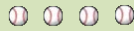


# NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE



SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion  
West Des Moines Cubs  
Manager: Shamu

## FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 27

November 24, 2021

Brethren:

Happy Thanksgiving holiday to you all!

First and foremost, many thanks to Underbelly for authoring his guest edition of *The Bellyflop*. As always, it was entertaining, thought-provoking and entirely on the mark. I loved the comparison between our Lincoln Northeast neighborhood and Mayberry RFD. One of the characters referenced by Bob was *Newt*, an intriguing fellow who would ride his bicycle in and around the Ballard Park/Havelock neighborhood areas, climbing the Ballard softball complex backstop like an orangutang; one of his signature moves was using a match with great flare to light his pipe, inserting his right upper extremity between his two lower extremities and up to his cocked head to his pipe in his clenched teeth to ignite his bowl of tobacco. Another one of his myriad talents--as Bob mentioned--was to make a cacophonous, blaring sound like a train horn which was so realistic that half the crowd at the Ballard softball games would immediately glance to the east to see if there was a train heading north or south on the Burlington Northern line. Like Bob, I am pretty sure that *Newt* was quite a bit older than both of us, but whether he was ten years older or 35 or more years older was imperceptible.

And thanks to SloPay for chiming in about another memorable northeast Lincoln character, *Bat Boy Bob*, whom I remember distinctly but who I have not thought about for at least forty years. For those of you who never met him, *Bat Boy Bob*<sup>1</sup> was as serious a batboy as ever laid foot on a baseball diamond, and he wanted everyone around him to know that *he* was the batboy and nobody else.

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<sup>1</sup> I will aver here on the record that I agree with SloPay that I cannot recall *Bat Boy Bob* and *our* Bob, aka Underbelly, ever being in the same place at the same time. Probably just one of those crazy coincidences.

To my memory, *Newt* did not directly engage with the public in the manner of *Bat Boy Bob* but, rather, was a bit of a loner. But I do recall that he had a wire basket attached to the front of his bicycle, and that he would come wheeling into Havelock with some piece of equipment or a knickknack of some sort, or perhaps even some little invention that he cobbled together, or maybe even a dead animal, and he would pull it out of the basket and admire it, seemingly for all the world to see, perhaps utilizing this silent methodology to gain acceptance if not prestige from the watching world.



### FRIDAYS WITH SKIPPER

And speaking of characters, my second *Friday with Skipper* on November 12 was a rewarding and remarkable day with our beloved Baby Trumpetfish, as the two of us headed south from Lincoln to Abilene, Kansas for a full measure of adventure. I'd be hard pressed to think of a better way to spend the day.<sup>2</sup>

I told B.T. I would be at his house at 7 a.m. sharp for our (his) drive to Abilene, but when I got to his house, it was dark. Rather than ring the doorbell and set his dog off like a three-alarm fire, I checked the hasp at the front door and found it unlocked, so I helped myself in. As I stood in the kitchen doorway waiting to hear or see a sign of life, suddenly out of the shadows of the lower staircase I saw the movement of a dim figure which gave me a bit of a start. As my eyes adjusted to the light and this figure emerged from the darkness, at first I thought it was Kevin Costner clad in his *Yellowstone* garb, holding a sawed-off shotgun. As he further materialized from the shadows, I realized that this person wasn't Costner, but then I thought it might be the reincarnation of Clint Eastwood in *High Plains Drifter*, equally startling. When he finally got close enough for me to fully make him out, I saw that it was B.T. in the flesh, decked out in hat, duster and boots, greeting me ebulliently for our *Friday with Skipper* adventure.

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<sup>2</sup> Although if Itchie is reading this right now, he has no doubt immediately thought of "Asian twins." I won't argue the point.



*Skipper and the High Plains Drifter Make Ready for Abilene*

Classic. Only B.T. One of a kind.

### ABILENE, ABILENE<sup>3</sup>

As we made our way south toward Abilene, we decided we had to listen to the famous country ballad by the same name sung by many different country western singers, but most famously by George Hamilton IV<sup>4</sup>. Here are the words to the first verse:

Abilene, Abilene  
Prettiest town I've ever seen  
Women there **don't treat you mean**  
In Abilene, my Abilene  
I sit alone, most every night  
Watch those trains pull out of sight  
Don't I wish they were carryin' me  
Back to Abilene, my Abilene

Nearly overcome with relief that we would *not* be treated mean by the women of Abilene, we continued along our merry way, anxiously awaiting our arrival at the Dwight David Eisenhower Presidential Museum.

Once in Abilene, we made our way across the tracks--DDE reportedly often told folks that he was just an ordinary boy from the *wrong side of the tracks*--and discovered the boyhood home of Eisenhower, located on the same campus as the presidential museum, library and the chapel where Dwight and Mamie are buried. After entering the museum, the *High Plains Drifter* and I had a marvelous time viewing and reading about the amazing life of DDE.<sup>5</sup> We spent a good 3-1/2 hours in the museum proper, and then another 30 or 45 minutes walking the grounds, revisiting the boyhood home and the chapel.

We learned a lot on this visit about Eisenhower and his remarkable life and career, but what stood out to me were his three speeches that he gave in the 1950s about the dangers of the atomic bomb and the importance of the pursuit of world peace. His words were not necessarily what I would have expected from the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, but they are words which we could and should repeat today. Wise old Ike understood the devastation of world war and the global existential threat posed by nuclear arms.

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<sup>3</sup> FYI Abilene, Kansas was the very northern end of the storied Chisholm Trail, where cattle drives from Texas and Oklahoma ended before the cattle were loaded up on trains and shipped East for higher prices.

<sup>4</sup> No relation to the too-tanned actor of a similar name.

<sup>5</sup> FN: POTUS 34, not your author.



















**BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE**





After completing our tour of the DDE Presidential Museum, and just as we were preparing to grab a bite to eat before departing Abilene for home, what to our wondering eyes should appear but a building right across the street from the DDE complex which announced that it was the *Greyhound Hall of Fame*. Now while B.T. and I have never been Greyhound dog track regulars, we both knew instantly that this was a treasured landmark that we could not afford to miss. During this little side-junket, we learned that the reason there is a Greyhound Hall of Fame in Abilene is that the area is well known for having Greyhound breeders, and monied people who pushed to have the HOF situated there. We also learned that there are only three states in the country which currently allow Greyhound racing, including our neighboring Iowa Squawkeyes. Sounds about right, doesn't it?

So now Indiana Jones and I can both add the Greyhound Hall of Fame to our list of such venues, right after Cooperstown and Canton. Another giant feather in the cap.

While the venues that we visited in Abilene were interesting and edifying, the best part of the trip was being able to catch up with B.T. on all things of common interest, and in the mix many different topics were included, such as the tragedy of gun violence, our country's flawed college education system, mask mandates, vaccination mandates, parenting, children, stepchildren and grandchildren, growing up in Lincoln,



and of course, our beloved Hot Stove League. One of the things that I appreciate most about B.T. is that he is knowledgeable about just about everything, can argue both sides of an issue with great fervor, and can discuss such topics without getting even a little angry. And, to his everlasting credit, he has great advice and unmatched insight about people and relationships, and so it is no wonder that his time is in great demand among his children, grandchildren, siblings and friends.

All in all, a wonderful day with a terrific friend.

### **A KRAUSE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH**

Just as we were getting ready to leave Scott's house for Abilene, I noticed a family photo in his home office that I hadn't seen before, and it is worth sharing with all of you here.



*The Krause clan, circa 1967?*

The first thing I noticed was that Scott's dad, A-Train, looks pretty much exactly like Bill Murray's brother, Brian Doyle-Murray, from the movie *Caddyshack*. I then noticed that B.T.'s little brother Mikey was clad only in a diaper, which shows how unpretentious his family was. B.T. even pointed out that his dad was the only one in the picture

with shoes on, which also says something about the Krause family and about being raised in the 1960s. B.T. also pointed out just how world-weary A-Train looks in this picture, which is understandable with so many young mouths to feed. Good stuff.

### **ANOTHER FRIDAY WITH SKIPPER**

Last week I had another great Friday which included lunch with my son Joe at *Cascio's*, a landmark Omaha steakhouse located on South 10th Street which has been in operation in Omaha since 1946. Joe currently works at Johnson Hardware which is only about a mile away from *Cascio's*, so he has been there many times for lunch with co-workers. However, as I told Joe while we were walking from the car to the restaurant, I have not been *Cascio's* for lunch or dinner for at least 30 years, and he told me that it probably looks exactly the same inside as when I was last there. Once inside, I realized that he was exactly right.

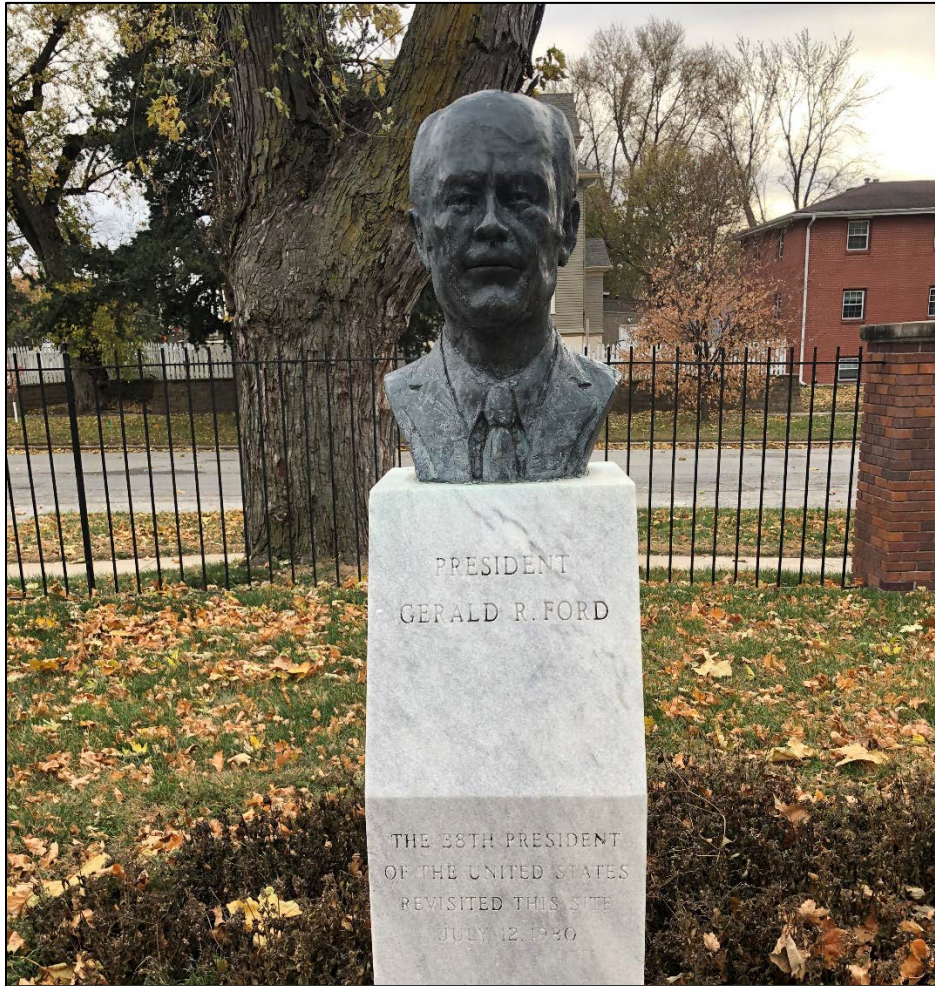


As we sat waiting for our food, I recalled the last time I had been at *Cascio's* was when Willis Reed was coaching the Creighton Bluejays (1981-1985) and was having dinner with Benoit Benjamin's mom, either during the recruiting visit or when she was in town for one of his games. Since Benoit left Creighton in 1985, it has in fact been at least 36 years since I have been to *Cascio's*, so there you go.

After lunch with Joe, I decided to stop by the Gerald Ford Presidential Birthplace Museum located at 32nd and Woolworth Avenue in Omaha, having never before seen this historic place. I'm not sure I've ever been more underwhelmed by an historical place, but since Ford only lived in Omaha for about two weeks after he was born and



then moved to Michigan with his mom, it is understandable. I think that his statue, shown below, was probably sculpted by the same dude responsible for the Stan Musial monstrosity in St. Louis. And that's all I got to say about that.



**BOOK REPORT**  
***JOCKO***



I just finished reading the only book I ever read about an umpire, titled *Jocko*, originally published in 1967 and co-authored by Robert W. Creamer. It is an interesting read about one of the most famous umpires of all time, someone who was inducted into the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown in 1974, and who in his final year of umpiring had numerous celebrations put on by various National League ballclubs during his final game in each ballpark. An Irishman through and through, Jocko was first a major league baseball player of nominal skill before being asked to take a stab at umpiring while he was

still on the roster as an active player for the Chicago White Sox. Seeing the writing on the wall about his playing career, Conlan soon took to umpiring full time, but had to pay his dues in the Minor Leagues before being promoted to the Majors. He eventually umpired for 25 years in the Bigs.

One of the players that Jocko refers to in the book is a fellow by the name of Debs Garms, an intriguing individual who born in Bangs, Texas and educated at someplace named Howard Payne University. I had never before heard of Debs, but as it turns out, he was a pretty salty hitter for the St. Louis Browns, and then the Pirates, and then the Cardinals. Not only did he break up Johnny Vander Meer's streak of hitless innings in 1938 (after his back-to-back no-hitters), but in 1940 Garms won the National League batting title despite serving as a platoon player, recording 358 at-bats in 103 games and posting an average of .355 to edge out Joe DiMaggio with his paltry .352 average. So how about that? There is always something new to learn about our beloved sport of baseball.

Conlan absolutely loved Ted Williams, whom he said never, ever complained about one of his calls behind the plate. He detested Jackie Robinson, who reportedly always complained about his umpiring, and always thought that he was right. He loved Elston Howard, the black catcher for the Yankees, so his hatred of Robinson was apparently not race-related. And more than anyone else, he hated manager Leo Durocher, who he claims was the biggest conniver and complainer that he ever met.

A good book, and quite readable.

### **WINTER MEETING**

Negotiations are still in progress with Magpie on the date, time and place of our winter meeting, but for now, please keep the weekends of January 21-22 and January 28-29 free on your calendars, if you can.

### **WAIT, THERE'S MORE 2.0**

When I sent my kids the picture of Scott's DDE-Day outfit, the reactions included Will's wishes for a great day with *Indiana Jones*, and Joe's commentary that "That is potentially my favorite outfit I have ever seen." Emily thought I was with Sherlock Holmes per her text. As indicated, I was thinking Costner and Eastwood. So then I came up with the brilliant idea of taking an anonymous survey of HSL members of who they thought B.T. most resembled in his amazing outfit. In no particular order, here are the results of the poll:

11. Indiana Jones
10. Barnaby Jones
9. Crusty the Clown



8. Silly Billy Jack
7. The Outlaw Josey the Whale
6. Bob the Batboy
5. Syd Blethniven
4. Freight Train Guatney
3. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
2. Newt
1. Baby Trumpetfish

I can't disagree with any of them.

### **GUEST NEWSLETTERS, ANYONE?**

Reading Robert's *Bellyflop* made me wistful for the era when many of you would contribute guest newsletters. I would like to encourage all of you to consider doing so going forward, as Linda is getting tired of hearing my voice and would love to have a break now and then. Don't be surprised if I come knocking on your door early next season requesting a contribution. Other voices need to be heard.

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Time to close out this issue. Enjoy your time together with family and friends this Thanksgiving, my brothers.

Skipper

