



## ***Eternal fan Levy authors message to ‘never give up’ in new Cubs kids’ book***

*By George Castle, CBM Historian  
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Marv Levy may have made Pro Football’s Hall of Fame in 2001 largely as a Buffalo Bill.

But his alter ego is as... a “Bear.”

Yeah, the 91-year-old four-time Super Bowl coach has respect for the McCaskey family, and thinks they take an unfair rap through their team’s long downslide. But he’s never drawn a check from the Chicago Bears. Instead, he’ll make a few bucks as Grandpa Bruno, a grizzled, loyal Cubs-fan bear in Levy’s new children’s book “Go Cubs Go.”

Truth in packaging: Similar to my assignments for this museum and website, I’m handling the historical information and historical vetting for “Go Cubs Go,” a new release by Ascend Books of Kansas City. The book, now available for a suggested \$18.95 from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [BarnesandNoble.com](http://BarnesandNoble.com), may be the only children’s work among the blizzard of similar-appearing books coming out after the Cubs’ World Series title. To show the appeal of children’s books connected with baseball championships, four such titles came out when the Kansas City Royals won the World Series in 2015.

Why a football guy like Levy, though, as author of a narrative that by necessity has to devolve to a young grade-schooler’s comprehension level? Easy. Levy wrote his life as a Cubs fan and present-day grandpa. He already authored two books, including a fictional work on a football team’s inner workings, which of course he knew from his days as a head coach and general manager.

Long before Levy coached his first game in high school in 1951, the native of Chicago’s South Shore neighborhood rooted for some perennial Cubs contenders in the 1930s and



**Marv Levy with an under-construction Wrigley Field just behind him. The famed marquee also existed in 1945 when Levy was fortunate enough to attend Game 7 of the World Series.**

attended Game 7 of the 1945 World Series at Wrigley Field. Endless patience was ultimately rewarded when the Cubs invited Levy, as a World War II veteran and '45 Fall Classic attendee, to be introduced to the Wrigley Field crowd in the fourth inning of Game 3 on Oct. 28 this year.

“Go Cubs Go,” named after Cubs fans’ post-game victory song, came together quickly after Kris Bryant tossed to Anthony Rizzo for the World Series-clinching out.

“I was both surprised and complimented when (Ascend Books publisher) Bob Snodgrass called and asked me to do it,” Levy said.

“I blinked a little,” he added. Writing a fairy tale-style story for entry-level readers is a lot harder than you think.

### **Granddaughter provides scouting report**

“I had the very good fortune to have an eight-year-old granddaughter, Angela Alexopoulos, who is really into children’s books,” Levy said. “I had the chance to peruse several of them to get the nature of them. It had to be children-friendly as far as understanding text.

“It definitely was fun to keep it simple. It reminded me a little of my coaching approach. Our playbook was about 20 percent the size of every other team’s playbook.

The theme of “Go Cubs Go” is “never give up,” and Levy’s Grandpa Bruno does just that, counseling his two bear grandchildren to stay loyal through every conceivable Cubs finish. Eventually they are rewarded with the 10-inning, Game 7 triumph. Levy’s example of maintaining his enthusiasm attending World Series 71 years apart, with the Cubs totally blanked in the interim, shines through.



**Marv Levy relates how he crafted a children’s book mirroring his life as a Cubs fan.**

“They (his grandchildren) helped cross the bridge very much,” he said. “I can get ‘Grandpa Bruno’ to talk to them the way I’ve learned I should talk to young grandkids like that, and how to get them enthusiastic. I knew how excited everyone would be about the Cubs, whether they were 90 or whether they were 8.”

Levy’s first vivid memory of Cubs fan loyalty, applied to the book, came on Sept. 28, 1938. The Cubs and Pirates battled for first place at Wrigley Field.

“I remember the ‘Homer in the Gloamin’” he said. “I was still in eighth grade... I remember we were all sent home a little early from school so we could listen

to the game (starting at 3 p.m.) on radio. My father (Sam Levy) came home from work early. We were all sitting around the radio.”

In a 5-5 tie, Cubs catcher-manager Gabby Hartnett belted a game-winning homer off Pirates closer Mace Brown on an 0-2 with two out on the ninth. Had Hartnett not con-

nected, the umpires would have called the game on account of darkness. Suspended games were not in the rules; the contest would have had to be replayed from the start the next day. Instead, the Cubs powered into the lead and reached the fourth World Series in Levy's young lifetime a week later.

"I remember hearing the announcer on the radio, Bob Elson, just saying, 'LONG FLY BALL...' and he said nothing else for 20 minutes," Levy said. "All you heard was the roar of the crowd. You knew what happened. We poured onto the streets and there were celebrations. I remember it well."

### **Air Corps uniform prompts entrée to '45 Series**

After enlisting in the Army Air Corps with 21 classmates the day after graduation from South Shore High School in 1943, Levy flunked an eye test in his desire to become a pilot. He instead was trained as a meteorologist and never went overseas. Thus he easily got back to Chicago on furlough when the Cubs returned to the World Series in Oct. 1945.

"The Cubs were down 3-games-to-2. They won it," he said of listening to Game 6 on the radio with a service buddy. "We were elated. We got on the L, changed downtown and got to Wrigley Field. The line was out of sight. But they moved everyone in uniform to the front. If you were in uniform, they dropped the price down to \$1.10."

Never, ever did Levy and anyone in the more than 40,000 at the Game 7 the Cubs lost expect the franchise to fall into an infamous rut and wander endlessly in the baseball desert.

"You expected the Cubs were going to win," Levy said. "All those World Series, they didn't win. But they got there. That helped add to the story I wrote. I incorporated along the way some of those memorable names so the kids would know about history."

Bad ownership and baseball management, of course, were the only curses afflicting the Cubs. Still, they needed a little bit of luck at the right times. Levy learned that all too well in football, especially when his talent-stacked Bills, fielding four Hall of Famers, lost four consecutive Super Bowls from 1991 to 1994.

"You've got to have some breaks go your way, some unpredictable things," Levy said. "There could be a gust of wind that comes up at a certain time. You can have the greatest star on your team making the error that loses the game. What makes all the games (compelling) is it's unpredictable."



**Marv Levy in the Army Air Corps in the mid-1940s. His uniform enabled him to be moved to the front of the line and gain admittance for just \$1.10 for Game 7 of the 1945 World Series at Wrigley Field.**

“When it doesn’t work out your way, go back to work. Don’t lay there in the fetal position. You can’t change what has happened.”

You want a championship, hire the right people, properly delegate and stay out of their way.

“Some owners over-meddle in my opinion,” Levy said. “By and large, they should want to know and be informed and be able to express opinions. There were many times when Mr. (Ralph) Wilson would maybe disagree with what I did – but he was not disagreeable. He would listen to your side of the story. A great man to work for.”

Levy does not get that sophisticated in concept as Grandpa Bruno in “Go Cubs Go.” Why trouble the kids with Cubs failures? Most of them are starting out as fans with a clean slate – a championship slate. But, growing up in a winning environment, the “never give up” lesson of which Levy writes/Bruno emotes is still a good one to have handy.