

FROM THE BULLPEN

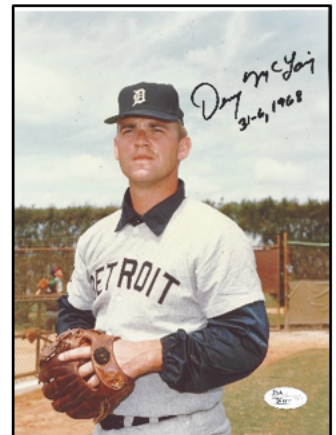
The Nebraska Hot Stove League



of the Summer of '68,
"The Year of the Pitcher"



Bob Gibson



Denny McLain

2018 Campaign

Edition No. 2

March 8, 2018

Baseball Brethren:

This edition of *From the Bullpen* begins with a few reflections from my trip last month to Alliance, Nebraska, for the depositions of a couple of Physician Assistants who work at the Box Butte General Hospital, which is quite possibly the nicest building in a community of functional but uniformly architecturally-unpleasing business structures. Lots of very square and rectangular metal and wood and plastic buildings with little or no thought given to aesthetics during design and construction. I know, I'm judging.



Box Butte General Hospital

The lifeblood of Alliance is the Burlington Northern Railroad, which runs coal trains from Wyoming on a seemingly constant basis, and appears to employ roughly half of the townspeople. The spartan Quality Inn [FN 1] was completely full for my Wednesday evening stay, and I think the only non-railroaders were myself and a pair of pasty young software coders who may have looked even more out of place than I did.



Alliance Quality Inn

On Thursday morning prior to the start of the PA depositions, I drove over to the Alliance YMCA for a quick workout. Housed in an unassuming metal building with minimalist signage, I almost drove right past it.



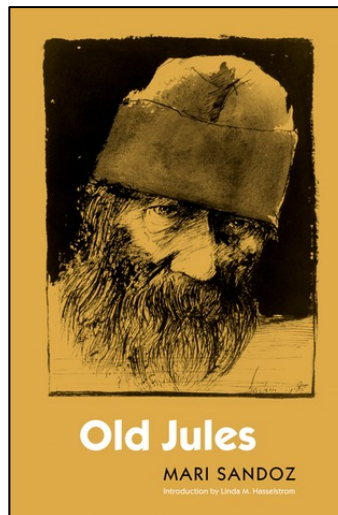
Alliance YMCA

Once inside, I could see that they had all of the equipment needed for just about any type of workout, but *Lifetime Fitness* it was not. Functional. Right next door is a parochial school. Rectangular, metal, minimal signage. Functional. The Alliance way.

The no-nonsense fellow who was working at the Alliance Y at 5:30 a.m. reminded me of Scott's brother Rick and Scott's dad A-Train. Punching the clock, paying his dues, bringing home the paycheck to support the family, Joe Friday straight and sober, no frills or BS.

Someone you can count on, day in and day out. And the dude had this wonderful Stentorian voice, the kind every trial lawyer wishes to have, booming and authoritarian. So there you go.

On my way to the hospital for the depositions, I saw a sign advertising the grave site of *Ol' Jules*, the father of Nebraska author Mari Sandoz, and the subject of one of her most well-known books.



With fifteen minutes to kill, I took a road less traveled toward the Alliance cemetery, but once there, could find no signage directing me to the specific grave of Ol' Jules. Maybe if he had been a former Major League baseball player I would have tried a little bit harder than my two-minute drive-by that day.

The depositions of the two PAs went about as scripted, with one of them as cool and emotionless as a sphinx, and who would not have given up the location of the family jewels with his neck on the guillotine; while the other PA could hardly wait to be sworn in so he could start spilling his guts, as he confessed to just about everything except for the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby. Had he been asked, I'm pretty sure he would have copped to that, as well.

After the depositions, with plenty of daylight ahead of me, I spurned the interstate route home and drove back on Highway 2 through the Nebraska Sandhills, stopping in for a look at the courthouses (often the biggest employer in these dwindling Sandhills communities) in Hooker County in Mullen, Thomas County in Thedford, and Custer County in Broken Bow. My drive through the meandering sandhills was a superb way to conclude this short business trip, affording me the occasion to admire the ranching way of life in Greater Nebraska. I am not sure I have ever seen as much meat on the hoof as I saw on this drive, as there were large herds of cattle out feeding on the range just about everywhere the eye could see.



Cows

Beautiful Nebraska, peaceful prairieland.

CACTUS LEAGUE CHRONICLES

Last week while in Phoenix to visit Emily and attend the American College of Trial Lawyers Spring Meeting, I took the opportunity to visit three Spring Training parks that I had not yet been to, Surprise Stadium in Surprise (Royals v. Reds), Camelback Ranch in Glendale (Dodgers v. Indians), and Maryvale Baseball Park in Maryvale (Brewers v. Mariners). While all three of these facilities are older and seemingly smaller than the Cubs' beautiful new facility (Sloan Park) and the gem of a ballpark that we visited together a few years ago (Salt River Fields at Talking Stick), these three venues were all excellent places to sit in the sun, consume a cold beverage, and watch the soon-to-be Boys of Summer vie for their spots in the spring. If there's anything more glorious than a March afternoon at a Cactus League baseball game in the Phoenix area, somebody will have to prove it to me. Oh, for the time in my life when I can spend the entire month of March in such splendor!



Surprise Stadium



Camelback Ranch



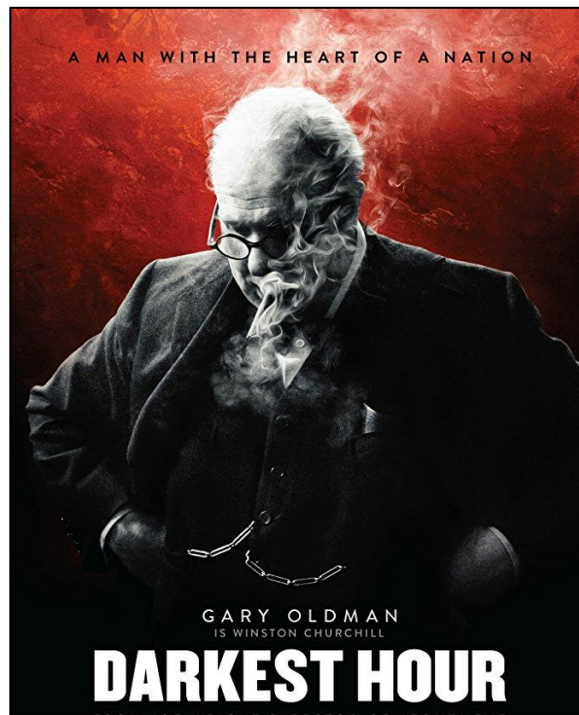
Maryvale Baseball Park

As a sidebar to the Phoenix trip, we had the opportunity at the American College meeting to listen to our current FBI director, Chris Wray, give his view on the performance of the 37,000 men and women in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as he was the keynote speaker. After listening to Wray speak, I can now utter the previously unthinkable phrase, "Trump got this one exactly right." After listening to Wray speak for about thirty minutes, I can say with confidence that I feel much safer with him at the helm of the agency. He is a good man, who has the right vision for the FBI. Let's hope that POTUS doesn't run him off until he has completed the mission.

THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER

Perhaps I have too much time on my hands, but here are a few things I've been reading, watching, thinking about, and doing lately:

Darkest Hour



After reading the book which became the script for the movie *Darkest Hour* [FN 2], Michele and I went to see the movie at the Oak View Mall on a recent Saturday afternoon. Never mind that we were the youngest patrons in the theater by about 20 years. *Darkest Hour* is a fantastic movie about one of the greatest world leaders in the last 500 years, and Gary Oldman gave an Oscar-worthy performance. When he delivered Sir Winston's rousing speech to Parliament about fighting the Hitler war machine to the bitter end, I literally had tears flowing down my cheeks, so emotional was its impact on me. Here's my favorite part:

We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

Chills aplenty at this movie. If you haven't seen it, you'll want to.

A Few More This, That, and the Other

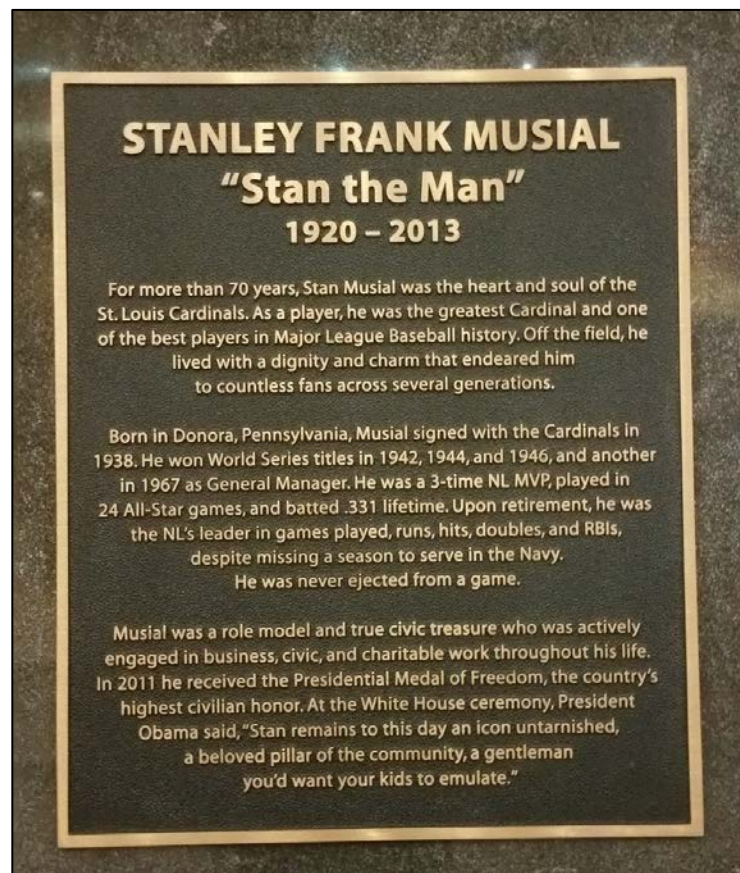
- * Just a couple of weeks after seeing *Darkest Hour*, I spent the bulk of the President's Day weekend getting ready for a jury trial that started on the following Tuesday, and was feeling sorry for myself for all of the blood, toil, sweat and tears that I found myself

pouring into the case. As I tried to cheer myself up and get in the right frame of mind for the trial, I found myself harkening back to one of my favorite Churchillian quotes: *"These are not dark days: these are great days -- the greatest days our country has ever lived!"* Silly as it may seem, it worked. I found myself inspired by good old Winston's wisdom, as I applied the elbow grease in full force to get ready for battle.

- * The case that I tried--involving a young African-American woman who walked into an Omaha hospital with shoulder and chest pain and was discharged with a prescription for Tylenol and then suffered a massive heart attack the next day--was a real donnybrook, and one that I am glad to have behind me. After it was over, I realized that it was my 100th jury trial, a milestone that I couldn't have imagined after almost yarfing on myself during my very first one in York, Nebraska, some 30 years ago. I know I'll never make it to 200, and 150 is probably out of reach, but I'd like to think I have another 20 or 25 weeks in the well still left inside this aging old rattletrap.
- * The other day, Joe and Will were showing me a couple of internet photographs of a truly awful bronze statue of one of the top soccer players in the world [FN 3], and I had to pull a Big Guy Topper on them and tell them about the hideous statue of Stan Musial lurking outside Busch Stadium. They were equal parts amazed and appalled. I know that most of you have seen it face-to-face, but in case you have forgotten, take a look:



Stan the Man



Here are just a few of the comments from some of the Cardinal faithful:

-- This may be the **worst statue ever created**. It looks nothing like Stan. His bat--tiny. The bill of his hat could cover an infield. This needs to be redone.

-- Whoever concocted this **Stretch Armstrong-ish** statue of St. Louis Cardinals icon Stan Musial must have had very little understanding how the body of human males appear thanks to the downright weird ligaments given to Musial. Whether the issue is the placement of his belt, the length of his hips, or simply the way players of his era used to dress, the quality of Musial's statue pales in comparison to his play on the field. Sorry, Stan.

-- If you ever saw (Stan) Musial play, you know that the **monstrosity** located near the Stadium Club ... lacks The Man's looks, his distinctive batting stance and a bat proportionate to the size of the bronze itself. ... In other words, it stinks.

- * After the Florida school shooting, I'm considering a run for public office based solely on a "ban all guns" platform. NRA members will be banished to Yemen where murder is a constitutional right. Jim Ed, you're going to have to give up everything but bow hunting. Underbelly, the machine gun will have to go. I plan to sponsor an amendment to the Second Amendment to change the language from "the right to bear arms" to "the right to bear balloons." I'm not kidding. It's ridiculous. If any of the rest of you are packing heat, you'll be checking them at the door on Draft Day. Ted, no baseball bats either, please.

DRAFT DAY: MARCH 17 9:00 A.M. SHARP

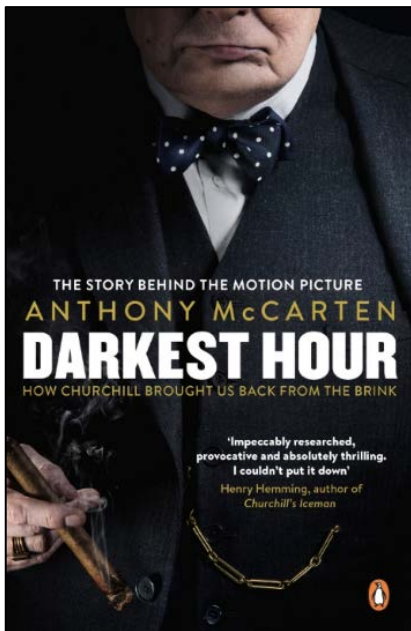
Just a little over a week away, our annual Hot Stove League Draft will take place next Saturday morning, March 17, 2018, beginning at 9:00 a.m. sharp at the Pansing Hogan Ernst & Bachman Washington Room. Get yourselves ready for the funnest day of the year, because it is almost upon us. See you next week.

Skipper

FN 1 - Apparently as good as it gets in Alliance. Not to be mistaken with a Biltmore hotel. Or even a Best Western. But the workers there were friendly, the morning breakfast bar was decent, and my only knock on it is that every single chair in the dining area had one

or more grease/oil stains on it. So as not to ruin my finest J.C. Penney suit, I opted to eat standing up. Railroading is a dirty business, that much hasn't changed since I worked on a small steel gang for the Burlington Northern in the summer of '76 or '77.

FN 2 - *Darkest Hour: How Churchill Brought England Back from the Brink*, by Anthony McCarten, Viking, Published 7th December 2017.



FN 3 - Apparently a famous dude, although I had never heard of him. Surprise.