

Winter 1995

Shoeless Joe Jackson Times

I don't deserve this thing that's happened to me
- Joe Jackson



Drawing by Blair Jenson, Culture House

News From the Editor

Welcome to the 1995 Winter Edition of the "Shoeless Joe Jackson Times!"

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We had a record number of letters sent in this time with thoughtful comments and suggestions. If you have a comment or suggestion or know someone who would like to receive this newsletter, please send the back page to *TΔK Publishing, 10 Shiloh Court, Madison, WI 53705*, or if you have access to the Internet you can E-Mail me at *dakrame1@facstaff.wisc.edu*. I want to thank everyone who wrote in and I hope you find this issue both informative and enjoyable.

Memories of Shoeless Joe

By: Lester Erwin
Shoeless Joe Jackson Society

Shoeless Joe Jackson . . . the mention of his name conjures up different thoughts and emotions for different people. Whether it is the old-timer who remembers Joe's playing days or the younger generation who have become familiar with

Joe through the movies, "Eight Men Out" and "Field of Dreams," the legend of Shoeless Joe Jackson has grown to a phenomenal level. It seems now that almost everyone knows about Shoeless Joe Jackson.

I, too, have memories of Joe Jackson. Some of them may be the same as other people, but my most cherished memories are from personal experiences with the man. When Joe passed away in 1951 I was only five years old. For about a year before Joe died I remember going to visit him on a regular basis. You see my mother and Joe's wife, Katie, were cousins; my mother was even named after Mrs. Jackson. During the warm weather months we would visit the Jacksons at their home, my mother and Katie Jackson usually stayed in the house while my Dad and Joe would sit in the yard. At that time I did not know anything about the Black Sox Scandal; all I knew was that Joe had played Major League baseball and it was exciting to me just to be around him. I spent most of my time in his trophy room. It was a fairly small room, probably only about five feet by ten feet but it was packed full of his awards, scrapbooks, and pictures. Even though I could not read very well I would spend hour upon hour looking through the scrapbooks to see pictures of Joe and other baseball players. When I was sitting in that room I felt like I was in the middle of Major League baseball. Still there were other times when I would go outside with my Dad and Joe as they sat in lawn chairs and talked. I remember on several occasions playing baseball and sliding into Joe's leg as if it were the base. My Dad would always warn me saying, "Lester don't do that you might hurt Joe," but Joe would always respond that it was all right just let him play. Joe always appeared to be a gentle man to me with an enormous amount of patience. He seemed very relaxed and in good spirits enjoying his daily walk

through life.

I can visualize now how Joe looked sitting back in that lawn chair relaxing and talking with my Dad. Some years later I was fortunate to come across a picture of him in that lawn chair and every time I look at it I remember the time I spent with Shoeless Joe Jackson.

It was also several years later when I found out about the Black Sox Scandal and all of the things that supposedly took place during that time. But no matter what I learned then, or even hear now, I still remember the kind, warm man with whom I was able to spend some time. From my childhood experiences with Shoeless Joe Jackson I feel there are a lot more reasons, besides his great baseball career, why he should be a permanent resident in Cooperstown's Baseball Hall of Fame.

A Practical Solution

Crime today is out of hand. Murders, rapes and other violent crimes are commonplace in every town across America. I propose we follow the lead of the former Commissioner of Baseball, Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis. He enforced justice with a blind sweeping hand.

Let's take, for example, how Landis handled the Black Sox scandal of 1919. It was on the eve of the Series, between the Chicago White Sox and the Cincinnati Reds, that rumors about a fix started to circulate. They were ignored because rumors always circulated on the eve of the World Series in an attempt to shake up the odds which were heavily in Chicago's favor. The Series was played. The Reds upset the White Sox five games to three. The rumors persisted.

In September 1920, a grand jury was called to investigate whether there had been a conspiracy to fix the 1919 World Series. Eight players were indicted including Joe Jackson and Buck Weaver. Some of the players confessed to playing poorly for money; while some, including Joe Jackson, denied taking part and pointed to their spotless records during the series as evidence. All eight, however, were found not guilty and freed.

This is when Commissioner Landis stepped in. He believed a crime had been committed against baseball, and as commissioner, it was his job to find the culprits. The culprits were somewhere among those eight players. Because Landis believed it would be better to punish everyone than to let one of the guilty go free, he banned all eight of them from ever playing professional baseball again. He got rid of the guilty players and the dark shadow that had been cast over baseball's name by the scandal. This is the kind of justice America needs today.

I propose that we use Judge Landis's system of justice in our society today. If we are uncertain about the perpetrator of a crime, all those suspected should be punished. For instance, let's consider that at a concert a man is found dead in a storage room. The police investigate and have no leads or suspects. Under normal circumstances, the pursuit would be lost and the culprit would go free and not be punished for his misdeed. I propose we round up all those present at the concert, which could exceed 60,000, and execute them all. This way the culprit would not be free to kill another day, and justice will have been served.

Let us next consider the growing number of criminals going free because of the ineffectiveness of our court system. For instance, consider the

difference in representation because of economic inequities which exist today, the differing conviction rates between races, and the number of cases thrown out because of procedural errors. Under Judge Landis' system of justice, trials would be unnecessary and these situations would be remedied. One man would review each case and simply punish all those suspected. No longer would the flaws of the courts allow criminals to go free.

Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis imposed his ideas of justice throughout his career, both as a judge and as the commissioner of baseball. He took away eight men's livelihood to punish a few. He believed that a criminal should be caught and punished no matter what the cost. Today, in America, with crime running wild, we need his brand of justice, blind, swift, and unwavering.

Jackson's Grand Jury Testimony Part 3/3

The following is the testimony Jackson gave before the grand jury on September 28, 1920.

Q — Weren't you in on the inner circle?

A — *No, I never was with them, no, sir. It was mentioned to me in Boston. As I told you before, they asked me what would I consider, \$10,000? And I said no, then they offered me twenty.*

Q — Who mentioned it first to you?

A — *Gandil.*

Q — Who was with you?

A — *We were all alone.*

Q — What did he say?

A — *He asked me would I consider \$10,000 to*

frame up something and I asked him frame what? And he told me and I said no.

Q — What did he say?

A — *Just walked away from me, and when I returned here to Chicago he told me that he would give me twenty and I said no again, and on the bridge where you go into the club house he told me I could either take it or let it alone, they were going through.*

Q — What did they say?

A — *They said, "You might as well say yes or say no and play ball or anything you want." I told them I would take their word."*

Q — What else did you say?

A — *Nothing.*

Q — Did you talk to anyone else about it?

A — *That's all I talked to.*

Q — Did you ever talk to Buck Weaver about it?

A — *No, sir, I never talked to Buck Weaver, never talked very much.*

Q — Did you know at the time Buck was in on the deal?

A — *They told me he was; he never told me it himself.*

Q — Who told you?

A — *Chick told me.*

Q — Did Mrs. Jackson ever talk to Mrs. Weaver about it, that you know of?

A — *No, sir, not that I know of; no, sir.*

Q — Is Mrs. Jackson a friend of Mrs. Weaver's, and did they chum together frequently-or

did they?

A — They are all chummy there on the ball ground, sit together there on the stand, most all the ballplayers' wives sit together.

Q — Who did Mrs. Jackson sit with most?

A — Mrs. Williams and her sit together.

Q — Did Mrs. Jackson talk to Mrs. Williams about it?

A — Not that I know of.

Q — Did Mrs. Williams ever talk to Mrs. Jackson about it?

A — I don't know, they never talked when I was around, don't know what they did when I wasn't around.

Q — Go back to Attell and Burns, just what do you know about them?

A — All I know is what Gandil told me over there, I talked to Bill myself later.

Q — When did you talk to Burns later?

A — It was the day the World Series started.

Q — What did you say to him and what did he say to you?



The Black Sox in court

A — *I met him in the lobby of the hotel, we sat there; I can't remember the name of the hotel.*

Q — Sinton Hotel?

A — *Sinton Hotel, yes.*

Q — That is in Cincinnati?

A — *Yes, I said, "How is everything?"*

Q — What did he say?

A — *He said, "Everything is fine."*

Q — Then what happened?

A — *He told me about this stuff and I didn't know so much, I hadn't been around and I didn't know so much. He said, "Where is Chick?" I said, "I don't know." He walked away from me. I didn't know enough to talk to him about what they were going to plan or what they had planned, I wouldn't know it if I had seen him, I only knew what I had been told, that's all I knew.*

Q — Who was the third party in with Burns and Attell?

A — *I don't know their names, I know there was three names.*

Q — What made you think that Gandil was double-crossing you, rather than Attell and Burns?

A — *What made me think it was, Gandil going out on the coast, so I was told, I was surmising what I heard, they came back and told me he had a summer home, big*

automobile, doesn't do a lick of work; I know I can't do that way.

Q — In other words, if he double crossed you fellows he couldn't come back and face them, and he had plenty of money to stay out there. It wasn't at the time that you thought Gandil was double crossing you, you thought Gandil was telling the truth, is that right?

A — *No, I told Williams after the first day it was a crooked deal all the way through, Gandil was not on the square with us.*

Trivia

- 1) How far did Jackson throw a base ball in a 1917 throwing contest?
 - a) 289 feet
 - b) 397 feet
 - c) 267 feet
- 2) What year was the Federal League formed?
- 3) Who caused the final demise of the Federal league and gave the Major League a total monopoly?

Answers on page 8

Q — Had you ever played crooked baseball before this?

A — *No, sir, I never had.*

Q — Did anybody ever approach you to throw a game before this?

A — *No, sir, never did.*

Q — Did anybody approach you to throw a game since that time, to throw the World's Series?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — Do you have any suspicion about the White Sox, any of the players throw any of the games this summer?

A — *Well, there have been some funny looking*

games, runs, I could have just my own belief about it, I wouldn't accuse the men.

Q — Where at?

A — *A couple in New York, this last Eastern trip, looked bad, but I couldn't come out and open and bold and accuse anybody of throwing those games.*

Q — Who pitched?

A — *Williams got one awful beating up there, 25 to something there.*

Q — Who else?

A — *I don't remember whether Cicotte started the game there or not.*

Q — Do you remember that series you played in Boston? Lost three straight games, did any of those games look suspicious to you?

A — *There was a lot of funny pitching, lot of walking.*

Q — Who was pitching those games?

A — *Kerr and Williams and Cicotte.*

Q — Was Kerr in on this any way, do you think?

A — *I don't think so.*

Q — Were any of the other six players in it except the ones we have mentioned?

A — *Not to my knowledge.*

Q — Do you remember the Washington series here the last time Washington played here, that you lost three straight games?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — Did any of those games look suspicious to you?

A — *I didn't pay any attention to them, looking for errors, and that, I was out trying to beat them.*

Q — Was anything whispered around the club that you know of, that you should beat New York and then drop these games for these other teams so that Cleveland would win?

A — *No, sir, I never heard that.*

Q — Did you hear anything in your ball team to the effect that if the White Sox would take second place and would get part of the World's Series money because you won second place in the pennant race and then get the City Series money, that you would make more money than if you won the pennant and won the World's Series?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — Did any of the players ever tell you that?

A — *No, sir, never told me that.*

Q — Did that ever occur to you, yourself?

A — *No, sir. I wanted to win, this year, above all times.*

Q — Why?

A — *Because-I wanted to get in there and try and beat some National League club to death, that's what I wanted to do.*

Q — You didn't want to do that so bad last year, did you?

A — *Well, down in my heart I did, yes.*

Q — Did you hear any of the players that mentioned that proposition to you that I have just mentioned?

A — *No, not to me, no, sir; they have not.*

Q — Have you heard from Gandil since he has been on the coast, has he written to you?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — Did you write and ask him for the other \$15,000?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — Why didn't you?

A — *I didn't think it would do any good, I didn't pay any attention to that.*

Q — Did you ever talk to Claude Williams about it since the series?

A — *We have talked about it once or twice, yes.*

Q — When?

A — *Sometime this summer, I don't remember whom it was.*

Q — In what city, if you can recall?

A — *I think it was here, in Chicago.*

Q — Where in Chicago, at the ball park?

A — *No, we were out riding in his car.*

Q — What did you say to him and what did he say to you?

A — *We were just talking about how funny it looked that Gandil didn't come back, and he must have made an awful lot out of it, crossed up the boys. We both decided he crossed them up.*

Q — You think now Williams may have crossed you, too?

A — *Well, dealing with crooks, you know, you get*

crooked every way. This is my first experience and last.

Q — Where else did you talk to Williams, outside of the time you were out riding in his car?

A — *Somewhere we were at, I believe in Washington.*

Q — When was that?

A — *That was this summer, I think.*

Q — How long ago?

A — *I think it was the second Eastern trip.*

Q — What did you say to him at that time, and what did he say to you?

A — *We just brought up the World's Series, I told him what a damned fool I thought I was, and he was of the same opinion, so we just let it go at that.*

Q — Does your contract with the Sox Baseball team call for \$6,000?

A — *\$8,000.*

Q — What part of the money did you get when you were sold by Cleveland to Comiskey?

A — *I think they gave me \$1,000 out of the sale.*

Q — That's all you got out of it, just \$1,000?

A — *Yes.*

Q — Do you know how much Mr. Comiskey paid

Trivia Answers

1) (b) 398 feet - He won the contest by 14 feet

2) 1912

3) Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis. In 1915 an antitrust suit was filed by the Federal League against the Major League owners. Landis deliberately delayed ruling for over a year, bankrupting the Federal League Treasury and causing its collapse.

Questions on page 6

the Cleveland Club for you?

A — *I do not, no, sir.*

Q — You knew it was a big sum of money, did you?

A — *So they said.*

Q — You were satisfied with \$8,000 a year, were you?

A — *That's all I could get out of them.*

Q — Did you get \$8,000 in 1919?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — What did you get in that year, that was last year?

A — *'19, I believe they gave me \$6,000, last year.*

Q — That is for the season, not for the year?

A — *Yes, just the playing season, yes, sir.*

Q — That also includes all your expenses on the trips, doesn't it?

A — *Yes, sir.*

Q — Railroad fare, board, room, and so forth?

A — *Railroad fare, room and board.*

Q — You were pretty well satisfied with that, weren't you?

A — *They wouldn't give me any more, that's all you could get. I was pretty lucky to get a contract like that with him when I came over here.*

Q — What were you getting with Cleveland?

A — *I was getting six the last year, and I had been in that automobile wreck, and it looked like I was through as a ball player.*

Q — That automobile wreck in Cleveland?

A — *Yes, I had my leg all tore up, my knee cap came out, it looked like I would be through as a ball player.*

Q — \$6,000 is the most you ever got until this year, is that right?

A — (No answer)

Q — Did you ever talk to any of the other men about this, now, that I have not asked you about?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — Do you know anything more about it than I have asked you?

A — *No, sir I don't believe I do.*

Q — Can you think of anything else of importance that I have not asked you?

A — *This other fellow, if I could think of his name, I can't think of his name.*

Q — Did Cicotte ever tell you who paid him the money?

A — *He told me about somebody paying him money, yes; but I don't know their names, never did know any of their names, except Bill Burns and Abe Attell, that's the only two names that I know. I did not attend the meetings.*

Q — You say Williams gave you your money; what ball player paid Cicotte his money?

A — *These gamblers paid him, I think, all along, from what I learn.*

Q — Did Williams ever tell you who paid him?

A — *Never did.*

Q — Did you ever ask Williams where he got his \$5,000?

A — Yes.

Q — What did he say?

A — *Up at Gandil's apartment, he said.*

Q — Have you ever talked to Burns since the World's Series?

A — *No, sir.*

Q — Do you know where he lives, where he is?

A — *No, sir, I do not.*

Q — You talked to Gedeon this summer?

A — *Yes, "Hello, how are you," and something like that.*

Q — Do you know whether or not Gedeon is in on the deal?

A — *No, sir, I do not.*

Q — Do you think he was?

A — *(No answer)*

Q — Does Williams know where you are now?

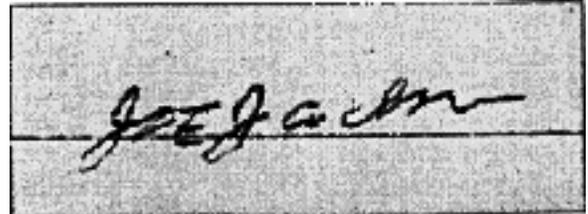
A — *I don't think so.*

This is the end of Jackson's testimony before the grand jury. Next issue we will explore a different version of Jackson's involvement in the Black Sox scandal.

Joe Jackson Memorabilia

Recently Joe Jackson's famed bat, Black Betsy, was put up for auction by Leland's auction house. It was expected to bring as much as \$50,000. Surprisingly, the minimum bid was not

reached and it was not sold. Black Betsy was crafted by a Greenville batmaker, Charlie Ferguson, who presented the bat to Joe when he turned 15. It was carved from the north side of a hickory tree; it stands 36 inches long and weighs 48 ounces. Jackson used Black Betsy for a large part of his career, and was the source of his favorite cheer, "Give'em Black Betsy, Joe, Give'em Black Betsy."



A court battle is being raged over another piece of Jackson memorabilia, his will. It contains one of the six known authentic Joe Jackson signatures in existence. Experts believe it to be worth over \$30,000. The American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society claim they own the will, while the courts claim that it is a piece of government property. The two charities filed suit in South Carolina in an attempt to obtain the will so they could sell it. They contend that the simple four-line will was Jackson's personal property, which was left to Katie Jackson when he died in 1951. When she died in 1959, she willed all of her assets to be liquidated with the money going towards the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society. The charities claim the will rightfully belongs to them, as it was one of Katie Jackson's possessions. The courts claim, however, that wills are required to be kept by the courts for 75 years. But the law is not clear if the original or a copy of a will should be kept. Both sides have agreed to let a judge decide the matter. Until this is resolved, one of the six known Jackson signatures in existence will remain locked in a court room safe.



with their salaries. If they attempted to do so they would be blacklisted and never play Major League baseball again. The players today have the option of going on strike with the opportunity to return to their teams with no serious consequences. Unfortunately, this is the reason why the World Series was not played this year, but it also may be the reason why gambling and fixed games are, for the most part, a thing of the past.

It has been said recently that baseball is a business. Baseball is not a business, baseball is throwing a ball around on Sunday afternoon, baseball is taking a pilgrimage to Wrigley Field, and baseball is hopes and dreams. For too long, and too often, the players and owners in the Major Leagues have forgotten that.

Reader's Write

This is the section where the readers write in with questions or comments, and I respond. I encourage you to write in and share your views about Jackson, and any suggestions you might have for the newsletter. If you have an idea for an article, please share it with me, or write it up and send it in. I will publish it if I feel others will enjoy it.

"I am very pleased with the Shoeless Joe Jackson Times. How about some sort of special on the strike? Maybe you could compare the owners' collusion trial and guilt to the ethics of Joe Jackson."

Bill

A good idea and something I'll consider for next time. The two situations are alike in many ways. In 1919, the Black Sox accepted money to supplement their tiny incomes. The labor laws and the state of the game did not allow players to go to arbitration or stage a strike if they were unhappy

"Thank you for the great work you continue to do. With efforts such as yours on behalf of Joe Jackson we will one day see Joe take his rightful place in the Hall of Fame."

Lester Erwin

Thank you for your compliments. I hope one day that dream becomes reality.

"I would be interested in hearing the viewpoints of others concerning the series Baseball by Ken Burns. The story of Shoeless Joe, in my opinion, was inadequately told, especially relative to the time devoted to Cobb and Ruth."

Pug Malone

I wholeheartedly agree. Burns seemed intent on only discussing the scandal and not the brilliant career Jackson had. Joe Jackson is the best natural

hitter and arguably the greatest player to ever play the game, and his name was only mentioned in relation to the scandal. I also felt that Burns did not accurately display the facts of the scandal, especially in Jackson's case. He did not mention the fact that Jackson went to Charles Comiskey and asked to be benched before the start of the series, or how he did not commit a single error, and batted .375. Most importantly he did not mention the fact that Jackson was not involved with the meetings or planning of the fix, or ever agreed to be involved. Gandil approached Jackson with the proposition of throwing the World Series after already assuring the gamblers that Jackson was in. To Gandil's surprise, Jackson refused to take part. Gandil's reply was, "You might as well say yes and then play ball or anything you want." Jackson made no promises to throw games, played his best throughout the series, and told his club that a fix was on. I feel these important elements which show Jackson's innocence were questionably left out of Ken Burns' series.

"Shoeless Joe and my mother were cousins. I fondly remember when growing up visiting in Shoeless Joe's home. Cousin Kate and Joe always made us feel welcome. Shoeless Joe was a quiet, gentle, and understanding man. He was delighted that my brother was a baseball fan. Our two sons are baseball fans, and they are very proud to be related to Shoeless Joe. They enjoy sharing about him; many times to find their friends in disbelief."

Barbara Steen

Thank you very much for sharing those memories with us. Whether or not he is ever inducted into the Hall of Fame, he will always be remembered by me as a great player, and a great man.

"Hello! I really enjoyed the issue of the Shoeless Joe Jackson Times that I received. I was wondering if you knew some definitive books about Shoeless Joe. Besides Eight men Out, and Shoeless Joe and Ragtime Baseball. Keep up the great work!"

Jim Warchol

Thanks - The only other non fiction book written specifically about Joe Jackson is the classic Say It Ain't So Joe, by Donald Gropman. It was recently reissued and updated. An outstanding book. Other books and works relating to Jackson are The Natural, Field of Dreams, and Damn Yankees.



