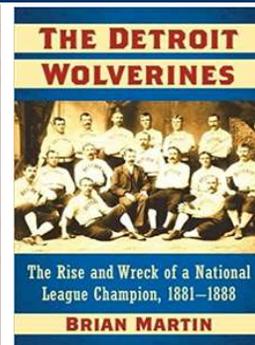
(11/15/2017) by David Kaiser

Recent advances in baseball statistical analysis have made it possible to assess the totality of contribution of each player to team success or failure. Using the metric Wins Above Average (WAA), the author undertakes a fascinating review of major league baseball from 1901 through 2016. The great teams are analyzed, underscoring why they were successful. The great players of each generation are identified using simple metrics. The importance of pitching is found to be vastly exaggerated. Focusing on today's rosters, the WAA assessment shows that the game is threatened by an unprecedented shortage of great players.

### **The Detroit Wolverines: The Rise and Wreck of a National League Champion, 1881-1888**

(10/30/2017) by Brian Martin

The Detroit Tigers were founding members of the American League and have been the Motor City's team for more than a century. But the Wolverines were the city's first major league club, playing in the National League beginning in 1881 and capturing the pennant in 1887. Playing in what was then one of the best ballparks in America, during an era when Detroit was known as the "Paris of the West," the team battled hostile National League owners and struggled with a fickle fan base to become world champions, before financial woes led to their being disbanded in 1888. This first ever history of the Wolverines covers the team's rise and abrupt fall & the powerful men behind it.



## Frank Observations

By Michael Frank

### Will Big League Baseball Survive?

Two issues ago I wrote about the Little League in general. Today, I look at what Lincoln Mitchell said about it in his book, "Will Big League baseball Survive?" (Temple, 2017)

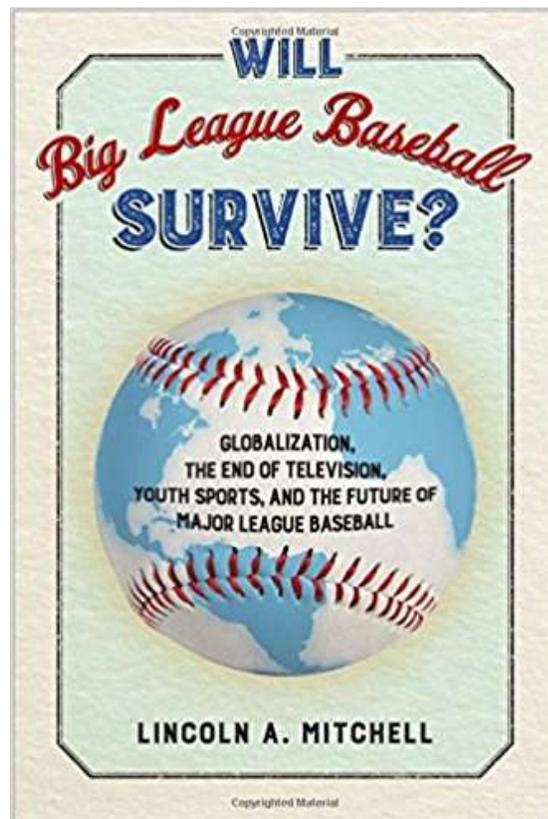
First, he points out little data is available on forms of the game that were once central to American childhoods, like pickup games, running bases, even throwing a ball against the wall.

He says many sports are seeing major drop-offs, as organized opportunities consolidate around the most talented, committed, or well-resourced players. They blame changing parenting styles, more athletic options, and indoor activities like video games.

Despite its shortcomings, sandlot ball engendered a love of the game and gave players who were not the best the opportunity to play a lot.

What was looked at as fun is now looked at as an opportunity for a scholarship; the weaker players have stopped playing. Recreational leagues are more difficult to maintain. It's not good for the long term health of the game.

Finally, he says there's no evidence that playing only one sport year round as opposed to following the calendar, will make a player better.



### A View from the Other Side – Volunteering at the National

As you know, the SABR National was in New York last month. I won't bother you with the different times I'd be there around my work versus a meeting away (Hooray, no air flight, no expensive hotel!).

On Wednesday, I basically watched David Lippman give out Mets tickets. I noticed the National group is more involved in these events than way back when. My main job was tracking times and holding up signs with 5, 3, and 0 minutes to go. (0 means go to Q&A). Most presenters were cooperative, sometimes rushing through material that deserved more than 20 minutes. It was not clear how much power I had to cut people off.

A few times a Marc Appelman or Leslie Heaphy came storming in when we ran over. It was a good job because it allowed me to listen to the presenters (a big part of Nationals anyway), connect with the presenters and others, and look at posters and do other things during the gaps.

Of course the presenters are the keys but you need support people, too.



## Book Review: Leo Durocher: Baseball's Prodigal Son

By Larry Levine

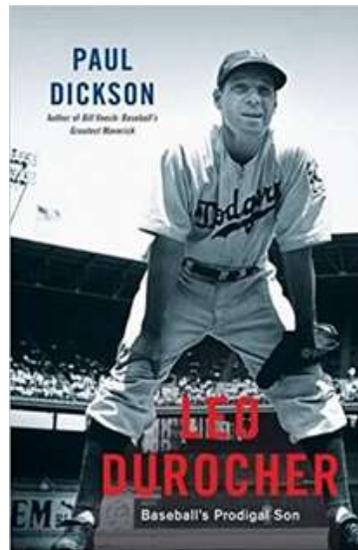
Paul Dickson has a penchant for writing about colorful characters. But while his award-winning biography of Bill Veeck (Bill Veeck: Baseball's Greatest Maverick) detailed the life of a charming, likeable rapsallion whose antics generally drew grins even when sometimes borderline appropriate, his latest, *Leo Durocher: Baseball's Prodigal Son*, recounts the career of a considerably less endearing man. While Durocher never precisely said that nice guys finish last, he certainly couldn't be accused of being nice and with few exceptions, over a long tenure in baseball, rarely finished last.

From mid-1948 through the end of the 1955 National League season, any devotee of the lamented New York Giants would have regarded Leo Durocher as a gift of the Baseball Gods (full disclosure: I was one of those folks). But he certainly didn't initially endear himself to Polo Grounder faithful. When this hateful refugee from Brooklyn became the Giants' manager and proceeded to jettison favorites like Johnny Mize, Sid Gordon and Willard Marshall, lynch mobs were forming throughout upper Manhattan. In time it became clear, however, that the acquisition of Eddie Stanky (a borderline Hall of Famer if you re-examine his numbers using the new analytics) and Alvin Dark would bring excitement and joy to the long suffering franchise.

Dickson reminds us of the wild celebration following the Bobby Thomson home run where Stanky ran from the dugout to tackle the delirious Durocher and wrestle him to the ground. Then, too, we loved the manager's judicious use of the irrepressible "Dusty" Rhodes as the Giants swept the heavily favored Indians in the 1954 World Series. Those were the good times - unfortunately, for the Giants, who fled New York in 1958 and for Durocher, who never again won a title, the good times were fleeting.

This is as good a place as any to denounce as utter and complete nonsense the myth of the stolen signs that the Giants purportedly used during the stretch run in '51 which Dickson duly reports as gospel. Forget for a moment that during the remarkable comeback from 13 and 1/2 games back in mid-August, that it was the pitching, not the offense which improved dramatically, something to which a telescope could not contribute. That there was a telescope seems clear but consider how the system was alleged to work. The pitcher is on the rubber looking for the sign. He reads it and immediately goes into his delivery. He does not hum the first few bars of the National Anthem before throwing the ball. We are to believe that in those few seconds, the coach with the telescope reads the sign, transmits it somehow to the Giants bullpen in deepest right field in the Polo Grounds which in turn appoints someone to signal the pitch to the hitter who is apparently expected to be looking to the bullpen rather than to the pitch which is already on its way. Absurd! Maybe there was some system for instantaneous communication. It certainly could not have happened this way.

Throughout this excellent volume (the author's wide ranging literary interests have resulted in an output of over 65 books and hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles) Dickson paints a picture of a brash, audacious, devil-may-care figure who would be a better fit on the old Orioles of the 1890s where the only baseball sin was getting caught trying to beat the system. Leo's style was already anachronistic by the end of his career. He'd never be hired by today's corporate ownership if only because of his checkered relation with the Press. At one point he banned the popular Dan Daniel and all but three of the 30 or so "beat" writers from the



clubhouse for being critical about markedly offensive behavior toward umpires. Dan Parker, an especially prestigious reporter of the time, wrote of this and other similar behaviors "Durocher is manager of a big league ball club. That is quite different from being a big league manager" (Donald Trump take note). Lack of any cordiality with reporters seemingly persisted to the end of his career. In Chicago, during the epic collapse of the Cubs in 1969, Durocher developed an absolutely toxic relationship with Jerome Holtzman, the highly respected dean of Chicago writers (not however over Holtzman's invention of the Save statistic, something truly worthy of abuse).

But Leo's status as a public relations nightmare was also due to his often hostile behavior to members of his own club. Among many examples was the near mutiny of the entire Dodger team in 1943 which erupted when a Dodger pitcher was punished for behavior judged by them to be innocent. Events of this kind do not happen in a vacuum. The players had probably had enough of what was likely a pattern of abusive managerial behavior. Durocher's public humiliation of the legendary Ernie Banks in Chicago is yet another such case. Not all players had Sal Maglie's chutzpah, who when called a dago and told "you pitch like a girl", spat a mouthful of water over Durocher in the dugout. Clearly, managers will use a variety of psychological techniques to spur performance but some of these incidents seem particularly mean spirited. Calling Ken Holtzman, the Cubs' lefthander, "a gutless Jew" in front of his teammates seems an unlikely motivator.

Durocher's biggest negative, however, and the reason it's difficult to understand how he's been admitted to Cooperstown (even if only posthumously) was his notorious attraction to big time gambling and his association with a cohort of underworld figures notable for a variety of criminal activities. Dickson reports that the Dodger clubhouse was overrun with gamblers, bookies, ticket scalpers, and racing handicappers. Players were known to spend hundreds of dollars on a single horse race between the innings of a ball game. High stakes poker games (in which Durocher played a hand) were everyday occurrences. Judge Landis warned Rickey to get control of the situation or there would be consequences. "Happy" Chandler, Landis' successor followed through by suspending Durocher for the whole of the 1947 season. Further, it defies credulity that Durocher was not somehow involved in actor George Raft's cheating mark for \$18,500 in Durocher's apartment in a crooked dice game although Leo was not physically present. Joe Adonis, "Bugsy" Siegel, and other members of organized crime were known to Durocher & although no fire could be definitively detected from these associations, the smoke was thick.

*Continued on Page 11 (Durocher)*



## Danbury (continued from Page 4)

Despite a creditable on field performance, the team was \$700 in debt due to poor attendance, railroad fares and hotel bills. Unable to continue paying the players, co-owners Rose and Jack Sullivan turned over the club to pitcher George Cain.

The team held together and responded positively and by August 31 had reached to 14 games over .500. Unfortunately, Danbury couldn't maintain the pace and lost eight of their final nine tilts. A 5-1 road setback to Waterbury clinched the pennant for the Brass City team on the season's final day beating Danbury, 5-1. The September swoon relegated Danbury to a 51-44 fourth-place finish.

Danbury's next foray with organized baseball came in 1912 as members of New York/Connecticut League along with Empire State teams from Newburgh, Kingston, Peekskill, Port Jervis and Middletown. Harry Guiron, from Troy, NY was the manager and owner of the Danbury team. With bleachers and a grandstand already in place at the White Street grounds, the only improvement that Guiron had to make prior to the season opener was installation of an outfield fence.

With the season set to start on May 17, Guiron began selling season tickets to an unsuspecting Danbury populace. The 1912 season for Danbury would last only three games! Fans learned on May 21 through New York newspapers that their team was voted out of the league by the other owners due to extensive travel expenses to Danbury. Travel to Danbury cost teams an average \$50 per game. With just a \$40 guarantee the New York teams stood to lose \$10 on each trip.

The unscrupulous Guiron disappeared from town leaving the team penniless and renegeing on promises to refund the fans who had bought season tickets. The entire league went belly-up a few weeks later

The stage was set for Ernest "Duke" Landgraf, one of minor league's all-time colorful personalities, to become part of Danbury's baseball lore. Landgraf would spend 52 years in the minor leagues as a player, owner, manager, scout, and finally as president of the Class D North Atlantic League for five seasons before retiring from baseball in 1950.

Landgraf bought the Paterson club which had been beset with field issues, and secured a spot for Danbury in the 1913 New York-New Jersey League by moving the team to Danbury on April 18. Other members of the six-team circuit that year included Long Branch, Poughkeepsie, Kingston, Middletown and Newburgh.

A new rule was established by National Association of Minor Leagues, minor league's governing board, that all members had to show evidence of their financial and operational stability. Teams were mandated file a \$1,000 bond prior to the start of each season. A portion of the bond, \$600, covered half of the player's monthly salary limit, while the remainder was held by the league president in good faith. This provided some reassurance for Danbury fans who had been duped by Guiron the year before.

The franchise also needed a place to play. Following the 1912 season the White St. grounds had been sub-divided into building lots. Sensing an opportunity to increase its profits, the Danbury

and Bethel Railway offered to build a stadium for the Hatters on the corner of South Street and Shelter Rock Road, next to its trolley shed. During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century trolley transportation was very popular. Many trolley companies at the time partnered with private industry to build baseball stadiums and amusement parks with trolley tracks bringing passengers to the front gates.

The newly minted "Hatters" made their 1913 season debut on May 25, with a win over Poughkeepsie, 8-5, at home before 900 fans. Unfortunately, team wins and fan support quickly disappeared when Danbury dropped 14 of their next 16 games, before halting the skid.

With fan support ebbing and the team prohibited by local laws from playing games on Sunday, and his debts rising \$1,500 the first month, Landgraf threatened to move the team to Reading, Pennsylvania unless the town fathers would allow baseball on Sunday.

The lack of Sunday games always had been a big problem for the four previous Danbury clubs. The so-called "Blue Laws," prohibiting Sunday baseball, had been controversial for professional baseball teams since its rise in popularity in the 1870s. Landgraf saw Sundays as crucial fan draw days when his team could make up for poor weekday turnouts.

In Connecticut, the decision to allow Sunday baseball was strictly a local issue. There was an eager group of fans who wanted to keep professional baseball in Danbury. They rallied and convinced town leaders to lift the ban. Danbury played its "first-ever" Sunday game on June 29, losing to Newburgh, 7-6, before a capacity crowd of 1,200.

Danbury made a dramatic push and almost reached back to the .500 mark, beating Middletown, 10-8 to raise their record to 19-20, on July 6. Sadly, this was to be the high point of the season as the Hatters continued their poor play through August. When the season ended on September 6, Danbury had fallen to fifth place, 43-55. Danbury finished 23 games behind league champion Long Branch, which went 65-29. Ironically, the other four franchises also finished the season with losing records.

The good news for the league was that all six teams that started the year were still operating at season's end. Danbury's best player in 1913 was its right-handed pitcher Sam Fletcher, who finished with a 15-9 record. Fletcher had previous major league stops with Cincinnati and Brooklyn.



## Danbury (continued from Page 9)

Danbury's had a local crowd pleaser that year with Danbury High School alumnus John "Boney" Blake, who hit .305. Blake, then a star outfielder for Niagara University, played under the assumed name of Blakey. This was a very common practice in the early 1900s when college rules forbade players from playing in professional leagues in the summer. This rule was universally ignored since the college governing organization lacked the resources to enforce this rule.

Interest in professional baseball was at an all-time high in the United States in Spring 1914 with two major leagues and 43 minor leagues. However, looming across the Atlantic Ocean were the winds of war. A global conflict involving several countries seemed inevitable.

The league expanded to eight teams for 1914 and took on a new name "The Atlantic League." All former New York-New Jersey League teams with the exception of Kingston joined the new loop. Newcomers included the New Jersey towns of Paterson, Perth Amboy and Asbury Park. The Long Branch "Cuban Giants" moved to Newark.

The Atlantic adopted a 100-game schedule that began on May 20 and finished on Labor Day. The salary cap for each team was \$1,200 per month and rosters were limited to 12 players. Teams were coached by a captain (player manager) who also played an active position. The owner of the club, usually also the general manager, procured players and made all financial decisions.

As expected, Newark got off to a fast start and by mid-season the Atlantic was all but a two-team race between Cuban Giants and Poughkeepsie. The absolute dominance of these two teams all but killed fan interest in other league towns including Danbury, which started slow but came back with to spurt to reach .500 on June 25.

The Hatters continued their climb and on August 16 had risen to ten games over .500 at 44-34. At this juncture, they were just six games behind Poughkeepsie (47-25) and Long Branch (48-26), which had moved back to its former New Jersey coast resort home from Newark on July 3 due to poor fan support.

Poor attendance became a growing problem in Danbury. Even with a winning team, the early season skid had cost the Hatters dearly. Rumors began to fly whether the Hatters would be financially able to complete the season. Sunday attendance had dwindled to 600 while the weekly games were drawing just 100 fans. The long trips to opponent parks also ate up most of the \$50 guarantee money. Despite threats to fold the team, Landgraf kept the Hatters alive.

The final three weeks of the Atlantic season were forgettable as Danbury lost 13 of their final 15 games. Poughkeepsie went 18-6 after August 16, nosing out Long Branch, which won 11 of its final 17 games, to cop the Atlantic League championship.

League management was in continuous chaos throughout the season as two league secretaries quit. By lacking a strong league executive in place, a quick settlement of disputes between teams became impossible. As a result, some teams failed to make up games lost to weather while others just refused to play some of their late season games. This spelled the death knell for the Atlantic League and closed the book on minor league baseball in Danbury. Over the last 25 years there have been at least two attempts to revive minor league baseball in Danbury but neither could attract financial support.

Following the 1914 season minor league baseball began a sudden decline. The 1914 season started with 44 leagues in play. By 1915 the number was down to 32, and dropped to 26 in 1916. Some experts attributed the downturn of fan support to emotional reactions to the war in Europe. Others pointed to competition from the growing silent movie industry & increased automobile usage. The actual reason was probably a combination of all three.

## Find the Connecticut SABR Members in the Crowd



This photo ran in the July 1, 2017 issue of the *New York Times* with a story about the convention. See how quickly you can find Bill Ryczek, Alan Cohen and Karl Cicitto.



## Durocher (*continued from Page 8*)

Was Durocher's one year suspension justified? Dickson seems to think not and offers some reasons why Leo might have been unfairly treated. Frankly, none of them seem overly compelling. Was Durocher's banishment, for example, the club owners' retribution against Rickey for defying their insistence that integration be delayed? No doubt these exemplars of democracy sensed that signing Black players would ultimately lead to the demise of the Negro Leagues and thereby cut off an important revenue stream based on the rental of stadiums for Negro League ball games. Indeed, the Yankees, for one, took in more than \$100,000 a year from such a source. But it's hard to imagine that if Rickey was to be punished, that depriving him of his manager would be an effective means. Surely, a more direct method would have been employed.

Dickson offers yet another possibility; that threats of organized boycotts of Dodger games in New York by Catholic groups like the CYO and others because of Durocher's tumultuous marital affairs prompted Chandler's action. No doubt this was a problem - but only for Rickey and Walter O'Malley. That the Commissioner would intervene in a strictly local issue makes little sense.

Finally the suggestion is raised that Chandler was being pushed by important figures in Washington demanding Durocher's expulsion on moral grounds. That such pressure existed is clear but Chandler, although never popular with players or many owners, was a former United States Senator and Governor of Kentucky and was likely sufficiently strong minded & experienced enough with political pressures to resist such entreaties.

No, these reasons aren't at all necessary to account for Durocher's forced absence. The Law of Parsimony dictates that we need not look for complex explanations when simple ones are available and one is conspicuously available. Leo Durocher, over the years, simply had engaged in enough scandalous behavior to justify significant comeuppance. In a way he had earned a perverse lifetime achievement award. In truth, the penalty might have been harsher. He was lucky that Bart Giamatti was not in the Commissioner's chair.

On the other hand (there is always another hand), Durocher certainly deserves significant credit for his enthusiastic support for the signing of African American players. His profanity laced denunciation of the petition signed by many Dodger players in Havana protesting the Jackie Robinson signing was testimony to his color blindness as was his assigning Monte Irvin, Willie Mays, and Henry Thompson to the outfield in Game 1 of the 1951 World Series; the first time an all-Black outfield had been so deployed.

As early as 1939, furthermore, Durocher gave an interview to Lester Rodney, the sportswriter for the Daily Worker, in which he was asked if he would sign Negro players if he had the chance. He said: "Hell, yes. I'd sign them in a minute if I got permission from the big shots." He went on to say that there were many Negro League players who could play in the Majors immediately, among whom were Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, and "Mule" Suttles. Unfortunately, this quote came to the attention of the famous civil libertarian, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who coerced Durocher into disavowing it. It is still mystifying how very intelligent baseball historians insist that Landis was not racially motivated to keep African American players out of major league baseball. This is not the place for that debate except Dickson reminds us that Landis, who insisted that he would approve any contract for a Negro player

if ownership brought one to him, issued an edict in 1942 forbidding interracial competition during the winter off-season. Apparently Black teams were having too much success against major league barnstormers thereby refuting one of the rationalizations for maintaining all-white rosters, that Negro players do not have the requisite skills.

If one had no previous knowledge of Leo Durocher prior to reading Paul Dickson's biography, there might be considerable wonderment over why his talents were so valued over the years given all his flaws. And make no mistake; they were highly valued. How else can one account for the constant demand for his services as manager? He was correctly regarded as a strong strategist, an aggressive, chance-taking, opponent-baiting leader of players who had to display the same characteristics or they would be playing elsewhere. Let's also not forget that his teams were successful; they won more than 2,000 games over his 24 year managerial career. Notwithstanding all of this, however, would that be enough today to compensate for the gambling, the interpersonal (and sometimes legal) strife, and the significant difficulties with the media? I think not! And therein lies the takeaway message of the Durocher era.

As observers of the societal scene have observed, the only constant is continual change. Whether social changes are regarded as progressive or retrogressive is arguable; what is undeniable is the inevitability of change. Scientists refer to a phenomenon involving important changes that happen when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by new and different ways as a paradigm shift. Consider in the course of the lifetime of most of us the paradigm shifts in acceptable sexual activities, in the role of women, in modes of communication (from face-to-face to today's 140 character electronic "tweets"), in what is considered politically "incorrect" speech, and so on. John C. Calhoun's views on race have obviously not changed (he's been dead for 167 years) and yet until this year, those views were apparently not distasteful enough to remove his name from one of Yale's residential colleges. Why now? The latest paradigm shift! These changes seem sudden but in actuality they arrive gradually, unnoticed, much like the movement of a clock.

Baseball has always reflected the greater society and it, too, has experienced these kinds of changes. It, too, has undergone substantial alterations in the ways the game is played and in the attitudes of the participants and fans. Think about what the game looked like in 1927 when Durocher broke in with the Yankees. Let Leo, himself describe it, as he did in his memoir:

"If a man is sliding into second base and the ball goes into center field, what's the matter with falling on him accidentally so that he can't get up and go to third? If you get away with it, fine. If you don't, what have you lost? I don't call that cheating; I call that heads-up baseball. Win any way you can as long as you can get away with it."

Durocher went on to describe the general practice (of most teams of the era) of doctoring baseballs illegally, kicking balls out of infielders' gloves, tagging baserunners in the mouth, sliding with spikes high, barreling into catchers at home plate, snarling at



## Bagwell Book by Connecticut Chapter Underway

By Karl Ciccito

Connecticut SABR Chapter is halfway done on a first draft of a book with the working title, **JEFF BAGWELL IN CONNECTICUT, A CONSISTENT LAD IN THE LAND OF STEADY HABITS.**

Connecticut's Land of Steady Habits moniker goes back to the early 1800's and according to connecticuthistory.org it was meant to reflect the state's political condition as well as its order, stability and virtue.

Jeff Bagwell taped the word **CONSISTENCY** to his locker at the University of Hartford where, like everywhere else he played, he stayed humble while out-working and out-performing the others. He truly was a consistent lad in the Land of Steady Habits – consistently great at hitting a baseball and at being a great teammate.

The book will cover Bagwell's play for Xavier High School, Post 75 American Legion, University of Hartford and the New Britain Red Sox. There will be profiles on coaches, team mates, articles on select Connecticut ballparks that Bagwell played in, and oral history.

The book is being written with the knowledge and acceptance of the Bagwell family. Jeff's mother, Janice, has been most gracious while chatting with Connecticut SABR about the book.

Writing for this project are six SABR members including Pete Zanardi, longtime Connecticut sports journalist; Alan Cohen, author of 45 SABR bio's, game stories and journal articles; George Pawlush, Connecticut minor league baseball historian and author, Tom Monitto, our stats expert; Greg Erion, author of the Bagwell Bio-Project biography and 31 other SABR articles; Bill Nowlin, SABR Vice President and author of too many books and biographies to cite; and Karl Ciccito.

The book will be fact checked by Brian Wood, and edited by Ciccito with Associate Editors Nowlin and Len Levin.



**"The Crunch Bunch"**

Left to right - Jeff Bagwell, Pat Hedge, Brian Crowley and Chris Petersen combined for 96 home runs and 427 RBIs in their careers.

## Durocher (continued from page 11)

opponents as the only form of communication allowable (David Ortiz would have needed a gag to conform) and more. Tellingly, all of this is in his introductory chapter entitled, I Come To Kill You.

That's the way it was and to judge the career of someone like Leo Durocher by the standards and attitudes of today's values is to commit the sin of presentism. This review might, in fact, be judged guilty to some extent. If so, the mercy of the reader would be appreciated. Durocher was a complex man, certainly, but he was very much a product of his time. That time is part of a bygone era. Many of his flaws, his gambling especially, would be problematic for baseball in any age, but his give-no-quarter, take-no-quarter playing and managerial style was reflective of the time. Durocher's popularity and value might have been largely based on his being a very visible representative of the ethos of that time.

Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan hadn't warned us yet, however, that the times they were a-changin'.

Paul Dickson has given us a nuanced look at one of Baseball's most engaging personalities.

## Major League Players with Connecticut Connections (2017 Regular Season through 07/27/2017)

Player	Team	Conn. Connection	POS	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SAC	GIDP	AVG	OBP	SLG
Ahmed, Nick	ARZ	UConn	SS	53	167	24	42	8	1	6	21	10	39	0	6	0.251	0.298	0.419
Davis, Rajai	OAK	New London	OF	82	250	39	56	13	2	3	15	23	58	2	7	0.224	0.288	0.328
Pollock, A.J.	ARZ	Hebron	OF	56	221	40	67	19	5	5	18	14	39	0	0	0.303	0.347	0.502
Springer, George	HOU	New Britain	OF	93	368	82	114	22	0	27	66	40	86	3	8	0.310	0.384	0.590

Player	Team	Conn. Connection	POS	G	W	L	ERA	CG	SHO	SV	HLD	IP	H	ER	R	HR	BB	SO
Barnes, Matt	BOS	Bethel	P	27	5	2	3.12	0	0	0	16	49.0	33	17	17	3	22	57
Breslow, Craig	MIN	Trumbull	P	30	1	1	5.23	0	0	0	0	31.0	38	18	19	4	14	18
Hahn, Jesse	OAK	Groton	P	14	3	6	5.30	0	0	0	0	69.2	78	41	46	4	27	55
Harvey, Matt	NYM	Mystic	P	13	4	3	5.25	0	0	0	0	70.1	67	41	42	16	37	54
Hughes, Jared	MIL	Stamford	P	44	3	2	3.83	0	0	1	9	40.0	37	17	18	2	21	34
Leone, Dominic	TOR	Norwich	P	38	2	0	2.56	0	0	0	2	45.2	30	13	15	4	21	48
Oberg, Scott	COL	UConn	P	46	0	1	5.58	0	0	0	10	40.1	50	25	27	3	20	38
Scribner, Evan	SEA	New Milford	P	8	0	2	11.05	0	0	0	0	7.1	13	9	9	3	0	6



## Connecticut SABR Smoky Joe Wood Annual Chapter Report

By Steve Krevisky

Our chapter has had a high level of activity in the past year. We note that following activities and achievements of our group:

1. We have regular breakfasts and have outgrown the restaurant where we have been holding this event for the past several years.
2. We have had 4 Strat-O-Matic Game Day events, with 8 to 12 attendees each time. John Garcia from Strat-O-Matic was at the April event, did Q and A, and gave out complete Strat games and team sets.
3. Our March 25 General meeting, at Quinnipiac University, featured presentations by Mark Stoler, Joe Runde and Mark Kanter. A highlight was the Hall of Fame Panel discussion (organized by Karl Ciccitto) with Jeff Bagwell's coach, teammates, and GM, Gerry Berthiaume, David Sizemore, Dan Gooley, Brian Crowley, and George Grande.
4. Our October 15 general meeting at QU featured presentations by Bob Wirz, David Kaiser, Vernona Gomez, Matt Merullo, and Jim Berardinucci.
5. Alan Cohen brings numerous boxes of baseball books to our meetings and conducts book sales.
6. We had a successful Yankees Ticket Auction, which raised \$270. Mark Stoler graciously donated a pair of 1960's Polo Grounds seats which brought \$550 to the chapter treasury.
7. Karl Ciccitto edits our chapter newsletter, The Wood Pile, which was published in August (21 pages) and January (11 pages). They carried contributions from 12 chapter members!
8. Bob Wirz was inducted into the Nebraska Sports Hall of Fame, in honor of his long career in the professional game and with the media.
9. A new book by Bob Wirz was published and he scheduled appearances to promote his books, as did Karl Ciccitto and Alan Cohen, who held book talks at the Bloomfield and Suffield libraries for the Mike Sandlock book that we did.
10. Alan Cohen managed our annual holiday banquet, which was a big hit, in spite of the snow and sleet. Featured speakers included Peter Tucci of Tucci Lumber, which makes MLB baseball bats, Jason Klein of Force 3 Gear, which makes MLB catchers' masks, and Marjorie Adams, who displayed copies of the laws of baseball, written in her Great Grandfather's hand (Doc Adams).
11. We had a chapter outing to Old Timers Day at Yankee Stadium, organized by Alan Cohen and Steve Krevisky, which we will do again. We also attended New Britain Bees and Bridgeport Bluefish games.
12. Many of our members attended the SABR convention in Miami last year. We attended the SABR convention in NYC, where several of us presented, and helped with convention logistics.
13. Our members attend other conferences, such as the SABR Analytics conference (Mark Stoler) and the Cooperstown Symposium (Paul Hensler).
14. We also regularly attend and present at the Southern NE chapter meetings as well and attend meetings in Boston and Springfield.
15. We have regular communication with our members, either through Jacob Pomrenke in the national office (done by Steve Krevisky), or through Facebook. Karl Ciccitto also writes the content for our web-site, and distributes links to it via Facebook and e-mail.
16. Several members attend the 19<sup>th</sup> century conference in Cooperstown and Joe Williams was on one of the panels.
17. Bill Ryczek and Paul Hensler have books in the works and we look forward to hearing from them on these.
18. Our next book project will be on Jeff Bagwell in Connecticut, as a follow up to our Bagwell panel at our March meeting.

Chapter Officers: Steve Krevisky, President

Alan Cohen, Vice President & Treasurer

Karl Ciccitto, Communications Director

Stan Dziurgot, Membership Coordinator



## Opportunity Knocks for Writing Projects

Compiled by Karl Ciccito

SABR has published dozens of books and thousands of biographies and will continue to add to the canon of baseball history through the efforts of SABR members. Writing opportunities are abundant. First Timers are welcome. Here is some information on 5 writing projects and how to become involved.

### Team Ownership Histories Project

The SABR Baseball Biography Project and the SABR Business of Baseball Committee are teaming up to create a collection of the ownership histories of major league franchises. As they are completed, the histories will appear in the Business of Baseball newsletter and be posted permanently in a separate section on the BioProject web-site. If you are interested in doing a team's history, please contact Andy McCue ([agmccue44@earthlink.net](mailto:agmccue44@earthlink.net)), who is coordinating the project.

### 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. 4,171 biographies have been written by 500+ SABR members as of July 30, 2017. Your subject can be anyone who ever played in the major leagues & 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](http://sabr.org/bioproject)

Things you should know: [sabr.org/content/bioproject-resources](http://sabr.org/content/bioproject-resources)

Request an assignment: Lyle Spatz at [lspatz@comcast.net](mailto:lspatz@comcast.net)

### 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.

Web-site: [sabr.org/gamesproject](http://sabr.org/gamesproject)

Things you should know: [sabr.org/content/sabr-games-project](http://sabr.org/content/sabr-games-project)

Request an assignment: Bruce Slutsky at [bruce@bruce Slutsky.com](mailto:bruce@bruce Slutsky.com)

### SABR Baseball Ballparks Project

We love ballparks and feel that each one deserves its own biography. Ballparks have a life of their own. Your job, as the ballpark's biographer, is to cover that life in detail, from birth to death.

Web-site: [sabr.org/bioproj/parks](http://sabr.org/bioproj/parks)

Request an assignment: James Forr at [jff110@hotmail.com](mailto:jff110@hotmail.com)

### SABR Book Projects

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

## THE WOOD PILE

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



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