

Gentlemen,

What if . . . ?

That's an intriguing question we all have asked.

Before you read this lengthy screed, please permit me to pose two "what if" questions.

- 1) What if our SPB-X 1933 season were real?
- 2) What if each of us had a doppelganger in it?

I hope that you enjoy this exercise in "what if."

Steve Ehresman

1933: Doctor Diamond Makes a Discovery

The other day, Doctor Diamond—that's me—was going through the attic of the 19th century farm house in which both my grandfather and father were born. I did not expect to find much: spider webs, broken dishes, dusty books, and old clothes. What I found, however, was unexpected and priceless.

It seems that my grandfather was a baseball fan. Not only that, but he was a part-time sports writer for a local paper that published its last issue and closed its doors about the time I was born. Nobody bothered to keep copies of those old newspapers. Nobody, that is, except my grandfather.

What caught my eye was a series of articles my grandfather had written in the weeks leading up to the 1933 baseball season. He lived in a world that is long gone--swept away by time and progress. He may have pecked out these articles late into the night, using an Underwood typewriter that would now be a museum piece and a kerosene lamp that must have stunk to high heaven. Maybe reading from scribbled notes, maybe composing in his head, my grandfather must have been passionate about baseball. Maybe he was just determined to earn a few dollars anyway he could in the teeth of the Depression.

In any case, my grandfather reported on each major league team, not only getting quotes from their managers, but also meeting some of their star players. How did he achieve this miracle--becoming an Odysseus among baseball gods and monsters? Despite our growing up under their tutelage, we know little about the lives of our elders. Regardless of the letters, diaries, photographs, or newspaper articles we possess, we lack the password to unlock the secrets of their world. We often ask ourselves, *How did they do it?* My grandfather did not explain his remarkable adventures in early 1933. In fact, he never mentioned them at all.

Not even my parents were able to help me. Their young lives were lived in the sunshine--reading, writing, ciphering, and shooting marbles at recess—safe in a world of childhood, over which catastrophic world events barely cast a cloud. In high school, my father played basketball in what looked like an old barn-- and must have felt like too, especially in the winter. He never mentioned my grandfather's love for baseball. My mother, intent on becoming the first member of her family to pursue a higher education, did not know my grandfather until she and my father were engaged.

How did grandfather do it?

I will never know.

Nevertheless, reminders of my grandfather's writing career abound. During the War, my grandfather wrote for **Stars and Stripes**, serving under Brigadier General Lesley Lewellen in London. His writing appeared in the first issue of that illustrious soldier's newspaper on April 18, 1942. Later, a few of his articles in **Stars and Stripes**, all of which are digitally preserved today, dealt with baseball games played to entertain the troops. One of the games about which my grandfather reported featured the racially integrated Overseas Invasion Service Expedition All-Stars, winners of the European Theater of Operations World Series in 1945. Among the stars on that team was Willard Brown.

My grandfather loved to tell stories. On holidays, he gathered a circle of children, holding their attention gently with his soothing voice, as he spun yarn after yarn. Some might have been war stories. Some might have been baseball stories. Some might have been products of his vivid and seemingly inexhaustible imagination. As the youngest member of those magical childhood circles, I remember only a gentle man who smelled faintly of peppermints.

Therefore, I will share my grandfather's writings that have been gathering dust for 86 years. I can only imagine what my grandfather must have been like in those days. I knew him as an old man, but in these articles, I can hear his voice from a time when he was young and unmarried. My father was not even a twinkle in his eye.

I hope the excerpts that I have chosen from his writings do him justice.

Albany Empires: Tuesday, February 14, 1933

The Empires are the first team I will discuss in a newspaper series designed to give rooters an inside glimpse of their favorite teams. When I interviewed Manager John Turnbull, an unassuming man who works for the University of Wisconsin, issuing weather forecasts and advisories in the off-season, he was enthusiastic about his team's chances. After all, the Empires are the defending World Series champions.

No doubt about it, Mickey Cochrane is the best catcher in baseball. Nobody is better behind the plate, and he can hit the ball a long way. Al Simmons and Chuck Klein? They are the best one-two punch in the league. I expect us to hit the stuffing out of the old horse hide. On the mound, we have a lot of chuckers. You give Red Lucas the ball, and he can beat anybody. These boys will go far.

After our interview, Turnbull slipped into his office and retrieved a bottle. At first, I thought it was hooch. The liquid he poured from the bottle--brown as mud--looked like toxic bathtub gin. Then I saw that the blue letters on the yellow label said *Yahoo*. A black coffee man myself, I have never tasted this beverage, but I was relieved that Albany's manager is a tea-totaller like me.

On a personal note, I wish all bachelors a happy St. Valentine's Day. Wait till next year, fellas.

Boger Gassers: Thursday, February 16, 1933

The next stop in my 1933 baseball pilgrimage was the Boger Gassers, a team whose seasonal prospects may be less bright than those of the Empires. Manager Terry Baxter met me at the door to his small office and pointed to a hard, wooden chair in which I awkwardly sat down, uncomfortable as I conducted the interview that he had promised. Although Baxter possesses the demeanor of a circumspect bookkeeper, he was forthcoming--even blunt--in assessing his Gassers.

This season may be tough for us. The league has a lot of good teams, and we do not have all the horses we need to chase them. Not yet. But we have some good-looking kids—Frankie Crosetti, Hank Greenberg, and Joe Vosmik. We know they can play. Next year, the league is going to hear a lot from the Gassers.

As I was preparing to leave, I bumped into Rogers Hornsby. Literally. I collided with the aging star as he strode into Baxter's office, exuding an air of proprietorship. Hornsby has never been well-liked—not by his fellow players at least--and after this run-in, I had first-hand knowledge of why.

"Get out of my way."

"I'm sorry, Rogers."

"It's Mr. Hornsby. Who the- - -are you?"

"I'm just leaving."

"Well, Just Leaving, get the- - -out of here. People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball. I tell 'em that I stare out the window and wait for spring. Now I'm gonna tell 'em that I dodge blind idiots."

I wondered why the Gassers had picked up Hornsby in the off-season. It's an open secret that Baxter is not only a star on the night club circuit, but a fancier of fine horse flesh as well. Maybe Hornsby, an infamous gambler, was acquired to be Baxter's side-kick at the race track. Given Hornsby's sense of entitlement, he probably thinks he is auditioning for Baxter's job.

Detroit Titans: Saturday, February 18, 1933

From the moment I stepped into Manager Paul Meyering's office, I knew that I had entered the world of an uncommon baseball man. Framed photographs of famous physicians hung on the walls. Likenesses of Harvey Williams Cushing, Joseph Lister, William James Mayo, and Elizabeth Blackwell immediately caught my eye. Meyering greeted me with a hearty handshake, inquired about my health, and led me to a comfortable, leather chair. After I had seated myself and sipped from a proffered glass of water, the Detroit manager plopped down in another leather chair and looked at me expectantly. I felt as if I were his only appointment that day.

Relaxed, I asked Meyering to talk about his 1933 team.

The Titans should compete this season—and for years to come—as we have some promising young players who are just beginning to realize their potential. Just look at Arky Vaugh. As smooth as Duke Ellington tickling the ivories. Ernie Lombardi can block the plate with the best of them. Plus, we think he can hit .300. Larry French is already a fine pitcher. He will only get better. Fred Walker has all the ability in the world if he can stay healthy and harness it.

As I was leaving, Meyering noticed that I was studying his physicians wall of fame. Without my having to ask, he explained the reason for his collection: "In the off-season I study dentistry at the University of Michigan. When I'm done managing, I intend to open my own practice." If Doctor Meyering treats his patients as well as Manager Meyering entertained a young reporter from a small-town newspaper, he will be quite successful.

East Kenosha Leopards: Monday, February 20, 1933

Manager Dave Lauer greeted me at the door to his office with a hearty handshake. A combination of Kris Kingle and Friar Tuck, he motioned me to take a seat in a wooden chair just inside the door, while he plopped down in a plush, green Art Deco armchair.

Without asking, Lauer handed me a steaming cup of Earl Grey tea, from which I politely sipped, spread his arms expansively, and boomed, "What do you want to know?"

Notebook in hand, I began the interview: "Describe the 1933 Leopards."

The Leopards have some fine players. Our young catcher Al Lopez has a long career ahead of him. He has the brains to be a manager someday. Dick Bartell will hustle and play a great shortstop. Charlie Gehringer? What can I say? He's automatic. The man is mechanical. Red Ruffing is a real workhorse on the mound. We should be competitive in 1933, and our future is bright.

As Lauer spoke, I noticed that his desk was piled high with papers, all stacked in neat rows. Beside them sat an adding machine. I was sure that the East Kenosha manager did not use it to figure batting averages. When he noticed me casting furtive glances at the organized chaos on his desk, Lauer shrugged, chuckled, and said, "I help people prepare their taxes in my spare time. A lot of late nights," he said with a leonine yawn, "but they pay the bills. Maybe I can help you sometime."

I thanked Lauer for his time, shook his massive paw, and let myself out of his office.

Help with my taxes? Thanks, but I have to make some money first.

Frankfort Frogs: Wednesday, February 22, 1933 (Washington's Birthday)

I had read that Manager Gary Plunkitt is the tallest manager in the major leagues. At 6 feet, 5 inches, the slender, graying Plunkitt lived up to his billing. Although Plunkitt is reputed to possess an encyclopedic knowledge of baseball, he was more eager to discuss his hobby of riding motorcycles than he was to begin a hot stove conversation about the 1933 season.

"You know the 1930 Indian 101 Scout? It's going out of production since the Dupont family bought out Indian. Anyway, I bought one this year. Didn't eat for a month. I can't wait for spring to ride it. Do you ride? You don't look the type. The 101 Scout is the best motorcycle Indian ever made. You might say that it's the Ty Cobb of motor cycles."

As Plunkitt droned on and my tired legs twitched, I notice that his office was decorated with autographed photographs of baseball luminaries (Ty Cobb, Honus Wagner, Tris Speaker, and Walter Johnson) and Hollywood goddesses (Greta Garbo, and Jean Harlow). I wanted to ask how Plunkitt had met Garbo and Harlow, but, remembering my assignment, I cleared my throat to ask a question.

Before Plunkitt could wax poetic about the 1930 Indian 101's performance or—much worse—Garbo's and Harlow's attraction to towering baseball managers, I politely asked, "What about your 1933 squad?"

The Frogs have a nice mix of veterans and youngsters. Ya gotta start with Lou Gehrig. The man's a horse, an iron horse. Can't say enough about him. We also got kids like Marv Owen and Pete Fox. You will know their names by the end of the year. Hal Schumacher is going to be an ace. I like our chances this year.

On my way out—I had stood throughout the motor cycle homily and the baseball analysis—I stepped aside as a hulking man entered Plunkitt’s office. In the presence of this Herculean figure, I felt like a weakling.

“Excuse me,” said the behemoth in a humble, surprisingly shy voice.

“Of course,” I said.

Then, I realized that Plunkitt’s visitor was none other than Lou Gehrig. Jumping up to shake Gehrig’s hand, Plunkitt immediately forgot me. I slipped silently out the door. On Washington’s Birthday, I had brushed shoulders with an American hero who was now laughing with his manager in an office suddenly made small by the presence of two larger-than-life men.

Las Vegas Knights: Friday, February 24, 1933

One of the youngest, most athletic managers in the Major Leagues, Mike See dominates any sports conversation. Not because he is rude, but because he is authoritative. Many a barroom argument has been settled by consulting Manager See, and—rumor has it—he has collected more than a few rolls of cabbage leaves by making intelligent bets. A man of high character, Manager See bristles at the suggestion that he would ever use his baseball knowledge inappropriately.

“I will never bet on baseball. I respect the game.”

Like everyone in the Majors, See is aware of the edict posted in every Major League locker room:

Any player, umpire, or club or league official or employee, who shall bet any sum whatsoever upon any baseball game in connection with which the bettor has a duty to perform shall be declared permanently ineligible.

“I admit that I place bets on other sporting events. Hornsby only plays the horses. He places bets based on hunches. I place bets based on research. That makes me smarter than Hornsby.”

In fact, See’s knowledge has earned him a column in a Las Vegas sports weekly. He may even secure a half-hour Saturday talk show on a local radio station.

When we finally got around to talking baseball, See was confident about his 1933 team.

The Knights are going to be good. Really good. We have a solid infield anchored by Ripper Collins and Billy Rogell. In the outfield, Carl Reynolds, Doc Cramer, and Gee Walker can do it all. The real strength of the Knights is our starting pitching. Who else has a rotation with Tex Carleton, Dizzy Dean, Paul Derringer, and Mel Harder? Don’t forget Bump Hadley and Van Lingle Mungo, who would be aces for any other team in the league. Did I mention a couple of kids I really like: Hal Trosky and Cecil Travis? The Knights should be on top for years to come.

As my interview with Mike See came to a close, he predicted a bright and prosperous future for Las Vegas. “Nevada legalized casino gambling a couple of years ago. Now we have a three-mile stretch of desert road nicknamed the “Strip,” just south of downtown. Someday really soon that dusty road is going to be worth millions.”

I don’t even play penny-ante poker, but, if I were a gambling man, I would take a tip from Mike See, collect the coins jingling in my pocket, and bet on the future of Las Vegas.

Lincoln City Riptide: Monday, February 27, 1933

Any manager whose team includes Babe Ruth will exude confidence. Marc Hollingsworth is no exception. I found Hollingsworth in his office, drinking a cup of coffee and reading the **Morning Oregonian**. When he saw me standing uncertainly in the open doorway, Hollingsworth folded his newspaper, rose to his feet, and, shook my hand.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," he said, smiling. "Please sit down." I sank gratefully into an overstuffed arm chair. "Would you like a cup of freshly brewed coffee?"

"Yes, please." I tried not to sound too eager, but I had not had a good cup of Joe since I began my baseball peregrinations. When Hollingsworth poured me a steaming cup from an antique Neapolitan flip coffee pot, I inhaled the aroma, spilled the black silk, and could not suppress a deep sigh of satisfaction.

One would not be surprised to find a manager's office filled with baseball guides by **Reach and Spalding** stacked neatly on a desk; dog-eared copies of **Baseball in Cincinnati** by Harry Ellard, **The National Game** by Alfred H. Spink, or **Pitching in a Pinch** by Christy Mathewson displayed in a book case; or issues of the **St. Louis Sporting News** scattered about on the floor. Hollingsworth's office surprised me, however.

Rather than its containing baseball publications, Hollingsworth's office featured three shelves of plumbing manuals, magazines, and catalogs. Prominent in this library was the **Standard Brand American Sanitary Company Lavatory Plumbing Fixtures Product Catalog**.

Noticing my puzzlement, Hollingsworth explained, "I'm a plumber in the off-season in my hometown of Milwaukie. Right now, I work mainly for well-to-do town folks, but next year I hope to expand my business to service rural areas. When my managing days are done, I will have a trade to fall back on so that I can pay my bills and raise my family."

As I have no trade to fall back on, I experienced a flash of envy, but once Hollingsworth began talking baseball, I focused only on my job at hand: reporting on the upcoming baseball season.

The Riptide is a veteran squad. Some might say a little long in the tooth. Sure, a lot of teams have gotten better, but Lincoln City still has the Babe. He may be thirty-eight, but he has a lot left. He has led us since we got him, and he will do it again. We're also counting on Heinie Manush to have a big year. Every time Lefty Grove takes the mound, we know that we can win. The Riptide will definitely be in the mix.

At that moment--right on cue--in strode the Babe himself. Wearing a natty camel's hair coat with a matching cap and puffing on an over-size cigar, he strode past me and addressed his manager. "Ya know, good livin' ain't getting any cheaper. I want a raise."

Hollingsworth smiled faintly and stroked his chin. "Babe, you already make more than President Hoover."

"He ain't gonna be president much longer, is he? Happy days are here again, and I want to enjoy them."

"I'll put in a good word for you."

Then—remarkably-- the Babe turned to me. “Hey, keed, you look too serious. You could use some fun. I know a dame who’s got just what you need. What do ya say?”

“Thanks, Babe,” I said, not quite believing that I was turning down an invitation to carouse with arguably the most famous man in America, “but I have to get up early for my job.”

“Me too, keed, but that ain’t stoppin’ me. Don’t take any wooden nickels.”

As Ruth swept from the room like visiting royalty, Hollingsworth shook his head, nodded to me politely, and opened a plumbing manual. As brief as a spring shower, my interview was over. In that interval, I had won a skirmish against temptation, a conflict foreign to the Babe.

Affable but wayward, Ruth is poised for another campaign of capturing headlines, winning hearts, and rewriting record books—all with the élan of an adolescent buccaneer. Once when offering advice to America’s youth, the Babe reputedly said, “It’s simple kids. If you drink and smoke and eat and ____ as much as me, well, kiddos, someday you’ll be just as good at sports.”

With that, I move along to the next stop on my pilgrimage.

Louisville Colonels: Wednesday, March 1, 1933 (Ash Wednesday)

Rich Applegate, one of the oldest managers in the Majors, is an anomaly. Although he comes from a generation of base brawlers, Applegate displays none of the behaviors and possesses none of the habits that are often associated with baseball’s more unsavory characters. Born on a farm in Northwest Kansas twenty-five miles from the county seat Norton, Applegate welcomed me with small-town hospitality that immediately put me at ease. On his desk lay the **Holy Bible**, filled with bookmarks, and a handbook of biblical annotations. Appropriately, I had arrived on Ash Wednesday.

Getting down to business, Applegate was insightful in assessing the Colonels’ chances in 1933.

Spud Davis will establish himself as a top-notch catcher this season. We also expect good years from Pepper Martin and Billy Jorges. Our outfield will hit. My, will it hit. Dave Jolley is our veteran, but look out for the youngsters: Joe Medwick, Mel Ott, and Ben Chapman. The Colonels have the best outfield in baseball. The pitching needs to do its part. Freddie Fitzsimmons and Bill Hallahan will have their usual seasons, but we need our kid Schoolboy Rowe to contribute. Our pitching is a little thin, but we will out-hit most teams.

As I prepared to leave, Applegate handed me a book mark inscribed with a biblical passage: **Corinthians 9:25-27**. Although I did not recognize it, this passage has been a guidepost in my life and, I hope, in the lives of my children and grandchildren: *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.*

New Haven Whiffenpoofs: Friday, March 3, 1933

My arriving in Manager Chris Williams’ office was unlike any other baseball experience I have had. Playing on an electric portable music player was “The Banks of Green Willow,” a six-minute orchestral piece by George Butterworth. It was soothing and beautiful. Stacked near-by were about a dozen 78 rpm records, many of which were recordings of compositions by Ralph Vaughn Williams, known for his love of English folk music.

George Butterworth and Ralph Vaughn Williams were members of a generation whose lives were torn apart by the Great War. Butterworth fell at the Battle of Somme in 1916. He was thirty-one. Vaughn Williams, friend and mentor to Butterworth, was in his early forties when war broke-out. Lying about his age, Vaughn Williams enlisted as a private in the British army. His “The Lark Ascending” premiered in London in the summer of 1921.

I knew none of this when I stepped into Williams’ office for a baseball interview, which turned into a ninety-minute tutorial on early twentieth century classical music. Along the way, the erudite Williams--I did not ask whether Ralph Vaugh Williams was a relative--digressed for an insightful analysis of his 1933 Whiffenpoofs. In case you were wondering--I certainly was-- the Whiffenpoofs are a collegiate *a cappella* singing group established at Yale University in 1909.

We are excited by our drafting Dolph Camilli last spring. He won't contribute much this season, but he is a name to remember. Frankie Frisch and Joe Cronin give New Haven one of th best keystone combinations in the Majors. We don't have great power, but Frank Demaree and Jo-Jo White are rabbits. They will score runs with their speed. On the mound, Lon Warneke is one of the best in the business. He and Firpo Marberry give New Haven one of the best pitching duos in the league. We won't score a lot of runs, but we won't give up a lot either.

Williams then put on a 78-rpm recording of Gustav Holst’s “The Planets,” a suite whose first movement is “Mars, The Bringer of War.” For a moment, I was stirred by the martial music. Then I thought of the horrors inflicted on the world by the Great War. I wondered if I would experience such horrors first-hand. *Better me than my children*, I said to myself and slipped out of Williams’ office, leaving the manager deep in thought.

New York Mutuals: Monday, March 6, 1933

From the moment I entered manager Joe DeZarlo’s office, I was immersed in all things New York. DeZarlo adorns his walls with photographs of the Big Apple’s famous landmarks: The Chrysler Building, The Empire State Building, Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall, and, of course, The Statue of Liberty. At least once a month, DeZarlo patronizes Delmonico’s Restaurant, dining on Delmonico Steak, Eggs Benedict, Baked Alaska, Lobster Newburg, or Chicken al a Keene—dishes unfamiliar to me. Further emphasizing his New York *bona fides*, DeZarlo asked me if I had heard of Billie Holiday, a seventeen-year-old singer who had begun to make a name for herself in New York’s night clubs.

“She’s playing tonight at Covan’s on West 132nd Street,” he said. “Do you want to go?”

“Thanks, I said, “but I have to get up early.”

Nothing against the young woman, but my beat is baseball, not jazz.

On the wall opposite his gallery of landmarks, DeZarlo displays autographed photographs of famous Italian-Americans. At a glance, I recognized the visages of Fiorello La Guardia, Enrico Caruso, Rudolph Valentino, and--surprisingly—Al Smith, whose father, Alfredo Ferraro, adopted an English version of his birth name. *Ferraro*, I learned, is Italian for blacksmith.

Of course, Tony Lazzeri was featured prominently in the display, and DeZarlo predicted that someday Ernie Lombardi’s and Dolph Camilli’s likenesses would grace his wall. As I admired the many photographs in his office, DeZarlo made a rather far-fetched prediction: ‘I hear that the Pacific Coast League Seals have a couple of Italian kids named DiMaggio playing for them. I hear that they

have a younger brother who is pretty good. Their father is a fisherman on the east side of the San Francisco Bay. I tell you someday all three of those kids are going to have their pictures on this wall."

DeZarlo's analysis of his 1933 Mutuals was less fishy.

The Mutuals will field a competitive team this season. With Gabby Harnett behind the plate, Willie Kamm at the hot corner, and Freddie Lindstrom in the outfield, we have a group of veterans who will anchor the team. Plus, Babe Herman carries a big left-handed stick. We are excited about the future of our young infielder Lonny Frey. When we put Carl Hubbell on the mound, we can beat anybody. Lefty Gomez is going to be a weapon for a long time. Look for the Mutuals to be in the thick of things all year.

As I prepared to leave this shrine to Gotham, DeZarlo handed me two complimentary passes for the premiere performance of a *Christmas Spectacular* at Radio City Music Hall on December 21. "I got these from Vincente Minelli. We're friends. I will be out of town that night, but you might use them to impress a special someone. There will be no better place in the City to take a date that night."

Prairie Crossing: Wednesday, March 8, 1933

Rather than a name plate, Manager Steve Ehresman's desk features a plaque with large black letters that boast *I drink and I know things*.

"I made that up," says Ehresman, grinning mischievously. "Someday, when somebody tries to use it, I want the credit."

To express their disdain, Ehresman's critics resort to Shakespearean insults, claiming that the Prairie Crossing manager embodies the vainglory of Malvolio, the braggadocio of Falstaff, and the guile of Iago. Having read *The Bard*, I was apprehensive about my having to interview an individual with such a vain, volatile, and untrustworthy personality.

Rather than my finding Ehresman unpleasant, I found him to be engaging, albeit overly concerned with impressing others. He is a raconteur who is quick to laugh; he is an avid reader who displays an impressive library; and he is a generous host who shares the best bootleg Canadian whiskey in the Majors. In fact he poured a generous amount of this north-of-the border elixir into a glass and offered it to me.

Before I could politely refuse, in swaggered a dapper man wearing a navy chalk stripe suit and a light grey Hornburg hat with black, highly-polished brogue shoes.

"Don't waste good booze on a rube," ordered the intruder.

"He's my guest," said Ehresman.

"I don't drink," I said.

"See. I told you. A rube."

"I'm here to interview the manager."

Even in the dimly lit room, it must have been apparent that my face was red.

"Make it snappy, rube. I got business with the manager."

Before I could answer, the intruder spun on his heels and, walking out the door, muttered, "What a nice little rube. What a loser," loudly enough for me to hear.

As I was about to retort with words that heretofore had been foreign to my lips, Ehresman interceded with his analysis of the 1933 Red Foxes.

That's our shortstop Leo Durocher. Expensive clothes, expensive liquor, and expensive women. But he is a slick fielder. I wish I had a few more scrappers like him. Some of his teammates don't like his lip—you can see why—but he gets under the skin of the guys in the other dugout. That's worth a lot. Anything for a win. I guess you want me to discuss the Red Foxes. With Bill Terry, Pie Traynor, Goose Goslin, and Tony Lazzeri, we are going to hit. Not a lot of power, but these veterans know how to win. We will go as far as our pitching carries us. I expect a big year from Guy Bush.

At that moment, Durocher strode back into the manager's office.

"Are ya done, rube?" he asked with a smirk. "I got a couple of hot dames waiting."

Without a word, I rose to my feet, clinched my fists, and glowered at Durocher.

Ehresman again took the initiative, as well as my elbow, and steered me to the door.

"You're welcome," Durocher chortled, as I walked out of the office, struggling to control a ferocious temper that I did not know—until this moment—that I possessed.

San Diego Glaziers: Friday, March 10, 1933

The walls of Steve Lehman's office are covered with pictures of glass windows. During my baseball journey, I have received an eclectic education, a serendipitous reward for my trying to do a good job as a reporter. Despite all that I had seen and heard, the quality of these framed photographs and the intricate, artisanal work they displayed captured my attention and aroused my curiosity.

Lehman's photographs were not simple Agfa-Ansco Colorol film with which the average consumer can take snapshot pictures. Rather, they were museum-quality Autochrome color photos. Later, I learned that Lehman had taken these photos to advertise his skilled work as a glazer.

Noticing that I was impressed by what I had seen, Lehman explained his off-season work. "When I'm not managing, I install glass in residential casement windows for well-to-do professionals in California. What you see on the wall is work I've done for them. Last year I began doing commercial jobs—hospitals, banks, and office buildings. California is growing every day. I hope to grow my business with it."

Lehman's pride in his abilities and his optimistic projections for his future success impressed me. Even in hard times ambitious people who are willing to work for their dreams are not hard to find. I filed this thought away for future reference.

When Lehman evaluated his 1933 San Diego Glaziers, he was equally hopeful.

I begin with our keystone combination: shortstop Luke Appling and second baseman Billy Herman. Both are young; both are talented; and both will make their mark as stars. Our team is anchored around these two. With Gus Suhr at first and Stan Hack coming on strong at the hot corner, San Diego will have a great infield for years to come. In the outfield, Jo-Jo Moore is a future stand-out. Earl

Whitehill leads our pitching staff, and Tommy Bridges has a bushel of talent. Some year soon the Glazers are going to dominate this league.

As I was leaving, Lehman gave me some prints of his best work, along with a fistful of business cards. "Tell your friends about me," he said. "You won't be sorry."

San Francisco Seals: Monday, March 13, 1933

Manager John Ungashick has the reputation for being the league curmudgeon. Rather than a crusty baseball lifer, I found a frank man with years of experience and extensive knowledge. When Ungashick spoke, players and umpires listened, to say nothing of rookie reporters. Perhaps the Ohio native derives his gravitas from his time in the Military Police Training Department, established on September 9, 1918 at Caseme Changarnier in Autun, France. To this day, Ungashick possesses the demeanor of one who has served honorably in an elite unit.

Like many other managers, Ungashick is a numbers guy, working as a self-employed accountant in the off-season. "My off-season work has led me to believe in "hidden figures." Baseball over-values certain statistics and under-values others. For example, batting average is considered the best measure of a player's worth, and on-base percentage is overlooked. On-base percentage is a "hidden figure." Someday a player will come along and show everyone that on-base percentage wins more games than batting average."

Ungashick spoke with such conviction that I began to wonder whether my unquestioned assumptions about *The Nation Pastime* were based on fact or fiction. Maybe I and many others have listened to the wrong voices. Maybe a whole new way of appreciating baseball is on the horizon.

A man whose interests extend beyond the diamond, Ungashick is a student of the American Civil War, often visiting battle fields in the autumn if his Seals are not in the post-season. Early in our conversation, Ungashick reminded me, "This is the seventieth anniversary of *The Battle of Gettysburg*." Then he handed me a publication that detailed the contributions of Ohio soldiers in that pivotal battle.

Turning to the pages Ungashick had designated for my reading, I discovered that the 66th OVI had flanked repeated Confederate assaults and helped secure the crest of Culp's Hill. Even more seminal to the outcome of the battle, the 8th OVI had helped repulse Pickett's Charge. Recognizing the many contributions of soldiers from the Buckeye State, Abraham Lincoln had a habit on the eve of a battle of asking how many Ohioans would participate. "I know," said the President, "that if there are many Ohio soldiers to be engaged, it is probable that we will win the battle, for they can be relied upon in such an emergency." I am certain that John Ungashick took a quiet pride in Lincoln's praise for his home state heroes.

Finally, I got around to asking Ungashick about his 1933 Seals.

Our infield has a few holes, but our outfield is great. Earl Averill, Earle Combs, and Paul Waner are as good as it gets. My kind of players. Ernie Orsatti, our fourth outfielder, is good enough to start for some teams. On the mound, Si Johnson and Lefty Stewart will carry the load for us. After them, we lack depth. This could be a tough year for the Seals, but I guarantee that we will play hard and steal some games from the so-called favorites.

With the Gettysburg booklet in hand, I thanked Ungashick for his time and for the knowledge he had imparted to me. Because I am a student of history, my thanks were more than the obligatory statements a polite guest makes upon his departure. In the summer, I hope to visit Gettysburg and offer my silent thanks to those Ohio lads and their brothers in arms who saved the Union.

Schenectady Blue Sox: Wednesday, March 15, 1933 (My Final Interview)

As Manager Don Rahn shook my hand and welcomed me into his office—more like the cubical of a medieval monk than the war room of a baseball skipper—he spoke with the confidence of an entrepreneur who can envision a bright future that is still cloudy to his peers. “I’m a numbers guy, as you can see,” said Rahn.

As I scanned the shelves on his office wall, I saw not only baseball record books, but also college texts for calculus, statistics, and mathematical logic. Although I am woefully ignorant about the contents of these books, I could at least read their titles.

Then on the spine of a relatively new book, one that had not endured the rigors of its being carried and passed along by scores of college students, I saw a word that I did not know: *actuary*. Sensing my ignorance, Rahn explained, “An actuary deals with the measurement and management of risk and uncertainty. In the off-season, I work for Equitable Life Insurance at the Equitable Building near Wall Street. After baseball, I will work in a profession that will always be in demand. It will grow, and my career will grow with it. That’s exciting.”

To me, it sounded like a big-league skipper’s job—managing risk and uncertainty—but, feeling out of my element and way over my head, I kept my reply simple: ““Tell me about the Blue Sox.”

Any discussion of the Blue Sox has to begin with Jimmie Foxx. The man’s a beast, and he’s only twenty-five. After Foxx, our infield is light-hitting glove men. Good guys who give you all they have, but they don’t have pop in their bats. Our mainstay in the outfield is Sam West, a speedy gloveman who hits for a high average. Lefty O’Doul and Kiki Cuyler have contributed mightily to our past success. Despite some wear and tear, both are dangerous hitters. Lou Finney fits in well with our future plans. Ed Brandt and Fred Frankhouse are reliable hurlers around whom our pitching staff is built. The Blue Sox will have to scramble for wins in 1933, but I promise our fans that we will play an exciting brand of baseball.

Feeling as if Rahn and I could still communicate with America’s common language, baseball, I left this financial maven’s office with a smile. “If you are ever in New York, come see me,” said Rahn. We could catch a show. The Equitable Life Building has three entrances on Broadway.”

My revels now ended, I am heading home, exhausted but grateful for the opportunity I have had to share with my readers. I cannot predict the future, but I know that my month-long journey has given me much. Home will not be the place it was when I left. Not because my little town has changed, but because I have changed. When I step through the doorway of my boyhood home and embrace my parents, I hope that I will be generous enough, brave enough, and wise enough to face the future with confidence and hope.

When I read my grandfather’s words, I am reminded not of the chasm of time that separates our worlds, but rather of the undying truths that bind our worlds together. When grandfather told stories, I often needed an explanation to understand him, but when I felt his unconditional love, I understood him perfectly.

