OCT. 3, 2002

50 YEARS A CUB FAN;

OR, SAND DOWN A RATHOLE

PRESENTED BY JAMES H. LOVE

TO THE ATHENAEUM SOCIETY OF HOPKINSVILLE, KENTUCKY

OCTOBER 3RD, 2002

MR. PRESIDENT...MR. SECRETARY...FELLOW PRESENTER...MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY.

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT ''TIMING IS THE KEY TO LIFE'', AND I GUESS THAT EVEN STRETCHES TO CONCEPTION FOR THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN THE ''RHYTHM METHOD'' OF BIRTH CONTROL,AND WHEN I SAW THAT MY TURN IN THE BARREL WAS COMING IN OCTOBER OF 2-THOUSAND 2, I FELT THAT SOMETHING ''TIMELY'' MIGHT BE IN ORDER.

THERE WAS THE AUTUMNAL EQUINOX TO PONDER, THE OPENING OF THE COLLEGE AND PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL SEASONS, THE WINDING DOWN OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL AND THE PLAYOFF MATCHUPS; THE PASSING OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSAY OF ''9-11'' AS THAT LANDMARK EVENT IN U.S. HISTORY HAS COME TO BE KNOWN, AND THE ''SABRE RATTLING'' BY PRESIDENT BUSH, AIMED AT SADDAM HUSSAIN.

I THOUGHT IT WAS A ''LOCK'' THAT ONE OF LAST MONTH'S PRESENTERS WOULD PICK UP ON THE ''9-11'' ANNIVERSARY;HOWEVER, NEITHER DID, AND I THOUGHT THIS WAS MY OPPORTUNITY TO DISPEL WHAT I PERCEIVE TO BE MY REPUTATION AMONG ATHENEAUM PRESENTERS AS A ''LIGHTWEIGHT''.

HERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DELVE INTO A SUBJECT OF UTMOST COMPLEXITY, WITH A CERTAIN TIMELINESS, NOT TO MENTION AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW MY SHREWD EDITING SKILLS AND ABILITY TO BALANCE THE BROAD LONG-RANGE IMPLICATIONS AGAINST THE BRIEF, HUMAN INTEREST STORIES WHICH GRABBED OUR ATTENTION AND WE REMEMBER TO THIS DAY.

AND, OF COURSE, THE UTMOST CHALLENGE, TO CONDENSE THIS INFORMATION INTO A PRESENTATION OF A HALF-HOUR OR LESS WHICH WOULD NOT BORE THOSE WHO HAVE KEPT UP WITH THE SITUATION AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS, OR SEEM SUPERFICIAL TO THOSE SEEKING ADDITIONAL INSIGHT OR INFORMATION ON THE EVENTS OF ''9-11''.

HOWEVER, JUST THE THOUGHT OF THAT PROVED TO BE TOO MUCH FOR THE MAN WHO,SINCE 1985, HAS BROUGHT YOU THE ''ALLIGATOR IN THE SEWER'', THE ''NO-CHANGE'' POLITICAL PARTY, THE E.O.C. DISPATCHER, AND THE 25TH YEAR HIGH SCHOOL REUNION PAPERS.

I DID BREAK SOME GROUND WITH MY TAPE RECORDED ''GARRISON KEILLOR AND THE ''PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION'', BUT JIM ADAMS SAID THE ONLY I DID THAT WAS TO ENABLE ME TO SMOKE DURING THE PRESENTATION.

ANYWAY, AS I PONDERED THE VIRTUALLY LIMITLESS RANGE OF TOPICS, I FELT THAT I SHOULD PROVIDE YOU WITH SOME INFORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT AND A REASON TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE ON A THURSDAY EVENING,WHILE ALSO GIVING YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO DELVE INTO THE CHARACTER OF THE PRESENTER.

BY THAT, I MEAN ONE OF THE SINGULAR FLAWS IN MY CHARACTER WHICH I CAN'T SAY IS ENTIRELY MY FAULT.

A VARIETY OF FACTORS CAME TOGETHER TO PUSH,LEAD, AND LURE ME DOWN THE PATH RESULTING IN MY PLEDGING MY LOYALTY TO NONE OTHER THAN THE CHICAGO NATIONAL LEAGUE BASEBALL CLUB---KNOWN FAR AND WIDE AS THE CUBS---THOSE LOVABLE LOSERS, PERENNIAL ALSO-RANS, HAVEN FOR ''HAS-BEENS'', ''MIGHT HAVE BEENS'' AND ''NEVER WERES'', PLUS THOSE WITH ''UNREALIZED GREAT POTENTIAL'' WHO INHABIT THE ''FRIENDLY CONFINES'' OF WRIGLEY FIELD LOCATED AT 1060 WEST ADDISON STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, WHICH SPAWNED THE ''CATCH PHRASE'' COINED BY WHITE SOX FANS IN THE 1950'S, ''MIKSIS TO SMALLEY TO ADDISON STREET'' REFERRING TO THE CUBS ''KEYSTONE COMBINATION'' OF SHORTSTOP AND SECOND BASE.

THAT WAS ''WATER OFF A DUCK'S BACK'' FOR AN 8-YEAR OLD WHO HAD FOUND A CAUSE TO FOLLOW, APPROVED, CONDONED, AND SUPPORTED BY HIS FATHER.

I GUESS HE COULD HAVE BOUGHT ME A SOX OR CARDINALS CAP, BUT NO, IT WAS A BRIGHT BLUE CUBS CAP, WITH A RED CAPITAL ''C'' ON THE FRONT, AND I WAS HOOKED.

I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE OF THE YEAR, THOUGH I THINK IT WAS 1952 BECAUSE I HAD HIGH HOPES FOR THE FOLLOWING CAMPAIGN---AND I HAVE FOR VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE ENSUING 50 BASEBALL SEASONS WHICH HAVE UNFOLDED OVER THE YEARS.

IN 1952, THE CUBS FIELDED THE NATIONAL LEAGUE'S ''MOST VALUABLE PLAYER'' IN THE PERSON OF HANK SAUER, THE LEFT FIELDER, WHO WAS KNOWN AS THE ''MAYOR OF WRIGLEYVILLE''.

SAUER, WHO LED THE LEAGUE IN HOME RUNS, WITH 37, AND RUNS BATTED IN, WITH 121, WAS SURROUNDED BY A LESS-THAN-STELLAR CAST, THOUGH RIGHT FIELDER FRANKIE BAUMHOLTZ, WAS RUNNER-UP TO THE SAINT LOUIS CARDINALS' STAN MUSIAL IN THE BATTING RACE; AND DEE FONDY, THE FIRST BASEMAN, TIED FOR FIFTH IN STOLEN BASES.

THERE'S A ''HOPKINSVILLE CONNECTION'' WITH FONDY, WITH THE LATE MAYOR TOMMY GATES PLAYING WITH FONDY DURING SPRING TRAINING WITH THE BROOKLYN DODGERS IN THE LATE 1940'S.

TOMMY SAID FONDY WAS THE FASTEST MAN IN A CAMP WHICH INCLUDED JACKIE ROBINSON AMONG SEVERAL OTHERS WITH SPEED;HOWEVER, GATES SAID FONDY NEVER COULD GET THE ''JUMP'' THAT ROBINSON COULD IN REACHING FULL SPEED IN A SHORT TIME.

FONDY WAS MY FAVORITE PLAYER AMONG A TEAM WHICH ALSO FEATURED PITCHER WARREN HACKER, WHO HAD THE SECOND LOWEST ''EARNED RUN AVERAGE'' IN THE LEAGUE IN 1952, WHILE BOB RUSH WAS SECOND IN STRIKEOUTS, WITH 157, IN AN ERA WHEN BALLPLAYERS DIDN'T ''WHIFF'' AS MUCH AS THEY DO NOW.

FONDY, WHO HAD A SET OF TWINS, AS I RECALL, LATER PLAYED FOR THE PITTSBURGH PIRATES AND CINCINNATTI REDS IN A CAREER WHICH SPANNED 8 YEARS.

HE LATER WORKED FOR THE PIRATES AND MILWAUKEE BREWERS AS A SCOUT AND IN THE ''FRONT OFFICE''.

THOUGH FONDY REMAINED WITH THE CUBS UNTIL 1957, HE WAS SUPPLANTED IN THIS FICKLE PRE-ADOLESCENT'S HEART BY A NEWCOMER ON THE SCENE--THE FIRST OF TWO BLACK PLAYERS TO BREAK IN WITH THE CUBS IN 1953, THOUGH ERNIE BANKS ONLY GOT IN 10 GAMES THAT YEAR.

THE NORTHSIDERS GOT BANKS FOR THE PRICE OF A CAB RIDE FROM COMISKEY PARK WHERE HE WAS WORKING OUT AS PART OF AN ALL-STAR GAME FOR THE NEGRO LEAGUES, WHERE HE PLAYED FOR THE STORIED KANSAS CITY MONARCHS--THE TEAM WHERE JACKIE ROBINSON WAS PLAYING WHEN HE WAS SIGNED BY BRANCH RICKEY.

BANKS HIT 19 HOMERS IN HIS FIRST FULL CAMPAIGN, WHILE PLAYING A VIRTUALLY ERRORLESS SHORTSTOP, THOUGH HE WOULD HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO FIRST BASE MUCH EARLIER IN HIS CAREER IN THESE DAYS OF ASTROTURF BECAUSE OF HIS LIMITED RANGE TO HIS RIGHT.

HOWEVER, MANAGEMENT WOULD HAVE HAD TO FIND A PLACE FOR HIM IN THE LINEUP, WHEN HE STARTED POSTING THE ''POWER NUMBERS'' WHICH WOULD MAKE HIM THE FIRST-EVER NATIONAL LEAGUER TO EARN BACK-TO-BACK ''MOST VALUABLE PLAYER'' AWARDS, AND AMONG THE FIRST TO WIN IT WHILE PLAYING WITH A SECOND DIVISION CLUB.

BANKS HIT HIS STRIDE IN 1955,WITH 44 HOME RUN,FOLLOWED BY 43 IN 57,47 IN 1958;45 IN 59, AND 41 IN 1960.

HE LED THE LEAGUE IN 58 AND 60 AND ONLY MISSED OUT IN 59 WHEN EDDIE MATHEWS WAS INVOLVED IN A 3 GAME PLAYOFF FOR THE PENNANT WITH THE LOS ANGELES DODGERS, AND THE BRAVES THIRD BASEMEN HOMERED TO BREAK A TIE AND TAKE THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

BANKS WAS A GENUINELY MODEST AND SOFT-SPOKEN MAN, WHO TALKED ABOUT THE ''FRIENDLY CONFINES'', ''LET'S PLAY TWO'', AND ALWAYS SAID IN THE SPRING THAT THE CUBS WERE GOING TO WIN THE PENNANT THAT YEAR.

THOUGH NOT GIVEN SUFFICIENT CREDIT, BANKS WAS THE FIRST BONA-FIDE HOME RUN HITTER TO GO TO A ''LIGHT BAT''.

BABE RUTH USED A 42 OUNCE LOUISVILLE SLUGGER, AND THOSE WHO FOLLOWED HIM SUBSCRIBED TO THE HEAVY BAT THEORY;HOWEVER, BANKS USED A 31-31--THAT IS A 31-INCH LONG BAT THAT WEIGHED 31 OUNCES, WHICH IS STILL LIGHT FOR A BAT, BUT IS USED TO THIS DATE.

BANKS' EMERGENCE AS THE SLUGGING, GOOD FIELDING SHORTSTOP WITH THE CUBS CO-INCIDED WITH THE APPEARANCE OF THE SPECTACULAR FIELDING AND SPEEDY VENEZUALEN SHORTSTOP ON THE SOUTH SIDE, THE WHITE SOX' LUIS APARICIO, WHO, LIKE BANKS, HAS BEEN VOTED INTO THE BASEBALL HALL OF FAME, THOUGH BANKS WAS A RARE ''FIRST BALLOT'' ELECTEE.

''LEETLE LOOIE'' AS HE WAS KNOWN, BROKE IN IN 1956 AND BEGAN A STRING OF 9 CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF LEADING THE AMERICAN LEAGUE IN STOLEN BASES WHILE ALSO PATROLLING THE LEFT SIDE OF THE SOX INFIELD WITH SOME ''EYE POPPING'' DEFENSIVE WORK.

THAT PROMPTED A CONSTANT ARGUMENT BETWEEN SOX AND CUBS FANS OVER WHO WAS THE BEST SHORTSTOP---AND FOR WHAT REASONS.

WE CUBS' FANS SAID BANKS MADE ALL THE PLAYS ON BALL HE COULD GET TO---HE NEVER MADE A BAD THROW--WHILE DRIVING IN A HUNDRED RUNS AND HITTING 40 HOMERS.

SOX FANS COUNTERED WITH APARICIO'S VALUE TO THE SOX ALREADY-STINGY PITCHING STAFF, WHILE TURNING A WALK OR A SINGLE INTO A DOUBLE BY STEALING A BASE AND GETTING INTO SCORING POSITION.

MY BEST FRIEND IN JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL WAS NAMED BOB CLARK, WHO MY SON IS NAMED AFTER.

BOB DIED AFTER OPEN HEART SURGERY IN 1967, BUT NOT BEFORE SERVING AS STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT AT ELGIN HIGH SCHOOL IN ELGIN, ILLINOIS, IN THE 1961-62 SCHOOL YEAR.

DURING HIS SPEECH TO A SCHOOL-WIDE ASSEMBLY TO CONVINCE THEM TO VOTE FOR HIM, BOB SAID THAT A STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT NEEDS TO BE SOMEONE CAPABLE OF MAKING BOLD, DRAMATIC STATEMENTS WHICH ARE IRREFUTABLE.

HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WAS A PERSON CAPABLE OF MAKING JUST SUCH A STATEMENT, AND, AS AN EXAMPLE, SHOUTED THAT ''ERNIE BANKS WAS A BETTER SHORTSTOP THAN LOOIE APARICIO''.

AT THAT POINT---AND ''ON CUE''--TWO CLASSMATES IN THE AUDIENCE STOOD UP, AND DISPUTED THE CLAIM AND THREW TENNIS BALLS AT BOB.

APPARENTLY, THERE WERE MORE CUBS FANS THAN WHITE SOX FANS AT ELGIN HIGH SCHOOL. BOB WON THE ELECTION ''GOING AWAY''.

THE ''FRIENDLY CONFINES'' OF WRIGLEY FIELD WERE ANOTHER REASON TO LIKE THE CUBS.

ALL THE GAMES WERE DURING THE DAY--UP TO 1988 WHEN LIGHTS WERE ADDED--AS MUCH TO FINISH LATE DAY GAMES OR TO PROVIDE LIGHT ON OVERCAST DAYS AS TO ALLOW THE LIMITED NIGHT GAMES.

THE CUBS BEAT THE METS AUGUST 9TH, 1988, IN THE FIRST NIGHT GAME AT VINE-COVERED WRIGLEY FIELD, NAMED AFTER THE OWNER AND CHEWING GUM MAGNATE, BUT PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS ''WEEGHMAN PARK'' AFTER THE OWNER OF THE CHICAGO WHALES IN THE FEDERAL LEAGUE, WHO SPENT 250-THOUSAND DOLLARS TO BUILD THE PARK IN 1914, AS PART OF THE RIVAL LEAGUE TO THE NATIONAL LEAGUE CUBS, WHO PLAYED ELSEWHERE UNTIL 1916.

THE FIRST CUBS GAME IN WRIGLEY WAS IN APRIL OF 1916 WHEN THEY BEAT THE REDS, 7 TO 6 IN 11 INNINGS.

THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS MODIFICATIONS TO THE PARK OVER THE YEARS;HOWEVER, IT IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME FIELD WHERE MANY NOTABLE AND HISTORICAL BASEBALL EVENTS HAVE OCCURRED.

SOME OF THESE ARE THE MAY 2ND, 1917 ''DOUBLE NO-HITTER'' BY JIM ''HIPPO'' VAUGHN OF THE CUBS AND FRED TONEY OF THE REDS, WHO NEITHER ALLOWED A HIT THROUGH 9 INNINGS, WITH THE FIRST HIT COMING ON AN INFIELD SINGLE BY JIM THORPE OF OLYMPIC FAME, WHO DROVE IN THE WINNING RUN IN THE 10TH.

TONEY ENDED WITH A NO-HITTER.

ALSO THE 1938 ''HOMER IN THE GLOAMIN'' IN WHICH GABBY HARTNETT HIT A HOMER IN LATE SEPTEMBER TO GIVE THE CUBS THE PENNANT JUST BEFORE THE UMPIRES WERE GOING TO CALL THE GAME BECAUSE OF DARKNESS.

AND THE FAMOUS AND CONTROVERSIAL BABE RUTH ''CALLED SHOT'' IN THE 1932 WORLD SERIES IN WHICH THE ''BAMBINO'' ALLEGEDLY--REPORTEDLY--WAVED AT THE OUTFIELD FENCE AND THEN HIT A HOME RUN OFF CHARLIE ROOT.

(MARK KOENIG STORY)

ROOT SAID YEARS LATER THAT THERE WAS NO WAY THAT RUTH ''CALLED HIS SHOT'' BECAUSE HE WOULD HAVE ''KNOCKED HIM ON HIS ASS'' IF HE THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT RUTH WAS DOING.

ANYWAY, THE PARK WHERE STAN MUSIAL GOT HIS 3,000TH HIT, PETE ROSE TIED TY COBB FOR ALL-TIME HITS, AND ERNIE BANKS HIT HOME RUN NUMBER 500, STILL STANDS, BOUNDED BY ADDISON, WAVELAND, SEMINARY, CLARK, AND SHEFFIELD STREETS,WITH MANY PEOPLE PAYING THEIR WAY IN AS MUCH TO SEE THE PARK AS TO SEE THE CUBS.

THIS YEAR, JUST SHORT OF 2,700,000 CUSTOMERS PAID THEIR WAY IN, AND AS SOMEONE ONCE SAID ABOUT GUY MORRIS,EMPTY SEATS ARE HIS BIGGEST ENEMY, NOT TENNESSEE, GEORGIA, OR FLORIDA, AND AS LONG AS WRIGLEY CAN CONTINUE TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR SEATS, THE CUBS WILL CONTINUE TO SPEND MONEY ON THE AGING STRUCTURE.

ON THE SUBJECT OF MONEY,2002 BEGAN WITH GREAT PROMISE, WITH A RECORD PAYROLL, AND A SPRING TRAINING RECORD AROUND THE ''BREAK EVEN'' MARK---BUT WHO PAYS ANY ATTENTION TO THOSE FIGURES ANYWAY. AND GAMES DON'T COUNT UNTIL APRIL.

FANS WERE HOPEFUL, WITH THE ADDITION OF FORMER HOUSTON ASTROS STAR MOISES, THAT'S M-O-I-S-E-S, ALOU, OF THE FAMOUS ALOU BROTHERS---MATTY,FELIPE, AND JESUS--WHO ONCE PLAYED THE OUTFIELD FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS AT THE SAME TIME--A FEAT NEVER DUPLICATED.

ALOU WAS SUPPOSED TO PROTECT SAMMY SOSA--THAT IS, MAKE THE OTHER TEAM PAY FOR PITCHING AROUND THE CUBS SLUGGER.

ON PAPER--AND AT THE BANK--, THIS YEAR'S TEAM HELD A LOT OF PROMISE, WITH A RECORD PAYROLL DOLED OUT TO FRED MC-GRIFF, TODD HUNDLEY, BILL MUELLER, SAMMY SOSA, AND THE AFOREMENTIONED MR. ALOU, AMONG OTHERS.

HOWEVER, OPENING DAY FOUND ALOU AND MUELLER ON THE DISABLED LIST, WITH THE 2002 EDITION OF THE CUBS LOSING TWO OUT OF 3 TO THE CINCINNATI REDS, WHO CLOSED OUT 33 SEASONS IN RIVERFRONT STADIUM/CINERGY FIELD THIS YEAR.

THEY THEN PROCEEDED TO LOSE 2 OF 3 AGAINST THE PITTSBURGH PIRATES, WHO FINISHED JUST AHEAD OF THE CUBS IN THE NATIONAL LEAGUE CENTRAL STANDINGS.

THIS YEAR'S EDITION OF THE CUBS WAS MUCH LIKE JOE GARAGIOLA'S 1952 PIRATES TEAM, WHO LOST THEIR FIRST FIVE GAMES, AND THEN ''WENT INTO A SLUMP'', ACCORDING TO THE NATIVE SAINT LOUISAN WHO PARLEYED HIS ''GIFT OF GAB'' DEVELOPED BEHIND THE PLATE INTO A LUCRATIVE RADIO AND TELEVISION CAREER.

THE '52 PIRATES COMPILED A RECORD OF 42 AND 112, TO FINISH 54 AND A HALF GAMES BEHIND THE BROOKLYN DODGERS.

SIMPLY STATED, THE 2-THOUSAND 2 CHICAGO CUBS WERE A BAD BASEBALL TEAM.

THE CUBS WERE BAD AT NIGHT,WHERE THEIR RECORD WAS 29 AND 46. THEY WERE BAD DURING THE DAY, WHEN THEY WERE 38 AND 49. THEY WERE BAD AT HOME, WHERE THEY WERE 36 AND 45. THEY WERE BAD AWAY FROM HOME, 31-AND-50.

THEY WERE BAD IN EXTRA INNINGS, 5 AND 9; IN ONE-RUN BALLGAMES, 18 AND 36;THEY WERE BAD AGAINST LEFT-HANDED PITCHING, 15 AND 24; AND RIGHT-HANDERS, 52-AND-71.

THEY WERE BAD EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK---EXCEPT SUNDAY.

THROUGH DIVINE INTERVENTION, THEY WERE 15 AND 11, WHILE POSTING A LOSING RECORD EVERY OTHER DAY OF THE WEEK, INCLUDING A DAY-WORST WEDNESDAY, 7 AND 18.

THEY WERE BAD EVERY MONTH OF THE SEASON,NEVER POSTING A WINNING RECORD DURING THE SIX MONTH SEASON, ENDING THE SEASON WITH A RECORD OF 67 WINS AND 97 LOSSES, FOR A WINNING PERCENTAGE OF .414,WITH ONLY 6 OTHER MAJOR LEAGUE CLUBS PLAYING WORSE BALL, THOUGH SOME OF THOSE HAD A HIGHER PAYROLL THAN THE CUBS.

FORTUNATELY FOR THE CUBS, ONE OF THOSE WITH A WORSE RECORD WAS IN THEIR DIVISION, WITH THE MILWAUKEE BREWERS FINISHING AT 56 AND 106 FOR A WINNING---OR SHOULD THAT BE--''LOSING'' PERCENTAGE OF .346,SO THEY CAN'T SAY THEY WERE LAST.

AS INDIVIDUALS, THEY WEREN'T ALL THAT BAD, WITH SAMMY SOSA COMING WITHIN ONE HOME RUN OF 500 FOR HIS CAREER AND A RECORD 5TH SEASON OF 50 OR MORE HOMERS.

FRED MC-GRIFF SET A MAJOR LEAGUE RECORD BY HITTING 30 HOMERS FOR HIS FIFTH CLUB, WITH A SIXTH LOOMING ON THE HORIZON, WITH THE DEVELOPING HOP SEI CHOI--FOR REAL--AS THE ''HEIR APPARENT'' AT FIRST BASE

MC-GRIFF, WHOM YOU MAY REMEMBER AS THE ''CRIME DOG'' FOR THE ATLANTA BRAVES, ALSO DROVE IN HIS 15-HUNDREDTH CAREER RUN.

INCIDENTALLY, SINCE I MENTIONED JOE GARAGIOLA, I THINK IT'S APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME TO COMMENT ON GARAGIOLA AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LATE HARRY CARAY AND A FEW OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT HARRY.

IN MY MIND, GARAGIOLA AND HIS ACTIONS WHEN HARRY WAS OUT OF A JOB ARE THE ONLY REASON THAT I COULD EVER FEEL ANY SYMPATHY FOR HARRY, WHO I ALWAYS THOUGHT WAS AN OVERPAID ''GASBAG'' WHO, IN HIS MIND, NEVER LEFT SAINT LOUIS.

OF COURSE, HARRY ONCE WROTE ME A LETTER, SAYING I WAS IN NEED OF PSYCHIATRIC HELP---MORE ABOUT THAT LATER.

THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE KEPT UP WITH BASEBALL OVER THE YEARS, AND MAYBE LISTENED TO THE CARDINALS ON WHOP IN THE 1950'S AND 60'S, CERTAINLY ASSOCIATE HARRY CARAY WITH THE NATIONAL LEAGUE CLUB FROM SAINT LOUIS; HOWEVER, A ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT BETWEEN HARRY AND ONE OF THE BUSCH FAMILY WIVES FORCED THE BREAKUP OF ARGUABLY THE GREATEST BASEBALL BROADCAST TEAM EVER ASSEMBLED, THOUGH THERE ARE THOSE WHO VOTE FOR MEL ALLEN, RED BARBER, AND CURT GOWDY, WHO DID A COUPLE SEASONS FOR THE YANKEES BEFORE BARBER WENT TO THE DODGERS AND GOWDY TO BOSTON.

THE CARDINALS BROADCAST TEAM INCLUDED HARRY CARAY, JACK BUCK, WHO SUCCEEDED HARRY; ''POSSUM'' JIM WOODS, WHO SHARED A MIKE WITH BOB PRINCE IN PITTSBURGH FOR MANY YEARS; AND JOE GARAGIOLA.

GARAGIOLA WAS IN THE BOOTH ONLY BECAUSE HARRY ALLOWED HIM TO BE AND (RIGHTLY) THOUGHT THAT THE NATIVE SAINT LOUISAN HAD POTENTIAL, WHICH PROVED CORRECT.

ANYWAY, HARRY EVENTUALLY ENDED UP IN OAKLAND, WHERE CHARLES FINLEY--HE OF THE SHEEP IN THE OUTFIELD--MULES ON THE SIDELINES--ORANGE BASEBALL--AND NIGHT POST-SEASON GAMES--HIRED HIM FOR ONE SEASON OF OAKLAND PLAY-BY-PLAY.

THOUGH I'VE NEVER READ ANYTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE IT, BUT MY PRIVATE THEORY IS THAT FINLEY---NEVER ONE TO BURY A GRUDGE--HIRED HARRY FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN BEING ABLE TO FIRE HIM FOR ALL THE CRACKS HARRY HAD MADE ABOUT THE KANSAS CITY ATHLETICS BEFORE THEY MOVED TO THE WEST COAST AND SHARED MISSOURI WITH THE CARDINALS WHO HAD A MUCH LARGE FOLLOWING.

BECAUSE HARRY HAD BEEN GIVEN NUMEROUS ''STOCK OPTIONS'' ON ANHEUSER-BUSCH STOCK THROUGH THE 50'S AND 60'S, HE WAS ANYTHING BUT DESTITUTE, BUT GIVEN HIS RELATIVELY YOUNG AGE AND GARGANTUAN EGO THAT NEEDED TO BE FED, HARRY NEEDED A JOB, BUT ACCORDING TO A STORY ABOUT CARAY IN ''SPORTS ILLUSTRATED'' SEVERAL YEARS AGO, GARAGIOLA WOULDN'T EVEN ANSWER HARRY'S CALLS WHEN HE NEEDED HELP.

HARRY DID ''LAND ON HIS FEET'' IN CHICAGO, WHERE HE MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF WITH THE WHITE SOX,THOUGH, IN ADDITION TO HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE HATED CROSS-TOWN RIVALS,HE BECAME A ''SHILL'' FOR THE SOUTH SIDERS, OR THE ''PALE HOSE'' AS THE WHITE SOX WERE SOMETIMES CALLED IN THE 50'S AND 60'S, ALONG WITH THE ''GO GO SOX''.

HARRY HAD AN ''ATTENDANCE CLAUSE'' IN HIS CONTRACT,MEANING HIS EXCITING DESCRIPTIONS OF THE LACKLUSTER SOX ON THE RADIO MIGHT PUT MONEY IN HIS POCKET BY ATTRACTING FANS TO THE BALL PARK UNDER THE MISAPPREHENSION THAT THEY WERE GOING TO SEE AN EXCITING BALL CLUB.

MEANWHILE, ONE OF THE MANY REASONS FOR LIKING THE CUBS WERE THEIR ANNOUNCERS, INCLUDING JACK BRICKHOUSE, HARRY CREIGHTON, VINCE LLOYD, JACK QUINLAN, LOU BOUDREAU, AND CHARLIE GRIMM, WITH THE LATTER TWO ONCE TRADING THE BROADCAST BOOTH FOR THE MANAGER'S JOB WHEN THE CUBS WOULDN'T OFFER BOUDREAU A CONTRACT LONGER THAN A YEAR AT A TIME.

WHEN BRICKHOUSE RETIRED IN THE 1980'S, IT APPEARED CERTAIN THAT MILO HAMILTON, WHO HAD PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH BOTH THE ATLANTA BRAVES AND HOUSTON ASTROS, WOULD BE THE MAN TO TAKE OVER THE FULL-TIME TELEVISION DUTIES, WHICH THEN INVOLVED ALL THE DAY GAMES AND MOST OF THE AWAY GAMES, IN CONTRAST TO THE 1950'S WHEN I FIRST STARTED WATCHING THE CUBS.

IN THOSE DAYS, ALL CUBS HOME GAMES--THAT IS TO SAY ALL THEIR DAY GAMES IN CHICAGO--WERE TELEVISED BY WGN, CHANNEL 9, WHILE ALL SOX DAY GAMES WERE TELEVISED--MEANING THE WEEKEND GAMES AND SOME WEEKDAY GAMES, AND BRICKHOUSE STAYED BUSY TELECASTING BOTH OF THEM.

HOWEVER, BY THE 80'S, THE CUBS' JOB HAD EVOLVED INTO A VIRTUALLY FULL-TIME TRAVELLING JOB, WITH AS MANY AS 140 CUBS' GAMES TELEVISED ON THE ''SUPERSTATION'' IN SOME YEARS, RULING OUT DOUBLE-DUTY WITH THE SOX, MUCH TO MY SATISFACTION.

WHEN BRICKHOUSE WAS REPLACED BY NONE OTHER THAN HARRY CARAY, HAMILTON WAS AMONG THOSE MOST SURPRISED, AND LEFT CHICAGO AFTER ONLY ONE OR TWO MORE SEASONS DOING THE CUBS GAMES ON RADIO.

IN THE MEANTIME, HARRY DID HIS UTMOST TO ATTRACT VIEWERS AND MAKE THEM CUBS' FANS AND SUCCEEDED EVEN BEYOND MANAGEMENT'S EXPECTATIONS.

HARRY CONTINUED THE POPULAR ''TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME'' DURING THE ''7TH INNING STRETCH'' AT WRIGLEY FIELD,THOUGH HE NEVER SANG IT THE SAME WAY TWICE OR ''ON KEY'' DURING THE 81 PERFORMANCES EACH YEAR.

HE ALSO DEVELOPED A REPUTATION OF ''TELLING IT LIKE IT IS'', OR BROADCASTING FROM A FAN'S PERSPECTIVE, WHICH IS ALL WELL AND GOOD;HOWEVER, HARRY WOULD GET DOWN ON A CERTAIN PLAYER, AND TREAT HIM UNFAIRLY.

LEON DURHAM, A DECENT FIRST BASEMEN, GOT OFF TO AN EXCELLENT START ONE YEAR WITH THE LONG BALL AND WAS INTRODUCED BY HARRY DURING A TELECAST BY SAYING HE WAS LEADING THE CUBS IN HOMERS, WITH 10 OR 11, OR WHATEVER.

THE FACT OF THE MATTER WAS THAT DURHAM WAS LEADING THE ENTIRE NATIONAL LEAGUE IN HOME RUNS.

I EARLIER MENTIONED THAT HARRY ONCE ADVISED ME TO GET PSYCHIATRIC HELP.

THAT WAS INCLUDED IN A LETTER WHICH I WROTE TO HARRY AND OTHERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CUBS TELECAST OF EARLY SEPTEMBER OF 1984 WHEN THE CUBS WRAPPED UP THE DIVISIONAL TITLE, MEANING THEY WOULD BE GOING TO THE POST-SEASON FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1945.

AFTER SWEEPING A DOUBLE-HEADER IN SAINT LOUIS ON A SUNDAY TO CLINCH A TIE FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST DIVISIONAL TITLE, THE CUBS TRAVELLED TO PITTSBURG THE NEXT NIGHT,WHERE RICK SUTCLIFFE WON HIS 16TH GAME AND THE CUBS CLINCHED THE DIVISIONAL TITLE.

I WROTE A 5 PAGE LETTER TO HARRY, WITH COPIES TO THE W-G-N BROADCASTING TEAM AND MANAGEMENT ABOUT WHAT A CRAPPY JOB THEY HAD DONE IN COVERING WHAT FOR ME, A LONG-SUFFERING CUBS FAN RESIDING IN PEMBROKE, KENTUCKY, WAS A MILESTONE EVENT IN MY SUPPORT OF THE CUBS OVER THE YEARS.

JACK BRICKHOUSE WAS BROUGHT ALONG, BUT HARRY VIRTUALLY IGNORED HIM, READING WHAT SOUNDED LIKE THE CHICAGO PHONE BOOK OVER THE AIR, WHICH WAS THE NAMES OF THOSE PEOPLE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE A MONDAY OFF AND TRAVEL TO PITTSBURG FOR THE CLINCHER.

HARRY ENDED UP DOWN IN THE LOCKER ROOM, SUGGESTING THAT THEY ALL ''GET LOADED'' AND SUCKING UP TO THE SPONSORS AND CUBS MANAGEMENT.

THE OTHERS INVOLVED IN THE BROADCAST DIDN'T ESCAPE CRITICISM SINCE THEY DID TAKE THE TROUBLE TO GO OUT TO WRIGLEY FIELD, WHERE A LARGE CROWD HAD GATHERED TO CELEBRATE.

ONE OF THOSE WILLOWY,GOOD LOOKING YOUNG FEMALE T.V. REPORTERS WAS ON HAND, TO ASK THE STALE ''HOW DOES IT FEEL?'' QUESTION, NOT THE MORE APPROPRIATE, ''WHAT BRINGS YOU TO WRIGLEY FIELD TONIGHT?'', WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS PLACE THAT MAKES YOU WANT TO COME HERE OF ALL PLACES ON A MONDAY NIGHT IN THE FALL?.

THEY ALSO INTERVIEWED A BLACK PERSON, WHOSE SALIENT COMMENT WAS ''THE PADRES SUCK'', WHICH PROVED WRONG SINCE THEY TOOK THE FINAL 3 GAMES TO GO TO THE WORLD SERIES IN 84, WHERE THEY LOST TO THE DETROIT TIGERS.

A SIMPLE MATTER OF CHICAGO GEOGRAPHY LEAVES THE CUBS WITH FEW BLACK FANS SINCE THEY ARE LOCATED ON THE NORTH SIDE, AND THE WHITE SOX ARE SITUATED ON THE SOUTH SIDE, WHERE MUCH OF THE ''WINDY CITY'S'' MINORITY POPULATION RESIDES.

AFTER THROWING IN A FEW MORE BARBS, I SIGNED OFF WITH HOW DISAPPOINTED I WAS WITH THE OVERALL COVERAGE OF THE CUBS DIVISIONAL TITLE.

I WILL GIVE HARRY THE CREDIT OF TAKING THE TIME TO RESPOND TO MY LETTER, WHICH I HAVE IN MY ARCHIVES SOMEWHERE.

AS I CLOSE OUT THIS PAPER, I'M SURE THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE STILL AWAKE ARE ASKING YOURSELVES HOW ONE PERSON COULD DEVOTE SO MUCH TIME, EFFORT, AND EMOTION TO SUCH A MUNDANE PASTTIME AS TWO TEAMS HITTING AND CHASING A BALL AROUND ON A GREEN FIELD, SOMETIMES NICER THAN THE CARPET IN PEOPLE'S HOMES.

I THINK IT'S THE INVESTMENT IN TIME AND EMOTION THAT CONTINUES TO PULL ME BACK YEAR AFTER YEAR,ALONG WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF THE GAME AND THE SHEER SKILL REQUIRED TO PLAY IT AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

MY DAD WAS A CUBS FAN.

MY BEST FRIEND IN JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL, WHO DIED IN 1967 AND MY ONLY SON IS NAMED AFTER, WAS A CUBS FAN.

I FEEL LIKE THEY LIVE ON AS LONG AS I CONTINUE TO ROOT FOR THE CUBS.

AND SO I'VE DEVOTED A HALF CENTURY OF MY LIFE TO FOLLOWING THE CHICAGO CUBS.

GRANTED, THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN MY INTEREST HAS BEEN HIGHER THAN OTHERS;HOWEVER, AS LONG AS I LIVE---AND AS LONG AS THE CUBS CONTINUE TO BUMBLE ALONG--COUNT ME AMONG THE FAITHFUL.

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