

## **Phillies' Victorino gets dumped on, becomes latest pour man's Al Smith**

*By Paul Ladewski*

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One-time White Sox outfielder Al Smith was a productive hitter for much of his 12 seasons in the major leagues, but the three-time All-Star is best remembered neither for any of his 1,466 career hits nor his Negro League exploits before them.

Fifty years after the fact, any mention of Smith immediately stokes memories of Game 2 of the 1959 World Series, when he took perhaps the most famous beer bath in baseball history. As the headline of his New York Times obituary said, "Al Smith, 73, Dies; Was Doused in Series."

Smith passed away in January, 2002, but his name came to light again last Wednesday night, when Philadelphia Phillies outfielder Shane Victorino was doused by an overzealous Cubs fan at Wrigley Field.

Compared to what Smith endured, Victorino has no reason to cry in his beer. At least he was able to catch the ball on the warning track in left-center field. On that Friday, Oct. 2, afternoon at Comiskey Park, Smith could only watch helplessly while the ball hit by Los Angeles Dodgers second baseman Charlie Neal landed several feet into the lower deck in left field.

Mere fractions of seconds earlier, in his haste to retrieve the ball, a fan named Melvin Piehl inadvertently knocked over a full cup of beer from atop the ledge of the wall. "It hit the bill of my cap and came down the side of my face," Smith recalled years later. "It was in my nose and everywhere. At first, I thought the guy dumped it on purpose, but the umpire (John Rice) told me he just tipped it over trying to get the ball. I wouldn't have caught the ball anyhow. It made about the third row."

If not for the work of Chicago Tribune photographer Ray Gora, the play would not have become nearly as memorable.

From a spot adjacent to the third-base dugout, Gora shot an eight-panel sequence, one of which would become among the most vivid images in baseball history. It shows Smith in an upward gaze near the wall, a shower of beer about to rain on his head. For years, Smith had a blown-up photograph of the moment in his Chicago home.

Often overlooked is the significance of the play, which marked the beginning of the end for a White Sox team in search of its first World Series championship in 42 years.

The Dodgers pulled to within 2-1 on the Neal homer. The visitors poured it on starter Bob Shaw two innings later, when pinch hitter Chuck Essegian and Neal hit homers give them a 4-2 lead, their first of the Fall Classic. The Dodgers went on win the game and even the series, 4-3, and the White Sox never recovered thereafter. The Dodgers went on to claim the championship in six games.

In the series, Smith hit .250 (5-of-20) and led the team in doubles (three) and bases on balls (three).

“We lost the game, and that's what bothered me more at the time," Smith once said. “Still does.”