

BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

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SABR Biblio News

Comments from the Chair

I hope you noticed Executive Director John Zaje's note that early editions of SABR's *Baseball Research Journal* are available online as full text. The address is <http://brj.sabrwebs.com>.

The page contains the full issues from the *BRJ*'s of 1972 through 1984, as well as 1986 and 1989. The others are in process. The early issues of *BRJ* have been unavailable for years. (I joined in 1982 and 1972 through 1974 were already out of print at that point. Later editions joined them steadily).

The page comes with a search engine which allows you to type in a name or phrase and find all mentions. Since SABR controlled the pages, the images are very clear. The kinds of problems that crop up with searching scans of old newspapers are much less frequent.

Responses to Paul Dickson's request for nominations for a proposed reprint series by Dover Publications continue to arrive. In the last newsletter, I noted the nominees have included *Every Diamond Doesn't Sparkle* (Fresco Thompson and Cy Rice), *Dodger Daze and Knights* (Tommy Holmes), *Baseball and the Cold War* (Howard Senzel), *Percentage Baseball* (Earnshaw Cook), *Ban Johnson: Czar of Baseball* (Eugene Murdock), and *100 Years of Baseball* (Lee Allen). Since then, Branch Rickey's *The American Diamond* and Eric Walker's *The Sinister First Baseman* have been put forward. If you have any further suggestions, please send them to Paul (newdefiner@aol.com) with a copy to me (agmccue44@earthlink.net).

Tom Hetrick augmented our production of indexes for important baseball books that were published without them. Tom, with help from index project director Skip McAfee, did an index for *Joy in Mudville: The Big Book of Baseball Humor*, edited by Dick Schaap and Mort Gerberg published by Doubleday in 1992.

The index will be made available, as usual, through the SABR Research Exchange, overseen by Len Levin. Contact Len at LenLevin5@hotmail.com or 282 Doyle Ave, Providence, RI 02906-3355.

Andy McCue
Chair, Bibliography Committee

Reviews and Features

This BAD Day in Yankees History: A Calendar of Calamities, by Gabriel Schechter. Foreword by Bill Lee. Charles April Publications, Cooperstown, NY. Spiral bound.

In this year when all real Americans celebrate the absence of the New York Yankees from post-season play, Gabriel Schechter has produced a book to keep those memories alive for the next year.

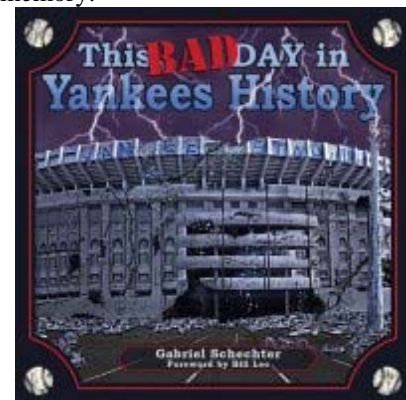
This BAD Day in Yankees History: A Calendar of Calamities is a perfect bathroom book. I first discovered this worthy genre 40 years ago with the first Macmillan *Baseball Encyclopedia*. These books provide interesting information in bites to fit any time frame or intestinal issue. And, unlike a book with narrative, you can put it down knowing the next inevitable visit will provide more fascinating information.

Schechter, a SABR member who works as a researcher at the Hall of Fame, has structured the book as a calendar, but it won't really work as a desk model. There's no room to make notes or keep track of a schedule. However, it does come with an index, allowing you to look up that anecdote that has stuck in your memory.

Each day features three to six nuggets of bad news for the Bronx Bombers that occurred on that day in history. There's also usually a quote of the day. See April 26: Oscar Gamble of a George Steinbrenner pledged to trade him: "I would like him to keep his word for the first time in his life...."

The anecdotes start early in Yankees history, in the years the current keepers of the flame prepare to forget, the years before the Yankees used their money to buy the core of a good Red Sox team and turn it into a "Yankee Dynasty" in the early 1920s.

There's September 3, 1906, when Kid Elberfield attacks umpire Silk O'Loughlin multiple times, including six attempts to kick him; The Kid had to be subdued by police.



And, from there, it follows the trail of Babe Ruth's stomach, last-minute losses, trades that failed, and Yankee players beating ostriches in spaghetti-eating contests (see April 3).

But mostly there's what Schechter calls the "arrogant, rude, self-centered, and aggressive" behavior that defines an organization that will always tell you how they represent class.

Every Billy Martin, or Yogi Berra, or Billy Martin, or Bob Lemon, or Billy Martin firing is detailed. There's Casey Stengel acknowledging he'll "never make the mistake of being 70 again."

But mostly, there's a nugget you can find in a few minutes that allows you to feel superior to Yankees, the organization and their fans. And, what's a better way to start a day.

Andy McCue



Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinson's First Season, by Jonathan Eig. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2008. Notes, index, photographs. 323 pages.

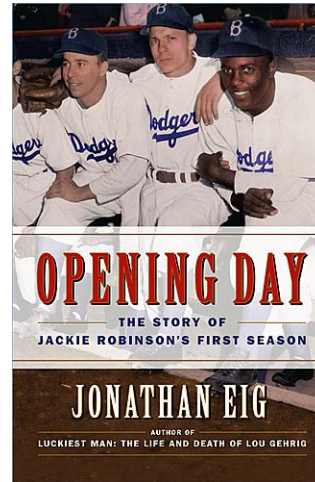
I didn't want to read Jonathan Eig's *Opening Day* when it was first published. It seemed to me that more than enough books had been written on Jackie Robinson and the Brooklyn Dodgers. I thought of Roger Kahn's 1972 *The Boys of Summer*, Jules Tygiel's 1983 *Baseball's Great Experiment*, Arnold Ramparsad's 1998 *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* -- a few among many -- and wondered what Eig's book could add. Then a friend received a copy as a Christmas gift and reported that he thought it well done. Having read it, I do, too.

Eig is a journalist trying his hand at history in *Opening Day*. He begins his Notes by saying "I can't imagine what Jackie Robinson went through in 1947," his point being that "I have tried in these pages *not* to imagine what Robinson went through in 1947. I have worked at every turn to present verifiable facts. Nothing here is imagined or invented. No dialogue has been recreated for dramatic effect. The facts speak for themselves, and I think they speak much more powerfully than the myths that have come to cloud Robinson's story." Here Eig announces a central purpose of his book: myths have obscured what really happened; dispelling them would make the meaning of what happened clear.

What are the myths "that have come to cloud Robinson's story"? I noticed three particularly: the Cardinals' attempted boycott of Robinson, dealt with in the chapter "Cardinal Sins"; Robinson's relationship with Pee Wee Reese, dealt with in the chapter "Pee Wee's Embrace"; and Robinson's relationship with Dixie Walker, dealt with in the chapter "Dixie Walker's Dilemma."

We all know the story of Stanley Woodward's expose of the Cardinals' attempt to boycott and Ford Frick's heroic announcement that such attempts would be dealt with summarily. Eig presents the events somewhat differently. He

suggests that "the racial talk," in Stan Musial's words, "was just hot air," produced by a Cardinals' team slump, a couple of rainy days, and the hot-headedness of Harry Walker. Cardinals' owner Sam Breadon was worried enough to ask National League President Ford Frick to help him calm the players down. Stanley Woodard's subsequent news story greatly exaggerated the situation and contained a quotation attributed to Frick that Woodard the next day admitted "he



had never intended to suggest . . . was entirely accurate." Cardinal players "denied everything in the story."

Likewise, we all know of Reese's friendship with Robinson, and particularly of the moment when he put his arm around Robinson in response to racial baiting by opponents' players and fans. Eig proposes that this didn't happen in 1947, though it probably did later, during the 1948 season. He does cite accounts by Lester

Rodney and Rex Barney that place the event in the 1947 season. Rodney remembers that "I saw the incident in Cincinnati.... A bunch of men before the game were shouting. Pee Wee dropped his glove at shortstop and walked over." This memory, however, is not backed up by any reporting at the time; no one wrote about it in 1947. Eig describes his sense of Reese's and Robinson's relationship. "In later years, as Robinson and Reese developed a genuine friendship, Robinson would talk about the role the Dodger shortstop played in making him feel a part of the team. Reese did indeed become a leader among the Dodgers in matters racial, embracing Robinson physically and emotionally. But not in 1947. In 1947, he was one of the boys. He was an ally, but not a strong one, and certainly not an outspoken one. Rickey and Robinson, in accounts written shortly after the 1947 season, both rated Eddie Stanky as Robinson's earliest important backer." Eig concludes "it's possible that the Robinson-Reese moment took place just as Barney, Rodney, and others remembered it, in 1947. But it seems unlikely."

Eig portrays Robinson in 1947 as a rookie accepted among the Dodgers for his baseball skills but largely ignored as a human being. Eig's treatment of Walker, generally thought of as Robinson's arch enemy on the team, is an example of this. Eig deals with Walker's attitude most clearly in the chapter "Dixie Walker's Dilemma." He begins the chapter by quoting from a story by Boston sportswriter Clif Keane in which Walker gives Robinson batting tips and Robinson is quoted exclaiming about how helpful all his teammates have been.

This prompts Eig to speculate on the relationship between Walker and Robinson. "Years later Robinson said that Walker was the only man on the team with whom he had no relationship whatever in 1947. It's possible that Keane invented the conversation between the two men, although it seems unlikely given that he had reported the inte-

raction immediately after the game and that no one challenged it at the time. What's more likely is that Robinson had so few encounters with Walker that he forgot about this one (and perhaps others) as the years went by. It was easy – and not just for Robinson, but for many writers – to make Walker the unvarnished villain and to omit evidence to the contrary. The relationship may well have remained frosty all season long, as Robinson suggested years after the fact, yet it's clear that Walker had accepted his black teammate, at least to an extent. From the start of the season to its finish he never criticized Robinson publicly for mistakes on the field. He never publicly questioned the right of black ballplayers to compete in the major leagues. And as far as anyone could tell, he never again spoke of organized protest. Faced with a dilemma, he decided to set aside his anger and play ball, which is all Robinson had asked in the first place." Walker, as Eig presents him, may have been a racial bigot, but he was also a good teammate in 1947.

That's what Reese was, too, but it's Eig's conclusion that none of Robinson's teammates were more than that in 1946. He writes that "years later, Reese, Bragan, Lavagetto, and many others on the team would describe how much Robinson's friendship had meant to them, how they had felt empathy throughout his struggle, and how they had learned from him the true meaning of courage. Robinson, they would say, had made them better men. But they made claims only after Robinson had established himself as a winner, and only after it had become fashionable to support civil rights. In 1947, when he needed them most, Robinson had no true friends, not among the Dodgers, anyway." Eig cites Jimmy Cannon's comment as Robinson debuted in Philadelphia, "the loneliest man I have ever seen in sports."

Eig's portrait of Robinson himself in 1947 is unusually vivid. While we are used to remembering Robinson as a liberal Republican in politics and as someone who in 1947 and 1948 had agreed to turn the other cheek in response to racial epithets, Eig uncovers a Robinson who is a radical in politics and an agent of chaos and one who, in one important way, responded aggressively to the situation he found himself in. In his chapter on the politics of integration, "Up in Harlem," Eig lists several left-wing groups Robinson was in touch with in 1946 and 1947, but it appears that Branch Rickey discouraged his participation. According to Lester Rodney, the *Daily Worker* sportswriter, "Branch Rickey was not favorably inclined toward his involvement, and in fact he was hostile toward it . . . Jackie was personally an outspoken and intelligent guy . . . His instinct was to get involved . . . [But] he knew in this particular situation he couldn't alienate Rickey."

On the bases, as Eig presents him, Robinson was an agent of chaos, attractive to criminals because of the kind of aggressive play he practiced. The burglar Malcolm Little, listening to games on his radio in his prison cell, "was spell-bound by Robinson, captivated by his speed and daring He...pictured this burglar, this black man stealing the white man's bases, running circles around them, making them look helpless 'Jackie Robinson, had, then, his most fanatic fan in me,' he wrote." On the basepaths, "Robinson put himself in harm's way every chance he got. His speed and guile broke down the game's natural order and left oppo-

nents cursing and hurling their gloves. When chaos erupted, that's when he knew he was at his best."

And it's on these basepaths that Eig finds Robinson most forcefully not turning the other cheek. Eig writes that "despite his vow to avoid confrontation with his opponents, Jack had already found a way to fight back . . . [Robinson] was playing a breathtakingly aggressive style of baseball unlike that of the other men on the team. If he'd wanted to fit in and maintain a low profile, at least until he'd become better established, he could have done so. He could have pounded out hits, advanced to the next base when the better behind him moved him along, and at all times kept his mouth shut. Instead, he glared at his opponents. He crowded closer to the plate when pitchers tried to back him off. He stole bases and took wide turns even in games that weren't close, just to show he could, playing at all times with the confidence of a man who knows something his opponents don't.... It was...a deliberate and cunning attack."

Robinson explains this, according to Eig, to his wife, whose presence helped him through this most challenging year. Eig's examination reveals that the circumstances of Robinson's rookie year were in many ways not quite as others have remembered them, and *Opening Day* (surely the beginning of a new era was well as the first day of the 1947 season) does speak "more powerfully than the myths that have come to cloud Robinson's story."

Leverett T. Smith, Jr.
Rocky Mount, NC



Berra's Boswell: An interview with author Dave Kaplan

Yogi Berra is one of America's most beloved characters. He enjoyed a 19-year career as a player, followed by several more seasons as a manager and coach. His simple, gentle demeanor — and unique ability to turn a phrase — have kept him in the embrace of an adoring public long after his days on the diamond ended.

One of the forces behind the scenes in perpetuating that legend is Dave Kaplan, director of the Yogi Berra Museum and Learning Center on the campus of Montclair State University in Little Falls, NJ.

Prior to joining the museum as its director in 1998, Kaplan (no relation) was the Sunday sports editor for the *New York Daily News*. In addition to his day-job duties, he has collaborated with Berra on four books, most recently *You Can Observe A Lot By Watching: What I've Learned About Teamwork From the Yankees and Life* (Wiley). Why so many books? "People ask for [them]," he said; they just can't get enough of Yogi.

Kaplan described the process of working with the Yankee Hall-of-Famer.

"We would just talk and talk and talk," Kaplan said in his book-strewn, tchotchke-filled office in the museum prior

to a Sept. 21 engagement with Art Shamsky and Jay Schreiber, assistant sports editor for *The New York Times*.

Kaplan had never met Berra before taking the director's job. "Yogi is an incredible font of knowledge about everything that goes on in sports. He's a real student of the game." Sometimes Kaplan would tape the conversation, at other times he would just keep the conversation in his head.

The relationship obviously worked, judging by their continued output

The museum has the feel of a mini-Hall of Fame. Pieces of Berra memorabilia — such as gloves, World Series rings, and other artifacts — fill display cases. Photos and paintings depict special moments in Berra's life and Yankees' and baseball history. One room overlooks Yogi Berra Stadium, home of the New Jersey Jackals of the independent Can-Am League and the Montclair State Red Hawks.

"This is a wonderful tribute to Yogi, a jewel of a museum," said Kaplan proudly. Berra is "a very visible presence.... He comes in three or four times a week."

The museum is fun, but it's the learning center aspect that gives Kaplan more satisfaction.

"The biggest reward at this place has been working with so many students and using Yogi as a teaching tool," said Kaplan whose mother and father worked in the education field.

Kaplan and his wife, Naomi, are the parents of three daughters — Leah, 19, Emily, 17, and Eva, nine — who have been involved in youth sports. He laments the direction such activities have taken in recent years, with so much emphasis on winning and personal aggrandizement in the pursuit of scholarships and other honors. He sees the need for change and uses the learning center to get the message across to the many tri-state area schools that visit. At a recent program, captains of high school teams were invited to discuss their roles as leaders. "They have the power to improve the culture of sports for the members of their teams," said Kaplan.

Other Berra-Kaplan collaborations include:

* *10 Rings: My Championship Seasons*

* *When You Come to a Fork in the Road, Take It!: Inspiration and Wisdom From One of Baseball's Greatest Heroes*

* *What Time Is It? You Mean Now?: Advice for Life From the Zenest Master of Them All*



Yogi Berra, left, and Dave Kaplan at the Yogi Berra Museum. Photo by Dith Pran, courtesy of Dave Kaplan

Ron Kaplan

Baseball's Greatest Hit: The Story of Take Me Out to the Ball Game, by Andy Strasberg, Bob Thompson, Tim Wiles. Hal Leonard, 2008. 210 pages, illustrated, music CD.

I have two sons, ages 17 and 8. Up until each turned six or so, I would sing the same two songs every night for their bedtime ritual: "Amazing Grace" and "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." While they still go to church, neither of them cares a thing about baseball like their dad. But they know that song.

That is the way it is with many folks, I assume. The song "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" is marked indelibly in the minds of millions of people who live in the United States, and, I suspect, elsewhere. What is it about that song that makes us want to sing about popcorn and crackerjack, about the crowd and, of all things, striking out?

When Jack Norworth and Albert von Tilzer wrote words and music for this immortal beloved song in 1908, they had no idea how popular it would become.

No musician ever does (with the exception of Beethoven who had an inkling about his own). But when Norworth wrote the song for his love Nora Bayes, it was a song that would impact American culture. The song became a hit.

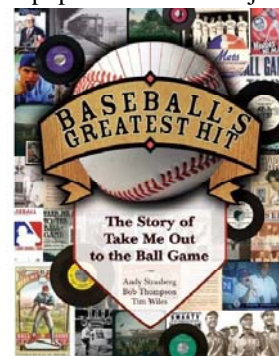
Now, 100 years later, we celebrate the centennial of the song. At this year's All-Star game in New York at Yankee Stadium, the song was to be featured, but it was not on national television. Still, commercials and websites challenged people to come up with original ideas on how to record the song.

Another way of remembering the song is this book, a labor of love and devotion, by Strasberg, Thompson, and Wiles. *Baseball's Greatest Hit: The Story of Take Me Out to the Ball Game* is a remarkable and beautiful book. With a foreword by Carly Simon and an introduction by Bud Selig, the book is complete with hundreds of photographs, amusing and impressive anecdotes, and a history of baseball by way of a song. The song is the third most popular song sung in America after "Happy Birthday," and the "Star-Spangled Banner."

So, how did a song written in 1908 become such a hit? That is the story this book tells. It found its first home, not in the ballparks but in slide shows in theatres where audiences sang along. The fact that Norworth had never been to a game did not stop the popularity of the song. Who cares about the author's experience when the song matched his or her own?

The popularity is not just with the baseball crowd, either. More than 400 musicians and singers have recorded the song.

Finally, this book contains that singular most important item: a CD containing 16 different recordings. Artists range from Fred Lambert and Leroy Holmes to Dr. John and



Bruce Springsteen. Perhaps the most popular rendition is by the late Harry Caray, the last track on the CD.

What is wrong with this book? Nothing. It is fun, entertaining and beautiful. It is a wonderful tribute to a song that brings us a smile every time we sing it. Even if it is about striking out, we seem not to care. Just to be singing this song at a ball game is all we want to do. It brings us a smile and relief from the day. It makes us remember every game we've ever been to, every time our father played catch with us. It may even remind us of every time our father sang it to us at bedtime.

Marc Jolley

Mercer University

(This reviewed appeared in *Arete* and is reprinted with the writer's permission.)



Remembering The House That Ruth Built

When the Boston Red Sox won their first World Championship in almost 90 years, it opened the door for a cottage industry in the publishing world. It seems like everyone -- from the sportswriters who covered the team to the players themselves -- was taking advantage of the historic occasion to write a book.

The final season of Yankee Stadium is another such occasion.

Several titles have been released to mark the passing of the landmark in the Bronx (even though the final season had yet to be played). Most follow the same path, chronicling the (mostly) highlights of the Yankees in a straightforward timeline, while reminding the reader that there were other momentous events hosted therein. Popes and musicians, boxers and footballers shared their moment in the spotlight.

♦ *Memories of Yankee Stadium*, by Scott Pitoniak.

This modest little volume has no pretension of grandeur, delivering exactly as advertised: the recollections of the author as he strolls down memory lane. Pitoniak bounces back and forth focusing on themes rather than a strict chronology, and his offering is much heavier on the narrative and lighter on the graphics, which, compared with the others, puts him at a disadvantage.

♦ *A Yankee Stadium Scrapbook: A Lifetime of Memories*, by David Fischer.

This one is just as the name implies, down to the illusion of tape to hold down the scores of photographs. There isn't much in the way of deep text here, as there is in some of the other books, but it's nevertheless enjoyable to thumb through, seeing what images within the reader they might invoke.

♦ *Yankee Stadium: 85 Years of Memories, 1923-2008*, by Les Krantz

Krantz focuses on specific aspects of the Stadium, including "magical moments" and star athletes. Some of the chapter headings are applicable to multiple players/ occa-

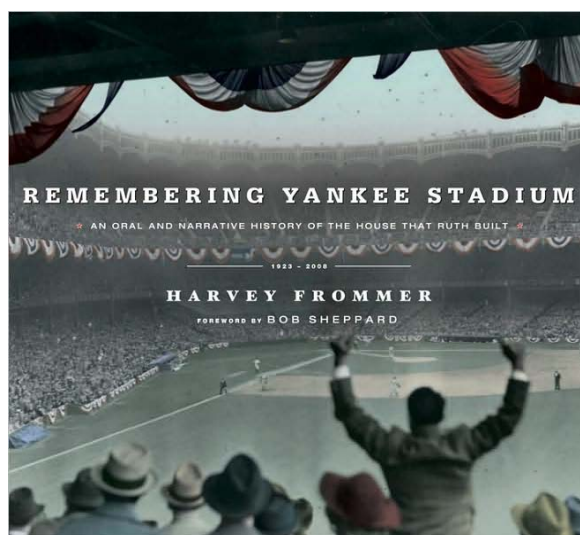
sions. There's also a chapter on the non-baseball events, including the ceremonies following 9/11 (the only book of the bunch to do so). This one includes a DVD hosted by former Yankees slugger Reggie Jackson.

♦ *Remembering Yankee Stadium: An Oral History of the House That Ruth Built, 1923-2008*, by Harvey Frommer.

The publisher, Stewart, Tabori & Chang, continues to uphold its reputation for putting out handsome books that any reader of whatever subject matter is at hand -- movies, art, sports -- would enjoy. Frommer, who lives and teaches in the heart of "Red Sox Nation," is once again dead solid perfect in conveying the image the Yankees had on not only sports but the all-American ideal (if you overlook their policy on minority players) for much of the 20th century. He enlists the help of dozens of players (both Yankees and their opponents), journalists, politicians and just plain folks for the oral history aspects. One would expect to find the same familiar pictures they've seen for years, but the editors have managed to unearth photos heretofore unbound in a baseball volume.

♦ *Yankee Stadium: The Official Retrospective*, by Mark Vancil and Alfred Sanatsiere III,

This volume is everything you should expect from a book with the "official" imprimatur. There's a marvelous "virtual tour" of the stadium, including areas most fans would never get a chance to visit, such as George Steinbrenner's office and the Yankees clubhouse. Several writers such as Bill Madden and Bob Klapisch contributed. In addition, numerous players and other personalities offer their "first person" impressions of specific events or the stadium in general. Visually gorgeous and narratively engaging, this one is sure to drive home what The Yankee Stadium, as it is formally referred to, has meant to the city, the country and, without being overly dramatic, the world.



Ron Kaplan

Please send articles, reviews, and suggestions to Ron Kaplan at Ronk23@aol.com. Please put "For SABR Newsletter" in the subject line.