

Minor Trips Newsletter

22nd Great Season

The first, the finest, the friendliest publication for fans of baseball travel. Our 22nd great season!

Volume 18, Issue 1

January 2012

Special points of interest:

- Baseball Fiction
- Trivia & Humor
- Minor Baseball News
- Readers Write
- Ballpark Reviews
- Book Reviews
- Baseball Essays
- Contests
- Independent League Baseball

From the Front Office



Call this déjà vu, or Karma, or mere coincidence; but it happened.

Last winter, I sat down one snowy evening to go through the Minor Trips mailbag. I grabbed few dozen envelopes and began to open and sort. Several of the letters troubled me and I set them aside -

"Sorry to say, but at my age, 83, I can no longer drive. Thanks for all the...."

"I have been out of work for over a year. Once the \$15 meant nothing, now..."

"Dad really enjoys his baseball newsletter, but he has been moved to a nursing home and..."

"Health expenses have cut our budget to the bone..."

"Thanks for keeping me in

the lineup even though I did not pay last year; it's been a rough few seasons..."

These letters, as well as a fistful of similar ones we received last year, caused me to lean back and ponder.

Minor Trips is not about money, it's a fun project for you and for us. Neither age, health nor finances should be an impediment.

I grabbed these troubling letters and hunted down a large envelope with similar notes from last season. It was time to start a "Reserve List" and create a database of folks who enjoy Minor Trips but circumstances interfere. They will get their copy

After placing the envelope with the names for this new database on my desk, I returned to the pile of mail.

Here's where things got surreal. The *next* envelope I opened was a typical re-order form but included a check for a substantial amount and another note -

"Dear Bob, The extra money is for you to use on some worthy project, maybe introduce people to the joys of minor league baseball or carry some members who are struggling. Minor Trips has given me a lot of enjoyment, this is just a small way that I can repay you."

Between the size of the check and the timing of the donation, I almost fell off

my chair. It felt like this generous benefactor was reading over my shoulder. Amazing.



At any rate, if you, or anyone you know, enjoys reading Minor Trips but some crazy or sad problems stand in the way - just return your order form with a short note. We will, anonymously, put you on the "temporarily disabled list" until whenever. Your teammates have you covered.

The Hall of Fame Certificates were a big hit. Minor Trip subscribers began counting and writing us that they were surprised how the ballparks and memories added up.

The certificates will be an ongoing project, each time you reach an increment of one hundred parks visited, just drop us a note and we will send legal documentation. One Hall of Famer wrote that he was so thrilled to get the certificate that,

"It will be framed and hung before the sun sets this evening."

We are trying something different this year. We are adding a second newsletter that will contain your guidebook.

We are experimenting with formats that will allow you to remove the center section of the second newsletter and fold it into your handy guidebook. There is no extra cost (to you) and it will give you a second dose of stories and content. It will also allow us to add some fringe leagues.



Photographers Eric and Wendy Pastore caught a summer evening at LaLachur Park in Lowell Massachusetts, home of the Lowell Spinners of the New York/Penn League. Surrounded by old warehouses and a unique bridge, the simple park has a fantastic view.

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www.digitalballparks.com

Table of Contents

Manager's Desk	Page 1
Plans & Positions & Poems	2
Hall of Famers, Lugo & Error	3
Minor History	4
Letters from Left Field	5
Theme Nights / Promotions	6
Minor Trips Memories	7
Around the Horn	8
Baseball City Reviews	9
Readers Recommend	10
Book Reviews	11
Independently Speaking	12
Clicking & Migration	13
Fiction "Tough Luck Player"	14
Twitching, Trivia, Movie	15
Name Game	16
SABR	17
Leagues of their Own	18
Non Fiction "Into the Minors"	19
Champs & Final Quotes	20

Minor Trips

Founded in 1991, Minor Trips is a two-part publication which includes a newsletter each December and a companion guidebook/newsletter mailed each March. Annual subscription price is \$15. Copyright 1991, Minor Trips. Mailing address is P.O. Box 360105, Strongsville OH 44136

Mission Statement

To enhance the enjoyment of Minor League and independent league professional baseball; to keep fans apprised of developments; to serve as a clearinghouse for information; and to promote the sport and cherish its history.

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Hallowed Grounds

The requirements for a classic ballpark are subjective. Age does not necessarily give a baseball park the panache or the atmosphere that many of us enjoy. Thankfully there are still hallowed baseball grounds left in America. These ballparks take us back to a time when going to a baseball game was all about the baseball game. This list came across my desk last summer. I concur completely; classics all. See them while you can:



1. Doubleday Field, Cooperstown NY
2. Rickwood Field, Birmingham AL
3. Centennial Field, Burlington VT
4. First Energy Stadium, Reading PA
5. Damaschke Field, Oneonta NY
6. Bowman Field, Williamsport PA
7. McCormick Field, Asheville NC
8. Modern Woodmen Park, Davenport IA
9. Bowen Field, Bluefield WV
10. Diethrick Park, Jamestown NY

Communications

If you ever wondered, about sixty percent of you list an e-mail address when you return your order form. Undoubtedly, more of you HAVE an e-mail account.



Your e-mail addresses come in handy when we need to send out re-order reminders and if there are important, last minute updates to the guidebook we need to share with you.

A subscriber wrote and showed us how to send a mass e-mail without having all of the the e-mail addresses visible. A good tip. So if you are on the fence about sending your e-mail address, be assured that we keep it private.

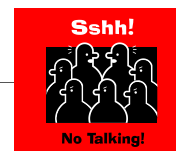
Speaking of e-mail, if you have friends or fellow fans on facebook, or travelers on twitter, or who knows what branch of the social network, if you feel they might be interested in joining our merry band of Minor Leaguers, they can contact us at mi-

-The Summer Game

Roger Angell

"Baseball's time is seamless and invisible, a bubble within which players move at exactly the same pace and rhythms as all their predecessors. This is the way the game was played in our youth and in our father's youth, and even back then back in the country days there must have been the same feeling that time could be stopped. Since baseball time is measured only in outs, all you have to do is succeed utterly; keep hitting, keep the rally alive, and you have defeated time. You remain forever young."

Shhhh.



Did you know that when you see a runner chatting with the first baseman or base coaches, they are breaking the rules of baseball?

"Players in uniform shall not address or mingle with spectators...No manager, coach, or player shall address any spectator before or during a game. Players of opposing teams shall not fraternize at any time while

"How could he lose the ball in the sun—he's from Mexico?"

Harry Caray

"All I remember about my wedding day is that the home team lost a double-header."

"So I'm ugly. So what? I never saw anyone hit with his face."

Yogi

"It ain't nothing' til I call it."

Umpire Bill

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Minor Trips Hall of Famers

Our first class of Minor Trips subscribers visiting over 100 different ballparks have officially been inducted. Several of you wrote to say you will reach the milestone soon. All these folks have a treasure trove of memories and now they have a certificate, too!

LEROY HARRIS (HICKORY, NC)
ROBERT DAVAN (NEW CITY, NY)
GEORGE POWERS (CUMMINGS, GA)
ROY ELLERBROCK (ITHACA, NY)
MICHAEL FORSTER (ALABASTER, AL)
BILL CONNORS (BOISE, ID)
DALE & LUANN KLEIN ** (IL)
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MARK SUMNER (STOW, OH)
JOE DULLE (FT. WORTH, TX)
PHIL CAPPALLO (LAKEWOOD, OH)
RONALD LIND (PLATTESVILLE, WI)
PAUL GILKESON (STATEN ISLAND, NY)

* OVER 200
 ** OVER 300

“When I get my copy of Minor Trips on a cold winter day, I never know if I should tear right through it in one big gulp - or if I should sip it slowly, a page each day. Finally figured it out; I do both. Keep pitching.” Len - Washington, DC

In August, Minor League player Mike Jacobs of the Colorado Rockies farm system became the first MLB player suspended for a positive HGH (human growth hormone).



The 30 year-old player was given a fifty game suspension and quickly given his release. Jacobs, who took the banned substance for knee and back ailments, became the first North American professional athlete punished for HGH.

You Go Lugo

My most memorable minor memories took place back in 1996 at Old Kent Park in Grand Rapids when the Western Michigan Whitecaps hosted the Quad City River Bandits.

This fun filled weekend began on a Friday night when I caught the attention of the on deck hitter for the Bandits, a shortstop by the name of Julio Lugo. It was late in the game and Julio was having one of those games he would like to forget.

As one who always brought a scorebook to the ballgame, I noticed the Julio had struck out in his first three appearances at the plate. From my third row seat, I raised my scorebook to Julio and, accompanied by a look of futility, I deftly gave him the sign to lay down a bunt down third base.

Sure enough, Julio did just that and beat it out for a base hit. All the season ticket holders roared in approval as Julio gave me the biggest smile imaginable standing on first base.

Julio's incredible smile won a boatload of fans over the three days. Even though our group of about 20 wanted the Whitecaps to win we cheered lustily for Julio each game.



Following the last out on the last game on Sunday night, my wife and I left our seat to begin the drive back to our home in Muskegon. But wait! As I was walking up the steps I heard a voice behind me, and when I looked, there was Julio climbing over the wall and dashing towards me with his spikes making a loud clatter as he climbed the concrete staircase.

With a big smile on his face, Julio shook my hand and thanked me for making this a wonderful weekend. Can you imagine this scene taking place in the big leagues?

From that day forward, I always checked the box scores to see how Julio was progressing in his quest to make it to the big show. And he did!

Mea Culpa



We made a hideous mistake in the guidebook...twice. Two years ago we listed the Gwinnett Braves in Virginia when they should have been in Georgia. At least ten people wrote about this error. I believe I may have driven subscriber Alan Rice into apoplexy as he is our unofficial fact checker after thirty years working on the Billing Gazette copy desk.

Due to a comedy of errors (involving a memory stick) and the problem of trying to write the guidebook while out of town (which we did last winter), last year's guide went out, once again, with Gwinnett misplaced. We notified everyone with an e-mail address and hand corrected several hundred, but

Tidbits

Recently the Bellingham Bells in Bellingham, WA, announced a new owner, a new logo and a new mascot. As a first in organized baseball, the mascot is a hamster. It derives from the fact that people in Bellingham are known as "Bellinghamsters."
 Dave C, NC

Sorry I'm late, I thought I sent in my form months ago but I looked it up and just forgot. I guess I have taken one to many fastballs to the head.
 Al

Was in the line-up years ago but...hey life happens. Finally drifted back and was amazed how much the newsletter has grown. I guess you can say I am returning off the wavier list.
 Greg

This five minute video on how baseballs are manufactured is very interesting and a much more complex process than one would assume. ...
www.reliableplant.com view **25724 how-baseballs-are-**