

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



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Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

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Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke
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At its best, the study of history is not just a recitation of past events. Our shared history can provide important context to help us better understand ourselves, by explaining why things happened the way they did and how we got to where we are today.

But those of us who study history never want to *re-live* it.

As I write these words in June 2020, we're still living under quarantine during a global pandemic, with racial tensions rising due to protests against police brutality and white nationalist backlash. It is easy to draw parallels to life in America from 100 years ago. The world has changed in many ways, but not in others.

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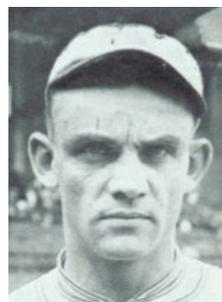
John "Beans" Reardon, left, wearing a flu mask underneath his umpire's mask, prepares to call a pitch in a California Winter League game on January 26, 1919, in Pasadena, California. During a global influenza pandemic, all players and fans were required by city ordinance to wear facial coverings at all times while outdoors. Chick Gandil and Fred McMullin of the Chicago White Sox were two of the participants; Gandil had the game-winning hit in the 11th inning. (Photo: Author's collection)

Pandemic baseball in 1919: California flu mask game

By Jacob Pomrenke
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A batter, catcher, and umpire stand at home plate, all wearing cloth masks over their mouth and nose. The fans in the wooden bleachers are wearing masks, too. Even the canine mascot has its snout covered.

The photographs are some of the most enduring images of a global influenza pandemic that infected an estimated 500 million people, nearly one-third of the world's population, and the cause of nearly 50 million deaths over a 24-month span.¹ They are a sign



Chick Gandil

of the human desire to carry on in the face of horrific tragedy and of baseball's place in American culture.

If these images did not survive, it might be hard to believe such an absurd spectacle ever took place: a baseball game played while everyone present was wearing flu masks. It happened only once, during a California

Winter League game on January 26, 1919, in Pasadena, where city officials enacted — and enforced — a strict ordinance requiring all citizens to cover their faces while out in public.²

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Hemingway gambles, loses on 1919 White Sox

By Sharon Hamilton

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In *Under Pallor, Under Shadow*, Bill Felber's book on the 1920 American League pennant race, he writes, "Of all its sporting pastimes, the ticket-buying public only invested faith in the integrity of one."¹ Not long before the Cincinnati Reds met the Chicago White Sox in a fateful 1919 World Series, Morris Cohen wrote in *The Dial* magazine, "Baseball is a religion, and the only one that is not sectarian but national."²

Young Ernest Hemingway numbered among those Americans who had faith in baseball — and in the White Sox.

On September 30, 1920, Hemingway wrote a letter to one of his closest friends about his own personal fallout following Shoeless Joe Jackson and Eddie Cicotte's confessions to a Chicago grand jury. The two players admitted on September 28 that they had accepted money from gamblers to fix the 1919 World Series. The 21-year-old Hemingway addressed this letter to Grace Quinlan, a friend who had become like a younger sister to Hemingway. Hemingway wrote the teenaged Grace things he did not confess to anyone else. Consistently, his letters to "Sister Luke" (as he nicknamed her) are among the most vulnerable and revealing of his early letters.³

The months leading up to the fall of 1920 when Hemingway wrote his "Sister Luke" about the White Sox scandal had already been a difficult period for him. Following the end of the First World War, Hemingway returned in January 1919 to his home in Oak Park just outside of Chicago. Hemingway's poor eyesight meant he was not permitted to enlist as a soldier, so he served as a Red Cross volunteer. It was in this role where Hemingway, who was just about to turn 19, had been delivering supplies to Italian soldiers at the front when he was wounded in an Austro-Hungarian mortar attack that almost killed him (the Italian soldier immediately in front of him died). This left him with a permanently damaged right knee.

Hemingway came back to America believing himself engaged to a Red Cross nurse and hoping to make a living as a writer to support them both. In March 1919, the nurse wrote to tell him she had become engaged to someone else.

At least he thought he could still depend on baseball.

Hemingway grew up as a baseball fan. He was fortunate enough to have ready access to a city with two championship teams and he appears to have cheered for them both. Around the age of 16, Hemingway wrote *Baseball Magazine* to order a subscription and to request posters of Chicago White Sox pitchers Big Ed Walsh and Ewell "Reb" Russell along with pictures of Chicago Cubs right fielder Frank "Wildfire" Schulte and catcher Jimmy Archer.⁴



Ernest Hemingway, pictured in 1918 as a Red Cross volunteer in Italy during World War I, grew up as a baseball fan outside Chicago. He appeared to root for both the Cubs and White Sox, and placed a bet on the Sox to win the 1919 World Series. (Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library/NARA)

As a fan of teams in both the American and National Leagues, Hemingway not only got to see star players of the Cubs and the White Sox in their glory days, he might also have seen some of baseball's all-time greats on the teams that visited Chicago. Hemingway may have watched Babe Ruth as a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox and by attending games against the Detroit Tigers, he would have seen the player he described in a 1948 letter as the best of all baseball players: Ty Cobb.⁵

Hemingway shared his love of baseball with his father, Clarence, a physician, who appears to have very much enjoyed attending games with his eldest son. In a letter written to his father in early May 1912, when he was 12, Hemingway said he consulted his baseball schedule and saw there was a series coming up between the Cubs and the rival New York Giants.⁶ Hemingway asked his father if they could go to the May 11 game. If they attended that day, they would have seen the Cubs lose 10-3 against the Giants and star pitcher Rube Marquard, one of his favorite players, of whom he would also order a baseball poster.⁷

During his youth there had been many Chicago baseball wins to witness, some of them so transporting for the young author that he later immortalized them in fiction. In his short story "Crossing the Mississippi," Hemingway wrote about the first game of the 1917 World Series between the White Sox and the New York Giants, including a description of Happy Felsch's winning home run. Hemingway could have read about it in the press but it's possible he was there to see it, especially considering that the details included in his story sound like an eyewitness account and not just the result of consulting a box score.⁸

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“This morning in your kitchen we were talking and in came Deggie and discussion occurred in the course of which I was informed by Deggie that it served me right to lose when I bet on the Sox last fall. Thinking the series was honest. And that he didn’t blame the sox for selling it, etc. And becoming somewhat wrath, but not showing it I hope, a great and overpowering desire to spank him laid hold of me. But it was conquered because thought I, ‘Sooth and what will become of the small remnants of my old drag if commit spankage on a dear friend?’”

— Ernest Hemingway letter to Grace Quinlan, September 30, 1920
 (“Deggie” was an acquaintance from Petoskey, Michigan)

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The young man in Hemingway’s story — a lightly fictionalized version of himself named “Nick Adams” — missed the end of the World Series because he (like the real Hemingway) was making his way to Kansas City to seek employment. It was on the train where “Nick” learned the White Sox had won the Series. Hemingway depicted this as a moment of pure joy.⁹ It was this young man and writer who, at age 20, put money on the 1919 White Sox to win the World Series.

Hemingway’s team lost in 1919, but in 1920 his White Sox appeared to be closing in on the American League pennant in a close three-way race with the Cleveland Indians and Babe Ruth’s New York Yankees. His own life at the time remained a mess. Despite his parents’ urgings, he had not enrolled in college and so far as they could see he had no serious intentions of looking for a job. In a searing letter handed to him just days after his 21st birthday, Hemingway’s mother accused him of sponging off his parents and friends, and told him to leave and not to come back until he had proven himself a man.

Although Hemingway continued to write short stories and send them out, he had not been able to sell any of his fiction. In August 1920 he found himself without money or family support. He moved into a boarding house in Boyne City, Michigan, where he wrote to his dear friend Grace Quinlan, his “Sister Luke,” about how hard he found it to have been exiled from home.¹⁰

It was to Grace that Hemingway also wrote a month later, when he learned the news of Joe Jackson and Eddie Cicotte’s confessions about throwing the World Series. It would have been difficult for him to miss, as their testimony made front-page headlines across the nation. Headlines in Michigan included “Eight Sox Men Indicted,”¹¹ “Three Sox Players Confess”¹², and — this could only have come to Hemingway as additionally depressing news — “Players ‘Laid Down’ in Race for 1920 Flag.”¹³ More than one of the Michigan papers also included the now-famous anecdote about a small child asking of Joe Jackson as he left the courtroom, “It ain’t

true, is it, Joe?” The headline read: “The Fallen Idol.”¹⁴

The letter Hemingway wrote to Grace on September 30 likely represented the immediate aftermath of the confessions as this was experienced by many White Sox fans. The scene Hemingway recorded for Grace concerned how he had been having breakfast when an acquaintance saw him and came over to make fun of him for having bet on the White Sox to win the 1919 World Series, and for having believed their play was on the level. Hemingway admitted to Grace that he was tempted to hit the friend who had mocked him but said he had managed to resist.

This letter provides an intimate personal glimpse of scenes as they likely played out for White Sox fans across the nation that week, with a first loss on the field compounded by a second one in the courtroom. Fans like Hemingway found themselves mocked for having believed in the White Sox in the first place, while also living through the knowledge of their betrayal.

Notes

1. Bill Felber, *Under Pallor, Under Shadow: The 1920 American League Pennant Race that Rattled and Rebuilt Baseball* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 195.

2. Morris R. Cohen, “Baseball,” *The Dial*, July 26, 1919, 57, quoted in Daniel A. Nathan, *Saying It’s So: A Cultural History of the Black Sox Scandal* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 15. The original *Dial* article can be viewed online via the Internet Archive at archive.org/details/dialjournallitcrit67chicrich/page/56/mode/2up.

3. Ernest Hemingway letter to Grace Quinlan, September 30, 1920, in *The Letters of Ernest Hemingway 1907-1922. Vol. 1*; eds. Sandra Spanier and Robert W. Trogon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 244-45.

4. Ernest Hemingway letter to “Base Ball Magazine,” April 10, 1915 or 1916, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 18-19.

5. Ernest Hemingway letter to Lillian Ross, July 28, 1948, in *Ernest Hemingway Selected Letters, 1917-1961*; ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons,

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Photos surface of Abe Attell's World Series roommate



In the June 2017 edition of the SABR Black Sox Research Committee newsletter, I wrote an article on Abe Attell's roommates, the two un-indicted gamblers who shared a room at the Sinton Hotel in Cincinnati during the 1919 World Series with Attell, David Zelcer, and the Levi brothers. Many have wondered why the two were never called to testify at the Black Sox criminal trial, as they could have shed light on the activities of the indicted gamblers.

One of the two gamblers was named in the hotel register and newspaper reports as "Jack Davis." My article laid out six proofs that this man's identity was John Henry Davis of Des Moines, Iowa. He was born Yechiel Shanin in 1864 in Dudino, Russia, and changed his name when he emigrated to the United States in 1892.

As I wrote then, "Davis played a lengthier role in the scandal, being named by David Zelcer as one of his companions at a ballgame in Chicago on September 28 (prior to the Series), and having traveled with Zelcer and Ben Levi to Cincinnati. ... It seems clear that people sharing a small room with the noisy and indiscreet Abe Attell would, at a minimum, have had knowledge of the fix and likely have been active participants in the fix."

I recently received an email from Katherine Keller, John Henry Davis's great-granddaughter. Her information helps confirm that this Davis was the gambler Jack Davis. Better still, she shared two photos of Jack Davis — the first photos of this Black Sox figure to surface. One is from his younger days, the other from much later in life.

Thanks to Katherine for sharing these family memories.



— Bruce Allardice

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1981), 647.

6. Ernest Hemingway letter to Clarence Hemingway, circa second week of May 1912, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 12.

7. "New York Giants at Chicago Cubs Box Score, May 11, 1912," Baseball-Reference.com, baseball-reference.com/boxes/CHN/CHN191205110.shtml.

8. "1917 World Series Game 1, Giants at White Sox, October 6," Baseball-Reference.com, baseball-reference.com/boxes/CHA/CHA191710060.shtml.

9. Ernest Hemingway, "Crossing the Mississippi," *The Nick Adams Stories* (New York: Scribner, 1927, 2003), ebook.

10. Ernest Hemingway to Grace Quinlan, August 1, 1920, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 235-36.

11. "Eight Sox Men Indicted," *Escanaba Morning Press*, September 29, 1920: 1.

12. "Three Sox Players Confess," *Port Huron Times-Herald*, September 29, 1920: 1.

13. "Players 'Laid Down' in Race for 1920 Flag," *Port Huron Times-Herald*, September 29, 1920: 1.

14. "The Fallen Idol," *Escanaba Morning Press*, September 29, 1920: 1.



Author Ernest Hemingway was born in 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois, and spent the first six years of his life in this home. (Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress)

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BASEBALL RESEARCH**



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