

Harding, Baseball Fan

Republican Nominee Has Played First Base on the Marion Team, and Helped Support It Later—He Loves the Partisanship of the Diamond

By RICHARD BARRY

I LOVE the blind partisanship of the baseball crowd. I adore the fierce prejudice of the baseball fan. Nothing stimulates me more than the enthusiasm of the bleachers—especially if my team is winning," said the Republican Presidential nominee as he relaxed for a moment between the visits of delegations to the little house on Mount Vernon Avenue.

His last visitors had been most agreeably received, for they had brought him the news that a team from the National and a team from the American League were going to make a special trip to Marion for the express purpose of playing a major league ball game for Senator Harding. He had so frequently mourned over the fact that his confinement to Marion this Summer would deny him his customary enjoyment of baseball that two of the major league owners had arranged this surprise for him. The mountain was traveling to Mahomet. It was planned to have no entrance fee for the game, and the day would be a public holiday in Marion. The most splendid baseball 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 Wagner with an orchestra and a company of singers to perform for him an opera at which he was the sole attendant. He had nothing on Warren G. Harding. But Ludwig listened to his opera in solitary splendor. Harding expects to invite all the town and countryside to see his ball game.

"Baseball is one of our finest institutions," the Senator continued, as he illuminated the reasons for his fondness for the national pastime. "No other sport of which I know so well expresses the genius of our land. It affords every opportunity to express the individual merit of particular stars, and yet it does not glorify the individual unduly at the expense of the community. The dominant motive is teamwork. It affords an apotheosis for the get-together and pull-together spirit. It is a wonderful curative for the ills that come from the overdevelopment of the ego.

"No one can either play on a team or sit on the bleachers for long without merging his individual spirit in the greater spirit of the whole. At the same time his human sympathies are inevitably quickened and his mental faculties sharpened.

"However, the most wonderful thing about baseball, to my mind, is what it does for the community spirit. A baseball team will act on a city like a precipitate upon chemicals; it will instantly clarify all cloudiness, and the result will be definite and distinct. A baseball team bearing the name of a city tends to make the people of that city forget their individual rivalries and jealousies in their fierce desire for the greater success of the city as a whole. It is like flying a flag that can play music and act a drama. It tends to make people forget their discouragements and their individual miseries, and passionately to believe that there is something more worthwhile than their own varying for-

tunes; namely, the success of the city.

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

"In former years when Marion had a ball club I was always interested in it financially, although we never made any money and from the mere standpoint of the ledger it might have been called a loss. Although 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 finer investment than I might have made in some other enterprises which would have paid a more tangible profit."

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

"That would be pretty hard to say," replied the Senator. "More than a half-dozen, first and last. The clubs were always coming around to a few citizens and passing the hat, and we never failed to chip in and make up the amount necessary to meet the deficit."

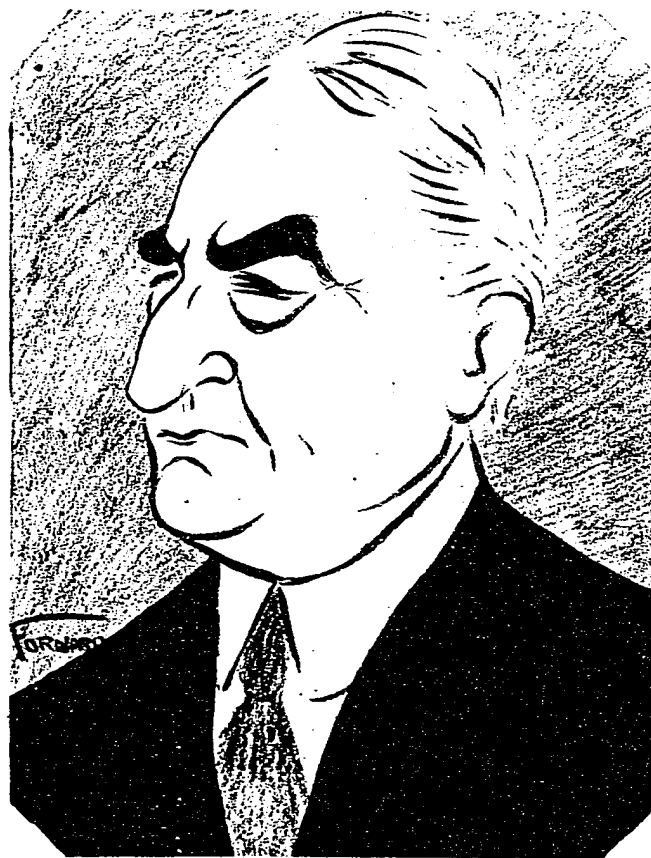
The Senator did not tell me, but

like horse racing, although I think the gambling connected with it is bad. But there must be professionals. They set the standard. This is an age of specialists, and a man cannot go to the top of sport any more than he can go to the top of any other calling without giving all his time to developing his gift. He ought to be paid for this, and well paid, so long as he conducts himself honorably and abides by the rules."

"However, it is contended," the writer interjected, "that our present-day method of employing professional athletes to do our physical exercise for us is likely to be degenerating to the community as a whole, in that it encourages the sedentary man merely to watch professionals perform 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 certainly not the condition in America today. One of the most encouraging things about baseball is that it is a universal pastime, indulged by practically every boy in the United States. The sandlots and picnic grounds and village squares of nearly all of the communities in the country are being constantly utilized by the youngsters who dream of some day being batsmen in the major leagues."

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



Fornaro Caricature of Harding

the writer learned that for more than a decade it was not known generally in Marion, even among baseball fans and those classified as "sports," that Harding and his friends were the financial mainstays of the Marion team. Throughout that period the Marion public thought it was supporting the ball team.

"Do you think the professional element in baseball is good for the general public?" was asked.

"Why not?" was the quick answer. "Yes, I believe in professional sport, unless it has some debasing element connected with it. I

The Senator laughed. "Of course I did, all the time as a growing boy; but there was one game I had after I was grown up that I will never forget. I will tell you about it. It was right here in Marion, along in 1885, I believe. They got up a home team to play against the neighboring town. You know that in baseball they choose the players as they do in amateur theatricals. In such theatricals no one is picked to play a part because he can act, but because of some real or fancied position he may have.

"You may judge of the rating of

An Artist's Impressions of Harding

By C. de FORNARO.

ONE day I asked Warren G. Harding to pose for me. He was then, as now, a Senator. He greeted me with simplicity and unaffectedness. As my eyes wandered curiously along the walls of his office, which contained innumerable framed cartoons, sketches and caricatures, he pointed out some of the best examples of the cartoonists' work. The collection included various caricatures and cartoons of the Senator himself.

"I am very fond of cartoons," said the Senator, "for they tell the story or the point much more concisely than an editorial. I have quite a collection in my newspaper office in Marion, Ohio."

Mr. Harding does not appear as tall as he really is, because of his broad shoulders and the good proportion of his limbs and arms. He stands straight and has a fine head, with white hair which enhances the healthy, pink complexion and the dark eyebrows jutting over kindly blue eyes. A powerful, well-modeled Roman nose overshadows a firm mouth and chin.

I have sketched thousands of prominent people—Popes, Kings, Presidents, Generals, politicians, actors, actresses, chorus girls, literary men, saloon keepers, and even convicts, but never has it been my fortune to draw a countenance which from the painter's or sculptor's point of view is more interesting than Harding's or more representative of our race at its best. The Senator's profile is as good as his full or three-quarter face. The average person does not realize the pleasure which is felt by an artist in drawing or painting a face which is so well proportioned and contains such a unity of planes, lights and shadows that the craftsman needs no correcting, flattering or eliminating to palliate or slur over exaggerations or weaknesses in the model.

Senator Harding finished signing some letters and while I was working started a running commentary on current topics, followed by an account of his travels over Europe and the Orient. I was interested in the picturesque description of lands familiar to me and the amusing remarks of the keen observer. As I interrupted my work several times, he remarked:

"I trust my chatter does not interfere with your work?"

the editor of the local paper in those years by the fact that I was chosen to play first base. Maybe it was because I was unusually tall. At any rate, I went out on first base without any glove. Of course, there was nothing remarkable in that, for there were mighty few gloves for anybody then, and certainly none for the first baseman. Evidently I appeared tall and strong enough to stand the gaff, so they slammed the ball at me without mercy. After an inning or two my hands were swollen so that I could hardly see the knuckles, but I did not squeal. Then along late in the game I had the misfortune to knock a two-bagger. At least the coaches along the sidelines insisted it was a two-bagger, and even yet I can hear the yells that greeted me as I started to run. It was made very plain to me that the fate of Marion and perhaps even my own future right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness depended upon my reaching second base. I did reach second base, but at what a cost! I felt the effects of that slide for two weeks."

Mrs. Harding was present when Senator Harding recalled this episode of his earlier years. She said this was the first time she had heard of it, but her eyes glowed with delight. It then was revealed that Mrs. Harding is as ardent a baseball fan as the Senator. In fact, she later confided to the writer that she had three major ambitions in life: First, to manage a national Presidential campaign; second, to be the manager of a championship baseball team as it is winning the pennant in a major league; third, to be the head of a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals and children with enough money to rigorously enforce the law.

A Marion newspaper man later said that for years in that city Mrs. Harding had attended the baseball games as constantly as her husband, and that neither one had ever missed a game if they could possibly help it.

The Senator went on to recall the happy years when Marion had her ball team. The little Ohio city was once a member of the Ohio-Pennsylvania League, which included Marion, Lima, Mansfield, Zanesville, Akron, Youngstown, Lancaster and McKeesport. Then there was an Ohio State League, which took in Marion, Mansfield, Hamilton, Portsmouth, Lancaster 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 'bush leaguers.' Perhaps there is a sort of reproach in that title, but if we had heard it we would have been blissfully unconscious of it, for, while we knew that major leagues existed, still we often wondered if there wasn't some mistake in fate's casting us for a secondary rôle, for we had a good ball team and a rattling good little league."

By this time the wonderful mobile Harding countenance, which can express anything from the tenderest emotion to the sternest and loftiest exaltation, was roseate with affectionate recollection. Often the writer has reflected that Senator Harding was equipped by nature to be a superb actor. In repose, especially after he has been in concentrated thought on serious subjects, his deeply lined face, with its large, bony structure and its classical proportions, is almost like a tragic mask. Then, as lighter thoughts assume control, the lines soften and disappear, the corrugations melt into beneficent rotundities, and there is hardly any trace, superficially, of the statesman and the thinker. It was to this latter phase that he had now come as he became enthusiastic with the pride of the small-town man in the baseball evolutions from his native city.

"I want to tell you," he went on, "that Marion furnished some mighty good ball players to the country. Jake Daubert, first baseman of the Brooklyn Nationals, now of the Cincinnati Reds, was trained on our team in Marion. Another celebrated player we trained was Cooper, who afterward became very prominent in the major leagues. Another man 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 Bob Allen, who climbed to the very top of the big-league tree until he became captain of the Philadelphia and later manager of the Cincinnati Reds.

"Another baseball distinction our town claims, and which I believe we are justly entitled to, is the fact that the first triple play of record by one man was made in Marion by John Darmody, second baseman of the Marion Club. This was in the 70s or early 80s.

"I only mention these especially good players as proof that we had good ball in those years, but the real benefit that the town got out of the club was the help it rendered in solidifying our community spirit and making us feel more keenly that we were just a large family with a single purpose."