

**CBM's Duffy/Voelker Team Up With Legendary Sports Writer Furman Bisher
at National Baseball Historian's Conference ---**

*(Bisher Scored Joe Jackson's Only Interview About the Black Sox Scandal in 1949 To
Recast Image of Joe Jackson and Charles Comiskey)*

Atlanta, Georgia- August 7, 2010 Paul Duffy, legal counsel for the Chicago Baseball Museum, and Dan Voelker, CBM board member, appeared on a panel discussion at the 40th Annual Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) national convention in Atlanta. They were part of a panel discussion with 91 year-old legendary sports-writer Furman Bisher, who wrote for the **Atlanta Journal-Constitution** from 1950 until 2009. In 1949, Bisher scored Joe Jackson's only interview about the aftermath of Black Sox Scandal and his banishment from baseball.

Duffy and Voelker, who are attorneys at Freeborn and Peters in Chicago, received international acclaim for their landmark article "It Ain't So, Kid, It Just Ain't So:" History's Apology to "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, Charles Comiskey and Chicago's Black Sox" that appeared in the September 2009 issue of **Chicago Lawyer** magazine challenging assertions made by Eliot Asinof, author of **Eight Men Out**. The 1963 book that has been widely accepted as the definitive story about the eight White Sox players accused of fixing the 1919 World Series and later made into a popular film of the same name in 1988.



Duffy and Voelker presented to a room packed with more than 350 baseball historians that Asinof got the story wrong about both Jackson and White Sox founder Charles A. Comiskey. They presented their research which recasts the widely portrayed image of Charles A. Comiskey, a skin-flint owner accused of covering up the Black Sox scandal and

the image of Joe Jackson, an illiterate crooked ball player, who took \$5,000 to help fix the 1919 World Series and who forever was exiled from baseball.

They were joined by Bisher, who got Jackson on record about the scandal. Duffy and Voelker were able to prove that Asinof had ignored Bisher's 1949 interview in his 1963 book.

Duffy and Voelker, who are now working a project involving MLB players union and Marvin Miller, believe that the 1963 publication of **8MO**, helped the MLB Players Union with overturning the reserve clause in 1970s because of the negative light **8MO** gave MLB owners, particularly Comiskey.

Voelker presented previously unseen Comiskey documents from 1911 urging American League President Ban Johnson to allow players to gain additional part-time income from playing in other leagues, besides MLB.

In fact, research presented showed Comiskey as one of the most benevolent owners and that White Sox actually had one of the highest payrolls in MLB. Comiskey, as a former star 1st baseman for the American Association St. Louis Browns, was very sensitive about the inequities that players had from owners. In fact, Comiskey jumped to the newly created Brotherhood Players League in 1890 that played at Southside Park II/Brotherhood Park (located at the corner of 35th and Wentworth across the street from Comiskey Park I). Comiskey joined the Brotherhood Player's League as player-manager for the Chicago Pirates in a revolt of Major League Baseball's reserve clause.

It was Comiskey's experience as a player held back by the reserve clause, that gave him insight about some of the inequity about relationships between owners and players, which led to him to be one of the first MLB owners who gave his star players multi-year deals (Jackson and Weaver).

"Eliot Asinof's book, **Eight Men Out** ("8MO"), released in 1963, was a groundbreaking piece of work, once and for all painting a definitive picture of the scandal that rocked professional baseball in 1920, and abruptly ended the careers of the players who were involved," said Voelker. "But Asinof had ignored important documents and facts there were available to him in the early '60s when he wrote **8MO**."

In Bisher's 1949 interview "Shoeless" Joe categorically denied that the infamous "Say It Ain't So" conversation between a young boy and him that allegedly occurred in front of the old Cook County Court House on Hubbard Street and says that story was made up by Charley Owens of the **Chicago Daily News**.

Also, in Bisher's 1949 interview, "Shoeless" Joe claims that he tried to report his suspicions of a "fix" to Comiskey, that he never met any of the gambler-fixers, that he

never agreed to throw the Series and that his performance in the Series supports his innocence.

According to Duffy, Asinof vaguely alludes to this interview in 8MO where he claims, albeit erroneously, that "Shoeless" Joe's denials took on an increased fervor - and, perhaps, exaggeration - as the years went by. "Asinof in fact, possessed the full article--I went through Asinof's papers which were acquired in 2008 by the Chicago History Museum. Jackson denied being part of the fix and said the "Say It Ain't So" statement was myth but Asinof failed to include this vital information in his book, which destroys the reputation of both Comiskey and Jackson."

Bisher's "This is the Truth" interview with Jackson was published in the October 1949 issue of Sport Magazine, the pioneer of sports magazines. Bisher had first met Jackson in 1935 when he was 17 and Shoeless Joe was operating his liquor store in Greenville, South Carolina and both Jackson and Bisher were paid \$250 for the interview.

Bisher spent two days with Jackson at his home Greenville, South Carolina. "I was still with the *Charlotte News* at the time and drove to Greenville to sit with Joe. Which we did, in metal yard chairs at his home in front of the modest bungalow in which he lived, near the mill village where he had grown up..."

"After writing it, I returned to Greenville for his approval and signature—though the public persona of Joe is that he was illiterate, something I seriously doubt. Somewhere in the musty files of *Sport Magazine*, wherever they may be, there must be a copy of the original, bearing his signature, which would be worth a fortune today."

"Though having been kicked out of baseball for 28 years, Joe did not have a trace of bitterness as he became a successful businessman," recalled Bisher.

This panel discussion by Voelker, Duffy and Bisher raises further questions about the credibility of Asinof's research that has become the widely-held viewpoint regarding two of baseball's important figures--Charles A Comiskey, whose legacy was forever scorched by the 1919 Black Sox and has been branded as a Scrooge figure when in fact he was a generous philanthropist, and "Shoeless" Joe Jackson's, whose prospects of obtaining reinstatement in MLB and, more importantly, posthumous admission into the Baseball Hall of Fame, as an illiterate cheat who let down a generation of loyal Southside fans that cast a shadow on a franchise for 40 years, when in fact Jackson batted .375 in the 1919 World Series and categorically played to win.