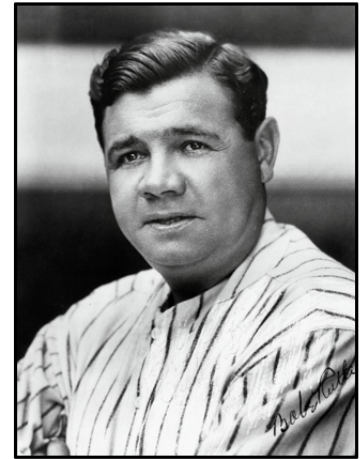




Babe Ruth

7-time World Series Champion
 Career Batting Average: .342
 Career Home Runs: 714
 Career Pitching Record: 94-46
 Career ERA: 2.28
 1st in All-Time slugging percentage: .690
 1st in All-Time OPS: 1.164



2019 Campaign

Edition No. 3

February 8, 2019

Fellas:

Two things on my mind this frigid February morning of Screech Fest:

1. Trip Update - We have two more commits for The Trip June 7-9:

	In ¹	Out ²	Lame Excuses for Those in Column 2
Stretch	✓		
Shamu	✓		
Big Guy	✓		
Mouse	✓		
Skipper	✓		
B.T.	✓		
Screech	✓		
PAwesome		✓	Too busy with work Too busy with family Purported trip to Ireland

¹ Paddlers of their own canoes.

² Non-paddlers.

			Bunionectomy procedure that week, Tracy says no friggin' way Sock drawer reorganization week Acolyte duty at church Fear of insecure southern border Clear conflict of interest
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This means that we now have 7 definite yeses, only 1 no, and 5 yet to respond. Importantly, one of our commits, the enigmatic B.T., will be offering up his Mobile Sewage Treatment Plant in the form of his Mercedes Wondervan for those who prefer ground travel to air.

2. Book Report, Redux on *A False Spring*

I just finished re-reading *A False Spring* by former Milwaukee Braves bonus baby Pat Jordan concerning his three-year stint in the low minors between 1959 and 1961, before washing out of baseball for good. I previously reported on this exquisite piece back on March 6, 2009 (Edition 2 of *FTB* for 2009), but I decided to re-read it recently when a friend shared with me a recent baseball article by Jordan, as mentioned in this organ's last issue.

To begin with, let me just point out that this is one of the best sports books you will ever read. I'm not sure I appreciated that back in 2009 when I first read it, but I do now. *Wikipedia*, that most unimpeachable of sources, states that *A False Spring* was rated No. 37 by *Sports Illustrated's* Top 100 Sports Books of All Time, which is high praise indeed. Among the pantheon of great writings limited to the subject of baseball, it has to be in the top 10, perhaps the top 2 or 3. It is raw, vivid, and almost entirely without pretense. If I were a critic, my only criticism would be that Jordan tried to sprinkle in a few too many ten-dollar words which sometimes seem out of place, presumably to show off his admittedly impressive vocabulary.

The name of the book comes from a passage from Ernest Hemingway's classic *A Movable Feast*, published in 1984:

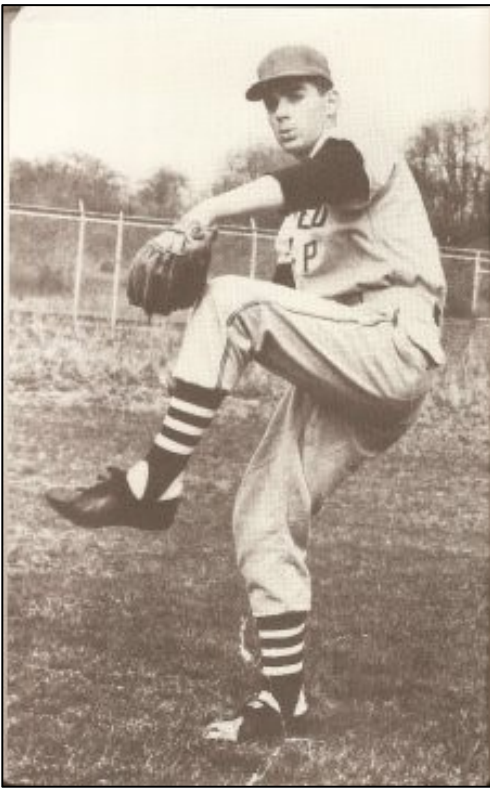
With so many trees in the city, you could see the spring coming each day until a night of warm wind would bring it suddenly in one morning. Sometimes the heavy cold rain would beat it back so that it would seem that it would never come and that you were losing a season out of your life. . . . When the cold rains kept on and killed the spring, it was as though a young person had died for no reason.

Life had seemed so simple that morning when I had wakened and found the false spring. . .

As the name for his book, I don't know how it could be more apt.

The first two chapters of *A False Spring* have to do with Jordan's meteoric little league and high school baseball careers, and his wooing by numerous big league baseball clubs, including the New York Yankees and the Milwaukee Braves. He describes how his brother, a lawyer ten years his elder, conspired with him to try to increase his baseball net worth to the point where he would receive a six-figure bonus, unheard of in those days, and unsuccessful in Jordan's case. He talked about the crusty old "birddogs" who came to watch him pitch in his youth, followed by the major league scouts who took their spots. I love the following passage about the professional scouts who came to watch him pitch:

Inevitably, during the course of these games, their talk drifted to mutual friends in baseball, old friends who were doing well financially or physically, or maybe not so well, who were actually broke, or even sick, or dying even of the Big C, or worse than that, who were out of baseball. There was nothing worse than being out of baseball for men who'd spent their lives in it.



The entire third chapter of *A False Spring* (73 pages, in all) deals with his first assignment in professional baseball, to McCook, Nebraska, for two months with the Class D McCook Braves of the Nebraska State League, which folded after that season. While there he played at Cibola Ballpark, the only lighted baseball park in the city. He spent time at the six-story Keystone Hotel, the tallest building in McCook. He roomed with Ron Hunt, pitched to Elrod Hendricks, and played against such eventual baseball luminaries as Jim Bouton and Al Weis. Phil Niekro, who hadn't yet learned to master his fluttering knuckleball, was the tenth pitcher on a staff of ten pitchers.

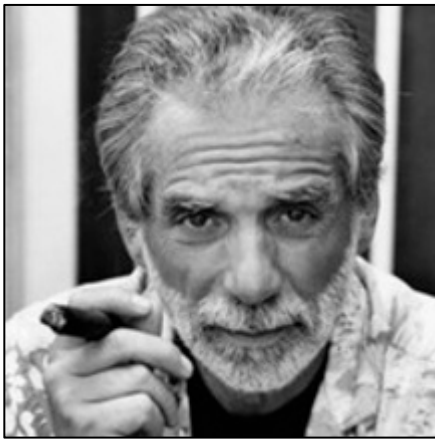
After relating this two-month experience in McCook during the summer of '59, Jordan goes on to describe his spring training experience in 1960 at Waycross, Georgia, where players of color lived in segregated barracks, and where he pitched to a young Joe Torre.

Chapter 5 deals with Jordan's 1960 season in Davenport, Iowa, of the Midwest League, where he had a maddening season of inconsistency while under the tutelage of former major league great Travis Stonewall Jackson. As he described it in the book, in Davenport, as in McCook, he pitched well about every four starts. In one game he pitched a one-hit shutout against the Kokomo Dodgers, and four starts later he earned a 2-1 win while striking out 14 batters.

In another game, he lost a 2-1 decision but struck out 11 hitters and in another, gave up 4 hits but struck out 14.

At the end of his season in Davenport, Jordan was sent to the Florida Winter Instructional League in Bradenton, Florida, where promising but often very immature ballplayers were sent for seasoning. The batting instructor at the FWIL was Dixie Walker. Joe Torre was one of his teammates, as were Tommy Aaron, Dennis Menke and Phil Niekro. After finishing up his time in the FWIL, it appeared that Jordan was back on the proper bonus baby track.

Chapter 7 of the book deals first with Jordan's spring of 1961, again in Waycross, Georgia. What began with great expectations at the start of that spring ended with Jordan forgetting how to throw strikes. He was shipped off to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where he played for future Montreal Expo general manager Jim Fanning (see *FTB* Edition No. 1, January 25, 2019), and where his professional career continued to spiral downward. Jordan describes



an amazing road trip in which six of the Eau Claire Braves (including future Brave great Rico Carty) drove together in a cramped car for hundreds and hundreds of miles to a game in Winnipeg, Manitoba, a baseball contest that began in 19-degree weather. After blowing a sprocket in Eau Claire, Jordan was suspended for two weeks and reassigned to lowly Palatka, Florida, where he and his 19-year-old wife (same age as him) drove through the night to join the club that would be the last stop of his professional career.

The good news for Jordan is that while he washed out of baseball, he has fashioned a very respectable writing career, which if anyone is interested, can be found at the aforementioned *Wikipedia*. As a matter of fact, I just sent away for another of his books, entitled *A Nice Tuesday*, which is sitting on my bed stand waiting to be cracked.

* * * * *

That's it for this issue, lads. See you tonight.

Skipper