
Honoring and Preserving the Sports History of Chautauqua County



Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

May 2017

Home Plate Wedding



CSHOF inductee **Walt Brown** (1915-1991), a Bemus Point native, achieved one of his dreams on May 16, 1947 when he made his major league debut as a pitcher for the St. Louis Browns. Another of Walt's dreams was realized eight years earlier while he was playing for the Kilgore Boomers of the East Texas League. On June 23, 1939, Walt married Frances Ruth Burroughs at home plate in Kilgore, TX.

Another home plate wedding occurred at Municipal Stadium (now Russell E. Diethrick Jr. Park) in Jamestown on July 10, 1945. That exchange of marriage vows created quite a stir in the pages of the *Jamestown Post-Journal*. Thanks to CSHOF inductee **Greg Peterson** for the clippings and photos.

Cowbells Ring as Ump Takes Bride at Plate

***History Made at Municipal Stadium
When Arbiter Passes Through Arch of Bats***

By Roberta Johnson

History was made last night at Jamestown's Municipal Stadium when, for the first time in the annals of baseball, an umpire was married at home plate, while a throng of nearly 3,000 enthusiastic spectators, departing far from the customary wedding decorum, jangled cowbells, applauded, cheered and whistled from the grandstand and bleachers.



Leading roles in the diamond drama were taken by PONY League Umpire Charles Ross Badger and Miss Lucy Fanny Hubbard, his girl from "back home" in Gastonia, N.C.

As the "guests" assembled, a program of wedding music was played via the public address system. The recorded selections included the traditional "Because," by D'Hardelot; "Yours in my Heart Alone," by Lehar sung by Richard Crooks; "Two Hearts," by Stolz; "For You Alone," by Geehl; "The Rosary," by Nevin; "Mighty Lak a Rose," by Nevin; "I Love You Truly," by Bond; "Just a Wearyin' For You," by Bond; and "Love's Old Sweet Song," by Malloy.

LEFT: Ross Badger in blue.

Preceding the appearance of the bridal party, the Jamestown Falcons and the Batavia Clippers marched slowly from their dugouts in single file, bats over their shoulders, and, falling into two lines, formed a path down which the bridal party later walked to home plate, where the minister, Rev. John A. Galbraith, awaited.

Spectators burst into laughter at the "we mean business" expressions worn by members of the two teams and one fan shouted, "They look cute – are they going to be bridesmaids or are they going to slug each other?" Others, their eyes on the bats, mulled over the fate of the "poor umpire," soon to be at the mercy of those "clubs" and the men behind them.

Wedding Music Played

As the first strains of Wagner's "Wedding March" mingled startlingly with the jangle of cowbells, the bridal procession made its entrance from the first base side of the stands. Leading the procession, which marched to first base then across the pitcher's mound and down the aisle made by the ball players and their bats to home plate, was batboy Bill Thompson, attired in his baseball togs, and carrying the wedding ring high on a pillow.

Following the ring bearer was the wife of the Jamestown manager, Mrs. Jim Levey of Dallas, Tex., matron of honor, stunningly gowned in a street-length grey and white sheer print, fashioned with a white pleated organdy ruff at the neckline and edging the bracelet-length sleeves. Her accessories, which included a perky white straw hat with a wisp of black veiling, were white and her shoulder corsage was of pink roses and white carnation tufts.



The bride came next, on the arm of PONY League Umpire Dick Wilber of Friendship, who gave her in marriage. She wore a lovely floor-length frock of Windsor Rose crepe Romaine, made on long, graceful lines with a double peplum, a narrow belt of self-material, V neckline, and short sleeves. Her braided halo, which matched her gown, was topped with a shoulder length veil, also of Windsor Rose, and her long gloves were of white silk. Her only jewelry was a large brooch worn at the neckline of her gown. She carried a white handkerchief, edged with a wide band of tulle, and an all-white Colonial bouquet of roses, baby's breath and sweet peas.

Following the bride and Umpire Wilbur was Jim Levey, Falcons manager, whom served as best man, and bringing up the rear of the procession was the bridegroom.

The wedding ceremony, unrehearsed, went off with only the customary "hitch," the minister instructing the participants in their responses as the occasion demanded.

Almost Forgot Kiss

Following the ceremony, the couple turned to retrace their steps down the aisle formed by the Falcons and the Clippers, and somewhat tardily, Umpire Badger turned to kiss his bride. She, apparently caught unawares, had no time to lift her veil for the kiss.

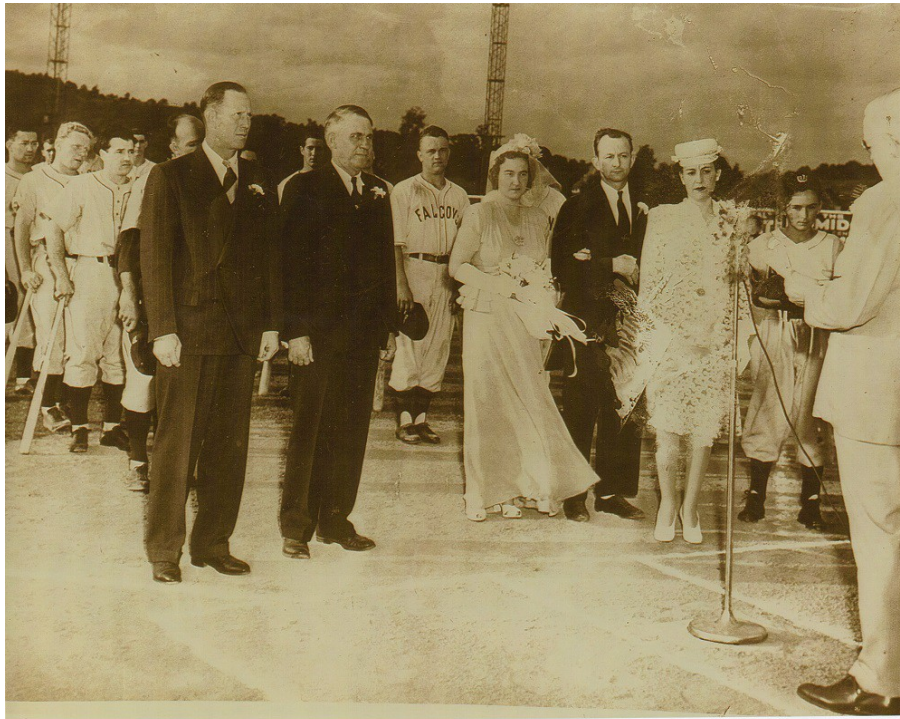
The bridal party again marched beneath an archway of bats as the loudspeaker blared forth Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." Arriving at the grandstand, Umpire Badger and his bride were showered with rice by the baseball fans. At the grandstand, the bride was ushered to one of the boxes, while the groom was hurried off the field to don his umpire's uniform.

"Umpire? Of course I'm going to umpire! I never sat and watched a baseball game in my life," he replied when spectators asked him if he really meant to take a part in the game.

In the interval between the wedding ceremony and the ball game, buckets were passed through the audience to take up a wedding collection for the couple. First count of the "take" showed \$166.46, \$50 of which was given by the Jamestown Baseball Club, while each of the Batavia Clippers had chipped in a dollar. Also in the collection were found five pennies sawed in half, one white button, a safety pin, six red meat points, one peppermint lifesaver and two bus tokens.

The bride, who declared the unusual contributions "real cute," said she and Badger were "goin' off on a honeymoon" with the money collected.

A bouquet of Talisman roses was presented to the bride by the Batavia Ball Club, of which C.J. Vanderpoest is president. That the umpires got their hands on the roses before the bride did was evident when they appeared on the field with the team managers wearing the roses as boutonnieres.



Bridegroom Umpire

A counting of noses showed that there were four umpires instead of the usual two, and there were those who said it was "just as well" since the bridegroom, umpiring at third base, had his eyes glued on a certain box in the grandstand instead of on the game a good share of the evening.

At the same time, a girl dressed in Winter Rose, who happened to be sitting in that particular box, consistently kept her gaze focused on a blue-clad figure at third base, seemingly oblivious of the baseball game in session.

"Ah know he sees me," she said. "Somehow he always kin fahnd me in the stand."

When, as the Falcons came to bat in the eighth inning, Umpire Badger walked to the box in the grandstand and escorted his bride from the stadium, the couple was followed by shouts of "You'll be saw-ry!"

Probably the most nervous person participating in the wedding ceremony was Rev. John A. Galbraith, who officiated.

"I've been 38 years in the ministry and I've performed marriage ceremonies in farmhouses, churches, chapels and parsonages, but this is the first time I ever performed one at a baseball game," he declared, wiping his brow.

The bride, outwardly calm, had been suffering from a case of "cold feet" for days, she said. The day preceding her wedding, she was to have been the guest of honor at a bridal luncheon, given by Harry Bisgeier, owner of the Falcons, not only for the bride but also for the women's committee, headed by Mrs. Thor Carlson, who saw to it that the bride was properly attired for the occasion.

As the hour for the bridal luncheon came and went and Mr. Bisgeier and the women's committee waited somewhat impatiently for the bride-elect to put in an appearance, someone suggested calling Lucy at her hotel to find out how soon she would be there. Lucy, it turned out, had no intentions of getting there – ever.

"Ah'm just not hongry," she explained. So the luncheon proceeded without its honored guest.

Bride Was Nervous

Lucy said she became so nervous yesterday morning that she decided not to go through with the wedding but Ross and his sister, Mrs. Katie Hicks of Gastonia, N.C. reminded her that she was "too far from home now to back out."

Despite her claim that she was nervous, she stood calm and silent while the women's committee helped her dress for the wedding. The committee was determined that, true to tradition, the bride should have "something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue."

Her white sandals were not new for the occasion so they served as "something old." As for "something new," there was no worry there, since most of her costume was new. For the "something borrowed," a member of the committee gave her a four-leaf clover charm to carry. The "something blue" presented a problem until one of the committee members found a blue sales receipt in her handbag and this was immediately concealed in the bride's costume.



The bridegroom was the least nervous of the principals in the wedding party.

"Take moah than this to make me nuhvuss," he observed. Informed before the ceremony that his bride-to-be was nervous, he registered surprise.

LEFT: Ross and Lucy in later years.

"She is?" he asked. "Ah don't see why. Ah took her fo' a ride in a airplane once and we did loop the loops and barrel rolls. She didn't say a wohd but when we got out of that plane she told me she wouldn't be ascairt to do anythin' with me.'

Explaining his vow to be married on homeplate, he said, "If Ah live to see this through Ah'll have accomplished what Ah set out to do. Ah'm the first umpire to be married at home plate since baseball began moah 'n a hundred years ago."

At noon today, Umpire Badger telephoned Bob Stedler, president of the PONY League, for permission to take the rest of the week off. They left this afternoon by bus for Niagara Falls, "chaperoned" by Mrs. Hicks.

While the selection of Niagara Falls as the honeymoon destination was not all that unusual, the fact that the bridegroom's sister is accompanying them is regarded as slightly extraordinary.

Contributing to the frivolity of the unusual wedding of Mr. Badger and Miss Hubbard was CSHOF inductee Frank Hyde, sports editor of the Post-Journal, who took on the persona of home plate to give its perspective of the joyous occasion.

Umpire Wedding Moves Our Home Plate to Speak Its Piece

Charles Ross Badger and Miss Lucy Hubbard, both of Gastonia, N.C., will be united in marriage on home plate at Municipal Stadium tonight at 7 o'clock. The marriage, the first of its kind to ever be conducted in the organized game with an umpire as the bridegroom, has attracted the attention of the entire baseball world. However, during the preparation and planning hub-bub one important character has been forgotten – the home plate. Following is a bylined story by that very important part of not only the wedding, but of our national pastime as a whole.

By HOME PLATE



I am the home plate at Municipal Stadium, that splotch of white rubber out in front of the grandstand, alone and unnoticed but the focal point for some of the game's greatest turmoils.

Every score starts and ends with me and sometimes there's an uproar at the beginning and another at the end.

I am a descendent of a long line of honorable constituents of our national pastime.

More joy and sorrow as well as historic and momentous rhu-barbs have taken place on top of my flat tummy than any other spot on the diamond.

I have served faithfully for 106 years, despite the fact I was literally born with "two strikes" on me when I came into this world with corners.

Probably the greatest bane of my existence is my corners. Maybe it was old Abner Doubleday who got the idea of shaping me that way but whoever it was bad cess (luck) to him.

Just think of the stuff I've had to listen to on account of those danged corners. Somewhere in the air above my corners there is an imaginary channel about one-sixteenth of an inch wide. Pitchers like to put the ball there, batters like to sneer at it and the lug in blue has to guess at it.

What has followed some of those guesses in the way of rhu-barb, if you gathered it through the years, would have made a festoon that would go entirely around the world 480 times.

I've heard decent men with wives and families use language that would bar them from even the Satanic regions. I've heard family histories attacked in a way to make you think this isn't a fit country to live in, not to mention pointed references to people's personal habits.

Little blokes like Jim Levey (Jamestown manager) have scratched dirt in my face. Middle sized blokes like Jack Tighe (Batavia manager) have spat on me. Big blokes like Art Dobberstein (Jamestown catcher) have jumped up and down on me and screamed, "No, No, it was wide. Then there's those strong, silent blokes like Bob Crow (Wellsville player) who stand behind me and hiss with adder-like intensity in the ear of the geezer in blue who is forever bringing me countless trials and tribulations.

As if all that isn't bad enough, the pitcher, if he loses a decision usually vents his spleen on me by hurling the ball in my face to see how high it will bounce. Then there are the batters. They usually swat me across the puss resoundingly several times while glaring and waving their clubs menacingly at the pitcher as he prepares to deliver.



And last but not least, there are the slides. I get mad every time I think of them. On a close one a player will pull his feet out from under him and go scooting across my face on his fanny. Which is usually followed by more jumping up and down on my frontal fort with spiked shoes, either by the catcher or the guy who wiped my nose with the seat of his pants, depending on whether the bloke in blue flattened his hands, palms downward, or hooked his thumb as if he were trying to catch a ride back to Gastonia, N.C., which is where one of those fellows is from who has been causing me a lot of trouble and is going to cause me a lot more.

LEFT: Frank Hyde at Municipal Stadium

Players great and humble have raced across me and history has been made as millions cheered. Now they say I am about to make history again in a new and unusual way. An umpire, yeah, the one from Gastonia, N.C., we just mentioned, is going to add insult to injury by planting both feet on my phiz tonight and standing there while he gets tangled up in a decision that even the gabby Gastonia gent won't be able to talk himself out of.

If I could pull up stakes and move I'd do it, but I can't so I can only give him the traditional hope that all his troubles will be little ones.