



## ***It takes a good baseball voice to honor the best voices of all time***

*By George Castle, CBM Historian  
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The “other side” of Pat Hughes is almost always on duty well beyond the parameters of the seventh-month-long, exhausting baseball season, during which he broadcasts all 162 Cubs games for WGN-Radio.

Hughes’ passion outpowers profit in this second career. Once he’s done as a one-man gang with writing, narrating, producing and marketing his latest “Baseball Voices” CD honoring play-by-play announcers who have achieved the broadcasters’ wing of the Hall of Fame, Hughes is on to sketching out the next tribute.

That’s why mid-summer cannot be a death march, at least away from the booth, as the Cubs slide into yet another irrelevant campaign. There are no dog days as Hughes spends the idle time in hotels on the road scouting and reviewing material for the next CD. Hughes both works hard and has an emotional spur to producing another tribute to men who first stoked his love of baseball, then later served as career influences.

So as Hughes marked his 58<sup>th</sup> birthday May 27 doing the Cubs-Sox game at U.S. Cellular Field, he already was looking toward his 12<sup>th</sup> CD, likely Yankees/”This Week in Baseball” voice Mel Allen, to be recorded after this season at Lake Bluff’s SRN Broadcasting. The CD’s are available at [www.BaseballVoices.com](http://www.BaseballVoices.com).



**Pat Hughes is a one-man gang writing, producing and promoting his "Baseball Voices" CD series.**

“I have to have been influenced by the guy,” Hughes said of choosing the subject matter for “Baseball Voices.” “I loved Jack Buck and Harry Caray. I worked with Harry. You’ll find I put a lot of segments on these CD’s where I’m involved on the air with these people. I worked with Bob Uecker for 12 years. The (Ron) Santo CD is almost entirely Ronnie and me. Marty Brennaman (of the Reds) was third in the series. I listened to Marty when I worked in Columbus in 1981-82. I was greatly influenced by his articulation, his intelligence, his descriptive calls.”

Caray, Santo and Milo Hamilton were the Chicago announcers Hughes has honored. Phillies announcer Harry Kalas, another profilee, grew up in Naperville. Jack Brickhouse did not qualify because he was almost exclusively a TV announcer in his baseball career post-1946, after a few years working Cubs, White Sox and Giants games on radio. Vince Lloyd and Jack Quinlan were sterling radio voices, yet did not get recognized in Cooperstown. Santo, of course, did not make the Hall of Fame as a radio voice, but qualifies with enshrinement as a player. Bob Elson of the White Sox should be on the list for the future.

The other pre-2013 CD’s in the series were the Mariners’ Dave Niehaus, the Dodgers’ Red Barber and the Pirates’ Bob “The Gunner” Prince.

Bottom line is Hughes not only is bringing the all-time voices’ great calls and stories to life, but also is preserving baseball broadcast history in an industry where such archiving was a low priority.

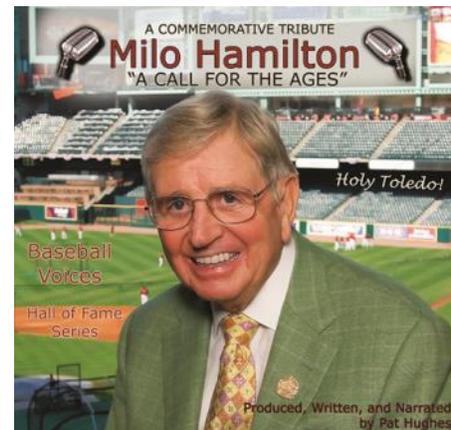
### **Hodges-Simmons CD emotional for Hughes**

Most recently-produced CD honored Giants voices Russ Hodges (“The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!”) and Lon Simmons. That cut to the beginning for Hughes, whose family moved from Tucson, Ariz. to San Jose in time for him to grow up with the Hall of Fame-laden roster of the Giants up the freeway.

“The most emotional one was last fall with Russ Hodges-Lon Simmons,” Hughes said. “It’s the first time two announcers were on one CD. They were the San Francisco radio team from 1958 to 1970. The Giants had a winning record every year they broadcast.

“They were the first two Bay Area big-league announcers. My first two Bay Area announcers. Great players. Great players. Great teams. Two wonderful announcers. It was a very emotional piece to put together.

“The great challenge was to find stuff Russ did. He passed away 42 years ago last month. With Russ, before (the Giants moved from New York to San Francisco) it was hard to find stuff except Bobby Thomson before he got to the Bay Area.



**Milo Hamilton had two tenures as Cubs radio voice and one as Bob Elson's radio sidekick on White Sox games.**

“John Miley, bless his heart.”

Top vintage-baseball broadcast collector Miley produced some New York Giants Hodges clips for Hughes, his latest contribution to “Baseball Voices.” Another source of highlights was southwest-suburban Chicago collector Gary Parker.



**Dr. David Fletcher (left), president of the Chicago Baseball Museum, and Pat Hughes at a recent Pitch and Hit Club Banquet.**

“With the Harry Kalas CD, Gary Parker had an old tape of the Yankees playing the Astros in 1965 (likely the first exhibition game ever in the just-opened Astrodome),” Hughes said. Harry was doing one inning only. I have him calling (Bobby) Richardson, (Mickey) Mantle and (Roger) Maris. I couldn’t believe my luck. I put the entire half-inning on. It’s classic. It’s young Harry working for the Astros. I couldn’t believe him starting the inning (mimicking Kalas’ drawn-out delivery) by saying ‘Richardson, Mantle and Maris.’

“A valuable resource is the Hall of Fame itself. They have an audio library with the Hall of Fame (induction) speeches and highlight tapes of championship seasons. Ballclubs themselves sometimes have recordings. Broadcasters themselves have recordings – Brennaman gave me his call of

Christian Laettner’s NCAA-winning shot against Kentucky.”

Some of those non-baseball calls are included for context.

“Jack Buck called 17 Super Bowls, so I had to put in a couple of plays from a Super Bowl,” Hughes said.

He also has retrieved calls the voices felt were long gone.

“Marty Brennaman said his favorite call was of a Tony Perez game-winning homer against the Giants in his first year (1974),” Hughes said. “I listened to an old Reds’ highlight tape and there it was. I bet Marty hadn’t heard call in 30 years. If it’s special to him, it’s special for the production.”

Genesis of the series came in the off-season of 2005-06. Hughes’ winter schedule of college basketball broadcasts and youth basketball coaching (he was a pretty good amateur player himself) was coming to an end. He also was temporarily laid up due to shoulder surgery.

### **Buck, Caray launched ‘Baseball Voices’**

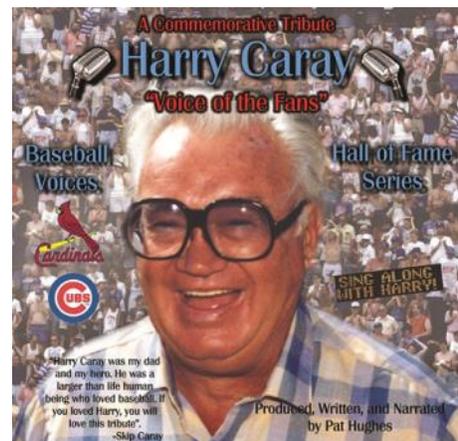
“I had a lot of time on my hands,” Hughes said. “I was thinking of Jack Buck and (his call of) the Ozzie Smith (1985 NLCS). I thought nobody has produced a tribute on an-

nouncers, by an announcer. Because I know what it takes, the travel and the preparation, everything you try to do as a broadcaster. Let me produce a tribute to Jack Buck.

“I put together his Hall of Fame speech and (oral history) anecdotes, his childhood, breaking into the major leagues. I had his Ozzie and Kirk Gibson calls: ‘I don’t believe what I just saw.’ Now having momentum, Hughes also produced a Harry Caray tribute, for which there was no shortage of material.”

Then he got lucky with timing.

“The Cardinals won the World Series in 2006. Dan Caesar (St. Louis Post-Dispatch sport media columnist) plugged the Buck and Harry CD’s with a full column on the Thanksgiving weekend. This is before I had a web site. Dan tells Cards fans it’s a must for the holidays. Three days later, I have about 300 envelopes in my UPS box with checks and orders for CD’s.



**The Harry Caray CD helped launch the "Baseball Voices" series.**

“I thought I had bitten off more than I can chew. It was the Cards’ World Series and Dan Caesar’s column and it was the Jack Buck and Harry Caray that started the whole thing. Without the Caesar article, the project never gets off the floor.”

Hughes had another important backer – commissioner Bud Selig, a friend from Hughes’ Milwaukee Brewers broadcasting days. The baseball boss’ recommendation helped with the laborious licensing process from Major League Baseball.

Each CD is typically 60 to 65 minutes. Red Barber was 47 minutes. In many cases, Hughes has far more material than he can use.

“Uecker and Santo were both difficult to keep down to 70 minutes or less,” he said. “With all the stuff Ronnie and I did on the air, it could have been a four-hour production and it still would have been good. But I’ve decided to go for the greatest hits. Uecker had such an amazing entertainment career, so the challenge was limit to it to 70 minutes or less. You have clips from the ‘Major League’ movies and Lite Beer commercials. I put in three minutes with Bob and Johnny Carson.”

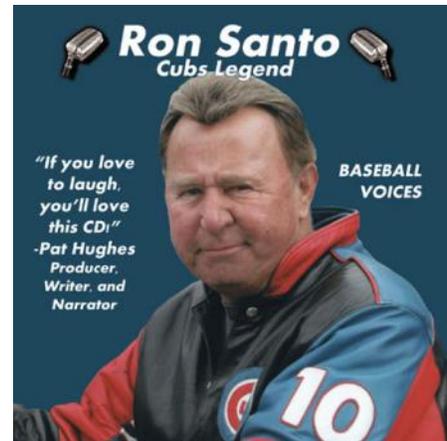
### **More than enough to stock Santo CD**

Hughes survived the trial by fire in playing off the wickedly funny Uecker in the booth. Tapes prove the erudite, quick-thinking Hughes could more than hold his own with “Mr. Baseball.” He went on to use his wry, sly and dry style on Santo to great effect. Their exchanges over 15 seasons blur the roles of whether Hughes or Santo were the straight man.

The Santo “Voices” will tickle the listener’s fancy, to be sure. Included was Santo’s famous “Oh, nooooo!!” reaction when Brant Brown dropped the game-ending fly ball in a crucial pennant-race game in Milwaukee in 1998. Many times Hughes recalled how the emotionally-stricken Santo appeared if he had expired by the shock of the sudden defeat.

Indeed, there was too much material to make the final cut. My own personal favorite, which was not included, is a Hughes-Santo exchange on a Saturday afternoon in the mid-2000s as a game got away from the Cubs in Atlanta. To fill time with their “B” material, Hughes challenged Santo to come up with names of animals that were three letters long: “ewe,” “gnu,” etc. Riding my bike at the time, I nearly toppled off in laughter.

The CD series prove Hughes is almost as good of a producer/writer as he is a dulcet-toned voice. He’s modest about such talents.



**Many of Hughes' interplay with Ron Santo are wry, sly and dry, with no clue about which of the broadcasters is the straight man in the exchanges.**



**Pat Hughes could have had four hours' worth of material celebrating his pairing with Ron Santo, the twosome pictured here at old Busch Stadium in St. Louis.**

“The writing is a challenge,” he said. “I’m not a writer, I’m a broadcaster. But I’m proud of the writing. I agonize over it. It would be like a writer trying to be a broadcaster for the first time. You’re going to feel awkward. It’s not Hemingway.”

But the package is entertaining and holds your attention. That’s the byword of a baseball announcer.

Father’s Day is forthcoming, a perfect time for a copy of “Baseball Voices” to find their way into a Dad’s gift bag to make him feel young again.

“It’s a great, affordable Father’s Day gift,” said Hughes. “Christmas is No. 1 for us, Father’s Day is No. 2. If you’re a baseball fan and it’s (a great) voice is part of your childhood, you’ll really like this.”

Each CD is \$14.95, with free shipping on all orders, available at [www.BaseballVoices.com](http://www.BaseballVoices.com).