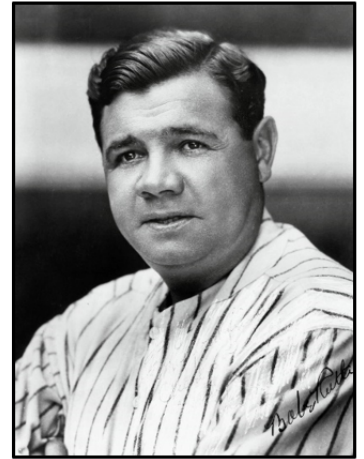




Babe Ruth

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. 1

January 25, 2019

Brethren:

Salutations and glad tidings from the management and staff at *From the Bullpen*. We hope your 2019 is off to a tremendous--no, make that a tremendously tremendous¹--start.

Sadly, the recent ice storm of Friday last--coupled with the hysterical predictions of a Winter Armageddon by every TV weather forecaster in eastern Nebraska--resulted in our Screech-centric Winter Meeting getting scotched--instead of the rest of us getting Scotched. But worry not, we are looking at February dates to reschedule this essential event on the HSL calendar, and hope to have a consensus soon. Hopefully B.T. (seen directly below just before his arrest²) will have made bail by then, and our ranks will be swelled to capacity for the ScreechFest Fête. Announcement to follow.

¹ Borrowing from the timeless words of former Husker head coach Frank Solich, who was back in Nebraska earlier this month to receive the Tom Osborne Legacy Award, and was heard to be liberally employing his favorite adjective once more.

² The Charge: Driving within 990 yards of a school zone, while impersonating William "Freight Train" Guatney, a class IV misdemeanor.



THE DRAFT - SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 2019

This is your quick and handy reminder that our Draft for the 2019 Campaign will be for the first time ever--if I'm wrong about this, I am confident it will be pointed out--on a Sunday, ironically, the Day of Rest. Right. The only resting that will be going on that particular Sunday will begin with a "W," as there will be twelve of us doing our biblical best to **wrest** the freshly-handed-off Cup from our defending Champion, Brother Screech.

Look for the more "Religious" types among us--B.T., Shamu and J.T.³ come to mind--to double down on church visits and prayer vigils that preceding week, so as to ward off the possibility of Punishment from the Potentate for skipping mass that morning.

The PHEB doors will open at 11 a.m. on Draft Day. The Draft starts at noon, sharp.

THE WEBSITE

After Screech's perhaps predictable default in timely responding to the invitation to redecorate our HSL website frontpage, Linda has once again worked her magic to provide a catchy new Year XXXV design which is most pleasing to the sensibilities, historic⁴, baseball-themed, and best of all, free of charge. You're welcome, Screech. Hope it is something that you will enjoy looking at for the next twelve months as you serve as the Keeper of the Cup, while basking in the glory of your recent accomplishment.

THE TRIP

While we have not yet voted on it (but we will, come Draft Day), please block off June 7-9, 2019 on your calendar and start saving up marital markers so that you can be one of the cool kids and visit Texas for a weekend Rangers-Athletics series at The Ballpark in Arlington (a/k/a Globe Life Field) in the final year of major league play at this gem of a baseball cathedral. This year will mark 29 years since we last had an HSL junket to Arlington (June 5-7, 1990), back in the pre-Smartphone, pre-Desktop, pre-Laptop, pre-Cellphone days of simplicity and splendor. You may remember on that trip we saw the great Ryan Express take the hill for a matchup against the visiting Red Sox. Although Ryan surrendered a double and triple to Wade Boggs and a 2-run jack to Carlos Quintana, he also struck out 12 Sox in 7 innings of work, and earned his 297th career win; all the while as we sat thirstily in the

³ Who as we all know likes to say that he has lived his life "at the foot of the cross." True, that, if he is talking about a cross between excessive gambling, supersonic alcohol consumption, and bombastic merriment.

⁴ 2019 marks the 124th anniversary of the birth of George Herman Ruth. So there's that.

no-alcohol Family Section, a blunder of cataclysmic proportion which may be unrivaled in league annals. More in a later issue about that 1990 trip.

Anyway, I hope that most if not all of you can make it this time around. Father Time isn't moving any slower, and it would be nice if all 13 of us could make it on a trip before we are all consigned to a wheelchair/dementia/Alzheimer's/in memoriam section of the ballpark.

ON THE ROAD TO: SMALL TOWN IOWA

Last week, this traveling litigator was summoned for duty in two little northwestern Iowa farm towns with which I was not previously acquainted, Hartley (population 1,587, in O'Brien County), and Remsen (population 1,641, in Plymouth County). When I walked into the Hartley Town Hall for the deposition of a former psych nurse, what my eyes immediately landed on was a larger than life blowup of a former Cubs catcher which was sitting against one of the Town Hall walls.



When I inquired about this ballplayer's identity, I learned it was former Major League player (Cubs, 1955-1957), manager and general manager (Montreal Expos) Jim Fanning⁵. Turns out Fanning grew up on a farm a few miles from Hartley, and has been a true friend of the Hartley community in supporting youth baseball. The town fathers recently renamed the local baseball field (see photograph below) Jim Fanning Field.

⁵ As a catcher with the Cubs across three unmemorable seasons (1955-1957), Fanning compiled a pathetic batting average of .170, with 24 hits, 5 RBIs, and no home runs. However, as the general manager for the expansion Montreal Expos from 1968-1976, he was instrumental in drafting a team that eventually became competitive. According to Wikipedia, which is *never* wrong, Fanning drafted wisely in the 1968 NL expansion lottery, and was able to parlay some of his drafted players to obtain Rusty Staub from the Houston Astros via trade. The player who became known as *Le Grand Orange*, Rusty was one of the early heroes of *Le Expos*.

Fanning also served as the actual field manager of the team over parts of three different seasons (1981, 1982 and 1984), compiling a career record of 116 and 103, before hanging up his uniform and returning to the Montreal front office.



Later the same day, as I was driving through tiny Remsen, Iowa, in search of the Remsen Town Hall for another medical deposition, I came across Johnny Niggeling Memorial Field (see below),

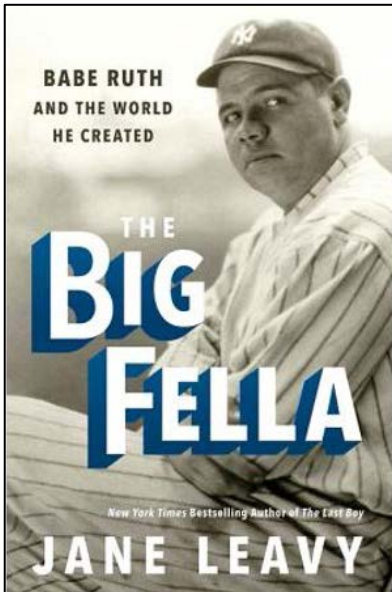


named after hometown hero Johnny Niggeling, who broke into the Bigs in 1938 with the Boston Bees (later the Boston Braves) at the ripe old age of 35. An incurable knuckleball pitcher, Niggeling spent a total of eight years in the majors before hanging it up in 1946. He left behind a career mark of 64 and 69, with an ERA of 3.22 and 620 strikeouts.

Both of these pleasing discoveries were made on the fly, with no advance research or knowledge. It just goes to show, a day on the road beats the heck out of a day at the office slogging through incessant emails and beating back the licking flames of daily professional emergencies, real or imagined.

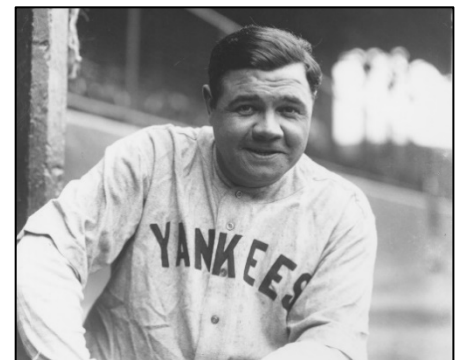
BOOK REPORT: THE BIG FELLA

By Jane Leavy



I just finished off a hefty 2 lb., 656-page work on George Herman Ruth, the Bambino, the Sultan of Swat, by Jane Leavy, author of the seminal baseball biography of Sandy Koufax (named "Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy"). Although a thoroughly-researched and well-written scholarly piece, *TBF* is a bit too full of arcane and sometimes unimportant if not trivial details about the life and times of the inarguable GOAT⁶ of professional baseball. With lots of jumping back and forth in time between present and past--which at times makes *TBF* a cumbersome read--the skeleton of this book is the barnstorming tour of America that Babe and Lou Gehrig made following their celebrated 1927 season, including the *coup de gras* for a Cornhusker reader, a game at Western League Park, located in Omaha at 15th and Vinton Streets.

The highly-publicized and quite lucrative barnstorming tour featured some hastily-assembled games between the "Bustin' Babes" and the "Larrupin Lous," with each superstar the leader of his respective team and made up of a few other major league players and mostly local sandlot talent. Babe and Lou would both hit and pitch, with the primary goal being the smashing of home runs by the two long-ball titans, with the outcome of each game being largely irrelevant.

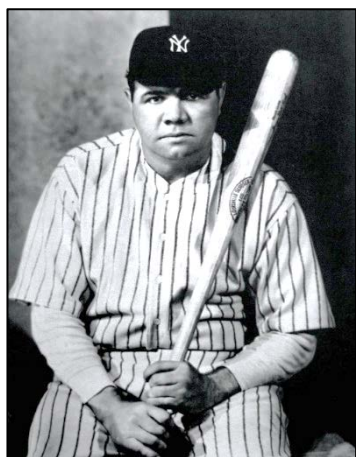


⁶ Greatest of All Time.



The game in Omaha happened on the afternoon of Sunday, October 16, 1927, and an entire chapter (8) of the book is devoted to this event. According to the book, the best amateur baseball talent in Omaha --teams which represented the Omaha Printing Company (winners of the Saturday League) and the Brown Park Merchants (champions of the Sunday League)--had been scheduled to play for the City Championship that afternoon. Instead, they were given the incredible opportunity to see and play with the two greatest hitters in major league baseball at that time.

As mentioned heretofore, the game was scheduled to be played at Western League Park in Omaha, the home of the professional Omaha team⁷ in the Western League. When Ruth stepped to the plate for his first at bat, the game was interrupted for the presentation of a ceremonial egg laid by a champion egg layer from Norfolk, known both as "Lady Amco" and "Lady Norfolk." As it turned out, this prize chicken--a single comb white Leghorn bird weighing in at 4-and-3/4 pounds--had laid an egg every day since April 29, and on October 11, 1927, laid her world-record-breaking 166th consecutive egg, which was dubbed as the "Coolidge" Egg, in honor of the president. The book contains a picture of Babe holding "Lady Amco," which is found to the right.



The youngest participant in this exhibition game was none other than Johnny Rosenblatt, later of mayoral (1954-1961) and stadium-name fame, who was struck out by the Babe in the 7th inning. If you would like to read a more detailed account of the game, [here's](#) an article from the Omaha World-Herald.

The Bambino's visit to Omaha also included a trip to Boys Town, as well as to the Immaculate Conception Church. He stayed at the classy Fontenelle Hotel, where he was rumored to have had a rendezvous with a couple of local beauties.

⁷ The 1927 Omaha Buffaloes played in the Western League under manager Barney Burch. One of the pitchers on that team was 17-year-old Mel Harder, who was born in tiny Beemer, Nebraska, and graduated from high school at Omaha Tech. Harder started the season with the Buffaloes, but was soon moved to the Class D Dubuque Dubs of the Mississippi Valley League, where Harder went 13 and 6. After being promoted to the Buffaloes, Harder went 4 and 7 for the Omaha team before being traded to the Cleveland Indians during the offseason. Harder spent his entire major league career with the Indians, going 223 and 196 and appearing in four All Star games.

Although a weighty read, I still recommend *The Big Fella* to you all if any of you are fans of the Sultan of Swat.

* * * * *

That will do it for this issue of *From the Bullpen*. Hope that you enjoyed Edition No. 1 of the new year.

Skipper