

Boston Braves Historical Association Newsletter

Spring 2010

www.boston-braves.com

The BBHA Team

The Association is pleased to announce that all steps have been taken to assure its continuation. Your editor has assumed the additional position as president while **Jonathan Fine** has graciously agreed to serve as secretary-treasurer. We will be ably assisted by an advisory board consisting of returning members **Mort Bloomberg** and **Saul Wisnia** and newcomers **John Brooks** and **Dave Scrivines**. John was one of the BBHA's founding fathers and has resumed an active leadership role in our time of need. Dave is a longtime member and frequent reunion attendee. He's a high school teacher and coach who also scouts part-time for the Red Sox. He had previously scouted for the Colorado Rockies and the Major League Scouting Bureau.

Gary Mastas has stepped down from the board but assures us of his continued active involvement in BBHA affairs. We wish to thank Gary for his past tireless and outstanding efforts on behalf of the BBHA and his work as a liaison with the Altison family that greatly facilitated the reorganization.

The matter of a 2010 reunion remains under consideration. We are talking with the Boston Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) about the possibility of a joint meeting in the fall. In this regard, we continue to solicit volunteers from the membership to work on this project should it come to fruition. Your support will be an important factor in determining whether an autumn undertaking is feasible. Please drop us a line at our Chestnut Hill P.O. Box if you'd like work on this endeavor.

We are in need of a volunteer with computer skills who can compile our membership list on address labels to facilitate future delivery of the newsletter. If you can help, please contact me at bbraves@beld.net.

George's Royal Rooters

Thanks to your generous response to our request in our last newsletter to fund a memorial brick for **George Altison** at Turner Field, we have received sufficient funds to not only cover the cost of the brick but also to make a donation in George's name to the Boston Braves' favorite charity, The Jimmy Fund.

The roster of George's Royal Rooters consists of **Norman Berg, Mort Bloomberg, Bob Brady, John Brooks, Paul C. Duffy, Jonathan Fine, Scott Kimball, Midge Landry, Bill Monbouquette, Joe Morgan, Paul Morgan, Michael Palladino, the Detweiler Family (Ducky and Jean Detweiler and Gina and Duff McConnell), Frank J. Williams and Saul Wisnia.**

We hope to take the replica brick provided to us by Atlanta to Braves Field for a final memorial tribute before presenting it to the Altison family.

We invite any members heading to an Atlanta Braves game during the 2010 baseball season to locate the brick and provide us with directions and a photograph so that we might share this information with the family and our membership.

New BBHA Publication

We're pleased to announce the availability of a new Association publication designed to provide the reader with a virtual tour of the remains of Braves Field. While it's impossible to replicate in print the passion and insight of a **Ralph Evans** in-person tour, this effort is intended as a supplement to, or substitute for, an on-site visit. Assembled by your editor, the book is entitled *A Pictorial Tour of Braves Field -- Then and Now*. In a soft cover, 8"x6" format, the book consists of 20 pages and contains 68 photographs of the Wigwam, past and present, including some in color, some rare and some previously unpublished. It supplements a long out-of-print BBHA effort by **Ray Miller**, in collaboration with Ralph Evans, *A Tour of Braves Field*, issued a decade ago. Included with *A Pictorial Tour* is a DVD of a slide show version of it that was part of a presentation to the Boston SABR Chapter on January 18 of this year by the author, and an oversized panoramic postcard featuring Opening Day at Braves Field in 1930.

The purchase price is \$18 postage paid. Due to the high costs associated with the use of quality paper to assure sharp reproductions of the photos, the use of color and an anticipated very low print run, we will only be able to "print to order" and cannot maintain a general inventory of the book. To be assured of a copy, you must order within 30 days of receipt of the newsletter. We will then have the publisher print as many books as required to fill orders received by that date. Orders received after that time will be subject to cancellation unless demand warrants a second printing. Another note: despite the price of this publication, please be assured that the BBHA has undertaken this project consistent with its philosophy of keeping the memory of Boston's Braves alive, rather than as a device to enhance the Association's treasury. We hope that your response will result in the effort achieving a break-even point so as to allow us to preserve BBHA resources for additional projects in support of the Association's primary objective. Thank you in advance for your orders.

Send your check for \$18, made out to the Boston Braves Historical Association to: **Boston Braves Historical Association, Post Office Box 67195, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467-0002.**

The Numbers Game

In 1932, the Boston Braves became the first Senior Circuit team to place numerals on the backs of their players at home and on the road. A number of American League ball clubs had experimented with this form of identification as far back as 1929 and the neighboring Red Sox took up the cause during the 1931 campaign. For the most part during these early days, teams assigned numbers based on a performer's spot in the line-up.

During the debut season, the Tribe employed 29 different numerals, ranging from 1 through 34. Future Hall of Famer **Rabbit Maranville** claimed the former while manager **Bill McKechnie** assumed the latter. Superstition kept number 13 in reserve while numbers 25, 26, 29 and 31 also went unused. It wasn't until 1935 that a Braves player dared to wear #13 on his back. Pitcher **Flint "Shad" Rhem** had been purchased from the Cardinals in 1934 and had pitched decently, winning and losing eight games while carrying #29 on his backside. Tempting the fates the following season, Rhem switched to #13 and bad luck soon followed. Appearing in only ten games, the right-hander, who had a fondness for the bottle, went 0-5. Rhem returned to St. Louis in 1936 and lasted just ten more games in the majors.

Until the club's departure after the 1952 season, the Braves employed only four other non-triskaidekaphobic ballplayers. Rhem's 1935 performance did not discourage #13's reuse the next season. Outfielder **Rupert "Tommy" Thompson** inherited the digits and batted a healthy .286 while playing in 106 games. However, Thompson was traded to the PCL San Diego Padres for **Vince DiMaggio** in a December deal and would conclude his big league stint with only brief trials in 1938 and 1939 with the White Sox and Browns.

Nearly a decade passed before the denizens of the Wigwam witnessed #13 appearing on their scorecard's home team roster. Picked up in a player/cash deal in 1945 from the Cardinals, sore-armed hurler **Mort Cooper** came to the Hub and requested the digits that he'd worn in St. Louis since 1941. While #13 had proven lucky for him with the Redbirds, winning over 20 games in three consecutive seasons, Cooper's performance in Boston was disappointing and he was sent packing in 1947. However, the Braves didn't mothball the number for long as another Cardinal transplant, **Red Barrett**, joined the team after the season and was awarded the distinctive number. Barrett had been traded to St. Louis in 1945 for Cooper, making this subsequent exchange of jersey identifiers somewhat ironic. After helping the Tribe to the National League pennant, Barrett faded from the scene and was out of the majors after the '49 campaign.

The last bearer of number 13 broke in with the club back in 1939 when it was nicknamed the "Bees." **Sibby Sisti** had worn five other numerals (5, 25, 1, 2 and 7) during his time in Boston. From 1947-50, he claimed a digit, #7, that some believed carried good luck. However, during the sixth game of the '48 World Series, Sisti donned "goat horns" when he pinch hit into a ninth inning double play, chilling a potential comeback rally that might have led to a seventh game. In 1951, the Braves' "Super Sub" yielded his #7 to catcher **Ebba St. Claire** and switched to #13. He retained it through to his retirement and transformation to a coach in 1954 with the transplanted Tribe in Milwaukee.

By the time the Braves abandoned the Hub, the club had used forty-six distinct numbers to identify its players. A consecutive string, from #1 to #42, had been deployed, followed by the random issuance of numbers 44, 50, 56 and 96. The latter designation was major league baseball's loftiest at the time of its issuance in 1947 by the Braves to righty **Bill Voiselle**. Voiselle was a mid-season pick-up from the Giants in exchange for **Mort Cooper**. The number represented Voiselle's home town of Ninety-Six, South Carolina. The dual purpose nature of Big Bill's identifier received much notoriety and is the granddaddy of today's gimmicky back signage borne by some publicity-seeking professional athletes.

The most frequently issued numerals in the Braves clubhouse were numbers 11 and 26. Each was assigned on twenty-four different occasions. In some instances, a player would return to that number after having yielding it for a period of time. The most distinguished Braves #11 was port-sider **Ed Brandt**, a pitching staff stalwart in the early '30s. Hall of Famer **Lefty Gomez** claimed the number in 1943 during a brief stint on the roster but without making an official appearance before his May 19 release. A revolving door of undistinguished players were handed #26 over the years. **Lefty Clyde "Hardrock" Shoun** contributed to the '48 pennant cause as a member of the "#26 club." Frequent reunion guest **Norm Roy** was one of the last Boston Braves bearers of the digits when he appeared in 19 contests in 1950.

Gene Conley and **Ernie Johnson** joined "Ninety-Six" Voiselle as the exclusive regular season wearers of their assigned numbers. At #56, Conley's number was the second highest ever issued by the Tribe. Our honored reunion attendee fared better with the Celtics, drawing #17 with the Hub's National Basketball Association representatives. Number 17 has been retired, not for the exploits of its former two-sports holder but for a later owner, **John Havlicek**. Ernie Johnson has the distinction of not only possessing the third-highest ever issued number (#50) but also of technically being a "three-city" Brave. Ernie followed the team to Milwaukee and later served as the "Voice of the Atlanta Braves" as the team's renowned broadcaster.

Ten numbers were employed throughout the Tribe's 1932-52 run. Always found hanging in a locker in the Wigwam's home dugout were numbers 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16 and 24.

We can only speculate as to what numbers the Boston Braves might have retired if that honor had been in vogue during their time in the Bay State. Number 1 warranted honorary retirement for **Rabbit Maranville** and, later, **Tommy Holmes**. Slugging outfielder **Wally Berger** certainly deserved consideration and the front office would have had to choose between his #3 or #4. Berger gave up #3 in 1935 to accommodate the arrival of **Babe Ruth**. While **Jackie Robinson's** #42 has been retired throughout major league baseball, would Boston's baseball "color line" pioneer **Sam Jethroe** and his #5 eventually be deserving of such recognition at a local level? Likewise, sentimental favorite **Sibby Sisti** might have been honored in a **Johnny Pesky**-like manner by the retirement of any of the six numerals adorning his back from 1939 to 1952.

Earl Torgeson never reached the heights of the other Boston #9 at neighboring Fenway Park but his

pugnacious, all out style of play is fondly recalled. It goes without saying that Spahn's #21 and **Johnny Sain's** #33 demanded immortalization. Hall of Famer **Billy Southworth's** efforts in Boston provide ample justification for retiring #30 as well. Since, as Warren Spahn so aptly put it, **Casey Stengel's** time in Boston was "before he became a genius," neither of the numbers he wore (#32 and #33) would have been removed from circulation on his account. The efforts of **Bill McKechnie**, who capably manned the helm of the ballclub despite meager resources, would at least require serious deliberation. While he claimed three numerals (#30, #33 and #34) during his 1932-37 run in the Hub, #33 was his dominant identifier. **Johnny Cooney's** many years of dedicated service as a pitcher, outfielder, coach and brief stint as manger might have warranted a spot on this Honor Roll. The selection committee would have had six numbers to choose from. Eminent members of the Braves Family who played before 1932 would require some type of recognition when instituting such a tribute.

While most folks are familiar with **Johnny Sain's** #33 and **Warren Spahn's** #21, both started out their Boston days with different digits. During their 1942 rookie season, Sain was assigned #28 while Spahn was handed #16. When both returned to the team in 1946 after WWII military service, they claimed their more familiar numbers. Spahn inherited his from hurler **Al "Bear Tracks" Javery** while Sain's #33 had last been worn by ex-manager **Del Bissonette** in 1945. Superstition interrupted Spahn's 1946-52 donning of #21 on occasion. As noted in the Fall 2008 newsletter, when he became "stuck" at 21 wins in 1951, Spahn changed to #22 (worn by **George Estock** during the season) and was victorious. Wearing #23 (borrowed from **Johnny Logan**) in his next outing failed to bring similar results. When shipped to the Yankees in 1951, Sain had to give up #33, as it belonged to **Bill Dickey**. He settled for #11. Sain wrapped up his playing career with the Kansas City Athletics in 1955 with #14 on his back. Spahn was more successful in retaining his favorite number after departing the Braves. In his major league swan song season of 1965 with the New York Mets and San Francisco Giants, he was able to retain his familiar jersey number with both clubs.

Phil Masi (#10) trumped Tommy Holmes (#1) for the longest consecutive holding of a number -- over ten straight seasons. Masi held onto his number from 1939 until his trade to the Pirates on June 15, 1949. Holmes' string ran from 1942-50. He would have held the record had he not accepted an offer to manage the Hartford Chiefs in 1951. His departure to the Tribe's Eastern League affiliate opened the door for catcher **Ray Mueller** to briefly wear the #1 jersey. "Kelly" reclaimed his digit when promoted to the helm of the big league club near the middle of the '51 campaign and retained it until yielding the post to **Charlie Grimm** after 35 games in 1952.

One of the most well known public displays of Braves numerals occurred during the 1948 pennant-winning season. On several occasions, players with the numbers 1, 9, 4 and 8 were asked to pose for photographs in that sequence. The most notable of these pictures appeared on the cover of *Baseball Magazine's* May issue. Lined up at the rail in front of the Wigwam's home dugout were **Tommy Holmes** (#1), **Earl Torgeson** (#9), **Danny Litwhiler** (#4) and **Connie Ryan** (#8). Later season versions witnessed one change in personnel. Litwhiler had been traded to

the Reds on May 11 for **Marv Rickert**. Look closely at such photos and you'll see **Jeff Heath** as Litwhiler's replacement. Using the final 1952 bearers of numbers to represent the current year, we'd only have to pose two ballplayers, **Dick Donovan** (#20) and **Jack Cusick** (#10), for such a photo opportunity.

Of the forty-six numbers used by the Boston Braves throughout their history, some sixteen adorned the backs of future inductees to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The total is somewhat inflated by the fact that some of these individuals wore more than one number while in the Hub. Unfortunately, the majority of the immortals earned their enshrinement for accomplishments elsewhere. This fact perhaps is best illustrated by the Tribe numeral claimed by the most future Hall of Famers. Number "3" was worn by **Babe Ruth** (1935), **Earl Averill** (1941) and **Joe Medwick** (1945). Here's the complete roster:

- #1 -- **Rabbit Maranville** (1932-35)
- #3 -- **Babe Ruth** (1935)
- #3 -- **Earl Averill** (1941)
- #3 -- **Joe Medwick** (1945)
- #5 -- **Ernie Lombardi** (1942)
- #5 -- **Joe Medwick** (1945)
- #7 -- **Al Lopez** (1936-39)
- #8 -- **Al Lopez** (1940)
- #8 -- **Paul Waner** (1942)
- #11 -- **Lefty Gomez** (1943)
- #16 -- **Warren Spahn** (1942)
- #20 -- **Billy Herman** (1946)
- #20 -- **Al Simmons** (1939)
- #21 -- **Warren Spahn** (1946-52)
- #30 -- **Billy Southworth** (1946-51)
- #31 -- **Casey Stengel** (1938-39)
- #31 -- **Paul Waner** (1941)
- #32 -- **Casey Stengel** (1940-43)
- #33 -- **Bill McKechnie** (1933-36)
- #37 -- **Lloyd Waner** (1941)
- #41 -- **Ed Mathews** (1952)

The above ranks may increase in the future should #15 **Danny Murtaugh** (Boston Braves, 1947) enter the Cooperstown shrine for his skipping of the Pirates to five first place finishes and two World Championships. An ongoing campaign to recognize not only his stellar performance on the mound but also his remarkable career as a pitching coach and mentor might eventually land **Johnny Sain** a deserved spot in the Hall as well.

Model View

Before members of the press and invited guests at team headquarters on March 8, 1915, Braves owner **James E. Gaffney**, fresh from New York City, unveiled a nine foot square model of the ballclub's soon to be constructed new home in Allston. The gathering at the Paddock Building on Tremont Street viewed Osborn Engineering Company's detailed representation of what was proclaimed to soon become the "largest baseball park in the world." Reporters eagerly took notes while photographers snapped shots of the model from different angles. The following day, the results of their efforts were revealed to the citizens of Boston as they opened their daily newspapers. A Globe headline proclaimed: "Here's How The Braves' New Park in Allston Will Look." Large photos captured the field at two strategic vantage points: from the outfield looking in at the grandstands and from the pavilions and the main entrance that bordered a street that would bear the owner's name. Gaffney used the model to illustrate his

directive to the designers that his new field incorporate the best and most successful features of other newly-built stadia in the country, giving the fans of Boston "the last word in ball parks."

Taking advantage of the bowl-like topography of the former golf course, the playing field would be several feet below street level with grandstand and pavilion seating built on the natural incline. Seats would be reached by ramps or runways. For the convenience of patrons, the plans incorporated a design that had streetcars running through the south end of the grounds.

Construction on the project was to start the following week. The initial target date for completion was pegged at September 1 and Gaffney admitted that work would have to be rushed in order for a grand opening to occur during the 1915 season.

The photographs of the original model provide us with insight at to changes that Gaffney made to reduce costs and keep the project on its quick pace. The most obvious of the post-model modifications concerned the ballpark's roof and right field bleachers. The right and left field pavilions' overhead coverings were jettisoned and the bleacher area's size was significantly reduced. Both were set aside for later. In fact, such planned enhancements were under consideration during the Perini regime. The changes may have quickened the pace of construction. Work actually began on March 10 with workers removing trees and brush, concentrating on the area near the Boston and Albany railroad tracks. Gaffney's optimistic targeted opening date of September 1 was even bested. Braves Field's turnstiles spun for the inaugural big league game on August 18. The Braves christened their new home with a 3-1 triumph over the St. Louis Cardinals.

The model survived intact until 1992, gathering dust in the attic of the former Braves administration building that had been transformed into Boston University's police station. Plans had been made for a viewing at the BBHA's first reunion but an ill-advised attempt at housekeeping resulted the near total destruction of the relic. Ironically, a BBHA supporter who worked in the building saved a remaining portion -- identical to the actual Braves Field structures that continue to exist to this day. The BBHA viewing did take place, albeit of the greatly reduced artifact.

A Streetcar Named Braves Field

A recently discovered article in a trade publication sheds further light upon Braves Field's link to public transportation. The September 25, 1915 issue of the *Electric Railway Journal* contained a story under the banner: "Handling Traffic at Largest Baseball Park: Arrangements Made by the Boston Elevated Railway to Accommodate the Immense Crowds Which Will Visit This Stadium." The in-stadium transportation facility was described as a "loop surface track" that extended into the ballpark confines from Commonwealth Avenue. The Boston Elevated Railway, a predecessor of the MTA and MBTA, had arranged for the "rapid handling of short-headway service" for the expected crowds. In a 600 foot long, 50 foot wide area that bordered the ramps to the right field pavilion and grandstand was a loading space with two tracks capable of berthing some twenty trolleys. The tracks were separated from the ballpark by a 10-foot high wire screen fence and enclosed on the other side by a 12-foot high, 6-inch

thick concrete wall with the familiar capstones that appeared on all other walls surrounding the field.

Departing Braves Field patrons seeking public transportation home would descend the ballpark ramps toward "pre-payment stations." These semi-octagonal concrete booths shared their design with the main entrance building, featuring the distinctive red-tiled roofing. They measured 4'10" x 9'2" x 8'. In anticipation of diminished daylight at late afternoon-ending contests in the spring and fall, above each change window in the booths were "incandescent lamps of 23 watt rating ... in porcelain reflectors." More powerful illumination wouldn't be required until night baseball came to Braves Field in 1946.

Tony's Plaque

A plaque resided in Braves Field for many years in silent tribute to a popular Braves infielder who died tragically. On June 12, 1919, the Braves picked up **Norman "Tony" Boeckel** on waivers from the Pittsburgh Pirates. He then proceeded to become the club's regular third sacker through the 1923 season. Although an average fielder, Boeckel compensated with his batting prowess and often was among the club's top run producers. He was a teammate of future Tribe manager **Billy Southworth**. In a true baseball oddity, Boeckel went through nineteen innings of a 1922 twin bill without having a single chance at third base.

Relaxing at home in California after the 1923 season, Boeckel and pal **Bob Meusel** of the Yankees were passengers in an automobile that became involved in a collision with a truck. While a bit shaken up from the accident, neither ballplayer was seriously injured. Boeckel exited the car onto the highway to dust himself off and assess the damage when he was struck by an oncoming auto. He was rushed to a San Diego hospital where he expired from his injuries on February 16, 1924. It was the day before he was scheduled to head to St. Petersburg for spring training. Boeckel became the first active major leaguer to die from an automobile accident.

Opening Day at Braves Field on a cold and damp April 23, 1924 featured the usual ceremonies interrupted by a special memorial service to the departed infielder. After the raising of Old Glory, the parade of politicians, club officials and members of the military marched to third base and formed a hollow square around the sack. A large wreath was placed on the bag and Boston Mayor **James Michael Curley** delivered a eulogy to the beloved Boeckel. A military regimental band then played "A Night in June." Newspaper accounts noted that many in attendance were deeply affected by the unexpected memorial. The club further honored their former teammate by wearing an emblem of mourning on a jersey sleeve during the season.

Before the game on September 6, a ceremony was conducted to unveil Boeckel's memorial bronze tablet that had been installed on the face of the infield grandstand wall on the home side of Braves Field. Club president **Christy Mathewson** presided over the event. The plaque was erected through the efforts of the Winthrop Lodge of Elks of which Boeckel had been a member. The Elks contingent would conduct memorial services before the plaque during subsequent seasons when Elks Day was observed at the Wigwam. Two years later, Mathewson would receive the same tribute at Braves Field. On May 28, 1926, a

commemorative tablet was installed in memory of Matty, who succumbed to the effects of tuberculosis on October 7, 1925.

The ultimate disposition of these Braves Field relics is unknown to this writer. Perhaps a reader might be able to shed light on their destiny.

In Memoriam

The ranks of living Boston Braves players declined to 34 with the passing of **Gene Tunney Patton** on June 25, 2009. Patton was 82 at the time of his death. The youngest of fifteen children, Patton was born on July 8, 1926 and named after the heavyweight contender for **Jack Dempsey's** crown. He lettered in four sports at Coatsville (PA) High School and attracted the attention of big league scouts as a slugging shortstop. Braves scout **John Ogden** signed the 17-year-old to a bonus contract upon his graduation in 1944. Ogden would later sign **Dick Allen** to a Phillies contract in 1960. Patton immediately joined the parent club, managed by **Bob Coleman**. He assumed a spot on the bench until Saturday, June 17 when he made his "**Moonlight Graham**" appearance in a major league game. In the bottom of the ninth inning of the second game of a doubleheader against the Giants, Patton was sent in to run for catcher **Stew Hofferth** who had walked. Pinch hitting for pitcher **Ben Cardoni**, **Butch Nieman** grounded to short, forcing out Patton at second base. He would never appear in another big league contest. Turning 18 in July, he received his draft notice from Uncle Sam. Patton contracted rheumatic fever in the service and eventually was discharged as disabled. He attempted a comeback but had little success at Braves' minor league affiliates in Hartford and Evansville in 1946-47. After leaving organized ball, Patton returned home to Coatsville and worked at the Lukens Steel Company. He was also active in American Legion baseball and was elected to the Legion's Hall of Fame in 1970.

November brought another loss to the Braves Family of players and a reduction in their ranks to 33 when **Tommy Reis** died on November 6. At 95 at the time of his passing, Reis was the oldest living former member of the Tribe and ninth oldest living big leaguer. The Braves' eldest statesman is now pitcher **Nick Strincevich** who was born on March 1, 1915. Reis was also the last surviving member of the Phillies to play at old Baker Bowl in the City of Brotherly Love. He was originally signed by Cleveland and later drafted by the Phillies. During the NY-Penn League playoffs in 1937, Reis hurled a clutch no-hit game. Taking the mound for the Wilkes-Barre Barons, he recorded a first inning out and then saw the next two Elmira Pioneers batters reach base on a walk and an error. Reis proceeded to retire the next 26 consecutive batters.

Reis's time in the majors was brief -- eight relief appearances in 1938. It was evenly split between the Phils and the Bees as he was sold to the Bees on May 23 after four appearances. In October, Reis was sent to the Yankees to complete a deal for shortstop **Eddie Miller**. His career was interrupted by WWII and Reis served with the 76th Infantry Division in Europe, seeing combat during the latter stages of the Battle of the Bulge. While he never again reached the majors, Reis continued to perform in the minors, accumulating 198 wins in a 500 game, 20 year career. He also managed farm teams of the Indians and Reds for a couple of seasons before leaving baseball. Reis worked for

Federated Department Stores in Cincinnati prior to retiring to Ocala, FL.

Bob Roselli, a catcher who appeared briefly with the Milwaukee Braves in 1955-56 and 1958 and the Chicago White Sox in 1961-62, died on November 6, 2009. He was 77. Roselli originally signed with the Boston Braves in 1950 and was the Hartford Chiefs' regular backstop in 1952. He and **Joe Morgan** were teammates on that Connecticut-based club.

Walter E. "Buck" Buerger, a minor league outfielder with several Braves affiliates, died on November 15, 2009 at age 83. He played in the lower classifications for the Mooresville Braves, Evansville Braves, Owensboro Oilers, Richmond Roses and Leavenworth Braves from 1945-47. Buerger made the Kitty League All Star Team in 1946 and was a teammate of **Chuck Tanner's**. He shared the locker room with future Brave **Virgil Jester** at Leavenworth in 1947. Buerger wrapped up his playing career in 1954 and went on to a career in law enforcement.

On February 2, 2010, southpaw **Paul LaPalme** passed away. He was 86 at the time. LaPalme pitched in the majors for the Pirates, Cardinals and White Sox from 1951 to 1957, achieving a 24-45 won/lost record. The knuckleballer was a Boston Braves farmhand in 1949. The Tribe acquired him from the New York Giants via the minor league draft on November 24, 1948 and assigned him to the Hartford Chiefs. His performance with the Eastern League affiliate (14-13, 2.90) attracted the attention of the Pirates who used the minor league draft to pry him away from the Braves. The first start of LaPalme's big league career took place at Braves Field where he dueled **Johnny Sain** and shut out the Tribe, 8-0, for a Bucs victory before a sparse crowd of 4,302. He lived in Leominster, MA until his death. After retiring from baseball, LaPalme owned an engraving company that made steel dies for plastics firms.

Fielding A Team

Although the ranks of surviving Braves players have diminished to 33, we still have representatives from the days of the "Bees" through to the final season in Boston. The 1938-52 ball clubs have at least one living ambassador. The population is exceedingly thin in a number of years, however. Teams from 1938 (with pitcher **Art Kenney**) and 1940 (with pitcher **Nick Strincevich**) have sole survivors while the 1939, 1941-45 and 1947 clubs feature just two teammates. 1950 and 1952 are the seasons where the our largest population of players reside -- 10 for each year.

The question now arises as to whether a "fantasy" team might be assembled from this group. Fortunately, the query can be answered in the affirmative. All positions on the diamond can be manned by players who performed there while with the Tribe.

The mound corps could be assembled from a pool consisting of **Johnny Antonelli** (1948-50), **Eddie Carnett** (1941), **Dave Cole** (1950-52), **Gene Conley** (1952), **George Estock** (1951), **Virgil Jester** (1952), **Ernie Johnson** (1950, '52), **Art Kenney** (1938), **Harry MacPherson** (1944), **Dick Manville** (1950), **Ray Martin** (1943, 1947-48), **Norm Roy** (1950), **Hal Schacker** (1945), **Nick Strincevich** (1940-41), **Bert Thiel** (1952) and **Al Veigel** (1939). The pitching staff would be throwing to battery-mates **Del Crandall** (1949-50) and **Walt Linden** (1950).

To patrol the outfield, our fantasy team could select from **Bob Addis** (1950-51), **Clint Conatser** (1948-49), **Jack Daniels** (1952), **Ralph Hodgins** (1939), **Danny Litwhiler** (1946-48) and **Luis Olmo** (1950-51).

Our choices in the infield are much more limited. **George Crowe** (1952) is the only surviving player to have manned first base in Boston Braves togs. At second, we could platoon **Jack Dittmer** (1952) and **Roy Hartsfield** (1950-52). The greatest infield flexibility resides at shortstop. Here we can select from **Al Dark** (1946, '48-49), **Eddie Joost** (1943, '45), **Johnny Logan** (1951-52) and **Mike Sandlock** (1942, '44). The hot corner still has two candidates: Sandlock and **Ducky Detweiler** (1942, '46). If we didn't restrict ourselves to positions played during their Boston Braves years, we'd add a bit more maneuverability to our roster.

The club would lack a manager and, fortunately, **Eddie Joost** and **Al Dark** would be capable substitutes given their experiences at the post elsewhere.

Return of the Miracle Braves

Special events took place throughout the Senior Circuit in 1951 to celebrate the league's 75th anniversary. The National League even produced a hardcover book, *75th Anniversary of the National League*, that contained league and individual team histories along with vintage photographs.

National League teams celebrated the anniversary during the season with ceremonies at their ballparks. The Braves chose to bring back surviving members of the 1914 Miracle Braves championship club as part of the Tribe's commemoration. A three-day event was put together by Braves owner, **Lou Perini**, culminating in pre-game festivities before the June 2 match at the Wigwam against the visiting Cubs. Boston and Chicago were the only National League clubs to have operated continuously since the circuit's formation in 1876.

Time had taken its toll in the 37 years that had elapsed since the Braves' last (and final) World Championship. Eleven of the 34 ballplayers on the Tribe roster over the course of the '14 campaign were deceased. The first to depart the scene was pitcher **Otto Hess** in 1926, followed in 1929 by manager **George Stallings**. The last survivor of this historic ballclub was **Jack Martin**, a utility infielder. Martin played in 33 games before being swapped to the Phillies in midseason for outfielder **Josh Devore**. Martin closed this chapter of the Miracle Braves' history upon his death on July 4, 1980. He was 93. Third baseman **Charlie Deal** outlasted all of his fellow regulars, passing away at 87 on September 16, 1979.

The honorees arrived in the Hub on May 31 and were ushered to WNAC-TV to take part in the Braves' weekly television program, "Baseball in Your Living Room." Interviews on local radio also were scheduled. Perini then treated the '14 veterans to a well-attended luncheon the following day at the Hotel Somerset. Waiters served the meal attired in replica 1876 uniforms. The Miracle Braves entourage was formally introduced to area press and radio representatives at the gathering. Also in the ballroom was Senior Circuit president **Ford Frick** and old-time ballplayers **Fred Tenney**, **Tom Corcoran** and **Alex Ferguson**. Tenney's time with the team went all the way back to 1894 and

he twice skippered the club (1905-07 and 1911). Corcoran's big league career ranged from 1890 to 1907, primarily as a shortstop. Ferguson broke into the majors in 1918 and spent time pitching for the Red Sox during his ten-year career.

President Perini presented each of the honored guests with commemorative tie clasps, personal copies of the National League anniversary book and the Baseball Encyclopedia. Wives who accompanied the honorees received orchid corsages. Perini continued with his largesse before the Braves-Cubs game the following day when he gave an engraved gold watch to **Hugh Duffy**, who had batted a lofty .438 for the 1894 Boston Nationals.

A number members of the '14 club traveled to Braves Field the day before the scheduled celebration to take in a game. On the opening night of a two week home stand against "western" clubs, they witnessed **Johnny Sain** gain his third victory of the season in a 3-2 defeat of Chicago. Pinch-hitter **Sam Jethroe** drove in the winning run in the seventh after walks to **Sibby Sisti** and **Buddy Kerr** and a wild throw by Cubbie's relief pitcher, **Dutch Leonard**, to third after a failed attempted sacrifice bunt by Sain. Among those in the stands were **Rabbit Maranville**, **Hank Gowdy**, **Bill James** and **George "Lefty" Tyler**. Tyler, James and the late **Dick Rudolph** were credited with 69 of the Miracle Braves' 94 victories. Tyler's brother, Fred, appeared briefly (as a catcher in 18 games) for the Braves at the tail end of the '14 season. Lefty Tyler would later die of a heart attack on September 29, 1953, 39 years from the date the Braves clinched the Miracle National League pennant.

After the game, the honored guests of the next day's events adjourned to their hotel and chatted with reporters. When queried as to the ingredient that led them on their triumphant march to the pennant, they cited team spirit. Manager **George Stallings** deft leadership also was duly noted. Lefty **Bill James** stated, "We belonged in eighth place when we were there and without Stallings we belonged there at the end of the season." Catcher **Hank Gowdy** seconded James' opinion: "George made us a great team." Even in 1951, the old-timers grumbled about baseball's changing salary structure. Staff ace and 1914 26-game winner James remarked that his largest contract was for \$2,600 or about what he figured to be a week's paycheck for Sox star **Ted Williams**. The familiar and often heard refrain of being born too early echoed among the group. Gowdy expressed his dismay at the emerging practice of signing untested talent to huge bonuses. Cleveland's recent deal with pitching prospect **Billy Joe Davidson** for a reported \$150,000 was cited as a case in point. The old backstop's judgment in this regard was on target. The Indians' investment in the southpaw failed to yield a return as Davidson never performed on a big league mound.

Festivities kicked-off on June 2 with a parade to Braves Field. The Harvard University band held the point position, followed by members of the various U.S. military services. Some 3,000 Little Leaguers, in uniform, marched just ahead of the 1914 team. The '14 vets rode in ancient autos provided by the Larz Anderson Museum.

The Diamond Jubilee celebration preceded the day's Braves-Cubs contest at the Wigwam. Fans cheered as the parade of antique automobiles circled the playing

field, passing before the visiting and home dugouts. In each of the ancient jitneys was a member of the Marine Corps, holding a sign that identified the honored guests in each of the cars. Paraded before the crowd in addition to Maranville, Gowdy, James and Tyler were outfielder **Herb Moran**, third baseman **Red Smith**, first sacker **Butch Schmidt**, catcher **Bert Whaling**, outfielder **Les Mann**, second baseman **Charlie Deal**, pitchers **Dick Crutcher** and **Paul Strand**, as well as coach **Fred Mitchell**, batboy **Willie Conner** and **George Stallings, Jr.**, substituting for his father. Instead of donning replicas of their '14 togs, the guests appeared in current Tribe tomahawk uniforms. A posed photograph of Schmidt, Whaling, Stallings, Jr., Mann, Smith, Crutcher, Tyler, Moran, Deal, Strand, Mitchell, Gowdy and James on the front step of the home dugout was snapped by a press photographer and sent to papers across the country for publication in the next day's edition.

Each of the old-timers was called out onto the field to assume his former position. Stallings, Jr. and Mitchell reported to the first and third base coaching boxes, respectively. Fan-favorite, **Rabbit Maranville**, drew the day's greatest ovation as he was introduced and jogged to his position at shortstop. The diminutive infielder had missed the parade as he had had to make a quick trip to New York and back to fulfill a commitment to a sandlot baseball group. He rushed from the airport in time to dress and just make it to the Wigwam for the introductions. To the delight of the fans, Maranville put on a fielding exhibition that included a demonstration of his famous basket catches.

The Harvard University Band was joined by Bowdoin College's a cappella choral group, the Meddiebempsters, named after the Maine town of Meddybemp (derived from a Native American term for "plenty of fish") to provide musical interludes. Immediately prior to the start of the game, a large reproduction of the National League's 75th Anniversary logo was unveiled on the Braves Field mound. On a somber note, NL President Frick asked the crowd for a moment of silent prayer in memory of **Lou Gehrig** who passed away ten years ago on this date.

Watching the day's events and the game from the stands was 91-year-old **C.A. Brown** who claimed to have been present at Boston's first National League game on May 30, 1876. Unfortunately, he and the other 15,127 in attendance witnessed the Braves go down to defeat, 7-5, despite some ninth inning last minute attempted heroics by the hometown team. Tribe starter **Warren Spahn** had one of his infrequent poor outings, lasting less than two innings, yielding four runs on six hits and two walks. **Earl Torgeson** provided some excitement, blasting an eighth inning two-run homer. Knuckleballing Cubs reliever **Dutch Leonard**, a baseball "senior citizen" at 43 years of age, squelched the ninth inning rally, retiring the side after coming in with no outs and two Braves on base.

With all the hoopla, the turnstile figures were disappointing, especially when one considers that the grand total was a bit "padded." Passes were handed out to the Little Leaguers, servicemen and Knothole Gang members, leaving just 9,984 paying guests.

Interest in the Miracle Braves remains strong to this day. Two recent events illustrate this point. **Robert Joel**, working with the Society for American Baseball Research, is heading up an effort to publish a book on

the Miracle Braves. The format will be similar to *Spahn, Sain and Teddy Ballgame: Boston's (almost) Perfect Baseball Summer of 1948*. Each member of the team will be subject to a detailed biography and other pieces related to the season and home ballpark are to be included. There's still an opportunity to participate in this project. A number of BBHA members contributed to the outstanding 1948 tribute. You can contact Robert for further information. His email address is: rjoeltjoel@aol.com.

Photographs have been uncovered of **Rabbit Maranville** and **Johnny Evers** wearing ball caps that appear to bear a swastika-like insignia. Researchers have been able to date the pictures to Opening Day, April 14, 1914 at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. While the intent behind the wearing of this unusual bit of apparel has not been found, we do know that such a symbol had been around long before its corruption as a trademark for Nazi Germany and had been used across many cultures. Some writers have speculated that superstitious ballplayers of the day looked for good luck charms to tilt the odds in their favor. Perhaps, the Miracle Braves, who had finished in fifth place the previous season, were seeking a way to increase their chances of escaping the National League's second division. This gambit, however, proved to be a failure as the Braves lost the first game of the season 8-2. If good fortune was the reason, the club's continued early season poor play might have caused the players to quickly jettison their inaugural game chapeaus and, thus, render the photographs rare and unique. In any event, the stigma now attached to the crooked cross would preclude the production of replicas of the 1914 cap and usage during "Turn Back the Clock" days at ballparks. For further information and to view the photos, go to <http://www.sportsbybrooks.com/those-1914-braves-throwback-caps-burn-them-27857> and http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/16/boston-braves-swastika-ha_n_464612.html.

Six Degrees

Some folks find it interesting and challenging attempting to link famous actors or sports personalities from different eras by using a "connecting chain" of six or less individuals. We had a contest back in 1997 using **Sibby Sisti** (see the Fall 1997 BBHA Newsletter).

Randy Johnson recently announced his retirement and is expected to be inducted into the Hall of Fame during his first year of eligibility. Some proclaim him to be baseball's greatest southpaw but we Braves fans know better. Our own **Warren Spahn** has a lock on that title in our opinion. And you can add to his mound prowess, his ability to help himself with the bat and his meritorious WWII military service.

Nonetheless, playing the Six Degrees "game," you can link Johnson to a member of the 1935 Boston Braves -- none other than the immortal **Babe Ruth**, who was also a skilled left handed pitcher at one time! Johnson was a teammate of **Bill Krueger's** on the 1995 Seattle Mariners. Krueger and **Tommy John** performed together with the Oakland Athletics in 1985. John and **Wally Post** shared the same locker room in Cleveland in 1964. With Cincinnati in 1949, Post shared a spot on the Reds' roster with **Ray Mueller**. Mueller and Babe Ruth were briefly teammates during the Bambino's ill-fated return to Boston in 1935.

You can easily craft your own Boston Braves player chains using an automated player-linking tool feature found on Baseball-Reference.com. The section in this great informational site that performs the task is at the "Oracle of Baseball" teammate chain section: <http://www.baseball-reference.com/oracle/> Have some fun and give it a try!

End of the Line

Sibby Sisti continued his valuable role as the Tribe's "Super Sub" through the club's last season in Boston. Having debuted in 1939, he was the senior Brave during that "swan song" campaign. Sibby spent time at second base (33 games), the outfield (23 games), shortstop (18 games) and third base (9 games). His flexibility on the field was somewhat offset, however, by declining batting skills. Sibby's batting average dropped 67 points to .212 from its 1951 level. He hoped to continue in a similar role in a new town when the team abruptly relocated to Milwaukee toward the end of the '53 Grapefruit League season. Unfortunately, Sibby found his playing time greatly reduced. He appeared in only 38 games and subbed at second, shortstop or third base in 23 of them.

Although Sibby made the club once again in 1954, the handwriting was clearly on the wall. His end came after nine appearances where he was used chiefly as a pinch runner. Looking to open up a roster spot for 20-year-old **Albert Spangler**, recently signed off the campus of Duke University, Sibby was informed by the front office on June 14 that he had a choice: an outright release or a new position with the club as an infield coach. In accepting the latter, he closed out a 13-year, 1,016 game, 2,999 at bat active playing career.

Sibby's last game appearance had taken place on Sunday, June 6 at County Stadium in Milwaukee during the second game of a doubleheader against the Pirates. A rookie by the name of **Henry Aaron** was called upon in the bottom of the seventh inning to pinch hit for relief pitcher **Dave Jolly** and walked. Behind 5-4, Tribe manager Grimm preferred a more experienced runner on the basepaths. Sisti replaced the future Hall of Famer and advanced to second base on a sacrifice bunt by **Bill Bruton**. **Johnny Logan** then drew a base on balls but **Eddie Mathews** flied to center to not only end the inning but also his veteran teammate's appearance in major league box scores. Sibby's ninth spot in the batting order was assumed by the replacement pitcher, **Joey Jay**. The Braves failed to make up the deficit and the game ended as a 6-4 defeat.

The following season, Sibby would try his hand at managing in the Braves farm system. At 34, he assumed the helm of the Class C Quebec Braves of the Provincial League. Sibby progressed up the ladder, leading teams at the Class B, AA and AAA levels from 1956-58. He was reassigned to the Class A Jacksonville Braves in 1959 and ended his long association with the Tribe upon the conclusion of that season. Sibby served as an instructor in the Phillies minor league chain for a while but eventually returned to Buffalo and worked at "real jobs" that paid as much, if not more, than what he could make in baseball's bushes. When Seattle's Pilots came into existence in 1969, Sibby once again took on a minor league managerial assignment. The 48-year-old directed the destiny of the Clinton Pilots of the Midwest League. In his six seasons at the helm in the minors, Sibby led his

teams to 443 victories against 398 defeats for a winning percentage of .527.

In his notorious book, *Ball Four*, author **Jim Bouton** stated that Sibby was invited to join Seattle's major league coaching staff in August as a favor in order to enhance his pension. Sisti would extend the "end" of his managerial career once more to appear in the movie, *The Natural*, as the Pittsburgh skipper whose trip to the mound failed to prevent the film's climactic home run by **Roy Hobbs** (played by **Robert Redford**) of the New York Knights.

Home Away From Home

Take Me Out To The Amusement Park

Over the years, the Braves took part in many in-season exhibition games away from their home confines. However, one has to look to a regular season match to find the most unusual site that the team ever claimed as a home field. On September 6, 1903, the Beaneaters took temporary leave of the South End Grounds to spend a day in Warwick, RI and play an official National League contest against the Philadelphia Phillies. A diamond was readied at the Rocky Point Amusement Park bordering Narragansett Bay. Alternatively known as "New England's most beautiful amusement park" and "the Coney Island of Narragansett Bay," the entertainment facility had been in operation since the late 1840s. With both ball clubs buried in the second division as the season was drawing to a close, the novelty of a game in this setting assured Beaneaters' management of a larger crowd than would have been the case at their usual address.

Expectations were met as 6,500 fans gathered to participate in the day's festivities. Beaneaters' future Hall of Famer **Vic Willis** engaged in a pitcher's battle with the Phil's **Jack McFetridge**. A hard fought 3-2 victory was recorded by the "home" team thanks to the hitting of first baseman **Duff Cooley** and fielding exploits of left fielder **Doc Carney** and center fielder **Tom McCreery**. The Beaneaters and Phillies returned to Boston to conclude their series with doubleheaders over the next two days.

Friendly Fenway?

Other than the temporary relocation to the Congress Street Grounds in 1894 to await the reconstruction of the South End Grounds, which had been destroyed in a conflagration, the Braves' only other in-season "field trips" involved short treks to Fenway Park.

It became apparent to Braves owner **James E. Gaffney** that the rebuilt wooden South End Grounds were no longer adequate. The field had been reconstructed on a smaller footprint, reflecting the fact that the original had been seriously underinsured at the time of its incineration. While he made plans to build a modern reinforced concrete ballpark for his team, Gaffney sought to borrow his American League neighbor's home to supplement attendance. The bitterness surrounding initial warfare between the Senior and Junior Circuits had abated enough to allow the respective owners to negotiate leasing arrangements.

The first regular season National League games at Fenway Park took place on April 19, 1913 when the Braves and Giants battled in a separate admission,

morning and afternoon doubleheader. Over 22,000 took in the contests (6,500 in the a.m.; 16,700 in the p.m.) and saw the home team drop both games. Gaffney rented Fenway once more in 1913, for a morning and afternoon Memorial Day doubleheader while the Sox were on the road in the Nation's Capital. Again, total attendance exceeded 22,000. The Braves dropped the morning session but bounced back in the afternoon to record the first Senior Circuit victory at Fenway, 5-2 over Brooklyn.

Red Sox owner **Joseph J. Lannin** opened Fenway's gates to the Braves again in 1914. With pennant-drive momentum building, the Tribe abandoned the South End Grounds and spent the last months of the season at the home of the Crimson Hose. Although faced with the prospect of a competitor outshining his Red Sox in their own domain, Lannin set aside any potential embarrassment in the face of rental revenues that greatly enhanced the bottom line. Such a windfall of funds might even have helped the Sox owner offset the costs incurred in purchasing **Babe Ruth** and **Ernie Shore** from **Jack Dunn's** Baltimore Orioles in July. The Miracle Braves acclimated well to the Kenmore Square location, winning 23 games there from August 1 to the home finale on September 29. Fenway Park remained the Braves' preferred site for the World Series and the Tribe wrapped up its sweep of the Philadelphia Athletics with victories in Games 3 and 4 in the Bosox's domicile.

The Braves chose to remain the tenants of the Red Sox in 1915 until their new home at the former Allston Golf Course was ready. They opened the season at Fenway Park on April 14 and remained through July 26. In any event, a return to the South End Grounds would have been difficult as its infield sod was transplanted to the construction site off of Commonwealth Avenue. The Tribe left on a lengthy road trip at the end of July and, upon their return to Boston, played their first official game at Braves Field on August 18. That fall, it was the Braves' turn to accommodate the Red Sox, as the American League franchise sought the advantage of the Wigwam's larger capacity to play its World Series contests against the National League champion Phillies. The Bosox found the field's dimensions to their liking, winning both games in their successful quest for the World Championship. The "home" games drew over 40,000 patrons with Game 3 setting a new Fall Classic record as 42,300 individuals attended.

During the depths of the Great Depression, Braves owner, Judge **Emil Fuchs**, sought out ways to increase revenues to stay afloat. He once proposed to conduct dog racing at Braves Field and shift conflicting games to Fenway Park. Both **Tom Yawkey** and Commissioner Landis turned thumbs down on the idea.

The Braves did borrow Fenway Park one more time. To club management's chagrin, the newly painted grandstand seats at the Wigwam hadn't sufficiently dried when the 1946 season opened.irate patrons paraded to the front office seeking redress for the green paint stains on their clothing. A subsequent newspaper apology and offer to compensate for any damage drew claims from as far away as California, Florida and Nebraska. Not wanting a recurrence, the Braves shifted their Sunday, April 28 doubleheader against Philadelphia to Fenway Park while the paint cured.

Were other attempts made by the Braves to rent Yawkey's domain? According to a **Clif Keane** interview

of **John Quinn** in the *Boston Globe* that took place after the announced move to Milwaukee, several more requests were made, only to be rejected by the Bosox owner. These feelers involved the possibility of a full sharing of the facility, rather than periodic rentals. Following the Fuchs' regime, the Judge's successor, **Bob Quinn**, sought out such a potential relationship in the late '30s. His son, John, as the Braves' general manager, made a similar query during the 1947 season and **Lou Perini** followed that up with a like conversation with Yawkey the following season. **John Quinn** told Keane of a meeting in Yawkey's office that remained etched into his mind. Yawkey explained his opposition to sharing Fenway Park with the Braves as follows: "I'm a funny person. What's mine is mine and I don't let anybody else have any part of it." He then gave Quinn a personal example where he had denied his sister's request to build a small home on the grounds of his massive South Carolina plantation even though the residence would have been some eight miles distant from Yawkey's home and Yawkey was confident that her presence would not have bothered him. "But it was just that strange way I have of wanting everything I have for myself. So I said she couldn't do it." Yawkey concluded, "I have to say the same thing to you. I think you'll understand."

When the shocking news of the intended franchise shift to Milwaukee was announced at a press conference in mid-March of 1953, shared use of Fenway Park once again received publicity. The headline above *Boston Post* sportswriter **Gerry Hern's** column that reacted to the news read "Why Did Perini Refuse Fenway?" Hern's earlier claim to fame was the penning in 1948 of that famous rhyme concerning Spahn and Sain followed by rain. He reported that **Tom Yawkey** had made a "kind" offer "late as it was" to **Lou Perini** to play the Braves' home games at his park in 1953. Perini was said to have responded, "I asked you four years ago and you turned me down and now it's too late." Hern effusively portrayed Yawkey as being "most sportsmanlike" in his offer, made for the benefit of the sports fans of New England and contrary to his best interests (Boston's loss of the Braves would give the Sox owner a regional baseball monopoly). However, the sincerity and timing of the supposed proposition is subject to question given the past rebuffs and Yawkey's candid remarks to **John Quinn**.

Was Fenway Park friendly to the Braves? Based on their record there, the question has to be answered strongly in the affirmative. According to the Retrosheet database (www.retrosheet.org), in 89 games (including post-season play), the Braves were victorious 59 times against 27 defeats and 3 ties, recording a winning percentage of .663. These numbers were greatly influenced, however, by the "miraculous" second-half of the season pennant drive of the '14 club that kicked into high gear during the Braves' time at Fenway Park.

The Welcoming Wigwam?

The Crimson Hose once again borrowed Braves Field for three home games of the 1916 World Series. In order to acclimate to these alien surroundings, the Red Sox played a season-ending doubleheader on October 3 against the Athletics in the "House that Gaffney Built." In Game 2 of the Fall Classic, **Babe Ruth** took to the Braves Field mound and hurled a 14-inning, 2-1 complete game victory over the Brooklyn Robins for the Sox. Boston clinched the World Championship on October 12 before 43,620 at the Wigwam, defeating

Wilbert Robinson's men in the fifth game of the Series, 4-1. The '16 Series finale marked the last time that either Boston club borrowed a neighboring field for post-season play. Interestingly, neither the Braves nor the Red Sox ever lost a home World Series game while using the other's ballpark.

Like the Braves, the Bosox sought the loan of their in-town competitor's playing field to conduct regular season business. Finding themselves disqualified by Sunday "Blue Laws" from ball playing due to Fenway Park's proximity to a house of worship, Red Sox management shifted their Sabbath contests to Braves Field, whose location did not activate the prohibition. The vast majority of their visits to the Wigwam were for this reason. From May 28, 1929 to May 29, 1932, fans were usually able to plan a Sunday outing to Braves Field and take in a National or American League ballgame depending upon which team was scheduled to be at home. Once the law was changed, the Red Sox saw no further need to lease Braves Field and their only future appearances at that site were for "City Series" exhibition games.

One of the most historic moments at Braves Field transpired on Sunday, September 28, 1930 during a Sox rental when the Red Sox and Yankees closed out the season. **Babe Ruth** took to the mound for the last time in Boston. It had been a decade since the Bambino had assumed his original position on the diamond. Before some 12,000 fans, he hurled a complete game and defeated his "cursed" former team, 9-3. Despite the significant lapse of time between starts, Ruth did not yield an earned run in seven innings. For six innings, he only allowed four scratch hits and no one had reached second base. Only when his arm grew tired in the eighth did the Red Sox mount any kind of offense. Ruth wasn't alone in making this day a memorable one at the Wigwam. When **Lou Gehrig** heard that the Babe was going to play out of his normal position, he insisted that he be inserted into the line-up in left field. In addition, Gehrig had three base hits in this Braves Field appearance and completed his fifth consecutive season of perfect attendance.

Another similarity links Boston's American and National League franchises. The Red Sox too were subject to rumors of a possible permanent relocation from their home confines to a tenancy at the base of their intracity rival. In *Red Sox Century*, authors **Glenn Stout** and **Richard Johnson** reported that such an idea had occurred to Red Sox ownership on at least two occasions. When the infamous **Harry Frazee** acquired the club and Fenway Park, speculation arose that he might raze the ballpark and move the Red Sox to Braves Field to take advantage of rising property values in the Fens area. Imagine how much more of a pariah Frazee would have become if he had sold both **Babe Ruth** and Fenway Park! During the late 1920's, toward the end of the ownership of the Bosox by a consortium led by **Bob Quinn** (the same **Bob Quinn** who later guided the Braves), the thought of selling the land beneath Fenway Park to stay economically afloat during the Great Depression received serious consideration. The ballpark's condition had deteriorated because of ownership's inability to perform the necessary upkeep. Insurance proceeds from a fire at the park were diverted to meet payroll expenses such that repairs were kept to a bare minimum. Relocating to Braves Field was contemplated as an option but the Braves were less than enthusiastic as both they and Quinn possessed serious concerns about

whether rental payments would be met. When wealthy **Tom Yawkey** took over, this option was permanently squelched.

Was Braves Field as welcoming to the Red Sox as Fenway Park had been to the Braves? Outside of World Series play, the answer is a resounding "no." Again using Retrosheet data, we observe that the Red Sox played 65 regular and postseason games at the Wigwam. They were able to win only 27 of those contests against 36 defeats and 2 ties. Their winning percentage was a lowly .415.

Sittin' In The Jury Box

Member **Jack Nussan Porter** informed us that Northeast Historic Film in Bucksport, ME may have an item of interest to fellow BBHAers. The tax-exempt, nonprofit organization is dedicated to the preservation of film and video related to New England. Jack mentioned that they offer to their members a promotional DVD entitled "Something Else, Volume II." The compilation includes copy of a rare, color 16-minute film of the Army-Navy All Star Game played against the Braves at Braves Field in the summer of 1943. The military service team was managed by **Babe Ruth** and included **Ted Williams** and **Joe DiMaggio** on its roster. The servicemen defeated the Tribe 9-8. Jack noted that the film showed beautiful shots of the Wigwam, especially of the right field area and the Jury Box. Prominently on display were ads for Calvert Liquor, Gem Blades, Philip Morris cigarettes, Burma Shave, Dubbleware and Old Overholt. Reflecting the times, a "Buy War Bonds" message was also on the outfield wall. In addition, the Army representatives performed close order drills and displayed artillery pieces. The Navy demonstrated how sailors were transported from one ship to another on the high seas. The event was filmed by **H.L. Utley** who photographed sporting events throughout the area. For further information, visit the historical group's website at <http://www.oldfilm.org/> or inquire at: P.O. Box 900, Bucksport, ME 04416 (tel: 207-469-7875).

The Baseball In Wartime Blog (<http://baseballinwartime.com/>), operated by **Gary Bedingfield** is a "must visit" website for those seeking an excellent coverage on all facets of this topic. Of special interest to BBHA members is a section that lists every Boston Braves ballplayer that responded to the call to arms during WWII along with a description of that individual's military service. Bedingfield's site also has a section that contains detailed biographies of Tribe members/veterans.

In the center of Stamford, CT is a well-used park named after a former member of the Boston Braves. Scalzi Park is used for Little League baseball and various pick-up games of softball, tennis and basketball. Cubeta Stadium, a baseball field, is contained within its confines. **Johnny Scalzi** was a famed Stamford athlete and community volunteer. His career in professional baseball was brief -- 27 games at second base for the Albany Senators and two games with the Boston Braves as a pinch-hitter, both happening in 1931. Also in '31, the Georgetown University pigskin star (and a future member of its Athletic Hall of Fame) played in seven NFL games for the Brooklyn Dodgers and threw a touchdown pass.

Joe Wilhoit, an outfielder with the 1916-17 Boston Braves was inducted into DePaul University's Athletic

Hall of Fame on January 30 for this achievements as a three-sport collegiate athlete (baseball, football and track). His big league career was relatively short, parts of four seasons and 283 games, including appearances in two World Series games for **John McGraw's** 1917 New York Giants. He finished up in the majors with back in Boston with the Red Sox for six games in 1919 during **Babe Ruth's** last season in the Hub. Wilhoit's claim to fame resides in his record-setting hit streak while with the Western League Wichita Wolves in 1919. That streak remains organized baseball's longest. From June 14 to August 19, through 69 games, Wilhoit hit safely in every contest for 9½ weeks. The left-handed batter went 153 for 297, resulting in a .515 batting average. In 50 of the games, Wilhoit recorded multiple hits. **Joe DiMaggio's** 61-game streak with the PCL San Francisco Seals in 1933 remains second best. His grand-nephew, **David Wilhoit**, maintains a commemorative website: <http://www.joewilhoit.com/>

Randy St. Claire, the son of catcher **Ebba St. Claire** (Boston Braves 1951-52), has returned to the majors as the pitching coach for the Florida Marlins. He previously had held that position with the Montreal Expos/Washington Nationals. St. Claire pitched for the Expos, Reds, Twins, Braves and Blue Jays over the course of nine seasons.

Chris Townsend is the new in-studio host of the Oakland Athletics' one-hour post-game radio show. A nationally syndicated radio broadcaster, Townsend is the grandson of **Bob "Mr. Team" Elliott** (Boston Braves 1947-51), the 1947 National League MVP.

George E. Outland, a Yale professor and U.S. Congressman, was an amateur photographer during the 1920's. A native Californian, he began his hobby by arriving early at various Pacific Coast League ballparks where he was able to access the field and take players' pictures. As he pursued his studies, Outland spent 1928-33 in Boston and continued his hobby at Braves Field and Fenway Park. His son John, a professor emeritus of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Richmond, has authored a book that honors his father's efforts. *Baseball Visions of the Roaring Twenties: A Fan's Photographs of more than 400 players and ballparks of the era* is the result and has been published by McFarland & Company. John informed me that 13 members of the 1929 Braves are pictured in the book (**Johnny Evers, George Sisler, Freddie Maguire, Lester Bell, George Harper, Earl Clark, Jimmy Welsh, Al Spohrer, Hank Gowdy, Ed Brandt, Ben Cantwell, Bob Smith** and **Dixie Leverett**) as are three pictures of Braves Field. Also included is a photo of his dad with outfielder **Wes Schulmerich** taken outside the park. John remarked that his father was more of Braves than a Red Sox fan during his time in the Hub.

A Few Last Words

I would like to dedicate this issue of the newsletter in memory of my mother, who recently passed away. Mom became a baseball fan late in her life and always encouraged and supported my BBHA efforts. She would invariably answer the telephone when **George Altison** called me to discuss various BBHA matters. I had to wait until the two had finished a lengthy discussion on current baseball topics before the phone was eventually turned over to me. George's passing saddened her greatly. Despite being very ill, mom insisted on helping get out the last newsletter and took

on the burdensome task of working with me to put address labels and stamps on 600+ newsletters. For many of us, we're able to pursue our interest in the Boston Braves and other baseball hobbies thanks to the support (and/or tolerance) of our family members. Let's give a tip of the ball cap to these unsung members of the BBHA "auxiliary."

Our reorganization efforts have caused our newsletter schedule to fall a bit behind. Because of this, we're deferring our annual dues solicitation until the next issue. Thank you for your kind and continued support.

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