About The American Century Theater

The American Century Theater was founded in 1994. We are a professional company dedicated to presenting great, important, but overlooked American plays of the twentieth century... what Henry Luce called “the American Century.”

The company’s mission is one of rediscovery, enlightenment, and perspective, not nostalgia or preservation. Americans must not lose the extraordinary vision and wisdom of past playwrights, nor can we afford to surrender our moorings to our shared cultural heritage.

Our mission is also driven by a conviction that communities need theater, and theater needs audiences. To those ends, this company is committed to producing plays that challenge and move all Americans, of all ages, origins and points of view. In particular, we strive to create theatrical experiences that entire families can watch, enjoy, and discuss long afterward.

These audience guides are part of our effort to enhance the appreciation of these works, so rich in history, content, and grist for debate.

The American Century Theater is a 501(c)(3) professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to producing significant 20th Century American plays and musicals at risk of being forgotten.

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## Contents

Poetry Corner: A Song and Poem for *Bang the Drum Slowly* ................... 1

The Real “Author”: Mark Harris  ......................................................... 4

Baseball in the Era of *Bang the Drum Slowly*  .................................... 7

Life Imitates Art: After Henry Wiggen, the Real Pitcher-Diarists .............. 13

Baseball Players, Dying Young ............................................................. 16

Bruce’s Pearson’s Disease—Hodgkin Lymphoma. ................................. 25

The Great Baseball Books ................................................................. 26
Poetry Corner:
A Song and Poem for *Bang the Drum Slowly*

The Song: *The Streets of Laredo*

The title of the play is taken from this old American folksong of dubious origins, about a cowboy who dies before his time. Laredo is a town, rich in Western lore, located in Southern Texas, but there are over a hundred different versions of this ballad set in almost as many different Western towns in the United States.

The song evolved from a seventeenth century British ballad about a soldier who died of syphilis. It has been known by many titles, including *The Bard of Armagh, The Sailor Cut Down in His Prime, The Dying Cowboy,* and *The Cowboy’s Lament,* and the main character’s occupations are many and varied.

The old-time cowboy Frank H. Maynard (1853–1926) of Colorado Springs, Colorado, claimed authorship of the revised *Cowboy’s Lament.* Larry McMurtry, who used the song’s title as the title of his sequel to *Lonesome Dove,* gives the song a date of “circa 1860,” which would mean Maynard wrote it at the age of seven. Whoever deserves the credit, this is one of those haunting and unforgettable tunes like *Greensleeves* that never gets old, and it is emotionally wrenching whenever it is sung well.

Few sing the whole song, of course. Johnny Cash and Marty Robbins, among others, had successful recordings of the song.

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**The Streets of Laredo**

*As I walked out in the streets of Laredo*
*As I walked out in Laredo one day*
*I spied a dear cowboy wrapped up in white linen*
*Wrapped up in white linen and cold as the clay*
*“I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy”*
These words he did say as I boldly stepped by
“Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story
I am shot in the breast and I know I must die

“It was once in the saddle I used to go dashing
It was once in the saddle I used to go gay
But I first took to drinkin’ and then to card playin’
Got shot in the breast and I am dying today

“Oh, beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly
Play the dead march as you carry me along
Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o’er me
For I’m a young cowboy and I know I’ve done wrong

“Get six jolly cowboys to carry my coffin
Get six pretty maidens to bear up my pall
Put bunches of roses all over my coffin
Put roses to deaden the sods as they fall

“Then swing your rope slowly and rattle your spurs lowly
And give a wild whoop as you carry me along
And in the grave throw me and roll the sod o’er me
For I’m a young cowboy and I know I’ve done wrong

“Go bring me a cup, a cup of cold water
To cool my parched lips,” the cowboy then said
Before I returned his soul had departed
And gone to the round-up, the cowboy was dead

We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly
And bitterly wept as we bore him along
For we all loved our comrade, so brave, young, and handsome
We all loved our comrade although he’d done wrong
The Poem: *To an Athlete Dying Young*

*To an Athlete Dying Young* is probably the best known work of British poet A.E. Housman (1859–1936). It first appeared in *A Shropshire Lad*, the compilation of his poems first published in 1896. Following the ancient Greeks, who also were struck by the irony and tragedy of the youngest and strongest sent to Hades at the peak of their powers, the poet reflects upon a young athlete brought home to be buried and concludes that he was fortunate to die near the moment of his greatest glory, since he will now never experience the inevitable fading of that glory. His death is of the body only: Because he did not experience the diminishment of age and decline, he is immortal in a way other athletes are not.

Housman captured the underlying themes of most stories and dramatizations about dying athletes, from *Brian’s Song* to *Million Dollar Baby*. It should remind us how original Mark Harris’s story was, avoiding all of the classic clichés of the dying athlete genre.

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*To an Athlete Dying Young*

by A.E. Housman

*The time you won your town the race*

*We chaired you through the market-place;*

*Man and boy stood cheering by,*

*And home we brought you shoulder-high.*

*To-day, the road all runners come,*

*Shoulder-high we bring you home,*

*And set you at your threshold down,*

*Townsman of a stiller town.*

*Smart lad, to slip betimes away*

*From fields where glory does not stay,*

*And early though the laurel grows*

*It withers quicker than the rose.*
Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl’s.

The Real “Author”: Mark Harris (1922–2007)

Mark Harris, whose observations of life through the perspective of a fictional major league baseball pitcher created an under-appreciated legacy that was a gift to baseball fans and non-fans alike, was born Mark Harris Finkelstein on November 19, 1922, in Mount Vernon, New York.

He was always drawn to literature and writing and, after serving in World War II, took the well-worn path from writing for small town newspapers (in Port Chester, New York) to contributing to big city dailies (in New York City) to bylined essays
in magazines. Harris’s early work focused on racial inequality in the United States, including his first published novel, *Trumpet to the World* (1946), which tells of a black writer who rises from poverty to become a best-selling novelist.

Harris received a late bachelor’s degree in 1950, his master’s in English in 1951 from the University of Denver, and a Ph.D. in American Studies in 1956 from the University of Minnesota. While writing, he usually was teaching as well: He taught English at five universities, becoming tenured at Arizona State University from 1980 to his retirement in 2002.

Harris was a passionate baseball fan—like many U.S. authors, including John Steinbeck, Bernard Malamud, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Cheever, Philip Roth, Ernest Hemingway, John Updike, and Ring Lardner—and like many of them, saw more than sports illuminated in the on- and off-the-field travails of baseball teams and their members.

*Bang the Drum Slowly* (1956) was the second of Harris’s four-novel series chronicling the adventures of Henry Wiggen, a talented pitcher for the fictional New York Mammoths and an oddball athlete with a literary bent. All the books, narrated in the first person by Wiggen, himself a published writer (hence his team nickname, “Author”), focus on moral and social issues with the humor of the locker room and the excitement of the playing field used for accent and intensity.

Beginning with *The Southpaw* (1953), the series continued through *Bang the Drum Slowly* to *A Ticket for a Seamstitch* (1957) and, two decades after Henry’s saga seemed over, *It Looked Like For Ever* (1979). In *The Southpaw*, Wiggen writes about his rookie year and, openly debating with himself how to best describe big league life, struggles with the dilemma of how to treat locker room obscenity and profanity as well as his teammates’ lively sex lives. Henry ultimately decides to include these without sanitizing them, because they are, after all, part of the game. In having his narrator make this decision, Mark Harris anticipated the same choice made by Henry’s real-life pitching star counterpart years later, when Jim Bouton shocked the baseball community (and wrote himself a bestseller) by including similar juicy details in his tell-all baseball book, *Ball Four*, in 1970.

Henry Wiggen was a better writer than Bouton, of course. A better pitcher, too.
Bang the Drum Slowly was the most acclaimed and popular of Harris’s works. In that book, Henry Wiggen, at the peak of his career, reflects on the life-altering episode where he befriended a dim-witted, semi-literate catcher who learned he was terminally ill with Hodgkin’s disease. Wiggen uses his status with team owners to dissuade them from sending the doomed player to the minor leagues, rallies his teammates to treat the catcher with kindness and respect, and even inspires him to become a better player before his illness ends his career and his life.

New York Times sports columnist George Vecsey was among the first to note the novel’s memorable last line, “From here on in, I rag nobody,” calling it “one of the loveliest last lines in American literature.” Since then, it has also become one of the loveliest last lines in cinema and the stage.

In 1956, the novel was the basis of an acclaimed live teleplay broadcast on CBS, with Paul Newman as Wiggen, Albert Salmi as the catcher, Bruce Pearson, and a young George Peppard as Piney Woods, another catcher on the team who sings The Streets of Laredo in the clubhouse (the title is taken from the song’s lyrics) in one of the teleplay’s most emotional scenes. The 1973 film version, adapted by Harris, starred Michael Moriarty (best remembered as the Sam Waterston’s predecessor as the prosecutor on TV’s Law and Order) as Henry Wiggen, screen newcomer Robert De Niro as Pearson, and Vincent Gardenia, who received an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor, as the team’s manager. (He should have won, too.)

In 1994, playwright/screenwriter/director Eric Simonson, with Harris’s collaboration, adapted Bang the Drum Slowly for the stage and directed its premiere at Boston’s Huntington Theatre. Simonson subsequently showed himself to be enamored of the possibilities of sports in stage drama: Simonson’s play Lombardi ran on Broadway from October 2010 to May 2011; his play, Magic/Bird (as in basketball rivals Magic Johnson and Larry Bird of NBA legend) premiered on Broadway in March 2012; and his latest play, Bronx Bombers, about baseball’s New York Yankees, premiered in the current Broadway season.

In the last of the “Southpaw” novels, It Looked Like For Ever, Harris returned to the theme of death and dying. Wiggen, now thirty-nine, is at the end of his career,
and the death of the athlete’s reign of glory and stardom becomes a metaphor for all life and death. One admiring reviewer wrote, “Writing like Harris’s helps us to understand, even to withstand, disaster—Vietnam, the meaningless death of the young, an enlarged prostate gland, and, in an earlier work of art, the failure of Mudville’s Casey.”

Mark Harris wrote thirteen novels and four nonfiction books, including Mark the Glove Boy, or the Last Days of Richard Nixon (1964); an autobiography, Best Father Ever Invented (1976); and Saul Bellow: Drumlin Woodchuck (1980). He also edited Selected Poems of Vachel Lindsay (1963) and The Heart of Boswell: Six Journals in One Volume (1981) and wrote many book reviews, critical essays, and articles, often with baseball themes. Those were collected in Diamond, a collection of Mr. Harris’s baseball essays published in 1994.

Mark Harris never sought the limelight or celebrity. He gave only a few interviews and was satisfied to teach English while exploring topics he cared about in his writing: humanity, kindness, ethics, love, and, of course, baseball. He let his writing speak for him. “There is nothing I can say which will explain myself,” Mr. Harris told one interviewer. “To some extent, I have said what I know in my books.”

He knew a lot. “Mr. Harris’s literary game of baseball is a version of pastoral, a small, intact reduction of the world,” wrote poet and critic Donald Hall while reviewing Henry Wiggen’s valedictory for the New York Times Book Review. “If I had a vote, I would put Henry up for Cooperstown.”

Baseball in the Era of Bang the Drum Slowly

Baseball changes slowly, but it does change, and the game in the era of Bang the Drum Slowly, the mid-1950s, was very different from what we know today. One revolutionary change that the play highlights was the way baseball players were paid. Before the elimination of baseball’s “reserve clause” in 1976, players were bound to the team that signed them until they were traded, released, sold, quit . . .
or died. As a result they had little bargaining power with owners, and even the best players earned less, often much less, than professionals in most other fields or even middle management in a small company. This meant that major league players, except for the biggest stars, had to work in the off-season to pay the bills. Minor leaguers barely received more than living expenses. There was no designated hitter, of course, and no play-offs: the pennant winners in the National and American league, those teams with the best record after the last of 154 games (not 162, as there are now), played each other in the World Series, the first time they could have faced each other that season, for there was no inter-league play.

The leagues still had only eight teams each: expansion didn’t start until the 1960s. There was a team in Washington, the Senators, who later moved to Minnesota, but no Angels, Astros, Mets, Padres, Brewers, Mariners, Rangers, Marlins, Rays, Diamondbacks, Twins, Royals, Blue Jays, Rockies, or Nationals (who were once the Montreal Expos, remember.) Players were also different, mostly smaller and lighter, with a select group of big, lump strong guys who looked like they belonged on a slow-pitch softball team. Nobody lifted weights; nobody used steroids.

Everybody used “greenies,” or amphetamines.

To give you further flavor of baseball in the 1950s, here is an article from the excellent baseball website, The Hardball Times (http://www.hardballtimes.com/), from March 2004.

**Dig the 1950s**
—Steve Treder

*Reprinted with the permission of The Hardball Times*

The 1950s are often presented as a time of dull conformity, staid normality, boring predictability. Black-and-white images of too-safe TV shows and calm, bland, white people in gray flannel suits populate the America-in-the-fifties stereotype. Scratch beneath the surface of this tepid veneer, however, and one discovers that the actual 1950s were anything but dull or placid; any serious look at America in the fifties encounters enormous social and cultural changes punctuating the decade: from Joe McCarthy to Rosa Parks to Elvis Presley to Jack Kerouac, the 1950s was
actually a time of extraordinary personalities, searing conflict, and dramatic change. As Kerouac might say: Dig it.

Baseball reflects and illustrates this. The image we’re often given of baseball in the ’50s is one of static conservatism; we may be led to believe it was a dreary and monotonous time of stolid teams in baggy gray uniforms, relying upon tried-and-true formulas. The truth is entirely different: the 1950s in baseball was almost certainly the decade involving the most fundamental, startling, and dynamic change of any in modern baseball history.

Pick an angle, any angle, and you’ll see it: race, geography, technology, the major/minor league structure, or the game itself on the field. There was no other time in the 20th century of such swift and significant transformation in baseball.

**Race**

Ask most fans when baseball became integrated, and they'll say “1947!” That’s technically true, of course, but comprehensively false. 1947, with Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby coming on the major league scene, was just the beginning of a long process. The vast majority of the wrenching and inspiring events of baseball’s integration took place in the 1950s. In 1949, just three franchises (the Dodgers, Indians, and Giants) employed players of color: the remaining 13 of 16 teams integrated in the ’50s.

In 1950, among regular major leaguers (defined as batters with at least 50 games and pitchers with at least 50 innings), there were 9 players of color (2.6%). By 1960 the total had become 52 (14.4%). Take a moment to contemplate the rich tumult of human lives and stories encapsulated in those stats: the choices, breakthroughs, conflicts, struggles, and triumphs represented. All that stark change took place in the decade of the 1950s.

It was a time of anything but stasis and conformity. It was an era of bold challenge of long-held norms and assumptions about race in baseball, brave testing of new arrangements—social, political, and economic—on a scale and depth not seen before or since. Minnie Minoso, Willie Mays, Joe Black, Jim Gilliam, Ernie Banks, Sam Jones, Vic Power, Hank Aaron, Elston Howard, Connie Johnson, Roberto Clemente, Frank Robinson, Orlando Cepeda—all these fascinating careers and many more—all are, to a great extent, tales of the enormous changes that took place in the 1950s.
Geography

Entering the 1950s, no major league franchise had been moved in half a century. The geographic configuration of teams was fixed, a given, essentially permanent. Major league baseball was almost entirely a Northeast and Midwest institution.

Before the decade was over, nearly a third of big league franchises would move. Five new major league cities would be established, including two on the Pacific coast, rendering MLB a nationwide entity for the first time. No geographic realignment of the sport since can begin to compare with the significance of that which took place in the 1950s, in boldness or in scale.

And one of the 1950s moves—that of the Dodgers from Brooklyn to Los Angeles—must certainly be regarded as the single most controversial and culturally meaningful franchise shift in U.S. sports history.

Technology

It was a technological innovation that made MLB's move to California feasible—fast, reliable, and cost-effective jet air transportation. Even for short road trips, the conversion of team travel from trains to planes became nearly universal in the 1950s.

This change had an impact beyond just in-season road trips. Train travel had facilitated a traditional practice of whistle-stop barnstorming at the end of spring training, as teams would often make several stops along the way home from Florida or Arizona, playing additional exhibition games and/or making publicity appearances. Plane travel helped phase out this custom in the 1950s.

Another technological change was in the ballparks themselves: the installation of lights for night baseball became universal everywhere in baseball (except Wrigley Field) in the 1950s. Night games were still fairly rare in the 1940s, but in the ’50s they became a standard offering, with nearly every team playing several night games a week. This had implications—few of them positive—for the neighborhoods surrounding inner-city ballparks and new ways in which teams began to assess ease-of-access considerations for customers.

Speaking of access, in the 1950s most fans began traveling to the ballpark by car. This also had far-reaching implications, as the difficulty of finding safe and easy
parking near inner-city ballparks was a huge factor in the desire of owners to find new facilities, in the suburbs and/or in new cities.

But certainly, the biggest of the many technological revolutions of the 1950s was television. TV was a novelty in the 1940s, but in the ’50s it suddenly became ubiquitous. Major league baseball became a televised event on a large scale. The implications of this can hardly be overstated in terms of revenue generation and marketing opportunities for the sport, and in many other ways as well.

The Major/Minor League Structure

Perhaps none of the many impacts of TV on baseball was bigger than what it meant for the minor leagues and semi-pro baseball. In 1950 there were 58 minor leagues in organized baseball and countless more semi-pro operations. By 1960 there were only 22 minor leagues, and semi-pro baseball had largely become extinct.

In the early 1950s, many minor league teams were operating independently or semi-independently; they weren't “farm teams” for the majors, but autonomous for-profit business ventures. By 1960 nearly all of the remaining minor league teams were strictly affiliated major league farms.

There were a number of reasons for this dramatic transformation, but probably the most meaningful was the TV boom. With major league baseball (and, of course, many other amusements) freely available on TV, the choice of fans to spend evenings and weekends at local minor league or semi-pro ballgames became a far less easy one to make.

Among the many ways television transformed small town American life in the 1950s was the shift away from communal gatherings at events such as minor league and semi-pro baseball games and the resulting greater primacy of the major leagues as “the show” in baseball.

The Game on the Field

Popular baseball mythology holds that white baseball in the 1940s was staid and slow. Then, the legend goes, Jackie Robinson and the other players of color burst on the scene and shook this all up, re-introducing daring base running, particularly the stolen base.
It’s a great myth. All it lacks is that pesky little element of being factual. Stolen base rates remained low and flat over the decade of the 1950s. More bases were stolen in major league baseball in any season through 1946 than in any season of the 1950s. The most stolen bases in any year in the ’50s occurred in 1951 (when there were still very few black players in the majors), and only three seasons (’50, ’51, and ’59) deviated more than 10 percent above or below the average for the decade. Whatever things black players did for major league baseball, stimulating an immediate revival of the stolen base was not among them.

Yet in nearly every other regard, the style of major league baseball changed utterly in the 1950s, as dramatically as any decade in history other than the 1920s. Consider these facts:

- Home runs per game increased by 32% from 1949 to 1959.
- Triples per game declined by 29%.
- Walks declined by 22%.
- Strikeouts increased by 41%.
- In the entire history of MLB prior to 1950, a batter had a season of hitting less than .250 while hitting 20 or more home runs a total of seven times. In the 1950s this happened 27 times.

In short, the way players and teams approached the task of manufacturing runs, and the acceptable cost/benefit tradeoffs batters assumed in swinging for the fences, were completely transformed in the 1950s.

There are many causes of this revolution, both practical and cultural—we'll be exploring them in the months ahead. The point for today is that the style of play in baseball changed enormously in the 1950s, but not in the way that’s often assumed: the game didn’t become more oriented around base stealing. Instead the 1950s was the decade in which baseball became completely enamored with the home run—a development with obvious reverberations to this day.

Next time someone tosses off that casual dismissal of the ’50s as a plain, dull, boring time, in any regard, baseball chief among them—let’s see, how would Kerouac put it? Get ’em hip.
Life Imitates Art: 
After Henry Wiggen, the Real Pitcher-Diarists

When Mark Harris’s *Bang the Drum Slowly* was published, the idea of a major league baseball player writing a book about the game was fanciful. Few players were sufficiently educated: the many “as told to” articles that turned up regularly in publications like *Baseball Digest* were obviously ghostwritten and the purest fluff. More of an impediment was the unwritten baseball taboo that what happens in the clubhouse stays there. A player writing a book would be treated as, and regarded as, a traitor and spy.

Yet not long after Henry “Author” Wiggen began his fictional literary expose of the real life of ballplayers, a real baseball player, also a pitcher, followed in his footsteps. Like Wiggen, he was a pitcher. Harris got this detail right: with three or more days off between starts, or, for a relief pitcher, long hours every week with nothing to do in the bullpen, pitchers were the logical Boswells of baseball if there were going to be any. **Jim Brosnan** was a relief pitcher, not a star like Henry. That turned out to be a problem.

From 1954 and 1956 through 1963, Brosnan, a right-hander, pitched for the Chicago Cubs, St. Louis Cardinals, Cincinnati Reds, and Chicago White Sox, usually in relief, though he had an occasional start. Brosnan was known as an intellectual—anyone who read books was, in those days, and probably still—and he wore glasses, always rare in baseball and the stereotyped mark of a nerd among athletes.

Jim Brosnan’s first book, like Wiggen’s told in the first person, was about his 1959 season, one which had him being traded from St. Louis to Cincinnati mid-season. It was titled *The Long Season* and presented the world of baseball players, their conversations, and the way they spent their days and nights as it had never been portrayed before. As he certainly expected, the book, which was positively reviewed and sold well, was detested as a breach of loyalty and privacy by some of his fellow players. Others enjoyed it and seeing their names in its pages. Among Brosnan’s harshest critics was catcher-turned author/broadcaster/TV personality Joe Garagiola, whose own best-selling autobiography, *Baseball Is a Funny Game*, was a traditional collection of funny anecdotes. (Years later, Brosnan revealed, Garagiola apologized to him and admitted that he had been wrong.)
Two years later, Brosnan published a sequel, his account of his season as a member of the 1961 Reds as they drove to the National League championship and the World Series, where they lost ignominiously to the New York Yankees in a rout. Brosnan’s writing continued to irk the Reds, and his contract offer was made contingent upon him agreeing not to write any more about the team. He refused, and was traded. Brosnan’s new team released him a year later, though he was still effective, and no other team would hire him. He was, in effect, blackballed from the game.

“I had violated the idolatrous image of big leaguers who had been previously portrayed as models of modesty, loyalty, and sobriety,” Brosnan wrote in a new introduction to the latest edition of *The Long Season*.

After his playing days, Brosnan continued writing and also became a sportscaster for a time. In 2007, when Brosnan was 77 years old, an interviewer quizzed him on his inspiration and experiences as a dugout author. If *The Southpaw* series inspired him, Brosnan didn’t mention it.

Some excerpts:

*I had not been happy with the baseball books that I had read when I was a kid. I had read a lot of the baseball books—they were puff pieces written by sportswriters about one player or another. I thought, “That’s one way to do it, but if I’m going to do it, who was I going to write about?” Well, it came easier to write about me. I wrote about what interested me, what I overheard in the clubhouse. At the start, I wanted to see what it would look like after I had written fifty pages. The editors said, “Keep doing what you’re doing.”*

♦

*Initially, I was told to take out the references to the martinis. Then I got a call from the top editor . . . and he said, “Ignore that last message. Put more martinis in. We just sold the rights to Sports Illustrated.”*

♦

*I didn’t lose any friends. There were a couple guys that I didn’t like and they didn’t like me, and it remained that same way. Joe Adcock [Milwaukee Braves first baseman] hit a home run off me and said,*
“Stick that in your book.” That got around. Frank Thomas [NL outfielder] said to me, “Stick that in your book.” For me, it got to be a pleasurable joke.

I intentionally tried not to offend anybody by making remarks about how they played or what they should have done or how easy it was to get them out. Gino Cimoli was upset because I made a crack about him not getting a good jump on a ball. He told my roommate, Howie Nunn, that if ever saw me at the bar, he’s gonna punch me out instead of buying me a drink. Well, as it turned out, I saw Gino in a bar in Cincinnati where a lot of the players used to hang out. Howie said, “Let’s go talk to Gino.” I said, “He’s gonna punch me in the mouth.” Howie said, “Don’t worry. He punches you, I punch him, we’re all even.” Of course, nothing happened. The thing just blew over.

Brosnan’s fate seemed to discourage potential successors, until eight years after *Pennant Race*, when yet another pitcher published his seasonal diary. It was the biggest success of them all. The writer/pitcher was Jim Bouton, once a star with the New York Yankees, then a fringe relief pitcher with a bad arm, trying to hold on to a job with the lowliest team in the majors, the 1969 expansion Seattle Pilots. (The team only lasted one year in the Great Northwest and became the Milwaukee Brewers in 1970.)

Bouton, unlike Brosnan, wasn’t a trained writer, and his book, called *Ball Four*, seemed like a hedge against his imminent demise as a professional ballplayer. But he dared to take the step Brosnan did not, exposing the raunchy, gritty, sometimes stupid side of baseball, including gross practical jokes, player feuds, drunken revels, and drug use. It made for an entertaining and eye-opening read for baseball fans and non-fans alike. *Ball Four* was a runaway best-seller and made Bouton an instant celebrity.

It also made him a pariah. Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn called *Ball Four* “detrimental to baseball” and tried to force Bouton to sign a statement saying that the book was completely fictional. Many of Bouton’s teammates never forgave him for publicly airing their shenanigans, and the New York Yankees were especially outraged about some of Bouton’s less than reverential revelations about the less than angelic Yankee icon, Mickey Mantle. For many years, Bouton was
excluded from Yankee Old Timer games, though he was finally invited in 1998. Bouton, wearing his familiar number 56, received a standing ovation when he took the mound at Yankee Stadium.

Bouton was released and retired the same year *Ball Four* was published, his playing days apparently over. Five years later, he launched an unlikely comeback attempt in the low minors, which some (including me) believed was a gimmick to provide fodder for another book. It worked: he got back to the majors (briefly) as a relief pitcher, and this time had a real writer make a book out of it. After that, Bouton acted in a TV version of *Ball Four*, authored a few more books, did some sportscasting, and was one of the co-inventors of Big League Chew, a shredded bubblegum designed to resemble chewing tobacco and sold in a tobacco-like pouch. It is still sold today.

Asked about Bouton and *Ball Four*, Jim Brosnan said

> I didn’t like the first page because I thought he made a buffoon out of Joe Schultz, the coach, whom I liked very much when I was with the Cardinals. The language he used coming out of Schultz’s mouth I had never heard. It may be just because I never heard it—and Bouton was around Joe Schultz a lot longer than I was—but I’m afraid that set the tone. I couldn’t say that I really liked the book much.

I wonder what Henry would have thought.

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**Baseball Players, Dying Young**

Baseball, in its 150-year history, has had its share of tragedies. The real instance of a baseball player learning that he was dying during a baseball season perhaps most similar to the fate of *Bang the Drum Slowly*’s doomed catcher, Bruce Pearson, is the most famous such story—the tragic end of Lou Gehrig, a player as different from the dull-witted, mediocre Pearson as one can imagine.
Gehrig was the Hall of Fame slugging partner to Babe Ruth in the famous Yankees “Murderers Row” line-ups of the Twenties, long the holder of the consecutive games played record (eventually surpassed by Cal Ripken) and generally regarded as one of the ten greatest baseball players of all time. Known as “The Iron Horse,” Gehrig had a career batting average of .340, an on-base percentage of .447, and a slugging percentage of .632, with 1,995 runs batted in. A seven-time All-Star and a key player on six World Series championships, Gehrig won the Triple Crown in 1934 and was twice named the American League’s (AL) Most Valuable Player. Gehrig was the first MLB player to have his uniform number retired, and he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1939.

The circumstances of his diagnosis and death were as dramatic as any novel or film.

When the Yankees began their 1939 spring training in St. Petersburg, Florida, it was clear that something was seriously wrong with their star first baseman. At one point he collapsed at Al Lang Field, then the Yankees spring training park. By the end of spring training, Gehrig had not hit a home run and his coordination and speed seemed gone.

By the end of April, Gehrig’s statistics were the worst of his career, with one RBI and a .143 batting average. Yankees manager Joe McCarthy resisted pressure from Yankee management to switch Gehrig to a part-time role. When Gehrig had to struggle to make a routine put-out at first base in one game, pitcher Johnny Murphy said, “Nice play, Lou.” Gehrig’s pride couldn’t take the solicitousness. “When they start feeling sorry for you . . . .” he told McCarthy.

After Gehrig went hitless against the Washington Senators, his record-setting 2,130th consecutive major league game, he approached his manager before a game in Detroit against the Tigers and said, “I’m benching myself, Joe,” telling the Yankees skipper that he was doing so “for the good of the team.” Gehrig himself took the lineup card out to the shocked umpires before the game, ending his “Iron Man” streak. The Briggs Stadium announcer told the fans, “Ladies and gentlemen, this is the first time Lou Gehrig’s name will not appear on the Yankee lineup in 2,130 consecutive games.” The Detroit Tigers fans gave Gehrig a standing ovation while he sat on the bench, weeping.

He never played again.
After six days of extensive testing at the Mayo Clinic that June, Gehrig received a death sentence on June 19, his 36th birthday. The diagnosis was amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The disease, little known then but forever after known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease, meant rapidly increasing paralysis, difficulty in swallowing and speaking, and a life expectancy of less than three years. There would be no impairment of mental functions, meaning that the great athlete would end his life as a prisoner in his own body.

On July 4, 1939, the New York Yankees held Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day at Yankee Stadium. Between games of the doubleheader against the Washington Senators, Gehrig was honored in a famous ceremony reuniting the dying slugger with Babe Ruth and the other members of the 1927 Yankees World Series team. New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia called Gehrig “the greatest prototype of good sportsmanship and citizenship.” Yankees Manager Joe McCarthy, struggling to control his emotions, described Gehrig as “the finest example of a ballplayer, sportsman, and citizen that baseball has ever known.” Turning tearfully to Gehrig, the manager said, “Lou, what else can I say except that it was a sad day in the life of everybody who knew you when you came into my hotel room that day in Detroit and told me you were quitting as a ballplayer because you felt yourself a hindrance to the team. My God, man, you were never that.”

Finally, in a scene movingly re-enacted by Gary Cooper as Gehrig in the movie, Pride of the Yankees, Gehrig addressed the crowd:

*Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about the bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth. I have been in ballparks for seventeen years and have never received anything but kindness and encouragement from you fans. Look at these grand men. Which of you wouldn’t consider it the highlight of his career just to associate with them for even one day? Sure, I’m lucky. Who wouldn’t consider it an honor to have known Jacob Ruppert? Also, the builder of baseball’s greatest empire, Ed Barrow? To have spent six years with that wonderful little fellow, Miller Huggins? Then to have spent the next nine years with that outstanding leader, that smart student of psychology, the best manager in baseball today, Joe McCarthy? Sure, I’m lucky.*
When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift—that’s something. When everybody down to the groundskeepers and those boys in white coats remember you with trophies—that’s something. When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles with her own daughter—that’s something. When you have a father and a mother who work all their lives so that you can have an education and build your body—it’s a blessing. When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you dreamed existed—that’s the finest I know. So I close in saying that I might have been given a bad break, but I’ve got an awful lot to live for.

Thank you.

The crowd stood and applauded for almost two minutes. Gehrig stepped away from the microphone and wiped the tears away from his face with his handkerchief. Babe Ruth came over and hugged him as a band played I Love You Truly and the crowd chanted “We love you, Lou.” The New York Times account the following day called it “one of the most touching scenes ever witnessed on a ball field.”

“Don’t think I am depressed or pessimistic about my condition at present,” Lou Gehrig wrote later. “I intend to hold on as long as possible and then if the inevitable comes, I will accept it philosophically and hope for the best. That’s all we can do.”

He accepted New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia’s appointment to a ten-year term as a Commissioner and was sworn into office on January 2, 1940. About a month before his death, when his deteriorating physical condition made it impossible for him to continue in the job, he quietly resigned.

Lou Gehrig died at his home in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, New York, on June 2, 1941, two years after his retirement from baseball, a few days short of his thirty-eighth birthday.

Lou Gehrig was neither the first nor the last baseball player struck down by illness, misfortune, or malice. Among the other tales of fallen diamond heroes are the victims of plane crashes, mysterious accidents, murder, and dread disease, as well
as one victim of the game itself. These casualties include stars, Hall of Famers, promising young players and burgeoning idols, and one shocking suicide, like Bruce Pearson, a back-up catcher on a World Series–bound team.

Bang the drum slowly and play the pipes lowly, for here they are . . . .

**Nick Adenhart** A young and highly touted starting pitcher, Adenhart made the California Angels 2009 squad in spring training, opening the season as the third starter in the Angels’ rotation. In his season debut on April 8, 2009, he earned a no-decision, giving up seven hits and no runs while striking out five batters and walking three in six innings against the Oakland Athletics at Angel Stadium of Anaheim. Shortly after midnight on April 9, 2009, the Mitsubishi Eclipse Adenhart was riding in was rammed by a red Toyota Sienna minivan that ran a red light. The driver and another passenger in the Mitsubishi were pronounced dead at the scene. Adenhart and a third passenger in the Mitsubishi were taken to the University of California, Irvine Medical Center, where Adenhart died as a result of his injuries. The minivan driver, Andrew Thomas Gallo, fled the scene on foot, but was later arrested. Gallo was indicted by the Orange County grand jury on three counts of murder, and sentenced to fifty-one years to life in jail. Nick Adenhart was twenty-two at the time of his death.

**Cory Lidle** Lidle, then a pitcher for the New York Yankees, and his co-pilot were killed in a plane accident on October 11, 2006, as their Cirrus SR20 plane crashed into the Belaire apartments complex on the upper east side of Manhattan. Lidle was thirty-four. His career spanned ten years and seven teams. He compiled an 82–72 record with a 4.57 ERA and 838 strikeouts.

**Harry Agganis** A young Boston Red Sox first baseman and local college football hero known as “The Golden Greek,” Agganos was twenty-five and hitting .313 in his second Major League season when he died on June 27, 1955, of a massive pulmonary embolism. He was in the hospital, recovering from pneumonia. Agganis, a native of Lynn, Massachusetts, was a football star at Boston University who signed to play baseball with the Red Sox in 1953.

**Lyman Bostock** Bostock, a twenty-seven-year-old outfielder for the Angels, was finishing his fourth season when he was fatally shot in the face while riding in the back seat of a friend’s car. It was later ruled a case of mistaken identity. He died on September 23, 1978, in Gary, Indiana. Bostock, considered a developing
superstar with speed, power, and the ability to hit for average, batted .323 and .336 for the Twins in 1976 and 1977. He was batting .296 when he was murdered.

**Darryl Kile**  
On the morning of June 22, 2002, Cardinals pitcher Darryl Kile was found dead in his Chicago hotel room at the age of thirty-three. Known as a fierce competitor who never missed a start in the Major Leagues, Kile died of coronary atherosclerosis, what the autopsy referred to as “a narrowing of the arteries supplying the heart muscle.”

**Willard Hershberger**  
Hershberger was a second-string catcher for the Cincinnati Reds from 1938 to 1940. In 160 career games, Hershberger recorded a batting average of .316 and accumulated five triples and forty-one runs. Hershberger spent the 1940 Cincinnati Reds season as the backup to Hall of Fame catcher and two-time batting champion Ernie Lombardi. In July, Lombardi suffered an injured finger, and Hershberger’s playing time increased; on July 26, the ungainly Lombardi sprained his ankle, putting Hershberger in the line-up for the long term. In a game against the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds on July 31, the Reds blew a 4–1 late-game lead and lost 5–4. Three days later, the Reds lost both games of a doubleheader to the Boston Bees (later the Braves) 10–3 and 4–3. Hershberger failed to hit in any of the games, and he blamed himself for the losses, telling third baseman Billy Werber that “if Ernie had been catching, we wouldn’t have lost those ball games.” In the second game against the Bees, Hershberger also failed to field a bunt cleanly and was unusually hard on himself afterwards, openly discussing suicide. He told his manager, Bill McKechnie, “My father killed himself, and I’m gonna do it, too.” Later, Hershberger seemed to have regained his composure, and McKechnie put the incident, and his catcher’s words, out of his mind.

The following afternoon, Reds publicist and traveling secretary Gabe Paul called Hershberger’s room at the Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston after Hershberger missed batting practice. He said that he wasn’t going to play that afternoon because he wasn’t feeling well. McKechnie, now worried, wanted the catcher at the game in street clothes, and Hershberger agreed. After the catcher was a no-show for the first game of the day’s doubleheader against the Bees, McKechnie asked a friend of Hershberger’s, to go to the team hotel to check up on him. The friend found Hershberger’s body in the bathtub with his throat cut. He was thirty years old.
After the second game, McKechnie gathered the players together in the locker room, stating, “I want to tell you something. Willard Hershberger has just destroyed himself.” McKechnie had the Reds dedicate themselves to winning the World Series “for Hersheir”. His number was retired for the season by the team as a tribute.

The Cincinnati Reds would go on to defeat the American League champion Detroit Tigers in seven games to win the 1940 World Series. Reds players decided to share a portion of their championship money, totaling $5,803, with Hershberger’s mother. Hershberger was buried at Visalia Public Cemetery in Visalia, California.

**Don Wilson**  The twenty-nine-year-old Astros right-hander had a career record of 104–92 and had pitched two no-hitters when he was found dead in a car in his garage, reportedly of carbon monoxide poisoning, on January 5, 1975. His five-year-old son, who was in an upstairs bedroom at Wilson’s home in Houston, also died. Wilson’s best seasons were from 1969 to 1972, when he went 16–12, 11–6, 16–10, and 15–10. He was an NL All-Star in 1971 and threw no-hitters against the Braves in 1967 and the Reds in 1969.

**Ray Chapman**  Chapman, the Indians’ shortstop, is the only player to die from an injury sustained in a Major League game. He died August 17, 1920, of complications from a skull fracture as the result of being hit by a pitch thrown by the Yankees’ Carl Mays. Chapman played nine seasons for Cleveland, and was batting .303—his career-high for a full season—at the time of his death. He was twenty-nine. His death helped lead to the banning of the spitball, which was notoriously difficult to control. Mays had thrown a spitball as the fatal pitch.

**Roberto Clemente**  The twelve-time All-Star outfielder got his 3,000th career hit in his final regular-season at-bat in 1972. He was killed December 31 of that year when a plane he chartered to carry relief supplies to earthquake-stricken Nicaragua crashed shortly after takeoff in the water surrounding his native Puerto Rico. Clemente, thirty-eight, played eighteen seasons for the Pirates, had a career batting average of .317, and was the NL MVP in 1966 when he had a career-high 29 home runs and 119 RBIs. He was the MVP of the 1971 World Series, batting .414 in the Pirates’ seven-game victory over Baltimore. Considered one of the best outfielders in baseball history, Clemente won twelve Gold Gloves. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in a special election in 1973.
Mike Darr  A Padres outfielder, the twenty-five-year-old Darr was killed in an automobile accident on February 15, 2002, in Arizona. Darr had played his first full season in the Majors in 2001, batting .277 in 105 games.

Ed Delahanty  Big Ed Delahanty was a Hall of Fame outfielder and first baseman who played for Philadelphia of the NL and Washington of the AL from 1888 to 1903. He played parts of sixteen seasons and batted .346 with 101 home runs—a high home run total in that era. He was thirty-five years old and batting .333 for Washington when he was found dead in Niagara Falls, New York, on July 9, 1903, after apparently falling off the International Bridge joining the U.S. and Canada. The circumstances surrounding his death remain a mystery. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1945.

Danny Frisella  A right-handed reliever, the thirty-year-old Frisella pitched in parts of ten seasons for the Mets, Braves, Padres, Cardinals, and Brewers. He was killed January 1, 1977, in a dune-buggy accident near Phoenix, Arizona. He is remembered mostly for his days with the Mets and for teaming with Tug McGraw to give New York a potent lefty-righty bullpen duo in the early ’70s. Frisella saved a career-high twelve games in 1971 and appeared in 351 games in his Major League career.

Ken Hubbs  Hubbs, a twenty-two-year-old Cubs second baseman, was killed in a light plane crash on a frozen lake near Provo, Utah, on February 15, 1964. He was the NL Rookie of the Year in 1962, receiving nineteen of a possible twenty votes, after batting .260 with five home runs and forty-nine RBIs. Hubbs also won a Gold Glove that season. His average dipped to .235 in 1963, but he drove in forty-seven runs and was expected to be the Cubs’ starting second baseman for a decade.

Addie Joss  Joss, a 6-foot-3 right-hander, was preparing for his 10th Major League season with Cleveland, after missing most of the previous season with an elbow injury, when he died suddenly of tubercular meningitis on April 14, 1911, two days after his thirty-first birthday. He had a career record of 190–67 and a 1.89 ERA, twice leading the AL in ERA. He was elected to the Hall of Fame by the Veterans’ Committee in 1978.
Mike Miley  Miley was a twenty-three-year-old shortstop for the Angels when he was killed in an automobile accident on January 6, 1977. He was California’s Number One draft pick in 1974 and played in seventy games in 1975 and fourteen in 1976. Miley quarterbacked the Louisiana State football team into the Orange Bowl as a junior in 1974 but left school to sign with the Angels later that year.

Bob Moose  The Pirates’ right-hander, primarily a starter 1968–1973 but by then a reliever, died in an automobile accident on October 9, 1976, his twenty-ninth birthday. Moose’s best season was 1969, when he went 14–3 and pitched a no-hitter against the Mets, and his career record was 76–71 with a 3.50 ERA in 289 games. He pitched in three games in the 1971 World Series.

Ed Morris  Morris, a thirty-two-year-old pitcher for the Red Sox whose best seasons were in 1928 and 1929, when he won a combined 33 games, died from stab wounds to the chest, the result of a fight during a fish fry given in his honor the night before he was to leave for Boston’s Spring Training camp in 1932.

Thurman Munson  The Yankee captain, a seven-time All-Star, was killed August 2, 1979, when the plane he was piloting crashed during a practice landing in Canton, Ohio. The thirty-two-year-old catcher was the AL Most Valuable Player in 1976 and its Rookie of the Year in 1970. He drove in 100 or more runs in three consecutive seasons, 1975–1977, and hit .292 in a career that spanned eleven seasons. He batted .373 in six postseason series. He was the last Major League player before Kile to die during a season.

Steve Olin and Tim Crews  Olin, twenty-seven, and Crews, thirty-one, pitchers for the Indians, were killed in a boating accident near Winter Haven, Florida, during Spring Training in 1993. Another teammate, pitcher Bob Ojeda, was injured but survived the nighttime accident, which occurred when their boat collided with a dock. Olin had become the Indians’ closer in 1991, saving seventeen games that season and twenty-nine in 1992. Crews was a middle reliever who had spent the six previous years with the Dodgers.

Chico Ruiz  Ruiz, thirty-three, was a utility infielder for eight seasons for the Reds and Angels. He was with California when he was killed in an automobile accident in San Diego on February 9, 1972. He was a .240 career hitter in 565 Major League games.
**Dernell Stenson**  A young outfield prospect for the Reds, Stenson was the unfortunate victim of what authorities believed was a botched car jacking. Stenson was killed in Chandler, Arizona, while participating in the Arizona Fall League and trying to impress the Reds front office. The AFL subsequently established the Darnell Stenson Sportmanship Award to recognize young AFL players’ accomplishments on and off the field. Stenson was twenty-five.

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**Bruce’s Pearson’s Disease—Hodgkin Lymphoma**

Hodgkin lymphoma—also known as Hodgkin’s lymphoma and Hodgkin’s disease— is a type of lymphoma, a cancer originating from white blood cells, called lymphocytes. It was named after Thomas Hodgkin, who first described abnormalities in the lymph system in 1832. Prior to the development of effective treatments, mostly chemotherapy, it was considered incurable and almost always fatal.

Hodgkin lymphoma is characterized by the orderly spread of disease from one lymph node group to another and by the development of systemic symptoms with advanced disease. Among the symptoms, several of which Bruce Pearson experiences in the novel, the movie, and the stage version of *Bang the Drum Slowly*, are:

- Painless swelling of lymph nodes in the neck, armpits, or groin
- Persistent fatigue
- Fever and chills
- Night sweats
- Unexplained weight loss, as much as 10 percent or more of body weight
- Coughing, trouble breathing, or chest pain
- Loss of appetite
- Itching
- Increased sensitivity to the effects of alcohol or pain in the lymph nodes after drinking alcohol
Today, Hodgkin lymphoma may be treated with radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or hematopoietic stem cell transplantation, with the choice of treatment depending on the age and sex of the patient, and the stage, bulk, and histological subtype of the disease. The disease occurs in two statistical peaks, the first in young adulthood (ages fifteen to thirty-five) and the second in those over fifty-five years old. Bruce would have been in the first group.

Although five-year survival rates for this cancer are now excellent, ranging from 90 percent (if detected early) to 60 percent (if treated in later stages, the first effective treatment for Hodgkin’s lymphoma wasn’t developed until the 1960s, by a National Cancer Institute team that included Vincent DeVita, Jr. It was called MOPP, an acronym formed by the four drugs it involved: mustargen, oncovin (also known as vincristine), prednisone, and procarbazine (also known as matulane). That treatment was usually administered in four-week cycles, often for six cycles. MSD and VCR were administered intravenously, while procarbazine and prednisone were taken orally as pills. MOPP was the first combination chemotherapy that achieved a good success rate. Bruce Pearson would not have had access to MOPP, which itself has been superseded by better drugs.

The overall Hodgkin five-year relative survival rate for 2001–2007 was 83.9 percent.

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The Great Baseball Books

— Jack Marshall

Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball.

Thus said Jacques Barzun, the eminent French-born sociologist, historian, and critic. Barzun moved to the United States at age thirteen and stayed until his death at age 104. He later became disillusioned with the game, but he was right the first time around. Another writer, New Yorker essayist Roger Angell, continued to find greater significance in baseball than just wins and losses, particularly in its power to make us care deeply about the symbolic and trivial. My personal favorite
passage from his copious writings on baseball, from the essay “Agincourt and After” (1976) by Roger Angell in his book, *Five Seasons*:

> It is foolish and childish, on the face of it, to affiliate ourselves with anything so insignificant and patently contrived and commercially exploitive as a professional sports team, and the amused superiority and icy scorn that the non-fan directs at the sports nut (I know this look—I know it by heart) is understandable and almost unanswerable. Almost. What is left out of this calculation, it seems to me, is the business of caring—caring deeply and passionately, really caring—which is a capacity or an emotion that has almost gone out of our lives. And so it seems possible that we have come to a time when it no longer matters so much what the caring is about, how frail or foolish is the object of that concern, as long as the feeling itself can be saved. Naiveté—the infantile and ignoble joy that sends a grown man or woman to dancing and shouting with joy in the middle of the night over the haphazardous flight of a distant ball—seems a small price to pay for such a gift.

Baseball has inspired the very best of sports literature, and *Bang the Drum Slowly*, based on one of the best of the best, is evidence. There is a lot more.

Here is my list of fourteen great baseball books, in no particular order.

**The Summer Game** by Roger Angell (1972)

The *New Yorker* baseball bard’s essays from the 1960s gave birth to modern baseball writing. He is simply the greatest baseball writer who ever lived: any of his books could be on this list.

**The Natural** by Bernard Malamud (1952)

Baseball as allegory, never done better. Warning: the novel does not end like the movie.

**Bang the Drum Slowly** by Mark Harris (1953)

The entire four-part story of Henry Wiggen, *The Southpaw*, is wonderful and essential reading, but this is its beating heart.

**October 1964** by David Halberstam (1994)

A great journalist in top form, writing about vivid characters playing baseball on a big stage.
You Know Me Al by Ring Lardner (1914)
Lardner invented the colloquial baseball novel. Virginia Wolfe called its letter-writing hero, the plainspoken bush-leaguer Jack Keefe, a character through whom “we gaze into the depths of society.” The first great baseball book.

The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract by Bill James (1985; revised 1988)
James is man with a brilliant and demanding mind, who for some reason limits that mind to pondering the mysteries of baseball. He’s a lively writer and iconoclast, and he has changed baseball with logic, math, and reasoning as much as babe Ruth did with his bat.

Triumph and Tragedy in Mudville by Steven Jay Gould (2004)
The author of The Structure of Evolutionary Theory applies his great intellect, humor, and powers of observation and analysis to the game he loves . . . a tour de force.

Waugh, the accountant protagonist of this strange and engrossing novel, invents a table-top baseball game like the old Strat-o-Matic, and becomes the god of his own baseball universe.

The Boys of Summer by Roger Kahn (1972)
The story of the old Brooklyn Dodgers—Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Duke Snider, and the rest, from their prime to their fall. The title comes from Dylan Thomas: “I see the boys of summer in their ruin lay the gold tithings barren.”

“If you build it, he will come,” whispers the corn field, and an Iowa farmer listens, meets Shoeless Joe Jackson and other baseball ghosts, and comes to terms with his life. Yes, this book became Field of Dreams.

The Great American Novel by Philip Roth (1973)
A sharp satire, a funhouse mirror view of baseball history, a tragedy, a comedy, and an epic: my favorite baseball novel of all time.
**The Long Season** by Jim Brosnan (1962)

Described elsewhere in this *Audience Guide*: the best of the baseball player journals, by Henry Wiggen’s real life counterpart.

**The Glory of Their Times** by Lawrence Ritter (1966)

Interviews with old ballplayers from the 1920s and earlier. Wonderful stories, wonderful memories.

**The Art of Fielding** by Chad Harbach (2011)

An existential crisis strikes Henry Skrimshander, the brilliant shortstop of the Division III Westish College Harpooners, who one day finds himself, suddenly and without reason or cause, unable to scoop up a routine grounder. Harbach proves that the old game still inspires great novels.
Tonight's ticket holders are cordially invited!

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Oh Dad, Poor Dad,
Mamma's Hung You in the Closet
and I’m Feelin’ So Sad
by Arthur Kopit (1962)

Judgment at Nuremberg
by Abby Mann (2002)

The Great American Century Songbook
by Jack Marshall and Tom Fuller

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