



(From left) Minnie Minoso, Dick Allen, Billy Pierce and Jim Kaat represent the big Sox contingent up for election by the Hall of Fame's Golden Era Committee.

Earning HOF berth would truly be a golden era for Minoso, and 3 others with strong Chicago baseball connections

*By George Castle CBM Historian and Dr. David J. Fletcher, CBM President
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To Minnie Minoso, the emotional impact of finally getting to the Hall of Fame could be best summed up by his body English.

When Cooperstown was mentioned to Sox great Minoso while he served on a panel on Cuban baseball at U.S. Cellular Field this past June, he quickly crossed himself.

Minoso knows the process all too well. An ultimate religious expression seemingly is the least firm action needed to boost a candidate over the top. Only one player from Minoso's era – Ron Santo -- has been enshrined by the Veterans Committee and its successors since Bill Mazeroski was voted in back in 2001.

“It means so much to Minnie,” said Billy Pierce, with Minoso the bookends of the Sox's “Go-Go Era” of the 1950s. “He was really hurt when he missed on the (Negro League) ballot in 2006. I went down to the ballpark, to congratulate him. He thought it was a cinch.

“He's very sentimental. I know his feelings. He was so hurt when he didn't make it. I hope he doesn't take it too much to heart if he doesn't make it this time.”

Nothing at all is assured for any of the candidates on the new Golden Era ballot for 2015 induction. Only Santo, posthumously, has been selected (in Dec. 2011, having garnered 15 of 16 votes assisted by lobbying efforts by the Chicago Baseball Museum) since Mazeroski through the ever-changing voting process for players no longer eligible via the Baseball Writers of America Association vote. (see sidebar story: [Veterans Committee:](#)

[lots of votes, only 1 inductee](#) for more details on the twisted history of Veterans Committee make-up and results since 2001).

And to make matters even more nerve-wracking, Minoso finds himself now competing with former ace southpaw Pierce, his Sox teammate for nine seasons in two tenures (1951-57; 1960-61) for enshrinement. Ever-loyal to his favorite team, Minoso also is going up against slugger Dick Allen (1972-1974 Sox) and lefty Jim Kaat (1973-1975 Sox), two other stars who made important contributions to the South Side on long resumes worthy of Cooperstown consideration.

A fifth candidate with a much diminished Sox connection is third baseman Ken Boyer, who died in 1982 of cancer. Three years removed from his famous 1964 MVP season, he was a late-season acquisition by Sox GM Ed Short in the ill-fated 1967 campaign, in which the Sox fell short of the AL pennant the last week with a Black Wednesday double-dip loss in Kansas City. On July 27, 1967, the Mets traded the .235-hitting Boyer along with second baseman Sandy Alomar in exchange for bush-leaguer third baseman Bill Southworth, whose career ended after he spent the remainder of the year in the minors, and veteran catcher J. C. Martin. Boyer hit .261 in 57 games over the rest of the 1967 season. He played in only 10 games in 1968 before being released by the Sox in May.

The five former White Sox players -- Minoso, Pierce, Allen, Kaat, and Boyer -- join Gil Hodges, Tony Oliva, Maury Wills, Luis Tiant and Big Red Machine front-office architect Bob Howsam on the ballot. Allen, Wills, and Howsam are new names on the second incarnation of the Golden Era ballot.

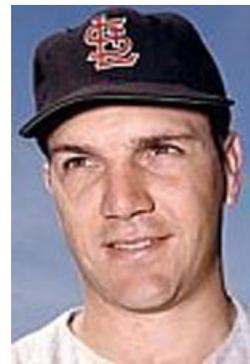
In 2011, Dick Allen did not make the Veterans Committee Golden Era ballot that prompted some controversy in baseball circles.

Stuart Miller wrote an impassioned commentary in the Nov. 10, 2011 issue of the *New York Times*: “Ken Boyer and Tony Oliva Are on the Ballot. Why Not Dick Allen?”

Wrote Miller: “The Golden Era ballot for the voters on the Baseball Hall of Fame Veterans Committee is filled with very good players. Some deserve induction and some don’t. Yet what’s most glaring is omission of one name: Dick Allen... Yet Allen should have been on the ballot because he was one of the most fearsome hitters of his era... Allen’s story is complicated by his personality and the politics of his time. He was, at best, a prickly nonconformist who broke rules and irritated teammates. However, he was also subjected to racism, both blatant and subtle, which is what fueled some of his behavior.”

After being left off the 2011 ballot, Allen’s profile was raised in June 2012 thanks to the efforts of the Chicago Baseball Museum.

Forty years after Dick Allen and the resurgent 1972 Sox saved the AL charter franchise from moving out of Chicago, the CBM paid tribute to Dick Allen in a two-day event at



Ken Boyer is the fifth Golden Era candidate with a Sox connection. However, the bulk of his candidacy plays off his stellar seasons with the Cardinals.

U.S. Cellular Field in late June 2012. The strike-shortened '72 season saw the Sox finish second behind the powerful Oakland Athletics in the West Division race and had the second-best record in the American League riding on the coattails of Allen, who won the AL MVP that year. The South Siders won 87 games and attracted almost 1.2-million fans, more than twice their total of two years earlier.

This high visibility event, where the City of Chicago showed its love for No. 15, garnered the publicity-shy Allen much-needed national exposure that helped him nab a spot on the 2014 Golden Era ballot.

Allen is the first to admit that he has never wanted to campaign for the Hall of Fame. After the CBM informed Allen on Nov. 2nd that he gotten on the 2014 ballot and he finally had a real shot at making it into the Hall of Fame, he still wanted to downplay actively campaigning for his selection: "I believe my stats speak for themselves." And, they do for Allen, whose credentials speak for themselves. Of the 10 candidates on the ballot, Dick is the only one to have won both the Rookie of the Year award ('64-NL) and Most Valuable Player ('72-AL). He also was twice the AL home run champion ('72 and '74) and made seven All-Star appearances.

Allen has the best offensive stats of the nine former player candidates, most evidenced by his position as tied for 16th MLB all-time ranking for OPS+, one of the best offensive measures to compare ballplayers across various eras. Dick's OPS+ 156 stat is tied with Willie Mays and Frank Thomas and is better than Hank Aaron, Joe DiMaggio and Mel Ott, all already enshrined in the Hall of Fame.

While not actively campaigning to get in the Hall, privately the Wampum Warrior would like to finally get the recognition that he believes he deserves. "All people remember is the fact that I got in a fight with Frank Thomas and that I was a troublemaker," said Allen in early November from his famous farmhouse outside of Pittsburgh that he built for his mother after he got a \$70,000 bonus for signing with the Phillies in 1960.

The "original" Frank Thomas, a white first baseman-outfielder, played from 1951 through 1966, including two stints on the Cubs and is still living at age 85. In July 1965 Allen got into a fistfight with fellow Phillie Thomas. According to two teammates who witnessed the fight, Thomas swung a bat at Allen, hitting him in the shoulder. Later, the two reconciled.

In a later installment of the series of articles on the four ballplayers with strong Chicago baseball connections for the upcoming Hall of Fame Golden Era vote, CBM President David Fletcher will make the case for Allen to be selected to this year's Hall of Fame. Unlike several other candidates, Allen has no MLB team he played on trying to help him gain admission to the Hall of Fame. His campaign is strictly being organized by his fans and baseball historians.

Although the Hall of Fame electoral process is supposed to be joyous, the effort to induct the post-BBWAA-vote candidates has been fraught with frustration. No wonder Minoso, officially pushing 90 and with time ticking, is on edge.

Appearing in front of a White Sox locker at US Cellular Field in November 17, 2011 at a symposium that celebrated his career from the New York Cubans, Cleveland Indians, and the White Sox, Minoso confessed, "To be in the Hall of Fame is my last wish in this life."

Then again, when you are pushing 89 (or 92 as many believe Minnie's true age will be on Nov. 29, 2014) — and when such a wish is again in the hands of the 16 members of the Golden Age election committee, it's not easy to put so many thoughts into words.

In various incarnations, the voting panels for these players simply whiffed in agreeing on a candidate.

All-time Cubs third baseman Santo thought he was a lock in his first Veterans Committee appearance in Feb. 2003. Media swarmed all over his Scottsdale, Ariz. home with a WGN camera set up for live shots by the swimming pool. Santo, though, never got the call that day nor in all succeeding votes, disheartening him while he was still alive. Only his death in late 2010 from the long-term effects of Type 1 diabetes pushed him over the top, with old friend Billy Williams lobbying successfully on his behalf a year later in the vote.

Turning the balloting over to all living Hall of Famers did not prove to be a solution. Some enshrinees simply did not believe the list of players were as worthy as they were. Petty politics reigned and thus no candidates got the required 75 percent of the vote. Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt was quoted having said that he would never vote someone in that the BBWAA passed over.

Privately, in April 2010 at the 70th anniversary celebration of his Opening Day no-hitter at Comiskey Park, the late Bob Feller told Fletcher that the Veteran's Committee format which included all living Hall of Famers would never vote in candidates the baseball writers overlooked. Feller believed strongly that his former teammate Minoso should have been voted in by the BBWAA.

"Ballplayers will have a tough time (voting) because they'll always have partiality to their friends," said Pierce. "Sportswriters go by statistics. It seems to be run better."

The end result is the worthy get shut out. In an extreme case, like Santo's, affirmation comes too late.

"People overlook a lot of these guys. So many guys are right there who are deserving," said Hall of Famer Fergie Jenkins, who is one of this year's Golden Era electorate taking over for ol' fishing buddy Williams, who was in the room pushing for



Dick Allen (left) and Jim Kaat, Sox teammates in 1973-74, would like nothing more than to go into the Hall of Fame together.

Ron Santo in 2011. “So many guys that are right there, who are deserving,” says Jenkins.

They have been waiting a decade or longer. Half of this year’s candidates shared Santo’s frustration, having appeared on the 2003 Veteran’s Committee ballot: Minoso, Allen, Boyer, Hodges and Wills.

Kaat (10 of 16 votes) and Minoso (nine votes) were on the Golden Era Ballot in the fall of 2011 and came close to getting elected. Kaat and Allen also were on the Veterans Committee ballot in 2005 and 2007. Pierce has never appeared before on a Veterans Committee ballot.

Pierce was last eligible for the BBWAA vote in 1974. Allen never got much love from the BBWAA voters, topping out at 18.9 percent in 1996, his second-to-last year on the ballot.

Jenkins will have a chance to right some wrongs with both his advocacy and his vote. He’ll be the Cubs’ Hall of Fame connection on the Golden Era voting panel that will meet during the winter meetings Dec. 7-8. Mixing it up, the Hall of Fame has amassed a voting group that includes enshrinees Jim Bunning (Allen’s 1964-67 Phillies teammate) Rod Carew (Kaat’s ’67-’73 Twins teammate), Pat Gillick, Al Kaline, Joe Morgan, Ozzie Smith and Don Sutton (Allen’s ’71 Dodgers teammate).

Two other firm Chicago connections will be present via former Sox general manager Roland Hemond, whose career-best trade involved Allen and later acquired Kaat in a late-season deal, and ex-Cubs manager and general manager Jim Frey.

Other voters will be Royals owner David Glass, former MLB disciplinarian Bob Watson, veteran baseball writers Dick Kaegel and Tracy Ringolsby, longtime New York writer Phil Pepe and statistician Steve Hirdt.

Ringolsby and Hirdt were part of the BBWAA Historical Overview nominating committee that put the 10 candidates on the ballot. The remainder were active or retired writers Dave Van Dyck (longtime *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times* baseball scribe who witnessed the 2012 Allen tribute), Bob Elliott, Rick Hummel, Bill Madden, Ken Nigro, Claire Smith, Jack O’Connell (BBWAA secretary/treasurer), Glenn Schwarz and Mark Whicker.



Fergie Jenkins (left) and Roland Hemond are the Golden Era electors with Chicago ties. As general manager, Hemond acquired both Dick Allen and Jim Kaat for the Sox.

Some fantastic qualifications might cancel out all the candidates again, unless one breaks out to reach the tough 75-percent voting threshold.

Kaat, for instance, won 283 games, one fewer than Jenkins and three less than Bert Blyleven, who had to struggle for years to gain entrée via the BBWAA vote. "Kitty," twice a 20-game winner for the Sox in 1974 and 1975, would overwhelm Pierce's 21 wins and two 20-win seasons on the South Side.

Meanwhile, who has the edge in offensive brilliance – Minoso with his all-around game or Allen with perhaps the greatest raw power of his generation? Allen could draw ahead on long-ball production, but he'd lose out with the games missed due to injuries and personal upheavals along with tenuous relations with media compared to unbridled joy for Minoso.

The Cuban Comet had 1,963 hits, including an exciting 83 triples, amassing a lifetime average of .298 with a .389 on-base percentage. He was front relay man on the "Go-Go" teams with 205 stolen bases.

Allen slugged 351 homers with a .292 lifetime average and .378 OBP while totaling 1,848 hits, including 79 triples (Allen's speed and base-running prowess is often overlooked). His productive years totaled just 11, from 1964 – when he was a spectacular NL Rookie of the Year winner with the Phillies – to 1974, when he concluded his Sox career due to injury and boredom two weeks before season's end. Two years before, he was almost a one-man gang in winning the AL MVP with his 37-homer season with the Sox.

The issue with Allen is if he would have booked passage to Cooperstown had he played four or five more seasons with optimum production and peace of mind.

Both Jenkins, who came up with Allen in the Phillies organization, and former Sox third baseman Bill Melton, an Allen South Side teammate, heartily agree.

"If he had played a couple of more (peak) years with Sox, or the Phillies, he'd have been near 500 homers," said Jenkins, who amazingly had good luck throwing hard-breaking sliders to Allen.

"He was a No.1 player, and feared. Always a great all-around player."

"I think 400 homers would have gotten him in," said Melton, now Comcast SportsNet Chicago's pre- and post-game Sox analyst. "Dick would have been a first-ballot Hall of Famer if he played three or four more years. A first-ballot guy is a guy who dominates the game, and he did."

Melton said if a statistician had crafted a chart of Allen's homers at spacious old Comiskey Park, which could not hold his blasts, they would have been laid out in a "perfect fan."



Golden Era elector Jim Bunning, a Hall of Famer, was used to casting votes in a closely-scrutinized balloting as a former U.S. Senator from Kentucky.

While Allen's career was truncated by both factors in and out of his control, Kaat got extra longevity from his Sox days. Reaching age 34 in 1973, he was starting to show wear around the edges as a lifetime Minnesota Twin when a waiver deal delivered him to the company and wise counsel of Sox pitching coach Johnny Sain.

"He changed himself with the Sox," said Melton. "Sain gave him his no-windup delivery and big bloop curve."

Kaat had won 25 with the 1966 Twins. He did not have another 20-win season until his re-packaged form racked up 21 wins in 1974 and another 20 for the Sox in 1975 - both mediocre teams. He'd pitch until age 44 with the Cardinals in 1983, his relief work having helped St. Louis win the World Series the year before.

Jenkins said he'll advocate for both Allen and Kaat in the voting process. Both candidates should pick up additional campaign support from Hemond, acquired both for the Sox in his GM days. The Allen deal remains one of the best in Chicago baseball history.

Boyer, who died young at 51 in 1982, has long been knocking on the Hall's door.

With his 282 homers, mostly for the Cardinals, he was near Santo in qualifications, although he did win the NL's MVP award in 1964. Boyer came to Chicago as GM Short tried to collect several older hitters in an attempt to boost a laggard lineup for the '67 pennant push.

Too many good candidates and not enough of a tradition of successful enshrinement seem to await this Golden Era class. However, it's the journey and good company that comforts Pierce.

"It's an honor to be nominated, without question," he said. "It's nice to be with a bunch of guys I know."

"Allen concurs. It would be really cool to go in with my teammate Kitty," he said.