

Final Link to Black Sox players, old Copper League Passes Away

By Paul Ladewski

Tommy Foy was a sawed-off batboy in the old Copper League many decades ago – he never did reach 5-foot-5 by most accounts – but the kid didn't always have to look up to the faded White Sox stars who played out their careers in virtual anonymity.

Believed to have been the last living connection to the players implicated in the Black Sox scandal, Foy passed away of natural causes at 96 years of age in Bayard, N.M., on Monday last week.

Several years after Eddie Cicotte, Chick Gandil, Buck Weaver and Lefty Williams were banned from Organized Baseball, they migrated to the Copper League, which included semi-pro teams in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Almost all were recruited by Hal Chase, the former New York Highlanders and Giants first baseman who was widely reputed to have fixed games earlier in his career and was blackballed as a result.

Weaver and Williams spent the 1927 season with the Fort Bayard Veterans, who played their home games at the military post-turned-hospital for veterans afflicted with tuberculosis. It was there that the young Foy formed a closer bond with Weaver especially.

Weaver was active in the community and a popular figure around town. He was among the players who donated equipment to Foy's youth team, whose games they attended on occasion.

“When I spoke with Tommy in September last year, he told me, 'Hal Chase and Buck Weaver could be rehabilitated, I think, but Chick Gandil and Eddie Cicotte were scoundrels through and through,’” said Mary Darling, a retired educator who interviewed Foy several times for a screen play in recent years. “Tommy didn't hold back about his disdain for Gandil in particular. He didn't care for Cicotte, either. Lefty Williams' alcoholism was very recognizable to him even as an 11- and 12-year-old observer.”

Foy liked to recall the time that he skipped school to attend a recreation of the 1925 World Series via telegraph at the Fort Bayard theater.

“Tommy told me that patients and players from throughout the Copper League watched the entire series together,” Darling said. “As its mascot at the time, he was considered part of the team and welcomed into the fold. I can imagine what it must have felt like to be 10 years old watching the World Series in the same room as Buck Weaver, Chick Gandil and Hal Chase.”

A Notre Dame University graduate, Foy was a survivor of the Bataan Death March in World War II and received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart upon his discharge shortly afterward. He also served in the New Mexico state legislature for three decades.