

By S. (Mule) Thornley

A Brief History of the Chapter The Unorganized Years

First in a series

Who is the Bob Davids of local SABR activity? That distinction belongs to Scott Hall, who was responsible for organizing the first regional SABR meeting in Minnesota, held Saturday, August 15, 1981. Operating from Grand Rapids, Minnesota, well north of the Twin Cities, Scott recruited two members from closer to town: Bob Tholkes and S. Thornley. Bob was responsible for the facilities and quickly secured the Bloomington Marriott, just north of the site that was still a ballpark and not yet an oversized shopping center. I was a tad more dilatory in my duties in lining up featured guests for the event.

As we began planning efforts, a players' strike was looming, making it uncertain whether there would even be a Twins' game to attend as part of our get-together. The Twins did make it clear that the scheduled old-timers' game would take place regardless of other circumstances, meaning at least that some notable ex-Twins would be in town at the time. Armed with an expense account for long-distance phone calls, I began calling some of my boyhood heroes to see if they would speak at our meeting. I had some great conversations, one in particular with Earl Battey, but wasn't getting any commitments. I also called former players in the Twin Cities area with the most encouraging response coming from Ossie Bluege, a longtime member of the Griffith organization as a player, coach, manager, scout, and comptroller. "Call me in August," he told me, "if I'm still alive." Fortunately, Ossie was still breathing two months later and agreed to attend our meeting, where he was a real hit. We ended up with another guest because the Seattle Mariners (with the strike settled by this time) were staying at the Marriott. Scott Hall spotted pitching coach Wes Stock in the lobby and persuaded him to stop by and join Ossie on the docket.

In 1982, Bob Tholkes was left more or less to himself in planning the meeting; he enlisted the assistance of Alden Mead in lining up the Chemistry Hall at the University of Minnesota for the meeting, which featured former Minneapolis Millers' Don Wheeler and Frank Trechock as our guests. No local meeting was held the following year since the national SABR convention was in nearby Milwaukee. Local SABR members were encouraged to attend that event and many did. The 1984 regional meeting was organized by the Tholkes, Mead, Thornley troika and

Cow Chips

John Gregory saw the San Jose Giants, whose lineup featured **Bobby Bonds, Jr.** . . . **Howard Luloff** did the play-by-play announcing for the 12-and-under national AAU tournament. . . . **Paul Rittenhouse** is officiating high-school football. . . . **Rich Arpi** and **Joe O'Connell** saw three Twins' games at Milwaukee and three Braves-Cubs games at Wrigley Field over Labor Day weekend. . . . **Brenda Himrich** organized a boat ride on the St. Croix River for the local chapter of the American Industrial Hygiene Society.

New Address

At least for the time being, here's where you can reach John "Stretch" Gregory:
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held in June at the Normandy Inn. The turnout was once again on the light side, prompting the three somewhat wise men to ponder an earlier date for the event, hoping this might avoid conflicts with members' summer vacations. The ploy seemed to work as a larger-than-ever-before group turned out for the 1985 meeting in early May. The masses inspired one member of the planning committee to seize the lectern during lunch to determine if there was interest in formally organizing ourselves into a local chapter of SABR. With their mouths full of rubber chicken, no one could object and the plan went forward. The first issue dealt with what to call ourselves. We almost decided on the hum-drum appellation of "Upper Midwest Chapter of SABR" when John DiMeglio, between mouthfuls of steamed carrots, growled, "Hell, let's name it after Halsey." Thus, the Halsey Hall Chapter of SABR was born and has existed ever since. Seven directors were elected—Thornley, Tholkes, Mead, DiMeglio, Bob Evans, Andy Lurth, and Fred Souba. We weren't sure what we were doing but began the tradition (which continues to this day) of holding a board meeting on a Sunday every other month.

The Chapter progressed rapidly: a monthly newsletter, *The Holy Cow!*, was born because of the initiative of Gary Clendennen (with Ken Ottoson and Howard Thornley providing artwork which can still be seen on the newsletter); we ended up with a set of by-laws by using the by-laws of Delta Upsilon Fraternity as a template (essentially copying the fraternity document and substituting "Chapter Meeting" in place of "kegger"); and we began organizing group activities in addition to the regional Chapter Meetings (the first being an excursion to Wisconsin to meet with Hall-of-Famer Burleigh Grimes).

IT MATTERS NOT WHETHER YOU WIN OR LOSE.



SINCE EVERYBODY GETS INTO THE PLAYOFFS ANYWAY.

