



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. 11

June 24, 2020

Brethren:

Today, as I drive leisurely along northwest Iowa's highways and byways, past immense fields of corn to my right and to my left, as I make my way to the little village of Ashton, Iowa, for a couple of depositions, I thought I would try to get a few of my random thoughts down on paper. Not sure where all of this will be going, but here goes.

IT'S GREAT TO LIVE IN THE MIDWEST

This morning I was again reminded how fortunate I am to have lived virtually my whole life in the Midwest, as have all of you. I woke up on a beautiful late spring morning at my hotel in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, went out for an invigorating walk, and came back to get showered up, packed up, and then to grab a bite to eat before heading east toward my deposition in northwest Iowa. As I sat in the dining area drinking my coffee, eating my breakfast and trying to read this morning's *USA TODAY*, I was chatted up by a friendly dude who cheerfully told me that today was going to be one of the Top Ten days of the year, weather-wise. I agreed with his statement, having just completed a brisk walk in this beautiful weather, and after a bit more polite conversation, I tried to go back to reading my paper. However, my new friend would have nothing of it.

For the next ten minutes or so, my loquacious new amigo gave me the Reader's Digest version of his life, concluding with the current chapter that informed me that he is 59 years old (I would have guessed more like 70), just back from a three-month furlough, and now just as happy as heck to be serving up breakfast at the Courtyard Marriott in Sioux Falls. Jerry¹ informed me with great enthusiasm that when he was younger, he wanted mountains and streams and completely different geography than is found in Sioux Falls, but that he did that and saw that and now he was back in the place where he was born and raised, and was more appreciative than ever of the beauty of his native land. Jerry also informed me that in this

¹ I actually could not read his name on the small print on his name tag, and I didn't formally introduce myself, so I don't know his real name, but he sure looked like a "Jerry," so we'll go with Jerry.

latter stage of his life, he has taken up photography, and he has derived great enjoyment out of taking beautiful pictures of sunsets and other things of beauty in the Sioux Falls area.

Now I don't know about the rest of you, but I have been to Sioux Falls several different times in my adult life, and I have to say that the beauty of the geography would not be the first thing that would come to mind for me, although I have to confess I have not explored it in detail. But as the sayings go, *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder*, and *One man's ceiling is another man's floor*. More than anything else, as I parted ways with Jerry and headed off to my depositions, I was just darned happy for him that he is happy, even though we just met.

To me, Jerry is an example of what's best about Midwesterners. From my brief meeting with him, it is clear that he has a very strong work ethic, as he was tickled pink to be back serving up food at the Courtyard Marriott, not a job that I would necessarily embrace, but a job that he clearly takes pride in. If you know how to activate YouTube and/or Spotify or one of those other fancy apps that lets you play music, do yourself a favor sometime and play *It's My Job* by Jimmy Buffett, one of his most underrated songs, but one which speaks volumes about Jerry and his ilk. God bless Midwesterners.

SO THERE WILL BE BASEBALL?

I read in yesterday morning's paper that we really are going to have a baseball season. Frankly, I'll believe it when I see it, but I hope that what I read rings true. If these millionaire owners and billionaire players can't figure out that the game is bigger than them and that they need to resolve their differences, they risk losing millions of fans and absolutely ruining America's pastime. Let's hope, and if you pray, pray, that these knuckleheads don't kill the golden goose.

KIDS FOR POTUS



Young people listen to President Donald Trump as he delivers an "Address to Young Americans" at the Dream City Church in Phoenix, on June 23, 2020

Okay, I know that some of you don't like it when *From the Bullpen* gets political, so for those of you who are squeamish, skip this paragraph. For the rest of you, and politics aside, can

anyone here really believe that the current administration held a pathetic *Kids for POTUS* rally in Arizona, one of the worst hotspots of COVID-19, in which something like 3,000 kids gathered together in a church and sat cheek by jowl, yelling vociferously, with only a handful of these crazed Nazi youths wearing masks? Can you even imagine how many of their parents and grandparents will be infected and may die because of this idiotic campaign rally? Other than trying to goad Kim Jung-Un into a nuclear war, it may be the most reckless thing that has happened yet by this tangerine-topped dictator.² With that out of my system, let's move on.

WILL THERE BE COLLEGE FOOTBALL?

Until the recent spike in COVID-19 cases, I was cautiously optimistic that we would likely have a college football season, and that most of us³ would be cheering for our beloved Cornhuskers this fall. Now I'm not so sure. But here's an idea. If the 2020 Husker season gets scrapped, I suggest that the Hot Stove League Husker faithful get together on a handful of football Saturdays and watch vintage Husker football games, such as:



NEBRASKA 35
OKLAHOMA 31

Nov. 25, 1971 - 1:50 p.m. Central
Owen Field | Norman, OK | ABC

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total
Nebraska	7	7	14	7	35
Oklahoma	3	14	7	7	31

“ They can quit playing now, they have played the perfect game.”

— **Dave Kindred**, Louisville Courier Journal

The Nebraska-Oklahoma
Game of the Century in 1971ⁱ (see Endnote)

or

² And I say *yet* with much dread, because I fear that the worst is probably yet to come, whether in this term or a next four-year term, God forbid.

³ Everyone except Tirebiter, that is, who may or may not be cheering for the Hawkeyes and that racist bastard Ferentz this fall.

1995 FedEx Orange Bowl
National Championship Game

<p>Nebraska Cornhuskers (12-0) <i>Big Eight</i></p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">24</p> <p>Head coach: Tom Osborne</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"><i>AP Coaches</i></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td style="text-align: center;">1</td></tr> </table>	<i>AP Coaches</i>		1	1	<p>Miami Hurricanes (10-1) <i>Big East</i></p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">17</p> <p>Head coach: Dennis Erickson</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"><i>AP Coaches</i></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">3</td><td style="text-align: center;">3</td></tr> </table>	<i>AP Coaches</i>		3	3
<i>AP Coaches</i>									
1	1								
<i>AP Coaches</i>									
3	3								

	1	2	3	4	Total
Nebraska	0	7	2	15	24
Miami	10	0	7	0	17

Date January 1, 1995

The Huskers' whipping of the Hurricanes for the National Championship in 1995

or

1996 Tostitos Fiesta Bowl
National Championship Game

<p>Florida Gators (12-0) <i>SEC</i></p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">24</p> <p>Head coach: Steve Spurrier</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;"><i>AP Coaches BA</i></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td></tr> </table>	<i>AP Coaches BA</i>			2	2	2	<p>Nebraska Cornhuskers (11-0) <i>Big Eight</i></p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">62</p> <p>Head coach: Tom Osborne</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;"><i>AP Coaches BA</i></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td style="text-align: center;">1</td></tr> </table>	<i>AP Coaches BA</i>			1	1	1
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<i>AP Coaches BA</i>													
1	1	1											

	1	2	3	4	Total
Florida	10	0	8	6	24
Nebraska	8	29	14	13	62

Date January 2, 1996

The Huskers' dismantling of Steve Spurrier's Gators at the Fiesta Bowl in January 1996

Details to follow, if necessary.

SAINT SCOOTER

As you are all aware--if you read your emails--B.T. has been doing some real soul-searching in light of the current Black Lives Matter movement, and has decided wisely, I feel, to change the name of his baseball team from the **Lincoln Chiefs** to the **Lincoln Saints**. While this may seem to some to be an unorthodox gesture at this time--given all the years of him handing out **Chiefs** gear with stereotypical images of savage warriors--I see it as a clear and unmistakable signal of B.T.'s open-mindedness and his willingness to thoughtfully consider how such a symbol might be seen as racially-insensitive and hurtful to others. I have to admit that while I personally love the look, feel and fit of said championship apparel, I do not wear it outside my home because of my fear of offending someone, and I imagine that I am not the only one amongst our Baker's Dozen that feels this way. And frankly, this should be a wake-up call to all of us that it is time for us to move forward with new outlooks and new traditions.⁴ Thanks for your leadership on this important issue, B.T. From here on out, your initials shall sometimes be short for *Beloved Teacher*.

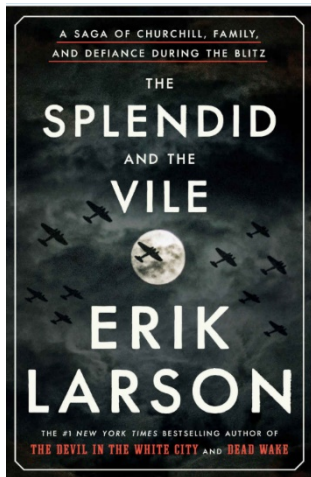
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

I don't know if any of you listen to NPR, but after about a 20-year hiatus, a couple of years ago I started listening to it again, and all I can say is that their programming is terrific. From *Fresh Air* to *All Things Considered* to *It's Been a Minute* to *Storytelling and Humor*, there is something for everyone.

On my Monday evening drive up to Sioux Falls, while listening to *Fresh Air*, I heard an interview of a psychiatrist, Judy Holland, who wrote a book known as *Good Chemistry* about using certain psychedelic drugs and their component parts to treat a variety of mental disorders. I thought it was fascinating. When we become overly anxious, such as when dealing with the coronavirus and/or having to listen to certain national leaders, our brains go into "Sympathetic" mode, which is the well-known "fight or flight" response. If through good chemistry, good diet, good exercise and good sense we can shift our brains over to what is known as "ParaSympathetic" mode, this is where we go into a "rest and restore" condition, which is where we all want to be, instead of fighting and/or fleeing.

According to Dr. Holland, there are certain chemicals in marijuana which can be quite useful in reducing or assisting in getting from Sympathetic mode to ParaSympathetic mode, in conjunct with other modalities or alone. But if you're not into pot, she offered a couple of other good suggestions. A good diet, exercise, spending time alone "in nature," of course, but she said also that breathing in through your nose instead of your mouth and making your exhalation time longer than your inhalation time, will prove to benefit many, if not most. And if all else fails, Dr. Holland recommended going into a quiet room and simply "hugging" yourself for 20 or 30 minutes. Who's with me on this?

⁴ Ever the socially aware, Underbelly has promised that when it is time to crank out his team's championship apparel, he likewise will consider changing his team's nickname, and will issue only racially-sensitive and approved apparel. I like the sound of the **Lincoln Wokes**.



**BOOK REPORT:
THE SPLENDID AND THE VILE
By Erik Larson
Random House, Feb. 25, 2020**

Just today I finished reading a magnificent book by Erik Larson known as *The Splendid and the Vile*, subtitled *A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance during the Blitz*. It is a gripping, well-researched, well-told story of Germany's incessant bombardment of the British Isles, and particularly London, during 1940. The book begins with Churchill taking office as Prime Minister of England on May 10, 1940, and concludes with New Year's Eve 1941, just after Pearl Harbor and the United States entering into the war against the Axis.

For those of you who haven't heard of him, Erik Larson is an accomplished author of a variety of books based on famous and infamous historical events. The first book of his that I read was *The Devil in the White City*, a riveting and macabre recounting of the heinous actions of a serial murderer in Chicago during the touring of the 1893 World's Exposition. The second Larson book I read was *In the Garden of Beasts*, which is about residing in Germany and Europe during the Nazi atrocities. A third wonderful Larson tale is "Dead Wake," about the sinking of the Lusitania by a German U-boat during World War II. And a fourth is *Isaac's Storm*, about the famous Galveston hurricane of September 8, 1900.

In *The Splendid and the Vile*, Larson focuses on how Winston Churchill, at the ripe old age of 68, rotund, immodest, oft-inebriated, constantly with cigar in mouth, courageously led England's fight against Nazi Germany, not only in Europe but around the globe. In great detail he describes the horrific nightly bombing of London by the Luftwaffe and the incredible destruction and the great number of deaths and crippling injuries caused by Goering's Air Force.

Although you have read many of them here before, some of my favorite Churchillian quotes from this book are as follows:

- "I am convinced that every man of you would rise up and tear me down from my place if I were for one moment to contemplate parlay or surrender. If this Long Island story of ours is to end at last, *let it end only when each of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground.*"
- As he neared the conclusion of his speech, he fired his boilers. " 'We shall go on to the end,' he said, in a crescendo of ferocity and confidence. '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.*' As the House roared its approval, Churchill muttered to a colleague, 'And . . . we will fight them with

the butt end of broken bottles, because that's bloody well all we've got.' " His muttering to his colleague was something I had not read about before. Loved it.

- "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."

In the chapter known as "Blood, Sweat and Tears," Larson describes the worst bombing of the war, which occurred on Sunday, May 11. It killed 1,436 Londoners and caused grave injury to another 1,792 people. It left some 12,000 people without homes. Imagine if that happened in just one night to a city in the United States. And yet London and Churchill fought on.

The book is not kind to Churchill's only son, Randolph, who was a problem child from infancy. Spoiled, rude, arrogant, a drunkard and an incurable gambler and reprobate, his mother Clementine all but disowned him, but his father bailed him out of jams time and time again. Here are a few clips about Churchill's son, Randolph:

- "I thought Randolph one of the most objectionable people I had ever met: lazy, self-assertive, whining and frankly unpleasant, . . . He did not strike me as intelligent."
- "Often he started fights with Churchill himself, to Churchill's great embarrassment. It did not help that he routinely picked his nose in public and coughed in relentless gusts. 'His coughing is like some huge dredger that brings up sea-changed things.' "
- "As the day's consumption of alcohol caught up with him, Randolph grew noisier and still more objectionable."

Toward the very end of the book, Larson described what happened on Christmas Eve 1941, just after Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into the war.

With Roosevelt standing at his side, in leg braces, Churchill spoke to a crowd of 3,000 people who had gathered at the White House for the lighting of the National Community Christmas tree. Churchill told the audience that he felt very much at home in Washington. He spoke of this "strange Christmas Eve," and how important it was to preserve Christmas as an island amid the storm.

"Let the children have their night of fun and laughter," Churchill said. "Let gifts of Father Christmas delight their play. Let us grown-ups share to the full in their unstinted pleasures"--abruptly, he lowered his voice to a deep, forbidding growl--"before we turn again to the stern tasks and formidable year that lie before us. Resolve!--that by our sacrifice and daring, these same children shall not be robbed of their inheritance or denied their right to live in a free and decent world."

He closed: "And so--" he flung his hand skyward--"and so, in God's mercy, a happy Christmas to you all."

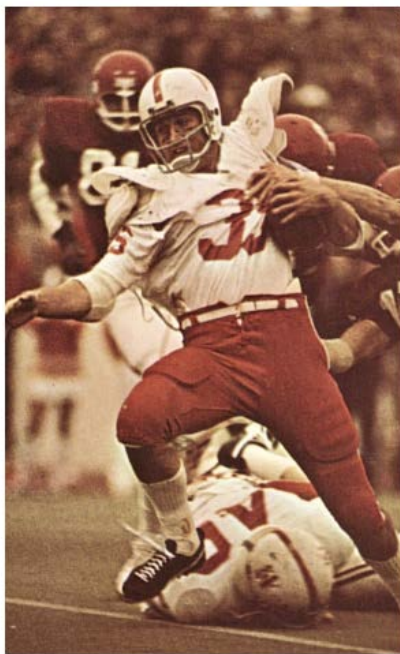
The crowd then began to sing: three carols, starting with "O Come All Ye Faithful" and closing with three verses of "Silent Night," sung with solemnity by the massed voices of thousands of Americans facing a new war.

Enough said. A fantastic book and must read. I could not recommend it more highly.

IN CLOSING

That's it for this issue. I'm off to Pittsburgh. Have a great weekend. See you on the flip side.

Skipper



**HUSKERS EDGE
THE SOONERS
IN A THRILLER
FOR THE AGES**

It was billed as the "Game of the Decade" and came across as the "Game of the Century." The Cornhuskers twice came from behind in the second half to pull out a sensational 35-31 victory over Oklahoma and maintain their No. 1 national ranking.

No. 2-ranked Oklahoma, led by a great quarterbacking job from wishbone artist Jack Mildren, gave the Huskers a magnificent battle before becoming Nebraska's 21st straight victim.

Johnny Rodgers provided the lightning to ignite Nebraska to an early 7-0 lead with a 72-yard punt return, but it was the quarterbacking of Jerry Tagge and the running of Jeff Kinney that sparked the final drive after the Black Shirts — spearheaded by Rich Glover and Outland Trophy winner Larry Jacobson — had blunted but not stopped the wishbone.

With 7:10 left in the game, Oklahoma took the lead, 31-28, and then the Cornhuskers went to work. Helped by a key third-down reception by Rodgers, the Huskers marched 74 yards in 12 plays for the winning TD. In the 98 seconds remaining for the Sooners, the Black Shirts stopped them cold.