

FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 3



January 26, 2023

OWNERS:

Ted Bridges
("PAwesome")
Wahoos
Returning Champion

Jeff Bechtolt
("Screech")
King Billies

Jon Blongewicz
("Sunny")
Blues

Denny Bontrager
("SloPay")
Bears

Jim Buser
("Tirebiter")
Redbirds

Rick Drews
("Big Guy")
Red Ball Jets

Dave Ernst
("Skipper")
Senators

Bob Hurlbut
("Underbelly")
Tribe

Scott Krause
("BT")
Saints

Mike Morris
("Mouse")
The Huskers

Mitch Pirnie
("Magpie/Tricko")
Bums

Chuck Sinclair
("Shamu")
Cubs

John Thielen
("Itchie")
DFL

STAFF:

Publisher and Editor
Dave Ernst

Webmaster and
Assistant Editor
Linda "Chief" Koftan

Gentlemen:

This issue of *From the Bullpen* comes to you from our West Coast bureau in Sacramento, where your humble scribe is ensconced for a few days of billable meanderings. Let's start with a little bit of news from Cooperstown.

HOF OPENS DOORS TO SCOTT ROLEN



In this year's vote of the Baseball Writer's Association, the only eligible former player deemed worthy was Scott Rolen who narrowly exceeded the 75% threshold. In the close but no cigar department was Todd Helton, whose career stats are laudable and who had one of the greatest at bats that I have ever seen, but who is apparently being downgraded because of his career spent in the hitter-friendly confines of Coors Field.

Here are the votes for the top ten vote-getters:

Scott Rolen: 297 votes, 76.3%
Todd Helton: 281 votes, 72.2%
Billy Wagner: 265 votes, 68.1%
Andruw Jones: 226 votes, 58.1%
Gary Sheffield: 214 votes, 55%
Carlos Beltrán: 181 votes, 46.5%
Jeff Kent: 181 votes, 46.5% (final year on ballot)
Alex Rodriguez: 139 votes, 35.7%



Manny Ramirez: 129 votes, 33.2%
 Omar Vizquel: 76 votes, 19.5%

With more than 1500 runs scored, more than 400 home runs, and in excess of 1500 RBIs, I would have thought that Carlos Beltrán would have received a higher percentage of votes. And I don't understand why Omar Vizquel isn't already in the HOF. The rest I get, including deeply-flawed A-Rod. Thoughts?

MORE ON "THE MAYOR" (JOHN LINDSEY)



Last week I mentioned former minor league journeyman John Lindsey in my report on *Where Nobody Knows Your Name*, who finally made it up to The Show with the Dodgers in 2010 for a grand total of 12 at bats. But as Paul Harvey would have said, you need to know *the rest of the story*. In researching Lindsey's career on the internet, I found out that he continued to labor away at his craft even after his cup of coffee with the Dodgers, competing for 6 more seasons, including stints in Mexico and other foreign lands. Lindsey played a grand total of 21 seasons of baseball, finally hanging up the spikes after 55 at bats with the Mayos de Navojoa baseball team in the 2015-16 Mexican Pacific Winter League season.

Take a look at this incredible body of work by The Mayor:

Year	Age	AgeDif	Tm	Lg	Lev	Aff	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	TB	GDP	HBP	SH	SF	IBB
1995	18	-1.2	Rockies	ARIZ	Rk	COL	48	198	179	23	42	10	0	2	22	0	2	11	48	.235	.303	.324	.627	58	4	7	0	1	0
1996	19	-1.8	Portland	NORW	A-	COL	57	238	208	32	53	11	1	2	22	1	1	26	63	.255	.349	.346	.695	72	3	4	0	0	0
1997	20	-1.5	Asheville	SALL	A	COL	110	443	399	54	94	20	2	12	67	3	2	29	110	.236	.303	.386	.689	154	14	11	1	3	1
1998	21	-0.4	Asheville	SALL	A	COL	126	516	472	59	130	21	3	14	73	2	4	24	114	.275	.329	.422	.751	199	11	15	3	2	2
1999	22	-0.6	Salem	CARL	A+	COL	75	291	260	32	54	15	1	4	35	2	1	20	69	.208	.281	.319	.601	83	3	7	3	1	1
2000	23	0.4	Salem	CARL	A+	COL	104	398	343	43	96	23	1	9	56	5	3	37	76	.280	.372	.432	.803	148	6	15	0	3	0
2001	24	1.6	Salem	CARL	A+	COL	51	186	168	19	47	13	0	7	32	1	1	13	51	.280	.350	.482	.832	81	2	5	0	0	2
2002	25	2.3	San Bernardino	CALL	A+	SEA	127	551	472	75	140	30	6	22	93	0	1	48	109	.297	.387	.525	.912	248	17	25	0	6	1
2003	26	1.4	San Antonio	TL	AA	SEA	88	344	307	40	91	22	1	8	43	9	1	22	81	.296	.363	.453	.815	139	5	11	2	2	1
2004	27	2.7	San Antonio	TL	AA	SEA	123	525	457	68	129	31	2	19	72	1	7	48	98	.282	.365	.484	.849	221	9	14	2	4	0
2005	28	5.0	Jupiter	FLOR	A+	FLA	30	111	96	13	21	8	0	1	16	0	0	11	22	.219	.324	.333	.658	32	5	4	0	0	0
2005	28	2.2	New Jersey	CAMA	Ind		56	247	209	35	67	15	6	9	62	0	0	24	34	.321	.421	.579	1.000	121	3	13	0	1	1
2006	29	3.3	New Jersey	CAMA	Ind		69	272	238	37	74	20	0	10	41	0	2	24	51	.311	.393	.521	.914	124	7	9	0	1	0
2007	30		2 Teams	2 Lgs	AAA-AA	LAD	133	507	454	79	144	32	1	30	121	0	0	35	94	.317	.385	.590	.975	268	9	16	0	2	5
2007	30		2 Teams	2 Lgs	FgW		29	117	105	9	24	6	0	3	16	0	0	10	36	.229	.299	.371	.671	39	0	1	0	1	0
2007	30	3.2	Las Vegas	PCL	AAA	LAD	77	333	300	51	100	26	1	19	88	0	0	21	56	.333	.393	.617	1.010	185	8	10	0	2	1
2007	30	5.6	Jacksonville	SOUL	AA	LAD	56	174	154	28	44	6	0	11	33	0	0	14	38	.286	.368	.539	.907	83	1	6	0	0	4
2007-08	30	1.3	Hermosillo	MXPW	FgW		21	86	77	8	20	6	0	3	15	0	0	7	26	.260	.326	.455	.780	35	0	1	0	1	0
2007-08	30	3.0	Estrellas	DOWL	FgW		8	31	28	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	10	.143	.226	.143	.369	4	0	0	0	0	0
2008	31	4.1	Las Vegas	PCL	AAA	LAD	133	563	481	85	152	36	1	26	100	0	0	63	82	.316	.407	.557	.964	268	19	14	0	5	2
2008-09	31	2.0	Mazatlan	MXPW	FgW		47	187	156	17	40	11	0	8	32	2	0	24	34	.256	.371	.481	.852	75	9	5	1	1	1
2009	32	5.3	New Orleans	PCL	AAA	FLA	133	502	443	53	111	22	1	19	83	1	2	38	112	.251	.331	.433	.764	192	20	17	0	4	2
2009-10	32	3.4	Mazatlan	MXPW	FgW		65	282	243	31	79	16	0	11	37	0	1	30	56	.325	.411	.527	.938	128	3	7	0	2	1
2010	33		2 Teams	2 Lgs	AAA-Rk	LAD	108	450	411	74	144	41	4	25	97	0	0	19	79	.350	.398	.652	1.050	268	16	16	0	4	0
2010	33	6.2	Albuquerque	PCL	AAA	LAD	107	447	408	74	144	41	4	25	97	0	0	19	78	.353	.400	.657	1.057	268	16	16	0	4	0
2010	33	12.9	Dodgers	ARIZ	Rk	LAD	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000	.000	.000	.000	0	0	0	0	0	0
2010	33	4.2	LAD	NL	Maj	LAD	11	13	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	.083	.154	.083	.237	1	1	1	1	0	0
2011	34		2 Teams	2 Lgs	FgW		30	120	103	10	27	7	0	2	11	0	0	13	24	.262	.367	.388	.755	40	2	4	0	0	1
2011	34	7.1	Albuquerque	PCL	AAA	LAD	75	270	230	36	71	15	0	13	49	0	0	28	59	.309	.404	.544	.947	125	5	10	0	2	1
2011-12	34	4.9	Mazatlan	MXPW	FgW		22	88	75	9	22	6	0	2	9	0	0	11	14	.293	.398	.453	.851	34	1	2	0	0	1
2011-12	34	7.5	Caracas	VEWL	FgW		8	32	28	1	5	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	10	.179	.281	.214	.496	6	1	2	0	0	0
2012	35		2 Teams	2 Lgs	AAA-FgW		95	407	353	72	119	22	0	25	78	1	1	36	89	.337	.415	.612	1.027	216	13	14	0	4	3
2012	35	5.6	Laguna	MEX	AAA		76	330	287	58	98	20	0	21	64	1	1	27	67	.342	.415	.631	1.046	181	11	12	0	4	3
2012	35	7.7	Toledo	IL	AAA	DET	65	271	233	33	63	17	0	15	47	0	0	29	59	.270	.365	.537	.902	125	5	7	0	2	2
2012-13	35	5.8	Culliacan	MXPW	FgW		19	77	66	14	21	2	0	4	14	0	0	9	22	.318	.416	.530	.946	35	2	2	0	0	0



Year	Age	AgeDif	Tm	Lg	Lev	Aff	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	TB	GDP	HBP	SH	SF	IBB
2013	36		2 Teams	2 Lgs	AAA-FgW		77	322	272	54	75	10	0	25	61	0	0	31	76	.276	.376	.588	.964	160	7	15	0	4	0
2013	36	6.3	Campeche	MEX	AAA		54	227	189	45	57	8	0	20	43	0	0	25	51	.302	.410	.661	1.071	125	3	11	0	2	0
2013	36	9.0	Toledo	IL	AAA	DET	22	88	80	8	16	3	1	4	7	0	1	4	37	.200	.273	.413	.685	33	0	4	0	0	0
2013	36	9.8	New Jersey	CAMA	Ind		16	64	56	8	14	5	0	3	16	0	0	4	17	.250	.328	.500	.828	28		3	0	1	0
2013-14	36	6.7	Navojoa	MXPW	FgW		23	95	83	9	18	2	0	5	18	0	0	6	25	.217	.295	.422	.716	35	4	4	0	2	0
2014	37		2 Teams	2 Lgs	AAA-FgW		141	592	500	105	148	29	0	45	128	0	1	63	140	.296	.397	.624	1.021	312	13	24	0	5	1
2014	37	7.0	Mexico	MEX	AAA		105	445	372	81	114	27	0	33	99	0	1	52	97	.307	.409	.645	1.054	240	10	16	0	5	1
2014-15	37	8.1	Navojoa	MXPW	FgW		36	147	128	24	34	2	0	12	29	0	0	11	43	.266	.361	.563	.923	72	3	8	0	0	0
2015	38		2 Teams	2 Lgs	AAA-FgW		33	138	120	12	25	2	0	4	19	0	0	7	39	.208	.290	.325	.615	39	6	8	0	3	1
2015	38	8.0	Tijuana	MEX	AAA		18	76	65	8	17	1	0	3	13	0	0	5	17	.262	.355	.415	.771	27	1	5	0	1	0
2015-16	38	9.7	Navojoa	MXPW	FgW		15	62	55	4	8	1	0	1	6	0	0	2	22	.146	.210	.218	.428	12	5	3	0	2	1

Year	Age	AgeDif	Tm	Lg	Lev	Aff	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	TB	GDP	HBP	SH	SF	IBB
Majors (1 season)					Majors		11	13	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	.083	.154	.083	.237	1	1	1	0	0	0
Minors (18 seasons)					Minors		1608	6452	5693	826	1598	370	25	232	1035	25	26	505	1363	.281	.358	.477	.835	2714	153	202	11	41	20
Foreign (8 seasons)					Foreign		517	2165	1852	310	537	103	0	123	382	3	3	214	494	.290	.383	.545	.928	1009	53	78	1	20	8
Other (3 seasons)					Other		141	583	503	80	155	40	6	22	119	0	2	52	102	.308	.398	.543	.941	273		25	0	3	1
All Levels (21 Seasons)							2277	9213	8060	1216	2291	513	31	377	1536	28	31	771	1962	.284	.366	.496	.862	3997	217	306	12	64	29
AAA (7 seasons)					Minors		612	2474	2175	340	657	160	8	121	471	1	3	202	483	.302	.379	.550	.929	1196	73	78	0	19	8
AAA (4 seasons)					Foreign		253	1078	913	192	286	56	0	77	219	1	2	109	232	.313	.407	.628	1.035	573	25	44	0	12	4
AA (3 seasons)					Minors		267	1043	918	136	264	59	3	38	148	10	8	84	217	.288	.365	.483	.847	443	15	31	4	6	5
A+ (5 seasons)					Minors		387	1537	1339	182	358	89	8	43	232	8	6	129	327	.267	.354	.442	.796	592	33	56	3	10	4
A (2 seasons)					Minors		236	959	871	113	224	41	5	26	140	5	6	53	224	.257	.317	.405	.723	353	25	26	4	5	3
A- (1 season)					Minors		57	238	208	32	53	11	1	2	22	1	1	26	63	.255	.349	.346	.695	72	3	4	0	0	0
Rk (2 seasons)					Minors		49	201	182	23	42	10	0	2	22	0	2	11	49	.231	.299	.319	.617	58	4	7	0	1	0
FgW (8 seasons)					Foreign		264	1087	939	118	251	47	0	46	163	2	1	105	262	.267	.359	.464	.823	436	28	34	1	8	4

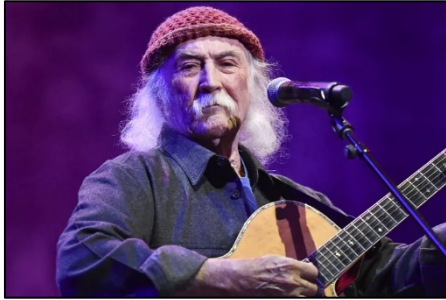
Before dismissing our man here as a career minor leaguer, take a look at his 2008 season with the Dodgers' AAA team in Las Vegas. In 133 games and 481 at bats, he had 152 hits for a .316 average, scored 85 runs, had 36 doubles, 26 home runs and knocked in 100. How does that *not* get you promoted to the big club? The year before that, Lindsey divided his time between AA Jacksonville and AAA Las Vegas and had a total of 32 doubles, 30 home runs and 121 RBIs. And then in 2010, the year of his call-up, he batted .353 with Albuquerque, scored 74 runs, had 41 doubles, 25 home runs and 97 RBIs. And all of those banner seasons added together earned him his call-up for 11 games of pinch hit duty in 12 official at bats.

For those of you scoring at home, The Mayor played for a total of 25 different teams, in 25 different cities, towns and hamlets, and in 4 different countries. He hung up some pretty impressive numbers, by any measure. I mean, how does a guy who had some 8060 at bats, scored 1216 runs, rapped out 2291 hits for a .284 career batting average, hit 513 doubles, 377 home runs and drove in 1536 RBIs in a career of 21 years *only* get one measly 11-game shot at making it in the majors and as a pinch hitter? It is almost inconceivable, unfathomable, inexplicable and, as Commander McBragg's lackey might say, *preposterous!*

I cannot think of anyone in the baseball universe who I would more like to sit down over a beer and talk with than The Mayor. And by golly, I'm going to see if I can find him and reach out and make that offer. Stay tuned.



R.I.P. DAVID CROSBY



As I am sure you all know by now, the music world lost perhaps the most talented and enigmatic harmonizer of all time, the great David Crosby. Truly a painful loss for those of us who loved his music. He was twice inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, once for his work with the Byrds (1991) and again for his work with Crosby, Stills & Nash (1997). This prickly pear of a person was apparently not the easiest guy to be around, but, man, did he exude talent. I don't know if any of you saw the documentary that came out a couple of years ago about him, but if you haven't, you should find it and watch it, and if you have seen it, it would be worth a re-watch. HQ and I certainly plan to give it another viewing.

As we were driving down to Kansas City this past weekend on our way to lunch with Sunny and his first mate Paula, we listened to music from Crosby on the entire drive, from all stages of his career. As we reminisced, I recalled one time that I saw him in concert at Pershing Auditorium, and thanks to the internet, I not only found the date of the concert (April 6, 2003), but also the playlist. Here it is:

- 1) Carry On
 - 2) Wild Tales
 - 3) Marrakesh Express
 - 4) The Lee Shore
 - 5) Déjà Vu
 - 6) Military Madness
 - 7) Wounded World
 - 8) Dirty Little Secret
 - 9) Almost Cut My Hair
 - 10) Southern Cross
 - 11) Helplessly Hoping
 - 12) Wasted on the Way
 - 13) Feed the People
 - 14) Ole Man Trouble
 - 15) Guinnevere
 - 16) Half Your Angels
 - 17) Cathedral
 - 18) Suite: Judy Blue Eyes
 - 19) Hearts Gate
 - 20) Our House
 - 21) In My Dreams
 - 22) Dark Star
 - 23) Wooden Ships
 - 24) Woodstock
- Encore:
- 25) America (My Country, 'Tis of Thee)
 - 26) Teach Your Children

What a phenomenal playlist, and what an encore (*Teach Your Children*)! Historic.



I digress a bit here, but any of you who have gone to a few concerts in the day might enjoy simply googling *Pershing Auditorium* or *Omaha Civic Center* or whatever other venue you may have frequented, and you will find a year-by-year listing of all concerts at said venue dating back to the late 1960s.¹ I realize that this jibber jabber may be as boring as watching paint dry for some of you, but I am a man of context and lists, and I am fascinated by going back and remembering events and happenings from 66 years of time on this planet.

After learning of David Crosby's death, the first thing that I thought about was not the Pershing Auditorium concert that I went to but listening to CS&N at a rental house in T-Town in Lincoln on Underbelly's magnificent stereo setup. Please correct me if I am misremembering this, Robert, but as I recall, because you were already too smart for college and went directly into the work force after high school and had a lot more disposable income than the rest of us, you purchased a very expensive stereo (was it a Pioneer? That part I can't remember.) and a set of uber-expensive speakers made by *Bang & Olufsen*, which were about 6 feet tall by 18 inches wide by 1 inch thick, and they were a music lover's fever dream. That part I remember with a good deal of clarity.

In any event, we listened to some great music from Crosby and many other musicians on Bob's phenomenal stereo setup. Good times, good times.

SEASON OF THE WITCH

Please pardon me for another ridiculous digression, but I think that it was, again, on Underbelly's stereo that I first heard the haunting, hypnotic, addictive and most likely drug-inspired classic *Season of the Witch* for the first time. More recently, I was adding tunes to one of my manifold Spotify playlists when the AI feature of Spotify recommended adding this tune to my collection. That was about three months ago, and I have been mesmerized by this song ever since. Written by Donovan in 1966, there are a whole host of great versions of this truly weird but wonderfully listenable² song, including Al Kooper, Stephen Stills and Donovan, together with a host of others. My favorite versions are actually by Kooper and Stills. Here are the words to this beguiling song:

When I look out my window
Many sights to see
And when I look in my window
So many different people to be

¹ In so doing, I was reminded of concerts in Lincoln and Omaha that I had seen over the years involving a lot of great bands and musicians, including: *Gregg Allman; Elvin Bishop; the Zac Brown Band; Jackson Browne; Aerosmith; America; Eric Clapton; the Charlie Daniels Band; the Doobie Brothers; Bob Dylan; the Eagles; Dan Fogelberg; Foghat; Foreigner; Peter Frampton; Billy Joel; Kansas; Kiss (hey, I'm not saying I'm proud of it); Annie Lennox**; *the Ozark Mountain Daredevils; Linda Ronstadt; Simon & Garfunkel; Steely Dan; George Strait; Styx; James Taylor; the Marshall Tucker Band; Joe Walsh*; and of course, our beloved *Jimmy Buffett*. I thought that I had been to every Jimmy Buffett concert held in Omaha, but I learned from looking at the Civic Auditorium concert list that he played a gig there in 1977, before I became a fan and eventual Parrothead.

Groups and acts that I haven't seen but would have liked to or still would like to, include: *Jim Croce; Elvis; Elton John; Janis Joplin; Gordon Lightfoot; Willie Nelson; the Rolling Stones; Frank Sinatra; Bruce Springsteen; Neil Young*; and the list could go on and on and on.

Unlike BT, I don't count our brief encounter with *Van Cliburn* in Arlington as a "concert attended." Get a life, dude.

* Actually, that's a bold faced lie. But I did make out with a chick in Minneapolis one time in my bachelor days that had a hairdo like Annie Lennox, and coincidentally that was the same night and the same bar where Itchie met his star-crossed lover, the eternal *Aunt Linda*.

² I'm pretty sure this isn't a real word, but you get the point.



That it's strange, sure is strange

You've got to pick up every stitch
(You've got to pick up every stitch)
You've got to pick up every stitch, yeah
(You've got to pick up every stitch)
You've got to pick up every stitch
(You've got to pick up every stitch)
Oh no, must be the season of the witch
Must be the season of the witch, yeah
Must be the season of the witch

When I look over my shoulder
What do you think I see?
Some other cat lookin' over
His shoulder at me
And he's strange, sure, he's strange

You've got to pick up every stitch
(You've got to pick up every stitch)
You've got to pick up every stitch, yeah
(You've got to pick up every stitch)
Beatniks are out to make it rich
Oh no, must be the season of the witch
Must be the season of the witch, yeah
Must be the season of the witch

You've got to pick up every stitch
(You've got to pick up every stitch)
You've got to pick up every stitch, yeah
(You've got to pick up every stitch)
The rabbits running down the ditch
Oh no, must be the season of the witch
Must be the season of the witch, yeah
Must be the season of the witch

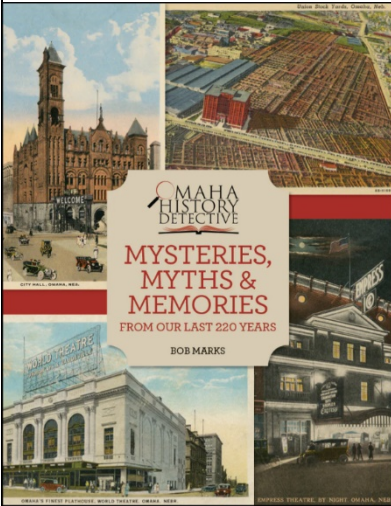
When I look out my window
What do you think I see?
And when I look in my window
So many different people to be
It's strange, sure is strange

You've got to pick up every stitch
You've got to pick up every stitch
Two rabbits running in the ditch
Oh no, must be the season of the witch
Must be the season of the witch, yeah
Must be the season of the witch
When I go, when I go



I have thought about it, I have asked others about it, I have looked it up on the internet, but I still have no clue as to what Donovan meant by "Beatniks are out to make it rich," by "The rabbits running down the ditch," or even the signature line, "You've got to pick up every stitch." It would also be fascinating to know what Donovan was tripping on when he cooked up this classic.

ALRIGHTY, MR. MARKS



You may remember that I previously mentioned that an Omaha *World Herald* writer by the name of Bob Marks had challenged his readership to come up with a fantasy baseball league that had been in continuous operation longer than the one of which he was a member.³ If any of you actually read all of the claptrap in the *Bullpen*, you may remember that I responded to Mr. Marks' challenge and told him about the Hot Stove League, following which he conceded that our little operation has been around and in play for one year longer than his league. You may also remember that Mr. Marks advised me that he was in the process of writing a book about the history of Omaha, and he promised to include a nod to the HSL for our longevity.

Well, sadly, I learned from an email last year that Mr. Marks had been diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer and that he had decided at his advanced age that he would not undergo any life-prolonging treatment. Obviously, at that time, the completion of his book was no longer a priority in his life, and I later learned that he passed away on June 17, 2022.

A while later, I received an email from one of Mr. Marks' daughters indicating that his family and friends had worked together to ensure publication of his book, and that it would soon be available for purchase, which of course I did. True to his word, right there in black and white in a postscript, is the following recognition of our beloved Hot Stove League:

POSTSCRIPT

I heard from only one other fantasy baseball league in Omaha: the self-styled Nebraska Hot Stove League. It was organized in 1985 by David Ernst and three fellow lawyers: "All rabid baseball fans - not sufficiently challenged with the rigors of the practice of law," according to Dave. Using mathematical skills dormant for decades, I determined that the NHSL has been in continuous operation for one year longer than my beloved UBL.

³ I refer you to *FTB* dated 08/11/21, Edition No. 17.

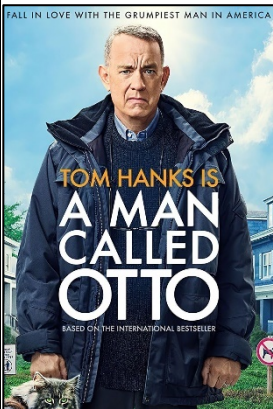
Based on that, and my hasty appraisal of its apparently unique scoring system, I have reluctantly had to concede the record for longevity to NHL's 13 fantasy fanatics.

Dave and I agree that it's not the winner's trophy that matters most, but the friendships and camaraderie we've experienced through all these years.

Still, the trophy is a close second.

Mr. Marks was truly a man of his word, in life and in death. From all of us here at the Hot Stove League, thank you, and Rest In Peace, Mr. Marks.

A MAN CALLED OTTO: TWO THUMBS UP



Putting on my Gene Siskel hat here for a moment, I give my full-throated endorsement to the Tom Hanks movie that is out in the theaters right now, *A Man Called Otto*. HQ and I went to see it together within the last fortnight, and we both thoroughly enjoyed it. Funny thing, though, we both realized after about five minutes that it is a remake of *A Man Called Ove*.⁴ We were both a little bit disappointed when we first realized this. However, it didn't take long until Hanks' bravura performance had us hooked, and, it must be said, frequently in tears. So if you don't like crying in movie theaters, you'd best not go. For my money, though, it's one of the most heartwarming flicks I've been to in a while, and not just because Hanks plays a cranky old

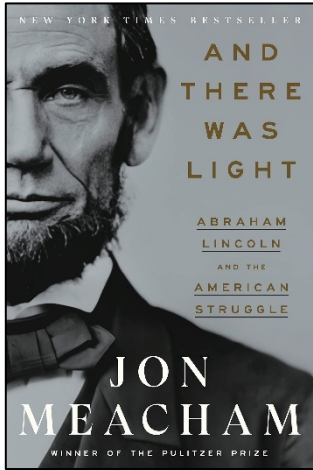
white male curmudgeon who might just bear a bit of resemblance to a few of our own aging members. There, I've said enough. You know who they⁵ are.

⁴ A Swedish film with subtitles that was out in theaters about five years ago, and also a great read.

⁵ Okay, we.



BOOK REPORT:
AND THERE WAS LIGHT



I just finished reading Jon Meacham's excellent book: *And There Was Light: Abraham Lincoln and the American Struggle*, published by Random House in 2022. I know what you are all thinking, and I thought the same thing: Does the world really need another book about Abraham Lincoln? Short answer: Yes. This brilliant author has provided us with a tour de force about our 16th president, focusing on how he went from a young politician who was uncertain about whether the abolition of slavery and equal rights for all people of color was advisable or doable, to a principled, uncompromising leader who endured through great personal hardships to free enslaved people through the Emancipation Proclamation, enact the Thirteenth Amendment, and end the Civil War through an unconditional surrender by Lee. He would not tolerate a compromise which would have allowed slavery to remain in the South. In spite of his closest advisers and confidants—and fellow anti-slavery stalwarts—advising him that he could not win reelection in November of 1864 unless he agreed to a compromise which would allow slavery to continue in the southern states, Lincoln put his evolving and maturing beliefs and principles in freedom and equality for all ahead of his political desires and ultimately proved to be the savior of our great nation.

I enjoyed the heck out of this book, and learned a number of things I didn't know or remember from my previous consumption of books on Lincoln, including:



Lincoln did not really consider himself to be a "Christian," or "follower of Christ," but he most definitely believed in the Almighty and turned to the God that he prayed to for support and guidance.



Lincoln's mother was considered a "loose woman" in her time, and Lincoln may have been a bastard child of her and some unknown father. He had a strained and uneasy relationship with his putative father.



After having his heart broken by a previous fiancé who ended their engagement, Lincoln was despondent and on a suicide-watch until he was able to move on and start courting again. Just his luck, he ended up on an emotional roller coaster for the rest of his life when he courted and then married the complete nut job by the name of Mary Todd, who was born into an influential Lexington, Kentucky family. By pretty much all accounts, Mary made Abe's life an absolute living hell, and repeatedly and often dressed him down in front of his cabinet members, friends and strangers alike.⁶

⁶ And some of you guys think you have it bad!





When Lincoln was elected president in November of 1860, our country was already tilting dangerously towards civil war and talk of secession abounded. Even before Lincoln left Springfield for Washington, talk of assassination was rife, and Abe had to be transported secretly and in disguise to take office in Washington. There was a grave concern at that time that there would be efforts by the Southern politicians (then affiliated with the Democratic party, now Republican) to prevent the electoral college from doing their duty and counting the votes, but then-Vice President John Breckinridge, a Southerner, who later served as a general in the Confederate Army, did his duty and Lincoln was properly elected president. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Between Breckinridge and Pence, I guess we're pretty darned lucky.



A bloody and brutal four years of civil war, the death of two young sons, one while in the White House, and his turbulent marriage to Mary took a tremendous toll on old Abe. Many observers thought he had aged twenty years in the span of four. Having succeeded with the Emancipation Proclamation, having been elected to a second term, and having finally crushed the traitorous South, one would have wished for Honest Abe a reasonable amount of time to be able to relax and enjoy the fruits of his efforts in saving the Union. Tragically, it was not to be.



Just one week after the fall of Richmond, the Confederate capital, and five days after U.S. Grant met Robert E. Lee at Appomattox on Palm Sunday to accept his unconditional surrender, Lincoln and his wife made the terrible decision to attend a play at Ford's Theater. The future might have looked a lot different if Grant and his wife had accepted Lincoln's invitation to join them at the play, but Grant and his wife wanted nothing to do with Mary Todd Lincoln and declined the offer. Without Grant there to help protect him, Abraham and his wife sat in a private box with two guests. John Wilkes Booth made his way into the private box where the Lincolns were watching the play *Our American Cousin*, shot the president in the left side of his head at short range, yelled *Sic Semper Tyrannis*, and then jumped from Lincoln's box down to the stage, fracturing his leg. Lincoln was taken across the street and attended to by a surgeon, but it was hopeless. He died during the night and our nation suffered greatly because of his untimely death.



You already know the rest of the story. Vice President Andrew Johnson, a drunkard and an avowed racist from Tennessee—who was picked by the Republican party, not Lincoln, to replace Hannibal Hamlin as the vice presidential candidate in the 1864 election because it was thought that this was the only way that they could hold power—was a horrible president and his efforts at Reconstruction were laughable and undoubtedly contributed to all of the lynchings and Jim Crow laws which permeated the South throughout the rest of the 19th century and into the 20th. Had Abe been at the helm for another four years, things might have looked a lot different, maybe even today.

A great read. History 101.

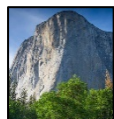


IN PRAISE OF YOSEMITE

I'm not going to apologize for the length of this *Bullpen*, because you can all pick and choose what you want to read and what you don't want to read, but I will provide an explanation. On my trip to Cali this week, Linda and I built in a side junket to Yosemite National Park, one of the nation's most beautiful and visited national parks. I stepped foot into it once before for about ten minutes on a deposition trip to Fresno, but decided that it was worth the four-hour drive each way from Sacramento to see a bit more of it. Not that I regret it, but what I didn't know is that there isn't one damned rest stop between Sacramento and Yosemite, and that most of the interstate/freeway roads connecting the two are in a miserable state of repair. Way to go, Gavin!

But I digress, again. My explanation for the length of this issue is that I decided to make this long drive to Yosemite and back and needed a little company along the way, ergo, all of you are the benefactors of my handy Dictaphone, allowing me to say all of the above and foregoing.

I include a few photographs from this little boondoggle below, but also allow me to share a few of my thoughts about Yosemite:



On my earlier visit to Yosemite, I came up from Fresno to the south and entered the National Park through the south entrance. On this trip, I came in through the west along the Merced River. Today's route was absolutely the best way to go, as one of the first things that I saw was El Capitan, shown to the left. Spectacular.



There are an incredible number of waterfalls in Yosemite, sending down huge amounts of snowmelt, hundreds and hundreds of feet down the faces of the majestic mountainsides and outcroppings.



As you drive through a valley past El Capitan, you can imagine what it might have looked like millions and millions of years ago when giant glaciers tore their way through the land to carve out this valley.



Having just been to Yellowstone last year, and trying to compare it with Yosemite, it's difficult to say which is more spectacular. They are similar in some ways and different in others. Let's call it a tie. If you get the chance to see either of them in person, take it.







DRAFT DAY

**TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2023, 7:00 P.M.
AT BRIDGES TRUST⁷**

Well, it looks like finally we have a date, time and place for the 2023 Hot Stove League Draft. Shrugging off all emails which in any way interfered with his plans, Kommandant Bridges in the most authoritarian of manners dictated that this year's Draft will be on Tuesday evening, March 28, at 7:00 p.m. at his Bucket Shop, otherwise known as Bridges Trust. Be there, then, or you are out of luck, apparently.

Alrighty, then. But what about the Winter Meeting? When and where will that be, Mein Furor? We need to have a date certain for this soon so that we can accept your **Wahoo**-logoed apparel and trinkets, perhaps a slice of Casey's pizza and a Schlitz tall-boy, and then caucus and vote on whether to adopt the proposed head-to-head format this season.

We patiently await word.

That's all I got.

Skipper

⁷ Still an oxymoron.

