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# CURBSIDE CHRONICLES

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Apparently some of our brethren forgot or were unable to scratch out a few lines of derogatory comments, witticisms and insightful analysis. Unfortunately, so am I. However, to keep Linda ready for a real newsletter from Itchie next Wednesday, I scrawled a few sentences together for you to read during your morning constitutional.

### **New Name**

Astute observers will note that the name of this publication is consistent with those authored by me in the past, but the name of the sponsoring organization has changed.

The Sin City Reds was the original moniker of the franchise. However, our league trip to Cincinnati forever altered my once deep admiration for the Reds. Seeing the denizens of the Great American Ballpark...especially the three-toothed, 145 lb., mullet-coiffed, chain-smoking, shirtless, fifty year-old with a tattoo of a vine beginning at his left nipple, stretching over his shoulder, and down to the middle of his back, adorned by leaves with the names of his children and birth dates, as well as names of NASCAR races and the dates he was there....gave me a completely different view of the Big Red Machine. This view was reinforced by Scott's attempt to engage in a conversation with a lovely lass at the bar. After Scott made an innocent invitation to show the girl a good time, she told Scott "that is the wrongest thing I ever heard".

While I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the HSL delegation in Cincinnati, I immediately adopted the "River City" as the franchise local to distance myself from any association with the people who inspired "Deliverance". No offense to Itchie and others who love pigs, "Dueling Banjos" and cooler-lid hats, but the "Reds" name also seemed to stir memories of its inbred fan base. It was like entering a motel bathroom three hours after Shamu dropped his kids off at the pool; no exhaust fan can remove the foul reminder of who sat in that seat before you. So it is with the Reds; I must never return lest I be reminded of the Cincinnati aura.

The new tagline – “Highlanders” – obviously is well known in baseball history, but my use as no connection whatsoever to the Yankees. The Pirnie heritage is completely Scottish. The original tartan and bagpipes of my great-grandfather are still kept near his 1860’s homestead in Custer County, Nebraska. As a result, I have always been fond of all things to do with Scotland. Therefore, when the notion of a new name began to bounce around in my head, it was natural for the Highlanders to be included. However, it was actually an epiphany of sorts which solidified my choice.

As some of you may recall, during our St. Louis trip last year, brother Itchie introduced us to a new drink called a “Jagerbomb”. Quite tasty and relaxing they were. Small in stature and easily drank, they quickly became a favorite of our crowd and me in particular. Their appeal was enhanced by Big Johnny’s ability to get rapid delivery by some fine young beer maids.

After consuming a fair quantity of bombs, I retired to my hotel room. Although my outward appearance indicated a certain level of impairment, my mind was busy contemplating a new name for the 2008 season as I slipped off into a relaxing slumber. During my REM sleep, I was visited by a vision of a man wearing a kilt hovering over me. It was a clear sign to me that the new team name would be the “Highlanders”.

However, a nagging suspicion has lingered. I awoke quickly after the vision appeared and my shorts were down to my knees and I saw a naked Mouse standing near my bed wrapped in a towel wrapped around his waist and what appeared to be a tattoo of a vine with leaves over his shoulder.

### **Memorial Day**

I have an understanding (albeit sad) of why people want to read, hear, and see reports about Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan, et al (kind of like a cross between a train wreck and “Girls Gone Wild”). However, it is beyond comprehension why anyone would spend an iota of time or energy to read, hear, or see anything to do with Rosie O’Donnell...a vile, self-loathing, waste of carbon, oxygen and water. I am a conservative, and as such, typically eschew liberal opinions. However, Rosie’s statements almost make Jane Fonda look patriotic.

I would never know of Rosie or the controversy surrounding her if I had gotten my morning newspaper on Saturday. I love having a cup of coffee and pouring over a good newspaper, or the Omaha World-Herald as the case may be. No self-respecting journalist would file a report about Rosie, and no editor would run such a story – because, let’s face it, nobody cares about opinions of a no-talent, hate-mongering, wind-bag talk show host. However, absent a paper, I was forced to read news on the internet, which includes every piece of nonsense occurring in the entertainment world. So, I wasted a few minutes of my time and learn about her putrid opinions and statements. Rosie thinks that the White House is behind a 9/11 conspiracy. Rosie thinks that American troops are the real terrorists. Rosie thinks that Christianity is more dangerous than Osama Bin Laden. Contrast these opinions to the following excerpts from the a Wall Street Journal article this weekend:

Once we knew who and what to honor on Memorial Day: Those who had given all their tomorrows, as was said of the men who stormed the beaches of Normandy, for our todays. But in a world saturated with self-hood, where every death is by definition a death in vain, the notion of sacrifice today provokes puzzlement more often than admiration. We support the troops, of course, but we also believe that war, being hell, can easily touch them with an evil no cause for engagement can wash away. And in any case we are more comfortable supporting them as victims than as warriors.

Not long ago I was asked to write the biographical sketches for a book featuring formal photographs of all our living Medal of Honor recipients. As I talked with them, I was, of course, chilled by the primal power of their stories. But I also felt pathos: They had become strangers – honored strangers, but strangers nonetheless – in our midst.

Leo Thorsness was also at the Hanoi Hilton. The Air Force pilot had taken on four MiGs trying to strafe his wingman who had parachuted out of his damaged aircraft; Mr. Thorsness destroyed two and drove off the other two. He was shot down himself soon after this engagement and found out by tap code that his name had been submitted for the Medal.

One of Mr. Thorsness' most vivid memories from seven years of imprisonment involved a fellow prisoner named Mike Christian, who one day found a grimy piece of cloth, perhaps a former handkerchief, during a visit to the nasty concrete tank where the POWs were occasionally allowed a quick sponge bath. Christian picked up the scrap of fabric and hid it.

Back in his cell he convinced prisoners to give him precious crumbs of soap so he could clean the cloth. He stole a small piece of roof tile which he laboriously ground into a powder, mixed with a bit of water, and used to make horizontal stripes. He used one of the blue pills of unknown provenance the prisoners were given for all ailments to color a square in the upper left of the cloth. With a needle made from bamboo wood and thread unraveled from the cell's one blanket, Christian stitched little stars on the blue field.

"It took Mike a couple weeks to finish, working at night under his mosquito net so the guards couldn't see him", Mr. Thorsness told me. "Early one morning, he got up before the guards were active and held up the little flag, waving it as in a breeze. We turned to him and saw it coming to attention and automatically saluted, some of us with tears running down our cheeks. Of course, the Vietnamese found it during a strip search, took Mike to the torture cell and beat him unmercifully. Sometime after midnight they pushed him into our cell, so bad off that even his voice was gone. But when he recovered in a couple of weeks he immediately started looking for another piece of cloth."

We impoverish ourselves by shunting these heroes and their experiences to the back pages of our national consciousness. Their stories are not just boy's adventure tales writ large. They are a kind of moral instruction. They remind of something we've heard many times before but is worth repeating on a wartime Memorial Day when we're uncertain about what we celebrate. We're the land of the free for one reason only: We're also the home of the brave.

I was very proud to fly the American flag this past weekend and my thoughts were focused on family and friends who have served or are currently serving our country. I could not care less about Rosie.

### **My Take On Your Teams**

My take on each team is as follows:

**Cubs:** Vladdy is white hot and R.J. is back in form. With good hitting depth and some lucky wins from a mixed bag of pitchers, Chuck could be asterisk free. Big Guy's attempt to scare Shamu about his "saves" total is a desperate ploy to get a trade done.

**Chiefs:** Doing it with pitching (43 wins), but who cares how he is doing it – he drafted dead last – so it is a remarkable feat regardless of the source of the points. There is no reason to believe that Scott will not

continue to be a contender; however, I expect a few more "family deals" will occur to strengthen the HR total (66).

**Tigers:** Leading HR hitters are Dukes, Peralta, Uggla, Mike Lowell and Alex Gonzalez. Now, that is not a great lineup. Pitching is very questionable (27-26 with 9 saves). This squad should be named the "Cliffdwellers" because a fall is inevitable.

**Hoos:** You gotta like Teixeira and A. Jones, but not so much after that. Penny, Santana, and Beckett I like, but the record is 34-36 so the Hoos' other pitcher must be chumps. I picked Possum to win and he will make a run at it before it's over. I'm sure it's just bad luck and the Hoos are really the best team.

**Mallards:** Pitching stinks with a 36-42 record and 326 runs allowed 595 innings. Gotta love A. Rod, Morneau, Lee and Hardy...gotta take up smoking to tolerate Cameron, Huff, and LaRoche.

**Bears:** Only one player with more than 9 HRs (Cabrera – 10). With Pujols, Michael Young, Delgado and Burrell, you gotta believe this team will come on fast some time soon. Pitching needs more saves, holds, and wins. Will the Bears maul the Tribe in a trade to get pitching?

**Satan's Cabin Boys:** I'm still bitter. Unfortunately, this team is far better than its current position would indicate. Several solid hitters are underperforming substantially. Reversion to the mean...means a torrid second half for Itchie. Pitching is weak, but Satan always gets sloppy wins and points from marginal hurlers. Top three team in the end.

**Blues:** Only 63 HRs. This is a very sorry team. Four Royals on the roster says it all. Blongo, you need to clean house with trades and free agents. You are on your way to being a bunk bed pal with Skipper.

**Redbirds:** Clemens will provide the spark needed to launch the Birds into the upper ranks of the league. The hitters are very impressive (C. Jones, Kent, Sosa, Wells, Rollins, Damon, Soriano and Thome). Third most hits in the league.

**Tribe:** Only 1970 ABs! The Redbirds have 275 more ABs. That translates to the Tribe playing with one and a half less batters than the Redbirds. How does that happen, Bob? With some luck, this team could rise to 7th.

**Bombers:** Seven Yankees – none named A. Rod or Jeter. Six batters with less than 4 HRs. Carmona has the most wins (6) followed by Eaton (5). Settle in, Mouse, you're home for the rest of the season.

**Senators:** Dave is overcommitted this year and he was forced to make choices. His HSL team may be at the bottom for all of 2007, but KWAA will be better for it.

### Personal Note

I will probably bag the team trip this year. My wife, Lori, was diagnosed with breast cancer in April. She had a lumpectomy on April 27th, and she starts chemotherapy on June 5th. Lori's prognosis is very good and her attitude is amazing. All of your prayers for a speedy and complete recovery would be greatly appreciated.

Till next time...Curby.