
❖ The Holy Cow ❖

May 2003

Spring Regional Recap

The annual Spring meeting of the Halsey Hall Chapter of SABR took place on Saturday May 10th at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. At least 37 members and guests attended the meeting (30 signed the sign up sheet, but I recall noticing at least seven other people). The leadoff presenter at the meeting was chapter guest (but fellow SABRite) **Tim Wolter** who spoke on baseball in POW camps in World War II. Tim, an Augsburg grad, like several others in the audience, talked mostly about the games played in German camps and how prisoners were organized by nationality and rank. The Red Cross was able to send in baseball equipment and soon teams and leagues were established in many of the camps. Teams took such names as the Luft Waffles, Old Gold and Lucky Strikes, as well as major and minor league team names. While field conditions often featured sandy infields and short outfield dimensions full of obstacles the teams had uniforms and the games had full umpire crews and received full coverage in camp newspapers. Tim had some wonderful slides and photographs to share as well as a full account of the Bert Shepard story (Pow with amputee leg who pitched briefly in major leagues after returning to states in 1945). Tim mentioned conditions in the Pacific theatre were much worse, but Japanese guards sometimes challenged Pows to games, with the Pows apprehensive about whether it was wise to play their "A" game or not. For those interested, Tim has written a book about POW baseball in World War II, that is still available through most bookstores.

The next presentation was by new member **Dan Carey** who spoke about his attempts to find an objective way to judge Hall of Fame pitchers (or those he thinks should be inducted). Dan has written a book on this topic which he has submitted to McFarland Publishers, and once was a former New York Met farmhand, signed out of Hastings High School. Dan talked mostly about Bert Blyleven's qualifications for the Hall of Fame and how his career should be measured and compared to other Hall of Fame members. He went through several steps of qualifications in his handout and talked about the correlation of his method with that of Bill James. The editor of this newsletter won a Blyleven signed baseball at the Twins game Saturday night, so he wishes Blyleven much HOF luck

luck and thus increasing the ball's value. <:)

The next presentation was by **Dan Levitt**, who spoke about the construction of the 1917-1919 White Sox by Charles Comiskey. Dan, along with fellow SABRite Mark Armour, has recently had a book entitled "Paths to Glory: How Great Baseball Teams Got That Way," published by Brassey's. A complete account of the 1917-1919 White Sox is found in this book, and Dan's talk basically was a brief synopsis of that chapter. His basic premise was that Comiskey was able to take advantage of other owner's financial distress and pick up quality players at the peak of their careers, such as Joe Jackson and Eddie Collins. Other players such as Ray Schalk, Red Faber, Buck Weaver and Happy Felsch were picked up from minor league teams. Finding a short-stop, firstbaseman and a third-baseman (Braggio Roth being horrible defensively and Weaver being moved to third from short) were major headaches. Despite these weaknesses, these Sox teams have been rated by some as some of the best of all time.

Rex Hamann gave the final presentation before lunch on deadball hurler Roy Patterson. Patterson had an interesting career, playing in Duluth, Minneapolis, Chicago White Sox (pitched in first AL game), St. Paul, Winnipeg, Fargo. Rex had some display boards with excellent photographs and newspaper clippings to supplement his presentation. Patterson, settled in the area (St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin) ironically died on April 14, 1953, the very date the Milwaukee Braves opened their first N.L. season in Wisconsin.

After lunch and a business meeting, **Stew Thornley** gave a talk entitled "Marvin Miller, Bowie Kuhn, and the Demise of the Reserve Clause." Stimulated by recent readings in the chapter book club and a recent interviews with Miller and Kuhn, Stew gave an interesting talk on the how the owners could have negotiated a different system, but decided to go with arbiter Seitz decision (despite warnings that the decision would go against them) and try to get overturned in court. Stew's handout had an excellent bibliography for those who might be interested in the topic.

The final presentation was given by **Lee Temanson**, who talked about his season of play in the Western Star League, a town ball league of small towns in Ottertail County in the summer of 1956. Lee described the league as "bush league baseball big time," with games on Sunday afternoons and practices on Tuesday and Thursday

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nights. Wednesday nights were reserved for church. Parks featured dirt infields, snow fences as outfield walls, wooden bleachers with many people sitting in cars along the foul lines. A box was passed around for contributions rather than one place for an admission charge. Despite being true amateur baseball with no ringers or college players, the league used two umpires in games, had good attendance (nothing else to do) and had good local newspaper coverage. Lee contends television and the coming of the Twins killed off this type of baseball, though Jim Karn pointed out Minnesota still has 300 local town teams and probably has the strongest amateur baseball leagues in the country. The meeting ended with a trivia quiz conducted by Howard Luloff and a tour of MHS museum storage areas by Dan Cagley. In the business meeting, four new board members were elected. They include Rex Hamann, Chuck Blomquist, Jim Wyman and Tom Swift.

Northwoods League: June 7th at Rochester at 7:00 p.m is a possibility with a trip to Moonlight Graham's grave featured. A game in August also a possibility. Contact Stew Thornley or Howard Luloff.

Electronic Newsletter Option:

Starting in July members will have the option of receiving this newsletter in an electronic format only. In a motion passed at the recent chapter regional meeting, members receiving an electronic copy will pay a \$ 6.00 annual subscription fee while those wishing to continue to receive a paper copy will pay the current \$ 12.00 yearly subscription fee. It is hoped enough members will opt for the electronic version, thus saving the chapter substantial sums in printing and postage costs. Let the editor know your choice when sending in your 2003-2004 subscription dues which will gladly be received at anytime.

Calendar:

June 7 - Chapter board meeting, 9 a.m., Barnes and Noble coffee shop, Galleria Edina (south of Southdale).....

June 7 - Chapter book club at 10 a.m., same place as above event.

July 19 - Chapter breakfast at 9 a.m., Bakers Square, 66th and Xerxes in Richfield.

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Halsey Hall Chapter - SABR
Rich Arpi, Editor.
2445 Londin Lane East, # 410
Maplewood, Minnesota 55119-5593

“ Carl Pohlad is so rich he bought his dog a boy.” —former Twins manager Billy Gardner
