

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

Spring 2006

Annual Dues

Although fuel prices have increased dramatically and postage costs have risen, your Association has been able to hold the line on our dues. Hard work, tight budgeting and generous donations on the part of our "Royal Rooters" have kept the charge at \$15. However, your cooperation is needed. Promptly sending in your share now will avoid the administrative costs of tracking and reminding you later or, worst yet, removing your name from our membership rolls. Your loyal support has enabled us to keep the memory of the Boston Braves alive and preserve the team's rich heritage. Before you forget, please write out your check to:

**Boston Braves Historical Association
Post Office Box 5668
Marlborough, MA 01752**

We also encourage those of you that can give a little more, to join our band of Royal Rooters. Thanks!

Get Well Sibby!

One of the most beloved members of the Braves Family is in need of your encouragement as he struggles to regain his health. **Sibby Sisti**, the Braves famed "Super Sub" and BBHA Hall of Famer, was taken seriously ill before the holidays and has been hospitalized since then. Gravely ill and in intensive care, Sibby "told the man upstairs that [he] was not ready to go yet" and has been battling back. Currently in a rehabilitation facility, Sibby faces a lengthy recuperation and would benefit from the prayers and support of his extended Boston Braves Historical Association family.

If you have been fortunate enough to attend one of our reunions, you have warm memories of Sibby as he was the first to appear and last to leave. He was always willing to sign an autograph, pose for a picture or engage in a friendly chat. Often, after the reunion, Sibby would assist the Altison family in packing up to leave. He has always been a willing signer through the mail and would offer his fans autographed photos from his personal collection, including his famous movie appearance in *The Natural* with Robert Redford.

Let's try our best to support our good friend and cheer him on as many of us once did when he took the field at the Wigwam. Please take a moment to send Sibby a card or letter in appreciation of the

joy that he has brought us over the years. Address your well wishes to:

**Sibby Sisti
2330 Maple Road
Williamsville, NY 14221**

A Tribute to the 1948 Braves

The Boston Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) is soliciting the BBHA's interest in a book project that would involve the 1948 Boston Braves. A number of our members, your editor included, are also members of SABR and have participated in their meetings and research efforts. The Boston Chapter has been very active in the last few years, sponsoring a SABR annual national convention in Boston and producing publications that have made their way to the shelves of area bookstores. Their first notable offering was *The Fenway Project: Sixty-four of the games most ardent fans chronicle one night on the field, in the stands, and behind the scenes at America's oldest ballpark*. Last year, the chapter issued '75: *The Red Sox Team That Saved Baseball*. Currently, the Hub Chapter is hard at work on a book on the "Impossible Dream" team of 1967, with the working title of *The 1967 Red Sox: The Impossible Dream and the Birth of the Red Sox Nation*. The publications have been produced by Rounder Books under the direction of **Bill Nowlin**, the co-founder of Cambridge, MA based Rounder Records. Bill is a BBHA member and worked with Johnny Pesky to write *Mr. Red Sox: The Johnny Pesky Story*. Bill and Johnny were at an autograph table at our Reunion XIII. In addition, Bill is working with BBHA executive committee member Saul Wisnia on Saul's long-awaited opus, *From Yawkey to Milwaukee*.

The Boston Chapter is now considering its next book project. One of the many ideas on the table involves memorializing the 1948 baseball season in Boston. That was a fateful year for our Braves. They reached the heights in capturing the National League pennant but fell short in the World Series, losing in six games to the Indians. When the Red Sox lost their Junior Circuit playoff game to Cleveland, depriving the town of an all-Boston Fall Classic, the Braves' fate may have been sealed. Had the Tribe been able to exhibit their superiority over Yawkey's men, local baseball history might have been dramatically altered in favor of the National League franchise.

Undertaking such a project requires a strong commitment from folks willing to perform research on players and other individuals associated with the clubs. Based on its experience with the 1975 and 1967 Red Sox initiatives, the Boston SABR Chapter knows that it has a robust base of researchers interested in Bosox history. We need to convince them that there is sufficient interest on our part to justify going forward with a publication that would include a tribute to the Boston Braves pennant winners.

If you've ever wanted to try your hand at writing a biographical sketch on your favorite Braves player or a personal anecdote about that last great Tribe season, now is the time. Volunteers are needed to take the oral history of surviving members of the 1948 team. You may also have a memento that would help illustrate the tale of the '48 season. The folks at the Boston SABR Chapter will provide excellent support, counsel and advice to anyone willing to participate – whether you're a complete novice or a talented amateur. I speak from person experience, having contributed to their efforts and having benefited from their help. I'm currently working on a biography of '67 Bosox bullpen coach Al Lakeman for the Impossible Dream book. As you might suspect, the fact that he was briefly a member of the 1949 Braves strongly influence in my choice. I've found the research and writing very rewarding as well as a lot of fun. The editorial support has been outstanding.

The ball is in our court. An opportunity like this may not come along again. Please assist me to respond favorably to their offer. Let me know your thoughts and interests as soon as possible. Contact me at:

Bob Brady
25 McAndrew Road
Braintree, MA 02184-8245

Anniversaries

As has been our tradition in our first issue of the year, we look to note the anniversaries of significant events in Boston Braves history.

One hundred and thirty years ago this April 22nd, the first game in National League history was played in Philadelphia between the Boston Red Stockings and the Athletics. The Braves' ancestors won the game, 6-5, scoring twice in the ninth inning. The Red Stockings were a charter member of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players, incorporating in 1871. They are the only team still in existence that has fielded a team during every season of modern professional play. The National League's Golden Jubilee was celebrated at Braves Field on May 8, 1926 and the Senior Circuit's 75th anniversary was

commemorated by Wigwam events on June 2, 1951.

This year marks the anniversaries of two notable team ownership changes. It will be a century ago in October that the **Dovey brothers**, George and John, in combination with John Harris, obtained possession of the ballclub, which then took on the nickname "Doves," as a reflection of their stewardship. Ninety years ago this past January, **James E. Gaffney** surprised local fandom by selling the Braves to a syndicate headed by famed Harvard football coach Percy Haughton. Gaffney brought a "miracle" World Championship to Boston in 1914 and opened the National Pastime's largest and first concrete and steel ballpark, Braves Field, in 1915.

Ninety years also have passed since the first home team no-hitter was registered at Braves Field. It was the fifth overall for the franchise. On June 16, 1916, right hander **Tom Hughes** held the Pittsburgh Pirates hitless, fanning the great Honus Wagner twice. He struck out seven while walking two in a 2-0 victory. Hughes was acquired by the Tribe late in the 1914 season but in time for him to pitch in the game that clinched the league championship. The 1916 season represented the height of his career as Hughes recorded sixteen victories against only three losses and led the league with a .842 winning percentage.

Braves Field hosted its only All Star tilt seventy years ago. The 1936 Mid-Summer Classic marked the first time that the Senior Circuit bested its American League rivals. Rookie Joe DiMaggio made his All Star Game debut at the Wigwam. The contest was under-attended due to false reports of a sellout that discouraged day-of-game ticket seekers. Braves Field was scheduled to be the site of the 1953 All Star Game but the franchise relocation to Milwaukee caused it to be shifted to Cincinnati.

2006 is a benchmark for a number of accomplishments for our hero and BBHA Hall of Famer, **Johnny Sain**. We commemorate these career achievements and offer our best wishing as he recuperates from serious illness. Sixty years ago on April 16, 1946, Big John returned from wartime service and opened the season with a 5-3 decision over the Dodgers. On May 11th, he helped kick off night baseball in Boston before 37,407 Wigwam fans (the biggest crowd since 1933) as the Tribe went down to defeat under the lights, 5-1. Pre-game festivities featured music, fireworks, an electrical likeness of Billy Southworth, an appearance by baseball's clown prince, Al Schacht, and the debut of sateen night uniforms. Sportscaster Jim Britt served as master of ceremonies and Commissioner Happy Chandler's wife officially switched on the lights. On July 12th, the stellar right hander hurled a masterpiece at Cincinnati's

Crosley Field barely missing becoming the seventh player in baseball history to pitch a perfect game. The only mar in his 1-0 victory came in the first inning when Grady Hatton became the solitary Red to reach base all day, courtesy of a misplayed pop fly double in back of third base. Left fielder Bama Rowell, third baseman Connie Ryan and shortstop Dick Culler all converged under the ball, each believing that it was the property of another. Sain's strong mound performance in 1946 culminated in his entry into the 20-game winner club on September 22nd, a first for a Braves pitcher since 1937. Big John ended his Braves career five years later on August 29th when he was sent to the Yankees for cash and righty Lou Burdette.

1946 was also the year that **Warren Spahn** recorded the first of his 363 big league victories. Sixty years ago on July 14th, Spahnje defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates 4-1 in the first game of a doubleheader at Forbes Field. In the complete game triumph, he struck out two, walked three and allowed eight safeties. The Battle of the Bulge veteran had rejoined the Braves on June 11. The win came on his fourth start of the season and seventh overall appearance with the club since his brief trial in 1942. Spahn had pitched the entire game of a Braves September 26, 1942 victory but failed to get the winning tally. In the bottom of the eighth inning of the second game of a doubleheader against the Giants at the Polo Grounds with the home team leading 5-2, a mass of youngsters swarmed the field. They had gained admission for their part in a wartime scrap metal drive. Police and ushers were unable to restore order and a forfeit was declared. According to the rules, the score was official registered as a 9-0 Braves win. All records afield and at bat were recognized except that no winning or losing pitcher was declared.

An important member of the 1948 NL pennant-winning squad was picked up by the Tribe at the end of the 1946 season. A September 30th deal with Pittsburgh brought "Mr. Team," **Bob Elliott** to Boston. Catcher Hank Camelli accompanied Elliott while Billy Herman, Whitey Wietelmann, Elmer Singleton and Stan Wentzel departed the Hub. Herman was sought by the Buccaneers to succeed Frankie Frisch as their manager. Elliott would capture MVP honors the following season.

Braves Field To Live Again?

In early March, newspapers in Boston reported on the possibility of the establishment of an independent minor league baseball team in Boston by 2008. A Hub attorney, Alexander Bok, has been in contact with other investors about raising initial capital of around \$6 million. The prospects for such a franchise aren't necessarily as far fetched as one would first suspect. The difficulty of obtaining Red Sox tickets coupled with their high cost and

similarly pricey concessions offerings limits many families' abilities to enjoy a day at the ballpark. The success of lower cost minor league alternatives in Lowell, MA and Pawtucket, RI supports such a view. Indeed, the Crimson Hose are exhibiting a sensitivity to this issue this season by scheduling a lower cost doubleheader involving the Pawsox and the Spinners at Fenway Park on August 26th. Charles Euchner, who has studied and written on the business of baseball, speculated that lawyer Bok's dream could be very successful in this area.

Bringing an independent league team to Boston would require the construction of an appropriate facility, in the order of a 6,000 seat stadium, to house the club. As the Bosox discovered when considering alternatives to renovating Fenway Park, there is a dearth of available sites in Beantown. A new ballpark would cost upwards of \$25 million. The facility would require about eight acres of land and would need to be close to highways, public transportation and parking. Bok's focus at the moment is on two sites, one of which is Nickerson Field on the campus of Boston University.

Those of you that have had the great fortune of attending one of **Ralph Evans'** wonderful Braves Field tours know the rich baseball history of this former Home of the Braves from 1915-1952. Its restoration as a baseball diamond would be a welcome event to us, assuming that the original portions of the Wigwam remain intact. Perhaps, the new club might establish its official address on Braves Field Way, the route that the late BBHA member **Jim Smith** worked so hard to commemorate. Bok has engaged in conversations with University officials concerning this proposal. It would be most fitting for baseball to return to the Braves' Field of Dreams on the sixtieth anniversary of its last championship campaign!

Do-It-Yourself Commemoratives

Over the past few years, the U.S. Postal Service has issued commemorative baseball stamps honoring ballplayers and ballparks. We've waited patiently but have yet to see postage bearing a Boston Braves-related tribute. This year's scheduled baseball-themed stamps are similarly devoid of such honors. However, you now no longer have to wait for a panel of postal potentates to decide if and when to issue a Wigwam stamp. Through an association with Zazzle.com, the Postal Service now permits individuals to design their own commemorative U.S. postage. Your editor recently took advantage of that offer to produce my own tribute to the Wigwam. As you can see, my 39-cent stamp pictures the Braves Field Way sign with the Tribe's administration building in the background. The photograph was taken on one of those truly rare days when the street sign had not

been purloined by some ne'er-do-well. There are rules on what is permitted on a stamp and the production cost is in excess of the rate on the stamp. A sheet of twenty 39 cent stamps will set you back almost \$20 once shipping is included. Zazzle's web site is fairly user friendly to permit you to download a photograph and engage in a limited amount of design work. The company is located at 66 Willow Place, Menlo Park, CA 94025 and can be found at www.zazzle.com. If you produce your own Braves-related stamp, please mail us one on a card or letter.

Bogus Logo

Caveat emptor! Over the years, we've received questions from the membership about a certain Boston Braves logo offered for sale or at auction as a relic from the days of the Tribe's stay in the Hub. Pictured above is that emblem. The logo does represent a team that was known as the Boston Braves but that team played not on grass but on ice. This edition of the Boston Braves performed in the American Hockey League from 1971-74, as a minor league affiliate of the Boston Bruins. The club was formed in Boston during the peak of the Bobby Orr years to take advantage of the hockey hunger of fans unable to secure tickets to see the parent club at the old Boston Garden. Interest dissipated with the decline of the Bruins brought on by player wars with the newly formed World Hockey Association and devastating injuries to the great Orr. While in existence, the minor league team churned out a wealth of souvenirs, some of which (*e.g.*, buttons and pennants) were sufficiently ambiguous as to the sport being represented to be confused with the late, lamented baseball Braves. We've seen examples of such souvenirs being offered as baseball items, out of ignorance and deceit. A recent example of the latter involved an eBay offering of a hockey team button that had been modified by attaching a ribbon with a small baseball on it. While both the Boston and Milwaukee Braves used the Screaming Brave as a logo (*see* the newsletter's masthead), that version is sufficiently distinct to allow for proper identification.

In Memoriam

**Billy Reed
Boston Braves' Second Baseman
faced Hall of Famers in Three Sports**

by Saul Wisnia

His major league career may have consisted of just 52 at-bats, but 1952 Braves second baseman **Billy Reed** had a list of diverse athletic feats that would impress even the likes of Bo Jackson and Gene Conley.

“My dad played Bobby Riggs in an exhibition tennis match right around the

time (1939) Riggs won at Wimbledon, played professional basketball against George Mikan, earned a football scholarship to Notre Dame, and played baseball against Jackie Robinson and Duke Snider in the big leagues,” Patrick Reed said of his father, who passed away on December 5th after suffering from Alzheimer's Disease for the previous year. “Not too many people can say they excelled to that level in so many sports.”

Reed certainly had fantastic talent; what was clear long before he debuted with the Braves on Opening Day of '52 was that he didn't have great luck or timing. Growing up as one of five brothers in tiny Shawano, Wisconsin (population 5,000), he earned 15 varsity letters in high school and was a conference scoring champ in basketball (three times) and football (twice) while also excelling at baseball and track. He even taught himself to play tennis by hitting balls off walls – the town had no courts – and became so good he never lost a match in three years of high school play. A local businessman enticed Bobby Riggs to come to town and play the young phenom, and as the story goes, “my dad didn't win, but he made a good showing of himself and kept Riggs running all day.”

Here, however, is where the bad breaks started. His football exploits earned Reed a Notre Dame scholarship upon his 1941 graduation, but he developed appendicitis that summer and couldn't suit up as a freshman. Then, just as he was getting better, Pearl Harbor changed everything. Like many other young men nationwide, Reed left college and enlisted. He never did get to play for the Irish.

A member of powerhouse football, basketball, and baseball teams while serving at Camp Grant, Illinois, Reed played with many major league stars in the European Theater upon war's end in 1945. He was signed by the Phillies as an amateur free agent in '46, and after hitting .363 for their Green Bay farm club that summer was sent to the Braves for the 1947 season. Thus began his minor league odyssey with the Tribe, which included one year at Evansville (.326), two at Hartford (.290, .331), and two more at Milwaukee (.313 and .311). Highlights included a batting title (at Hartford in 1949) and a Little World Series championship with the '51 Milwaukee Brewers. In true Gene Conley fashion, the steady-fielding singles hitter also spent several winters as a starting guard on the Oshkosh All-Stars of the National Basketball League – which merged with the NBA just after he stopped playing (of course) in 1949.

A month shy of his 30th birthday, Reed finally made the big club with the Braves in April 1952. Leading off, he registered the first major league hit of the season on Opening Day at Boston and was 2-for-4 against Brooklyn's Preacher Roe in a

3-2 loss to the Dodgers. He got into fourteen more games, but despite a .250 average (13-for-52, all singles) was sent back to Milwaukee in May as part of the Braves' youth movement. After another year there and three more with Toledo, he called it quits with a .312 lifetime minor league average and became a successful business executive with the American Can Company.

"Dad never complained that things didn't go better for him in baseball," recalls Patrick Reed. "He was a wonderful guy who made a lot of friends in the game, and when we lived in Milwaukee and the Braves were going great, he introduced me to Aaron, Mathews, Logan and all the rest. Later we moved to Atlanta, so we got to follow the Braves there as well. In recent years we never missed reading the BBHA newsletters together, and every time he left the house he'd smile and repeat his old manager Charlie Grimm's advice – which dad applied to everything he did. 'Take two and hit to left.'"

Ed Walton

The BBHA and SABR lost a renowned long-time member this past November. **Ed Walton** of Fairfield, CT died at age 74 of lymphoma. His name may ring familiar to those of you that also follow Boston's "other" team. In addition to his many years of service as an administrator at the University of Bridgeport, Walton performed yeoman research work for the Red Sox, producing a three volume binder of data on the club's early history that has served as a primary reference for the club over the years. His dedication to baseball research led to the uncovering of an inaccuracy in Hall of Famer Tris Speaker's home run totals, resulting in the inclusion of an additional circuit clout to The Grey Eagle's accumulation. Walton also published three books on the Bosox: *This Date in Boston Red Sox History*, *Red Sox Triumphs and Tragedies* and *The Rookies*. He was a frequent contributor to *Red Sox Magazine* and the team's programs. Walton would often correspond with your editor and reminisce about his allegiance to the Braves. His last contribution to the newsletter appeared in our End of Summer 2004 edition where he told the tale of his first trip to Braves Field in 1943. Thanks to member **Frank J. Williams** for bringing Walton's passing to our attention.

Roomies

Over the course of the baseball season, today's pampered millionaire ballplayers travel in luxury from city to city. They require individual deluxe accommodations unlike the days of yore when teammates were required to share a room. Rifling through a stack of old issues of *The Sporting News*, your editor came across an August 4, 1948 article that

contended that the deft housing of ballplayers was an untold factor in producing pennant-winning teams. Apparently the roommate matching done by the Braves must have assisted in their last championship drive. According to Baseball's Bible, the Tribe made the following 1948 hotel rooming assignments:

Charlie Barrett and Connie Ryan
 Bob Elliott and Bill Salkeld
 Johnny Sain and Si Johnson
 Al Dark and Bobby Hogue
 Clyde Shoun and Nelson Potter
 Phil Masi and Tommy Holmes
 Earl Torgeson and Frank McCormick
 Mike McCormick and Jim Russell
 Jeff Heath and Clint Conatser
 Johnny Antonelli and Bob Keely
 Vern Bickford and Ernie White
 Sibby Sisti and Bob Sturgeon
 Warren Spahn and Bill Voiselle

Billy Southworth and Al Lyons were provided with single rooms.

Did You Know?

Brothers Jeffrey and Douglas Lyons have paired to produce books that contain their research into obscure facts about the National Pastime. In *Out of Left Field* and *Curveballs and Screwballs*, the duo has unearthed some gems about the Boston Braves. For example:

When Joe DiMaggio batted .398 for the 1935 San Francisco Seals, he was beaten out for the batting crown by .001 by a former Boston Brave, **Oscar "Ox" Eckhardt**. Eckhardt was one of the minor's greatest hitters, compiling a .367 record over thirteen seasons and capturing the PCL batting title four times. The outfielder just spent eight games with the 1932 Braves, hitting .250. His only other big league appearance occurred in 1936 with Brooklyn for a sixteen game trial that produced an anemic .182 batting average.

When **George Sisler** changed leagues and came to the Braves near the end of his illustrious career, it provided him with the opportunity to become the first player to record 200 hits in the Junior and Senior Circuits. He reached that level five times while with the Browns and, in 1929, recorded 205 safeties with the Braves. During that latter season, Sisler also became the only player to tally over 200 hits but score below 70 runs (67). He is also the only Hall of Famer to have two sons play in the majors – Dick and Dave. Son Dick also managed in the big leagues linking the Sislers with the Macks (Connie and Earle) to claim the familial distinction of Hall of Famer fathers having offspring that piloted in the majors.

Johnny Cooney had a twenty year playing career (1921-44) that started out on the mound and ended in the outfield and first

base. Fifteen of those seasons were with the Braves. He also coached for the Tribe in Boston and Milwaukee. Cooney was not known for his slugging. He amassed 3,372 at bats before hitting his first home run in 1939. He repeated that unusual feat the very next game and never again swatted another homer during his remaining time in the majors.

The first rookie to belt three circuit clouts in one game was none other than **Eddie Mathews** of the Boston Braves who did it against the Dodgers on September 27, 1952. Mathews along with fellow Hall of Famers Joe DiMaggio and Johnny Mize played their very last games in a World Series. Mathews' last time as an active player occurred with the Tigers in Game 4 of the 1968 World Series. Mathews hit his last homer, #512, on May 27, 1968, the day of the birth of two future sluggers – Jeff Bagwell and Frank Thomas.

In 1915, the Braves briefly employed a fly chaser whose first name was Anna. **Anna Sebastian "Pete" Compton** had a nondescript six year stay in the majors from 1911-16 and 1918.

Warren Spahn won over 300 games but never struck out as many as 200 batters in a single season. His highest total, 191, occurred in 1950 while the Braves were still in Boston. He led the NL in whiffs that year as well as three other times, all with the Hub version of the Tribe.

The youngest pitcher to record 300 victories was **Kid Nichols** at 31 years of age when he accomplished this feat for the Braves on July 7, 1900. He would close his career in 1906 with 361 wins.

The ashes of the last Boston Braves manager, **Charlie Grimm**, are scattered over Wrigley Field where he spent a significant amount of time playing and managing the Cubs.

Babe Ruth's hit his last home run as a member of the Boston Braves. His 714 home runs were memorialized by actor/director Jack Webb in the television show, *Dragnet*, where his character carried badge 714 as a Los Angeles police department detective.

A member of the 1909 Boston Braves, **Jack Coffey**, later went on to become a teammate of Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth in the same season. The infielder started the 1918 season with the Tigers and was subsequently sold to the Red Sox.

The only pitcher to record victories over the Boston, Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves was Robin Roberts.

There are many more fascinating tidbits in these books that you might wish to read about. Both soft cover publications

have turned up in the discount section of bookstores from time to time.

Honors

Fittingly, this year's Judge Emil Fuchs Award for meritorious contributions to baseball was presented at the 67th annual dinner of the Boston Chapter of the Baseball Writers of America to **Lennie Merullo**. Merullo has graced our presence at several reunions and is always a popular guest. The 88-year-old grew up as a Boston Braves fan who ended up as the Cubs' regular shortstop during the 1940s. In 1945, Merullo played on the last Chicago Cubs team to appear in a World Series. Merullo's love affair with baseball lasted for 64 years as he turned to scouting until finally retiring. The tale of how his first child was given the name "Boots" is now legendary. On September 13, 1942, Merullo was playing shortstop in the second game of a doubleheader at Wrigley Field. In the fourth inning, he committed four errors, a dubious distinction previously accomplished by the Indians' Ray Chapman in 1914 but never since. Boots' son, Matt, made it to the majors as a catcher for the White Sox, Indians and Twins.

Braves Family member and reunion master of ceremonies **Joe Morgan** is a member of the Red Sox Hall of Fame Class of 2006. Morgan is being accorded this honor for his managerial prowess, leading the Bosox to the AL East Division title in 1988 and 1990 and capturing the AL Manager of the Year award in 1988. Also being accorded similar honors is BBHA member **Dick Bresciani**. Bresciani currently is a vice president with the Crimson Hose, heading up publication and archives efforts. Under his direction, the club commenced a formal retirement of numbers policy, launched the Tony Conigliaro Award and established its Hall of Fame.

Arthur "Pinkey" Whitney entered the San Antonio Sports Hall of Fame on February 17, 2006. The city's native son was a top defensive third baseman, completing a twelve year career in the majors with only 180 errors in 1,495 games at the hot corner. Whitney split his time between the Phillies and the Braves from 1928-39. His batting statistics were not shabby either. In 1929, while leading the league's third sackers in putouts, assists, double plays and total chances, Whitney also hit .327 and drove in 115 runs. He reached the century mark in RBIs in each of his first three big league seasons. Whitney's nickname was bestowed on him by his brothers who borrowed a comic strip character's moniker. He twice batted over .340 for Philadelphia. Whitney's stint with the Braves began with a 1933 mid-season trade with the Phil and ended similarly when the Tribe shipped him back to the City of Brotherly Love in the spring of 1936. Ironically, Whitney would be the National

League's starting third baseman at the latter year's All Star Game at the Wigwam. He finished his career with a .297 batting average. After baseball, Whitney returned home and organized amateur leagues in the Texas city as well as serving as a manager, coach and umpire. He operated a bowling alley and later worked for the Lone Star Brewery. Upon retiring, Whitney stayed active by working the gates at Spurs games held at the HemisFair Arena and at minor league baseball games. A modest man, he gave away most of his mementos from his playing days, including a bat that teammate Babe Ruth had given him after the Bambino had swatted what turned out to be his last big league homer. Whitney was inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in 1983, four years before his death. He would mentor two San Antonio pitchers who would achieve a modicum of big league fame – Joel Horlen and Gary Bell. It was the latter who urged Whitney's entry into the city's shrine when the Impossible Dream hurler received his hometown's honor in 2004.

Thanks to the efforts of our great friend, **Art "Lefty" Johnson**, his fellow Braves pitcher, **Al "Bear Tracks" Javery**, is up for consideration for entry into Oxford High School's Hall of Fame. Johnson, who spent parts of three seasons in the majors, is a charter member of the BBHA and has always been willing to lend a hand to preserve the team's history. He was elected to the Winchester (MA) High School Hall of Fame along with Heisman Trophy winner, Joe Bellino. Upon learning that Oxford High was seeking nominees, Johnson contacted the school's principal and offered his teammate's name for consideration. Javery had a seven year stay in the majors, all with Boston. The big righthander finished with a 53-74 record and an ERA of 3.77. Javery posted four consecutive double win seasons even though the club was mired in the second division. His seventeen victories in 1943 were tops for the team while his 303 innings pitched led the league. A lead-off first inning scratch infield hit deprived Javery of a no-hitter at Braves Field against the Phillies on September 16th. He was named to All Star squad's in 1943 and 1944. Javery passed away in 1977.

Sittin' In The Jury Box

Our thanks to members **Gary Caruso** and **Arnold Bailey** for placing stories about our 2005 reunion in *ChopTalk* (November, 2005) and *Sports Collectors Digest*, (February 3, 2006) respectively.

Arnold Bailey also reports that Bruce Sutter, recently elected to the Hall of Fame, delivered kudos to a former Boston Braves signee who went on to become a major league catcher and pitching coach. Rhode Island's **Mike Roarke** helped Sutter develop and perfect his bread-and-butter pitch, the split-finger fastball. He mentored Sutter when the relief ace was with the Cubs

and Cardinals. Roarke will be Sutter's guest in Cooperstown for the induction ceremonies.

The Patriot Ledger of Quincy, MA ran a February 25th story on "The boys of yesteryear," featuring an interview with our very own **Ralph McLeod**. For the article, reporter Adam Smartschan talked with our esteemed member of the Braves Family, along with Bob Fletcher, the son of the late **Elbie Fletcher**. Ralph and Elbie had known each other as youths when they starred on their respective high school baseball teams. The two later crossed paths as teammates on the 1938 Boston Bees squad. The newspaper article contained the familiar 1938 spring training photograph of Ralph and Elbie on a steamroller, along with manager Casey Stengel and several other players. While Ralph's big league stay was brief, six games at the tail end of the 1938 season, Elbie spent twelve seasons in the majors, split between the Braves and the Pirates. Bob Fletcher, who remembers selling seat cushions at old Forbes Field, retains some of his dad's memorabilia, including Elbie's 1943 All Star Game bat. Ralph and Elbie maintained a life-long friendship and the two attended our early reunions. Elbie passed away in 1994. Ralph continues to be an honored guest at our fall gatherings. This October, he celebrates his 90th birthday.

72-year-old **Ed Charles** was twelve when Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier sixty years ago on March 17, 1946 in Daytona Beach, FL at City Island Ballpark. That day, Robinson's minor league club, the Montreal Royals, took on their parent, the Brooklyn Dodgers. The game was played before an estimated 4,000 spectators. A relatively small Jim Crow bleacher section proved to be inadequate for the nearly 1,000 African American fans that showed up. Many had to stand out beyond the right field foul line. Without the price of admission, Charles viewed his hometown's historic event from a perch on a light stand beyond the left field fence. The major league squad defeated their minor league brethren 7-2 with second baseman Robinson going hitless but stealing a base and scoring a run. Robinson's breakthrough inspired Charles to pursue his dream of one day playing in the majors. The Boston Braves assisted him toward achieving his goal by signing him in to a professional contract and commencing his career in 1952 with the Quebec Braves of the Provincial League. His teammates there nicknamed him "Ez" after the former heavyweight champion. The Milwaukee version of the Braves traded Charles to the Kansas City Athletics in 1961 and he made his major league debut the following season. His productive eight year big league career as an infielder culminated with a trip to the World Series in 1969 where his Mets team captured the World Championship.

The first of **Warren Spahn's** 35 home runs, a record for National League pitchers, occurred on September 11, 1948 against Charlie Bicknell of the Phillies. The overall leading home run hitter among pitchers is **Wes Ferrell** who clubbed 38 balls out of the park. His last was with the 1941 Boston Braves, the year before Spahn broke into the big leagues.

The Phillies' Jimmy Rollins ended the 2005 season with a 36-game hit streak. That put him one shy of **Tommy Holmes'** 37 game mark that stood as the National League record until Pete Rose surpassed it by seven games in 1978. Rollins will continue his quest in 2006 and hopefully cause renewed attention to our hero of the Jury Box.

Thanks

Our sincere gratitude is extended to those of you taking the time to drop us a line and/or to send along a reminiscence or clipping. Among our contributors are **John Materazzo, Mort Bloomberg, John Delmore, Larry Yaffa and Roland Hemond**