



‘Harry’s Diary’ elusive missing link to Black Sox Scandal

*By Dr. David Fletcher and Paul Duffy
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One of the most significant documents regarding the Black Sox Scandal is “Harry’s Diary.”

“Harry’s Diary” is a collection of two ledger and legal pads written by Harry Grabiner, Charles Comiskey’s longtime loyal confidant who served as the White Sox’s General Manager from 1915-1945.

Even in partial form with key elements missing, “Harry’s Diary” is a telling and chronological insider’s outline of the events surrounding the initial investigation by Comiskey of the fixing of the 1919 World Series and the events after the fix was exposed in September 1920.

Grabiner (1890-1948) had been with the White Sox since 1905, when he started selling scorecards at the old 39th Street Grounds. He left the White Sox in 1946 to join Bill Veeck in Cleveland and died in October 1948.

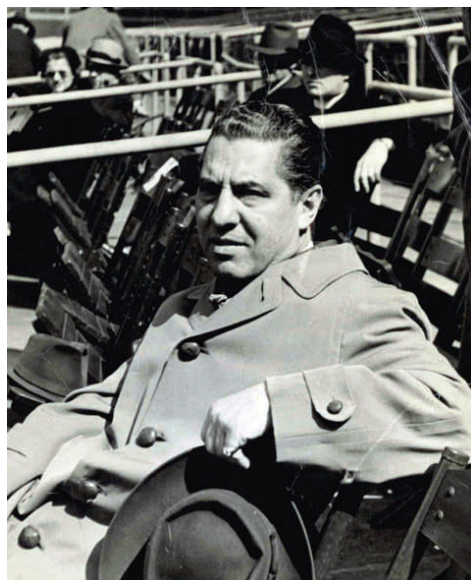
Along with chronological diary journal notations, the “Harry’s Diary” documents also included the 1918 and 1920 White Sox Team Salary List and the Player’s League Constitution and By-Laws¹; the 1919 salary list was missing.

Scintillating excerpts were published by Bill Veeck and Ed Linn in their 1965 book *The Hustler’s Handbook* (G.P. Putnam.) But an original copy of “Harry’s Diary” does not exist for baseball historians to view and try to make more sense of the Black Sox Scandal.

The Hustler’s Handbook was published after Veeck had sold the White Sox for the first time in June 1961 to go “home to die” when he believed he had brain cancer.

“Harry’s Diary” starts off like this:

“The first intimation that there might be something wrong with the World Series and that baseball players might be implicated therein was really brought to our particular notice when Mort (sic) Tennes called me on the telephone in my room at the Sinton Hotel, Cincinnati, after the



Harry Grabiner later in life at Wrigley Field in the 1940s.

first game (Oct. 1, 1919)..."

[are] unusual occurrences. ... But the context in which Veeck reveals Harry Grabiner's diary is also aimed at disrobing corporate culture. Veeck hates the way corporations produce joyless conformity, 'committee-think,' and colorless people."

Diary is 'Rosetta Stone' of Black Sox

The late Gene Carney, a famed Black Sox researcher, called "Harry's Diary" the Rosetta Stone of the Black Sox Scandal.

This vital missing link to baseball history went missing for more than 40 years. Sadly, the narrative is still missing at the present time, except for a few snippets published in *The Hustler's Handbook* and two pages of the actual diary posted on the Internet at BlackBetsy.com. The other 26-plus pages are still missing and remain the hidden Dead Sea Scrolls for Black Sox documents. The complete version of Harry's Diary has never been released or seen in its entirety.

Carney wrote: "Harry Grabiner, according to Veeck, evidently sat down after the 1919 Series to create a written record of events, possibly at Comiskey's suggestion. If there would be a full-scale investigation (this never happened since Comiskey was never indicted for covering up the scandal), both men would be asked hard questions. 'What did you know and when did you know it?' The Watergate questions, now familiar to Americans who no longer believe cover-ups

Even Harry Grabiner's last private secretary with the White Sox, Grace Patricia Ryan Samfillippo, did not know where the diary was located or even that a diary existed.³

Recalled Samfillippo in a 2007 interview: "Harry talked about the Black Sox and the investigation a lot. He offered to share the players' contracts to show their wages were similar to other players of that era. But my (great) uncle Charlie (Comiskey) refused to show them. He felt it was unnecessary to prove his character to anyone."⁴

It was not until 43 years after Grabiner had created this legal defense file for his boss — referred to as CAC in the journal entries — that a 23-year-old White Sox office boy named Fred Krehbiel became key in even confirming the diary's existence. In 1963, Krehbiel was responsible for briefly unearthing one of the key mystery documents in baseball history that contained information on how the Black Sox scandal unfolded from the viewpoint of White Sox management. The hidden journal also suggested that the 1918 World Series between the Cubs and Red Sox was fixed.

Krehbiel's startling discovery of "Harry's Diary," hidden in the bowels of Comiskey Park, is one of the reasons why the story about the fixing of the 1918 World Series even exists.⁵

Krehbiel's personal connection to Chicago baseball history makes his discovery even more startling.

His maternal grandfather was William Louis Veeck Sr., who was president of the Chicago Cubs from 1919 to his death in 1933. Veeck was a sportswriter for the *Chicago American*. In July 1919, Cubs owner William Wrigley Jr. hired him to run the Cubs as team president. Under Veeck's leadership (his job included GM duties) the Cubs won two pennants in 1929 and 1932. But Fred's grandfather's most lasting impact on baseball history was his involvement in bringing to light the Black Sox Scandal.

Veeck initiated the investigation of the Black Sox Scandal when he blew the whistle on his own team as he was alerted about the August 31, 1920, Cubs-Phillies game being fixed.

Soon after, due to Veeck's efforts, a Cook County Grand Jury was empaneled and led to the indictment of the eight Black Sox players in late September 1920.



Bill Veeck published excerpts from "Harry's Diary" in his 1965 "Hustler's Handbook."

Most of chapter 11 in Bill Veeck's *The Hustler's Handbook*, called "Harry's Diary — 1919" (more than 40 pages), deals with the power plays that resulted in Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis winding up in the new Commissioner's job in the wake of the Black Sox Scandal. William Veeck was a key player in engineering the creation of the new Commissioner's office. The diary outlines all the politicking behind the choice of Landis as MLB's absolute authority. The elder Veeck appears several times in "Harry's Diary."⁶

Frederick A. Krehbiel II, the youngest son of Bill Veeck's sister Peggy, joined his uncle to work for the Sox in 1959 as an office boy during Veeck's first ownership season with the Sox. In that same year, the Sox made their first World Series appearance since the Black Sox Scandal.

While attending Lake Forest College, Fred continued to work for the Sox even after Veeck sold the team to John and Art Allyn in June 1961.

Fred Krehbiel's 1963 find inside ballpark storeroom

In August 1963, right after graduating from Lake Forest, Fred stumbled upon a long-lost ledger book and legal pad with two dozen pages of handwritten notes hidden behind a table in the bowels of Comiskey Park. The documents were remnants of unfiltered journal entries written by Harry Grabiner.

In *The Hustler's Handbook*, Veeck discussed his nephew's find: "I predict great things for the young gentleman."⁷ That was an understatement. The finder of "Harry's Diary" went on to become the co-chairman of Molex Corp. Krehbiel is also a well-known philanthropist with his generous funding at Rush University Hospital (the alma mater of author Fletcher), Millennium Park, the Museum of Science and Industry, and other Chicago museums.

He was also the unsung hero in the White Sox staying in Chicago — in December 1975, he helped his uncle Bill Veeck buy back the White Sox from the John Allyn family and prevented the troubled franchise from moving to Seattle or Denver.⁸

After nearly two years of attempting to secure an interview with the discoverer of Harry's Diary, we interviewed Krehbiel on Wednesday, July 20, 2011, at Molex's headquarters in Lisle, a western suburb of Chicago.

Krehbiel had never given an in-depth interview about the historic find.

It was Charles A. Comiskey's great-granddaughter, Illinois State Rep. Patti Bellock, who was able to secure the interview for us. Krehbiel had helped Bellock's campaign.⁹

We had high hopes for the interview, hoping Krehbiel had a copy of his historic find so we could finally read the entire document without the commentary of Bill Veeck, who gave Black Sox researchers a titillating nugget of information but not the entire story of what Harry knew

and when he knew it. We hoped we could secure a copy of “Harry’s Diary” and share it with other Black Sox researchers.

Before the interview, we solicited suggestions for interview questions from Black Sox researchers around the country. For instance, Rod Nelson wanted to know: “What’s the deal about Comiskey’s handwritten Constitution and By-Laws of the Brotherhood of Professional Ballplayers? I don’t know if that manuscript has additional historical significance because it reflects a first draft or something.”

The interview with Fred Krehbiel



Fred Krehbiel (right), who found what appeared to be "Harry's Diary" at Comiskey Park in 1963, with Dr. David Fletcher, president of the Chicago Baseball Museum.

It was an incredibly hot day near 100 degrees when we went to Molex’s offices. Krehbiel’s personal assistant, Sandie Lockhart, was personable to us while we waited. We perused various pieces of artwork and looked at the history of the company, a leading supplier of electronic interconnectors. Krehbiel was very open and engaged throughout the interview. He grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago, between Downers Grove and Lemont. He went to Avery Conley School.

His grandmother, Grace Veeck, had “quite a collection” of memorabilia at her Hinsdale house. When Krehbiel was young, he took some of that collection, which prompted Bill Veeck’s comment in *The Hustler’s Handbook* that Krehbiel was good at finding

things — sometimes before people even knew they were missing!

Krehbiel recalled attending games in Cleveland when Bill Veeck owned the Indians, and at Sportsman’s Park when Veeck owned the St. Louis Browns. He recalled Veeck telling him Eddie Gaedel was a “mean little guy.”

Krehbiel said he vividly remembered finding Harry Grabiner’s diary — even though it was a half-century ago.

He worked for the White Sox from 1959 to 1961, when he was about 18 to 20 years old. Krehbiel was given the duty of cleaning out a storeroom at Comiskey Park. At the time, he worked directly for Don Unferth in the team’s front office, who instructed him to “get rid of” anything in the storeroom. Some of what was in the storeroom was “truly junk,” which Krehbiel threw out. In spite of Unferth’s instruction, however, Krehbiel did not throw out any documents or other things that appeared to be of value. He kept at least one of every item that was not “truly junk” (including documents) that he found in the storeroom.



Old Comiskey Park during the Cubs-Sox City Series. "Harry's Diary" was found in a storeroom in 1963. Photo credit: SDN-009805, Chicago Daily News negatives collection, Chicago History Museum

He gave away many duplicate items that he found; for example, he recalled giving a souvenir ring to a secretary at Comiskey Park and telling her how she could turn it into an attractive necklace for herself.

Similarly, he recalled giving away any duplicates of World Series programs from 1919 and 1959; All-Star Game programs for games held at Comiskey Park, and other items to employees at the park, while keeping one of each item. He recalled finding many player contracts, which he found to be “truly fascinating.” He at one point recalled setting up a display of items that he found in the storeroom in the Bard’s Room at Comiskey Park.

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Contract 1920

✓ Weaver	1920-1921 (for 2 years @ \$1250)	7250
✓ Kriebing	RR R.O.	3250
✓ R.A. Taft	1000 bonus at reporting time	2500
✓ E. Lawrence		275
✓ S. Stewart		300
✓ M. Steingrabe	250 extra	250
✓ R. Sorenson	250	250
✓ J. Zesar	250 extra	250
✓ J. Marquis		300
✓ Martin Black		300
✓ J. M. Moore	300 extra	350
✓ J. Kiefer		150
✓ J. Davidson		200
✓ J. J. Sullivan		450
✓ Ed. Murphy		3500
✓ Ray Schalk	1920-21-22	10,000
✓ Ray Hanson		300
✓ Lou Gleason	Ames lease	11,000
✓ K. K. K.	Ames lease	4500
✓ J. Lee	600 extra	300
✓ E. H. Payne		300
✓ J. S. Collins	1920-1921-1922	1500
✓ J. M. Collins		4500
✓ J. M. Hark		300
✓ E. A. Purcell		3000
✓ M. Lutzko		250
✓ J. R. Henderson		3300
✓ M. Kerr	D (option 4500 1921)	4500
✓ J. M. McMillen		3600
✓ B. L. G.		3250

Krehbiel still has some documents in his possession, including correspondence to and from Bill Veeck and player contracts for White Sox players (including contracts for players on the 1919 team). He found many of those documents when he was working for the White Sox both before and after Bill Veeck sold the team in 1961.

Krehbiel believes, contrary to what Bill Veeck wrote in *The Hustler's Handbook*, that he found Grabiner's diary before Veeck sold the team in 1961. He recalled finding it and bringing it to Veeck at Comiskey Park. He believes this occurred in 1961.

Krehbiel recalled finding the diary “as if it were yesterday. The storeroom was close to the locker room, next to the front gate at Comiskey Park. There were two rooms — an outer room and an inner room. The diary was in the inner room. In that storeroom, there were “boxes and boxes of junk” piled in front of a cabinet. The cabinet was built into a brick wall in an interior area behind home plate. He sorted through the stash, which he said was “mostly junk” that he threw out, and cleared a way to a cabinet. It took several days for him to sort through the things that were in the cabinet.

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✓ Oscar Zerk	1920-21	7000
✓ C. P. Williams	1000 bonus at reporting time	6000
✓ J. Jackson	1920-1921-1922	3000
✓ J. J. Miller		175
✓ W. Miller		160
✓ H. M. O'Connell	500 extra at season	2500
✓ Leo Jordan		400
✓ J. M. Hark		4000
✓ E. L. Cicotte		10,000
✓ R. H. Wilkerson		6000
✓ E. J. Zerk		300
✓ J. M. Hark	Bonus 200	2500
✓ J. M. Hark	Bonus 1500 at kept	6000
✓ J. M. Hark	rep 2000	3500

A 1920 White Sox player payroll ledger from "Harry's Diary." This covers the final big-league season of the eventually-banned Black Sox participants. Photo credit: Mike Nola / BlackBetsy.com

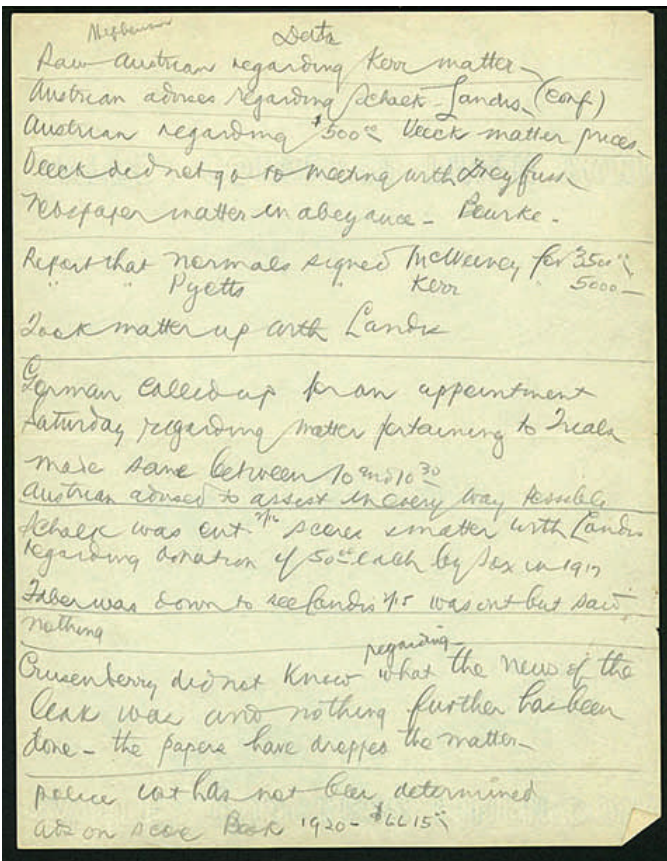
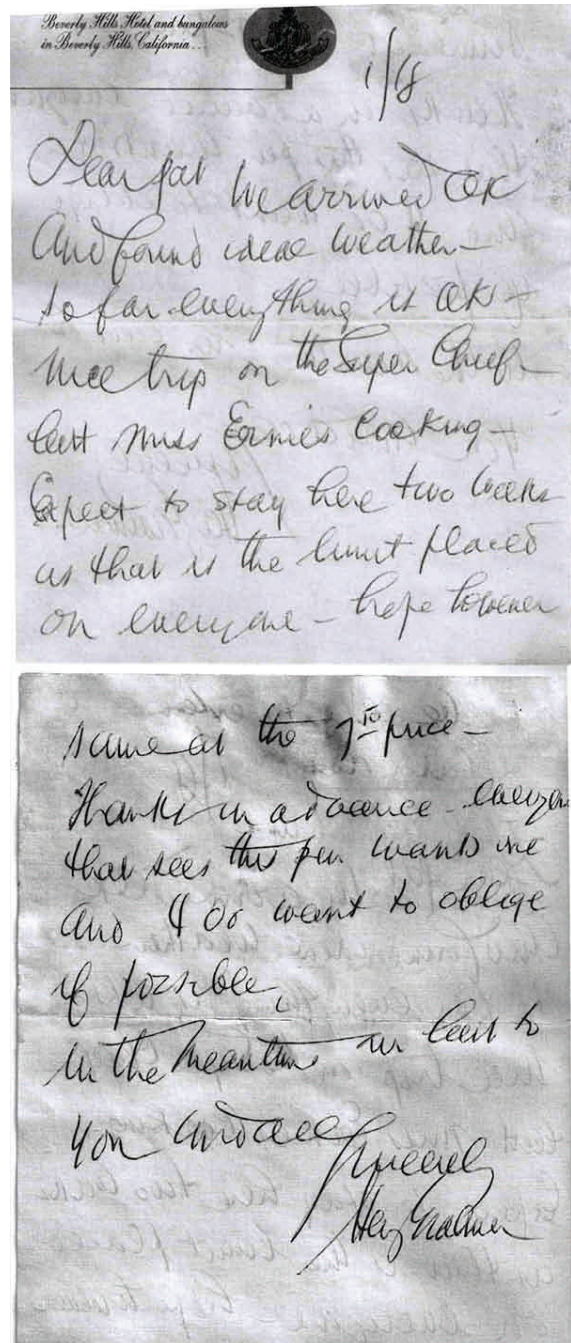
The cabinet was made out of brick and built into a door. The door was made of metal and its inside walls were brick. Someone had removed some bricks from the right-hand side of the cabinet.

He said it was clear that someone created the indentation in order to hide something. Inside the "indented area off to the side, within the cabinet" he found the diary — one bound volume each for the years 1919 and 1920. He took the volumes and brought them to Bill Veeck.

He initially had no idea what they were, but recalled that they were very dirty.

Krehbiel said he read Grabiner's diary when he found it, but "it didn't have a lot of meaning to me" and he "didn't spend a lot of time looking at it." At the time, he was more interested in other items that he found while cleaning the store-room, such as a program in the shape of a baseball glove. He was also fascinated with player contracts, many of which he found in the store-room.

He has not seen the documents since he gave them to Bill Veeck.



This is a photo of a page from "Harry's Diary." The writing has reference to a supposedly fixed game in 1917, in which White Sox manager Clarence "Pants" Rowland was said to have an involvement in the affair.

Photo credit: Mike Nola / BlackBetsy.com

Samples of Harry Grabiner's handwriting from the 1940s can be used to authenticate the diary.

The trail remains cold

We were disappointed that Krehbiel did not have a copy of “Harry’s Diary” for us to copy and share to the world.

Who does have a copy?

This question was posed by the late, famed Black Sox researcher Gene Carney several times before his death in 2009.

In September 2003, Gene and I went to *Eight Men Out* author Eliot Asinof’s house in rural upper New York and spent the day with him. *Eight Men Out* was published in 1963, a few years earlier than *The Hustler’s Handbook*. But when the latter book came out, Asinof spoke with Veeck, who noted how much Asinof had right without the benefit of the diary. In the book *Bleeding Between the Lines* — the story of the making of *Eight Men Out* published in 1979 — Asinof related a humorous exchange when Veeck called him up during a World Series in the 1960s saying he was with Cincinnati Reds pitcher Dutch Ruether who was quite drunk.¹⁰

Asinof told us that he had read the diary — Ed Linn had typed it up and sent him a copy. Instantly, we asked for Asinof to produce a copy of “Harry’s Diary” for us to read (along with 50 hours of taped interviews with Abe Attell that he said were in his attic.)

Asinof, like Krehbiel, did not have a copy of “Harry’s Diary” So where was it now? Well, Asinof had participated in an ESPN Classic documentary about the Black Sox Scandal in 2001 and loaned his copy of Grabiner’s 1919 diary to ESPN producer Gary Rothschild. Asinof said Rothschild never gave it back. Our attempts to see if ESPN had a copy in their files went nowhere.

Gene and I also tracked down Mike Veeck, Bill Veeck’s son, who said that it was back in the Grabiner family¹¹, and had been for many years. The trail stopped there because there were no leads about which descendant had the diary.

Krehbiel said he has “lots” of questions about how the diary became lost and where it went. He recalled two conversations relevant to the diary’s whereabouts. In one, Bill Veeck indicated that he wanted to give the diary to the Baseball Hall of Fame. In the second, he recalled Bill’s wife, Mary Frances Veeck, saying she believed the diary came into the possession of Ed Linn, co-author of Veeck’s three books. Krehbiel recalled that he personally tried to retrieve the diary after Ed Linn died in 2000.¹² Linn’s widow told Krehbiel the diary was not among Linn’s papers. He also recalled that after Mrs. Linn died, he tried to obtain access to Ed Linn’s papers to find it, but he was unsuccessful. That is the only information Krehbiel has as to the present whereabouts of Grabiner’s diary.

I tracked down Linn’s daughter, Hildy, in Arizona. She remained close to Mary Frances Veeck. I finally met Hildy in May 2012, when Fred Krehbiel and Mary Frances Veeck hosted a party for Veeck biographer Paul Dickson at the Chicago Casino Club. She did not have a copy of “Harry’s Diary.” Hildy said some parts of the diary were sold in an auction.¹³

Mike Nola, Official Historian of the [Shoeless Joe Jackson Virtual Hall of Fame](#), might be able to shed some light on who has “Harry’s Diary.” In a 2003 e-mail to author Fletcher, he wrote “The folks at Real Legends (auction house) would not tell me who had it ... but hinted that it was someone either in the Veeck family or someone that worked for Veeck back in the day.”¹⁴ Two pages from the diary can be viewed on his [BlackBetsy.com](#) website. One of those pages includes the journal entry: “Feb 16 (1921), Schalk was out to Comiskey Park. Matter with Landis

regarding donation of \$50 each by Sox in 1917” which includes the discussion of the 1917 bribing of the Tigers to lay down to the White Sox to allow them to win the pennant that year.

The mystery continues about when or where “Harry’s Diary” will turn up to be accessible for researchers. “Harry’s Diary” remains lost after its discovery in the early 1960s by a young Fred Krehbiel. Maybe this is what Harry Grabiner had really hoped for when he stashed his diary hidden in the bowels of Comiskey Park.

Notes

(1) Comiskey had jumped from the St. Louis Browns and joined the short-lived Player’s League in 1890. He managed and played for the Chicago Pirates in 1890 at Southside Park II which was located next to future site of Comiskey Park I on 35th and Wentworth — where the present day White Sox marquee sign is located and is a parking lot for buses. Sorry Cubs fans but Southside Park II also served as the Cubs franchise home park from 1891-1893. It is believed that Comiskey wanted that document to prove he was sympathetic to the Sox players, who had complained he was cheap and uncaring.

(2) Gene Carney, “Notes From the Shadows of Cooperstown.”

(3) Grace Patricia Ryan Samfillippo (1925-2009). As one of the last living people to work for the Chicago White Sox's first general manager Harry Grabiner, she spent countless evenings nestled in the lap of her uncle Charles A. Comiskey as he riveted her with bedtime baseball stories. She worked as Grabiner’s secretary in the early 1940s, nestled by the Bards Room at Old Comiskey Park. Co-author David Fletcher interviewed her several times and found that Grace was a direct living link to the 'Old Roman' and his tremendous impact on baseball in America. Grace was unaware that Grabiner kept a diary of the events surrounding the 1919 Black Sox scandal, later found in the bowels of Comiskey Park by Fred Krehbiel in 1963. She gave Fletcher several Harry Grabiner handwritten letters showing that the handwriting in two pages of the Diary known to still exist and posted online at BlackBetsy.com match to help authenticate it is indeed Grabiner’s work product.

(4) David Fletcher, “[Growing Up Comiskey.](#)” Chicago Baseball Museum Newsletter, April 2007.

(5) In May 2011, the Cubs returned to Fenway Park for the first time since the 1918 World Series and there was a series of stories about the 1918 World Series being fixed, including the May 14, 2011 *New York Times* story: “[Whiff of Scandal Wafts Over 1918 World Series.](#)” It was in this diary that Grabiner revealed that the 1918 World Series between the Cubs and Red Sox had been fixed as Grabiner provided the new baseball Commissioner Landis with a list of 27 “dirty” players, including a scribbled notation next to the name of former Cubs pitcher Gene Packard: “1918 Series fixer.”

(6) The behind the scenes creation of the Commissioner’s Office in Harry’s Diary correspond to documents that were contained in the 2007 Black Sox auction collection acquired by the Chicago History Museum, which were legal files from Comiskey’s attorney Alfred Austrian and believed to be stored in his grandson Charles Comiskey II’s garage until his death in August 2007 and turned up in this auction.

(7) *The Hustler's Handbook*, page 221.

(8) <http://www.chicagobaseballmuseum.org/files/CBMForgotten-Story-76-Sox-20120925.pdf>

(9) Representative Bellock had finally forgiven author Fletcher for bringing her on the “Black Sox 85 Years Later” symposium panel in October 2004 at the Chicago History Museum, where she felt she was savaged by Thomas Cannon, grandson of Ray Cannon, the attorney who represented Joe Jackson in the 1924 Milwaukee civil trial.

(10) Ruether sued Asinof for slander for insinuating in SMO he been out late drinking the night before Game 1 of the 1919 World Series when he pitched Game 1 and the Reds won 9-1. Ruether pitched a complete game allowing one run and one walk, while going 3 for 3 at the plate, including 2 triples.

(11) Grabiner’s daughter June Travis, a famed Hollywood actress, died in 2008. We have not been able to track down any other Grabiner family members. June Travis did help Bill Veeck acquire the White Sox a second time in late 1975. On January 3, 1940, June married Fred Friedlob. They had two daughters, Cathy and June.

(12) *The Hustler’s Handbook* co-author Ed Linn died in 2000 in San Diego at age 77.

(13) It seems criminal to have sold Harry’s Diary piecemeal.

(14) Mike Nola e-mail to author Fletcher, June 30, 2003.