

# BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter

Summer 2005

### The Sons of Sibby Sisti

May 20-22 marked the return of the Braves to Boston for a three-game restoration of their historic "City Series" competition. The in-city rivalry ran from 1905 through the ill-fated spring of 1953 and was the subject of the BBHA publication by Frank J. Williams, *The Battle for Baseball Supremacy in Boston*. Major league baseball's inauguration of interleague play in 1997 was devised to promote attendance by providing fans with an opportunity to see traditional rivals in the Senior and Junior Circuits compete with one another without having to await a joint World Series appearance that might never happen (remember 1948?). The Red Sox and Braves were immediately paired because of their longstanding past relationship. Many of you will recall our joint reunion with the Atlanta Braves 400 Club that summer. We looked forward to the annual scheduling of this rivalry and were disappointed when it was interrupted in 2003. I know that many in our membership attended this year's contests and that many others watched the games on television.

Baseball draws much of its appeal from its past. This season's events are measured against the feats of yesteryear. However, instead of welcoming the return of a notable part of Boston's sports heritage, a few in the media questioned its continued validity. Dan Shaughnessy, sports columnist of *The Boston Globe*, was especially vocal in his displeasure of this interleague link-up. Shaughnessy is a media personality whose opinions often provoke a strong positive or negative reaction. You can decide for yourself where you stand after reading his remarks about Boston Braves followers. In a May 21<sup>st</sup> column entitled "Rivalry Must Be Chopped," Shaughnessy questioned the existence of any remaining Braves fan base in New England. "[T]here are supposedly still pockets of New Englanders who never stopped rooting for the team with the tomahawks. In truth, it's difficult to find Braves loyalists around Boston in 2005. They're like the Japanese soldiers who were found in the Philippines, still fighting World War II years after VJ Day." Continuing on, he remarked, "There is no group known as The Sons of Sibby Sisti. If you know anyone who still goes to

the racetrack every day, he's probably one of the last of the Boston Braves fans."

Of course, some hyperbole is contained in Shaughnessy's musings. However, given recent high profile incidents of questionable journalistic practices by this country's print and electronic media, you'd think that the existence of readily available information that might otherwise contradict a clever but inaccurate alliterative quip would not be so cavalierly overlooked. It would have taken very little effort on his part, or that of a go-fer's, to look into his own newspaper's files to retrieve articles that have appeared within the *Globe's* very own pages concerning the Tribe's hard core fandom in the Northeast. The Boston media has never had difficulty locating the BBHA to solicit assistance in the preparation of a Braves-related piece. We especially protest Shaughnessy's spurious taking of our beloved Boston Braves Hall of Famer's name in vain. Sibby Sisti is the Boston Braves counterpart of "Mr. Red Sox," Johnny Pesky. Our "Mr. Boston Braves" is equally revered by Beantown's National League fans. While our official title is the "Boston Braves Historical Association," we would be proud to also be referred to as The Sons (and Daughters!) of Sibby Sisti. We're somewhat surprised, given Shaughnessy's past ramblings, that he chose to cast aside the number of "firsts" attributable to the Braves, including the introduction of Boston baseball's first African American player and the establishment of The Jimmy Fund. As recent Hall of Fame inductee Peter Gammons remarked, "And for those who whined in Boston [about interleague matchups] – would you rather see a team that once played a mile away from Fenway and has 13 consecutive first-place finishes or three games with the Royals?" Despite Shaughnessy's protestations, the rivalry will continue in Atlanta next season.

### Riding the Rocket

You never know what will turn up next in an eBay auction. Recently, a negative capturing a shot of members of the press viewing the 1952 winter itinerary of the Boston Braves "Rookie Rocket" was placed up for bid. The photograph was taken in front of a chartered Pan American World Airways airplane bearing that

moniker, which embarked upon a 10,360 mile transcontinental road trip to introduce Boston's baseball scribes to the Tribe's crop of new talent. Born out of inspiration and desperation by Braves' publicity director **Bill Sullivan** (BBHA HOF 1999), the jaunt was intended to encourage members of the press to report on the pool of prospects that hopefully would restore the club to its 1948 championship glory. The team's declining performance since its halcyon season had taken its toll at the gate, with attendance dropping from a club record of 1,455,439 to 1951's meager 487,475. The Braves farm system was exhibiting signs of resurgence in 1951. Boston's ten affiliates recorded a total of 855 victories versus 686 defeats. Three teams captured league pennants with top affiliate, Milwaukee, winning the Little World Series. Only two clubs failed to achieve league playoff status.

The flight departed on the morning of January 21<sup>st</sup> and would not return to Boston's Logan Airport until February 8<sup>th</sup>. Passengers included such notables as Bob Holbrook of the *Globe*, Al Hirshberg of the *Post*, John Gillooly of the *Daily Record*, Larry Claflin of the *American* and Jack McCarthy of the *Herald-Traveler*. The Rocket was met at its first stop, Newark, NJ, by manager **Tommy Holmes**. An auto ride to Weehawken delivered the group to the home of **Jack Cusick**, obtained that past fall from the Cubs in a trade for Bob Addis. Cusick originally signed with the Phillies and was drafted by the Cardinals where Rogers Hornsby tutored him in the minors. The tour's next stop was Prospect Park, PA and the residence of outfielder **Jack Daniels**, who had toiled with the Hartford Chiefs for the past three seasons. Fast afoot, Daniels had the reputation of being a fine defensive performer with a strong arm. A quick hop to Wilmington, DE brought the travelers to **Billy Bruton**, a speedy fly chaser who had stolen 66 bases in his first year of organized ball. Starting in 1953, Bruton would anchor the Braves outfield in Milwaukee for eight seasons, capturing the National League base-stealing title during his first three big league campaigns.

Departing the frigid northeast, the Rookie Rocket touched down in Havana, Cuba to visit with prospects performing on the winter baseball circuit. Milwaukee Brewers outfielder **Bob Thorpe** fielded questions from reporters who next ventured to San Juan, PR where a large contingent of prospects awaited the scribes. Performing for teams representing various cities on the island were **George Crowe, Jack Dittmer, Billy Klaus, Don Liddle, Murray Wall,**

**Bert Thiel and Charlie Gorin.** Thorpe, Crowe, Dittmer, Klaus and Thiel would see action with the parent club during the upcoming season.

The longest leg of the journey followed. From San Juan, the Rocket winged its way to Los Angeles. There they encountered Brattleboro, VT native **Ernie Johnson** who was staying with his in-laws while working at the *Los Angeles Post*. Big things were expected from the lanky right hander who had notched a 15-4 record with the Brewers and excelled in the post season by adding five more victories during the American Association play-offs and the Little World Series. The following stop was in Santa Barbara to visit with future Hall of Famer **Eddie Mathews**. Mathews made the 1952 big league squad and clubbed 25 of his 512 career homers with Boston. Moving further up the west coast, the Rocket was met by pitching prospect **Gene Conley** in Richland, WA. Conley had just been named *The Sporting News* minor league player of the year by virtue of his 20-9 performance with the Hartford Chiefs in 1951, his first season in pro ball. Nine of his victories were shutouts.

Turning eastward, the Rocket landed in Denver to introduce the writers to **Virgil Jester**, regarded as the top relief pitcher in the American Association in 1951. The gang left the Mile High City and arrived at Shawano, WI to see second base prospect **Billy Reed**. Reed had missed batting above .300 only once (.290 in 1948) in his previous six minor league seasons. He had captured the Eastern League batting crown in 1949 and was the American Association's All Star second sacker in 1951. The Rookie Rocket embarked on a series of Midwest whistle stops to St. Louis, Evansville, and Columbus for interviews with **Harry Hanebrink, Pete Whisenant** and **Dick Hoover**, respectively. Reed, Whisenant and Hoover would make brief appearances in the Hub during the 1952 season while Hanebrink would have to wait until 1953 before progressing to the majors. While serving with the Navy during World War II, Hanebrink visited Hiroshima shortly after the atomic bomb blast.

The weary crew of the Rookie Rocket returned to Boston, only to quickly unpack and prepare for the opening of spring training in Bradenton, FL later in February.

## Talk from the Chop

**Gary Caruso**, BBHA member and editor of *ChopTalk*, continues to take note of the franchise's rich history all the way back to Boston. The June edition featured an article about the Braves' first trip to Washington in April to play the Nationals. Reflecting upon the team's history, the author informed readers that the Braves had last competed against a DC entry on July 3, 1899 when the Boston Beaneaters were defeated by the Washingtonians. When switch-hitting Rafael Furcal homered from both sides of the plate on April 15<sup>th</sup>, he was the third Brave to accomplish this rare feat. Current mate, Chipper Jones, had done it five times before but it was Boston Brave **Jim Russell** who established the initial mark in 1948. The late **Warren Spahn** continues to be memorialized. A statue in the image of the Warren Spahn Award was dedicated outside of the SBC Bricktown Ballpark, home of the AAA Oklahoma City RedHawks. Spahnie's statue is a facsimile of the one's that currently reside outside of Oklahoma Sports Museum and in front of Turner Field. Baseball's greatest left-hander also is remembered at Hartshorne (OK) High School where the diamond has been named in his honor. Member **John Patterson** of N. Kingston, RI penned a letter to the editor expressing his gratitude that *ChopTalk* covers the entire spectrum of franchise history. John is also a member of the Milwaukee Braves Historical Association.

July's issue of the Braves journal contained an article highlighting the release of a film about **Hank Aaron's** pro baseball debut as a Boston Braves farmhand in Eau Claire, WI. The 80-minute documentary, *Summer Up North*, is based on Jerry Poling's book, *A Summer Up North*, detailing the challenges faced by the 18-year-old playing far from his southern home. For further information, visit SummerUpNorth.com. The possibility of a triple crown winner in the Senior Circuit this season for the first time since 1937 resulted in a notation that the Braves can lay claim to one of the seven ballplayers that achieved this feat. **Bobby Lowe**, of the 1894 Beaneaters led the league in batting, homers and RBI.

August marks the seventh annual Braves Hall of Fame induction ceremony and that month's *ChopTalk* noted the entry of shortstop **Herman Long**. Long performed at shortstop for the 1890-1902 Beaneaters and was known for his slugging prowess during the Dead Ball Era. He was also a leading base-stealer and a slick

fielder. **Steve Kuczek** of the 1949 Boston Braves was interviewed about his 1.000 batting average. Kuczek's only big league appearance occurred on September 29<sup>th</sup> when, as a pinch hitter, he stroked a double to right-center in Braves Field against Dodger ace, Don Newcombe. To subscribe to *ChopTalk*, the official monthly magazine of the Atlanta Braves, call 1-877-655-CHOP (2467).

## Numerology

In 1931, the Boston Braves were the first National League team to identify their players with numerals, displaying numbers on both home and road togs. In honor of the resumption of the City Series, let's see whose Boston Braves numerals Atlanta players are donning on their backs this season. Manager Bobby Cox bears #6, once claimed by outfielders **Vince DiMaggio** (1937-38) and **Frank McCormick** (1947-48), and last seen in Boston during the 1952 season on the backs of infielders **Jack Dittmer** and **Billy Reed**. Bench coach Pat Corrales spent many seasons as an active player donning the "tools of ignorance" as did another wearer of #39, **Walker Cooper** (1950-52). When we look at the first base coach's box and see Glenn Hubbard, we recall his #17 being on the shoulders of two former honored reunion guests, outfielder **Bobby Loane** (1940) and lefty **Chet Nichols** (1951). Hitting coach Terry Pendleton's #9 decorated the backs of two pretty fair Boston batters, **Johnny Cooney** (1940-42) and **Earl Torgeson** (1947-52). Pitcher Jim Brower is wearing frequent reunion attendee **Ray Martin's** #38 (1949) which was also worn by **Jim Konstanty** and **Max Surkont** during the 1946 campaign. Lefty Mike Hampton's #32 was claimed in the past by **Hank Gowdy** (1932), **Duffy Lewis** (1933-35), **Casey Stengel** (1940-43), **Ducky Detweiler** (1946) and **Ernie Johnson** (1952). Former Oakland ace Tim Hudson wears another numeral (#15) that adorned many Boston Braves flannels. Included among that group were **Huck Betts** (1934-35), **Whitey Wietelmann** (1939-41), **Tony Cuccinello** (1942-43), **Bob Brady** (1946), **Danny Murtaugh** (1947), **Bill Salkeld** (1948-49) and **Luis Olmo** (1950-51). Many of our membership associate #30 not with right-hander Horacio Ramirez but with manager **Billy Southworth** (1946-51). Reliever Chris Reitsma shares his #37 with **Paul Waner** (1941), **Bobby Hogue** (1948-51) and **George Crowe** (1952). Whether starting or relieving, John Smoltz proudly bears the number (#29) of one of our greatest Braves Family supporters, **Art "Lefty" Johnson**. Pitchers Jorge Sosa and

**Johnny Antonelli** (1948-50) claim ownership rights to #34. Righty Kyle Davies' #26 links back to the days of pitchers **Tom Earley** (1940-42) and **Norm Roy** (1950-51). Newly acquired reliever Kyle Farnsworth was assigned #40, a numeral split between former Negro League star **Buzz Clarkson** and manager **Charlie Grimm** during Boston's Last Hurrah of 1952. Backstop Johnny Estrada shares his #23 with catching great **Del Crandall** (1949-50) and the irrepressible **Johnny Logan** (1951-52). Back-up catcher Eddie Perez dons **Ralph McLeod's** #12 (1938), also possessed by **Johnny Hopp** (1946-47), **Eddie Stanky** (1948-49) and **Roy Hartsfield** (1950-52). Young catching prospect Brian McCann may not know it but in 1942, Hall of Famer **Warren Spahn** wore his #16 as did **Steve Kuczek** (1949) when he stroked his only hit to achieve a 1,000 lifetime batting average. Infielder Wilson Betemit and pitcher **Vern Bickford** (1948-52) share #24. Ageless Julio Franco, with #14, bears the number of **Fred Frankhouse** (1934-35), **Danny MacFayden** (1936-39), **Skippy Roberge** (1942), **Dick Culler** (1946-47), **Bobby Sturgeon** (1948) and **Paul Burris** (1949-52). Number 1 has been displayed on the backs of National or Boston Braves Hall of Famers **Rabbit Maranville** (1932-35), **Sibby Sisti** (1940-41) and **Tommy Holmes** (1942-52). Continue to wear it proudly, Rafael Furcal! Second baseman Marcus Giles' assignment of #22 reflects similar designations to **Jim Tobin** (1940-45), **Danny Litwhiler** (1946), **Hank Camelli** (1947) **Nelson Potter** (1948-49), **George Estock** (1951) and **Virgil Jester** (1952). Atlanta fans will always associate #10 with Chipper Jones while Boston fans fondly recall backstop **Phil Masi** (1939-49) and his role in the infamous 1948 Game 1 World Series pick-off play. First baseman Adam LaRoche's dad was a major league pitcher of some notoriety. Adam's #19 was favored by Boston moundsmen **Dick "Leif" Errickson** (1940-42), **Red Barrett** (1943-44) and **Jim Wilson** (1951-52). Reunion attendee and ex-outfielder **Clint Conatser** possessed that double digit during the 1948-49 seasons. Pete Orr's #4 is steeped in Boston Braves history, tracing its heritage from **Randy Moore** (1933-34) through to **Wally Berger** (1935-37), **Max West** (1938-42, 1946), **Jeff Heath** (1948-49) and **Sid Gordon** (1950-52). Kelly Johnson and **Willard Marshall** (1950-52) both chased flies for the Braves while possessing #27. Superstar Andruw Jones carries the number (#25) that **Sibby Sisti** wore as an eighteen year old rookie when he made his big league debut on July 21, 1939. When Brian Jordan flashes his

#33 on the field, Boston Braves fans think of the refrain, "Spahn and **Sain**, and two days of rain." Big John was the Tribe's #33 from 1946-50, a number inherited by **Lou Burdette** in 1950 when Sain was traded to the Yankees. From 1933-36, manager and Hall of Famer **Bill McKechnie** had the double-threes sewn on his uniform. Up and comer Ryan Langerhans has been given #18, most prominently claimed in the Hub by **Al "Bear Tracks" Javery** from 1941-45.

### In Memoriam

**Damon "Dee" Phillips** passed away on November 4, 2004 at age 85. Phillips broke in with the Reds as a shortstop in 1942. A .202 batting average resulted in a demotion to the Syracuse Chiefs of the International League in 1943, where despite another anemic .204 performance at the plate, Phillips found himself on the Braves' 1944 roster. He played in 140 games, dividing his time between third base and shortstop. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, Phillips recorded eleven assists at third in a game against the Giants. Called into the Army in December, he served overseas in Guam, Luzon and Japan before mustering out in August of 1946, in time to appear in two games for the Tribe as a pinch-hitter and conclude his major league career. Phillips possessed a .250 lifetime batting average.

**Kenneth A. "Hal" Weafer** died at age 92 in Albany, NY on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Originally from Woburn, MA, he relocated to Albany in 1937 to pitch for the Albany Senators from 1937 to 1940. Weafer had been a right-handed prospect of some acclaim at Woburn High School where he was an original inductee in that school's Hall of Fame. Named by *The Boston Globe* to the Greater Boston Area All Scholastic Baseball Team in his junior and senior years, he earned the starting assignment in the 1930 schoolboy All Star game at Fenway Park. Weafer drew further accolades while pitching at Duke University under coach and former A's star hurler Jack Coombs. The talented righthander won fourteen straight games over two seasons at the university. After his junior year in 1934, Weafer traveled with the Red Sox as a batting practice pitcher. He received a \$3,500 signing bonus from the Cubs in 1935. Following spring training with the Cubs at Catalina Island, CA, Weafer was farmed out for further seasoning to the Toledo Mud Hens and then to the Birmingham Barons. On May 29, 1936, he made his only major league appearance, pitching ineffectively over three innings for

the Boston Bees in a 15-0 blowout at the hands of the Giants at the Polo Grounds. The Giants' Al Smith retired 23 men in order through seven and two-thirds innings before a Hal Lee Texas leaguer destroyed the lefthander's attempt at immortality. Weafer left the game with a career ERA of 12.00. Despite being plagued by a chronic sore arm, he continued to perform on the mound for his adopted hometown team. Weafer had the opportunity to pitch to Babe Ruth in a 1939 exhibition game at Albany's Hawkins Stadium. An avid Red Sox fan, Weafer's life spanned their 1918 and 2004 World Series championships. His obituary noted that the end of the "Curse of the Bambino" was the thrill of his baseball life.

Seventy-nine-year-old **Gene Mauch** succumbed to cancer on August 8<sup>th</sup>. He served as a utility infielder for the Braves during the 1950-51 seasons. Mauch was acquired by the Braves from the Cubs in December of 1949 in exchange for pitcher Bill Voiselle. He saw sporadic action during his stint in the Hub, only appearing in 67 box scores. Perhaps the most memorable event during his stay occurred off the diamond. When the Cubs came to Boston for a four game series in August during the 1950 season, Cubs regular shortstop and Mauch's ex-teammate, Roy Smalley, married Gene's sister Jolene. The union produced Roy Smalley, III, a 13-year major league veteran. Smalley played for his uncle Gene when the former managed the Minnesota Twins. The Braves released Mauch outright to the Milwaukee Brewers on July 4, 1951, recalling Johnny Logan from the farm club. He went on to aid the Brewers in their capture of the Little World Series title. Living in California during the off season, Mauch found himself cast as an extra in Warner Brothers' *The Winning Team*, a bio-pic on the life of Grover Cleveland Alexander. The film starred Ronald Reagan and was one of the late president's favorite roles. The Yankees drafted Mauch off of the Brewer's roster, only to sell him to the Cardinals during spring training in 1952. After a brief trial with St. Louis, he was returned to the Brewers. In 1953, at age twenty-eight, he prematurely commenced his managerial career when, at Tribe general manager John Quinn's behest, he accepted the player-manager post with the Braves-affiliated Atlanta Crackers, succeeding Dixie Walker. Mauch resumed his career as a full time player with the Pacific Coast League Los Angeles Angels in 1954-56. He returned to Boston, this time with the Red Sox, toward the end of the '56 season and wrapped up his big league playing days with the Bosox in

1957. Mauch was a lifetime .239 hitter. He accepted the Red Sox' offer to manage their AAA affiliate, Minneapolis Millers and from there, was tapped to helm a succession of major league clubs. His principal claim to fame was based upon his leadership of the Phillies, Expos, Twins and Angels. The legendary Branch Rickey observed Mauch's leadership potential when he signed the teenager to a Dodgers contract. The Mahatma opined, "Look at him and you'd think he's 16. Talk to him and you think he's 26. Talk baseball with him, and you'd think he's 36." The "Little General" compiled a 1,902-2,037 record, and is ranked sixth all-time in games managed (3,939) and eleventh in victories. Mauch, "the best manager never to make it to a World Series," is unfortunately known for his near misses. Over the course of twenty-six seasons, he took three teams to the verge of a pennant but never made it to the Fall Classic. Mauch's 1964 Phillies held a 6 ½ game lead over the Cardinals with twelve games to go, only to unravel and lose ten games in a row. His 1982 Angels took the first two games of the ALCS but lost the next three to the Brewers. 1986 found him one strike away from the Series only to have the Red Sox rally in the ninth inning of Game 5 and then sweep Games 6 and 7. Mauch was named to the PCL's All-Centennial Team in 2003 and to the PCL Hall of Fame in 2004.

**Bernard "Bill" Danze**, a Boston Braves farmhand, passed away on August 10<sup>th</sup>. He was 77. In 1946, Danze signed with the Braves as a pitcher and was sent to the Leavenworth Braves of the Class C Western Association, where he played for a season before leaving professional baseball. The previous year, the seventeen-year-old hurler represented Nebraska on Esquire's Western All-Stars baseball team coached by Hall of Famer Ty Cobb. Babe Ruth led the Eastern squad of high schoolers. The contest took place on August 28<sup>th</sup> before 23,617 fans at New York's Polo Grounds. Danze started and pitched six innings, allowing two runs on four hits. The game was decided in the ninth inning when the East rallied for three runs, nipping the West, 5-4. Future major league left hander, Curt Simmons, then sixteen, was named "Best Player." He pitched the first four innings and played in the outfield for the last five. Prospective Boston Brave **Jack Dittmer** backed up Danze at shortstop, while upcoming big leaguers Davey Williams and Herb Plews shared second base for the gang from west of the Mississippi.

Former outfielder **Bob Kennedy** died at age 84 in April. Braves fans will

recall that Kennedy made the final putout in the 1948 World Series. As a defensive replacement for Dale Mitchell in left field, he caught Tommy Holmes' fly ball in the ninth inning, securing the Game Six 4-3 win and Cleveland's World Series championship. Cleveland now has four survivors of that championship team – Bob Feller (86), Eddie Robinson (84), Allie Clark (82) and Al Rosen (81). Kennedy's son, Terry was a major league catcher for fourteen years and was named to four All Star teams. Bob and Terry Kennedy are one of only four father-son combinations to have each played in a World Series.

We sadly note the passing of longtime member **Tracy "Butch" Holliday** at age 62 on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Tracy was a noted still photographer who worked with Hollywood producer Jack L. Warner. He also wrote for the Voice of America and was the "Joni James Man" on radio station WXKS-AM in the late 1980s. We thank Tracy's sister, Marilyn Pierro for the donation to the Association made in her late brother's name.

**Timothy J. Davern** died on July 6<sup>th</sup> in his 79<sup>th</sup> year. Davern was born in Brookline, MA and, during the depression, his family rented out the top two floors of their home to Boston Braves players. According to family members, the players were often "paid" for interviews with boxes of breakfast cereal that would often end up on the Davern's kitchen table for various meals.

#### A Father's Loss

A touching father-son piece appeared on Father's Day in the June 19<sup>th</sup> edition of *The New York Times*. Michael Shapiro penned "Father-Son Bond Remains Alive In Wartime Diary: Billy Southworth Jr. Put Service Before Baseball." Shapiro is the author of *The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, the Dodgers and Their Final Pennant Race Together*. His article was derived from a diary that Billy Jr. kept and dedicated to his father, with the intent of eventually sharing his wartime experiences with his dad. Billy Jr. was the first professional ballplayer to enlist in the military, shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. His father counseled against the decision, at least until his son had made it to the big leagues. Junior was a highly regarded prospect, having been voted the Most Valuable Player in the Canadian-American League in 1939. The two had grown especially close after Southworth's wife had left them. The diary recorded the son's twenty-six bombing runs over France and Germany, meeting Bob Hope and Clark

Gable and his delight in his father's successes in managing the Cardinals. Dad gave his son the cap that he wore leading the Redbirds to the World Championship, hoping that it would bring luck to his offspring when in combat. Southworth the elder never had a chance to read the diary. Billy Jr. came home a war hero in 1944 and his good looks led to a Hollywood movie contract. The diary was lent to his navigator, who was an aspiring writer, to assist the latter. It was in that individual's possession when Billy Jr. crashed into Flushing Bay in February 1945 on a B-29 training mission. It took six agonizing months for his body to be recovered. Southworth's daughter by his second wife became aware of the existence of the diary several years ago and retrieved it from the writer's widow. Despite Billy Southworth's later achievements in Boston, the death of his beloved son always weighed heavily on him and some attribute his post-Championship decline in part to the lingering effects of this devastating loss.

#### Life After The Braves

To anchor their infield, the Washington Nationals signed free agent shortstop Cristian Guzman to a four-year, \$16.8 million contract this past off-season. However, the 27-year-old former Twin has had a disastrous year both in the field and at bat. Guzman's dismal plate performance has been reflected by a below .200 batting average through August. His exercise in futility at the plate brings back memories of Braves' infielder **Eddie Joost's** similar experience in 1943.

In December of 1942, the always cash-strapped Tribe traded away their stellar but high salaried shortstop, Eddie Miller, to the Reds in exchange for \$25,000, pitcher Nate Andrews and Joost. Joost had appeared in all seven games of the 1940 World Series as his Reds defeated Detroit for baseball's championship. While with Cincinnati, Joost experienced a couple of negative incidents involving the Braves. During an August 3, 1940 doubleheader at Braves Field, he learned that teammate Willard Hershberger, a 30-year-old backstop, had committed suicide while staying at the Copley Plaza. The season prior to his trade to the Hub, Joost was involved in a controversial play involving the Braves' Paul Waner. On June 17<sup>th</sup> at Crosley Field, Big Poison hit a slow infield grounder to second baseman Joost, who juggled the ball briefly before throwing to first a tad late to catch the runner. Waner indicated to the official scorer that he didn't

regard his safety as a base hit, which would have been his 3000<sup>th</sup>. Joost was awarded an error and Waner would record his landmark hit a couple of days later. Joost's Beantown stay, unfortunately, did not deliver better fortune.

Dividing his time during the 1943 campaign between third and second base (Whitey Wietelmann inherited Miller's shortstop position), Joost proceeded to hit an anemic .185 over 421 at bats, one of the lowest marks for a batter with so many plate appearances. He was in frequent conflict with manager Casey Stengel. While some have reported that this frustrating season influenced Joost to join the ranks of the voluntarily retired, Joost has stated that his one-year absence was caused by his draft board. He was faced with the choice of playing baseball and risking induction into the Army or continuing to work at his off-season job at a meat-packing plant and receiving a deferment.

His return to the Braves in 1945 was marked by friction and injury. Despite his lackluster performance and sabbatical, Joost sought a raise in pay from the club. In the second game of the season, he broke his toe and was disabled for a month. Later, he fractured his wrist. Joost was also suspended during the season. He appeared in only thirty-five games, batting .248. The following winter, as the Three Little Steam Shovels rebuilt the team, Joost was packaged with \$40,000 and sent to the Cardinals for Johnny Hopp. He was immediately dispatched to the team's Rochester, NY International League affiliate. Joost regained his batting eye, clubbing 19 homers and driving in 101 runs. The Philadelphia Athletics purchased his contract at the end of the season and Joost thrived under the direction of owner/manager Connie Mack.

Joost led American League shortstops in putouts four times and was named to the All Star team twice. He combined with second sacker Pete Suder to tally a record 217 double plays in 1949. The solid Philadelphia infield defense of "Joost to Suder to Fain" was the subject of a poem mirroring the famous "Tinker to Evers to Chance" paean. According to its last stanza,

*A long time from now  
When they're telling of how  
So and so could 'get two' with no strain,  
We'll think of the days  
Of Connie Mack's A's  
And of Joost and Suder and Fain.*

After donning spectacles, Joost became more discriminating at the plate and from 1947-52 walked more than 100 times a season. In 1947 and 1949, he had more walks than hits. For his first six seasons with the A's, Joost recorded home runs in the double digits. His 116 circuit clouts stood as a team record until Miguel Tejada surpassed that total in 2002. BBHA member **Rob Neyer**, in his excellent book, *Rob Neyer's Big Book of Baseball Lineups*, placed Joost on the Philadelphia/Kansas City/Oakland Athletics All-Time and Single Season teams.

Joost was the last manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, succeeding Jimmy Dykes at the team's helm in 1954. Plagued by a dearth of talent, he could not stave off the White Elephants' descent into the AL cellar as the club lost twice as many as they won. The following season, the A's left for Kansas City and Joost headed back to Boston for a brief fling with the Red Sox. In his final big league season that was marred by a hand injury, he performed as a utility infielder, appearing in 55 games and batting .193. Joost declined Bosox general manager Joe Cronin's offer to pilot the club's top minor league affiliate in San Francisco, having had his fill of managing.

Today, Joost is a frequent honored guest at events held by the Philadelphia Athletics Historical Society and has a plaque on the Society's Wall of Fame at its Hatboro, PA museum. He was inducted into the Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame in 1995. Despite a standing invitation to join us at our annual reunion, Joost cites his still vivid memories of his unhappier days in Boston as an insurmountable impediment.

### Sittin' In The Jury Box

Among the World Championship celebrants at Opening Day at Fenway Park was 95-year-old **Arthur Giddon**. Giddon was a former Boston Braves batboy who spent two summers with the club in the 1920s. Recovering from a heart attack and pneumonia, he could be seen near the park in an SUV with a homemade sign noting his Tribe affiliation. Giddon's daughter had appealed to the Red Sox for tickets for her father and the Bosox responded favorably, enabling the nonagenarian to view the festivities in his wheel chair.

The major league record for most runs scored by two clubs on Opening Day was set on April 19, 1900 when the Philadelphia defeated the Boston Beaneaters 19-17 in ten innings in Boston before a

crowd of 10,000. The Beaneaters rallied for nine runs in the ninth to send the game into extra innings.

Braves Family member and reunion attendee **Roland Hemond** was in Chicago to attend his 54<sup>th</sup> Opening Day as he began his 55<sup>th</sup> year in baseball. Currently a White Sox executive, Hemond witnessed his first opener in 1952 at Braves Field where he was working under John Mullen handling farm system and scouting chores. Hemond surreptitiously left his desk in the administration building and ventured into the Wigwam where he witnessed rookie and future Hall of Famer Eddie Mathews double in his first big league at bat against tough veteran Dodger lefty hurler, Preacher Roe. As a general manager of the White Sox, he saw his teams take two rare Opening Day doubleheaders, against the Athletics in 1971 and the Yankees in 1982.

Much ado has been given to the practice of wearing alternative uniforms by big league ballclubs. Some teams have as many as five sets of togs. There are ninety-eight different jerseys being used in the majors this season, and this total does not include batting practice shirts. While some might think this to be a recent innovation, the National Baseball Hall of Fame reports that alternate uniforms date back more than a century with the Boston Beaneaters leading off by using three distinct sets in 1900.

Frequent reunion attendee **Alvin Dark** spends a lot of time on the golf links these days. At 83, the former Boston Braves shortstop and 1948 Rookie of the Year often scores lower than his age. He recently shot a hole-in-one at his home town course in Easley, SC. In August, "Blackie" sponsored his third annual Alvin Dark Charity Banquet and Golf Tournament at Easley's Smithfields Country Club. A number of ex-big leaguers participated, including Bobby Richardson, Phil Niekro, Bob Bolin, Don Cardwell, Dave Bristol and Darrell Chaney.

Why do pitchers seem to thrive with the Atlanta Braves? Many point to Leo Mazzone, a coach who never played in the majors. Mazzone has teamed up with Braves manager Bobby Cox since 1990. He attributes many of the pitching concepts that he employs to his mentor, **Johnny Sain**. Mazzone hooked up with Big John in 1979. That relationship allowed the current Braves coach to "pick the heck out of his brain." In Mazzone's opinion, "Johnny Sain is the greatest pitching coach in the history of the game."

Did you know that a governor of New Hampshire was a former member of the Boston Beaneaters? **Fred Brown**, who played nine games for the 1901-02 clubs, was elected governor of the Granite State in 1922. An outfielder, he batted .200 over twenty big league at bats. Following his last season in the majors, Brown enrolled in law school and served as the mayor of Sommersworth and U.S. District Attorney before his governorship. Brown failed in a re-election bid but later served one term as U.S. Senator and was appointed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt to be U.S. Comptroller General. He died in 1955.

**Ted Lewis** was another Beaneater New Hampshire notable. A right-hander, he performed for the Beaneaters from 1896-1900 and twice won over twenty games. Lewis finished up his career in 1901 with Boston's Americans. Lewis, a/k/a "The Pitching Professor," attained a 94-64 record (.595) over six seasons. Upon retiring from baseball, he went on to teach at Columbia, Williams and Yale. Lewis was appointed to the presidency of Massachusetts State College in 1926 and the University of New Hampshire in 1927. He served in the latter post until his death in 1936. Lewis was a close friend of poet Robert Frost as both shared common interests in poetry and baseball. Purportedly, the two played an occasional game of catch in Lewis's backyard.

Continuing with our literary theme, the nation's first poet laureate and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Robert Penn Warren, considered 1927-29 Braves righty **Kent Greenfield** his best friend. The author of *All The King's Men* and his lifelong chum lived across the street from one another in Guthrie, KY. Warren referred to his buddy as "K" in his poetry. Greenfield, a rangy curveballer, won 27 of his 41 major league victories while with the Tribe. Over the course of six seasons, he had stops with the Giants and the Brooklyn Robins as well. Greenfield died in 1978.

The long-held worst road record of the 1935 Braves was threatened during the 2005 season. Embedded in the Tribes 38-115 totals were 65 losses away from Braves Field (13-65 .167). This year's Tampa Bay Devil Rays and Colorado Rockies were setting a pace through July that could challenge the 70-year-old record. On a more upbeat note, references to the accomplishments of the 1914 "Miracle" Braves could be found in the sports pages as scribes sought comparisons to the efforts of

the Houston Astros and Oakland Athletics in ascending from the early season depths in the standings to compete for the top spots in their respective divisions. The surprising early season surge of the ex-Expos highlighted the most dramatic shift in fortune exhibited after a franchise relocation when the 1952 64-89 Boston Braves transformed themselves in 1953 into the 92-62 Milwaukee Braves.

#### **Charles "Red" Barrett's**

remarkable 58-pitch complete game outing against the Reds on August 10, 1944 was brought into proper perspective when sportswriters hailed Minnesota right-hander Carlos Silva's 74-pitch 7-1 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Barrett, a Cincinnati castoff, led the Braves to a 2-0, two hit victory at Crosley Field, besting Bucky Walters, a future Braves coach. Another ex-Red, the late **Damon Phillips** knocked in one run and scored the other. Barrett had beaten Walters three times the previous season, once by an identical 2-0 score in a game that was completed in one hour and six minutes. Along with a bundle of cash, Barrett was traded to the Cardinals for Mort Cooper during the following season and proceeded to lead the league with 23 wins. Reacquired by the Tribe in 1946, he remained with the club through his final big league season in 1949. Barrett made two relief appearances in the 1948 World Series. He returned to Boston to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that championship team. Barrett passed away in 1990.

Hall of Fame second baseman **Billy Herman** (Boston Braves 1946) was honored posthumously on April 16<sup>th</sup> when his hometown of New Albany, IN dedicated the home of their youth league baseball facility in his name. Herman achieved his fame with the Cubs and Dodgers. He's best remembered by Braves fans as the key component to the 1946 deal that brought "Mr. Team" **Bob Elliott** from Pittsburgh to Boston. The Pirates sought Herman to pilot their squad. Herman would later return to the Hub to coach (1960-64) and manage the Red Sox (1964-66).

The Braves returned to Mississippi in 2005 when they relocated their Double-A franchise to newly-built Trustmark Park in Pearl, MS. From the late '40s to 1950, the Tribe maintained a working agreement with the Jackson Senators of the Class B Southeastern League. The most prominent player of that era assigned to the club was right-hander **Vern Bickford**. After four seasons with the Welch, (WV) Miners of the Mountain State League and three years of

WW II military service, Bickford arrived in Jackson in 1946 and put together a 10-12 3.33 record. His status as Braves chattel was challenged the following season when, after being promoted to Triple-A Indianapolis, the Indians switched affiliation to the Pirates and disputed Bickford's ties to the Tribe. A coin flip determined his destiny and Bickford was reassigned to the Braves' new lead farm club, the Milwaukee Brewers. Bickford would go on to be an important contributor to the Braves' 1948 pennant-winning effort and would hurl a no-hitter against the Dodgers in 1950 as part of a 19-win season.

Prior to his *Chop Talk* interview, **Steve Kuczek** was featured in an article appearing in *The Evansville Courier*. Kuczek reflected on being signed out of Colgate University and playing at Braves farm clubs in Hartford, CT and Pawtucket, RI as well as the long, boring bus and train trips. He got to know Tribe farmhand Chuck Tanner well when the two were in Denver. His one at bat – one hit major league career was the result of Connie Ryan getting the heave ho for appearing at the plate in a rain slicker to protest weather conditions during a September 29 tilt versus the Dodgers. All that Kuczek has to show from his brief stint with the Braves is a "raggedy" set of spikes and a "beat-up" glove. Despite his brief box score appearance, he still receives occasional autograph requests by mail.

Seventy-two-year-old **Arnold "Arnie" Hallgren** was inducted into the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame in April. Hallgren was the first British Columbian to be placed on a major league roster. At nineteen, the outfield/third base prospect was signed by Boston Braves scout Bill Marshall for a \$9,500 bonus as the Tribe outbid the Dodgers by \$2,000. Invited to spring training in St. Petersburg in 1953 prior to the announcement of the franchise shift, he recalls playing in right field against the Cardinals and his idol, Stan Musial. "It was a magical day." Hallgren, playing right field, doubled in his first at bat and was driven home by Joe Adcock. He also threw a strike from right field to Eddie Mathews to nail a St. Louis runner. Hallgren would claim batting titles in the Pioneer and Northwest Leagues. He made it onto the Milwaukee Braves 40-man roster in 1956 but was farmed out near the end of spring training. In 1961, recognizing the continued futility of his quest to make the majors, Hallgren retired. He did pass along his baseball genes to his offspring. Son Tim was drafted by the Mariners in 1979 and is

currently a national cross-checker with the Dodgers' scouting department. Tim previously worked for the Texas Rangers for 18 years, including the George W. Bush general partnership reign. Tim's brother, Bob, had been selected by the Astros three years prior to his drafting.

Although John Smoltz tied his own Atlanta Braves record of 15 strikeouts in a game in April against the Mets, he fell short of the franchise nine inning record of 17 held by Boston's **Charlie Buffinton**, recorded in 1884. **Warren Spahn** whiffed 18 in a fifteen inning game against the Cubs in 1952.

If you have a few extra dollars in your pocket, you might be interested in some items recently brought to our attention. A large Braves Field musical snow globe (manufacturer unknown) has appeared on eBay from time to time. The globe is similar to the Fenway Park edition found in catalogs over the past couple of years. The Upper Deck card company has included two Boston Braves in its 2005 Hall of Fame set. Warren Spahn appears as #72 in a limited edition of 550. George Sisler's cardboard was produced in a much more limited quantity since it contains a piece of one of his game used bats. Only twenty-five were manufactured. Author G.S. Rowe has

continued his Will Beaman Boston Beaneaters mystery series. His 2005 offering is entitled *Double Play in Beantown*. The novel focuses on the 1901 arrival of the Boston Americans to the Hub's sporting scene and the subsequent rivalry that ensues. The book was published by Pocol Press.

Member and Royal Rooter **Larry Ruttman** expects to have his book, *Voices of Brookline*, issued this fall. The 500-page publication will contain several reminiscences of Braves Field days by nearby Brookline residents. He may be reached at lawrut@msn.com. Another long-time member/Royal Rooter, **Al Rocci**, continues his quest to have Babe Ruth's #3 retired throughout the major leagues, similar to the honor bestowed upon Jackie Robinson. BBHAer **Ben Emanuele** revealed that he was the winning eBay auction bidder for the "Braves Field" trolley scroll that we mentioned in the last newsletter. Our hope that the item had fallen into the hands of a true Boston Braves fan has been fulfilled! Our last newsletter prompted member **Bill Scanlon** to inform us that he was at the Wigwam to witness Cliff Chambers' no-hit defeat of George Estock.

*Bob Brady*  
*Newsletter Editor*