Harding, Baseball Fan

By RICHARD BARRY

I love the blind partnership of the baseball crew. I adore the clean, unassuming, unsuspecting, and insupportable baseball fan. Nothing stimulates me more than the enthusiasm of the blunderbuss, the nonpartisan, the nonprofessional, the team is winning, said the Republican President-elect as he re- correlated for a moment, the sentiments of the little house on Mount Vernon Avenue.

His last visitor had been most enterprising. He had brought him the news that a team from the National and a team from the American League were going to play a little trip to Marion for the express purpose of playing a major league ball game for Senator Harding. He had so frequently murmured over the fact that his con- tinuence to Marion this summer would deny his customary en- vironment of baseball; that two of the major league owners had arranged this surprise for him. The mountain town was to be an ad hoc park. It was planned to have no entrance fee for the day and the game would be a day of celebration. It was a splendid opportunity for a softball baseball game on record—a major league game played for a single spectator, to which he would be privileged to invite all his friends and neighbors.

King Ludwig of Bavaria once employed a band and a company of singers to perform for him an opera at which he was the sole attendant. He had never walked before on Warren G. Harding. But Harding listened to his opera in sol- idary splendor. Harding expects to meet the nation's and the world's great leaders and great countrysides to see his ball game.

"Baseball is one of our finest in- stitutions," the Senator continued, "I am pleased to see that the line of progress of the nation is marked by the increasing fondness for the national pastime."

"No other sport of which I know so well has so long a hold on our land. It affords every opportunity for success to individuals, for particular stars, and yet it does not render each and every individual a failure at the expense of the community."

A dominant motive is teamwork. It affords an opportunity for men to come together and pull together. It is a wonderful cure for the individualism that has come from the overdevelopment of the age.

We can either play on a team or sit on the benchers for long periods, negating his individual sport in the greater spirit of the whole. At the same time this skill's human sym- pathy and self-sacrifice are highly esteemed and his moral incitement sharpened.

However, the most interesting thing about baseball, to my mind, is the way it gives for the community sport. A baseball game is like a city on a precipitate upon chem- ical wave of the country. Clouds, and the result will be a beautiful picture. What makes the major league team bearing the name of a city tend to make the people of that city take a pride in its progress? Baseball, its heroes, its stalwarts, its journalists in their fierce desire for glory and advantage in the work of their profession. The whole.

It is like flying a flag that one can play music and do a duty. It is a true pleasurable profession, and advantageous and its individual good. We believe that there is something more worthwhile than their own varying for- tunes; namely, the success of the game.

"A sport could render no greater service than this, especially when it is conducted in the spirit of the modern competitive lines, and inculcates ideas of im- portance to all, under pre- scribed rules previously agreed upon. I have seen a city that apparently was in the doldrums become interested in supporting a ball team and immediately find itself with a civic spirit that it never had before. Even when the civic spirit is strong a ball game is a good thing to make it vocal and give it tone.

"In former times when Marion had a ball club I was always inter- ested in it financially, although we never made any money and from the mere standpoint of the lodger it might have been called a loss. Al- though I never got back directly any of the money that I invested in Marion ball clubs, I never considered the money lost. I always considered it a fine investment if it only might have made in some other enterprises which would have failed to realize a salary adequate profit.

"How many of those clubs did you invest in?" the writer asked.

"That would be pretty hard to find, but it would be at least a half-dozen, first and last. The clubs were always always around to five cents and pasting the hat, and we never failed to tip the players a five cent immaculate money to meet the deficit."

"The Senator did not tell me, but like a horseracing, although I think I know how the horses are running, it is a deep. But there must be profes- sions. They set the standard. This is an age of specialists, and a man cannot go to the top of sport any more than a man can go to the top of any other calling without giving all his time to developing his skill. He ought to be paid for this, and well paid, so as to be thus be conducted himself neither is a rule nor a rule.

"It is, of course, tender," the writer interjected, "that our present-day method of employing pro- fessional athletes to do our physical exercise for us is likely to be degen- erating, so to the community as a whole, in that it encourages the sedentary man merely to watch professional performers instead of doing something himself.

"If the rest of us never did any exercise ourselves, there might be some truth in that," the Senator responded, "but that is not the condition in America today. One of the most encouraging things about baseball is that it is a un- iversal pastime, indulged in practically every boy in the United States. The sandlots and picnics grounds and the rawboned players of nearly all of the communities in the country are being constantly utilized by the youngsters who dream of some day being batmen in the major league."

"Did you ever play baseball?" the writer asked.

"I never played baseball."

"I see," the writer remarked, "that the editor of the local paper in those days was of the Senator's habit of playing first base. Maybe you was because I was unusually tall. At the time I was not a man without any grave. Of course, there were a good solid 154 pounds of me, and there were mighty few gloves for anybody then, and certainly none for a second baseman."

"Of course, I could have made it."

"But you didn't like the odds against a sore knee, and I didn't slip. Then it turned out that the misfortunes to knock a two- bagger. At least the coach along the alinement insisted it was a two- bagger, and yet I can hear the ball that I started to run. It was made very plain to me that the fate of Marion and perhaps even our own future right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness depended upon my second base. I did rush second base, but at the end of the second it slid for two weeks."

"Mrs. Harding was present when Senator Harding witnessed the play of his earlier years. She said this was the first time she had heard of it."

"It then was revealed that Mrs. Harding was a skilled player of the game."

"As Senator. In fact, she later continued to the writer that she had three under her control, and that she managed to control a major league campaign; second, to be the man- ager of a championship baseball team as a profession lasting the major league; third, to be the head of a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals."

"A Marion newspaper man later said that for years in that city Mrs. Harding has been the second base while Marion played as constantly as her husband, and every major league had ever missed a game if it could possibly help it.

"The Senator went on to recall the history of Marion's baseball team. The little Ohio city was a member of the old Marion County League, which included Marion, Mansfield, Mansfield, Zanesville, Ashville, Columbus, Marion, Mansfield, Tiffin, and McKeen. Then there was an increased interest in baseball in Marion, Mansfield, Delaware, and Newark. Earlier Springfield and Chillicothe were in.

"I suppose," he commented, "that the fellows in the big cities would have referred to us in those days as 'hush leaguers.' Perhaps they were, but we had heard it we would have been blissfully unconscious."

"Like most major leagues, we were often times in the hade house, while ours was that he in the main league, was still often times in the main league."

"We were in a fair state of affairs then."

"We heard the time the wonderful Marion Harding connection, which can ex- press anything from the tenement to the boudoir, and it was no wonder."

"In 1890, Senator Harding was equipped by nature to be a very good play."

"In 1920, after he has been in concentrated on serious business, but it has an excellent fortune, with his large, long, and handsome field and his chance propor- tions."

"Then, as lighter thoughts assumed control, the burden was lifted and an appeal, the corrupting meant into the game."

"But there are hardly any trace, superficially, of the state of a gentleman and the thinker."

"But even so, as a gentleman he began the work of a gentleman"

"In the baseball evolutions from his native city.

"It was hard to tell you," he went on, "that Marion furnished some goods playing the game or the country. Dake starvation, first baseman of the Brooklyn Nationals, now of the Cincinnati Reds, was trained on our team in Marion. Another celebrated player was seated was a player who afterward became very prominent in minor leagues, a player who started with us was Siegel, who later became a marvelous outfielder for the Philadelphia Club. And one of our best boys in the early days was the one that played the very top of the big league with us because the captain of the Philadel- phia Club."

"I will not say that baseball distortion our town claim, and which I believe we have still a claim to."

"I believe we were the first to play one record by one man was made in Marion by John Stockton of the Marion Club. This was in the 1887 or 1888 season."

"I only mention these especially good players as proof that we had some good players who were able to benefit that the town got out of the club."

"They would have been a benefit to us."

"I believe I am speaking of our community spirit and not all the players who were just a large family with a single purpose."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.