



The Kansas City Baseball Historical Society



“2010 Kansas City Athletics Reunion a Huge Success”

On July 16 and 17, 2010 the KCBHS hosted their annual Kansas City Athletics reunion. This year's events were the most ambitious undertaking yet by the KCBHS, and all who attended were very pleased with the success. A total of 23 former Kansas City A's players attended the reunion events this year.

The events began on Friday evening, July 16, when the KCBHS hosted its first ever Kansas City A's Reunion Banquet at the Harrahs Casino Hotel in North Kansas City. Harrahs Casino was a big supporter of the reunion weekend, and provided lodging for the out of town A's alumni players. Many of the players who attended this year's events were first time attendees, and many reunited with teammates that had not been seen in 40 years or more. Among the first time reunion attendees this year were Ned Garver, Jim Gentile, Joe DeMaestri, John Donaldson, Gil Blanco, Bill Bryan, Jim Gosger and Skip Lockwood. Other former players in attendance included Joe Azcue, Don Buschhorn, Chuck Dobson, Bill Fischer, Alex George, Joe Grzenda, Jay Hankins, Tom Harrison, Lew Krausse, Jerry Lumpe, Nelson Mathews, Hal Raether, Diego Segui, Rollie Sheldon and Dave Wickersham.

The banquet evening featured a pre-dinner “meet and greet” cocktail hour which allowed paid banquet guests to mingle and meet the A's players. Attendees also had the opportunity to view and bid on three tables full of Kansas City A's items, many of which were donated by the players. These distinctive autographed items raised funds which were used by the KCBHS for reunion expenses. KCBHS President Jeff Logan then welcomed all guests and players prior to dinner. A's players were seated at all of the banquet tables, allowing every attendee to share a meal and conversation with former players.

After dinner, KCBHS Vice-President David Starbuck provided some comments and introduced all of the A's players in attendance and their guests. Four of the A's legends then spoke to the audience and provided stories and memories of their playing days in Kansas City. The four guest speakers included Ned Garver, Jerry Lumpe, Bill Bryan and Lew Krausse. Each of the player speakers were well received by the audience and brought some wonderful (and hilarious) stories.

Ned Garver recalled being the opening day pitcher for the Detroit Tigers in 1955, at the first ever Kansas City A's game played at Municipal Stadium (he would later pitch for the A's from 1957-1960). Ned still recalled losing the game to the A's 6-2, and took exception to a ball four pitch called by the home plate umpire to A's batter Elmer Valo (which led to the winning runs). Ned recalled pitching to A's infielder Joe DeMaestri (in attendance at the reunion), who would later be his A's teammate. They had both previously been teammates with the St. Louis Browns. Ned mixed his baseball stories with great humor and was a hit with the audience.

Jerry Lumpe, who remains a Kansas City A's all-time fan favorite, talked about being traded from the world champion New York Yankees in 1959 to the A's. The trade allowed him to play full-time, even though he had to switch to the position of 2nd base. Jerry enjoyed his time in Kansas City (being a Missouri native), even though the A's never did well in the standings. He described being called to the office of A's owner Charley Finley, who excitedly showed Jerry (player rep) the beautiful new "Green and Gold" uniforms that would become the A's trademark. Jerry, and most of his teammates, were not particularly pleased with the new colors and thought they looked like parakeets when they were worn. Jerry also talked about being at 2nd base on May 22, 1963 when A's pitcher Bill Fischer (in attendance at the banquet) gave up the famous long home run to Mickey Mantle at Yankee Stadium, which many still debate may have been one of the longest home runs in history and just barely missed leaving Yankee Stadium.

Billy Bryan, former catcher for the A's, fondly recalled his call-up to the major league Kansas City A's in 1961. He asked for a slight pay raise when he was called to the major leagues, and received the grand increase of \$100. Bill chided his former battery mate, Lew Krausse, for getting all of the money in the A's bank account as a result of Lew receiving \$125,000 as a 1961 bonus baby. In his first catching appearance, Bill stated he was so nervous that he missed the first pitch and it struck the home plate umpire. Bill told the umpire that the pitcher "crossed him up". Bill spoke warmly about the fans in Kansas City and was very impressed that the Kansas City Athletics were still fondly remembered by baseball fans in Kansas City. Bill later recalled one year when the lowly A's won a few games and actually pulled out of last place in the standings. The players were so happy that they feasted on champagne after the game. Unfortunately, they lost the next day and returned to last place for the rest of the year.

Lew Krausse, former A's pitcher, spoke about his playing career and pondered how some of his teammates in attendance had slightly lost their youthful, athletic appearance. Lew also spoke about the "Finley years", but was genuinely grateful of his time in Kansas City and being able to reunite with many of his former teammates. Lew discussed his career stats, and he had calculated that if his Kansas City A's teammates could have only averaged 5 runs per game, he would have won another 100 games in his career and been bound for the Baseball Hall of Fame. Lew graciously commended the work of the KC Baseball Historical Society, and urged his teammates to continue working with the KCBHS to make future events and reunions even more successful.

On Saturday evening, July 17th, the Kansas City T-Bones baseball club again co-sponsored a "Kansas City Athletics Night" with the KCBHS at their game. All of the reunion players participated in a pre-game autograph session, and were then introduced onto the field as part of the pre-game ceremonies. The alumni players all wore retro 1961 Kansas City A's caps, provided by the T-Bones. Former pitcher Lew Krausse threw out the ceremonial opening pitch, and the players and KCBHS board members were provided a suite to enjoy the game. The KCBHS extends its deepest appreciation to the ongoing support of the Kansas City T-Bones for their involvement in the reunion events each year.

Many words of thanks and positive comments have been expressed by the player alumni, their families and the many fans and KCBHS members who attended all or part of the reunion events. The KCBHS board is already working on plans for future KCBHS events, including the 2011 Kansas City Athletics reunion. We count on the support of our paid members, and we encourage you to enlist other baseball fans to join the KCBHS (fees are only \$25.00 per year).