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By Frank Hyde
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VETERAN LOCAL SPORTSOFFICIAL HAS LOTS OF TALES TO TELL

Lou Brown speaking:

"Years ago Vince Joy and I were officiating a football game between Smethport and Port Allegany, a real red hot rivalry. As I recall, it was a very close game. A Smethport kid finally skirted right end, raced down the sidelines for a ways, then broke to his left and went all the way.

"I followed down behind the play but before I signaled touchdown, I looked back at Vince. He was shaking his head and pointing down toward the sideline marks. The kid had stepped out of bounds as he turned the corner.

"Well, we were walking off the field after the game when a woman came out of the stands and hailed us. She approached rapidly with her right hand outstretched as if to shake hands. She was carrying an umbrella in her left. I reached out and took her right hand. I guess I should have taken both of her hands because she swung that umbrella with her left and belted me over the head.

"'You lousy so and so', she yelled. 'That was my son who scored that touchdown!' I had a gash in my head and it was bleeding but someone patched me up in the dressing room. Someone else asked me if I wanted to press charges. I said, 'No, with her personality, she has enough trouble.'

Louis Richard Brown, a big, balding, good-natured man, has been an institution in western New York sports for a half century. He played basketball, football and baseball in high school, college and independent games and officiated in all three for more than 35 years.

Lou loves to talk about the old days and gets a chuckle out of many anecdotes even when the joke (which may not have been a joke at the time) was on Lou Brown.

For instance, July 4, 1929, at the airport dedication field day in Angola, Forestville was playing Angola in a baseball game with Brown catching for Forestville. The teams were members of the Buffalo News League. Chan Wolfe, now living in South Dayton, an outstanding pitcher, was on the mound for Forestville. Wolfe fanned the first two batters in one of the late innings with Forestville hanging onto a slender lead. Then he put a third strike down the middle on the third man but the ball went through Brown and the batter was safe

on first. He then fanned the fourth man. Forestville finally won and Pius Swert, former catcher for the New York Yankees, who was managing Angola, yelled across at the Forestville bench: "How can we win when you have a man who can strike out four men in one inning?" That strikeout feat, believe it or not, appeared in Ripley's Believe It Or Not, the nationally syndicated cartoon panel.

Brown played in two National Semi-Pro Baseball Tournaments at Wichita, Kansas. He caught for Manager Joe Nagle's Hope's Window's team that won the state championship and earned a ticket to the nationals.

Lou and several other members of the Hope's team shifted to the Steel Partition Bombers to play from 1945 through 1949. That club, also managed by Nagle, won the state title and went on to Wichita. Ralph Millard was business manager and the team was sponsored by Reuben Johnson.

One of the state tournaments was played in Jamestown and Louis Collins served as state commissioner of semi-pro baseball. He made the trip to Kansas. The two New York entries were defeated in the early going.

In later years, in addition to continuing as a sports official, Brown turned to managing Little League and also aided in the organizing the city's first Babe Ruth circuit. He skippered the Elks Little League team during the first season of play at Baker Street Field, where he was assisted by Chris Farrell. The next four years he managed the Optimist entry at Fluvanna Field, aided by Lyle Parkhurst, Elly Norton, and Otto Winburg. Brown also aided Bob Stuart, Bert Lesser and John Linder when the Babe Ruth League was formed to provide action for the Little League graduates.

Brown played football and baseball at South Dayton High School, now Pine Valley Central, and took post-graduate work at Gowanda Central School.

He attended the University of Michigan, where he played both football and baseball. A broken right knee put him in the hospital for 21 days and doctors advised him to forget football.

Brown's early experience as an official was in boys' and girls' basketball at \$5 per game. "All of us Browns had to hustle for our money," he explained. "I came from a family of eight kids."

Lou was born and grew to manhood at South Dayton. His father, Chauncey, had a varied career as a postmaster, manager of a Quality Markets store and assistant superintendent of a milk plant. He took a fling at railroading as a telegrapher on the Erie and was also an accomplished musician.

Brown is married to the former Ruth Morley of Sinclairville and they have three boys. Rick coaches basketball at Southwestern Central School and is in

charge of the middle school's athletic program. William has just completed 11 years in the U.S. Air Force stationed in Germany. Don is on the faculty at Greece Central School near Rochester. He also operates the baseball program for the city of Rochester in the summer and plays on a pro softball team. Bill, the smallest of the three boys, was Vince Joy's team manager when Joy coached the Jamestown High cagers.

Piney Johnson was president of the local chapter of the National Association of Approved Basketball Officials, now the International Association (IAABO) Board 39 when Lou became a member. Norm Becker was vice-president and Doc Demarest was secretary-treasurer. Brown later became secretary, a post he held for 16 years. He served in the same capacity for the Chautauqua County Football Officials Association also for 16 years. He was president of both organizations at one time or another.

Lou never forgot the first basketball game he officiated. It was between Jamestown and South Dayton Independents and it was really rough out there, as often happens when town teams tangle. Lou began to wonder about the wisdom of his decision when the regular official did not show up.

"But Ralph Patchen was playing for Jamestown," he explains, "and when things got pretty sticky he'd come by, slap me on the back and say 'hang in there, you're doing fine.' That sure helped."

Some of the old Lake Shore League battles between Jamestown and Gowanda, the former coached by Rolland Taft and the latter by Howard Hillis, are still fresh in Brown's memory for he officiated several of them.

"Usually after one of their games," he relates, "the officials and coaches would meet at Hillis' home and Mrs. Hillis would serve rolls and coffee. Those were great post-game sessions."

One time, Lou recalls, Taft and Hillis got to debating defense. They wound up down on the living room rug drawing out play charts with chalk. Taft was needling Hillis with "you never did figure out my defense." Hillis popped right back, "How could we? Your kids never knew where they were supposed to be."

Brown once worked a game between Gowanda and Olean. Gowanda had not lost at Olean for a long time but this night the Panthers were edged. After the game one of Hillis' players came into the dressing room and remarked: "Coach, there's not hot water in the showers." Hillis digested that then shot back: "That's Olean for you. They beat you, then freeze you to death with cold showers."

Games years ago on the third floor of the old hotel in South Dayton used to provide some amusing highlights. Once Cloise Swearingen, Lakewood High School football coach and later principal at Southwestern, was blocked out on a

play in a game between South Dayton and Lakewood Indies and hit the stairway on the run. Unable to check his momentum he reached the second floor and crashed through a door and into one of the rooms.

Lou Brown has some advice for young officials: "Know your mechanics, learn the rules so when you go out on the floor you can leave your rulebook in your suitcase. Above all use common sense. Remember, you are working these games for the kids. I have found you will always get better results during a dispute with a smile than with all the authority in the world."

Brown, retired as an official after 35 years, has not been idle, either now or when he was officiating. He operated a feed store in Ashville for 10 years and worked for Laco Roofing for 25 years. The company, he points out, was started by Leon Carlson, who once pitched for the Washington Senators.

No report would be complete without a final note on Howard Hillis, also now retired. He is still a colorful character and was a fine coach. Brown relates: "One time Howard fouled out of one of those independent games. He was walking down the sidelines heading for the locker room when a loose ball skirmish broke out near the Gowanda goal. Howard, a quick thinker, yelled 'Here!' Someone passed the ball to him and without breaking stride let loose a shot that went through the basket. No one noticed what had happened and the points went into the scorebook."