



They're gone a decade, but Vince Lloyd's, Red Mottlow's voices remind of eternal friendships

*By George Castle, CBM Historian
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Both great men are gone nearly 10 years.

But I still consider them my friends, present tense, because I still hear their distinctive voices loud and clear, whether in memories of being on the air, offering wise counsel or only skimming the top of their encyclopedia of stories and experiences.

I've got to keep their memory alive, because generations who never heard them or knew them deserve the benefit of their output as men and all-time sportscasters. Vince Lloyd and Red Mottlow had great influence on me growing up. As I got to know them closely as their senior-citizen days approached and progressed, my only regret – a big one -- is not getting more decades with them in corporeal form.

Longtime baseball announcer Lloyd should be a recipient of the Ford C. Frick Award, honoring a great voice of the game. Pioneering radio sports reporter Mottlow should have gotten his shot on the air at WGN. Subtracting these goals doesn't take a shred away from their lifetime achievements.

There was Lloyd's rich baritone, hardly cracking when he bellowed "Holy Mackerel!" for a Cubs homer, intersecting with Mottlow's staccato, rapid-fire "Red Mottlow, WCFL Sports" on mid-20th Century 50,000-watt Chicago-originated frequencies. There were kind, encouraging words amid the most political of businesses – sports media -- where negativity and a childish caste system still rule. There were gut-busting stories that required a few minutes for your last guffaw for finally quiet itself. And there was the old pro's talents helping out as Mottlow co-hosted my "Diamond Gems" syndicated weekly radio baseball show – [clips of which are posted on the Chicago Baseball Museum web](#)



Red Mottlow pounding away at his typewriter with some of his broadcast awards on the wall behind him.

[site](#) -- from 1998 to 2002.

A book would need to be written to give Lloyd and Mottlow justice to their long lives, Lloyd making it to 86 before his passing on July 3, 2003, Mottlow reaching 76 before his death on May 12, 2003. I have a couple of thousand words. Both friends, remembering how on the air time was an umpire to which there was no appeal, would advise me to use them well.

They came from different backgrounds, Vince Lloyd Skaff (a typical change employed to this day where a broadcaster drops his last name) from Sioux Falls, S.D., while Martin Mottlow, nicknamed “Red” for his flaming-colored hair, hailed from his beloved Marshall High School on Chicago’s West Side. Both settled in Chicago media about a decade apart. Lloyd started in 1949 on the periphery, then the centerpiece, of baseball broadcasts. Mottlow came back to his native Chicago to work in the WGN newsroom in 1959 before he became the first radio reporter to take a microphone and recorder into Chicago’s locker rooms in the mid-1960s.

We’re moving to the fatter part of the inverted pyramid style.

Vince and Lou combo unforgettable

First, Vince Lloyd. Anyone who listened can never forget his entertaining, nearly-20-partnership with Lou Boudreau made listening to Cubs games on WGN-Radio and its network stations a joy. They were both engaging and honest, as one could be working for a conservative station, broadcasting a conservative team. And folksy, as Midwesterners expect them to be. In addition to the “Holy Mackerel home-run call twinned with “Good Kid” Boudreau’s “No Doubt About It,” there was a cowbell employed to celebrate Cubs homers starting in the 1970s. Fans sent a steady procession of home-made food to the broadcast booth. Vinnie was not shy about doubling up on play-by-play while scarfing down a dumpling or piece of pie.



Longtime baseball exec Roland Hemond (left) hosts Vince Lloyd and wife Myrt at a White Sox spring training game at Tucson Electric Park around 2002.

WGN had a tradition of their baseball announcers reading sponsors’ messages live between innings. The crowd noise added to the ambience. So when could Lloyd and Boudreau make a quick dash to the bathroom, located a modest run down the catwalk hung from Wrigley Field’s upper deck? Often, they didn’t. “We just sweated it all out,” Lloyd recalled of the in-game dispersal of bodily fluids.

Vinnie’s delivery was so good he should have been a recognized star, the No. 1 announcer in the market. Problem is, he still had to play second fiddle to Jack Brickhouse

in the same manner he was as Brickhouse's TV partner for a decade on Cubs and White Sox games. Blame Cubs owner P.K. Wrigley, who allowed the most saturated video coverage of any team in the majors. The Cubs' TV voice with all his exposure – up to 148 games after 1968 – would always overshadow his radio counterpart. The radio man's only advantage was at night, where WGN's clear-channel output could go much further than the video signal.

Vince and Lou crafted joy out of tragedy. Lloyd would have continued as Brickhouse's No. 2 had not for the sudden death of radio voice Jack Quinlan – who might have been a better voice than all of them -- in a car-truck crash near Chandler, Ariz., during spring training 1965. Both Lloyd and Boudreau initially were reluctant to work in the radio booth after the disaster. But when they knew they'd be paired, Vince and Lou carried on for Quinlan and carved out their own legend.

They worked in a long-gone corporate world where a job at WGN, which paid less than the network-owned stations in town, was considered like being a part of the family. Once you were in, you stayed in, for decades until retirement. The bosses didn't automatically cut you at 50 or 60.

'80-hour week like a vacation'

But such stability came at a price. "An 80-hour week was like a vacation," cracked Brickhouse from the vantage point of the 1990s, years after his last broadcast. The WGN announcer worked varied duties and long hours. Ray Rayner did three children's TV shows each day, with clown duties on the noon "Bozo's Circus" the centerpiece. "Bozo" star Bob Bell began his day doing the 6:30 a.m. TV news, then later voicing radio newscasts before applying the clown greasepaint for his midday starring role.

At one point, Lloyd was tabbed to be the sports voice of Wally Phillips' top-rated morning show. He had to report for work at 5:30 a.m., then go out and do the afternoon game. Fortunately, the Cubs did not play night games, a hazard Jack Buck faced at KMOX in St. Louis, where the Cardinals voice also had morning-show duty. Long after he got his mornings off, Lloyd was part of a rotation of announcers who had to come back into the station to do the 10 p.m. TV newscast in the late 1970s after putting in the afternoon behind the mic at Wrigley. Worse yet, Lloyd had to don a cheaply-made canary-yellow WGN blazer -- one that weather guru Tom Skilling said could hardly stand up to a date at the cleaners -- to narrate highlights and read the scores. Brickhouse had to work such punishing schedules going back to the 1940s so few other WGN voices would get breaks on their hours.

Vinnie's bosses also would make him gas it for the ballpark. At one juncture, Lloyd pulled duty anchoring an 11:45 a.m. newscast at WGN-TV's studios next to Tribune Tower at 435 N. Michigan. He also had "Leadoff Man" duties on the station at Wrigley Field or Comiskey Park shortly after 1 p.m. It's only a 15- to 20-minute drive to either ballpark. Again, if Brickhouse could do it, so could his colleagues. For years, Jack had to dash from either ballpark seconds after finishing "The Tenth Inning" to anchor a 5:45 p.m. TV sportscast.

The job had some historic rewards, though, as Lloyd participated in some of the most memorable moments in Chicago baseball broadcast history.

Lloyd found himself amid a wild mob scene on May 15, 1960 trying to interview Don Cardwell by the Wrigley Field third-base dugout moments after the right-hander finished his no-hitter against the St. Louis Cardinals. Assistant director Arne Harris and a cordon of Andy Frain ushers somehow carved out a small circle in which Lloyd and Cardwell stood while the happy multitudes pushed forward. When Cardwell finally broke for the clubhouse down the left-field line, Lloyd's day was finally over. He then discovered the cable for the mic he had just used was snapped by the weight of the throng, seconds after he went off the air. The Cardwell interview is the oldest piece of sports videotape (not a kinescope, a film of a live telecast) preserved.

On April 10, 1961, after a series of strings had been pulled by WGN producers with Chicago-area congressmen, Lloyd found himself in the presidential box at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. face to face with John F. Kennedy. The short "Leadoff Man" segment, second-oldest sports video saved, was the first time a sitting president was interviewed on a pre-game TV show.

Then, on July 14, 1962, Lloyd handled the Sox end at Comiskey Park of a dual telecast with the Cubs game on the North Side. The two teams were scheduled to play at home at the same time. Rather than employ a split-screen technique to show both games at once, WGN elected to switch back and forth to whichever game had action. With all the stoppages in play built into baseball, only one of 16 runs scored in both games was missed.

Adding Bulls, college football to their schedules

At their peak, Vince and Lou were the sports mules pulling the wagon on WGN-Radio. They were the first Bulls radio team, handling home games only from 1966 to 1970. When the Cubs season ended, they quickly transitioned to broadcasting a Big Ten Game of the Week on Saturday afternoons. Boudreau worked between-periods TV on Blackhawks games, while Lloyd was the voice of high-school events like swimming tournaments.

As WGN began cutting back on Lloyd's baseball schedule after Harry Caray joined the broadcast team in 1982, Lloyd worked with longtime WGN colleague Jack Rosenberg to build up the long-neglected Cubs radio network. The familiarity of the pair and their contacts clicked. Soon the network branched out all over the Midwest and sometimes beyond.

Yet even after his official final Cubs broadcast in 1986, Lloyd's voice was praised for its strength. When Caray was sidelined with heart problems in 1994, Lloyd was summoned from retirement to fill in along with Bears voice Wayne Larrivee. The baritone had some age on it, but it also had plenty of oomph. After Caray returned, he tried, but failed, to persuade Lloyd to come back full time.

All the while, Lloyd intersected with all kinds of celebrities, hearing some eyebrow-

raising anecdotes and opinions. Dr. David Fletcher, president and founder of the Chicago Baseball Museum, is searching for the missing part of the diary of White Sox general manager Harry Grabiner that might shed some real light on the 1919 Black Sox scandal. But Vinnie filled in all the blanks on a host of other sports issues. He confided stories he could have never broadcast over his old airwaves. They were indeed astounding. Call them “Vinnie’s Revelations.”

He joined WGN as a kind of “house Democrat” when rabidly conservative Republican Tribune Co. boss Col. Robert R. McCormick still firmly had old New Dealers and new Fair Dealers in his crosshairs. Lloyd said McCormick rigged the books to make it appear WGN-TV, which signed on in April 1948, lost money while Harry S Truman was president. The Colonel was determined not to pay taxes to a Democratic administration. When converted Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeded Truman on Jan. 20, 1953, suddenly WGN-TV was shown to have made a handsome profit.

Brickhouse’s weakness on football

The same year, WGN-Radio took over the Bears radio rights, teaming Brickhouse with Irv Kupcnet. The duo were famed for some hilarious broadcasts with misidentifications and malapropos. Kup’s analysis often was limited to “Dat’s right, Jack.” Why did Jack get running backs’ ID’s wrong so often? Lloyd said his friend, a real baseball/basketball expert, simply did not understand football all that well.

In 1959, Lloyd discussed Billy Williams, the Cubs’ top hitting prospect, with then-Cubs hitting coach Rogers Hornsby. The Rajah had scouted Williams and Ron Santo at Double-A San Antonio, telling the pair they were the only Missions players who’d make it in the majors. The Texas-born Hornsby, unfortunately, was a man of his era. He referred to Williams as a “nigger...but a good nigger,” Lloyd recalled with revulsion.

Advance the clock nine years. In the off-season of 1968-69, Lloyd and Boudreau heard from a Downstate Illinois source that the Cardinals looked to fire announcer Harry Caray soon. The actual Caray dismissal came as the 1969 season ended, with Caray discussing his cashing in on a Vince and Lou game broadcast. The banishment from owner Gussie Busch has long been linked to an affair Caray allegedly had with Busch’s daughter-in-law. The 1968-69 Caray report coincides with alleged telephone contact between Caray, laid up in a St. Louis hospital after being struck by a speeding car, and a Florida cottage where the Busch spouse was staying at the time.

Also in the 1969 season, as the Cubs amassed a record attendance of 1,674,000 to witness their most famous team, Lloyd found out how badly management was unimaginative and moss-backed. He told Cubs GM John Holland that if the team won the pennant, they’d draw more than 2 million the following season and then consistently afterward. Holland would not believe him. Lloyd accurately saw into the future. When the Cubs finally finished first, in the NL East, in 1984 after a 39-year wait, the gate finally climbed above 2 million, staying at that level in all but one non-strike season going forward. In 2004, Cubs attendance reached 3 million, staying at that level until hundreds of thousands of fans began getting smart amid the 101-loss debacle in 2012.

Lloyd was hardly long-suffering. But like most with the Cubs traveling party, he had to suffer amoral manager Leo Durocher. While on the team plane in 1969, Durocher yanked the pipe out of Lloyd's mouth and threw it into the bathroom sink. Lucky Lloyd wasn't an ex-Marine like sportswriter Jerome Holtzman, who challenged the all-mouth, little-action petty Caesar. At the last second, Durocher declined to fight the pugnacious Holtzman.

And Vinnie put his money where his mouth was. While several notorious tightwads ran in his circle – Brickhouse's slow draw on giving out tips was legendary – Lloyd said he frequently picked up the tab for dinner companions.

A staccato sports voice among rock jocks

Red Mottlow was equally generous. And even more so than Lloyd, almost deadpan and documentary-style in relaying his stories. Most outrageous was his days at WCFL's sports voice, as it gave WLS a battle for the Top 40 rock audience in Chicago while winding down its long-running status as radio home of the White Sox.

See, according to Red's dry, just-the-facts narration, the rock jocks took advantage of their popularity as purveyors of the music industry. So, to let him continue the story without getting into absolute specifics, the DJ's stepped into a nearby stairwell to engage in debauchery with young female visitors to the station during news or commercial breaks, or while a long-playing record rolled. Then the girls' parents would come down to the studios at Marina City to investigate.

Hardly any other Mottlow stories were this ribald. They were merely...historic. His job at WCFL permitted him to do what no other radio reporter had previously accomplished in Chicago broadcast history – to get the recorded pre- and post-game comments of athletes, coaches and managers for sportscasts other than the actual game broadcast shows.

Red's status, of course, met with stiff resistance from sportswriters who realized Mottlow would beat them to the consuming public with the interviews. The scribes simply felt entitled – the pressbox was their exclusive sanctuary. Outsiders -- be they broadcasters or female reporters or writers from smaller, outlying papers -- were not welcome. When Mottlow, properly credentialed from the New York Mets, arrived at Shea Stadium to cover the Cubs' infamous "Black Cat" series in Sept. 1969, he was initially barred from the main pressbox by Baseball Writers Association of America ayatollah Jack Lang. "This is *my* pressbox," bellowed Lang, better known for calling Hall of Fame candidates, including Ernie Banks in 1977, each January to give them the news they were elected.

Mottlow was aggressive and resourceful enough to get around such barriers as no other radio voices regularly followed his lead in his first few years. He'd have George Halas all to himself at Bears practice in Papa Bear's final two seasons as coach in 1966-67. Mottlow was the only radio reporter to start out covering Ken Holtzman's no-hitter on Aug. 19, 1969 at Wrigley Field, until Brad Palmer raced from WBBM's McClurg Court studios in Streeterville to make it by the eighth inning.

Mickey circled bases to snub Red

He would not give up on a potential interviewee. One day at Comiskey Park, he approached Mickey Mantle near the batting cage, asking for an interview. Mantle ignored him, and started running to first base. Mickey continued to circumnavigate the bases as Red moved near to home plate. Mottlow was poised with his mic as Mantle finished his 360-degree tour, but the Yankees legend merely continued by him on the way to the dugout.

Like Lloyd, Mottlow did not have a pleasant encounter with Durocher. One day Mottlow asked The Lip for an interview. "Sorry, kid, I've got my own show," he said of "Durocher in the Dugout" with Boudreau.

And in another kinship with Vinnie, Mottlow had to rush in the ballpark-to-downtown route. Without today's remote transmission boxes that permit live broadcasts through phone lines from the pressbox, Mottlow had to hope a daytime Cubs or Sox game ended in three hours. He'd hustle to get his tape in the clubhouse, then had a route planned out for knifing through rush-hour traffic the 4 ½ miles to Marina City for his 5:45 p.m. sportscast. In a union operation, Mottlow had to give his tape to an engineer to edit and set for playback. Meanwhile, morning-drive time sportscast duty meant Mottlow often had to cut short attendance at a night sports event to get enough sleep. If the evening game was important enough, well, you can sleep another time.

Mottlow had the personal grounding in Chicago sports as a youth Lloyd did not possess growing up in South Dakota. He attended his first game at Wrigley Field at age 9 in 1935 to see Babe Ruth take one of his last at-bats for the Boston Braves. Nearly three years later, on April 24, 1938, Red and his father watched sore-armed Dizzy Dean make his home debut over the Cubs in a victory over the Cardinals, his old team.

Red grew up in the largely Jewish Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. He was at Marshall High School during the school's 98-game basketball winning streak in 1943. Red never forgot his schoolmates' feats, from an era when many of the best basketball stars were Jews. In 2002, he penned a self-published book, "Fast Break to Glory," recounting the great winning streak. All-time baseball writer Jerome Holtzman, by then Major League Baseball's official historian, edited the book.

Graduating in 1944, Mottlow avoided being drafted into infantry service by volunteering for Navy duty on the new Essex class aircraft carriers. Assigned to the *USS Bon Homme Richard* in the South Pacific, he served as ship bugler. In between his short musical summons of the crew, Mottlow found out-of-the-way places on the huge ship to sack out for naps.

After World War II, Mottlow majored in speech at the University of Iowa, where he was a classmate of Milo Hamilton, future Sox and Cubs announcer and a Ford C. Frick Award inductee in the broadcasters' wing of the Hall of Fame. Mottlow and Hamilton maintained a lifelong friendship. After graduation, the Red-head paid his dues on radio in Galesburg, Ill., and Muskegon, Mich., along with reading the news on TV in Grand Rapids during cut-ins in the "Today" show. He prospered in Minneapolis, where he

broadcast the NBA's Lakers and Triple-A baseball. In the Twin Cities, he picked up the radio-centric skill, employed by Ronald Reagan and others, of re-creating road games' play-by-play by Western Union ticker.

Mottlow finally returned to Chicago. He witnessed Stan Musial's 3,000th hit at Wrigley Field on May 13, 1958. Soon he hooked on as a writer/producer with WGN in their newsroom. The off-the-air gig wasn't his ideal job, a status that haunted him the rest of his life. But between his rapid-fire delivery compared to the rich, midnight voice of a typical WGN announcer of the era and lack of political connections to management or Brickhouse, he stayed off the air at the 50,000-watt powerhouse.

Quick thinking to report on Harvey Haddix near-perfecto

But his news sense served WGN well. He was in the newsroom the night of May 26, 1959 when the wire services reported Pirates pitcher Harvey Haddix had taken a perfect game into extra innings 90 miles north at Milwaukee's County Stadium. Mottlow was the only one who kept a cool head. He instructed a producer to call the ballpark at game's end, and ask that he be put through to the visiting clubhouse. As luck would have it, Haddix -- trudging in from 12-innings-of-perfecto-for-anught -- walked by at that moment and answered the phone. With Lloyd Pettit doing the interview at WGN, the station had a scoop.

Months later, on Sept. 5, 1959, Mottlow got his on-air shot at WGN. The station was one of the last to air a Western Union re-creation on Saturday afternoons when the Cubs were out of town and playing at night. Pettit typically handed the chore. But on this Labor Day weekend day, Pettit was away airing a Bears pre-season game. Brickhouse and Lloyd were working the Sox game at Comiskey Park. Quinlan and Boudreau were in Los Angeles with the Cubs. Thus no WGN sports voice was available. And none of the regular announcers felt capable of doing the re-creation. With his Twin Cities experience, Mottlow made his pitch. He expertly handled a Reds-Braves game in Cincinnati. The Chicago Baseball Museum hopes to play a portion of Red's broadcast, which was preserved.

Through all his incarnations, at WIND-Radio as a newsman after WGN, then a decade at WCFL, then rock station WFYR-FM and finally all-news WMAQ-Radio (along with a time as Blackhawks PA announcer), Mottlow hardly ever backed down. His pugnaciousness was never more than an asset when he verbally tangled with Bears coach Mike Ditka at a 1990 press conference. Red would not take guff from Iron Mike.

And on Aug. 30, 2002, with knowledge another baseball strike had been avoided by just hours, Mottlow set out in search of truth in the Wrigley Field pressbox. During the game with the Cardinals, he spotted Cubs president Andy MacPhail, a management point man in negotiations. One of the issues was revenue-sharing money to be divvied up among small-market teams to be spent on players. Red was suspicious, believing some owners would pocket the extra bucks. As MacPhail walked away from the pressbox down a corridor, the septuagenarian Mottlow took off after the honcho to button-hole him and get assurances revenue-sharing was targeted for competitive balance, not profits.

Truth was Mottlow's temper was as volcanic as Ditka's. He dodged several bullets. One longtime story had an irate Red heaving a typewriter out of a window at WGN. I had to pull him out of disaster another time. Upset he did not have his usual assigned seat in Wrigley Field's pressbox, likely due to a clerical error, Red rushed behind Cubs media relations director Sharon Pannozzo. Looking out at the field, Pannozzo did not see Mottlow flip *both* birds at her. Before she turned around, I grabbed Red and hustled him away. "You're going to get kicked out of here," I warned Red. He did not realize Pannozzo had still issued his season credential and assigned seat out of respect for his longevity into semi-retirement after his last broadcast at WMAQ. Red was admitted to both Chicago ballparks as working media almost to his dying day.

Another time Red flashed his aggravation when he tried to get out of the pressbox on his own volition. On Sept. 30, 1988, Ronald Reagan made his only presidential visit to Wrigley Field during a game against the Pirates. The Gipper was led up the ramp to the old pressbox hanging from the upper deck. Then he made a left turn on the catwalk to join Harry Caray in the broadcast booth. Mottlow, of course, was deterred by no one in search of an interview. He grabbed his tape recorder and headed for the exit to get his chance at Reagan. Sorry, it was not Katy, but a statuesque Cubs security guard named Olivia who barred the door from the outside. The Secret Service and the Cubs had combined to basically lock in the media in the pressbox to keep them away from the president. "What is this, Russia?" came the staccato question from the frustrated Mottlow.

Inevitable mortality came to both Lloyd and Mottlow. Fortunately, they did not go through life worrying about it. Several spring trainings in a row, I visited Lloyd at his Green Valley, Ariz. home south of Tucson. In 2002, I stood with Lloyd outside on a clear, star-studded desert night. We looked up. It's as if all his old friends were there. Caray and Brickhouse had died in 1998. Boudreau and colorful baseball TV director Arne Harris passed away in 2001, Harris dropping on the spot while standing waiting for a table with Chip Caray the night before the season's final game. Lloyd realized he was the last broadcaster left standing from a legendary WGN group. He was philosophic, but not bowed. The bond among friends was strong, though. Lloyd revealed he was startled awake the morning Brickhouse died. He had the strangest feeling. And then the news confirmed it. Days later, Mottlow and I sat together at Brickhouse's funeral service.

One day Mottlow was chasing MacPhail down the press-box corridor. Seemingly the next day, late in the following winter of 2002-03, Red revealed he had a brain tumor. I had one last visit at his Wilmette home, where Red struggled to speak coherently while wife Helen looked on. The tumor spread quickly. Pannozzo, still unaware of the double flipped-bird, sent assistant Samantha Newby to represent the Cubs at his funeral. Then -Blackhawks PR chief Jim De Maria led a large contingent of that team's front office staff to pay their respects. Crazy, Red would have been spitting fire had he attended the Bartman Game later in 2003 at Wrigley Field.

I got the bad news about Lloyd at Wrigley Field during a July 4, 2003 contest against the Cardinals. I knew he was sick, but I was still stunned. He'd tell me the game always goes on.

Even though they departed within two months of another, both two pairs of friendships will keep going, in another form, and their voices will never be quieted in both my head and heart.