



Bob Gibson and Stan Musial,
Spring Training 1961, Tampa Bay

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

SEASON XXXVI



Angry no more.

FROM THE BULLPEN

2020 Campaign

Edition No. 1

February 27, 2020

WINTER MEETING REVISITED

February felicitations, friends:

Now that we are near the end of February and on the cusp of Spring Training, let's briefly revisit the beginning of the month and the fantastic shindig hosted by our reigning Hot Stove League champion, James "Jim Ed" aka "Tirebiter" Buser. On that lovely evening of Saturday, February 1, the plucky owner of the Omaha **Redbirds** treated all of us to a fun night of food, fellowship and libations, beginning with hors d'oeuvres and adult refreshments at the beautiful new Buser enclave north of the North Omaha Airport, featuring one of the best westward views imaginable. For the League archives and posterity, immediately below is a photograph of the twelve of us¹ who gathered in the spacious confines of the Buser man cave:

¹ Turns out Itchie thought it'd be more fun to go to the Alcoholics Anonymous Open in Phoenix with One-Way Tony, where they held hands, watched golf, and prayed to their higher power for the strength to avoid the evils of intoxicating spirits--until 7:30 a.m., that is, when the Likker Shack at the golf course started serving Bloody Marys.

Anyway, for those of you who are unaware, upon his return to Omaha, J.T. was tasked with providing compassionate in-home care for his convalescing Better Half, who recently underwent a hip replacement. So drinking his brains out for a long weekend with One-Way was probably part of the job requirement.



Men in Red



Screech reluctantly cedes The Cup to Jim Ed



After plying us with deer sausage and tasty craft beers, Jim Ed laid out the merch for his wide-eyed baseball brethren:



Quality stuff. On a par with Screech's offering of last year, and even better than PAwesome's merch offering from two years ago.² In the immortal words of the Popeil's pocket fisherman pitchman, "*And that's not all.*" After a couple of well-spent hours at Manor Buser, we were ferried over to one of Omaha's finest Italian eateries, *Pasta Amore*, in Rockbrook. There in the comfort and quiet of their private dining room, we were treated to a dizzying and delicious menu of Chef Leo's finest creations, as well as several different selections of excellent wine. Not to mention Leo's droll sense of humor.



It was a splendid evening of merriment, story-telling, good conversation, and great company. Congrats again to Jim Ed on a well-deserved first Hot Stove League championship, and to him and B.T. for treating us to an epicurean delight.

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² By virtue of the timeless maxim: *Something is better than nothing.*

³ Oh, and B.T. was right. *Hidden Gems* was a great movie.

THE DRAFT

Here--*here*--is another reminder that our 36th Annual Hot Stove League Draft will take place this season on Friday, March 20, 2020, in the Washington Room at PHEB, beginning at 6:00 p.m. **SHARP!** And if you haven't already started doing so, it's time to start preparing for the FUNNEST DAY OF THE YEAR!

THE TRIP

Here--*here*--is another reminder about the date and location of The Trip. This season we will head to Baltimore and D.C. to catch a Friday night (June 5) game between the Orioles and the Cheatin' Astros at Camden Yards, followed by a Saturday evening game between the defending World Series Champion Nationals and the Metropolitanans.

A few of us may head to the Baltimore/D.C. area a day early on Thursday, June 4, to try to catch a minor league baseball game in the area, but for those of you who want to fly out on Friday, here are some options:

7:00am - 1:55pm	5h 55m (1 stop)	\$258.00	
Delta	OMA - 1h 57m in ATL - BWI	one way	
Good Flights (7.4/10)		Free Cancel w/in 24	

<small>1 stop</small> # 2251 / 1188			
7:55 AM → 1:40 PM	Duration 4h 45m 1 stop	\$512	\$484
		\$293 <small>3 left</small>	

<small>1 stop</small> # 3763 / 4233			
10:35 AM → 4:15 PM	Duration 4h 40m 1 stop	\$512	\$484
		\$269 <small>2 left</small>	

10:35am - 4:50pm	5h 15m (1 stop)	\$218.21	
Delta	OMA - 1h 10m in ATL - BWI	one way	
Very Good Flights (7.8/10)		Free Cancel w/in 24	

For the return trip on Sunday, I am booked on the nonstop Southwest Flight 5013, departing out of Reagan National at 12:55 p.m. and arriving in Omaha at 2:40 p.m., currently priced at \$164, if you want to join me. Here are some other options out of Reagan:

<small>1 stop</small> # 2961 / 4743			
8:35 AM → 12:00 PM	Duration 4h 25m 1 stop	\$516	\$488
		\$183 <small>1 left</small>	

Nonstop # 5013			
12:55 PM → 2:40 PM	Duration 2h 45m	\$507	\$479
		\$164	

<small>1 stop</small> # 5041 / 4699			
6:45 PM → 10:35 PM	Duration 4h 50m 1 stop	\$516	\$488
		\$363	

One other option may be to hitch a ride on B.T.'s Mobile Sewage Treatment Wagon, if you are retired like Itchie and Shamu, or have two or three weeks of vacation time that you have accrued. If interested, I recommend that you consult with B.T. directly. I'm a lousy middle man.

Should be a blast. The last time I looked, we had commitments from Sunny, Itchie, Big Guy, Shamu, Tirebiter and yours truly in varying degrees of firmness. Let's see if we can't get a few more of you lads⁴ on board.

WINTER QUARTERS, VISITED



A couple of weeks ago on a Wednesday, after finishing up my shift at the Heart Ministry Center in the heart of North Omaha, I decided to punch in "Winter Quarters" on my mobile cellular device and see how far away I was from this historic spot that I have long thought about visiting. Not very far at all, as it turned out. Just a few miles away, a mere few blocks west of the Florence area of North Omaha. Once Google Maps got me in the right vicinity, I drove around a little bit just to make sure that I was not in danger of entering a cult programming center from which I might never escape. What I found on one side of the street was a beautiful Mormon temple with a gated parking lot and about 30 to 40 cars parked therein on a Wednesday in the early afternoon. I decided not to try entering the temple where forced indoctrination might await, and instead went into a building across the street to the east which is a museum (officially named the *Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters*) dedicated to telling the story of the great Mormon migration from Nauvoo, Illinois to Salt Lake City, and

⁴ And by "lads," I mean "crusty old farts." Yeah, *you*. You're all getting old, and you will soon be too old to be able to make it on a boys-only junket, without your spousal caregiver to push you around in your wheelchair and snap you out of your senility to remind you what state you're in. Not too many good years left, fellas. Better take advantage of them. Just saying.

the establishment of the "Winter Quarters" in the area between what is now Florence and the Missouri River.

Once inside the museum, I was greeted warmly by Elder Mark Vaughn and the museum receptionist⁵. Elder Vaughn seemed delighted to have a visitor--I was the only one there for the full hour that I spent there--and he gave me a wonderful tour of the museum and in masterful fashion described the reasons for and the significance of the establishment of Winter Quarters in North Omaha. He seemed to have plausible and detailed answers to each and every question posed to him, which were many. He answered them all without reservation, and without trying to sell me on his Mormon brand of religion.

Many and perhaps most of you know that Brigham Young led the oft-persecuted Mormons from their home in Nauvoo to what is now Salt Lake City, but I wonder if you knew (I didn't) that they had originally planned to make the migration in a continuous journey and not to stop and spend the winter in Omaha. As it turned out, it took them much longer to trek across Iowa because it was extremely rainy and muddy during that year (1846), and also because they kept running into all the Idiots Out Wandering Around, who kept asking them stupid questions like, "What's it like to have four wives?"⁶ But that's a whole other story.

According to Elder Vaughn, there were on the order of 15,000 or so Mormon travelers who made the initial exodus from Nauvoo, and several thousand of whom spent the winter in and around Omaha, and the reasons that they chose the west side of the Missouri River were twofold. One, because they were worried that they were being followed by the same people and forces who more or less evicted them from Nauvoo, and they would be able to see them coming across the Missouri River; and two, to give them a jump start on their migration to Utah the following spring, so as not to have to start the next leg of their journey by having to first cross over the daunting Missouri River.

I asked Elder Vaughn what was going on over at the temple across the street, what with all the cars in the parking lot on a Wednesday afternoon. He explained to me that people there were doing "administrative" work for the church, and that you have to have member status to enter that building. Apparently one of the things that goes on in the temple is a whole lot of praying for their ancestors who were born before Joseph Smith came along, in order to get these ancestors into their Mormon version of Heaven.

I think my favorite part of the museum, though, was this picture of a large group of Mormon migrators:

⁵ One of his seven wives.

⁶ And the obvious answer was: *Hell*. Which brings up a great joke that my friend Bill likes to tell. *What is the penalty for bigamy? Answer: Having two wives.*

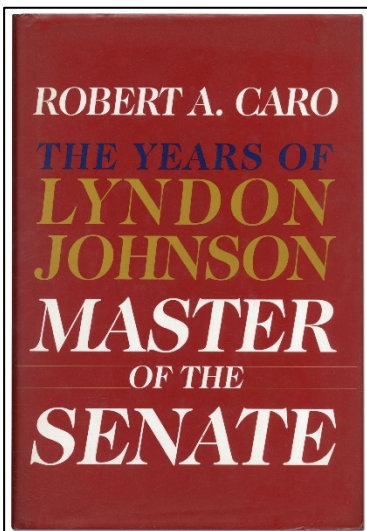
Down-and-Back Wagon Trains 1861-1868



Some pretty salty looking characters in this bunch. Looks like a bunch of true survivors, which is exactly what they were.

Anyway, if you decide to stop up to the Winter Quarters Museum for a look on your own, tell Elder Vaughn that I sent you.

MASTER OF THE SENATE



I recently finished Robert Caro's soaring 1049-page tome on Lyndon Baines Johnson's glory years in the United States Senate, classically titled *Master of the Senate*. LBJ was the youngest Senate majority leader in history, taking over the reins of the Democratic majority at the tender age of 46. Once in charge, he led the world's Greatest Deliberative Body for a total of 6 years, running the show with an iron fist until he made the decision to accept Kennedy's offer of the second spot on the ticket in the 1960 election. This was a decision that LBJ came to rue almost immediately after Kennedy defeated Nixon to win the presidency, because he went from being one of the most powerful politicians on earth to being effectively neutered as Kennedy's VP, and a laughingstock to most of the Beltway during those years.

To many, LBJ's signal accomplishment as the leader of the Senate was passing a Civil Rights voting bill in 1957, the first such Civil Rights legislation enacted since Reconstruction. While it was a much weaker bill than the Democrats and Liberals (they are sometimes but not always one and the same) wanted, it

was the best compromise available at the time, and something that set the table for his Administration's later enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

A Short SOB Story

I was so intrigued by Robert Caro's detailed description of the architecture of the Senate Chamber at the United States Capitol and the Senate Office Building (sometimes humorously referred to as the "SOB") right across the street that when I was last in D.C. for a deposition back in December, I stopped in to see what I could see. I was pleasantly surprised that I was able to get in for a self-guided walking tour of the Russell Senate Office Building, since I had my travel bag and my briefcase with me, but once I was through the metal detector, I was on my own. I was able to stroll at my own pace up and down the long office corridors described by Caro in *Master*, and it was fascinating to think about LBJ and all of the other purveyors of power walking these same halls throughout the years. While wandering through the halls of the first level, I noticed that Nebraska's own Ben Sasse has an office in close proximity to Mitt Romney and Ted Cruz, which I thought was about right. I was amazed that there were no security guards patrolling the corridors, and, I have to admit, if Senator Yertle the Turtle⁷ had walked past me in the hallway, it would have taken every ounce of my self-restraint not to have attempted to land a flying drop kick into his sternum.⁸

After my walk-through at the Senate Office Building, I attempted a similar self-guided tour of the Capitol so that I could see the Senate Chamber where LBJ presided, but the nice people at the metal detector would not let me through with my luggage, and so this experience will have to wait until my next trip to the District.

After finishing *Master of the Senate*, I decided it was easily one of the top ten books I have ever read. However, before taking on the fourth volume of Caro's work on LBJ, *The Passage of Power*, I decided to finish off *A Long Season*, the 1959 diary of pitcher Jim Brosnan (don't bother, he's a semi-racist pseudo-intellectual who thinks he's much wittier than he really is) and *Evicted* (worth reading, but depressing, the story of the plight of the underclass in Milwaukee and of our national housing crisis for society's poorest), but am now good and ready to resume partaking of Caro's magnum opus.

* * * * *

Looking forward to Draft Day and the commencement of Season XXXVI of our glorious fantasy league lives together. Mazel Tov.

Skipper

⁷ The senior senator from Kentucky.

⁸ Sorry, Shamu, I know talking politics makes you uncomfortable.