

# SABR Minor League Newsletter

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## **Bob McConnell succeeds Ernie Green as Chairman**

Let me introduce myself, although I know a number of you personally and have corresponded with many others. I am one of the original members of SABR and was the first secretary- treasurer of the organization. I joined the Minor League Committee when it was formed and have been a member ever since. My main interest is minor league home runs. Another interest is compiling a list of all professional leagues that operated in the Nineteenth Century (see the later article). Bob McConnell

## **Plans for the Newsletter**

Some ideas for material to be included in the newsletter are as follows:

- (1) Articles on sources of research material and methods for doing research.
- (2) Description of projects being worked on by committee members - what the project involves, where the project stands at present, and plans for publishing the final result.
- (3) Proposed projects to be undertaken by the committee as a group.
- (4) Book descriptions for both new and out-of-print books. These will be more than just book reviews.
- (5) Letters to the editor.
- (6) Player career records. As space permits, we will publish career records of players who were not in any of the three volumes of *Minor League Baseball Stars*.
- (7) Minor league records for well known major league players. Some players had great minor league records which we tend to overlook. Also, some outstanding major leaguers have poor minor league stats. We will include both the good and the bad.
- (8) Help wanted. We will encourage members to let us know where they need help.
- (9) Articles by members on the results of their research.

Our main objective is to encourage research and to make members aware of what has been done, what is currently being done, and what is planned. We encourage members to write concerning the newsletter or anything else relating to the minor leagues.

## **Questionnaire**

Enclosed you will find a one page questionnaire. We are asking all committee members to fill it out and return it to Bob McConnell, at the above address. A similar questionnaire was distributed about five years ago, but we want to bring our information up to date. We will incorporate some of the information from the questionnaire in future newsletters. You must return the questionnaire to remain on the committee. This may seem somewhat arbitrary. However, this idea was presented to the members attending the annual Minor League Committee meeting at Phoenix this summer. The members were almost unanimously in favor of it.

We want all committee members to become actively involved in some way with minor league research. The subject is like an untapped gold mine just waiting to be worked. We encourage you to fulfill requests

from other members, provided they are reasonable. For those of you who are interested in the minors, but do not know how to get started with your research, you will get some ideas in our future newsletters.

### **Nineteenth Century Professional Baseball Leagues**

The Minor League Committee has compiled a list of nineteenth century professional baseball leagues, along with notes on known information for each league. We are starting a project to gather more information on these leagues. The ten page compilation gives details on the type of information that we are seeking. If you have specific information on a nineteenth century league or if you are interested in the project and would like to look over the list, write to Bob McConnell, at the above address, for a copy.

### **SABR Farm Committee Project**

(This project is being led by Bill McMahon. He has submitted the following report. Bill can be reached at the Department of Philosophy, University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-1903, or McMahon@uakron.edu.)

A subcommittee of the Minor League Committee has been set up for the purpose of producing a definitive list of farm clubs. The initial members are Bob Davids, Bob Hoie, Jim Holl, Jerry Jackson, Lloyd Johnson, Bob McConnell, Ray Nemecek, John Pardon, and Bill McMahon. We have fairly accurate information from 1935 on (with some question marks), but our data from before 1935 is fragmentary. We would welcome further volunteers for this project and would appreciate any information you can send.

There are four general periods to consider:

(1) Before 1920. Aside from direct ownership the relationships appear to be largely informal. A study of these is necessary. Our leading authority on this is Jerry Jackson, so if you wish to work in this area, please contact him at P. O. Box 620218, Oviedo, FL 32762-0218, or SABRMnLgs@aol.com.

(2) 1920-46. The beginnings and fruition of farm systems. The major primary sources are the Heilbroner publications and the issues of the *Sporting News*. Some of us are working in this area, so if you are interested, you may contact Bill McMahon, at the above address.

(3) 1947-62. Peak and decline of farm systems. From 1947 the *TSN Guide* publishes lists of farm clubs. The *Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball (MLE)* should be nearly 100% accurate here, but we have encountered some minor problems with the sources. Also we are trying to get a list of farm clubs of minor league teams, as some non-affiliated minor league teams had their own farm systems. I have checked 1961-62 and will be doing 1960 shortly. We would appreciate help from people with access to back issues of microfilms of *TSN*.

(4) 1963 to date. Player Development Contract and end of B, C, D classifications. Here the *MLE* should be virtually infallible, but it wouldn't hurt to have an independent check. If you have team yearbooks, *Red* and *Green Books*, etc., we would appreciate your checking them against the *MLE*, and if there are discrepancies, sending them in.

The reason why, even when data is available, a definitive list of farm clubs is difficult to achieve is that discrepancies arise from two sources, facts and interpretation. Examples of factual differences in primary sources are: (a) For 1953 I have both the *Heilbroner Blue Book* and *TSN* list. *Heilbroner* has some additional farms to those listed in *TSN*. The evident reason is that the *TSN* list is dated March 1, and some farms were added later. (b) John Pardon sent me a *Heilbroner* list for 1937, which I compared to one I had gleaned from the microfilms of *TSN*. There were several discrepancies, the most interesting of which concerned the Cambria clubs- Trenton, Salisbury (MD), Ayden, and Landis. Joe Cambria typically worked with Clark Griffith and Washington, yet *Heilbroner* lists his clubs as farms of the New York Giants!

My hypothesis is that there is a clerical error in *Heilbroner*, i.e., Washington is team VIII, the Giants XIII, and someone inadvertently transposed the V and the X.

Examples of differences in interpretation are: (c) Whether the farm club relation is always transitive, i.e., if A is a farm of B, and B of C, then A is a farm of C. Bob Hoie, author of the article in *Total Baseball*, adheres to the theory that the relation is transitive, while I think there may be some exceptions to it. (d) What to do about "de facto farms." Among the best examples of these are the wartime affiliations of Little Rock/White Sox and Memphis/Browns. Officially, they weren't affiliated, but... On the other hand, it is arguable that at times Los Angeles was more a de jure than a de facto farm of the Cubs.

The committee will be adjudicating these matters, but first we need more information. In the next few weeks I expect to set up a website listing our results by year. We shall inform you when that is ready. Meanwhile we would like to hear from those of you who are interested and wish to contribute.

### **Reporting on the Death of Minor League Players**

Ray Nemecek requests that all committee members keep a lookout in their local newspapers for obituaries and/or stories on the death of minor league players. Ray reports death information to *Baseball America* and to the *Baseball Blue Book*. The exact date of death and the place of death (not residence at time of death) are needed. If you are so inclined, contact a relative or friend of the deceased and try to obtain the middle name, date and place of birth, height and weight (playing), bats and throws.

Ray makes it easy. He can be reached in any of four ways:

Address	1424 Heatherton Drive, Naperville, IL 60563-2233
Telephone	630-357-2381
Fax	630-357-2391
E-mail	basebalray@aol.com

We will also report these deaths in committee newsletters. If the deceased player also played in the majors, the above information should also be sent to Bill Carle, chairman of the SABR Biographical Committee, at 8220 East 135th Street, Grandview, MO 64030.

### **Williamsport (PA) Baseball History**

Committee member Lou Hunsinger, with James P. Quigel, Jr., has published *Williamsport's Baseball Heritage*, Arcadia Publishing (1-888-313-BOOK), 1998, \$18.99. This is a soft cover book of 128 pages of pictorial baseball history salvaged from the files of the defunct newspaper, *The Grit*. Did you know that the Williamsport Millionaires team of the outlaw 1906 Tri-State League included players such as Jimmy Sebring, Bob Unglaub, Gabby Street, Rube Bressler, and Rabbit Gleason? The authors have also submitted a manuscript on the history of Williamsport, PA baseball to the editors of the Pennsylvania University Press.

### **Minor League Museum Statistics Project**

There is exciting news out of Memphis, Tennessee, that affects SABR. The National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues is sponsoring a newly formed Museum of Minor League Baseball (MMLB). Dave Chase, former publisher of *Baseball America*, is the director. Ray Nemecek, one of the founders of SABR, and Lloyd Johnson, past president and director of SABR, are consultants to the museum project. We have been able to convince the Museum leaders to support and fund a project to compile and input minor league statistics from 1877 to the present. Right now, they are putting together the various components of the whole project.

## **Statistics Project Overview**

The Minor League Statistics project is a massive project that transfers all of the known statistics and biographical data of the estimated 150,000-250,000 players who participated in Minor League Baseball from 1877 through 2000 to a computerized database. The anticipated database supersedes any sports information that exists today. It is a giant leap forward in the baseball world that may have untold effects on other research. Not only will the Minor League Statistics project put the MMLB on top of the information world, but it will reaffirm that Minor League Baseball is the National Pastime.

## **Brief Project Description**

The Statistical Database project consists of several components, and, subsequently, several research groups. The three main components are statistics (Major, minor, Negro, Mexican, Japanese leagues), biographical information, and original research (statistics for leagues that do not have them). These different but compatible bodies of information need to be combined in a computer program that produces a baseball card for any given player for visitors to the MMLB. Most of the data input will be volunteer work.

The job is not easy. Year by year, the statistics are to be scanned or input in a computer spreadsheet. Each volunteer is asked to realign or input one to three years from the Guides. One year will take approximately 3-4 weeks. They will provide the computer disc of scanned stats and photocopies from the Guides. Your job will be to align those stats in Excel or some spreadsheet program. After you have finished, they will place first names (from the NA Bulletins or reserve lists) besides the last names on your work.

To participate in the statistics input you must have a computer with Excel or Works spreadsheet. They are using Excel. Eventually the PC files will be dumped into a mainframe database program. They plan to do the bulk of the communication by e-mail. Files can be sent instantly over electronic lines. They may utilize a website as well.

There are other jobs to do as well as scanning and inputting. Original research is one of those. Another is first name research. There is as much as you would like to do, or as little as you feel comfortable doing. The instant rewards are a lifetime pass to the Museum for one year of stats, and a copy of the unpublished database for three years of stats. For more, they will negotiate. The long-term reward is the satisfaction of having been a part of a team that attempted and accomplished the impossible.

If you have questions concerning this project contact Lloyd Johnson, 816-822-2516 or [lloydj@msn.com](mailto:lloydj@msn.com).

## **Texas League Media Guides**

The Tulsa Baseball Club gave SABR member Andy McCue some baseball material. Andy, in turn, donated it to the Minor League Committee. The material consists of a scrapbook of newspaper clippings covering the period from 1941 to 1950 and photocopies of Texas League Media Guides for 1962, 66, 75-78, 80-83, 85-92. The scrapbook is in somewhat fragile condition and Morris Eckhouse has suggested that it be sent to Western Reserve University where the SABR archives are located. Western has the facilities to make copies of fragile material. I can easily reproduce pages from the media guides. We will try to give a better idea as to the content of this material in the next newsletter. In the meantime, if anyone wants more details sooner, contact Bob McConnell.

## **Three I League**

Tim Wiles has given us a copy of a brief history of the Three I League. This material was donated to the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library. If anyone is willing to expand on this history, Bob McConnell will send you a copy of this material.

## **Des Moines History**

Scott Sailor, an official of the Iowa Cubs (Pacific Coast League), is working on a history of baseball in Des Moines. If any committee member thinks that they may have something to offer, contact Scott at 350 SW First Street, Des Moines, IA 50309, or call him at 515-243-6111.

## **Forrest Edward "Frosty" Kennedy**

Forrest "Frosty" Kennedy passed away last year. He was best known as one of the few players to reach the magic 60 mark in home runs for a season. Playing for Plainview of the Southwestern League, Frosty's big year was 1956. His obituary stated that he hit his 60th homer in his last at bat in the last game of the season, and this was duly noted in a Minor League Committee newsletter.

This makes a great story, but it didn't exactly happen that way. It is true that Frosty went into the last game of the season needing one home run to reach 60. He batted in the leadoff slot in order to give him the maximum at bats in the game. That, in itself, is a good story - a slugger with 59 homers batting leadoff. Frosty lifted the suspense by connecting in his second at bat in the third inning. He came to the plate three more times during the game.

## **Researching Fun? You Bet!; by John F. Pardon**

Can researching baseball be fun?

You bet. Especially if you are someone like John Hall of Columbia, Missouri. Hall grew up in Carthage, Missouri, and like many youngsters of his day, loved baseball and played it every chance he could.

In 1946 the K-O-M League arrived. The Class D Kansas-Oklahoma-Missouri League put a franchise in Carthage and it lasted until 1951. By 1950 Hall was batboy for visiting teams, and in 1951 handled similar duties for the hometown Cubs. And that included most road games. It was an experience he never forgot.

Years later, now in his 50s, with some time on his hands, and encouragement from wife Noel, he began researching the heroes of his youth. "I was curious. I wanted to know what happened to those players I remembered," Hall said during a phone conversation.

So it was off to local, state and college libraries. And any other sources he could find. His digging opened a world of long ago memories. Letters and phone calls followed, bringing many responses from former K-O-Mers.

In 1994 he began the *K-O-M League Remembered*, a monthly newsletter sometimes running as many as 24 pages an issue. Team pictures, snapshots, and all kind of stories have appeared. All of this work culminated in a 432 page book entitled, *Majoring in the Minors*, published in 1996.

In listening to his stories (what a memory he has) of players from every team, not to mention managers, front office people, umpires, and anyone else he could find, you could hear the feeling he pours out for the love of these players from the past.

This year more than 125 came to Carthage for a two-day reunion. Activities included a golf tournament, hitting, throwing and batting contests, visiting local sites including the old ballpark, and lots of time meeting and reminiscing.

Highlighting the weekend events was the presentation of a plaque to Hall by the K-O-Mers for getting them all together.

"I wanted to find the people behind the numbers," Hall said. "Whatever happened to them; where did they go?" Well, he certainly has succeeded, and then some. Hall says there are plenty of hugs, tears and smiles when these players (and of course, family members) get together.

And what' s next on Hall' s schedule?

"This summer I hope to get some of the members of the 1949 Independence, Kansas team together and let them tell about the Yankees winning the pennant and playoffs. There should be some interesting stories," Hall said.

I think he' s right. No doubt a certain shortstop will be more than casually mentioned. A shy teenager from Commerce, Oklahoma began his career as shortstop that year. He went on to a Hall of Fame career as an outfielder for the New York Yankees, in uniform number 7. (Wonder who he might be?)

So, can you have fun researching? John Hall sure is.

### Questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to all Minor League Committee members five years ago. We wish to update this information. The results will be published as a roster similar to the one prepared five years ago, and will be distributed to all members.

Mail to Bob McConnell, 210 West Crest Road, Wilmington DE 19803. We will assume that if we do not receive a questionnaire, then you are no longer interested in being a committee member.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Last First Nickname or first name you prefer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Personal resources (guides, *The Sporting News*, *Sporting Life*, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Daily newspapers available at your local library: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Access to a state, historical or college library which has the following newspapers on film:

\_\_\_\_\_

Interests (league histories and/or stats, team histories, player career records, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Projects you are planning, currently working on, or have completed: \_\_\_\_\_

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Projects you would like to see the committee as a group undertake: \_\_\_\_\_

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Time you are willing to spend to fill requests from other committee members:

Yes: Considerable: \_\_\_\_\_ Some: \_\_\_\_\_ Little: \_\_\_\_\_ None: \_\_\_\_\_

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