



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

# NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

SEASON XXXVI



Angry no more.

## FROM THE BULLPEN

2020 Campaign

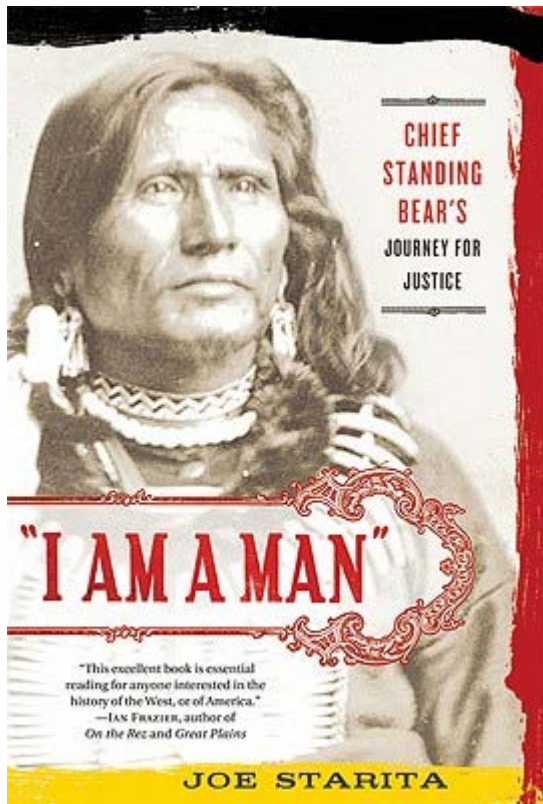
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May 14, 2020

Greetings:

### BOOK REPORT:

#### *"I AM A MAN": Chief Standing Bear's Journey for Justice*



On the advice of a former law partner, I recently purchased and read *"I am a Man": Chief Standing Bear's Journey for Justice*. Although I didn't know it at the time<sup>1</sup>, the author of this book is a guy named Joe Starita, who was a 1967 graduate of Lincoln Northeast High School. Another Rocket High grad made good, no surprise there.

Over the years, I had heard and read bits and pieces about Standing Bear and his trial in an Omaha courthouse, but until reading the book, I didn't really have a grasp of the full story. It's a pretty remarkable tale.

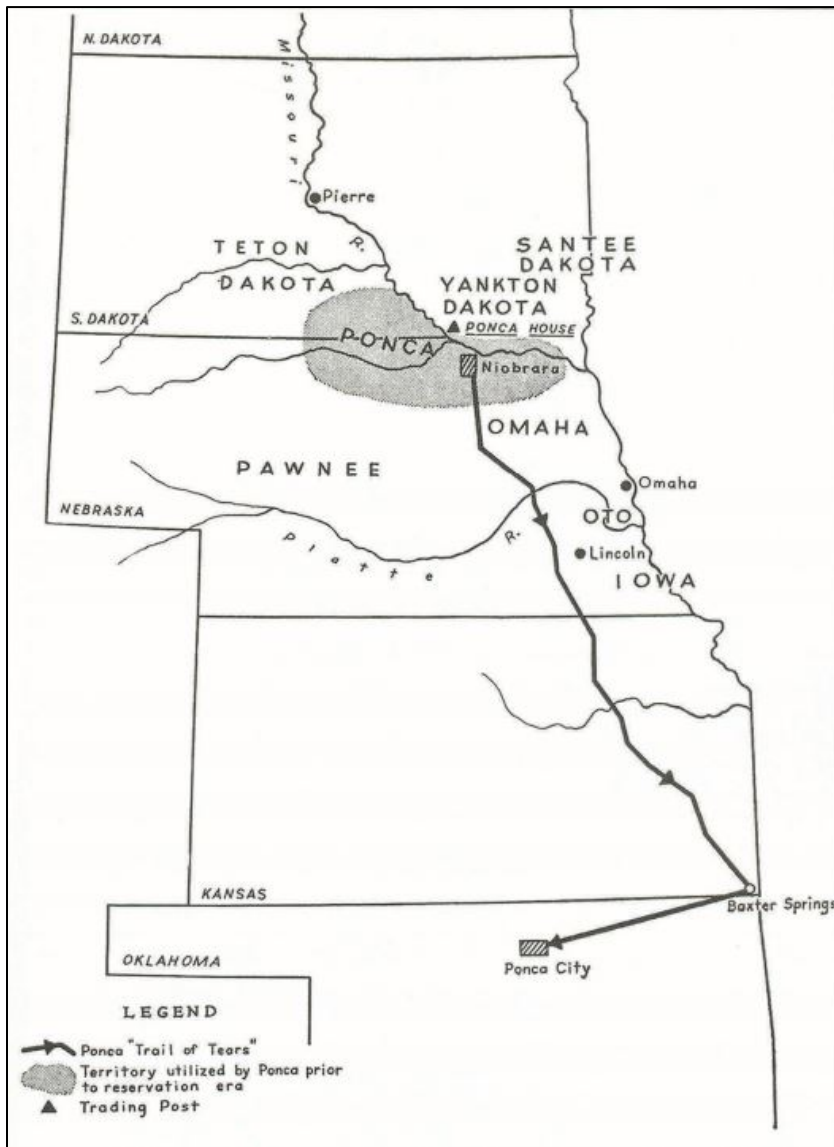
Standing Bear was born in about 1829 in or near the village of Niobrara, located on the Niobrara River near its confluence with the Missouri River, not far from the westernmost branch of what is now known as Lewis and Clark Lake. Standing Bear was a member of the Ponca Indian Tribe, one of the many tribes of Great Plains Indians who sustained themselves by planting and harvesting crops in the fertile lands in the Missouri River Basin.

<sup>1</sup> A shout out here to Slopay, who shared this information with all of us in his recent email.

The Ponca traditionally raised maize, vegetables, and fruit trees in the area during the summer, and then ranged westward for the winter bison hunt. By the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1807, a smallpox epidemic had ravaged them and reduced their numbers from about 800 to 100, long before "shelter in place" was a thing.

Standing Bear married an Indian by the name of Zazette Primeau, daughter of Lone Chief. Together they had several children, including a daughter and son whose names were Prairie Flower and Bear Shield. Standing Bear became a leader among his people, one of the top Chiefs of the Ponca Tribe.

In May of 1877, the Ponca Indians were forced to leave their native lands and move to certain land which had been "reserved" for them in Oklahoma Territory, which became known as the Indian Territory. (See map below from the book, called the "Ponca Trail of Tears May 16-July 9, 1877.")



In the book it is also referred to as the "Warm" Country, and certainly it was warmer than in North Central Nebraska. However, Standing Bear and his Ponca tribesmen mostly hated their new land in the Indian Territory, which was not nearly as fertile as their land near the Missouri River, and did not serve them well in raising crops. The Native Americans were also much more susceptible to disease while living in the Indian Territory, and nearly one-third of Standing Bear's Ponca tribesmen and women died of malaria or starvation within a couple of years.

### **THE WINTER WALK**

While living in the Indian Territory, Standing Bear's son Bear Shield became very ill and it was soon evident that he was going to die. He pleaded with his father to take him back to their beloved native land near Niobrara, Nebraska, and to bury him there. On January 2 of 1879, Standing Bear and 29 of his tribal followers--including women and children--set out to leave the Indian Territory and walk off the reservation lands and across Kansas and Nebraska toward freedom, leaving behind the majority of the still-living members of the Ponca tribe who were wont to leave the Indian Territory.

On the second day of the journey, the temperature was 19 degrees below zero.<sup>2</sup> It was a cruel beginning to the Walk for Freedom, and seemingly foolhardy. However, in spite of terrible weather, inadequate clothing and blankets, and a diminishing food supply, this brave band of warriors forged on, traversing the hostile and barren land with no assurance that they would have a place to stay once they got there. In spite of these hardships, Standing Bear was determined to take the bones of his now dead son back to their homeland for their final resting place.

After 62 days of this miserable journey, on March 4, 1879, Standing Bear and his band of survivors arrived at the Omaha Reservation (a friendly tribe that agreed to let them camp on their lands) in Northeast Nebraska, where they planned to stay for a short time before traveling across northern Nebraska to Niobrara. It was there that they were arrested, and made to turn south and march to Fort Omaha in North Omaha where Standing Bear would remain incarcerated until further orders were received by the commanding officer.

### **STANDING BEAR LAWYERS UP**

It was while he was detained at Fort Omaha that Standing Bear received a monumental assist from a most unlikely benefactor, General George Crook, who for most of his army career had been displacing American Indians from their native lands, including Crazy Horse and his Lakota Sioux. However, Crook after a time began to sympathize with the Native Americans, and was particularly sympathetic to the plight of Standing Bear. According to the book, it was General Crook who first recommended that Standing Bear file a writ of habeas corpus to try to get his case before a federal judge and prevent his return to the Indian Territory. The rest, as they say, is history.

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<sup>2</sup> Not sure exactly how they were checking ambient temperatures back at that time, but I'm sure Mr. Starita isn't just making this up.

## THE TRIAL OF STANDING BEAR

Aided by a newspaper man by the name of Thomas Henry Tibbels, Standing Bear had a crack legal team representing him in his habeas corpus action. One of them was a man by the name of Andrew Jackson Poppleton, a Michigander who after getting his law degree, stopped in Omaha on his way to California to seek fame and fortune and remained in our fair city for the rest of his career, becoming the first lawyer to practice law in Omaha and the first President of the Nebraska Bar Association. He later became the second mayor in the history of the City of Omaha. The other member of the legal team was John Lee Webster from Ohio, a solid constitutional law scholar.

Standing Bear's attorneys had to get word to the territorial judge (appointed by Honest Abe) for the area, the Honorable Elmer Scipio Dundy, who was a practiced outdoorsman who was on a hunting campaign at the time. Judge Dundy returned to Omaha and presided over the habeas corpus trial at the territorial courthouse located at 15th and Dodge. The attorney representing the federal government was a young and brash trial barrister by the name of Genio Lambertson, who would be handling his first trial as the newly-appointed D.A.

The trial itself lasted two days. Several different witnesses were called. The star witness was Standing Bear himself, who after the trial had officially ended asked for permission to address the Court, which was allowed. With an eagle feather in his braided hair, a bold blue shirt trimmed in red cloth, blue flannel leggings and deerskin moccasins, and a Thomas Jefferson medallion and a necklace of bear claws around his neck, he walked up to the front of the courtroom, stopped and faced the audience, and extended his right hand, holding it still for a small time.



An artist's rendition of Standing Bear in court

After a while, he turned his stance and began to speak to the judge, his words translated by a Ponca squaw named Bright Eyes, as follows:

*That hand is not the color of yours, but if I pierce it, I shall feel pain. If you pierce your hand, you also feel pain. The blood that will flow from mine will be of the same color as yours. I am a man. The same god made us both.*

It was a “drop the mike” moment if there ever was one, and became the integral part of his legend, as well as the title of the book under review.

Judge Dundy, as judges do, took the matter under advisement, and ten days later, he delivered his decision in a lengthy written opinion, concluding that “an *Indian* PERSON within the meaning of the laws of the United States, and has therefore the right to sue out a writ of habeas corpus in a federal court.” Secondly, he opined, General Crook had illegally detained the Ponca prisoners. Third, Dundy held that the military had no legal authority to forcibly remove the Ponca to Indian Territory. And fourth, the wise jurist held that “Indians possess the inherent right of expatriation as well as the more fortunate white race, and ‘have the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’”

Following Judge Dundy’s monumental decision, the government appealed the ruling to the United States Supreme Court. To raise money to fight this appeal, Standing Bear and several others went on an extensive speaking/lecture tour to a number of cities in the East, including Boston, New York City, and Washington, D.C. The government eventually dropped their appeal.

### **IN SEARCH OF STANDING BEAR**

After reading the book on Standing Bear and then studying my Nebraska map, I realized that I had not ever been to the village of Niobrara<sup>3</sup> near the land where Standing Bear lived his final days and was eventually buried.

I decided that a solo road trip to Niobrara was in order. So on Thursday last, instead of heading to my office for a full day of blankly staring into my computer screen, I piled into my aptly-named Explorer and headed west on Highway 275. Once I got to Norfolk, I switched roadways and took Highway 13 through Pierce and on to Plainview, and then onto Highway 20 in a westward direction until it met up with Highway 14, then Highway 14 north into Knox County, and then north to Verdigre. It is at about Verdigre that the terrain changes from flat farm- and ranchland to rolling hills and bluffs as one continues to traverse northward on 14 toward the village of Niobrara.

Once in Niobrara, I could see why Standing Bear and his Ponca tribe treasured their homeland so dearly, as it is land that is adorned by the Niobrara and Missouri Rivers, with abundant rich fertile soil, and no doubt full of wild game, including buffalo, which are still raised in this area.

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<sup>3</sup> Although I seem to remember a vacation trip when I was a little tyke on which we visited the Niobrara State Park, which is very close by. But since I can’t remember for sure, it might be on the order of fake news.

Surprisingly, I didn't see any mention whatsoever of the beloved native son Standing Bear in the village of Niobrara, or the roads leading into and out of this hamlet. And even with my handy cellular device in hand on this junket, I was not able to get directions to Standing Bear's burial site. I guess that will have to be a future trip.



Standing Bear Memorial Bridge



I did drive across the structurally impressive Standing Bear Memorial Bridge across the Missouri River to a place known as *Running Water*, South Dakota, where there is a terrific viewing spot on a high bluff which allows one a spectacular view of the sprawling Missouri and Niobrara River valleys. One could easily imagine this great Indian chief in his canoe on this great river in the middle of the 19th century, looking for food or surveying the land for potential for the next crop season.



### **FUN FACTS ABOUT STANDING BEAR**

- In 1893, Standing Bear worked for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Chicago, and visited the world's Columbian exposition where he rode the ferris wheel in full native dress.
- After returning from the East, Standing Bear resided at his old home on the Niobrara. He farmed near approximately 170 other Ponca Indians who were allowed to re-settle there.
- Standing Bear died in 1908 of oral cancer and is buried on a hill overlooking the site of his birth.
- In 2005, a new elementary school in Omaha was named in Standing Bear's honor.
- In 2017, a bronze sculpture of Standing Bear was completed and installed in downtown Lincoln, Nebraska.
- In 2019, a statue of Standing Bear replaced one of Nebraska's own William Jennings Bryan in the Statutory Hall of the United States Capitol.

### **TAKE ME HOME, COUNTRY ROADS**

On my drive home from Niobrara, I took Highway 12 east to the Santee Sioux Indian Reservation, a small chunk of land which our government generously set aside for the Native Sioux, upon which the tribal leaders (or their palefaced financial bankers, more likely) have erected a gaudy structure known as the Ohiya Casino & Resort, which, on a Thursday mid-morning in

the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, had no shortage of shiny patron vehicles in the parking lot.



I feel confident that there was some excellent Social Distancing and sanitizing of the premises going on inside, and it was tempting to take a peek, but I thought better of it and drove on.

The other site worth remarking about from my drive back is the baseball complex in Crofton, Nebraska, which is absolutely beautiful, and clearly the pride and joy of this entire community.





I knew that the village of Crofton had a strong baseball tradition because Joe's Mount Michael Legion baseball team played in the State Tournament near Wilbur, Nebraska, back in about 2010, and I remembered reading up on their impressive history of Legion baseball performance, including a State runner-up title that year. If you're ever in Crofton<sup>4</sup>, it is worth a look.

**2006 REVISITED:  
MEET ME IN ST. LOUIE**

As promised, below is JT's spellbinding recap of our wonderful 2006 junket to St. Louis for an annual HSL Trip. Man, that was fun.

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<sup>4</sup> And why would you be, I get it.

# The Jiggernaut

Official Publication Of  
The Skipjacks  
Special Edition Of  
From the Bullpen  
Guest Editor: Itchie



**Five times Champion,  
and that ain't no fish tale.**

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## ***Meet Me in St. Louie***

There are only two words to describe the recent annual HSL junket to St. Louis on Father's Day weekend:

Great Fun  
Great Turnout  
Great Seats  
Nice Stadium  
Mike Shannon's  
Big Johnny  
Jager Bomb  
Another Round  
David Vatterott

Okay, maybe more than two. The weekend was such a smashing success and great time, it's hard to know where to begin.

It all kicked off on a picture perfect Friday morning with the assembly of the trip participants in the airport coffee shop. After discussing the current state of baseball over a cup of joe, the league members reached a consensus that the only current players not amped up on androstendione or

HGH are those who have not yet been able to find a pusher. One may be prone to wonder about Jamey Carroll, Magpie's newest pickup. This light-hitting second baseman seems to have experienced some expansion of his skull plates, resulting in his eyes lodging approximately 33 inches apart. Think of a hybrid Dante Bichette/Andre the Giant, and you'll have a visual of Jamey's twin.

Unfazed by the prevalent cheating and potential ruination of our national pastime, we boarded our Southwest bird for the short flight to the holy city. In keeping with HSL tradition, Jim Ed set the tone for the trip by barking out his order for a barley pop before the flight attendant could finish her tutorial on how to work the seat belt extender. Once the drinks were served, we were "on our way" in more ways than one.

We arrived in St. Louis on time, and not so quickly purchased our tokens for the scenic ride downtown on the Metro Link. After realizing that we were probably the only rubes gullible enough to actually buy a ride pass, we decided that all future use of rail transportation would involve gate crashing the train like the rest of the normal people do. Worked like a charm.

We checked into our lavish digs at the Embassy Suites, with the tallest league member from Kansas City first in line. Stretch secured his room key and turned around to say "let's go, roomy," only to find that 9 others in his traveling party had all curiously vacated the lobby at the same time to use the facilities. Due to the unfortunate fact that 9 men can only hide in a bathroom for about 45 minutes, Underbelly was eventually overtaken by the stench and succumbed to his urge to exit. Stretch instantly hog collared him, and just like that he had his bitch. After the first night of seeing Underbelly in his purple mesh Speedo, Stretch has received approval under the league by-laws of his motion to designate UBob as his permanent roommate on all future HSL trips. That works for us. It sounds to me like he found someone with a fitness for a particular purpose.

Upon leaving the hotel, we established nearby Sundeckers as our base of operations moving forward. Although we were torn on whether to stay at Sundeckers to watch the Togo/Paraguay World Cup match or head to the ballpark, we opted for the latter. We boarded the Metro Link once again at our newly discounted HSL rate, determined to hook up with Shamu's St. Louis connection to secure our ducats for the night's Cards/Rockies tilt.

This ticket exchange meeting went down at Mike Shannon's restaurant, just a stone's throw away from the new stadium. After exchanging pleasantries with Shamu's "peeps" and acting like we actually cared about how they were doing, we grabbed the tickets and informed them that we needed to be on our way, posthaste. Thanks a lot, gotta go. We then proceeded to grab a quick bite at a quaint little Italian restaurant, surrounded by 500 of our closest friends adorned in A.Pujols/ S.Rolen/S.Taguchi jerseys.

Bellies now full and tickets secured, we headed for St. Louis' new jewel and the night's activities. Once at the ballpark, we were greeted at the front door by a disfigured Stan Musial. I am uncertain how Stan the Man could have had such a wonderful career wearing a 30 pound hat and swinging a 7 ounce bat, but apparently he did. I might suggest they ask the sculptor for a refund on that one.

Once in the stadium, four of the league members took their seats in their luxury suite, and four others about an arm's length from the third base coaching box. Very nice, for you. Skipper and I

wandered over to our seats in the fat people section, and let the usher know that we were ready for him to hit the "on" switch for the sauna. He complied. The only benefit of those seats was the close proximity to the turkey leg vendor, a tradition so strong at Busch that it was carried over from the old stadium to the new. We tolerated three innings of the "sitting by fat people eating turkey legs in a steam room" section, then decided to wander around the venue a bit to see the rest of the stadium.

Clearly, each and every usher in the place has had extensive Turk training, and my guess is that they are actually generating commissions based on their number of evictions per game. The "turking" also extends to the standing areas in the concourse, as any steps outside the yellow lines of the designated viewing areas will result in a stern rebuke and threat of violence from the ticket Nazi's. A word to the wise: Sit in your assigned seat at Busch, and DO NOT deviate from those orders.

After the game, we decided to let the crowd clear out a bit before heading home. We ducked in a little Irish pub for a quick thirst quencher, and it was here that the first Jager Bomb of the trip was detonated. Stretch indicated that he was game for a little "pick me up," and eventually Maggie seemed to develop a fondness for this cool refreshing drink (or as Underbelly so succinctly put it, "licorice and battery acid"). After that, it was Katie bar the door. There was another "bride to be" stalking of yours truly in this establishment, and a "Jager trade" executed between Maggie and Itchie, and then we moved on to conclude our evening at base station. It was here that one of St. Louis' fine young bachelorettes dropped the bomb on us that knocked Vatterott College off its lofty pedestal as an institution of higher learning on the level of Rice, Stanford, Northwestern, and DeVry. Her midnight confessions of her intimate relationship with David Vatterott led us all to conclude that anyone that would have sex with an inked up, body pierced, hard drinking endocrinologist is probably not running a reputable institution of higher learning. This revelation has thrown me into my own personal tizzy, as I must now amend the educational plans that I had previously cast in stone for my three known offspring.

Saturday brought a new day, and another opportunity to pursue my elusive goal of having fun for just once in my life. However, the angel on my left shoulder kept telling me to slow down a bit. Friday night had been a bit tough on my 48 year old body, and Sunday's flight was going to sneak up on us all pretty early. Just take it easy tonight, angel said, and slow down and enjoy the moment. The devil on my right shoulder said "let's get after it tonight. We're not going to slow down, and as a matter of fact, we're not even going to hit the brakes." As usual, logic prevailed. The devil won.

The early part of Saturday started with a brief foray into the nearby casino. We were greeted by a cheerful bunch that was not only committed to Compliance, they were, in fact, Gung Ho on Compliance. After being lavished with Chamber of Commerce level courtesy, we paid the entry fee that bought us the right to have the casino separate us from our money. We proceeded to the gaming area to take our chances. Fearful of bankrupting the casino and putting those hard working employees on the street, we limited our winnings and quickly decided that a mix of Bloody Mary's and tumbling dice was not going to accelerate our retirements, so we agreed to move on.

Saturday night's game required that we acquire some additional ducats, so we headed toward Mike Shannon's to align ourselves with some of the brother's currently working "supply side

economics" in the ticket biz. We were immediately hooked up, and the transaction went down without incident. After introducing ourselves to the "supply side employees" in Shannon's alcohol market, we headed to the stadium once again. If Alan Greenspan had been on the deck at Shannon's, he would have immediately raised interest rates on Jagermeister and Red Bull, sensing that future demand was going to be strong to the point of irrational exuberance. Smart man, Greenspan.

Saturday's game was great, with my only regret that my family wasn't with me. I just know if they had been, I would have been afforded the opportunity to stand in line for 55 minutes to spend \$60 on a "Fredbird" Build-a-Bear. Maybe next time.

After the game, we reconvened at Shannon's for our final night out. We re-acquainted ourselves with the wait staff, building such rapport that we were eventually on a first name basis (with adjectives included), even from 50 yards away. At this point, I'm finally starting to have some fun. After several hours of consuming various forms of alcohol (shots, beer, liquor) and multiple sources of carcinogens, we headed back to Sundeckers for our swan song. It was here that Magpie put on a magnificent imitation of a post lobotomy Jack Nicholson in Cuckoo's Nest, staring blankly ahead into space and mumbling incoherently about a Pamela Anderson look alike. Once again, age kicked in and reason prevailed, so we cut short the festivities to ensure that we would be spry and chipper for the gifts and adulation that surely awaited each of us for Father's Day.

Sunday concluded our annual trip, with the only excitement being Screech's forging of a lifetime bond with Skeezix on the train back to the airport. Sitting next to each other on the crowded Metro Link, they struck up a conversation and within minutes it was clear that they were long lost brothers, sharing an affinity for tattoos, bad smells, smokes, and CC Sabathia hat wearin' style. Screech has submitted a motion to include Skeezix on all future HSL trips. His plea was reminiscent of Jimmy Chitwood's appeal to keep his coach in Hoosiers. "Skeezix goes, I go. Skeezix stays, I stay." Enough said, Screech. It's clear he is one of us.

In all sincerity, thanks to everyone for the arrangements, the excellent tickets, the camaraderie, and the memories. I think for once in my life, I finally achieved my goal.

Good luck the rest of the way, and I'm so glad we all agreed over the Jager Bombs to remove the innings cap.

Itchie

## SHORT STOPS



It looks like major league baseball will start playing games again around the 4th of July, and with DHs in both leagues, so I guess PAwesome wins that one. Oy vey. A terrible, terrible decision, in my humble opinion.



As you all know, B.T. has offered his beautiful spread in Lincoln for the Draft, tentatively set for the last week of June. More details to follow soon.



A couple of great quotes from one of my baseball books recently revisited:

*"It's got absolutely nothing on it."*

*Al Michaels, on why he called Steve McCatty's new pitch "The Nudist"*

*"They want me to throw it over the plate, and I can't pitch that way."*

*Rick Odowngey*

*"I'm working on a new pitch--it's called a strike."*

*Jim Kern*

*"After a while I asked if I could pitch from closer in."*

*Charlie Hough, after walking five batters in a row*

*"Ryne Duren was a one-pitch pitcher. His one pitch was a wild warm-up."*

*Jim Bouton*



After watching only the first two segments, I can heartily recommend to you "Last Dance." It is terrific. *The multi-episode documentary on Netflix/ESPN about Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls 1997-98 season.*

\* \* \* \* \*

And that's it for this issue, lads! Have a great weekend, all.

Skipper