

Boston Braves Historical Association Newsletter

Spring 2009

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Calling All Members - Time to Renew!

Annual membership dues for this year are payable now. Your prompt remittance would be greatly appreciated. We've been able to keep our dues at \$15 for ten years by keeping a tight handle on our expenses. With another postal rate increase on the horizon, you can help us contain costs by renewing your membership as soon as possible so that we won't have to incur the extra expense of printing and mailing reminder cards. We appreciate your loyalty and generosity over the years and hope to continue to provide you with information and efforts preserving the memory of our beloved Boston Braves. We also thank those in our group that can afford to donate a little extra and achieve Royal Rooter status. A wonderfully designed membership card by member **Bob Polio** will be sent to you upon receipt of your check for \$15. Please send your renewal payment to:

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

Thank you for your support and encouragement.

Braves Anniversaries

2009 marks the 95th anniversary of the 1914 Miracle Braves and the last World Championship won by a National League franchise in Boston. Home games during that historic World Series took place on American League turf at Fenway Park to take advantage of a larger seating capacity. The Braves would reciprocate in 1915 and 1916, allowing the Red Sox post-season use of the Wigwam to pump up the Fall Classic's attendance and capture two World Championships.

Braves Field also drew closer to reality in 1914 when **James E. Gaffney**, the club owner, purchased the Allston Golf Club on December 1. The Braves had outgrown the dilapidated wooden South End Grounds, which had been rebuilt on a smaller footprint after burning down 115 years ago (1894), forcing the team to temporary quarters at the Congress Street Grounds. The fire occurred on May 15 and, amazingly, the South End Grounds was rebuilt and reoccupied by July 20.

However, while in their South Boston waterfront ballpark, the Beaneaters'/Braves' second baseman, **Bobby "Link" Lowe**, achieved baseball immortality by being the first to clout four home runs in a game.

Sunday baseball came to Boston 90 years ago on April 28, 1929 at Braves Field. The honor, however, was claimed by the Red Sox and not the ballpark's home tenant. The Braves would have held that Hub sport's "first" had their Sunday, April 21 game not have been washed out. The Wigwam was lent to the Bosox since they were still legally prohibited from using Fenway Park on the Sabbath due to the field's too close proximity to a house of worship.

70 years ago on July 21, 1939, **Sibby Sisti** made his major league debut with the Boston Bees in a game against the Cubs before a sparse crowd of 2,797 at National League Park (*a/k/a* "The Beehive"). This all-time Boston Braves favorite was five days shy of his nineteenth birthday. Sibby pinch hit for starter and losing pitcher **Jim "Milkman" Turner** in the bottom of the ninth and was thrown out in a bunting attempt. He had been called up from the Tribe's Eastern League Hartford affiliate where the young Buffalo, NY native had been batting .312. **Casey Stengel's** Bees were desperate for infield help with shortstop **Eddie Miller** on the disabled list and second-sacker **Tony Cuccinello** nursing a bum knee. Sibby filled in at second, third and short in 63 games with the seventh place ballclub.

1944 could have been called the "Year of the No-Hitter" for the Braves. 65 years have passed since Tribe right-hander **Jim "Abba Dabba" Tobin** hurled his hitless masterpiece against the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 27 at Braves Field. Tobin aided his cause, clouting a four-bagger over the left field wall in the eighth inning of his 2-0 whitewash. Only 1,987 fans were on hand to witness this gem. Turnabout was fair play and Tobin found himself on the losing end of a no-hitter on May 15 at Crosley Field in Cincinnati. Reds southpaw and future Brave **Clyde "Hardrock" Shoun** rendered Braves batters helpless in a 1-0 triumph. Tobin, however, drew some satisfaction by walking in the third inning. He was the only Tribesman to reach base, depriving Shoun of a perfect game. Even fewer observed this feat as 1,016 passed through Crosley Field's turnstiles. The following month, Tobin once

again pitched hitless ball. In the second game of a doubleheader against the Phillies at the Wigwam, Tobin secured a 7-0 victory in a June 22 contest halted after five innings due to darkness (lights wouldn't be added to the field until 1946). The crowd was a bit larger this time -- 2,256 attendees! The attendance at these games was not the exception to the rule. The Braves drew only 208,691 in 1944, their lowest total since 1924.

Since many of us still retain an image of **Johnny Antonelli** as a fuzzy-cheeked, 18-year-old bonus baby, it's hard to believe that our frequent reunion honored guest won his first major league game some 60 years ago. Almost a year after his signing, the teenaged southpaw was handed the ball for his first professional starting assignment. On May 1, 1949, before a crowd of 33,402, Johnny took to the Braves Field mound in the second game of a doubleheader against the visiting New York Giants. Warren Spahn and the Tribe had emerged victorious, 6-5, in the opener as the result of a bases loaded pinch single by Sibby Sisti in the bottom of the ninth. Antonelli pitched effectively in the nightcap, frequently drawing cheers from the stands as he held the Giants to six hits and one unearned run until the final inning. He suffered a loss of control in the top half of the ninth, loading the bases with free passes, causing manager Southworth to bring in Nels Potter in relief. The veteran right-hander wrapped up the contest by retiring the side after giving up a solo run. This 4-2 win would be followed by 125 more victories before John August Antonelli called it a career in 1961.

Boston Braves Heritage Trail

While less formal than Boston's famed historic Freedom Trail, the Boston Braves have their own trail of sorts to mark their 81 year stay in the Hub. Today, one can visit several locations with ties to the Tribe. The most obvious and most important, of course, is Nickerson Field with its preserved portion of the Wigwam's right field pavilion and the retrofitted Braves administration building. A commemorative plaque in the courtyard in back of the edifice reinforces the area's historical importance. Unfortunately, the alley connecting Babcock Street and Gaffney Street/Harry Agganis Way continues to be bereft of its "Braves Field Way" signage that late BBHA member **Jim Smith** worked so hard to get the City of Boston to document. While in the vicinity, why not locate the spot of the ill-fated **Warren Spahn's** Diner? With the slogan, "The Best In Baseball -- The Best In Food," the restaurant's debut was set for Opening Day 1953 to welcome hungry Braves Field patrons. Unfortunately, both Spahn and potential pre- and post game hungry customers were in Milwaukee that April. The restaurant, on the opposite side of Commonwealth Avenue near Babcock Street, is long gone. It

transitioned into a Hayes Bickford diner and, ultimately, to a muffler shop.

Two other ancient playing fields of the Braves should be included on any Boston trek. The multi-turreted South End/Walpole Street Grounds no longer has any physical presence but another commemorative plaque was installed at the Ruggles MBTA Orange Line station which incorporates part of the old ballpark's footprint. A piece of Northeastern University's campus claims the remainder. That sprawling educational complex also stands on a former home of the Red Sox -- the Huntington Avenue Grounds, home of baseball's first World Series. A much more elaborate tribute has been constructed in its honor. In addition to a large plaque on the outer wall of the university's Cabot Gym (with a World Series room inside), a 6'2" statue of **Cy Young** has been erected in a back mall. Young appears to be peering at his catcher and some 60 feet away resides a granite replica of home plate on the approximate spot of its Grounds' ancestor. Since Young closed out his big league career and claimed the last four of his 511 victories with the Braves in 1911, his statue would be a legitimate stop on our fantasy tour.

As previously mentioned, the 1894 conflagration that consumed the South End Grounds forced the Beaneaters/Braves to temporarily transfer their operations to the Congress Street Grounds, within a stone's throw of Boston Harbor. This waterfront ancestor to the likes of Baltimore's Camden Yards and San Francisco's Safeco Field is without any present-day distinguishable marker. The best one can do is to walk along Congress Street, cross over the Fort Point Channel and head to the South Boston Waterfront area. Former warehouse buildings along 368-374 Congress Street stand on the approximate place of this hallowed ground. For an excellent treatise on this wooden doubled decked ballpark that featured two 75 foot towers, go to <http://bioproj.sabr.org/bioproj.cfm?a=v&v=l&pid=19637&bid=2621>.

While regarded as enemy territory by die-hard Boston Braves fans, Fenway Park belongs on this grand tour. The Tribe's last World Championship was captured here. In sweeping **Connie Mack's** heralded Philadelphia Athletics in 1914, the Miracle Braves took the final two games of the Series at the American League site. They played the 3-1 clincher on October 13 before an enthusiastic gathering of 34,365. Fenway Park would also serve as a home-away-from-home on other occasions, most notably in 1946 while the Braves awaited for the wet green paint on Braves Field seats to dry after the legendary Opening Day fiasco at their home.

One of the most obscure of Braves sites in Boston is the Paddock Building at 101 Tremont Street in the

downtown area. This 11-story office building, across the street from the Granary Burial Ground, once housed the club's headquarters, including the offices of Braves owner and club president **James E. Gaffney**. It was from this location that Gaffney negotiated the purchase of the Allston Golf Club and subsequently informed Braves fans of his plans to transform that acreage into the new "Home of the Braves." The facility housing the Braves administrative operations was named after Major **Adino Paddock**, whose Revolutionary War-era home originally stood on the corner of Bromfield and Tremont Streets. Paddock, a relative of one of the early settlers in Plymouth, was Boston's first coach-maker and a man of substance. He was a respected pre-war captain of the city's artillery and trained such future Revolutionary War notables as Brigadier General John Crane of Tea Party fame and General Henry Knox, the Secretary of War in Washington's first cabinet. However, Paddock was an outspoken Tory and was forced to flee Boston when George Washington evacuated the city of British troops on March 17, 1776. His home was confiscated after he returned to England. Paddock's earlier contributions to the development of Boston, however, were not forgotten and the developers of the office building chose to name the structure in his honor.

The Birth of Braves Field

At 5 o'clock on December 4, 1914, a long-anticipated announcement was made at Boston Braves headquarters at the Paddock Building in downtown Boston regarding a new ballpark for the Hub's National League franchise. From New York City, president **James E. Gaffney** telephoned club secretary Herman Nickerson, a former sports editor of the *Boston Journal*, to inform him and those in attendance that a deal had been closed to acquire a substantial portion of the former Allston Golf Club course. That area faced Commonwealth Avenue and was bounded by the Boston and Albany Railroad in the rear and by Babcock and Pleasant Street on its sides. A state armory, expected to be completed in the spring of 1915, was being erected along the eastern portion of the former golf course. The lot was 675 feet wide on Commonwealth Ave. and ran back 850 feet to the railroad yard. The entire plot consisted of an area of 593,718 square feet. The stadium would be conveniently located slightly more than a mile from Fenway Park. The Boston side of Pleasant Street would become Gaffney Street and finally, Harry Agganis Way.

Gaffney noted that much work would need to be done and that construction would have to be rushed to complete the structure in time for a mid-season debut. The old golf course club house would have to be demolished and a large swamp at the base of a steep hill in the middle of the tract would have to be filled.

Babcock and Pleasant Streets then ran only as far as the Brookline side of Commonwealth Avenue. They would have to be extended across the avenue to the railroad borders. Gaffney pledged to be "on hand to superintend the job and see that work is rushed through as no park ever was rushed before."

The Braves president intended to request that the Boston and Albany Railroad construct a station at the rear of the baseball grounds. He also would seek to have the Boston Elevated Railway Company run a spur trolley line down Pleasant Street to an entrance into the park. It was estimated that express cars from Park Street running out of the new subway onto Commonwealth Avenue would arrive at Braves Field in about 12 minutes.

On December 17, further details were revealed. Gaffney and an entourage had visited the site to plan the ballpark layout. They determined that the grounds would be graded to a level two to three times lower than Commonwealth Ave. The grandstand was to face the east and be built on the existing contour of the land. Gaffney had obtained the plans of all existing big league parks and was intent on selecting their best features for his new stadium. For example, he expressed a preference that the grandstand reflect that of Detroit's Navin Field and that its capacity be slightly larger than the Polo Grounds. In adopting this strategy, Gaffney promised to "select any good features that will help give the Braves a model baseball plant -- in fact, the last word in such plants."

Gaffney further planned to use the Commonwealth Ave. frontage for stores and garages. Space would be left on the Babcock Street side for a row of houses. This would allow him to not only build a substantial sports facility but to also take advantage of the more commercially valuable real estate.

While the new park was being designed, the disposition of the South End Grounds was the subject of much discussion. Fearing its use by a competing interloper such as the Federal League, baseball's National Commission counseled the Braves president that any sale of the property should have "an iron-bound agreement to the effect that the park could never again be used for baseball playing." The Grounds changed hands at year's end with the requested provision in place. The new owners were said to be prepared to invest a substantial amount of money to transform the land into a manufacturing site. Famed *Boston Globe* sports reporter **T.H. Murnane** supplied a fitting obituary for the South End Grounds: "The present structure will soon be torn down, and all that will be left of the most celebrated ball field in the country will be bitter memory to many a magnate and glorious memory to those who witnessed the games from 1871 to 1900."

Boston's Replacement All Star Game

On the afternoon of December 28, Gaffney and two New York based directors of the Braves arrived in Boston by train and quickly went to the Paddock Building headquarters to review the plans for Braves Field drawn up the Osborn Engineering, a Cleveland, OH firm that had previously worked on the design of Fenway Park.

The original documents provided a detailed description of the proposed seating capacity: 948 boxes and 15,983 grandstand chairs (for a total of 16,931 reserved seats), 8,376 right pavilion and 9,639 left field pavilion spaces, and room for 5,336 occupants in the "25 cent" bleachers to be built in center field. All told, the park would house 40,282.

All entrances would reside on Pleasant Street with capacity for some 25 ticket booths. Several exits would be placed on the Babcock Street side. Entry into the grandstands, modeled after Navin Field per Gaffney's request, would be patterned after those passageways at Chicago's Soldiers Field. Taking advantage of the topography, the architect set the playing field 12 feet lower than Commonwealth Ave. Again, in accordance with Gaffney's strategy, some 200 feet of frontage along the avenue would be set aside for other than baseball purposes.

In addition to the design of the stands, Gaffney played a significant role regarding the layout of the playing field. According to the *Globe's* Murnane, "[Gaffney] also wants to see plenty of room for the outfielders, and this he has provided for in grand style, for there is room for home runs within the field, and the laying out of the diamond was done with proper regard for the players, who on many grounds are forced to play sun fields."

Given the large scale of the job, many of the Hub's building contractors were on hand, seeking contracts. Gaffney wanted site preparation work to commence immediately so that concrete could be poured as soon as possible when temperatures permitted in the spring.

During a time where the construction trade was still dependent upon draught animals and equipment that would appear primitive in today's world, Gaffney's dream was fulfilled in exceptional time when, on August 18, 1915, the Braves opened the park by hosting the St. Louis Cardinals. Time constraints and increased expense did result in some modifications to the plan (e.g., the reduction in the size of the bleachers that produced the legendary Jury Box) but Gaffney succeeded in giving Boston what was described on a contemporary postcard portrait as the "Largest Ball Ground in the World."

The only break in the string of the annual All Star contests occurred in 1945. Wartime travel constraints precluded conducting the Mid Season Classic. The Red Sox had been scheduled to host the game at Fenway Park and received a deferral until the following season. On the July 9-10 open dates that had been reserved for the occasion, a number of exhibition games now filled the bill. Proceeds of these contests were donated to various war relief efforts. While some games featured competitions against service clubs, most of the exhibitions consisted of contests between inter-league rivals. The Braves met the Red Sox at Fenway Park on July 10 in what was advertised as "Boston's United War Fund Game."

To pump up attendance, Boston's famed newspaper cartoonist **Bob Coyne** sketched a piece entitled "Alladin's Lamp Couldn't Give You Much More!" to lure folks to the ballpark. His cartoon portrayed the game's scheduled distinguished guests, heavyweight champ **Joe Louis**, baseball's clown prince **Al Schacht** and commissioner **Happy Chandler**. Old time ballplayers of "Grandpa's Day" such as **Hugh Duffy** were advertised as attending in addition to the Braves Troubadours. Purchasing a red feather for a buck at the park from a representative of the like-named charity might win you a season pass. On the playing field, baseball's best pitcher, **Dave Ferriss** would oppose baseball's best batter, **Tommy Holmes**. A photograph of Ferris, Holmes and Happy Chandler from the event would adorn the back cover of the serviceman's edition of *The Sporting News 1945 Baseball Register*

22,809 fans entered Fenway's portals, raising \$73,000 for relief efforts. It was by far the largest fundraising exhibition contest, besting the \$50,518 taken in at the Yankees-Giants game before a crowd of 41,267.

Boo Ferriss opposed **Al Javery** on the mound. During his three inning stint, Ferriss gave up two hits and no runs. The Red Sox took the lead for good in the second inning when Javery allowed two runs on a hit and four walks. **George "Catfish" Metkovich** stroked the game's only a home run, a blast into the right field bullpen. Much to the delight of the crowd, Tommy Holmes "extended" his 37-game hit streak with a single off of **Randy Heflin** in the sixth. Another highlight also took place that inning when brother faced brother. The Tribe's **Jim Tobin** pitched to his younger sibling, Jack, the Bosox third baseman playing in what would be his only season in the majors. The Braves' Troubadours commemorated the event by serenading the Tobins with "Brother Can You Spare A Dime." Jack responded by tapping Jim's knuckleball through the box for what was described in the press as "a 10-cent hit in any league." The Braves were saved from a shutout by

Ducky Medwick, who doubled and was driven in by second baseman **Frankie Drews**. The 8-1 contest lasted one hour and forty-two minutes.

1952 Memories

Drumming up interest for the forthcoming season, the club issued its newsletter, the *Braves Bulletin* in the late fall of 1951. The red and blue colored publication proclaimed in a banner headline, "Top Rookie Crop Brings New Look Plus New Optimism to 1952 Braves." Billed as "the largest crop of rookie ball players in Braves history," this group included **George Crowe**, **Gene Conley**, **Ed Mathews**, **Jack Cusick**, **Ernie Johnson**, **Dick Donovan**, **Normie Roy**, **Murray Wall**, **Don Liddle**, **Bert Thiel**, **Bob Hall**, **Billy Klaus**, **Harry Hanebrink**, **Bob Thorpe**, **Pete Whisenant**, **Jack Dittmer**, **Jack Daniels**, **Billy Reed**, **Virgil Jester** and **Dick Hoover**. Each had his picture and biography included in the publication.

In January, the team chartered a Pan American World Airways propeller-driven plane and branded the fuselage with the title "Boston Braves Rookie Rocket." Rocketeers included general manager **John Quinn**, public relations director **Bill Sullivan** and a contingent from the local media including sports reporters from Hub newspapers such as the *Globe*, *American*, *Daily Record*, *Herald-Traveler* and *Post* and the Yankee Radio Network. Departing Logan International Airport on the twenty-first, the group logged in excess of 10,000 miles visiting and interviewing prospects across the United States, Cuba and Puerto Rico. They returned to Boston on February 8, in time to prepare for the February 20 8:30 a.m. club scheduled departure from Boston on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad to the Tribe's spring training headquarters in Bradenton, Florida. Arrival for the entourage in the Sunshine State was schedule for 3:25 p.m. the following day.

Other off-season publicity efforts included weekly radio and TV shows. WNAC and the Yankee Network of New England radio stations filled the air with baseball topics at 6:15 p.m. on Thursdays while WNAC-TV broadcasted "Baseball In Your Living Room," featuring prominent ballplayers and instructional sequences.

The Braves' regular season radio and television broadcasting team consisted of **Jim Britt**, **Bump Hadley** and **Lester Smith**. The nationally-known Britt was handling Tribe play-by-play for the tenth year. A biographical portrait by BBHA executive committee member **Mort Bloomberg** appears in *Spahn, Sain and Teddy Ballgame*. Hadley had previously attained fame on the diamond as a pitcher for the Senators, White Sox, Browns, Yankees, Giants and Athletics over a 16-year career that included appearances in the 1936,

1937 and 1939 World Series. This was his fourth year in the booth describing game action for TV viewers. Hadley also hosted local radio and television sports shows. Smith, a former Braves Knot Hole Gang member, was in his second year of work with WNAC and the Yankee Network. After leaving Boston, he went on to achieve fame and fortune in both news and sports broadcasting in New York City. Smith passed away last year on April 19 at 90 years of age.

The 1952 Boston Braves program featured a color cover of a jumping **Tommy Holmes** catching a ball before a group of Little Leaguers. The artist had used a black and white publicity photo of the Braves manager as for a model and had added the youngsters to represent a clinic that had been conducted at Braves Field the previous season on Saturday, July 21 at 11:30 a.m. before the Braves-Pirates game. The same image of Holmes, in a black and white drawing, had appeared in the 1947 Boston Braves *Sketch Book*. The club strongly supported youth baseball and invited over one thousand participants from all over New England to the July 21 event. Holmes and the Pirates' **Ralph Kiner** had provided batting tips while **Walker Cooper**, **Sibby Sisti** and **Johnny Logan** illustrated the finer points of fielding various positions. After the game, won by the Braves 11-6, two Little League All Star teams played a game on Wigwam turf. While a large contingent of Little Leaguers entered the park on free passes, paid attendance for the day was only 3,263. The 1952 team yearbook cover followed the motif of the season program with a full color portrait inspired by that day's activities and with a two-page illustrated story included inside.

Innovators that they were, the Braves had adopted the magazine-sized format for their programs in 1949, well ahead of the neighboring Red Sox. A closer look at the cover also revealed another significant difference between the Hub's National and American League clubs. Among the group of Little Leaguers on the right hand side of the cover was an African American lad. The Braves had integrated their roster in 1950 and this year's line-up featured former Negro Leaguers **Sam Jethroe**, **George Crowe** and **Buster Clarkson**. And the great **Jackie Robinson** had been listed as a Wigwam visitor in the team's scorecards since his historic 1947 major league debut.

While Holmes appeared on the cover of the ten cent program for the entire season, his name would shift from the home to the visitor's side of the scorecard when he was removed from the Tribe's helm on May 31 in favor of **Charlie Grimm** and subsequently signed on with his hometown Brooklyn Dodgers for their pennant drive and subsequent World Series appearance. Contents within the magazine would be updated periodically throughout the season.

The Braves continued their strong support of The Jimmy Fund in a number of ways. Large red and white baseball-shaped donation containers were stationed within the park and generously filled by the club's patrons. The new Jimmy Fund Building on Binney Street in Boston had been dedicated a year ago. \$1 million of its \$1.5 million cost remained to be repaid along with the need for at least \$200,000 annually to carry on research work.

By today's standards, the price of admission to a game at the Wigwam seems to be a true bargain. General admission was \$1.20 with a seat in the pavilions priced at \$1 and a Jury Box spot at 60 cents. Youngsters also had the option of an even less expensive route via Knot Hole Gang membership. Kids between 10 and 16 years of age were eligible for discounted admission to a section in the third base pavilion seats. The Knot Hole Gang was a longstanding program that started during the Fuchs regime.

As expected, reserved seats were priced higher. A grandstand reserved seat would set you back \$1.80. Moving up in class, a box seat required a purchaser to plunk down \$2.40. The most expensive seat in the house would be found on the roof in the Skyview area. The princely sum of \$3.60 gained entry to the nosebleed section of the park. The Braves always advised those thinking of attending a game on the spur of the moment that "Braves Field is never sold out in advance." The park always had some 20,000 unreserved seats for sale on game day even if all reserved seats had been sold. Team management didn't realize how hollow this marketing proclamation would ring in '52 when only 280,000 would pass through the turnstiles and many contests failed to draw attendance in numbers above four figures.

The Braves offered four season ticket plan, each with the guaranteed right to purchase the same seat should the Braves miraculously make it to the World Series. A full season regular box or Skyview package cost \$150 or \$200, respectively. A similar ticket bundle for a reserved grandstand seat all season went for \$100. The club also attempted to create other combinations for its fans. One could opt for a grouping of 12 Sundays, 3 holidays and 28 nights for a box seat (\$100.80) or reserved grandstand perch (\$75.60). Still too pricey? The Braves had a couple of less expensive deals to offer. \$50.40 got you a reserved grandstand seat for 28 night games while the \$25.20 "Variety Special" allowed you and a companion to attend the first night game appearance at Braves Field of each National League opponent in two comfortable reserved grandstand chairs. For what it costs to attend a single game at Fenway Park today, you could have bought any one of these multi-game plans in 1952.

One did not have to venture to Gaffney Street to purchase tickets for future games. Gilchrist's in downtown Boston served as an outlet as did some 28 other sites in New England, including at Bulkely Stadium, home of the Eastern League affiliate Hartford Chiefs. The Braves also encouraged mail orders as long as a self addressed stamped envelope was provided. However, in its published ticket information, the club warned, "NO TELEPHONE RESERVATIONS ACCEPTED."

The original home schedule brochure for the '52 season listed 31 night games and 17 doubleheaders. Pre-Equal Rights movement Ladies Days were frequently conducted but tickets weren't sold in advance. Prior to the start of each home stand, the Braves would announce this promotion by press and radio. The discounted ducats had to be purchased at the Babcock Street ticket office where the "Ladies Gate" also resided. The fairer sex gained admission to the unreserved grandstand for a half dollar.

Boston's Hotel Somerset offered a \$4.75 special. For that modest sum, one would received "a superb dinner in the air conditioned Currier and Ives room," a reserved night game grandstand seat at the Wigwam and a taxi from the hotel to the game and back.

If you were in Boston and the weather caused you to wonder whether the game would be played at the Wigwam, you only needed to look toward the skyline. What today is referred to as the "old" John Hancock Tower building maintained beacon on its roof with a set of colored lights. That tradition carries on to this day. In 1952, a flashing red light informed you that there'd be no game today at Braves Field. Generations of Bostonians have become well versed in the "Weather Light Rhyme":

Steady blue, clear view
Flashing blue, clouds due
Steady red, rains ahead
Flashing red, snow instead

Braves Field was not isolated from fears generated by the Cold War in Europe and the hot war in Korea. The 1952 program contained air raid instructions. Shelter areas were labeled at the Wigwam and the public address system was prepared to broadcast a three-minute warbling signal should an attack appear imminent. Patrons were instructed to stay in the shelter areas until an all-clear signal was sounded.

Club management issued its annual and routinely ignored warning about gambling at the ballpark. "Betting and gambling of all kinds are prohibited in this

ballpark. Offenders will be ejected and barred from the park.”

Afternoon games started at 2 p.m. with doubleheaders commencing a half hour earlier. Night tilts began at 8:30 p.m. -- evidence that the national television networks did not originate the late starting times that today are to blame for the tired, bleary-eyed fans reporting to work or school the next day!

Declining attendance caused Braves management to defer planned significant renovations to the ballpark that they had commissioned Osborn Engineering to draw up after capturing the 1948 National League flag. However, ownership had lowered the outfield wall by five feet in hopes of more Tribe homers and had undertaken a beautification effort, including the planting of fir trees, that rendered the field “the prettiest park in the majors” according to our resident expert and tour guide, **Ralph Evans**.

Distances from home plate to the outfield boundaries changed constantly over the years and various sources provide conflicting information. According to *Who's Who in Baseball* for 1952, home to left field covered 337 feet, center field was a distant 390 feet and for a ball to travel to the Jury Box, it would have to fly some 319 feet, only slightly further than Fenway Park's chummy left field wall.

Because of its configuration, Braves Field has some interesting special ground rules. A ball batted down the left field foul line and into the Braves bullpen was in play. If a ball hit down the left field foul line went out of the umpire's sight, it was declared a two-base hit. The left field wall that served as the foundation for the the 68 foot tall electric scoreboard contained a large “**Always Buy Chesterfield**” sign that included a three-dimensional cigarette and within the smoke rising from the tip was the caption “**A HIT!**” If a ball ricocheted off that sign, it remained in play. However, if the ball was entrapped by the advertisement, the batter would be awarded a double.

Once inside the park, fans would be lured to concession booths for food and souvenirs or be serviced by the “boys with the baskets” in the stands. Fifty cents would buy you a pennant or a yearbook. For those with an appetite, ballpark staples (Armour Star frankfurters, with Gulden's mustard as an option, @ 50¢, a bottle of Coke or peanuts @ 10¢ and popcorn @ 15¢) were readily available. Sandwiches started at 25¢ for egg salad and increased to 30¢ for swiss cheese, 35¢ for ham or a hamburger, 45¢ for a cheeseburger and topped off at 50¢ for pastrami. Beer and ale were offered in bottle or draught (35¢) with such brands as Narragansett, Ballantine, and Harvard to select from. Daggett's Boston Orangeade “with crushed fruit” was on sale throughout the ballpark. Hood's ice cream served

as a dessert choice if one had a dime and a nickel in their pocket. Smoke that pervaded Braves Field did not only come from locomotives from the adjacent railroad yard. Cigar and cigarette manufacturers were longstanding team sponsors and their products were sold and freely consumed on site. While such fumes were not yet considered noxious, the sale of fried clams had been discontinued due to their pervasive cooking odor.

Pre-season optimism quickly dissipated as the Holmes-led club sank into the second division and **Jolly Cholly Grimm** couldn't do much better as the replacement skipper. **Warren Spahn** was the club's sole representative on the All Star team and led the Senior Circuit in strikeouts. He was the club's winningest hurler with a 14-19 record. Even the slugging heroics of rookie third baseman **Eddie Mathews** couldn't attract fans to Braves Field. Attendance peaked on July 5 when 13,405 folks “filled” the 40,000+ seat stadium for a game against the Dodgers. The largest gathering that the Tribe played before in '52 occurred on the road. A June 8th doubleheader at Wrigley Field drew 38,514 to witness a Braves-Cubs split.

The home game attendance reached rock bottom on May 14, when only 1,105 loyalists ventured to the Wigwam. Their faith was rewarded by a 10th inning come-from-behind 4-3 victory. This sparse attendance figure was not unique as the club drew under 2,000 more than a half dozen times during the season. It's understandable under such circumstances why some of our reunion guests from the '52 club have marveled at the size of our annual celebration and have remarked that the team might still be in Boston had it received such support,

And the season was not without its low-lights on the field as well. On April 23 at the Polo Grounds, Tribe rookie **Dick Hoover** yielded a homer to **Hoyt Wilhelm** in the latter's first major league at bat. The future Hall of Famer never hit another one over the course of a 1,070 game big league career. **Earl Torgeson** batted into a triple play against the Pirates in Pittsburgh on June 24 and, on June 30, was thrown out of a game in New York and fined for attacking Giants catcher **Sal Yvars** in retaliation for breaking his bat. Ex-skipper **Tommy Holmes** came back to haunt the Tribe on June 29. Now donning “Dodger Blue” and playing before a hometown crowd at Ebbets Field, the former hero of the Jury Box denizens drove in the winning run as a pinch-hitter. **Sam Jethroe** made it into manager Grimm's doghouse on September 3. With two outs in the bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, and a 3-1 count, the Jet ignored a “take” sign from the skipper and swung at a high pitch out of the strike zone. The easy fly ball out secured a Dodgers 6-5 triumph. “Cholly” was not so

jolly when he later fumed to the press, "Even a little leaguer wouldn't pull one like that."

The 3,482 Braves fans at the Sunday, September 14 doubleheader saw the last National League regular season victory in Boston. They had little time to savor it, however, as **Max Surkont** efficiently dispensed of the Chicago Cubs, 1-0, in opener in the Senior Circuit's quickest game of the season. The last-ever home win required only one hour and twenty-five minutes to complete.

Ironically, the second largest crowd of the season, 8,882 loyal fans, assembled at the Wigwam on Sunday, September 21 for Braves' final home game of the season and, unknowingly, its last in Boston. The Tribe wrapped up 81 campaigns in the Hub with an 8-2 loss to the Dodgers.

The futility of the Boston Braves' demise was reflected in their terminal regular season game at Brooklyn on September 28. The affair ended in a 5-5 deadlock, allegedly called on account of darkness, but most likely influenced by the fact that neither side cared to extend the protracted meaningless 12-inning struggle. Even home plate umpire **Al Barlick** quit after ten innings to catch a train home to Springfield, IL. Bum's manager **Chuck Dressen** had pulled his regulars after five innings. In the eighth, he even inserted pitcher **Preacher Roe** into the first base coaching box. **Tommy Holmes** played the entire game in right field -- for the Dodgers -- and was the last batter a Boston Braves pitcher ever faced. Holmes sent a bouncer back to Tribe hurler **Lou Burdette**, who fired to second to catch **Bobby Morgan** off the bag. The remaining umpires agreed that it was too dark to continue any further. The Braves finished in seventh place.

The previous day, freshman **Eddie Mathews** had provided a glimpse of what would become a Hall of Fame career and of the team's potential when he clubbed three homers against the Brooks. Mathews stroked three consecutive home runs to help secure the Boston Braves last regular season victory. **Virgil Jester** claimed the Tribe's final win in an 11-3 blowout.

For the record, the Braves' concluding lineup on September 28 was as follows: **Sam Jethroe** (CF), **Johnny Logan** (SS), **Eddie Mathews** (3B), **Sid Gordon** (LF), **Earl Torgeson** (1B), **Paul Burris** (C), **Jack Daniels** (RF) and **Jack Dittmer** (2B). **Ernie Johnson** started the game and was relieved by **Sherman Jones**, **Bob Chipman** and **Lou Burdette**. **Warren Spahn**, **Jack Cusick** and **Walker Cooper** made pinch-hitting appearances. 9,453 witnessed this end of an era, which commenced a period of franchise relocations that would result in Brooklyn's home team following the Tribe's example in 1958 and depart for Los Angeles.

Immediately after the Braves wrapped up their season at the Wigwam, the field was converted into a gridiron. Temporary stands were assembled to run parallel with the right field/first base side of the field to accommodate a football configuration. Boston College played a seven game home schedule at the Gaffney Street locale. The Eagles began with a September 26 night affair against Richmond and wrapped up with a day contest on November 29 against their traditional rivals, the Holy Cross Crusaders. With the exception of contests versus Clemson and Holy Cross, individual game tickets cost \$2.40 for reserved grandstand, \$3.60 for a box seat and \$4.80 for the Skyview. Prices peaked for the Crusaders battle, with the same seats going for \$3.60, \$4.80, and \$6.00, respectively. BC's lackluster season (4-4-1) was reflected by their home game record: three victories against four losses. Most importantly, they went down to defeat at the Wigwam to their Catholic college adversary Holy Cross, 21-7.

In November, the Perini interests bought out the other two "Little Steam Shovels" along with minority investors in the Braves, giving the family the sole control it needed to determine the destiny of the ballclub. The seeds of eventual franchise shift had been sewn.

Lou Perini's Vision

Contrary to what some believe, evidence indicates that the purchase of the Milwaukee Brewers for \$270,000 in 1946 by **Lou Perini** and his fellow Braves owners was not necessarily part of a covert contingent exit strategy out of the Hub. During this timeframe, ownership was willingly making generous investments, signing a respected and successful manager at a previously unheard of salary and acquiring on-field talent for significant cash outlays. A robust player development program was undertaken and the team would follow the Dodgers lead in breaking baseball's "color line." Extensive public relations efforts and innovations were sponsored. With their construction industry background, the Three Little Steam Shovels under Perini's leadership, went about making physical improvements at Braves Field both in the stands and on the diamond. As mentioned previously in the newsletter, plans were drawn up and at the ready to further modernize the ballpark based upon the assumption that rising attendance would be sustained.

The Braves had a history of preferring outright ownership of their minor league affiliates over working agreements. Letters from the predecessor regime exist that document this attitude. For example, Bees President **Bob Quinn** once informed a minor league ballclub suitor that "we have no Working Agreements, because we have never been able to get anything out of them except headaches. For this reason we try to operate our own ball clubs." Despite the tenuous

financial position of the Bees, the franchise had full title to Hartford in the Eastern League, Evansville in the Three-I League, York in the Inter-State League and Bradford in the PONY League.

In addition to adding Milwaukee as a wholly-owned Triple A outlet in the Tribe farm system, Perini saw the purchase as a sound investment with the prospect of an excellent near term return. The Milwaukee county board had voted to erect a stadium to accommodate baseball, football and other sports and had appropriated \$100,000 for preliminary work. This, plus a solid core of local baseball fans, led Perini to predict before a local gathering to introduce himself that Milwaukee would become a major league city within five years. He believed that pressure from the west coast would eventually lead to the expansion of major league baseball into two twelve-team circuits.

Perini disagree with the sentiment of some that a wholesale conversion of the "open classification" Pacific Coast League to major league status would be wise. He dismissed Sacramento, Portland, Seattle and San Diego as not yet ready to support big league ball. Perini felt that Los Angeles and San Francisco were ripe for admission and that Oakland and Hollywood, with their natural rivalry, would be the other logical entrants.

Expansion just to west coast cities would create ten-team leagues, causing Perini to speculate that "a good schedule is impossible under such a set-up." Therefore, he foresaw an opportunity for Milwaukee, Montreal, Baltimore and Houston to become likely targets for a more rational structuring. He pledged to his Milwaukee audience: "When that time comes, we [the Boston Braves] will have to get out, because no one can operate more than one big league club. When that time comes we will sell our Milwaukee holdings and Milwaukee men will get the first chance, believe me."

As an aside to his audience, Perini noted one of his joys in owning the Boston Braves. "My greatest pleasure is watching kids jump the fences at our park. I tell my ushers not to bother fence hoppers. I used to do it myself when I was young. I know what a thrill a kid gets out of hopping a fence to see a ball game."

Perini's optimistic 1946 outlook would be sustained for the next few years with steadily improving teams, strong fan support and a championship. The disintegration of the '48 champs led to a precipitous decline in attendance and a sea of red ink. With **Bill Veck** seeking to escape St. Louis and casting eyes on a number of cities to move his Brownies, Wisconsin's citizenry and politicians sensing the financial instability of a number of major league franchises, placed intense

pressure on Perini to decide to either relocate the Tribe immediately or give up the territory to others. Financial survival overrode sentimentality, resulting in an abrupt spring training 1953 decision to shift the franchise to Milwaukee and leave Braves fans brokenhearted in Boston. **Tommy Holmes** was also affected by this chain of events. He had been signed to manage the 1953 American Association Brewers but relocated with that Triple A franchise to Toledo, OH instead.

In Memoriam

Since our previous newsletter, we were saddened to learn of the deaths of three former Boston Braves farmhands, **Paul Johnston**, **Joe Nelson** and **Paul Cave**.

Paul Johnston passed away on December 2, 2008 at 81 years of age. He was a WWII Marine Corps veteran who played minor league baseball for eight seasons. Johnston performed as a right-handed pitcher for Braves' affiliates the Eau Claire Bears, Evansville Braves and Welch Miners from 1950-52. With Eau Claire in 1950, he was a teammate of future major leaguers **Bill Bruton** and **Bob Trowbridge**. In 1951 at Evansville, Johnston was managed by former Braves skipper **Bob Coleman**. His best season in this span occurred in 1952 when he went 15-7 with the Appalachian League Miners. Johnston had continued success in that league, going 18-8 with the Lancaster Red Roses in 1954 and 20-4 with the Salem Rebels in 1955, his final professional season. He was a member of the Salem/Roanoke Baseball Hall of Fame. Johnston spent eleven years overseeing the Salem Golf Course.

Joe Nelson was 86 at the time of his death on February 7. He was an outstanding baseball and basketball player at the University of North Carolina. After brief pitching appearances in 1942 with the Elmira Pioneers of the Eastern League and the Norfolk Tars of the Piedmont League, Nelson enlisted in the Navy. He was critically wounded in an air attack at Okinawa that resulted in the death of 18 of his shipmates. After the war, Johnston attempted to resume his baseball career, joining the Hartford Chiefs in 1946. Among his teammates were several who had made it to Boston as wartime substitutes: **Don Manno**, **Frank Lamanna**, **Hal Shacker**, **Buddy Grep** and **Gene Patton**. Although he performed well, going 4-1, a sore right arm cut his season short and would plague him for the rest of his career. Dropping down a level the next year, Nelson pitched for the Class C Fort Lauderdale Braves but could only muster a 4-13 record. He stuck around the Florida International League with the independent Miami Beach Flamingos for the next two seasons before hanging up his spikes. Nelson went on to become an admired basketball coach and longtime administrator at

Seabreeze (FL) High School. He led his Sandcrabs team to three state basketball championships.

Paul Cave, a port-sider who spent eight seasons in the Braves farm system, passed away at age 75 on February 19. Cave broke in with the Pirates' Butler Tigers Class C club in 1951 and then joined **Bob Coleman**'s Evansville Braves squad of the Three-I League in 1952. With that Boston Braves affiliate, he played with reunion guest **Felix Mantilla** and future big league manager **John Goryl**. He twice performed with reunion MC and Red Sox manager **Joe Morgan** (1953 Evansville and 1957 Atlanta) and was the battery-mate of last year's reunion attendee **Mike Roarke** at Evansville (1952), Jacksonville (1954-55) and Wichita (1957). He continued to perform for Tribe teams until retiring in 1959. His best season was in 1954 for the Jacksonville Braves when he went 18-6. Unfortunately, his performance was overshadowed by teammate and reunion attendee **Humberto Robinson**'s 23 wins. The following season, Cave was selected to the Sally League's All Star team based upon a 12-9, 2.04 ERA performance. Cave made it to the Triple-A level on three occasions but never received a call-up from the parent Milwaukee Braves. After baseball, he settled in Farmville, VA and worked for Johns Equipment Company, later known as Mid-Atlantic Irrigation Company.

Nickname Confusion

The Boston Braves maintained a lengthy relationship with Connecticut's capital city. From 1938 to 1952, the club operated a Class A Eastern League team in Hartford. Tribe managers **Del Bissonette** and **Tommy Holmes** served apprenticeships there. Depending on the particular official or unofficial source that you might access, the Hartford club was known as the Bees, Laurels or Senators until 1946.

The insect monicker reflected the name adopted by its parent in 1936 and abandoned in 1940. Yet some continued to cite that handle through the '46 season. The confusing use of the Laurels and Senators designations was reflected on the pages of Hartford's dueling morning and afternoon newspapers, the *Courant* and the *Times*.

The *Courant* opted for "Senators," a historic team nickname and reflective of the state government seat. In fact, **Lou Gehrig** broke into professional baseball with the Senators and they were the only minor league team that he ever played for. The Iron Horse made a 12-game organized ball debut with the Senators in 1921 and split his time between the Yankees and Hartford in 1923 and 1924. Other notables that played for the Senators include **Jim Thorpe** (1922) and **Hank**

Greenberg (1930). The Senators name endures to this day in the form of a vintage baseball club that plays under 1886 baseball rules. Last year, they even played against a club bearing the Boston Beaneaters name! See <http://www.hartfordseiators.org/>

The *Times* preferred the "Laurels" reference. Recognizing that the Bees nickname was passé after being dropped in Boston, the *Times* adopted the official state flower preference after it had been selected by voters in a local naming contest.

Since the Hartford club was owned outright by the Braves, the Three Little Steam Shovels resolved the silliness before the start of the 1946 season. On May 8, they announced to the press that henceforth the team would bear the name "Chiefs" and would wear an Indian figure on their uniforms. Messrs. Perini, Maney and Rugo had also earlier in the month purchased Bulkeley Stadium, the team's home field. The first game played in the ballpark under the new owners was an exhibition contest on May 11 between the Braves and Red Sox. An overflow crowd of 7,713 fans witnessed a 3-3 deadlock that was called based upon a pre-agreed curfew, with the "visiting" Sox in the lead in the ninth. The score reverted back to the last full inning. The two teams needed to catch the 6:47 p.m. train back to Boston and had decided in advance not to play beyond 5:30 p.m. Despite it being a pre-season practice exercise, **Johnny Sain** was on the mound the entire game for the Braves.

Like its parent club, the Hartford Chiefs would play their last professional season in 1952.

Goodbye Johnny

When **Tommy Holmes** took over the helm of the Braves in 1951, he was faced with the problem of dealing with the declining performance of a former teammate and friend, **Johnny Sain**. After Big John had been kayoed in six consecutive starts and experienced two lackluster relief appearances, Tommy's hand was forced. He announced that "Sain will miss at least the next two turns. I won't say he's going to the bullpen, that he's washed up or anything like that.... He just needs a little rest." Holmes hoped for a repeat of the previous season when Sain had rebounded from a poor campaign in 1949 to again win 20 games. With pressure on to pitch youngsters such as **Chet Nichols** and **Dave Cole**, coupled with Sain's high salary and red ink flowing on the Tribe's books, the club acted after Sain went 5-13 in 26 games. On August 30, in a waiver deal, the Braves sent Sain to the Yankees for promising hurler **Lou Burdette** and a \$50,000 cash injection.

While Sain's departure was not a surprise, his landing in the American League in New York to rejoin his first

big league manager, **Casey Stengel**, raised questions among sportswriters. *Boston Globe* sports editor **Jerry Nason** wondered in print how the Dodgers and other contenders could allow Sain to be waived out of the National League and into the hands of a potential World Series opponent. Whether or not Sain would be able to resume his pitching prowess, Nason opined that the big right-hander's extensive knowledge and experience of Senior Circuit batters would allow him to "call every Yankee pitch from the bench" during the Fall Classic. Even at this stage of his career, Sain was recognized by his peers as an exceptional student of the game. Nason also chastised the Red Sox for missing out on the chance to keep Big John out of the Yankee's clutches.

But for the "Shot Heard 'Round The World," the Dodgers might have been immediately confronted by their August inaction. Sain would go on to appear on the World Series mound and provide his invaluable expertise in the dugout for the Yankees against the Giants in 1951 and the Dodgers in 1952 and 1953, aiding in the Yanks' triumphs in these interleague clashes.

Fan Appreciation

An old undated and yellowed newspaper clipping provides us with an example of one of the many fan-friendly promotions that the Braves undertook. Pictured in this decaying fragment is a photograph of Tribe vice president **Guido Rugo** handing a certificate to a 38-year-old Somerville truck driver and his wife.

Earl Mokler had attended a late season Fan Appreciation Day game but had left the park immediately after its conclusion and before super-fan **Lolly Hopkins** was called upon to draw winning ticket stubs from a barrel. Hopkins pulled out his season ticket seat tab for Section E, Row 4, Seat 23, a reserved grandstand seat in back of the Braves' dugout. The prize was a free trip to next season's spring training camp in Bradenton, FL along with the use of a car during the stay. As a bonus, both Mokler and his wife received a complete wardrobe for the trip and \$250 in spending money. Because of his premature departure, Mokler had to be notified by telephone whereupon he grabbed his wife, rushed back to the park and claimed his prize from Rugo at the Braves office on Gaffney Street.

Mokler was truly a loyal fan, witnessed not only by his season ticket purchase but also by the fact that he confessed "that despite being a rabid baseball fan he never has seen the Red Sox."

Sittin' In The Jury Box

Boston Braves Hall of Famer **Roland Hemond** sent along a copy of *Dugout Wisdom: Life Lessons From Baseball*, a new book by **Dan Migala**. The publication is a compilation of inspirational moments described by a variety of members of the baseball community. Roland wrote the book's foreword, sharing a memorable personal reflection. On leave from the U.S. Coast Guard in 1951, he had traveled Florida to see his cousin **Ray Lague** at the Pirates spring training camp. Lague had broken into organized ball in 1950 with the Class D Salisbury Pirates, compiling a 9-4 record. Ray, who attended our 16th reunion in 2007, was also Braves chattel later in his career. While waiting for Ray to arrive, Roland fortuitously met the McMahons, a couple who toured various minor league baseball towns during the summer months. **Leo McMahon**, a former professional ballplayer, had been blinded by a mustard gas attack during World War I. Under the billing, "the Lucky Sergeant," he would sing the National Anthem at ballparks while wearing his military uniform and the pair would live off of donations received from the crowd. McMahon's journeys across the country provided many contacts with club officials. The singing sergeant offered to write letters of introduction for Roland, and one resulted in an internship with **Charlie Blossfield**, the general manager of the Boston Braves Hartford Chiefs affiliate. Thus, the first door was opened, leading to Roland's long and meritorious National Pastime career. The book is replete with similar tales from the likes of **Sparky Anderson, Rod Carew, Bob Feller, Monte Irvin, Al Kaline, Frank Robinson, Nolan Ryan** and many, many others. One of our notable reunion guests, **Chuck Tanner**, also contributed to this effort. Each player's tale concludes with a listing of the scout responsible for his signing. Three worthy baseball foundations near and dear to Roland's heart benefit from the sale of this book: the National Baseball Hall of Fame, the Professional Baseball Scouts Foundation and the Association of Professional Ball Players of America. Ordering information for *Dugout Wisdom* may be found at <http://www.dugoutwisdom.com/#>

Braves pitcher **Charlie "Red" Barrett's** son Rick informs us that his dad will be posthumously inducted into the International League's Hall of Fame at the Durham Bulls opening night game, tentatively set for April 9. Red went 16-3 in 1938, 16-12 in 1939 and 20-12 in 1942 for the Syracuse Chiefs. Rick very much appreciated BBHA member **Sid Davis's** well written biography of his father that appeared in *Spahn, Sain and Teddy Ballgame*. Sid is now working on a project for the Museum of Making Music to accumulate information on ballplayers who played musical instruments.

The Savannah Sand Gnats of the South Atlantic League, a New York Mets affiliate, have added **Ric Sisler** to their staff as the Director of Sales. He had previously served as their general manager from 1991-98. Sisler is the grandson of Hall of Famer **George Sisler** (Boston Braves, 1928-30), the son of **Dick Sisler**, an eight year major leaguer and former Cincinnati Reds manager and nephew of **Dave Sisler**, a former Red Sox, Tigers, Senators and Reds hurler. Sisler pitched briefly in the Yankees' farm system before moving to a front office career.

Member **Bob O'Neil** recalls the 1950 Labor Day doubleheader against the Dodgers at Braves Field for a number of reasons. Before the game, Bums' manager **Leo Durocher** put **Dolph Camilli's** two young sons through their paces by swatting ground balls to them. One of the lads, Doug, would later catch in the majors for the Dodgers and Senators. He was behind the plate for Sandy Koufax's third no-hitter and later coached for the Red Sox. During the game a commotion arose in the box seats behind the home plate screen. On the disabled list, the Red Sox's **Ted Williams** had traveled down Commonwealth Avenue to take in the games. As soon as he was noticed, Teddy Ballgame was inundated with autograph requests by Boston's National League fans. **Vern Bickford** and **Warren Spahn** secured both ends of the twin bill. Bob also recalls being at the Wigwam for a game against Brooklyn on August 16, 1948 when the public address system announcement of **Babe Ruth's** death echoed throughout the stands. On a happier note, he fondly remembers the Troubadours perched on the roof of the visitor's dugout, tormenting its occupants.

Spahn, Sain and Teddy Ballgame has been well received. We sold out all of our copies, even after several reorders. In its January 9, 2009 issue, *Sports Collectors Digest* ranked the book as the 29th (out of 100) best baseball book of 2008. Thanks to **Bill Nowlin** and all of the other BBHA members who contributed to this effort highlighting the Boston Braves last hurrah. The book can still be purchased on-line at various sites or in local bookstores.

When former Atlanta Brave **John Smoltz** takes to the mound for the Red Sox in '09, it won't be the first time that he's appeared in a Boston uniform. Smoltz wore a "Turn Back The Clock" Boston Beaneaters (Braves) 1912 replica uniform at Fenway Park during the Major League's Interleague Play inaugural back in 1997. It was the first time since September 21, 1952 that the "Boston" Braves had played a regular season game in the Hub. The BBHA and the Atlanta Braves 400 Club held a joint celebration to commemorate the event (See the Fall 1997 newsletter). Perhaps this albeit brief appearance by Smoltz qualifies him to join the ranks of **Gene Conley** and others who played for Boston's

National and American League franchises!

In advance of his election to baseball's Hall of Fame, **Jim Rice** was presented with the **Judge Emil Fuchs** Award for long and meritorious service to baseball at the Boston Chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America gathering on January 8, 2009.

The very wealthy **C.C. Sabathia** picked up his second consecutive **Warren Spahn** Award as baseball's best lefthander at a ceremony in Oklahoma City on January 17.

Just a reminder. We issue, on an *ad hoc* basis, brief BBHA (electronic) eNewsletters in-between editions of this publication. There have been thirteen bulletins transmitted to date. The latest one provided a link to a *Sport* magazine photo gallery that has a rarely seen great color photo of **Warren Spahn** and **Johnny Sain**. The eNewsletter is not intended as a substitute for, or a replacement of our "hard copy" issue. This vehicle enables us to quickly get word out about matters of interest to our membership and, in some instances, provide an internet link to the source of the information. The service is free to members. All you need to do is provide your email address to bbraves@beld.net.

We Appreciate You!

Ronnie Joyner has added **Gene Conley** to his Boston Braves portrait gallery. Many thanks to Ronnie for this excellent addition to the newsletter.

Our members continue to supply use with reminisces, clippings and other materials that help us preserve the memory of the Boston Braves. Special thanks to **Midge Landry, Jack Wholley John Ahokas, Mort Bloomberg, Len Levin, Joe McCann, Bob O'Neil** and **Jim Augustine**.

Your thoughts and contributions are always most welcome. **Bob Brady, BBHA Newsletter Editor, 25 McAndrew Road, Braintree, MA 02184-8245** (bbraves@beld.net).