

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

Reunion Edition 2005

Reunion XIV by Arnold Bailey

It was the 14th time they had gathered for an annual reunion and one among them seemed to speak for every person in the room. As he walked toward the speaker's rostrum, **Sibby Sisti** joked that the step up to the platform "seems to get a little higher every year," in a subtle reference to the passing of so many seasons since he and his team had played in Boston. And, as he summed up the feelings of the former players on hand, telling the assembled fans: "We're all very appreciative that the people are honoring us in this way. It's great to be remembered after so many years away from the game...."

Sibby in the Spotlight

Sibby recalled that he has attended all of the reunions except one, and cautioned the assembled fans and fellow players that "I really have nothing new to tell you." After which, the one-time "Super Sub" of the old Boston Braves proceeded to tell his audience the kinds of "new things" that make these yearly gatherings of the Boston Braves Historical Association so unique and so special.

"Let me tell you about three incidents that happened before I got to the Braves," Sibby said, explaining to the 150 fans in attendance that, but for timing and fate, he could have begun his pro baseball career with the Braves' cross-town rivals, the Red Sox. Sibby told about a time when he was still in high school and a star athlete in Buffalo where he was born and still lives today. "A bird dog scout had me work out in Cleveland for the Red Sox and their manager even shook hands with me and told me the Sox would be following me to see how I was doing," Sisti said. "Joe Cronin was the manager. But time went by and no one from the Red Sox ever contacted me. The next year, the scout brought me to Boston, but this time to meet with Bob Quinn of the Braves. Some time after my workout, my father told me that they [the Braves] had signed me to a contract to play in Hartford when I graduated the following spring. The bad news was that the Braves wanted me to stop playing football. So I had to go and tell my coach that I had signed a pro contract and couldn't play high school sports anymore."

Sibby revealed that his signing included a bonus. "When Johnny Antonelli signed with the Braves, they gave him a

bonus of \$52,000. Well, I got \$51,000 less than Antonelli did. You do the math!"

Sibby also told about a game against the Cardinals, when he was a rookie with the Braves, that he had beaten out three bunt hits. "Then this guy comes into the dugout who I later learned was Jesse Burkett and told Casey [Stengel, the Braves manager] that if I beat out another bunt, I'll tie his record. After he leaves, Casey turns to me and says, 'Go ahead, try it.' My next time at bat, I decide to take the first pitch to see where the infielders were playing. The pitch hits me right between the shoulders. But it felt good. There they were, knocking down a .200 hitter!"

The 1948 season was special to the Braves players and fans alike, as the team won the National League pennant. Sibby recalled the time early in the season when manager Billy Southworth alerted his versatile "Super Sub" to prepare to be even more versatile. "Our two catchers were Phil Masi and Bill Salkeld," Sibby told the reunion audience. "Phil was a right-handed batter and Salkeld batted left-handed. So, Southworth platooned them, depending on whether we were facing a right-handed or left-handed pitcher." The former had been with the Braves since 1939 and the latter was in his first season in Boston, acquired in an off-season deal with the Pirates along with outfielder Jim Russell and pitcher Al Lyons for veteran outfielder/first baseman Johnny Hopp and infielder Danny Murtaugh. "Southworth came over to me one day and said I was his next catcher [behind Masi and Salkeld] just in case he needed one. It was a good strategy to be able to switch Masi and Salkeld depending on who was pitching for the other team. But what would happen if he made the switch and the catcher in the game got hurt? I had caught quite a lot in the service and I had practiced catching in the bullpen and warming up pitchers between innings. But they never needed me to catch. If I had, I would have played eight positions [all except pitcher], but I ended up playing seven."

Sisti played 1,016 major league games, all for the Braves, first in Boston, then in Milwaukee. He had been a regular at second and third base in the early '40s, before he was called for military duty. After the war, he spent 1946 with Indianapolis, batting .343 and winning *The Sporting News* Minor League Player of the Year Award. He then returned to the Braves as one of the era's top utility players because of his versatility. He played a special role with the

1948 pennant winners, filling in for both shortstop Alvin Dark and second baseman Eddie Stanky. Long after he retired as a player, he was cast in the hit movie, *The Natural*, in a small role as a coach.

Ralph Reminisces

Prior to the reception and banquet at the Brookline Holiday Inn, **Ralph Evans** conducted his popular annual tour of Braves Field before a gathering of eager fans. After the Braves left Boston and moved to Milwaukee before the 1953 season, Braves Field ultimately was demolished and became the site of Boston University's football stadium. Very little survives of what had been the home of the Braves from 1915 through 1952 and, when it was built, was the biggest ballpark in the world. Ralph told of how a group of fans who became known as "The Market Street Gang" had sneaked into the deserted ballpark and made off with home plate. "They had scaled the left field wall and, with their bare hands, they dug up home plate in March, when the ground was still frozen. And, home plate at big league ballparks didn't just sit atop the dirt; it went down about a foot into the ground. For close to forty years they hid it – in basements, under beds, in coal bins.... Then, I saw the first confession I've ever seen that was heard by about 300 people. They brought it to the reunion commemorating the Braves' 1948 pennant team and presented it to Tommy Holmes, who gave it to the Sports Museum of New England, where it still resides."

Ralph even shared a few stories about Ted Williams, the hitting legend of the Red Sox, leading to an anecdote by mentioning that he had seen a pitcher named "Rainbow" Trout playing with the independent Brockton Rox. "He was the son of Dizzy Trout who, with the bases loaded, once struck out Ted Williams, the last man to hit over .400. After the game, he brought a ball into the Sox clubhouse and asked Williams to sign it as a remembrance. About two weeks later, Williams was facing Trout again and hit a home run off him. As he was running past home plate, he yelled at Trout, 'Hey, rook, find that ball and I'll sign that one for you, too!'"

He even added to the legend of Braves Field's fabled "Jury Box," that section of the right field stands inhabited by some of the team's most loyal fans. "That section of the grandstand wasn't finished when the ballpark opened, so instead of seating about 4,000, there were only about 2,000 seats. Later, when the Braves were going bad, a member of the media looked out there one day and counted only a dozen fans sitting in that section. So, he named it the "Jury Box." Ralph even shared some history about County Stadium, the Braves' new home when they relocated to Milwaukee in 1953. "The stadium had been built for the minor league Brewers, and it

grew larger as the Braves grew more successful and more popular. But when the Braves won the pennant in 1957, there was still an old snow fence bordering much of the outfield," he said.

The Formal Program

Dick Johnson, curator of the Sports Museum of New England and the author of several books including one about the Braves, welcomed the group and introduced the BBHA's executive committee, led by business manager **George Altison** and members **Jonathan Fine** and **Gary Mastas**, who led the Association's reunion organizing team. It was Dick Johnson and the Sports Museum who had, in essence, set the tone for the formation of the BBHA and the annual reunions, when his organization held a 40th-year reunion of the 1948 pennant winners in 1988. Dick introduced **Rev. Gerald Beirne**, who offered the blessing. Fr. Beirne, a long-time baseball fan and one of the game's foremost trivia experts, told the group that a fan had asked him in April if it was theologically appropriate to make a cash offering and light a candle in the hope that the Red Sox would win another pennant and defend their World Series championship. Fr. Beirne assented. "Not long ago, as the Sox fell out of first place, the fan came back to the church and asked, 'Father, is it too late for me to get my dollar back?'"

Johnson thanked the kitchen staff for a "superb" meal [entrees of chicken picata and baked stuffed sole], a commemoration joined in unanimity by the audience. He also introduced special guests in the audience, including **Adacie Fox Allen**, a long-time fan who once attended games with Lolly Hopkins, who was the Braves' most loyal and best known fan; **Caroline Fuchs**, the granddaughter of Judge Emil Fuchs, the innovative owner of the Braves in the 1920s and '30s and who signed Babe Ruth as a team executive, assistant manager and player in 1935; **Gay Vernon**, Mickey Vernon's daughter who Johnson knew as a traffic reporter on the radio in the Boston area; **Tommy Ferguson**, the one-time bat boy whose uniform is on display at the Sports Museum; **Carlton Willey**, the former Braves pitcher; former Red Sox infielder **Ted Lepcio**; and **Midge Landry**, the niece of "Skippy" Roberge, the Lowell native who was a Braves infielder in the early '40s.

Joe's Turn at Bat

Johnson then introduced **Joe Morgan**, the former Braves infielder and ex-Red Sox manager, who served as master-of-ceremonies. Morgan welcomed the former players and fans assembled in a ballroom at the Holiday Inn in the Brookline section of Boston. During his playing days with five big league teams, Morgan had been a teammate of at least five players in

attendance [Johnny Logan, Mickey Vernon, Gene Conley, Willey and Lepcio], and at least one other ex-player whose name came up in anecdotes during the speaking program [Clay Dalrymple]. Morgan mentioned that Willey was from Cherryfield, Maine. "That's the blueberry capital of New England, so it's anybody's guess why they named the town Cherryfield," Joe said. "It's a town about half as big as this room. I went there a few years ago and thought I'd try to locate Carlton. I walked into a little store and the first thing I heard was, 'Hey, Joe, what are you doing up here?' The guy turned out to be Willey's cousin and he led me right to him." Willey joined the Braves in Milwaukee in late June 1958 and his first major league start was memorable, both for him and for all of baseball. Willey pitched a shutout against the Giants and went on to be named *The Sporting News* Rookie Pitcher of the Year. During that same game, Joe Adcock made his first start in left field since 1952 and climbed the outfield fence to snare one fly ball. Willie Mays got his 1,000th career hit in the game, and Don McMahon, who came on in relief of Willey, became the first pitcher to be driven to the mound, as a passenger in the sidecar of a motor scooter. Later in his career, after he was traded to the Mets, Willey figured in another unusual bit of history. He was on the mound when Giants' manager Alvin Dark sent the three Alou brothers – Felipe, Matty and Jesus – up to bat in the eighth inning. It is believed to be the only time that three brothers have batted consecutively for the same team in the same inning – and in ascending order of age. All three went down in order, none hitting the ball out of the infield.

Morgan read a letter from **Christine Shaw**, the daughter of the late Earl Torgeson, who had been a popular and productive first baseman for the Braves in Boston. She wrote that she was upset about an anecdote in a recent book [unnamed] that claimed her dad hadn't been a cooperative autograph signer. Morgan and some of Torgy's former teammates in the audience set the record straight – that Torgeson, a 27-year cancer survivor, was a great citizen of baseball and never had brought discredit upon either himself or the game he played.

Morgan also introduced **Ralph McLeod**, a former Braves outfielder, and recalled that the West Quincy, MA native had been with the Braves when the team played a game during a hurricane in 1938. Morgan mentioned that McLeod had gone 2 for 7 [2 hits in 7 at bats] during that year and congratulated him with, "a .280 hitter isn't bad, buddy!"

Lefty's Legacy

Art Johnson, the Winchester, MA native who was a lefty pitcher for the Braves in the early 40s, was in the lead-off spot among former players who spoke during the banquet. He told about the time, early in his

career, when he had been called up by the parent club in Boston, and "wanted to establish himself as a pitcher" in his first game in the majors. "I got the call and came running in from the bullpen," Johnson said. "Casey Stengel [Braves manager] had a worried look so I told him I was ready to go. But Mr. Stengel wasn't worried about me. He said Joe Sullivan [another lefty who was pitching for the Braves that day] broke the web in his glove and they needed to borrow mine." Johnson also told about pitching against the Giants when he decided that he'd prove his toughness by throwing inside and knocking down one of the opposing batters. "One guy seemed very even-tempered and mild. His name was Mel Ott. So, I decided that he would be the one," Johnson recalled. "I figured I'd brush him back and I threw one up under his chin, and he went down. Later, he came up to me and told me that the next time I tried that against him, he might lay one down and step on my pitching hand [while running to first base]. I just said, 'Oh, Mr. Ott, it won't happen again.'"

Johnson even added to the Stengel mystique with a story about the then Braves manager talking with a young newspaper reporter. The reporter asked Stengel what position on a team was the most important. "So, Casey tells him the most important position is catcher," Johnson said with a smile. "because if there wasn't a catcher, every pitch would roll all the way to the backstop. The reporter [thought Casey was serious] used the quote in his column. And, Art shed some light on why he hadn't chosen scouting after his playing days were over after three seasons (1940-42) with Boston. "We were watching some of the young players work out and Casey asked me what I thought about a young left-handed pitcher. He had just been signed out of Buffalo and had been throwing for about twenty minutes," Art said. "I told him I thought the guy wouldn't make it because he was too small and threw just strikes. That young left-handed pitcher was Warren Spahn." Spahn, of course, would go on to pitch 21 seasons in the majors, win 363 games (including a dozen seasons with 20 or more victories) and get elected to the Hall of Fame in 1973.

Views from the Visitor's Dugout

Lennie Merullo, a Boston native who still resides in the area, told the audience about his lifetime in baseball – a total of 64 years as a player and a scout, before retiring two years ago. He was a shortstop for the Cubs from 1941 to 1947, a total of 639 games. Many fans still recall his toughness, and his classic fistfights against Eddie Stanky during a 1946 game against the Giants, then a pre-game brawl with Dixie Walker, who had challenged him the previous day. Lennie also was involved in two triple plays, both against the Reds – the first, combining with catcher Clyde McCollough and first baseman Phil

Cavaretta in a 1942 win over Cincinnati; the second, combining with first baseman Eddie Waitkus in an extra-innings victory in 1947. For several years after his retirement as a player, Lennie was the chief scout for the Cubs organization. Merullo said he often wishes the two segments of his career had been reversed. "I wish I could have scouted first, then played," he told the group. "You pick up so much useful information when you're scouting and it stays with you. If I could have had all that information at the beginning of my career, I could have been a heck of a player."

The Dual Sportsman

Gene Conley, who personifies pro sports in Boston for many fans, spoke about his long career in both baseball and basketball. During an 11-year career in major league baseball, he pitched for the Braves in Boston, then Milwaukee, and finally for the cross-town Red Sox during his final three seasons. He also played pro basketball for the Boston Celtics as an able backup center on teams that featured the legendary Bill Russell and Bob Cousy during the Celts' great championship seasons. He is the subject of a book, written by his wife, titled *One of a Kind*, which chronicles his life and times as the only person in the history of pro sports to win championships in both major league baseball (1957 Milwaukee Braves) and the National Basketball Association (1958/59, 1959/60 and 1960/61 Celtics).

Gene had the audience roaring with a tale about a game against the Dodgers when he thought he'd have a little fun with Chuck Dressen, who was coaching at third base for Los Angeles. "I kept creeping very slowly toward home on every pitch, moving in from the pitching rubber on the mound, so I started each pitch a little closer to home plate and the batter," Gene recalled. Dressen finally caught on to what he was doing and complained to the home plate umpire. "I covered up a hole in the mound that I had made with my right foot which was at least three feet closer to the plate than it should have been. The umpire asked about it and I just told him that that was where my left foot had been landing. I'm just lying away explaining it all." The ump finally ruled, officially, that nothing was wrong, which didn't make Dressen very happy. "As the ump was leaving the mound, he turned to me and said, 'Now you get back where you belong on the mound.'" Gene added.

Gene told the group about a game when he was with the Phillies and his chaw of tobacco got the best of him. "Gene Mauch was in his first year as manager and he was very feisty, not much for public relations for the ballclub," Gene said. "One game, I had a big chaw of tobacco and was faking little sips of water between innings. After a while, I wasn't feeling very good,

dizzy and wobbly. I called Dalrymple [his catcher] out and told him I was so dizzy I couldn't even see his signs. All I could see were little black dots and sparkles. I said, 'I'm sick; maybe it's my chew.' He called Mauch out and he brought in a relief pitcher. Then he says to me, 'Come on, Alice,' as he leads me to the dugout. I was so sick I couldn't leave the ballpark for maybe three hours after the game was over." He also recalled a game when he was with the Phillies and future Hall of Famer Juan Marichal, in his first big league game, was working on a no-hitter. "Our catcher was Clay Dalrymple," Gene said, describing his good fielding, but weak hitting (.233 lifetime average) teammate. There were two out in the seventh inning and Marichal was just mowing the Phillies' batters down when Dalrymple was sent up as a pinch hitter. "He was a left-handed batter, but he said he was going to switch around and bat right against Marichal," Gene said. "Somehow, he hit the ball and it ended up being a slow roller just past Marichal, which turned out to be the only hit of the game." Marichal's debut ended up being a 12-strikeout, one-hitter in a 2-0 win for the Giants over the Phils.

The Man from Marcus Hook

Mickey Vernon spent one season, 1959, with the Braves in Milwaukee, during the end of his very productive 20-year career spent mostly with Washington. He also spent two seasons with the Red Sox in Boston. He told about growing up in Pennsylvania and playing on the same American Legion team as Danny Murtaugh. "He signed with the Cardinals and I signed with the Browns and we both ended up playing in the minor leagues in Maryland," Mickey recalled. "In one game, the field where he was playing had very bad lights and Danny made a couple of errors," said Mickey. "There was this leather-lunged fan who really got on him for it. So, Danny challenged him to come down onto the field, but nothing happened [and the fan stayed in his seat]. A few innings later, the manager did something the fan didn't like, so he started yelling at him. This time the manager challenged the fan to come down onto the field, and the guy did. He was a big guy, about 250 pounds and over six feet tall. So, the manager turns to Murtaugh and yells, 'Okay, Danny. I got him down here for you....'

When Vernon finally arrived in Milwaukee, Birdie Tebbetts was the general manager and he brought the veteran first baseman in primarily to pinch hit. "On Opening Day, they sent me up to pinch hit and I got a hit," he recalled. "It was a pleasure playing in Milwaukee and watching great players like Spahn, Mathews and Logan perform. And Aaron was so great. The team did have some problems in left field and at second base with Covington hurt and Red Schoendienst ill with TB and other

things," he said. "Nobody seemed to want to play left, so Haney [Fred Haney, the Braves manager] put me in left field where I hadn't played since Legion ball. Early in the game, there was a popup and I'm having trouble catching up with it, running on my heels, which makes the ball seem to jump up and down. Well, it jumped right out of my glove and that was the last time I played left field!" But Mickey added a footnote, directing his comments at Logan, who was sitting at a table not far from the speaker's platform: "But as I remember, it really should have been the shortstop's play, Johnny. Or maybe Felix Mantilla was at short that day." He also recalled that his Opening Day pinch hit in Milwaukee against the Phillies was followed by a bloop single to right by Johnny O'Brien. "After the game, the opposing pitcher [Dick Farrell] was so mad that he had been beaten by an old pinch hitter and a young Punch-and-Judy hitter that he punched his image in a dressing room mirror and broke his hand," Mickey said. "I think he was fined \$500 by Sawyer [Phillies manager Eddie Sawyer]."

Vernon even had a Ted Williams story for his audience, recalling the 1958 season when he and Williams were Red Sox teammates. "Ted was hitting a ton," recalled his two-season teammate who had been the oldest player to lead the American League in batting when he hit .337 at the age of 35. "I was in the league in 1941 when he hit over .400 and he was hitting that good again. I kidded Ted that the only reason he was hitting so good was that he wanted to become the oldest player to win the batting title." Ted turned serious and told Mickey that was the furthest thing from his mind. "He said to me, 'I just want to be the best hitter who ever lived.'" Mickey said, "and he was." Williams hit .388 that year, winning the fifth of his six batting titles.

Mickey also recalled that his only World Series experience came in 1960 when he was with the Pirates, reunited with his old pal, Murtaugh. "We lived only about two miles apart and Danny asked me to join him in Pittsburgh as a coach," Mickey explained. That was the season that ended with a walk-off home run to beat the Yankees and win the Series for the Pirates. "So I got to the World Series as a coach, but it would have been nice to get there as a player," Mickey said. "That's what it's all about."

In a League of Her Own

Mary Pratt announced to the group that a \$30,000 grant is now making it possible for the women's league to be officially recognized through a statue that next spring will be dedicated on the lawn beside the library at the Baseball Hall of Fame. The statue will portray a woman ballplayer in a batting stance. She recounted her career in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (as a pitcher for Rockford and Kenosha from 1943 to

1947), recalling that she was paid \$60 a week which was considerably more than her salary as a school teacher (her career ultimately spanned 48 years). "We played 125 games a year, every day and doubleheaders on Sundays," she said. "It was wonderful to be associated with Art McManus, Jimmie Foxx and Max Carey, who were so important to the creation of our league. We didn't ride buses until my third year. But we carried our own baggage and traveled from Chicago to South Bend, Racine, Kenosha and Rockford." She concluded by leading the audience in singing a Rockford Peaches song to the tune of "McNamara's Band."

Johnny At The Bat

Last to the rostrum was **Johnny Logan**, whose 13 big league seasons began with the Braves in Boston in 1951 and continued with the team when it moved to Milwaukee. Logan, who is president and one of the founders of a similar historical association in connection with Milwaukee's Braves, was congratulated on his recent election, with Spahn, to the Milwaukee team's Hall of Fame. He was the shortstop and team leader on pennant-winning Milwaukee teams in 1957 and '58. Johnny recalled that he had first met Spahn when he was a rookie at Braves Field and had asked the veteran lefty how he (Logan) could make the big league club. "He told me to just get every ground ball hit when he was pitching," Logan said, "and I thought he'd give me a long answer of advice!"

The immortal tale of "Casey At The Bat" was Johnny's recitation of choice and, before he began to recite the oft-told tale, he asked Fr. Beirne "to pray for me." Logan finally found his way through the tongue-twisting lines of the piece, which led him to propose an alternate ending – perhaps with David Ortiz, the clutch-hitting Red Sox batter replacing the strikeout-burdened Casey, or maybe Hank Aaron, if Ortiz isn't available.

In the meantime, Johnny was recalling stories about many of his former Braves teammates, including the great Eddie Mathews, the Hall of Fame third baseman who was Logan's roommate for much of their time together in Milwaukee. "You remember Don Drysdale," Johnny tempted the audience, referring to the big and mean pitcher for the Dodgers: "He was a nasty pitcher and in one game, Bruton [outfielder Billy Bruton, the Braves' centerfielder and lead-off hitter] hit a home run off him. I'm next and Drysdale hit me. I'm on first base thinking, 'Good, instead of going 0 for 5 today against Drysdale, I'll go 0 for 4. Next time up, Bruton hits another homer and we're ahead something like 7-0. Drysdale hits me again. Right on the elbow. I'm on the ground in pain and Haney comes out but I tell him I want to stay in the game. So I yell at him [Drysdale] and ask him why he

keeps hitting me. It wasn't me who hit the home runs. He says something like, 'If you've got something in mind, come out here and get me.' So, I just called for Mathews. He was my fighter."

More Morgan Musings

Morgan, known for his miracles as a manager, is also known for his sharp quips as a speaker and emcee. Before calling him to the rostrum, Morgan reminded Logan that he had been a first-ball hitter, especially a first-ball fastball hitter. Logan agreed. Then, Joe extolled the virtues of first-pitch hitting, noting that former Red Sox star Nomar Garciaparra had batted .600 one year when hitting the first pitch. Then, turning the focus of his story to Conley and his decade as a big league hurler, Joe joked, "There's a lot of dumb pitchers around, Conley." Joe also aimed a trivia question at Logan. Noting that he holds the record for most consecutive wins by an interim manager (12 with the 1988 Red Sox after he replaced the fired John McNamara during the All Star break), he asked who had held the record at 11 straight? The answer, which proved to be a stumper, turned out to be former Braves manager, Fred Haney. Morgan's mastery of trivia also showed itself in a question he posed about why players perform better at their home ballparks than on the road. Some of the answers from the audience included: "The home fans," "They can sleep in their own beds," and "home cooking." Joe maintained that the reason for the discrepancy is tied to self-motivation and he used statistics compiled by Hall of Famer Stan Musial to illustrate his premise. "Musial got 3,630 hits," Morgan revealed, "1,815 at home and 1,815 on the road. He could self-motivate."

Odds and Ends

One of the most enthusiastic fans at the reunion was Midge Landry of Lowell, the niece of Skippy Roberge, who was an infielder with the Braves in 1941 and '42, and again in '46. Skippy had been wounded in Germany during World War II and, although he hit a career high in '46 after returning from military service, his injuries shortened his career. Midge has compiled a comprehensive scrapbook of photos, news clippings and artifacts about Skippy and has been tireless in her efforts to ensure that he is remembered and commemorated.

As a 14th reunion memento, each guest received a special four page program with a cover designed by talented artist **Mark Waitkus**. The water color painting shows Spahn in his unique and unorthodox full windup, with the outfield fences at Braves Field as a backdrop. The inside front cover reproduces a painting that is a vintage scene of a Boston batter, entitled "The First Game" that had been commissioned by Chevrolet to celebrate the 100th year of organized baseball and was presented to

then-Commissioner Bowie Kuhn at the July 13, 1976 All Star Game. The third page lists the dinner menu with reproductions of 1953 Topps baseball cards of Sisti and Logan and a 1949 Bowman card of Tommy Holmes. The back cover lists the BBHA's executive committee and a roster of 124 Royal Rooters.

Following the final speaker, three raffle prizes – a Spahn Hartland statue; an original copy of the 1948 Harold Kaese book *Boston Braves*; and a framed photo of the 1948 Braves lineup signed by Sisti and Conley – were awarded to attendees Dana Booth (Concord, MA), Bernie Rubin (Sharon, MA) and Herb Zakrisson (Hope, RI), respectively. And fans went throughout the room gathering autographs from the former Braves players.

During a brief conversation following the program, Adacie Fox Allen reminisced about her long tenure as a Braves fan and talked about the special relationship she and other fans had with the team, one of the primary reasons the BBHA has proved to be such an effective and worthwhile organization. "The Braves always treated us right. The ownership and players always made us feel that they were grateful to their fans and made us feel part of a very special family," she said, as she and others closed the book on another unique family reunion.

Reunion Footnotes

Thanks to all of the hard core Boston Braves fans who attended the Wigwam tour and/or the reception and banquet despite competition from the Red Sox-Yankees game, a Patriots contest and a large memorabilia show. We will try to avoid such conflicts in the future but, in order for us to book an affordable facility during this time of year, we must do so far in advance and in the absence of knowledge of potential sports or other competing events.

We greatly appreciate the kindness of member **Gary Caruso**, editor and publisher of *ChopTalk*. Gary donated a quantity of the October issue of the Atlanta Braves' official monthly magazine that was handed out at the gathering. The issue was of special interest to Boston fans as it featured a report on the current condition of stricken Braves great and reunion favorite, Johnny Sain (more about this later). Gary followed up by including a summary of reunion events in his periodical's November edition.

Royal Rooter Midge Landry generously sent along photos and a video of the day's events for our archives.

Someone left behind a camera containing reunion photos. Please contact **George Altison** ((508) 485-1423) to identify the lost item so that we can return it to its

rightful owner and he or she can relive the day's festivities.

White Sox Connection: Congratulations Roland Hemond

Many comparisons have been drawn by the media to the successive World Series Championships by the Red Sox and White Sox. Fans of both clubs hungered for this ultimate title for an inordinate amount of time, attributing the drought to perceived "curses." However, one might postulate a stronger White Sox comparison and linkage to Boston's National League entry than to the gang on Yawkey Way. After all, the 1914 Braves also swept a World Series! Chicago's American League franchise reached its nadir in 1919 with the Black Sox scandal and never quite fully recovered until the fourth game victory in the 2005 World Series. That scandal came to a head, in part, when the testimony of two Boston Braves players aided a grand jury investigating rumors surrounding the 1919 Fall Classic. Braves third baseman Tony Boeckel and catcher Art Wilson testified in affidavits that during a meeting at a New York City hotel in the spring of 1920, the two engaged in conversations with Giants pitcher Rube Benton and catcher Lew McCarthy. Benton told the Braves that he had received a telegram from Hal Chase advising him to bet on the Reds to win the first two games of the Series and to be the overall victors. Benton informed the pair that he scraped as much money together as he could, followed Chase's advice and won \$3,800 dollars. The rest, as they say, is history.

Columnist Bernie Lincicome of the *Rockie Mountain News* drew this writer's attention to the White Sox – Braves comparison. In an October 15th story, Lincicome stated, "The White Sox are the Boston Braves, except they did not leave town." Pale Hose history contains many parallels to the Tribe's. They both suffered from a lack of attention and respect. Fans committed to one or the other town team and rarely to both. Their cross-town rivals usually possessed deeper pockets and resided in greater cacheted homes. Braves Field's construction did not anticipate the emergence of the home run; New Comiskey was built prior to the commencement of the retro-ballpark movement. The reputation of both fields would suffer accordingly. Old and new Comiskey Park, like the Wigwam drew from separate geographic bounds and seemingly different classes. On and off-field deficiencies of the competing Cubs and Red Sox were more accepted, deemed "lovable" or attributed to events beyond their control (i.e. the Billy Goat or the Bambino). While the Pale Hose stayed the course, unlike their Boston brethren, they tested the waters in Milwaukee after the Braves migrated southward and cast eyes upon Denver, Seattle, Toronto and St. Petersburg until last minute government

support materialized for a new ballpark. And, the two clubs shared **Roland Hemond**.

Roland Hemond is currently the executive advisor to Sox general manager Ken Williams. He got his start in baseball in 1951 with the Braves' Eastern League affiliate Hartford Chiefs. Later, he relocated to Boston and ended up working in the front office for farm director John Mullen. Hemond followed the club to Milwaukee, moving up in the hierarchy. He joined the Angels in the 1960s and assumed the White Sox general manager's post in 1971. Hemond's tie to the Chiefs played a role in securing the general manager's position with the Orioles. Club owner Edward Bennett Williams was a Hartford native who sold concessions at old Bulkeley Stadium. Prior to returning to Chicago, Hemond served as an adviser to the Diamondbacks. When Ken Williams received his appointment in 2000, he quickly recruited Hemond. The two had known each other since the latter drafted the former out of Stanford in 1982. Hemond had also acquired talented minor league shortstop Ozzie Guillen from the Padres in 1984. Guillen would anchor the White Sox infield for over a decade and eventually pilot the club to the Promised Land. After 54 years in the game and on his 76th birthday, Hemond received what he described as "the highlight of my career," when the White Sox completed their sweep of the Houston Astros. He was able to see his two protégés claim the championship trophy and witness the jubilation of the long-suffering South Side fans.

Revenge of the Bambino

The Babe's return to Boston with Judge Fuchs' 1935 Braves was short and bittersweet. The aged slugger was beset with ailments that reduced his effectiveness on the diamond and his stay was marred by controversy surrounding alleged deceptions on the part of the club regarding managerial and front office commitments. The situation came to a head on June 2nd when the disgruntled Bambino announced his retirement and left Boston for his New York home. Eight years later, Ruth returned to the Hub to lead a select team of former ballplayers now in the military service against his old club. As part of Boston Mayor Maurice Tobin's annual charity field day program, Ruth's All Stars challenged the Boston Braves in a July 12, 1943 exhibition tilt at Fenway Park. Prior to the contest, Ruth donned his famed Number 3 Yankees uniform to battle serviceman Ted Williams in a home run competition. Red Barrett of the Braves was selected to pitch to the legendary sluggers. Williams launched three balls into the right field stands while the 48-year-old, rotund Babe, hampered by a chronic knee injury, was unable to drive a spheroid out of the park. Twelve thousand spectators witnessed a close 9-8 contest, won by the Ruth All Stars thanks to a third inning two-run triple by Dom DiMaggio and

a three-run seventh inning homer by Ted Williams. The Sultan of Swat's team also included ex-big leaguers Babe Young, Skippy Roberge and Jim Hegan. The Tribe tied the game in the fifth, thanks to a Chuck Workman two-run circuit clout but Braves reliever Dave "Porky" Odom failed to contain the barnstorming nine. Seventeen-year-old rookie and frequent reunion attendee, **Ray Martin** started the game for the Braves. Fresh out of Norwood High School, he had made an auspicious big league debut on July 2nd against the Cubs, retiring Lennie Merullo, Claude Passeau and Stan Hack on seven pitches in the ninth inning. Martin would manage only one other brief official appearance that season before entering the service. Portly right-hander Odom, an Athletics spring training castoff appearing in his only major league season, achieved a degree of immortality when Ruth acceded to fan pleas and pinch hit toward the end of the contest. The Bambino lustily swung at Odom's offerings, eventually connecting and sending a ball toward right field for a routine fly out.

The Babe's Last At Bat?

Did George Herman Ruth record his final "official" at bat on the playing field of the Hartford Chiefs, the Braves' Eastern affiliate? According to *Hartford Courant* staff writer Tom Yantz, such was the case. In a September 28th article, Yantz relayed the story of Cliff Keeney, now 90, but a talented semipro infielder in his prime. On September 30, 1945, he was a teammate for a day with the then 50-year-old Sultan of Swat. Ruth had agreed to appear in an exhibition doubleheader at Bulkeley Stadium, home of the Chiefs. Some 2,500 fans cheered on a contest between the Savitt Gems and the New Britain Codys, local semipro clubs. In the second game, Keeney was called back from the on-deck circle and the out-of-shape Babe emerged from the dugout to pinch hit. While the fans in the stands hoped that he could hit just one more out of the park, Ruth grounded out to the pitcher. Slamming his bat angrily on the ground on the way back to the dugout, the Babe would later profess that he should have hit the pitch into the seats. Ruth would be diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1946 and, it is believed, never again appeared in a box score before his passing on August 16, 1948. Keeney's yellowed clipping from the next day's *Courant* contains a photo of Babe Ruth with the Gems and a box score noting that Ruth batted for him in the third inning.

In Memoriam

On September 13th, minor league homer king **Joe Bauman** died at age 83 in Roswell, NM from complications suffered as the result of a broken pelvis that he had incurred from a fall during a ceremony naming the Roswell ballpark in his honor. Bauman captured organized baseball's home run record in 1954 while playing first base

for the Roswell Rockets of the Class C Longhorn League. That season, in 138 games, Bauman swatted 72 round trippers, drove in 224 and batted .400. Over the course of his minor league career, he homered 337 times. While Bauman never made it to the majors, he was briefly a Boston Braves farmhand in 1948. He appeared in one game for the Milwaukee Brewers and 98 games for the Hartford Chiefs. The following season, Bauman rejected a Tribe contract offer that contained a salary reduction and an assignment to the Atlanta Crackers. He informed the parent club that "he could make more money selling 24-inch shoestrings on any corner in Oklahoma City," and left organized baseball from 1949-51. He returned in 1952 and remained in the low minors until retiring in 1956. Bauman was watching on TV when Barry Bonds hit number 73 in 2001. He was surprised that his achievement had lasted as long as it did and his only reaction was "There goes my record."

Former Braves catcher **Mike Ulicny** (a/k/a Ulisney) passed away on September 22nd. He was 87. Nicknamed "Slugs," Ulicny made his big league debut on May 5, 1945 and played in only ten more games that season, completing his brief career in the majors on July 3rd when he was farmed out to the Milwaukee Brewers. He batted .389 in eighteen trips to the plate. The following January, Ulicny was part of a National League All Star team that embarked on a twenty-two game tour against service teams in the Pacific theater. Led by manager Chuck Dressen, the group included Al Lakeman, Mike Sandlock, Red Barrett, Ed Logan and Bill Voiselle, each of whom at one time were with the Braves, and Ralph Branca, Frank McCormick, Clyde King and Whitey Kurowski.

77-year-old **Francis Harte**, a Braves farmhand, died on September 24th. An All-State baseball player in Waltham, MA, he joined the Braves organization upon graduating from high school. Harte's professional career was interrupted by Korean War military service. While in the Army, he played on a service team with Billy Martin. Harte chose not to resume his baseball career after leaving the military.

Al Lopez, the oldest member of the Baseball Hall of Fame, passed away on October 30th. As a 16-year-old, he caught the immortal Walter Johnson during a barnstorming tour. Lopez was the only surviving player from the 1934 sophomore All Star Game. The 97-year-old former outstanding defensive catcher performed behind the plate for the Boston Bees from 1936-40. He was acquired in an off-season deal with Brooklyn along with Tony Cuccinello, Ray Bengue and Bobby Reis for Ed Brandt and Randy Moore. During a spring training game in 1939, Lou Gehrig sought the backstop's opinion on why he was struggling at the plate. Lopez suggested

that The Iron Horse was pushing rather than slapping at the ball. Neither yet knew that ALS was taking its toll on the Yankee first baseman. Lopez has been credited with bringing out the best in such Swarm hurlers as Deacon Danny MacFayden, Lou Fette and Jim Turner. The latter two reached the majors in their thirties and each won twenty games for the Bees in their joint inaugural season of 1937. The chronically cash-strapped club dealt Lopez to the Pirates in midseason 1940 for \$40,000 and Ray Berres. Lopez's election to the Hall of Fame was not based on his stellar 19-year playing career despite his holding of the major league record through 1987 of games caught and the like National League mark until 1990. Lopez was enshrined in Cooperstown in 1977 by a vote of the veterans committee on the strength of his managerial career. He took the 1954 Cleveland Indians and the 1959 Chicago White Sox to the World Series during an era dominated by the New York Yankees. Over seventeen seasons at the helm of a big league ball club, Lopez recorded 1,422 victories and a winning percentage of .581. He was placed in the media spotlight recently during the White Sox's campaign for the 2005 World Series Championship. Lopez expired shortly after the Pale Hose captured title for the first time since 1917. A bronze statue honoring Lopez was placed in the southeast corner of Al Lopez Park in Tampa, Fl in 1992.

Broadcaster **Ralph Edwards** died of heart failure on November 16th at age 92. For Boston Braves fans, he's best remembered for linking the team to the start of The Jimmy Fund. The May 22, 1948 evening transmission from Hollywood of his national radio show, "Truth or Consequences," featured an interview with Einar Gustafson, then a 12-year-old cancer patient at Children's Hospital. Gustafson was referred to as "Jimmy" to protect his privacy. Thought dead for many years, "Jimmy" Gustafson emerged from obscurity in 1998 and attended our reunions prior to his passing in 2001. The ailing lad told Edwards that he wished for a television set so that he could follow his favorite team, the Boston Braves. Assisting Edwards were nine Tribesmen and manager Billy Southworth who were present at Gustafson's bedside that day. The group serenaded the ailing youngster with a rousing rendition of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." At the end of the broadcast, Edwards implored his audience to donate funds to make Jimmy's wish come true and to support research to help find a cure for cancer in children. Within a week, some \$20,000 had been sent in. From this humble beginning, the charity has since raised over \$350 million. The Braves strongly supported The Jimmy Fund over the following years and convinced the Red Sox to take over when the Tribe departed the Hub during the spring of 1953. Ralph Edwards would move on to television and would achieve further fame hosting "This Is Your Life."

Lost and Found

The reclusive **George Crowe** recently emerged from seclusion. The 1952 Boston Braves first baseman was interviewed by *New York Times* columnist William C. Rhoden for an article published on October 15th. Crowe broke into organized ball with the Pawtucket Slaters in 1949, leading the New England League with 106 RBIs while batting a lofty .353. In 1950 with the Hartford Chiefs, the former Negro Leaguer and pro basketball player was selected the Eastern League's most valuable player, the first African-American to achieve that honor. Crowe topped the circuit in hits, runs, doubles and batting average. Sharing first base duties with Earl Torgeson during the Braves' last Boston campaign, he played in 73 games and batted .258. Crowe remained with the Tribe until traded to the Reds in 1956. That deal sent the legendary Bob "Hurricane" Hazle to Milwaukee in return. Crowe's nine year big league career also included a stop in St. Louis. In a rare stint as a regular, he replaced an injured Ted Kluszewski in the 1957 Cincinnati lineup and clubbed 31 homers, driving in 92 runs. The following year, Crowe was named to the All Star Team. He achieved further notoriety for his pinch hitting talents, leading the Senior Circuit in such tallies in 1959. During his big league playing days, Crowe served as a mentor to many young African American ballplayers who encountered the lingering remnants of baseball's defunct color line. Formerly living in log cabin a small town in New York's Catskill Mountains to take advantage of his passions for hunting and fishing, he recently turned up in Gold River in northern California, relocating to the West Coast to join his eldest daughter. Crowe is not a fan of today's game, citing character flaws in both the owners and players. At 84, he has two artificial knees, an artificial hip, a pacemaker and, as he humorously stated in the article, "no brains." Thanks to member **Len Levin** for sending along the *Times* article.

High Honors

A number of Tribesmen have been accorded accolades recently. Reunion favorite **Johnny Logan** was added to the Milwaukee Braves Honor Roll at Miller Park on August 26th. A plaque with a photograph of "Yatcha" now resides in the stadium concourse. The Boston Braves family was well represented at the ceremony with Felix Mantilla, Andy Pafko and Jack Dittmer in attendance. On December 4th, the Wisconsin Old Time Ball Players Association will induct Johnny into their Hall of Fame.

The *Omaha World-Herald* ran a series of articles in August on Nebraska's 100 greatest athletes. Included among that illustrious group were Braves **Les Mann** and **Johnny Hopp**. A gifted athlete, Mann

excelled in track and field in high school and would later achieve All American status in football at Springfield College. As a member of the Miracle Braves, he singled in the winning run with two outs in the ninth inning of Game 2, breaking up a 0-0 duel. With the pennant winning Cubs in 1918, Mann led a player revolt for better World Series shares. In 1922, he turned in New York Giants pitcher "Shufflin" Phil Douglas when the latter sent him a letter inviting a bribe. Judge Landis promptly banned the right hander for life. Mann's major league career spanned sixteen seasons as an outfielder with six teams, including three separate stays with the Braves. He retired with a career average of .282. After retiring, Mann formed the National Amateur Baseball Association and was instrumental in introducing baseball at the Olympics. He was the manager of the U.S. team that was sent to Germany in 1936. Although other countries pledged to send teams, none did, and Mann split his squad and played a demonstration game before a puzzled audience of 125,000.

Johnny Hopp achieved notoriety with the Gashouse Gang Cardinals. He became a regular in 1941 and played in three consecutive World Series for the Redbirds. He followed his old skipper, Billy Southworth to the Hub, coming to the Braves in 1946 in a deal for Eddie Joost. After two solid seasons, the outfielder/first baseman was swapped to the Pirates. Finishing up a thirteen-year career with the Yankees, Hopp played on two World Championship clubs. In 1,393 games, he hit a respectable .296. After his playing days, Hopp coached for the Cardinals and Tigers from 1952-57.

Elmer "Butch" Nieman was added to the College Hill (KS) Neighborhood Association Wall of Fame on October 9 for his founding and stewardship of the area's Babe Ruth League. Nieman was signed by the Red Sox in 1939 and made it to the majors with the Braves in 1943 for a three season big league career that resulted in a .256 lifetime average. The outfielder led the Tribe with 16 home runs in 1944. Nieman had a much more successful minor league career as the player-manager of his hometown Topeka Owls of the Western Association from 1947-51. During his five years there, he led the club in homers each season and in RBI four times. Nieman also delivered a league championship. He passed away in 1993. Nieman's son, Kurt, was inducted into the Fort Scott Community College Athletic Hall of Fame on October 8th in recognition of quarterbacking the school's team to a national championship in 1970.

Sittin' In The Jury Box

Gary Caruso's donation to the BBHA of November editions of *ChopTalk* was especially appreciated given its

contents. **Patty Rasmussen** penned a heartbreaking article, "Johnny Sain's Enduring Fight." Similar to the trek made by Johnny Pesky, Bobby Doerr and Dom DiMaggio to the ailing Ted Williams' side, then Braves pitching coach Leo Mazzone traveled to an Oak Brook, Illinois nursing home to visit with his former coaching mentor. In 2002, Sain was felled by a stroke that paralyzed his left side and robbed him of his speech and motor skills. His wife of 33 years, Mary Ann, tends to his needs and has decorated his room with memorabilia in the hope that the items jog his memory. Even though Sain's achievements of winning twenty or more games on four occasions and his coaching of sixteen twenty-game winners has yet to result in a call from Cooperstown, he has been inducted into both the BBHA and Atlanta Braves Halls of Fame. The 88-year-old Sain was able to react to Mazzone's visit with a smile and a few words. As Mazzone departed, he recalled the time when he received a call from Sain and the voice on the line identified himself as "the best pitching coach in baseball calling the second best coach." Mazzone agreed with that characterization then and now. Through the efforts of business manager George Altison, an oversized card of remembrance, adapted from our reunion program, has been sent to the legendary half of the "Spahn and Sain, Pray for Rain" duo.

The 1914 Miracle Braves were thrust back into the spotlight this past baseball season when the surging Houston Astros invited comparisons to their ancient Boston counterparts. Like the Tribe, the Astros made it to the post-season despite once being fifteen games under .500. 91-years had elapsed before the Braves' miraculous feat was duplicated. As late as mid-July, the Tribe had trailed the New York Giants by 15 ½ games. When the season concluded, the Braves were atop the pack, 10 ½ games the better of the dispirited second place New Yorkers. Pitching, rather than hitting, delivered the National League pennant and Series Championship to the Beantown club. The team boasted two 26-game winners (Bill James and Dick Rudolph) and a 16-game victor (Lefty Tyler). Tribe hurlers led the league with 104 complete games while recording a respectable 2.74 ERA. The team's batting average was a middling .251 and only one regular batted over .300 (outfielder Joe Connolly at .306). Unfortunately for the Astros, the comparison stopped at the World Series as they did the reverse of the Braves and were swept by their American League rival.

A couple of literary efforts bear noting. In the September issue of *Brookline Magazine*, **Shera Sage Smith** contributed an interesting piece entitled, "The Legend of Babe Ruth: Untold Anecdotes of his Return to Boston." The author documented the trials and tribulations of the Babe's ill-fated

second coming to Boston. When **Clyde H. Hogg** discovered that his grandfather's younger brother had pitched in the big leagues, he set out to investigate. After five years of research, the tale of spitball pitcher **Bradley Hogg** emerged. The story of the deadball pitcher's career is well documented in Hogg's book, *Spitting on Diamonds: A Spitball Pitcher's Journey to the Major Leagues, 1911-1919* (University of Missouri Press). Bradley Hogg started his career in September of 1911 with the Boston Rustlers, precursors of the Braves. He began the next season with the club but was sent to the New Bedford Whalers of the New England League in exchange for a diminutive shortstop by the name of Rabbit Maranville. Hogg drifted around the minors until the last weeks of the 1915 season when the Cubs called him up for a look-see. He then moved on to the Pacific Coast League where he met with success over the next two seasons. In 1916, Hogg won sixteen games for future Hall of Famer Frank Chance's Los Angeles Angels, helping the team to the pennant. He led the league with a 27-13 record the following year and was sold to the Phillies during the winter. Hogg's thirteen victories in 1918 tied him for the staff high. With the last place Philadelphians in 1919, he suffered through a 5-12 record and retired. His decision was precipitated by the Major's edict outlawing trick deliveries including his specialty, the spitball/shineball. Over the course of his major and minor league career, Hogg played with or against twenty-seven Hall of Fame ballplayers. He went on to practice law full-time until his death in 1935.

The 1911 Rustlers were a sad aggregation, finishing in the Senior Circuit basement with a 44-107 record, 54 games out of first place. Cy Young signed on in August, after being released by the Cleveland Naps and picked up four more wins to complete his lifetime victory total at 511. The ancient hurler roomed for a short time with a fellow Ohioan, rookie **Scotty Ingerton**. Ingerton had been acquired from the Cubs as part of a swap to reacquire pitcher Big Jeff Pfeffer for promising infielder Dave Shean. Both Young and Ingerton would finish their major league careers upon the completion of the 1911 campaign. In the first game of an October 9th season-ending doubleheader in Philadelphia, Ingerton initiated a triple play. In all, he would take part in 136 games and bat .250. He tried out at every position except pitcher and catcher. Ingerton would play a few more seasons in the minors before quitting in 1916. His principal claim to baseball fame comes from his preservation of the National Pastime's "slanguage." According to an article in the August 8th *Akron Beacon Journal* by Mark J. Price, Ingerton passed along the game's slang to patrons in his bar and later defined many terms in a 1934 newspaper article. In Ingerton's dialect, "orchards" were ballparks, "yodlers" were third base coaches and "blue

darts" were line drives. His lingo categorized baseballs as "apples," curveballs as "snakes" and umpires as "Blind Toms." So, the next time you hear an error referred to as a "boot" or a lazy fly ball as a "can of corn," thank Scotty Ingerton for his role in conserving this colorful facet of the game.

Did you know that the Braves once had their own version of Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown? When **Wayne "Ossie" Osborne** was five years old, he threw a percussion cap onto a stove, resulting in the maiming of his right hand. Osborne claimed that he derived a advantage in his delivery from the loss of a piece of his right index finger. That alleged benefit did not result in a sustained major league career as he only saw action in seven games over the course of two seasons. Osborne was with the Bees for five games in 1936, compiling a 1-1 record. The previous season saw him in a brief two game trial with the Pirates. He also had tryouts with the Tigers, Red Sox and Dodgers. Osborne thrived in the Pacific Coast League, winning in double figures in eight different seasons for the Mission Reds and Hollywood Stars. In all, he won 131 games on the Coast. Osborne went on to a career in broadcasting, covering Cubs games in the '40s and working as a radio station sports director. He was also an amateur golfer of some repute.

For seventeen years, the Roy Hobbs World Series has served as a "Field of Dreams" for amateur baseball. This year, more than 3,300 players and 190 teams headed to Florida in November to vie on the diamonds of Lee County. The competition attracts ballplayers from 25 years in age to 65-plus. Series are conducted in nine categories based on age and other factors. A "Boston Braves" team has been entered in this contest over the past several years. This season's Braves edition competed unsuccessfully in the Veterans (38 and over) wooden bat category.

For those of us old enough to remember the Braves of the 1950s, the catchy slogan, "Hi Neighbor, Have a 'Gansett!'" brings back a flood of memories. The Narragansett Beer Company of Cranston, RI, founded in 1888, was once the source of New England's best selling lager beer. 'Gansett was a prominent Tribe sponsor. The company secured a featured place among the Wigwam's outfield billboards in 1948. On the left field wall, underneath the mammoth new electric scoreboard, the Narragansett Beer Company placed a large ad that featured a bull's eye, enticing batters to "Hit the Spot." Its familiar refrain was also incorporated into the broadside. In 1949, the brewer took advantage of the addition of color and the newly expanded size of the game day program to secure a highly visible spot on the back cover. The amber brew was portrayed as a Wigwam favorite along with Armour franks, Hood's ice cream and Coca

Cola. Narragansett Beer lost this spot in the 1951-52 programs to a competitor, Ballantine Ale, and moved its advertising inside, encompassing the entire internal back cover. Ads were also attached to pocket schedules and were a familiar part of radio and television broadcasts. While the brewery outlasted the Braves in New England, it too declined in popularity and eventually was forced to shut its Rhode Island doors in the early 1980s. Its facilities were demolished in 1998. Our story doesn't end here, however. This past October, the proud brand was relaunched in Worcester County, MA. Six packs of 12-ounce long necks are available in some local package stores at a price of around \$5.50 and 'Gansett is also making its way into area pubs. Mark Hellendrung, the former president of Nantucket Nectars and a Rhode Island native, led a group of investors in the purchase of the rights to the Narragansett trademark from Pabst Brewing Company. Hellendrung even found the last brewmaster from the Cranston brewery and obtained the original beer recipe. The actual brewing operation is located in High Falls, NY. We wish Mark the best of luck in this nostalgic endeavor. If 'Gansett can come back, why not the Braves?!

Rookie right-hander Scott Feldman of the Texas Rangers caused a bit of a stir this season when he had not given up a run in 8 1/3 innings over six games since his call-up. His feat matched that of Hall of Famer Honus Wagner who also did not give up an earned run in the 8 1/3 innings of his pitching "debut" over the 1900 and 1902 seasons. Wagner did allow five unearned runs. The all-time record is held by Boston Braves righty hurler **John Dagenhard** who pitched 11 scoreless innings in 1943 in his inaugural, and only, big league appearance. Dagenhard was acquired from the Hartford Chiefs on September 18th after winning 19 and losing 10 with the Eastern League Tribe affiliate. While with the Chiefs, he started a triple play when he speared a line drive in a July 5th contest. Dagenhard claimed his only major league victory in the nightcap of season-ending doubleheader at Wrigley Field. He bested the Cubs 5-2, pitching a complete seven hit, no-earned run game. With World War II raging, Dagenhard took on a military-industry job and never appeared in another major league box score. He finished with a 1-0 record over two appearances, with a 0.00 ERA.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE BBHA!
Bob Brady, Newsletter Editor