

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



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Research Committee Newsletter

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Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke

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I hope you all had a chance to check out the fantastic Black Sox special issue of *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, edited by Bill Lamb and published by McFarland & Co. this past spring.

Judging by the response at this summer's SABR 42 convention in Minneapolis — Gary Mitchem at McFarland told me they sold out of their journals by the third day of the convention! — it was a big hit among this crowd. It's well-deserved.

I think we're going to find, in time, that Bob Hoie's article on the White Sox's payroll and player salaries will completely change the way we interpret the Black Sox Scandal in the future.

Black Sox writers have been chipping away in recent years at the idea that the Chicago players were underpaid and ill-treated by owner Charles Comiskey, but Hoie's article blows up that myth once and for all. Comiskey

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Left-hander Dickey Kerr is remembered for being one of the "Clean Sox", winning two games during the tainted 1919 World Series. But before the scandal was ever revealed, he played an important role as Kid Gleason's secret weapon out of the bullpen. The Chicago White Sox of 1919-20 almost never blew a late lead, and Kerr was a key reason why. Read more about the White Sox's historic late-innings success on page 6. (Photo: Chicago Daily News negatives collection, SDN-062584, courtesy of Chicago History Museum.)

Bill Burns: Running for the border

By Jacob Pomrenke

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Here lies Sleepy Bill Burns.

The final resting place of William Thomas Burns — former major league pitcher and star witness in the Black Sox trial — is Garden 815, Section 5, Lot 3038, Space 6 at Holy Cross Cemetery in San Diego, California.

His is the only unmarked grave in the row, at the front of the cemetery next to the office. Burns was buried here on June 12, 1953, six days after his death at the age of 73.

Holy Cross is an old Catholic cemetery, dedicated in 1919, on a hilltop overlooking the U.S.-Mexico border — the same border Burns once famously crossed in an effort to elude American

League officials who wanted to bring him back to Chicago for the Black Sox trial. On a clear day, you can see the large radio towers that dominate the landscape outside Tijuana, Mexico.

Burns, a native Texan, spent much of his adult life near the border, so it's only fitting that he ended up buried near it. But why here, in San Diego? His Irish Catholic background made him eligible for burial at Holy Cross, but he had no family nearby. The informant on his California death certificate was his younger brother, Charles, an oil refinery worker who lived in Contra Costa County, 500 miles to the north. The death certificate indicated that Bill Burns spent the final six months of his life at the Trammel Rest Home in

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► BURNS

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Ramona, a sleepy mountain town in unincorporated San Diego County. Ramona is some 40 miles away from Holy Cross, and there is no indication Burns ever lived in San Diego proper.

Tracing back through Burns' life offers few answers.

Burns was born in San Saba, the "Pecan Capital of the World," in the Hill Country of Texas. He was one of 13 children, known as Will (or Willie) Burns growing up. After attending high school in San Saba and working on the family ranch for a few years, a career in professional baseball beckoned in 1906, when at age 26 he joined the Los Angeles Angels of the Pacific Coast League. He pitched his way up to the major leagues by 1908, and spent five seasons with the Senators, White Sox, Reds, Phillies and Tigers, finishing with a 30-52 record. He bounced around the minor leagues for a few years, then "took up the mining business" in New Mexico during the war. By most accounts, he did well for himself, and he claimed to own 12,000 acres of land in Texas.

His involvement in the Black Sox Scandal came about after a meeting in September 1919 with Chick Gandil and Eddie Cicotte in New York. Burns, with his partner and friend Billy Maharg, helped coordinate the World Series fix and served as a liaison between the White Sox players and a group of gamblers led by Abe Attell. When Attell refused to pay off the players after Chicago lost the first two games of the World Series, they double-crossed Burns and Maharg by winning Game 3 unexpectedly.

Burns turned the tables a year and a half later, when he became the prosecution's star witness in the Black Sox trial. He was persuaded to testify by American League president Ban Johnson, who enlisted Maharg to lead an extensive manhunt in the spring of 1921 to locate Burns. Maharg spent two weeks near the Mexican border searching for Burns, encountering him at a fishing camp on Devil's River near Del Rio, Texas. Burns was whisked to Chicago and regaled the courtroom with his sensational story of the World Series fix.

After the trial, Burns went back to his ranch in San Saba. His wife, a woman from the suburbs of Cincinnati named Laura (maiden name unknown), had already moved back to Ohio and the two divorced soon after. Not much is known of Burns' life thereafter. He likely stayed in San Saba until about 1935, when the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl drought may have forced him to leave Texas and head west like millions of other farmers during that era.



A purple flower marks the unmarked grave of Sleepy Bill Burns at Holy Cross Cemetery in San Diego, California.

(Photo: Jacob Pomrenke.)

In 1936, Burns is listed in the California voter registration rolls as a resident of Calexico, a town in Imperial County about halfway between San Diego and Yuma that sits right on the Mexican border. His occupation was "laborer" and he was still single. He stayed in Calexico for about a decade, renting a room on 5th Street for \$8 a month and later working on a construction crew for the highway department. It was unsteady work and he didn't make much money (he claimed an income of \$800 in 1939.)

In the winter of 1952-53, he moved to the Trammel Rest Home on Telford Lane in Ramona, California, where he died on June 6. According to cemetery records, a funeral Mass was held at St. Mary's Church in El Cajon. It's unknown how many friends showed up. In a letter to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1961, Charles Burns said the family had lost touch of his brother Bill for about two decades before his death. His grave was unmarked, and it remains so today.

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The curious case of Billy Maharg (not Peaches Graham)

By Bill Lamb

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On September 27, 1920, suspicions about the integrity of the previous year's World Series between the Chicago White Sox and Cincinnati Reds were given substance by a self-admitted fix insider named Billy Maharg. In an interview first published in the *Philadelphia North American* and syndicated nationwide immediately thereafter, Maharg maintained that a number of Chicago players had agreed to lose the Series in exchange for a \$100,000 payoff from gamblers. Within days thereafter, Sox stars Eddie Cicotte, Joe Jackson, Lefty Williams, and Happy Felsch each admitted accepting cash payments for their agreement to participate in the fix. Those players and others allegedly involved in the plot were subsequently indicted by a Cook County grand jury and brought to trial in Chicago in July 1921, the event becoming the epicenter of the Black Sox scandal.

Although Maharg was a well known sports figure in his native Philadelphia – he had been a lightweight boxer active in local fight clubs, a sandlot ballplayer who actually appeared in two major league games, and an assistant team trainer/lackey for the Phillies – Maharg was largely unknown in Chicago. To undermine the credibility of this stranger to local jurors, Black Sox defense lawyers began circulating the rumor that Maharg was actually a journeyman big leagues catcher named Peaches Graham, concealing his true identity for reasons unknown, but presumably sinister. The claim was ludicrous, readily dispatched at trial where Maharg was generally deemed a credible and effective prosecution witness. Notwithstanding that, the accused players were acquitted on August 2, 1921, only to find themselves permanently banished from Organized Baseball via edict of Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis issued the very next day. A minor ingredient of more recent accounts of the Black Sox scandal is a curious change in the name of the fix informant from Philadelphia. Although he had lived his 72-year life entirely as Billy Maharg, a number of modern baseball references, including authoritative ones like Baseball-Reference, now state that Maharg's last name was actually Graham, M-A-H-A-R-G spelled backwards. No evidence is ever offered in support of this assertion because there is none. Indeed, despite its acceptance and repetition by many, the notion that Billy Maharg was actually named Graham is utterly specious, a peculiar but persistent canard refuted by both genealogical inquiry and perusal of historical sports pages.

Billy Maharg was born William Joseph Maharg in



Billy Maharg is pictured during the Black Sox trial in 1921. (Photo: Chicago Daily News negatives collection, DN-0073359, courtesy of Chicago History Museum.)

Philadelphia on March 19, 1881, the second of three children born to George Alexander Maharg and his Irish immigrant wife, the former Catherine Carney. Although it has other origins, *Maharg* is a relatively common Scottish and Scotch-Irish surname, one of several corruptions of the old Gaelic clan name *MacGiolla Chairge* (meaning descendant or follower of Chairge, a venerable, if obscure, Celtic saint). In Billy's case, the Maharg name was brought to America by his great-grandfather, an immigrant from Ireland who settled in Pennsylvania early in the 19th century. Billy was named for his grandfather, William J. Maharg, a shoemaker-turned-coal miner born in western Pennsylvania in June 1829. Billy's father George Maharg was the oldest of grandfather Maharg's five children. Born in rural Pennsylvania in 1857, George later relocated to Philadelphia where he first found work as a common laborer. He and wife Kate were married in 1879, an event followed by the birth of daughter Rebecca Maharg later in the same year. Billy was born two years thereafter, while the belated arrival of younger brother George Alexander Maharg, Jr., in April 1896 made the family complete.

Little is known of Billy Maharg's early life, but he was raised Roman Catholic and his education was sufficient to permit him to read and write adequately, while acquiring a fine hand for penmanship. The 1900 U.S. Census lists 19-year-old Billy as living at home with his parents, as well as siblings Rebecca and George, Jr., and working as a farm hand, presumably for his father, by now a local farmer. But Billy Maharg was more a creature of the Philadelphia streets. Small (5'4 1/2", 135 lb.) but athletic, he played

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► MAHARG

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baseball on north Philadelphia sandlots but first came to public attention in the ring. Maharg began his professional boxing career on January 12, 1900, losing a six-round newspaper decision to Harry Berger at the Pelican A.C., a Philadelphia fight club. Despite that inauspicious beginning, Maharg was no palooka. He was a durable, if soft-punching lightweight (only two KOs), good enough to be deemed a prospect by no less an authority than George Siler, the country's foremost boxing referee. In a November 1902 news column, Siler declared that "Philadelphia has a coming youngster named Bill Maharg, who has proven his superiority over the best 132 pounders in his section of the country." Ultimately, Maharg proved unable to fulfill his promise, never rising much above being a Philadelphia club fighter. But his seven-year boxing career contains one impressive highlight: on April 11, 1906, Maharg won a "decisive" official ten-round decision over Freddie Welsh, a future lightweight world champion and a member of various boxing halls of fame. Following a newspaper decision loss to Young Loughery on January 3, 1907, Billy Maharg hung up the gloves, having posted a respectable 45-11 (with 18 draws/no-decisions) record, and never having been knocked out in 74 total bouts.

Maharg entered the major league baseball record book on May 18, 1912, when he donned a Detroit Tigers uniform for a game against the Philadelphia A's. The 31-year-old Maharg was one of the replacement nine put on the field by Detroit management after Tigers regulars walked off the field in support of a suspended Ty Cobb. Stationed at third base, Billy handled two chances competently before a bad-hop grounder caught him in the face and put him out of the game. Maharg went 0-for-1 at the plate. When Billy left the contest, the score was a respectable 6-2 in the fifth inning. Perhaps not entirely coincidentally, the A's then began bunting on Maharg's inexperienced replacement at third, with predictable results. Other calamities then befell the pseudo-Tigers. The final score: Philadelphia 24, Detroit 2.

In time, Billy left his father's employ on the farm, and worked odd jobs. He also remained close to the Philadelphia sports scene, with access to the Phillies' locker room facilitated by friendship with staff ace Grover Alexander. Alex and Maharg boarded at the same rooming house. An agreeable man willing to make himself useful, the Phillies eventually took Maharg on, officially as an assistant trainer (his title in a 1916 Philadelphia Phillies team photo caption) but more practically as a driver/gofer for team notables. In the season-ender of the 1916 campaign against the Boston

Braves, a contest that the *New York Times* would label "a travesty on the national game," Phillies manager Pat Moran cleared the bench, even sending assistant trainer Maharg into action. Sent up as a pinch-hitter in the bottom of the eighth inning, Maharg grounded out. He then "went out to right field, where he posed in the shadow cast by the large flag at the top of the grand stand." Nothing was hit Maharg's way in the ninth, and the game ended uneventfully, the second-place Phils dropping a meaningless 4-1 decision. The two-game major league playing career of Billy Maharg was now over, his lifetime 0-for-2 yielding a .000 BA. But flawless in two chances in the field during the 1912 game, Maharg was officially a perfect 1.000 with the glove.

At age 37, Maharg registered for the World War I draft but was not called to arms. Rather, he gained employment as a driller at the Baldwin Locomotive Works, a railway engine plant in Philadelphia. Maharg's appointment with destiny arrived in September 1919, supplied by Bill Burns, a baseball friend with whom Maharg had once taken an extended fishing trip. A former major league pitcher, Burns was now in the business of selling oil leases. But gambling was Burns' true avocation. Maharg had neither the brains nor the bankroll necessary to make a living gambling himself, but as an ex-prize fighter, he was well acquainted with the gambling fraternity, particularly in Philadelphia. Billy could, therefore, be of use to Burns in arrangement of the financing of a proposition put to Burns by White Sox staff ace Eddie Cicotte: the fixing of the 1919 World Series.

The Black Sox scandal presents a subject far too complicated for treatment here. Suffice it to say that Maharg was an observer, and occasionally a minor actor, in various fix-related events. The grand jury probe that ultimately exposed the Black Sox scandal came almost a year later and initially had nothing to do with the play of the 1919 World Series, being instituted rather to investigate the reputed fix of an inconsequential late-August 1920 game between the Cubs and the Phillies. But public pressure and the vigorous behind-the-scenes efforts of AL president Ban Johnson soon changed the probe's focus and put the 1919 Series center stage before the grand jury. On September 25, 1920, the *Chicago Tribune* announced that indictments would be returned shortly and publicly identified Eddie Cicotte, Chick Gandil, Lefty Williams, Happy Felsch, Joe Jackson, Swede Risberg, Fred McMullin, and Buck Weaver as the Sox players likely to be charged. Accusatory headlines prompted indignant protestations of innocence, particularly from Weaver, McMullin, and Felsch. The burgeoning scandal spotlight then unexpectedly moved to Philadelphia, where Billy Maharg was giving the interview that would blow the scandal wide open.

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► MAHARG

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On September 26, Maharg confided his knowledge of World Series fix events to *Philadelphia North American* sportswriter James Isaminger. Published the next morning and quickly re-printed nationwide, the Maharg-Isaminger interview was a sensation. Distressed White Sox owner Charles Comiskey immediately telegraphed Philadelphia, imploring Maharg to come to Chicago and repeat his story to the grand jury, offering Maharg the standing \$10,000 Comiskey reward for information that inculpated any of his players, if proven true. But Maharg would not budge, declaring that he was not interested in Comiskey's money. "I don't want it. I didn't talk for the money," said Billy. "My idea was to show how nice a double-cross was rung up. People that know me know that I wouldn't take the \$10,000 and people that don't know me, I don't care what they think." Maharg would never testify before the grand jury, but it no longer mattered. In rapid succession, Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams appeared before the panel where each admitted agreeing to accept money in return for losing the Series, while Felsch made an abject out-of-court confession of fix complicity that was published several days later in the *Chicago Evening American*. The Black Sox case indictments were formally returned on October 29, 1920.

Given that evidentiary rules do not apply to grand jury proceedings, Maharg could have been charged himself on no more than a reading of the *Philadelphia North American* interview to the panel. But Cook County prosecutors needed witnesses, not additional defendants. Thus, Maharg was never indicted for his role in the fix of the 1919 World Series. Rather, he became a star prosecution witness. Of even more benefit to the State, however, was Maharg's willingness to assist prosecution recruitment of Bill Burns. With expenses covered by Ban Johnson, Maharg traveled to Texas, found Burns near the Mexican border, and then persuaded him to return to Chicago with Maharg and turn State's evidence.

Called to testify on July 20, 1921 and on the witness stand for the better part of three days, Burns proved a surprisingly effective government witness, drawing rave reviews from the Black Sox press corps. Several days later, Maharg was just as good. The issue of his true identity was addressed immediately. Lead prosecutor George E. Gorman: "It has been intimated by the attorneys for the defense that you are Peaches Graham, is that correct?" Maharg: "No, I have never been known by anything but Billy Maharg. I know Peaches Graham, but I am not he." Congenial and seemingly guileless, Maharg then repeated his by-now well known account of fix events, "adding a strong layer of corroboration to the State's already strong case," while remaining impervious to attack by defense

counsel. But in the end, it did not matter. Notwithstanding facially strong proofs, particularly against defendants Cicotte, Jackson, Williams, Gandil, and David Zelcer (a/k/a Bennett), all nine accused (seven players and two gamblers) who entrusted their fate to the jury were acquitted. Within 24 hours Commissioner Landis acted, permanently banning the acquitted players from Organized Baseball for life.

Following the trial, Billy Maharg receded into obscurity, spending the rest of his working life as an auto mechanic at the Ford Motor Company plant in Chester, Pennsylvania. The Black Sox saga, however, was not quite finished, as Buck Weaver, Happy Felsch, Swede Risberg, and Joe Jackson each instituted a civil lawsuit against the Chicago White Sox. As part of the pre-trial discovery process, Maharg was deposed by counsel for the litigants in December 1922, but his story did not change. Of the lawsuits, only the Jackson case actually went to trial, but Maharg was not called to testify. Instead, his deposition was read to the jury by White Sox attorneys. A small footnote to the legal proceedings occurred some 15 years later when George Frederick "Peaches" Graham, former Philadelphia Phillies catcher and Maharg's putative alter ego, died in Long Beach, California on July 15, 1939, at age 62. Billy, meanwhile, continued working at the Ford plant in Chester, as did his diminutive (5'3") younger brother George A. Maharg Jr., who eventually came to share lodgings with Billy in Philadelphia.

According to Rothstein biographer David Pietrusza, Maharg kept a kennel of dogs on the family farm in Burholme, Pennsylvania and spent leisure time hunting small game. Retiring from Ford at age 65, Billy relocated to Burholme where he "puttered at farming and maintained his friendship with Grover Cleveland Alexander." In later life, Maharg suffered from arteriosclerosis but the heart attack which claimed his life came unexpectedly. He died in Philadelphia on November 20, 1953. Never married, Billy left no immediate survivors. A brief death notice published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for the "beloved son of the late George and Catherine Maharg" invited relatives, friends and the Veteran Boxers Association to attend the viewing at a local mortuary. Following a Funeral Mass at Resurrection Church, Maharg was buried at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in nearby Cheltenham, the final resting place of Connie Mack and a score more deceased major league figures.

No headstone marks the Maharg grave. An alternate but fitting memorial might, therefore, be having modern-day baseball authorities delete the "Graham" nonsense from their annals and bestow the correct birth name upon William Joseph Maharg.

This article is derived from a fully annotated SABR biography of Billy Maharg, found here: <http://bit.ly/sabr-maharg>

Black Sox's historic success in late innings

By Jacob Pomrenke

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In Major League Baseball, most games are decided well before the seventh inning. It's been well documented that the team holding the lead from the seventh inning onward wins about 85 to 95 percent of the time. (See [any situational chart](#) at Baseball-Reference.com for details.) That basic maxim has held true since 1901, regardless of any changes in strategy, scoring levels or bullpen specialization over the last century.

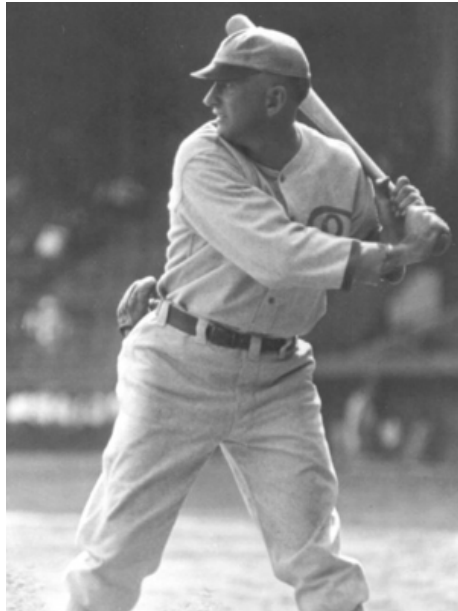
As David W. Smith put it in his SABR 34 presentation "[Coming From Behind: Patterns of Scoring and Relation to Winning](#)": The most successful teams take the lead early and keep it.

But what about those exciting games when the lead changes hands in the late innings? Which teams are best at holding onto a late lead or rallying from a late deficit?

SABR member Tom Ruane took a look at these "come from behind" rallies in [an article for Retrosheet in July 2012](#). As you'd expect, most of the teams that fared well in Ruane's study were teams with strong overall records, a lot of World Series champs and pennant winners. Those teams are usually pretty good at rallying from late deficits and holding onto late leads.

Among these teams, one stands out as being historically good in the late innings: the Chicago White Sox of 1919-20.

According to Ruane, the 1919 Sox blew the fewest late leads (3) in major league history over the last 95 years. (Retrosheet game data currently covers the years 1916 to 2011. We'll call this the Retrosheet Era.) Four other teams have blown just three leads after the seventh inning, and they're all pennant winners like the Sox: the 1942 Cardinals, 1952 Dodgers, 1954 Indians and



On September 24, 1919, Joe Jackson clinched the American League pennant with a game-ending single in the 9th inning to beat the St. Louis Browns. The White Sox were one of the best teams in baseball history at rallying from deficits in the late innings and holding onto late leads.

(Photo credit: BlackBetsy.com.)

1969 Mets.

Note: For the purposes of this article, I'm sticking with Tom Ruane's definition of a "blown late lead" as games in which a team is ahead at any point from the seventh inning onward and ultimately loses the game. This does not cover games in which a team temporarily blows the lead but later rallies to win.

Over a two-year span, the 1919-20 White Sox also have the highest winning percentage (32-8, .800) in the Retrosheet Era in games when the lead changes hands after the seventh inning. Other teams rallied for more late wins — for instance, the 1952-53 Dodgers were 40-12 in such games — but no team blew fewer late leads than the White Sox. As a result, their winning percentage is highest.

Why were the Black Sox so good

late in games — a team relatively thin on pitching in this era before bullpen specialization and a low-scoring Dead-ball environment that discouraged late rallies?

This article will examine their performance in more detail.

Blowing a late lead

First, let's look at the few games in which the White Sox lost a game they were leading from the seventh inning onward. This happened only eight times to the Sox in 1919-20, the fewest in the Retrosheet Era.

- ♦ **May 10, 1919:** CHW ahead 4-3 in 7th, 5-4 in 9th @ CLE. Lost 6-5 in 11th.
- ♦ **June 1, 1919:** CHW ahead 3-2 in 7th vs. CLE. Lost 5-3.
- ♦ **August 8, 1919:** CHW ahead 4-1 in 7th @ PHA. Lost 5-4 in 13th.
- ♦ **April 27, 1920:** CHW ahead 2-1 in 7th @ CLE. Lost 3-2.
- ♦ **May 6, 1920:** CHW ahead 2-1 in 8th vs. CLE. Lost 3-2 in 10th.
- ♦ **May 30, 1920:** CHW ahead 6-1 in 7th @ CLE. Lost 8-6.
- ♦ **July 14, 1920:** CHW ahead 4-0 in 5th, 4-3 in 8th @ WAS. Lost 6-4.
- ♦ **August 27, 1920:** CHW ahead 5-4 in 10th @ NYY. Lost 6-5 in 12th.

Five of those eight losses were to the Cleveland Indians. This isn't surprising, since the Tribe under manager Tris Speaker won the World Series in 1920. The White Sox have been suspected of tanking games that year to keep the standings close, so it's worth considering whether the Sox were easing up against the Indians, their chief rivals for the AL pennant. But that theory doesn't check out here. For one, the White Sox (10-12) beat the Indians more than any other club in 1920

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except the Yankees (13-9). And the White Sox's blown leads against Cleveland in 1919-20 all happened early in the season — once in April, three in May, and one in June — long before any serious pennant-race implications could have been known. Plus, Cleveland blew four late leads of its own against the White Sox, including on consecutive days on July 5-6, 1920.

The pitchers who blew Chicago's late leads were not contained to just the suspected Black Sox, either. Eddie Cicotte and Dickey Kerr each suffered two late losses, once in 1919 and once in 1920. Dave Danforth had the other blown 1919 lead, while Red Faber, Roy Wilkinson and Lefty Williams each lost one late lead in 1920.

When the White Sox did blow leads, they weren't blowing large leads — only three of their eight blown leads was in a game where they were ahead by more than one run. The White Sox blew their largest lead on May 30, 1920, when Cleveland rallied from a 6-1 deficit in the 7th inning. The Indians scored five runs off Cicotte in the 7th and Tris Speaker broke a 6-6 tie with an RBI single in the 8th. This happened one day after the White Sox had come back from their own 7-1 deficit with a 5-run, 9th-inning rally to beat the Indians (who set a single-game major league record with 10 doubles.) Clearly, something was in the air that Decoration Day weekend at League Park!

Timely hitting and a "wee" reliever

So what made the White Sox special at holding onto leads?

Their starting pitching, led by Eddie Cicotte, Lefty Williams, future Hall of Famer Red Faber and young Dickey Kerr, was superb. The White Sox led the league in team ERA in 1913, 1916 and 1917, and in 1920 that rotation became the first quartet in major league history to each win 20 games in a single season. Only the 1971 Orioles have matched the feat since.

Like most teams of that era, the White Sox bullpen was used mostly for mop-up duty, not for preserving a lead and closing out a victory as it is today. Manager Kid Gleason relied on his bullpen less than any other team in the American League in 1919-20 (Chicago relievers threw just 375 innings, according to Retrosheet; Boston was second-lowest in the AL with 415 relief IP. Meanwhile, the lowly Philadelphia A's used their bullpen for a whopping 606 IP.)

But Gleason did have one unlikely reliever to call on in a pinch: Dickey Kerr.

The 5-foot-7 left-hander from Texas was a rookie in

1919, too unproven to join the regular rotation at first. But he flourished in his role as a reliever in 1919-20, going 11-2 with a 2.80 ERA (plus 5 retroactive saves) in 40 appearances out of the bullpen. As a starter, his win-loss record was stellar at 23-14, but his 4.61 ERA in 44 games showed a maddening inconsistency in his performance. Still, when Gleason needed him most — as he did in the 1919 World Series, with Faber injured and Cicotte and Williams throwing games — Kerr stepped up. Along with Roy Wilkinson, who was 5-1 with a 2.85 ERA in 22 relief appearances in 1920, Kerr was the White Sox's most dependable man out of the bullpen. More on him below ...

The other reason why the White Sox were so successful is their extraordinary knack for timely hitting. The White Sox held onto late leads in part because they kept extending their leads, especially in the eighth inning. Check out the White Sox's scoring by inning:

In 1919:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Sox	86	64	78	81	68	89	62	79	48	6	6
Opp	89	47	77	46	61	63	60	41	42	3	5

In 1920:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Sox	99	67	88	77	68	101	90	110	63	17	14
Opp	85	58	72	76	79	69	74	68	65	15	3

The White Sox's run differential, in both years, was greater in the eighth than in any other inning. This propensity to put up big numbers in the eighth was on display most famously in Game 8 of the 1919 World Series, when the White Sox offense finally awoke and exploded for four runs in a last-gasp effort to extend the Series.

They couldn't pull off the comeback that day — and may not have been trying to anyway — but the chart above shows that their eighth-inning outburst was no fluke. It also helps explain why the White Sox were so successful in the late innings: because they scored a lot of late runs.

Rallying from late deficits

Time after time in 1919-20, the White Sox showed that being down in the late innings wasn't much of an obstacle.

The White Sox won 32 games in which they trailed in the 7th inning or later, the most in baseball over that two-year span. So while Chicago pitchers almost never blew a

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late lead, Chicago hitters caused opposing pitchers to do it regularly.

Their victim most often was the Boston Red Sox, baseball's most dominant team with four World Series titles in the 1910s. Boston owner Harry Frazee was struggling financially to keep his best players and traded many of them away, including Babe Ruth in the winter of 1919-20. As a result, the Red Sox nose-dived into the second division after winning the World Series in 1918. The White Sox took advantage of their decimated rivals, rallying eight times in the late innings.

Chicago also beat up on the American League's other bottom feeders, rallying for five late wins against Washington and Philadelphia. The Sox had four late wins against Cleveland and New York, and three apiece versus St. Louis and Detroit.

These late rallies tended to happen in bunches. Six of their comebacks happened in August 1919, including back-to-back "walkoff" wins against the Red Sox on August 15-16 which began a 10-game winning streak for the pennant-bound White Sox. July 1920 also saw seven comeback wins for the White Sox, including consecutive games on July 19-20 against the Yankees.

The man in the middle of most of these rallies? Happy Felsch.

Chicago's slugging center fielder drove in the go-ahead or winning run on a team-high six occasions — including the White Sox's only walkoff home run against Cleveland's Jim Bagby on July 6, 1920. Felsch also had a dramatic game-ending two-run triple in the 10th inning on June 19, 1920, to lead the White Sox to a 6-5 win over the Yankees. In addition, Felsch scored the go-ahead run a team-high five times during the White Sox's 32 late rallies in 1919-20. When the White Sox needed a clutch hit late in the game, they wanted Felsch at the plate. More often than not, he delivered.

One of the White Sox's late-game rallies clinched their 1919 American League pennant. On September 24, 1919, the St. Louis Browns took a 5-2 lead into the bottom of the 7th inning at Comiskey Park. The White Sox chipped away with two runs in the 7th and were down by one entering the 9th. After Buck Weaver's sacrifice fly tied the score at 5-5, Joe Jackson smashed a line drive single to right-center, scoring Nemo Leibold with the pennant-clinching run. Only two other times in the pre-divisional era did a team clinch a pennant in a walkoff victory: Bobby Thomson's "Shot Heard 'Round the World" for the New York Giants in 1951 and Hank Aaron's 11th-inning game-ending home run for the Milwaukee Braves in 1957.



In 1919-20, the White Sox rallied from a late deficit to win 32 games, the most in baseball during that period. Happy Felsch, above, drove in the go-ahead or winning run in six of those games. (Photo: Chicago Daily News negatives collection, SDN-060870, courtesy of Chicago History Museum.)

Lost in the commotion of that game was the fact that Eddie Cicotte would have earned his 30th victory if he hadn't allowed 5 runs in 7 innings and exited with the White Sox trailing. Instead, Dickey Kerr was the beneficiary with two scoreless innings in relief.

Earlier, I mentioned that the White Sox's blown leads were spread out evenly among the pitching staff. The comebacks were dominated by Dickey Kerr, Bullpen Ace, who was the winning pitcher in 10 of the White Sox's 32 late rallies in 1919-20. Most of the time, his effective relief pitching kept the White Sox in the game long enough for Chicago to retake the lead. He also earned a save (retroactively) in two White Sox comeback wins, both in the same week in July 1920. Kerr even drove in the game-winning run once himself, on a swinging bunt single with the bases loaded in the 8th inning on July 25, 1919, to beat the Browns.

Among the other pitchers, Red Faber benefited from six comeback wins, Lefty Williams from five, Eddie Cicotte and Roy Wilkinson from four.

In one memorable comeback on September 6, 1920, Shovel Hodge, making his major league debut, took a no-hitter into the 8th inning against the Detroit Tigers. With one out, Sammy Hale broke up the no-hitter with a single and the Tigers blasted Hodge for four runs in the inning to take a 4-2 lead. Joe Jackson sent the game into extra innings with a

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► LATE INNINGS

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2-run, game-tying homer in the bottom half, then Eddie Collins hit a walkoff double in the 10th to give Hodge his first career victory.

Why so good?

Let's come back to the fundamental question: Why were the White Sox so good at holding onto late leads and rallying from late deficits? I'll concede the obvious point that the Sox were the best team in the American League in 1919-20, so they were better than their opponents in all kinds of games.

One factor for the White Sox's historic success in the late innings is that when scoring levels are down — just 7.34 runs were scored per game in the Deadball years of 1916-19, compared to a whopping 9.52 runs per game in 2000-09 — teams make fewer comebacks overall. As Tom Ruane pointed out, the 1919 season had the fewest come-from-behind-late victories (162 out of 1,113 total games played) in the Retrosheet Era. The season with the lowest percentage of late comebacks was the infamous Year of the Pitcher in 1968. So scoring levels clearly play a role in how often teams stage late rallies at all.

In addition, the White Sox also benefitted from having one of the worst "comeback" teams in baseball history in the same league. The 1919 Washington Senators share the inglorious major league record for the fewest comeback wins in the Retrosheet Era. According to Ruane, the Senators won just two games all season that they trailed in the late innings. Both times, they overcame a one-run deficit in the top of the seventh inning. The Senators lost every game in which they were trailing in the eighth or ninth innings.

But mostly, Kid Gleason's White Sox just had a knack for winning close games. They had few weak spots at the plate or in the field, with a stable and healthy lineup that had mostly stayed the same since 1915. It's become a cliché to say that everyone on the team contributed on any given day — but 15 different players drove in or scored the go-ahead run during one of the White Sox's late rallies in 1919-20, from Felsch, Weaver and Jackson all the way down to the pitchers Williams and Kerr, and little-used bench players like Amos Strunk and Harvey McClellan. Everyone was involved.

All great teams win their fair share of close games in the late innings. But the 1919-20 Chicago White Sox happened to do it over and over and over again.

Now, just think if they had been trying a little harder ...

Following up on the Sox's education levels

In the [June 2012 edition of this newsletter](#), we began to debunk Swede Risberg's claim that he had dropped out of school in the third grade, which has long been used as evidence that clashes between cliques of educated vs. "uneducated" players contributed to the Black Sox Scandal.

While the quote attributed to Risberg was clearly tongue-in-cheek — he reportedly said he dropped out of school because he "refused to shave" — he did like to play up his reputation as an undereducated player who was as tough off the field as he was on it.

Committee member **Bob Hoie** alerted us to newspaper reports from San Francisco that documented Risberg attending and playing baseball for Hancock Grammar School up through the age of 15.

Now, **Bob Erland** has found more evidence to disprove Risberg's claim.

As Bob writes, the 1940 United States Census, just released to the public this year and fully indexed in August, was the first to ask Americans for the highest grade completed.

Risberg's answer to the Census taker who showed up at his door in tiny Edgewood, California? Eighth grade.

His wife, Mary, said she had completed two years of college, while their 10-year-old son Robert had completed the sixth grade by the spring of 1940. Gerald, 6, had not started school yet.

As for the other Black Sox players: Chick Gandil responded that he had completed *four* years of high school (not two as previously thought), as did Fred McMullin. Buck Weaver said he had completed *two* years of high school and Lefty Williams *one* year of high school (also more than previously known), Eddie Cicotte the sixth grade, Happy Felsch the fifth grade, and Joe Jackson the third grade.

As Bob Erland writes, these responses to the Census were recorded as stated without any further verification. But there is little reason to believe the old ballplayers were lying. It's possible some of the players went back to school or attended classes after they stopped playing baseball, especially after the Depression hit.

But it's sure starting to feel like the Black Sox just weren't the dumb schnooks they've long been portrayed to be — at least when it comes to formal education. Education may not have been much of a factor in the Black Sox Scandal after all.

— Jacob Pomrenke

Harry's Diary: The elusive missing link

By Dr. David Fletcher and Paul Duffy

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One of the most significant documents regarding the Black Sox Scandal is "Harry's Diary."

"Harry's Diary" is a collection of two ledger and legal pads written by Harry Grabiner, Charles Comiskey's long-time loyal confidant who served as the White Sox's General Manager from 1915-1945.

Even in partial form with key elements missing, "Harry's Diary" is a telling and chronological insider's outline of the events surrounding the initial investigation by Comiskey of the fixing of the 1919 World Series and the events after the fix was exposed in September 1920.

Grabiner (1890-1948) had been with the White Sox since 1905, when he started selling scorecards at the old 39th Street Grounds. He left the White Sox in 1946 to join Bill Veeck in Cleveland and died in October 1948.

Along with chronological diary journal notations, the "Harry's Diary" documents also included the 1918 and 1920 White Sox Team Salary List and the Player's League Constitution and By-Laws¹; the 1919 salary list was missing.

Scintillating excerpts were published by Bill Veeck and Ed Linn in their 1965 book *The Hustler's Handbook* (G.P. Putnam.) But an original copy of "Harry's Diary" does not exist for baseball historians to view and try to make more sense of the Black Sox Scandal.

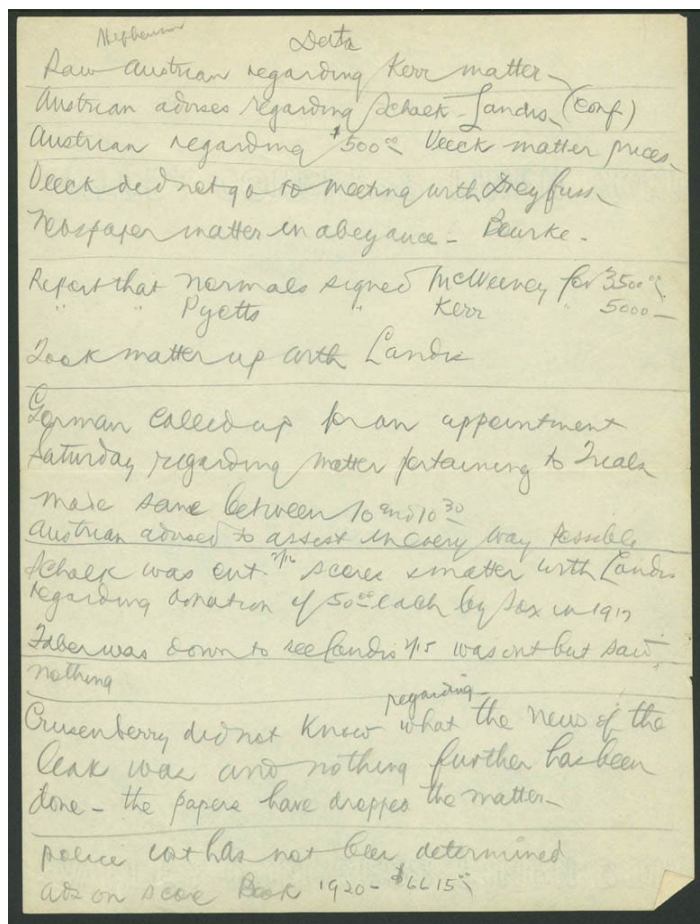
The Hustler's Handbook was published after Veeck had sold the White Sox for the first time in June 1961 to go "home to die" when he believed he had brain cancer.

"Harry's Diary" starts off like this:

"The first intimation that there might be something wrong with the World Series and that baseball players might be implicated therein was really brought to our particular notice when Mort (sic) Tennes called me on the telephone in my room at the Sinton Hotel, Cincinnati, after the first game (Oct. 1, 1919)..."

Famed Black Sox researcher, the late Gene Carney, called "Harry's Diary" the Rosetta Stone of the Black Sox Scandal.

Carney wrote: "Harry Grabiner, according to Veeck, evidently sat down after the 1919 Series to create a written record of events, possibly at Comiskey's suggestion. If there would be a full-scale investigation (this never happened since Comiskey was never indicted for covering up the scandal), both men would be asked hard questions. 'What did you know and when did you know it?' The Watergate questions, now familiar to Americans who no longer believe cover-ups



A page from "Harry's Diary", a collection of ledger and legal pads written by Harry Grabiner, the Chicago White Sox's General Manager from 1915 to 1945. Portions of the diary were published by Bill Veeck and Ed Linn in *The Hustler's Handbook* in 1965, but the whereabouts of the full diary remain unknown, tantalizing Black Sox researchers for years. (Photo: Mike Nola/BlackBetsy.com.)

[are] unusual occurrences. ... But the context in which Veeck reveals Harry Grabiner's diary is also aimed at disrobing corporate culture. Veeck hates the way corporations produce joyless conformity, 'committee-think,' and colorless people."²

This vital missing link to baseball history went missing for more than 40 years. Sadly, the narrative is still missing at the present time, except for a few snippets published in *The Hustler's Handbook* and two pages of the actual diary posted on the Internet at BlackBetsy.com. The other 26-plus pages are still missing and remain the hidden Dead Sea Scrolls for Black Sox documents. The complete version of Harry's Diary has never been released or seen in its entirety.

Even Harry Grabiner's last private secretary with the

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White Sox, Grace Patricia Ryan Samfillippo, did not know where the diary was located or even that a diary existed.³

Recalled Samfillippo in a 2007 interview: "Harry talked about the Black Sox and the investigation a lot. He offered to share the players' contracts to show their wages were similar to other players of that era. But my (great) uncle Charlie (Comiskey) refused to show them. He felt it was unnecessary to prove his character to anyone."⁴

It was not until 43 years after Grabiner had created this legal defense file for his boss — referred to as CAC in the journal entries — that a 23-year-old White Sox office boy named Fred Krehbiel became key in even confirming the diary's existence. In 1963, Krehbiel was responsible for briefly unearthing one of the key mystery documents in baseball history that contained information on how the Black Sox scandal unfolded from the viewpoint of White Sox management. The hidden journal also suggested that the 1918 World Series between the Cubs and Red Sox was fixed.

Krehbiel's startling discovery of "Harry's Diary," hidden in the bowels of Comiskey Park, is one of the reasons why the story about the fixing of the 1918 World Series even exists.⁵

Krehbiel's personal connection to Chicago baseball history makes his discovery even more startling.

His maternal grandfather was William Louis Veeck Sr., who was president of the Chicago Cubs from 1919 to his death in 1933. Veeck was a sportswriter for the *Chicago American*. In July 1919, Cubs owner William Wrigley Jr. hired him to run the Cubs as team president. Under Veeck's leadership (his job included GM duties) the Cubs won two pennants in 1929 and 1932. But Fred's grandfather's most lasting impact on baseball history was his involvement in bringing to light the Black Sox Scandal.

Veeck initiated the investigation of the Black Sox Scandal when he blew the whistle on his own team as he was alerted about the August 31, 1920, Cubs-Phillies game being fixed.

Soon after, due to Veeck's efforts, a Cook County Grand Jury was empaneled and led to the indictment of the eight Black Sox players in late September 1920.

Most of chapter 11 in Bill Veeck's *The Hustler's Handbook*, called "Harry's Diary — 1919" (more than 40 pages), deals with the power plays that resulted in Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis winding up in the new Commissioner's job in the wake of the Black Sox Scandal. William Veeck was a key player in engineering the creation of the new Commissioner's office. The diary outlines all the politicking behind the choice of Landis as MLB's absolute authority. The elder Veeck appears several times in "Harry's Diary."⁶



Dr. David Fletcher, left, is president of the Chicago Baseball Museum. Fred Krehbiel is the nephew of Bill Veeck and discovered the lost diary of Harry Grabiner at Comiskey Park in 1963. (Photo: Courtesy of David Fletcher.)

Frederick A. Krehbiel II, the youngest son of Bill Veeck's sister Peggy, joined his uncle to work for the Sox in 1959 as an office boy during Veeck's first ownership season with the Sox. In that same year, the Sox made their first World Series appearance since the Black Sox Scandal.

While attending Lake Forest College, Fred continued to work for the Sox even after Veeck sold the team to John and Art Allyn in June 1961.

In August 1963, right after graduating from Lake Forest, Fred stumbled upon a long-lost ledger book and legal pad with two dozen pages of handwritten notes hidden

behind a table in the bowels of Comiskey Park. The documents were remnants of unfiltered journal entries written by Harry Grabiner.

In *The Hustler's Handbook*, Veeck discussed his nephew's find: "I predict great things for the young gentleman."⁷ That was an understatement. The finder of "Harry's Diary" went on to become the co-chairman of Molex Corp. Krehbiel is also a well-known philanthropist with his generous funding at Rush University Hospital (the alma mater of author Fletcher), Millennium Park, the Museum of Science and Industry, and other Chicago museums.

He was also the unsung hero in the White Sox staying in Chicago — in December 1975, he helped his uncle Bill Veeck buy back the White Sox from the John Allyn family and prevented the troubled franchise from moving to Seattle or Denver.⁸

After nearly two years of attempting to secure an interview with the discoverer of Harry's Diary, we interviewed Krehbiel on Wednesday, July 20, 2011, at Molex's headquarters in Lisle, a western suburb of Chicago.

Krehbiel had never given an in-depth interview about the historic find.

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It was Charles A. Comiskey's great-granddaughter, Illinois State Rep. Patti Bellock, who was able to secure the interview for us. Krehbiel had helped Bellock's campaign.⁹

We had high hopes for the interview, hoping Krehbiel had a copy of his historic find so we could finally read the entire document without the commentary of Bill Veeck, who gave Black Sox researchers a titillating nugget of information but not the entire story of what Harry knew and when he knew it. We hoped we could secure a copy of "Harry's Diary" and share it with other Black Sox researchers.

Before the interview, we solicited suggestions for interview questions from Black Sox researchers around the country. For instance, Rod Nelson wanted to know: "What's the deal about Comiskey's handwritten Constitution and By-Laws of the Brotherhood of Professional Ballplayers? I don't know if that manuscript has additional historical significance because it reflects a first draft or something."

The interview

It was an incredibly hot day near 100 degrees when we went to Molex's offices. Krehbiel's personal assistant, Sandie Lockhart, was personable to us while we waited. We perused various pieces of artwork and looked at the history of the company, a leading supplier of electronic interconnectors. Krehbiel was very open and engaged throughout the interview. He grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago, between Downers Grove and Lemont. He went to Avery Conley School.

His grandmother, Grace Veeck, had "quite a collection" of memorabilia at her Hinsdale house. When Krehbiel was young, he took some of that collection, which prompted Bill Veeck's comment in *The Hustler's Handbook* that Krehbiel was good at finding things — sometimes before people even knew they were missing!

Krehbiel recalled attending games in Cleveland when Bill Veeck owned the Indians, and at Sportsman's Park when Veeck owned the St. Louis Browns. He recalled Veeck telling him Eddie Gaedel was a "mean little guy."

Finding Harry's Diary

Krehbiel said he vividly remembered finding Harry Grabner's diary — even though it was a half-century ago.

Krehbiel worked for the White Sox from 1959 to 1961, when he was about 18 to 20 years old. He was given the duty of cleaning out a storeroom at Comiskey Park. At the time,

he worked directly for Don Unferth in the team's front office, who instructed him to "get rid of" anything in the storeroom. Some of what was in the storeroom was "truly junk," which Krehbiel threw out. In spite of Unferth's instruction, however, Krehbiel did not throw out any documents or other things that appeared to be of value. He kept at least one of every item that was not "truly junk" (including documents) that he found in the storeroom.

He gave away many duplicate items that he found; for example, he recalled giving a souvenir ring to a secretary at Comiskey Park and telling her how she could turn it into an attractive necklace for herself.

Similarly, he recalled giving away any duplicates of World Series programs from 1919 and 1959; All-Star Game programs for games held at Comiskey Park, and other items to employees at the park, while keeping one of each item. He recalled finding many player contracts, which he found to be "truly fascinating." He at one point recalled setting up a display of items that he found in the storeroom in the Bard's Room at Comiskey Park.

Krehbiel still has some documents in his possession, including correspondence to and from Bill Veeck and player contracts for White Sox players (including contracts for players on the 1919 team). He found many of those documents when he was working for the White Sox both before and after Bill Veeck sold the team in 1961.

Krehbiel believes, contrary to what Bill Veeck wrote in *The Hustler's Handbook*, that he found Grabner's diary before Veeck sold the team in 1961. He recalled finding it and bringing it to Veeck at Comiskey Park. He believes this occurred in 1961.

Krehbiel recalled finding the diary "as if it were yesterday. The storeroom was close to the locker room, next to the front gate at Comiskey Park. There were two rooms — an outer room and an inner room. The diary was in the inner room. In that storeroom, there were "boxes and boxes of junk" piled in front of a cabinet. The cabinet was built into a brick wall in an interior area behind home plate. He sorted through the stash, which he said was "mostly junk" that he threw out, and cleared a way to a cabinet. It took several days for him to sort through the things that were in the cabinet.

The cabinet was made out of brick and built into a door. The door was made of metal and its inside walls were brick. Someone had removed some bricks from the right-hand side of the cabinet. He said it was clear that someone created the indentation in order to hide something. Inside the "indented area off to the side, within the cabinet" he found the diary — one bound volume each for the years 1919 and 1920. He took the volumes and brought them to Bill Veeck.

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He initially had no idea what they were, but recalled that they were very dirty.

Krehbiel said he read Grabiner's diary when he found it, but "it didn't have a lot of meaning to me" and he "didn't spend a lot of time looking at it." At the time, he was more interested in other items that he found while cleaning the storeroom, such as a program in the shape of a baseball glove. He was also fascinated with player contracts, many of which he found in the storeroom.

He has not seen the documents since he gave them to Bill Veeck.

The trail remains cold

We were disappointed that Krehbiel did not have a copy of "Harry's Diary" for us to copy and share to the world.

Who does have a copy?

This question was posed by the late, famed Black Sox researcher Gene Carney several times before his death in 2009.

In September 2003, Gene and I went to *Eight Men Out* author Eliot Asinof's house in rural upper New York and spent the day with him. *Eight Men Out* was published in 1963, a few years earlier than *The Hustler's Handbook*. But when the latter book came out, Asinof spoke with Veeck, who noted how much Asinof had right without the benefit of the diary. In the book *Bleeding Between the Lines* — the story of the making of *Eight Men Out* published in 1979 — Asinof related a humorous exchange when Veeck called him up during a World Series in the 1960s saying he was with Cincinnati Reds pitcher Dutch Ruether who was quite drunk.¹⁰

Asinof told us that he had read the diary — Ed Linn had typed it up and sent him a copy. Instantly, we asked for Asinof to produce a copy of "Harry's Diary" for us to read (along with 50 hours of taped interviews with Abe Attell that he said were in his attic.)

Asinof, like Krehbiel, did not have a copy of "Harry's Diary." So where was it now? Well, Asinof had participated in an ESPN Classic documentary about the Black Sox Scandal in 2001 and loaned his copy of Grabiner's 1919 diary to ESPN producer Gary Rothschild. Asinof said Rothschild never gave it back. Our attempts to see if ESPN had a copy in their files went nowhere.

Gene and I also tracked down Mike Veeck, Bill Veeck's son, who said that it was back in the Grabiner family¹¹, and had been for many years. The trail stopped there because there were no leads about which descendant had the diary.

Krehbiel said he has "lots" of questions about how the diary became lost and where it went. He recalled two conversations relevant to the diary's whereabouts. In one, Bill Veeck indicated that he wanted to give the diary to the Baseball Hall of Fame. In the second, he recalled Bill's wife, Mary Frances Veeck, saying she believed the diary came into the possession of Ed Linn, co-author of Veeck's three books. Krehbiel recalled that he personally tried to retrieve the diary after Ed Linn died in 2000.¹² Linn's widow told Krehbiel the diary was not among Linn's papers. He also recalled that after Mrs. Linn died, he tried to obtain access to Ed Linn's papers to find it, but he was unsuccessful. That is the only information Krehbiel has as to the present whereabouts of Grabiner's diary.

I tracked down Linn's daughter, Hildy, in Arizona. She remained close to Mary Frances Veeck. I finally met Hildy in May 2012, when Fred Krehbiel and Mary Frances Veeck hosted a party for Veeck biographer Paul Dickson at the Chicago Casino Club. She did not have a copy of "Harry's Diary." Hildy said some parts of the diary were sold in an auction.¹³

Mike Nola, Official Historian of the [Shoeless Joe Jackson Virtual Hall of Fame](#), might be able to shed some light on who has "Harry's Diary." In a 2003 e-mail to author Fletcher, he wrote "The folks at Real Legends (auction house) would not tell me who had it ... but hinted that it was someone either in the Veeck family or someone that worked for Veeck back in the day."¹⁴ Two pages from the diary can be viewed on his [BlackBetsy.com](#) website. One of those pages includes the journal entry: "Feb 16 (1921), Schalk was out to Comiskey Park. Matter with Landis regarding donation of \$50 each by Sox in 1917" which includes the discussion of the 1917 bribing of the Tigers to lay down to the White Sox to allow them to win the pennant that year.

The mystery continues about when or where "Harry's Diary" will turn up to be accessible for researchers. "Harry's Diary" remains lost after its discovery in the early 1960s by a young Fred Krehbiel. Maybe this is what Harry Grabiner had really hoped for when he stashed his diary hidden in the bowels of Comiskey Park.

Notes

(1) Comiskey had jumped from the St. Louis Browns and joined the short-lived Player's League in 1890. He managed and played for the Chicago Pirates in 1890 at Southside Park II which was located next to future site of Comiskey Park I on 35th and Wentworth — where the present day White Sox marquee sign is located and is a parking lot for buses. Sorry Cubs fans but Southside

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In Memoriam: Robert L. Risberg

Just before this newsletter was published, we learned of the death of Swede Risberg's oldest son.

Robert L. Risberg, 86, died in Red Bluff, California, on November 8, 2012. He was elected to five terms as the Assessor-Tax Collector for Tehama County, serving from 1970 to 1990. Prior to that, he owned a logging and trucking company for 13 years in in Mt. Shasta, California.

He was married to his wife Audrey for 50 years and they had two children, daughter Gretchen Andersen of Morelia, Mexico, and Jeff Risberg of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Bob served in the Air Force during World War II and later as a criminal investigator in the military police. He lettered in four sports at Weed High School in California and later pitched on the baseball team at Santa Rosa Junior College.

Bob refused most interview requests about his dad's involvement in the 1919 World Series scandal, but in 2001, he spoke with an ESPN producer about the Black Sox.

"He still loved baseball, you know," Bob said. "Baseball didn't throw him out; Landis did. ... He ended up being a successful man. His business was successful. He enjoyed being a family man and I think he was just a happy person."

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Park II also served as the Cubs franchise home park from 1891-1893. It is believed that Comiskey wanted that document to prove he was sympathetic to the Sox players, who had complained he was cheap and uncaring.

(2) Gene Carney, "Notes From the Shadows of Cooperstown."

(3) Grace Patricia Ryan Samfillippo (1925-2009). As one of the last living people to work for the Chicago White Sox's first general manager Harry Grabiner, she spent countless evenings nestled in the lap of her uncle Charles A. Comiskey as he riveted her with bedtime baseball stories. She worked as Grabiner's secretary in the early 1940s, nestled by the Bards Room at Old Comiskey Park. Co-author David Fletcher interviewed her several times and found that Grace was a direct living link to the 'Old Roman' and his tremendous impact on baseball in America. Grace was unaware that Grabiner kept a diary of the events surrounding the 1919 Black Sox scandal, later found in the bowels of Comiskey Park by Fred Krehbiel in 1963. She gave Fletcher several Harry Grabiner handwritten letters showing that the handwriting in two pages of the Diary known to still exist and posted online at BlackBetsy.com match to help authenticate it is indeed Grabiner's work product.

(4) David Fletcher, "[Growing Up Comiskey](#)." Chicago Baseball Museum Newsletter, April 2007.

(5) In May 2011, the Cubs returned to Fenway Park for the first time since the 1918 World Series and there was a series of stories about the 1918 World Series being fixed, including the May 14, 2011 *New York Times* story: "[Whiff of Scandal Wafts Over 1918 World Series](#)." It was in this diary that Grabiner revealed that the 1918 World Series between the Cubs and Red Sox had been fixed as Grabiner provided the new baseball Commis-

sioner Landis with a list of 27 "dirty" players, including a scribbled notation next to the name of former Cubs pitcher Gene Packard: "1918 Series fixer."

(6) The behind the scenes creation of the Commissioner's Office in Harry's Diary correspond to documents that were contained in the 2007 Black Sox auction collection acquired by the Chicago History Museum, which were legal files from Comiskey's attorney Alfred Austrian and believed to be stored in his grandson Charles Comiskey II's garage until his death in August 2007 and turned up in this auction.

(7) *The Hustler's Handbook*, page 221.

(8) <http://www.chicagobaseballmuseum.org/files/CBM-Forgotten-Story-76-Sox-20120925.pdf>

(9) Representative Bellock had finally forgiven author Fletcher for bringing her on the "Black Sox 85 Years Later" symposium panel in October 2004 at the Chicago History Museum, where she felt she was savaged by Thomas Cannon, grandson of Ray Cannon, the attorney who represented Joe Jackson in the 1924 Milwaukee civil trial.

(10) Ruether sued Asinof for slander for insinuating in 8MO he been out late drinking the night before Game 1 of the 1919 World Series when he pitched Game 1 and the Reds won 9-1. Ruether pitched a complete game allowing one run and one walk, while going 3 for 3 at the plate, including 2 triples.

(11) Grabiner's daughter June Travis, a famed Hollywood actress, died in 2008. We have not been able to track down any other Grabiner family members. June Travis did help Bill Veeck acquire the White Sox a second time in late 1975. On January 3, 1940, June married Fred Friedlob. They had two daughters, Cathy and June.

(12) *The Hustler's Handbook* co-author Ed Linn died in 2000 in San Diego at age 77.

(13) It seems criminal to have sold Harry's Diary piecemeal.

(14) Mike Nola e-mail to author Fletcher, June 30, 2003.

1912 White Sox: End of the Hitless Wonders era

By Jacob Pomrenke
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One hundred years ago, the seeds were planted on the South Side of Chicago for "baseball's darkest hour": the Black Sox Scandal.

The 1912 season is famous in baseball history for many reasons. Fenway Park opened in Boston and Tiger Stadium hosted its first games in Detroit. Ty Cobb was suspended for attacking a fan and his teammates staged a one-day strike in support. Walter Johnson set an American League record with 16 consecutive wins and was matched by Smoky Joe Wood just weeks later. The Red Sox won a classic World Series over the New York Giants with a final winner-take-all game full of memorable plays (and misplays) still remembered today.

1912 was also a pivotal season in Chicago White Sox franchise history. It was the year the Sox began their transition from the "Hitless Wonders" of Big Ed Walsh and Billy Sullivan to the "Black Sox" of Eddie Cicotte and Buck Weaver. Owner Charles Comiskey started building the core of his next great team in 1912, and the Sox, with a mix of veterans and rookies, responded by leading the American League standings for most of the season's first half. After faltering to a fourth-place finish, the Sox capped off the season by beating the cross-town rival Cubs in arguably the most dramatic postseason "City Series" in major league history.

The first decade of the 20th century saw the White Sox emerge as one of the American League's powerhouse clubs, capturing two pennants in 1901 and 1906 and narrowly missing one more in 1908. Their run of success culminated in a surprise World Series championship in 1906 over the Cubs, who set a major league record for wins



Hall of Famer Ed Walsh had his last great season with the Chicago White Sox in 1912, finishing with a 27-17 record and a 2.15 ERA in 393 innings pitched. He also pitched an exhausting 41 innings in the postseason City Series against the Cubs, leading the White Sox from an 0-3 deficit to victory. (Photo: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Paul Thompson photographs, LC-DIG-ppmsca-18323.)

(116) that still stands. But by 1911, the White Sox were fading — they finished in fifth place at 77-74 with the oldest team in the league.¹

The White Sox entered the 1912 season under new player-manager Jimmy "Nixey" Callahan as a "turbulent" team, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.² Callahan — one of the first established National Leaguers to jump to the White Sox back in 1901 — was in his second stint as manager for Charles Comiskey's team.³ Callahan's first move was to hire the feisty 45-year-old William "Kid" Gleason as his assistant manager. Gleason had spent more than 20 years in the big leagues as a pitcher and infielder, but his primary job with the White Sox was to show the ropes to their many new recruits. He delighted in his role and the Kid became a father figure to many on the team.⁴

As the *Tribune*'s Sam Weller wrote on April 7, "The success or failure of

the White Sox in 1912 appears to lie in the capabilities of [the] youngsters."⁵

The most promising rookie on the roster was a 20-year-old infielder from the Pacific Coast League, George "Buck" Weaver. He came from the San Francisco Seals with a reputation as a brilliant fielder, but soon earned the nickname "Error-A-Day" Weaver for his erratic play.⁶ He could get to any ball in sight and make a strong throw from any position, but had a tendency to chuck the ball wildly, making a mind-boggling 71 errors in 1912. Still, he caught owner Charles Comiskey's eye early in spring training and earned the starting job at shortstop over another prospect, Ernie Johnson. Weaver's wide smile and fiery enthusiasm quickly made him a fan favorite at Comiskey Park.

Weaver's double-play partner at second base was Morris Rath, a steady 25-year-old brought up from the

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Far left: The infield at Comiskey Park is burned dry before a 1912 City Series game between the White Sox and Cubs. Left: Buck Weaver is carried off the field after his collision with Harry Lord in Game 2. (Photos: Chicago History Museum; Chicago Tribune.)

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Baltimore Orioles who didn't miss a game for the White Sox in 1912 and led the team in on-base percentage (he also led the Sox by reaching seven times on hit-by-pitches, a skill which would become his greatest claim to fame in baseball history. More on that later.)

The Sox were captained by third baseman Harry Lord, a stellar all-around player who had come over in a trade from the Boston Red Sox in 1910. Lord hit a sparkling .321 and stole 43 bases for Chicago in 1911, and commanded the respect of everyone on the team. He was reserved and quiet, with a reputation for taking baseball seriously. At age 30, he was the oldest man in the starting lineup other than the manager, Callahan.⁷

Four members of the 1906 championship team were still with the White Sox. Veteran catcher Billy Sullivan and infielder Lee Tannehill were in their final seasons with the club while pitchers Ed Walsh and Doc White would not be effective again after 1912. But for one final season, Walsh was up to the task as the team's workhorse ace and turned in a performance for the ages.

This competitive mix of old and young White Sox shocked the rest of the American League by sprinting to the top of the standings, winning 28 of their first 40 games. By June 1, they were two games ahead of the Boston Red Sox and Walsh had won nine of his first eleven starts. But Detroit Tigers manager Hughie Jennings correctly noted that Walsh was carrying too much of the load: "Chicago is playing wonderful ball, but it cannot maintain such a pace as it is setting. Here is Walsh pitching half of his club's games."⁸

The White Sox fell out of first place for good on June 15, losing three out of four to the pennant-bound Red Sox at Comiskey Park. By the Fourth of July, they had dropped to fourth place and were in need of pitching help. So, on a tip from Chicago sports writer Ring Lardner, the White Sox purchased the contract of a disgruntled right-hander who

had worn out his welcome in Boston: Eddie Cicotte.⁹

The 28-year-old Cicotte rejuvenated his career in Chicago. He had been considered an underachieving troublemaker with the Red Sox — "he was suspended without pay so much of the time that it was like having no job," wrote the *Tribune's* Sam Weller.¹⁰ But he gradually learned how to control his knuckleball and became one of the American League's best pitchers. In three months with the White Sox, Cicotte went 9-7 and was the team's only pitcher besides Walsh to finish with a record over .500.

Comiskey's other major midseason addition was a scrawny 19-year-old catcher acquired in a trade with Milwaukee of the American Association. Ray Schalk took over veteran Billy Sullivan's job for the final month and quickly became Walsh's favorite catcher. His masterful handling of Big Ed earned him the starting job in 1913, and Schalk didn't relinquish the spot for 15 more years.

Major pieces like Shoeless Joe Jackson and Eddie Collins would be added later, but the core of the "Black Sox" roster began to take shape in 1912.

But first, the White Sox's old guard — namely, Ed Walsh — had one final hurrah left in them. Chicago stumbled to a 78-76 fourth-place finish, a distant 28 games behind the Boston Red Sox. Walsh ended up with a 27-17 record, 2.15 ERA and 393 innings in an exhausting 62 appearances, the fifth time in six years he had led the league in that category. He led the AL in both games started (41) and games finished (18).

The season wasn't yet over for the Sox, or Walsh's magical right arm. Since neither the Sox nor the Cubs had qualified for the World Series, the two teams scheduled a postseason "City Series" against each other — a best-of-seven exhibition series that was as highly contested as the real Fall Classic. The City Series was a long-lasting tradition in two-team cities like St. Louis, Boston and Philadelphia, as a way for owners and players to make a little extra money and give fans one last chance to see top-flight base-

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ball before the long winter. Nowhere was the City Series more popular or intense than in Chicago.¹¹

The 1912 Chicago City Series turned out to be one of the most exciting in major league history. The first two games, at Comiskey Park, ended in ties. Walsh dominated the White Sox in Game 1 with a 1-hit shutout, allowing just a double to Hall of Famer Joe Tinker. But the White Sox couldn't scratch out a run, either, and the game was called by darkness in a 0-0 tie.

Game 2 went 12 innings, but also was called by darkness in a 3-3 tie. The contest was marred by a nasty collision between Buck Weaver and Harry Lord in the eighth inning. Lord, playing left field, was chasing a shallow fly ball when his knee struck Weaver's jaw and knocked the rookie unconscious. Weaver was carried off the field and taken to Mercy Hospital with what would probably be diagnosed today as a concussion, and various cuts and bruises over his eye, lip and ear.¹²

Weaver ignored his doctors' advice to rest in bed and watched from the press box as the Cubs beat Doc White, Walsh and Cicotte in succession to take a commanding 3-0 series lead.

As Weaver continued to recuperate (Ernie Johnson took his place at shortstop), Big Ed Walsh single-handedly led the White Sox to a historic comeback — a comeback that would not be equaled by a major league team in a sanctioned postseason series until 2004, when the Boston Red Sox famously rallied from an 0-3 deficit in the American League Championship Series against the New York Yankees.

In 1912, with the White Sox on the brink down 0-3, Walsh made his third start in seven days for Game 6. The big right-hander pitched all 11 innings as the White Sox pulled out a 5-4 victory at the Cubs' West Side Park.

Behind "Bullet" Joe Benz, the Sox also won Game 7 the next day back at Comiskey Park, scoring four runs in the eighth inning to win 7-5.

In Game 8, Weaver was back in the lineup and he homered in the sixth inning off Larry Cheney to give the Sox a lead. The Cubs, however, took a one-run lead into the ninth inning and looked to finally close out the City Series. But the Sox again rallied for four runs, the big blow being a Wally Mattick bases-loaded triple, to take an 8-5 win. Walsh came in for the ninth inning to shut down the Cubs and tie the series at three games apiece.¹³

Manager Callahan called upon — who else? — his ace Big Ed Walsh for the winner-take-all showdown on Oc-

tober 18 at Comiskey Park. Besides bragging rights, the difference between the winner's share (\$809.15) and loser's share (\$567.72) was at stake.¹⁴ This time, the White Sox didn't have to wait until their final at-bat to win. Game 9 was a laugh. The Sox scored eight runs in the third inning and cruised to a 16-0 victory. Weaver doubled, tripled and scored three runs, showing no ill effects from his injury. Schalk also tripled among his three hits. Walsh went the distance and pitched a five-hit shutout.

The Sox had done it — won four straight against the Cubs after going down 0-3 in the City Series. In a span of 10 days, Walsh had made four starts and two relief appearances, testing the physical limits of his 31-year-old arm. In addition to his 393 innings in the regular season, he had pitched 41 more in the City Series.

Walsh was never the same after his 1912 heroics. He was limited to 97.2 innings in 1913, requiring great periods of rest between starts, and won just 13 games the rest of his career.¹⁵ His last appearance in the big leagues was in 1917 with the Boston Braves. He later returned to coach with the White Sox and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1947.

The White Sox quickly moved away from the Walsh-led "Hitless Wonders" teams and by 1913 had the youngest roster in the league.¹⁶ The exuberant Buck Weaver was named captain when Harry Lord quit the team in a salary dispute, and Eddie Cicotte became the ace of the staff as Walsh's pitching grew ineffective. Kid Gleason remained with the White Sox as a coach through the managerial tenures of Jimmy Callahan and Pants Rowland, finally taking the reins himself in that fateful season of 1919.

Two other members of the 1912 White Sox figured into the Black Sox Scandal, as well.

Weaver's double-play partner, Morris Rath, hit .200 in 92 games for the White Sox in 1913 and was sent down to the minor leagues. He resurfaced as the Cincinnati Reds' starting second baseman in 1919 and was memorably plunked in the back by Cicotte in Game 1 of the World Series — reportedly the sign to gamblers that the World Series "fix" was on.

After the "Eight Men Out" were suspended from baseball in 1921, the White Sox found 33-year-old Ernie Johnson — who had battled Weaver for the job at shortstop back in 1912 — in the Pacific Coast League and brought him back to the majors to take over at shortstop. Johnson spent parts of three seasons with the White Sox before moving on.

The team that became known as the Black Sox changed the course of the franchise — and baseball history —

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forever. That team began forming in 1912. With a different mix of players and personalities, the scandal might never have happened.

The leader and captain of the 1912 White Sox, Harry Lord, certainly thought so. He later expressed regrets about not being in a position to do more.

"I'm sure," Lord said, "that if I could have been there, Joe Jackson and Buck Weaver, whom I still don't believe were in it, and the others would have listened to me. I could have stopped it if I'd had to punch the ringleader in the nose."¹⁷

Notes

(1) Baseball-Reference.com shows the 1911 White Sox roster with an average age of 29.0, a full year older than the St. Louis Browns. Accessed online at <http://www.baseball-reference.com/leagues/AL/1911.shtml> on October 18, 2012.

(2) *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1912.

(3) Elfers, James. "Nixey Callahan." SABR Baseball Biography Project. Accessed online at <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/ee2e44fa> on September 12, 2012.

(4) *Chicago Tribune*, December 13, 1911.

(5) *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1912.

(6) Stein, Irving. *The Ginger Kid: The Buck Weaver Story*. Dubuque, IA: The Elysian Fields Press, 1992, p. 28.

(7) Anderson, Will. "Harry Lord." SABR Baseball Biography Project. Accessed online at <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/7ef30196> on September 13, 2012.

(8) Stein, p. 19.

(9) Ibid.

(10) Sandoval, James. "Eddie Cicotte." SABR Baseball Biography Project. Accessed online at <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/1f272b1a> on September 10, 2012.

(11) "Regional Postseason Series." Retrosheet.org. Accessed online at <http://www.retrosheet.org/Regional%20Series/> on September 10, 2012; Stein, p. 20.

(12) *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 1912.

(13) Retrosheet.org.

(14) Stein, p. 22.

(15) Schimler, Stuart. "Ed Walsh." SABR Baseball Biography Project. Accessed online at <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/3a0e7935> on September 15, 2012.

(16) Baseball-Reference.com.

(17) Anderson, "Harry Lord."

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was no saint, and the players may have hated him (as did most players with most owners), but no longer can we claim that Comiskey's miserliness was a serious factor in why the Sox players chose to fix the World Series.

Bill Lamb's article on the Black Sox legal proceedings may also prove to be a landmark study, bringing together pieces of the puzzle that have long confused writers and readers. His new book, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial and Civil Litigation*, is [available for pre-order on Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) now. I look forward to reading his unique perspective on a subject that hasn't been explored in much depth before.



Also wanted to give you a brief update on our 1919 White Sox BioProject book project, which is coming along slowly but surely:

◆ We're almost finished with all the player bios, so now it's time for Phase 2: The essays. We discussed this a little at our annual committee meeting at the SABR convention, but for those of you who couldn't make it to Minneapolis, we need a brief summary (500 to 1,000 words) of the regular season, the World Series and, of course, the Black Sox Scandal. Any volunteers for either of these three essays?

We're also looking for any other interesting essays to highlight the 1919 White Sox and their season. For instance, since this is primarily a book of biographies, someone is already writing an essay about the gamblers involved in the World Series fix. Perhaps you'd like to write about how Kid Gleason's pitching staff was affected by the loss of Red Faber, Dave Danforth, Reb Russell and Joe Benz or how the Sox might have done in the 1920s with a full roster of stars.

◆ We still have about four player bios out for assignment, so if you haven't turned yours in, let me know where you're at in the process and send those as soon as you can.

◆ A couple of prospective authors were forced to drop out recently and we're now in need of someone to write the biographies for **Tom McGuire**, a veteran of the Federal League who pitched one game for the Sox in August 1919; and **Roy Wilkinson**, who made two relief appearances in the fixed World Series and later lost 20 games for the decimated 1921 Sox.

If anyone would like to write about either of these two pitchers for our book, please let me know at buckweaver@gmail.com. Hope to have a lot more progress to report in the next newsletter!

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, contact chairman Jacob Pomrenke at buckweaver@gmail.com.