JUL 19, 1993

THE SECRETS OF SAM

HALL OF FAMER SAM RICE CAME OUT OF NOWHERE TO PLAY RIGHTFIELD FOR THE WASHINGTON SENATORS. BUT WHERE WAS NOWHERE?

STEVE WULF

His is one of 215 plaques in the Hall of Fame gallery, and visitors tend to skip past him on their way to more recent or recognizable names. If they stopped, they would read:

EDGAR CHARLES (SAM) RICE
WASHINGTON 1915-1933
CLEVELAND 1934

At bat 600 or more times eight different seasons. Had 200 or more hits in each of six seasons. Batted .322 for 20-year career and had 2,987 hits. Set AL record with 182 singles in 1925. Led AL in number of hits (216) in 1924 and 1926. Led AL in putouts for outfielders with 454 in 1920 and 385 in 1922.

No plaque tells the whole story of a Hall of Famer, but the Rice bronze may be the most inadequate in Cooperstown. Numbers can say that he was a great hitter and a fine outfielder. The story of his life—actually two lives—is the stuff of a novel or a play or a movie. No plaque could tell of the tragedy and triumph of Sam Rice. No plaque could reveal the mystery he held on to with a death grip, as if it were a fly ball in the World Series. His plaque should just read: A MAN WHO COULD KEEP A SECRET.

One of his secrets is part of baseball lore. On Oct. 10, 1925, the Washington Senators and the Pittsburgh Pirates, having split the first two games of the World Series, met for Game 3 at Griffith Stadium. These were two splendid teams, boasting many future Hall of Famers: Rice, Goose Goslin, Walter Johnson and Stan Coveleski of the Nats; Pie Traynor, Kiki Cuyler and Max Carey of the Pirates.

It was a rotten day, really, cold and windy, but an overflow crowd of 36,495 fans, including President Calvin Coolidge and his wife, Grace, braved the elements to welcome the Senators home. The fans cheered mightily in the bottom of the seventh when Washington scored twice to take a 4-3 lead. In the top of the eighth, second baseman-manager Bucky Harris entrusted the lead to relief pitcher Firpo Marberry. The prototype of the modern-day closer, Marberry struck out Pirate shortstop Glenn (Buckshot) Wright and first baseman George (Boots) Grantham. But then catcher Earl (Oil) Smith turned on a Marberry pitch, lining the ball toward the temporary bleachers in right centerfield.

Rice, who had moved over to right from center at the start of the inning, took off after the ball. He leaped and made a backhanded catch near the fence, then tumbled over the four-foot-high barrier and disappeared into the crowd. Everyone in the stadium froze, waiting for Rice to reappear. Seconds passed. Finally, he emerged from the crowd, holding the ball in his glove. Umpire Charlie Rigler signaled that Smith was out.

Rigler was a National League ump, but that didn't stop the Pirates from storming the field in righteous indignation. Leading the charge were manager Bill McKechnie and owner Barney Dreyfuss. McKechnie maintained that Rice had dropped the ball and that a spectator had placed it back in his glove. When the umpires refused to reverse the call, McKechnie went to Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, sitting in the commissioner's box along the first base line, to lodge a protest, but the Judge waved him off.

In the ninth the Pirates loaded the bases with one out, but Marberry induced a pop-up and then a fly ball, and the Senators won 4-3 to take a 2-1 lead in the Series. The next day The Washington Star reported: "Old baseball men, players and writers searched their memories for a catch that could rival Rice's, but found none. [Senators' owner] Clark Griffith, who played baseball when the game was in short trousers, declared he had never seen any catch approach it.... [Former Senator pitcher] Nick Altrock, who has been around in a baseball sense nearly as long as Griffith, was rendered speechless. All he could do in the clubhouse after the game was to murmur, 'How did he do it?' "

The more pressing question was, Did he do it? Even commissioner Landis wasn't so sure. As Rice later recalled, "The Judge called me to his hotel, the old Occidental, the next morning. I walked into his room, and he had me sit in a chair for five minutes before he even acknowledged me. Finally, he turned to me and said, 'Sam, did you catch that ball yesterday?'

"I told him, 'Judge, the umpire said I did.' Landis thought about it for a time. Then he said, friendlylike, 'Sam, let's leave it that way.' "

And that's the way Rice left it. Some 1,600 fans voluntarily filed affidavits and forwarded them to Landis, but half of them said Rice had caught the ball—"it shone in his glove like a bright star"—and half said he hadn't. Rice might have been pressured for a clearer answer had the Senators gone on to win the world championship; the Pirates, however, became the first team to come back from a 3-1 deficit to take the Series.

Still, people wondered. One magazine offered Rice $2,500 for the whole truth and nothing but, but Rice said nothing doing, even if that was a princely sum at the time. When Rice was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1963, Paul Kerr, then the president of the Hall, tried to get him to reveal the truth. Even then Rice held his ground, and his tongue. Two years later Rice told his fellow Hall of Famers at a banquet during induction weekend in Cooperstown that he had just written a letter in which he revealed the truth about that October day in 1925. The letter, he said, was to be opened upon his death.

Sam certainly knew how to keep a secret. But then, he had been practicing.

"I remember Daddy wouldn't let me go into our room at the Otesaga Hotel [in Cooperstown] while he was writing that letter. I was 21 at the time. I used to ask him, 'Would you tell me if I asked you?' And he'd say, with a little gleam in his eye, 'No.' So I never asked him if he caught the ball."

Dr. Christine Rice is sitting at a table in the dining room of the Manor Country Club in Rockville, Md. The only child of Sam and Mary Rice, she lives in the house in which her parents last lived and plays the same golf course her father played. She even inherited his beautiful lefthanded swing.

"Daddy was the kindest, most considerate man I've ever known," says Rice, who has a doctorate in education and teaches art to junior high students. "He helped so many people along the way. He reminded me of Gregory Peck, the actor. But he never talked about himself much. He kept it all inside—the catch, his life before baseball. It was only by accident that we found out about the storm."

Most biographies of Sam Rice pass over the early years. Lee Allen, the esteemed historian for the Hall of Fame museum, simply noted upon Rice's election to the Hall that "he got off to a much later start than most players."

These are the basic biographical facts: Edgar Rice was born in 1890 in Morocco, Ind., and grew up on a farm. At 23 he joined the Navy, and at 25 he successfully tried out as a pitcher for a minor league team in Petersburg, Va. That's where he came to the attention of Griffith, and late in the 1915 season Rice made his major league debut with the Senators. That was his early life in a nutshell, or at least the nutshell that Rice always gave to anyone who asked.

When Rice initially reported to the Senators, a sportswriter referred to him as "Sam" Rice because he didn't know what the new player's first name was. Rice immediately adopted the name, preferring it to Edgar (although to his dying day he always wrote his signature as "Sam"—quote, unquote—Rice.) Perhaps he just liked the sound of his new first name. But it may also have helped him to forget what happened to Edgar Rice.

As Christine Rice would one day learn, Petersburg was not the first minor league team her father had tried out for. Nor was her mother, Mary, her father's first wife. According to a meticulously researched article in the Newton County (Ind.) Enterprise by John Yost in 1984, Edgar Rice had married Beulah Stam in 1908. They had moved into a home in Watseka, Ill., not far from the Rice family farm in Morocco, and had two children: Bernie, born in 1909, and Ethel, born in 1910.

Although Edgar worked in a variety of jobs, he harbored dreams of playing professional baseball. In April 1912, at the age of 22, he went to try out for the minor league team in Galesburg, Ill. With Edgar away, Beulah and the kids went to stay for a few days with his parents, Charles and Louise Rice, and Edgar's two younger sisters. On Sunday, April 21, the family went to Iroquois, Ill., to visit some friends and returned to Morocco around 6 p.m. As the Rices arrived home, the skies were darkening and storm clouds were moving in from the southwest. The family hurried inside, but at 6:30 the house took a direct hit from a tornado. The local newspaper of the time described the devastation:

"Its work there was almost too terrible to relate. The house was blown entirely away as were other buildings but a tool shed which was untouched. The timbers of the house and barn were scattered for nearly a quarter of a mile to the southeast. The furniture and contents of the house were twisted into shapes which would seem impossible to accomplish, and when the wreck had passed, every member of the family except Mr. [Charles] Rice lay dead either in the yard or adjoining fields.... The bodies were found as far as 60 rods from the house, nearly stripped of clothing, bruised and broken."

After the tornado had passed, neighbors hurried to the Rice farm to help, and there found Charles Rice running distractedly among his dead loved ones, carrying the body of one of the children in his arms.

When Edgar received word of the horror, he rushed home from Galesburg. Thousands attended the two funerals, one for Charles's wife and children and one for Beulah, Bernie and Ethel. For a week Edgar staved at his father's bedside in a neighboring farmhouse, but Charles had lost the will to live. He died, as if of a broken heart, on April 30.

One can only imagine what was going through Edgar's mind. What if I hadn't been away? Beulah and the kids at least would have been back in Watseka. What if I hadn't gone to that tryout, if I hadn't eared so much about playing baseball? They would be alive today.

His family gone, his life destroyed. Edgar Rice fled his home and became a drifter. He worked as a railroad section hand. He harvested wheat in the fields of Minnesota and the Dakotas. He bottled whiskey at the Green River distillery in Louisville. Months later he wandered to Norfolk, Va., and in 1913 he enlisted in the Navy and began serving as a fireman aboard the USS New Hampshire.

As it happened, the New Hampshire had a baseball team, and Rice couldn't resist the siren call of the game. The next winter he played on the team at Guantanamo naval base in Cuba. And while he was on furlough in Petersburg, Va., he tried out for the local Virginia league team. The owner, Doc Lee, was so impressed by the righthanded pitcher that he bought Rice out of the Navy—something you could do in those days. Rice went 9-2 for Petersburg in 1915. At the time Griffith, then the Senators' manager as well as their owner, was pressing Lee for payment of a $300 debt. Lee, who was hard up for cash, offered his best pitcher instead, and Griffith, amused by the offer, took him up on it. As it turned out, Griffith got only one win from his $300 hurler—that and 2,889 hits.

Two years before Babe Ruth convinced the Red Sox he was more valuable as a lefthanded-hitting outfielder than as a pitcher, Rice did much the same thing. He became the Senators' full-time rightfielder and leadoff man in 1917, batting .302 with 35 stolen bases. Even though Rice had already served in the Navy, World War I caused him to spend most of 1918 in the Army. He resumed his baseball career in 1919, and from then until 1932, he hit below .310 only twice. He earned the nickname Man o' War, not only because of his service stints but also because of his thoroughbredlike speed. In 1920 he led the American League in stolen bases, with 63. Sam wasn't one to brag, but he always maintained that he actually had 71 stolen bases that year.

Rice was immensely popular with Senator fans, who appreciated his steady play and uncanny stroke. His best season came in 1925, when he batted .350 and drove in 87 runs. In the Series that year against the Pirates, he hit .364. When Rice went over that temporary barrier in right center to make his controversial catch, he was 35 years old and still at the top of his game.

At age 40 he hit .349 with 73 RBIs. His numbers began to dip after that—whose wouldn't?—but Rice was still a very useful outfielder when the Senators arranged a special day in his honor in 1933. Among his many gifts that afternoon was a beautiful new Ford—quite a nice prize during the Depression. But then, he had given the Senators quite a return on their initial $300 investment. Upon Rice's announced retirement that winter, a Washington sportswriter named Joe Holman composed a sweet little poem entitled Man o' War, which read in part:

Somehow you always seemed a cinch,
To clock that apple in a pinch.
To play the game with loyal heart,
A splendid soldier, loyal, smart.
Old Man o' War, you've played and won;
Yours was a race superbly run.

The race wasn't quite over yet. Walter Johnson, Rice's good friend, beseeched him to join the Cleveland Indians, whom the ex-pitcher was managing, so Sam put on a different uniform for the first time in 20 years. He hit .293—not bad for a 44-year-old—then hung up his spikes for good, 13 hits shy of 3,000.

Shirley Povich, the dean of Washington sportswriters, covered Rice for many years. "What a great hitter he was," says Povich. "One time against Cleveland the starting pitcher brushed him back, and Sam lined the next pitch off the pitcher's knee. Sam's next time up, the relief pitcher brushed him back, and Sam lined his next pitch off the guy's foot. Put out two Indian pitchers that day. Otherwise, he was a very nice man, Sam was. But a bit of a loner."

In his 20 years in baseball Rice, even if he was a bit of a loner, had made his share of friends in the game. Yet there is no evidence that in all those years Sam Rice ever uttered a word to anyone about the tragic life of Edgar Rice.

He didn't marry—again—until he was 39 years old, to Mary Kendall. Upon retiring from baseball Rice started a chicken farm in Ashton. Sam Rice's Chicken Hatchery, it was called, and the farm was quite successful. During World War II, Rice again contributed to the war effort, selling his eggs to the Army for their use in manufacturing a typhus vaccine. In 1945 Rice sold the chicken farm, but he kept some other feathered friends around, breeding and racing champion pigeons.

Rice was an accomplished duckpin bowler as well as a crackerjack golfer. "We would go out to a field," recalls Christine, "and he would have me stand in one spot, then pace off the distance he hit his five-iron. I would stand there and watch as he hit balls around me in a perfect semicircle. When he was done I would put them in a basket." When he was 74 and a newly inducted Hall of Famer, Sam was still able to shoot his age.

Rice pretty much stayed away from baseball after his retirement. Says Christine, "He said that watching baseball made him tired, because when the players were running, he was running alongside them." But he did miss the camaraderie. On some evenings a car would pull up in the driveway with old Nick Altrock, his former teammate, in the back and a driver in the front. "Daddy would go into the house and come out with two cold beers," Christine recalls, "and while Nick sat in the car and Daddy leaned on the outside of it, the two of them would just talk about old times."

Along the main road in Ashton stand the Sam Rice Manor houses, still lived in and well-kempt. After Rice sold his farm property there in the early '60s, the structures were built as a model housing development. And nearby there also still stands a beautiful brick house that is now used as the offices for a tree nursery. On this part of the property Sam and Mary once owned a nice farmhouse, situated close to the road; but they never lived in it. "Unbeknownst to the neighbors," says Christine, "Daddy started building this new brick house right behind the farmhouse. When the new house was done, they moved their belongings in, then Daddy called the lire department and had them burn the farmhouse down. Presto, they were living in a house the neighbors had never seen before."

A surprise for the neighbors, perhaps, but no surprise given the history of Edgar Rice. It wasn't the first time, after all, that he had turned to the future by eradicating the past. "Daddy was always like that," says Christine. "Taking up new things, leaving the old ones behind and never looking back."

Christine wasn't there the day the truth came out; she was working in Germany at the time. She says it happened one day in the mid-'60s while a newspaper reporter was interviewing Sam, with Mary alongside him. "The writer suddenly asked him about the tragedy in Indiana," says Christine, "and that was the first my mother had ever heard about it."

It's not hard to imagine the looks that Sam and Mary must have exchanged at the moment that his 50-year-old secret was revealed. On his face were anger, pain and regret, and on hers, shock, hurt and bewilderment. Nor is it hard to imagine what he said to her later when they were alone. Mary, forgive me for not telling you long ago. I just felt it was my burden and mine alone.

The call from the Hall of Fame came on Feb. 9, 1963, 11 days before his 73rd birthday. Had Rice gotten those additional 13 hits, he might have been called much earlier. Then again, had Ty Cobb not lobbied on his behalf—"Sam belongs in the shrine," Cobb proclaimed—Rice might have had to wait even longer.

Sam professed nonchalance when reporters asked him for his reaction. "If it were a real Hall of Fame," he said, "you'd say Cobb, Speaker, Walter Johnson, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and a few others belonged, and then you'd let your voice soften to a mere whisper." But his elation was evident in his induction speech later that August, "I don't think there are words to use on a day like this," he said. "It's the biggest thing any of us can have."

Sam and Mary and Christine drove up to Cooperstown from Maryland nearly every year after that. It was on such a visit in 1965 that Rice told his fellow Hall of Famers of the letter he had just written, to be opened upon his death, with the answer to the question of whether or not he caught the ball hit by Fail Smith in 1925.

Sam Rice's last visit to Cooperstown was in 1974, for the induction of Mickey Mantle, Whitey Ford and others. "We were worried about his health and about him getting around in all those crowds," says Christine. "But he kept saying, 'Lefty will take care of me.' He and Lefty Grove were good friends. But when we got there, we found out that Lefty had just had cataract surgery and couldn't see. So the two of them walked around, arm in arm, that weekend. Daddy provided the eyes, and Lefty the legs."

On Oct. 13 of that year, nearly 49 years to the day after his "catch," Rice died of cancer at the age of 84. "Paul Kerr came down from the Hall of Fame," says Christine, "and he had Daddy's letter. We couldn't decide if we should open it at the funeral. We probably should have, but for some reason we waited." The delay resulted in a rumor—and a subsequent panic—that the letter had somehow been misplaced. Kerr reassured everyone that he did indeed have the answer, and at a Nov. 4 press conference the letter was finally read.

Dated July 26, 1965, it is written in a sure, almost elegant hand, on the stationery of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum:

It was a cold and windy day—the rightfield bleachers were crowded with people in overcoats and wrapped in blankets, the ball was a line drive headed for the bleachers towards right center. I turned slightly to my right and had the ball in view all the way, going at top speed and about 15 feet from bleachers jumped as high as I could and back handed and the ball hit the center of pocket in glove (I had a death grip on it). I hit the ground about 5 feet from a barrier about 4 feet high in front of bleachers with all the brakes on but couldn't stop so I tried to jump it to land in the crowd but my feet hit the barrier about a foot from top and I toppled over on my stomach into first row of bleachers. I hit my adorns apple on something which sort of knocked me out for a few seconds but [Senator outfielder Earl] McNeely around about that time grabbed me by the shirt and picked me out. I remember trotting back towards the infield still carrying the ball for about halfway and then tossed it towards the pitchers mound. (How I have wished many times I had kept it.) At no time did I lose possession of the ball.

"Sam" Rice

At the bottom of the letter there was a postscript:

P.S. After this was announced at the dinner last night I approached Bill McKechnie (one of the finest men I have ever known in Baseball) and I said Bill you were the mgr of Pittsburgh at that time, what do you think will be in the letter. His answer was, Sam there was never any doubt in my mind but what you caught the ball: I thanked him as much to say, You were right
—S. Rice

All that time, and Sam Rice held on to it.

ILLUSTRATION

AMY GUIP; PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL BASEBALL LIBRARY AND UPI/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

In the 1925 World Series, Rice made his famous catch—or did he? No one would know the answer for sure for more than 40 years.

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

AMY GUIP; PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL BASEBALL LIBRARY AND UPI/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

His past swept away by a deadly twister, Rice could see no reason to burden his wife and daughter with his sad and painful history.

ILLUSTRATION

AMY GUIP; PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL BASEBALL LIBRARY AND UPI/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

Among Rice's odd interests were chicken farming and pigeon racing.

ILLUSTRATION

AMY GUIP; PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL BASEBALL LIBRARY AND UPI/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

A Cooperstown plaque tells of Rice's talents.

Old Hands Gone, Warriors Toss the Ball to Eager Kids

By DAVE NEWHOUSE

OAKLAND—The Golden State Warriors enter the 1974-75 season with new players, a different attitude and a more aggressive style of play.

Nate Thurmond, Clyde Lee and Cazzie Russell—three of the team's top six players last year—are gone. So are Jim Barnett and Joe Ellis.

In their places are younger, largely unproven, players who carry both uncertainty and an unbridled enthusiasm for the game.

"I think we'll have a team everyone will enjoy watching," said Coach Al Attles. "There will be mistakes, but there also will be competitiveness and spirit. These guys will get better as the season gets older."

WHEN RICK BARRY rejoined Thurmond two years ago, it was supposed to result in an instant championship for the Warriors. Things didn't turn out that way, for a variety of reasons.

No. 1 among these was a failure to feed new talent into the team. Over a period of four years, the Warriors gained nothing from their first-round draft pick. Bob Portman didn't have pro ability, Cyril Baptiste had a drug problem and Darnell Hillman and Kevin Joyce signed with Indiana of the American Basketball Association.

Another top pick was lost when Owner Franklin Mieuli traded it away to Atlanta in January, 1970, for the rights to Zelmo Beaty. The Warriors were in a title run that year when Thurmond was injured. Mieuli thought he could sign Beaty, who was sitting out that year with the Hawks while about to sign with the ABA.

ZELMO PLAYED four years in the ABA with Utah. But Beaty recently signed with the Warriors, who then traded him to Los Angeles.

However, Mieuli had forgotten, or misunderstood, a provision in that '70 agreement which said the Warriors also would have to give up Clyde Lee should Beaty ever sign an NBA contract.

Since Lee was the Warriors' top draft pick in 1966, the team gave up two No. 1 choices for a player who never would play a minute in a Warrior uniform.

Attles, who called Lee the backbone of the Warriors, naturally felt like tearing his hair.

"The coaches and the players have to look at this as something we had no control over," he said. "We have to keep trying to improve, keep believing in ourselves."

BARRY ALSO WAS stunned by the situation, but tried to minimize its probable effects.

"We might lose some rebounding strength without Clyde, but Derek Dickey is going to give us good rebounding and more offense," Barry said. "Derek can run and jump and shoot. He's going to surprise some people."

Dickey, a 6-7 second-year player who keeps a boa constrictor for a pet, doesn't feel any pressure at being cast into Lee's starting role.

"This isn't any burden on my shoulders," he declared. "This is my job, what I'm paid to do."

Should Dickey falter, rookie Keith Wilkes is awaiting his chance. He's an ex-UCLA star and a No. 1 choice the Warriors managed to sign. He not only continues to shoot well, as he did in college, but has been more aggressive on the boards than the Warriors expected.

AGGRESSIVENESS is a new Warrior trademark, especially on defense.

"This is an entirely different team this year," said Barry. "There's more enthusiasm and more aggressiveness. Cliff Ray (whom the Warriors got from Chicago for Thurmond) is more aggressive by nature than Nate, so this should also help make up for rebounding loss in Clyde's going."

Ray and George Johnson will divide time at center. Barry, Dickey, Wilkes and another rookie, Frank Hendrick, will be the forwards.

Keith Wilkes . . . Awaiting His Chance

Butch Beard, Charlie Johnson, Jeff Mullins and rookie Phil Smith will do most of the backcourt work.

"It's good to get so many young players, because of the enthusiasm factor," said Attles, who now has an assistant coach, Joe Roberts. "This is the most enthusiastic camp, in fact, that I can remember in my 15 years with the Warriors.

"VETERANS sometimes lose their enthusiasm because they've been doing the same thing day after day, year after year. It often was hard getting some of them to do things, although they themselves might not have realized it.

"We're a running team basically," Attles said, "and with Ray, I think we might get the ball out better on the fast break than Nate could.

"Cliff may not score as much as Nate, but I don't think you have to have a dominant scorer at center to win consistently. Wilt Chamberlain got two and four points a game the year the Lakers took the title.

"I'm just happy to be around a team like this. I'm not saying we're going to win the championship, but we'll be interesting."

obituaries

Edgar C. (Sam) Rice, a member of the Hall of Fame and the central figure in one of the most controversial plays in World Series history, died in Rossmor, Md., October 13. He was 84.

An outfielder, Rice spent 19 of his 20 years in the majors with the Senators and compiled an impressive list of credentials which ushered him into the Hall of Fame in 1963. Many thought he should have been elected earlier.

He had a lifetime average of .322 and in 1920 stole 63 bases. "I actually had 71," he once recalled, "but they weren't so accurate in keeping statistics in those days."

For his career, he had 351 stolen bases. He also had 2,987 hits and probably could have reached 3,000 if he had decided to play a little longer.

But over the years, somehow, the only thing people asked him was about his controversial catch in the 1925 World Series with the Pirates.

Here's the situation:

It was the top of the eighth inning of the third game and the Senators were ahead, 4-3. Earl Smith, the Pirate catcher, sent a long fly to center and Rice raced back.

Rice tumbled over a small fence in front of temporary bleachers at the same time the ball crossed the barrier. For some 15 seconds, Rice and the ball were out of view of most of the spectators.

When Sam finally appeared, he had the ball in his hand and umpire Cy Rigler, who had dashed out from second base, ruled that Smith was out.

The Pirates, along with their owner, Barney Dreyfus, stormed the field, screaming their protests—to no avail, naturally.

"I never heard such an uproar," said Rice, who never revealed if he caught the ball or had it handed to him by a Senator fan, as some suggested.

Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the commissioner, tried to pry the truth from Rice, but Sam wouldn't budge. "The umpire said I caught it," Rice would comment, sometimes with a smile.

"Well," said Landis, "let's leave it that way."

Some 1,600 fans voluntarily filed affidavits and had them notarized. "Half the fans said I caught the ball and the other half said I didn't." Rice commented.

The Senators went on to win the game, 4-3. It would have been a better story if they also had won the Series. But the Pirates took it, four game to three.

Rice, who had a gentle sense of humor, enjoyed keeping everyone in the dark. "Someday I'll tell everything," he would inform interviewers. "Does that mean you didn't catch it?" they would ask. "Well, just wait," he would reply.

Rice was born in Morocco, Ind., a hamlet then with less than 1,000 population. Whenever he was asked where he was born, he'd always reply, "Morocco." That would raise of few eyebrows, but he'd never add it was in Indiana.

Rice, who batted lefthanded and threw right, collected 200 or more hits six times, the last time in 1930, when he was 40 years old.

The Senators released Rice in January, 1934, a month before his 44th birthday. He joined the Indians that year and made 98 hits to bring his total 13 short of the 3,000 mark.

"I could have played a few more games," he said recently, "and I'm sure Walter Johnson (the Indians' manager) would have gone along with me.

"But keep in mind they didn't pay much attention to a record like that in those days. And to tell the truth, I didn't even know how many hits I had when I retired."

A couple of years later, Clark Griffith, owner of the Senators, mentioned to Rice that he was just 13 hits shy of 3,000 and asked him if he'd like to come back until he got 3,000.

"By that time I was too old," said Rice, "and my career was behind me."

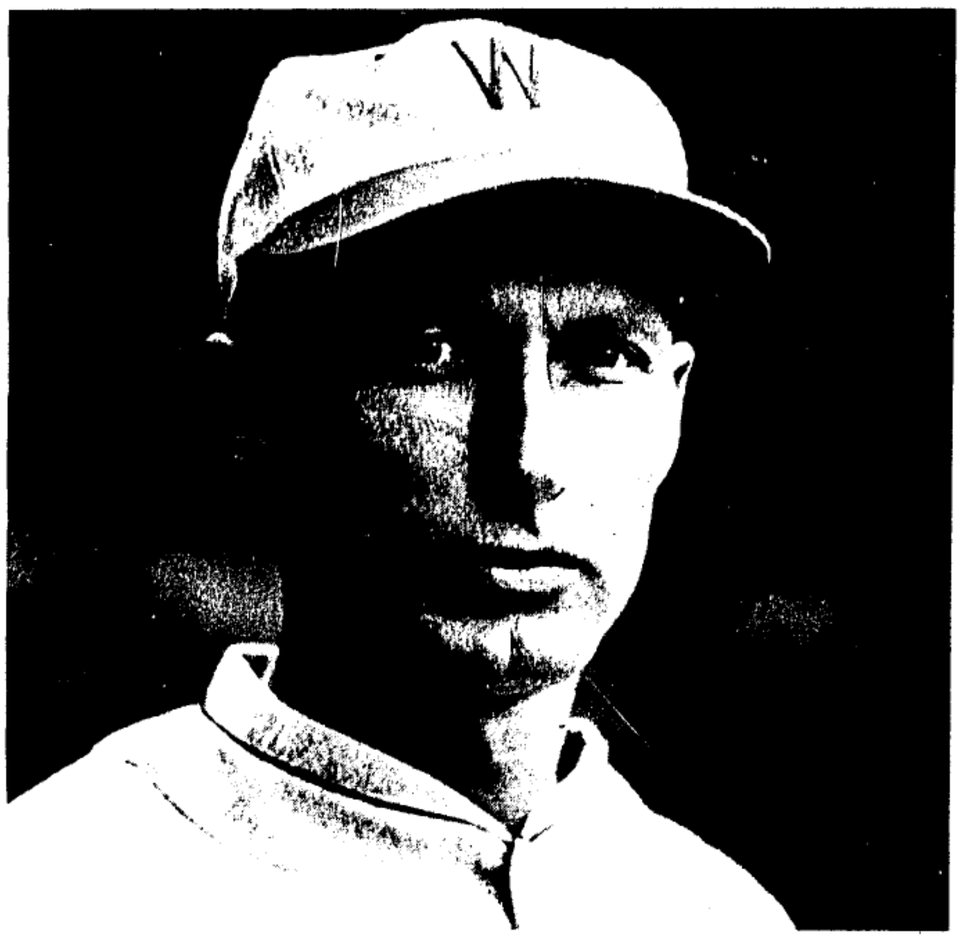
Although Griffith was thought to be a conservative man with a buck, Rice found him to be a generous employer.

"I made $18,000 with the Senators and paid only about $1,000 in tax," he recalled not long ago. "That would be about $75,000 today."

While Rice stood on the outside and others with less skill were voted into the Hall of Fame, he became somewhat bitter.

When the Veterans Committee finally tapped him for the honor at age 73, he commented: "Oh, it's fine, but I can't say I'm too thrilled."

Walter C. (Lefty) Stewart, a major league pitcher for 10 years and a 20-game winner in 1930, died in Knoxville, Tenn., September 26. He was 74.



Sam Rice . . . Hall-of-Famer Dead

Stewart, who lived in Crossville, Tenn., was with the Tigers in 1921, the Browns from 1927 through 1932 and with the Senators until 1935. Later in that season, he was traded to the Indians and then drifted back to the minors. His lifetime major league record was 101-98.

His career—and life—almost came to an end in 1927 when he was stricken by appendicitis while hunting. His appendix burst and by the time he reached a hospital, he was near death.

Doctors told him, after months of recuperation, that he'd never pitch again. But Stewart wasn't about to give up. After two mediocre years with the Browns, he hit his peak in 1930 when he won 20 and lost only 12.

He was involved in one of the biggest deals in late 1932 after having a 15-19 record with St. Louis. He, Goose Goslin and Fred Schulte went to the Senators for Sam West, Carl Reynolds, Lloyd Brown and $20,000.

He won 15 and lost six for Washington in 1933 and Manager Joe Cronin gave him a starting assignment against the Giants in the World Series. He lasted only two innings and was charged with the defeat.

Stewart was with a number of minor league clubs, including San

(Continued on Page 54, Column 3)

Abdul-Jabbar's Tantrum Could Kayo Bucks

NBA west

By BOB WOLF

MILWAUKEE—There is such a thing as having ups and downs, but in Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's case, the transition was ridiculous.

One night, the perennial All-Star center of the Milwaukee Bucks took Bill Walton apart in their much ballyhooed first meeting, thus proving what everyone already knew—that he stands alone at the top of his profession.

Just 24 hours later, the Milwaukee marvel threw a temper tantrum that knocked him out of action indefinitely. He got so upset about being poked in the left eye that he smashed his right hand against the basket support at Memorial Auditorium in Buffalo, breaking the fourth metacarpal bone.

THE NEXT morning, the memory of one of his biggest triumphs erased from his mind by one of his most regrettable acts, Abdul-Jabbar was lying in a Milwaukee hospital. He had a cast on his right arm from his knuckles to his elbow, and a patch that almost covered the left side of his face.

Not only did the big man have a broken hand, he had a corneal abrasion on his eye. Doctors said the eye would heal in two weeks or less, but the hand was something else. It could cause him to miss the first month of the season, perhaps even more.

It is not the intention here to chastise Abdul-Jabbar for blowing his top. In the first place, he has been hit in the eye countless times in his career—he has had corneal abrasions three or four times, in fact—and he fears this so much that he often loses his composure when it happens.

THE POINT is that it did happen, and that the Bucks have lost their meal ticket for several weeks, and that the picture in the Midwest Division has been clouded as a result.

As stated in a story previewing the NBA West title races in this issue, the Bucks must still be considered the team to beat in their division. If Abdul-Jabbar is back as soon as the doctors say he could be, he will miss no more than five games.

But let's say the hand doesn't heal that rapidly—hand bones can be tricky healers. Let's say that Abdul-Jabbar misses 15 to 20 games, which would bring the schedule close to the one-quarter pole. If he is out that long, the Bucks could become a third-place team.

If this seems to be a rash statement, digest these facts:

1. WITH ABDUL-JABBAR available all last season, the Bucks finished only five games ahead of the Chicago Bulls and seven games ahead of the Detroit Pistons.

2. Before training began, the Bulls already had cut the gap between themselves and the Bucks by finally landing a first-class big man, Nate Thurmond.

3. Even though certain members of the Bucks have insisted they will have no trouble compensating for the retirement of Oscar Robertson, the man generally regarded as the greatest guard of all time will be missed.

4. The Bucks must play the Bulls twice in the first week of the season, and certainly Abdul-Jabbar won't be around for either of those.

5. THE PISTONS, chronic losers until a year ago, don't figure to lose one close game after another as they did early last season.

General Manager Wayne Embry of the Bucks is to be congratulated for acting swiftly to find an interim replacement. Repulsed in all attempts to find a center, he latched onto a perennially promising forward, Steve Kuberski, in a deal with the New Orleans Jazz.

With Kuberski at forward, Cornell Warner, originally a regular there, will stay at center until Abdul-Jabbar returns—or until Dick Cunningham recovers from a back ailment.

But even the biggest optimist in Milwaukee won't claim that the Bucks can replace the most dominant force in basketball. Their only hope is that the Bucks don't get too far behind before the king returns.

IRONICALLY, the whole thing is frustrating for the Bulls and Coach Dick Motta. Three-fifths of their starting lineup is holding out—and they aren't going to catch anybody the way they are.

It is to Motta's credit that, as director of player personnel, he has refused to accede to the sky-high demands of Bob Love, Norm Van Lier and Chet Walker.

Motta said a mouthful when he remarked, "We've created a greedy monster with renegotiations. The rest of the league will have to follow our lead before long. The trend of giving the players more money whenever they ask for it is destroying pro basketball.

"It's too bad the players have no respect for a legal document. There are no loyalties or respect for tradition in sports anymore. If Love had broken a leg in the first year of his contract, he wouldn't have sent the guaranteed money back.

"We're talking about what's right and honest. I feel sorry for Jerry Sloan and Nate Thurmond (the only regulars not holding out), who've paid their dues without ever wearing a championship ring.

"Something has to be done to restore normalcy, because the league can't survive too much longer without it."

WALTON UNREADY: The decisiveness of Abdul-Jabbar's decision over Walton before a packed house in Dayton, O., made it obvious that the redhaired rookie had a few things to learn about the pro game.

As Abdul-Jabbar himself put it, "There are a lot of things I could tell him, but they all stem from experience."

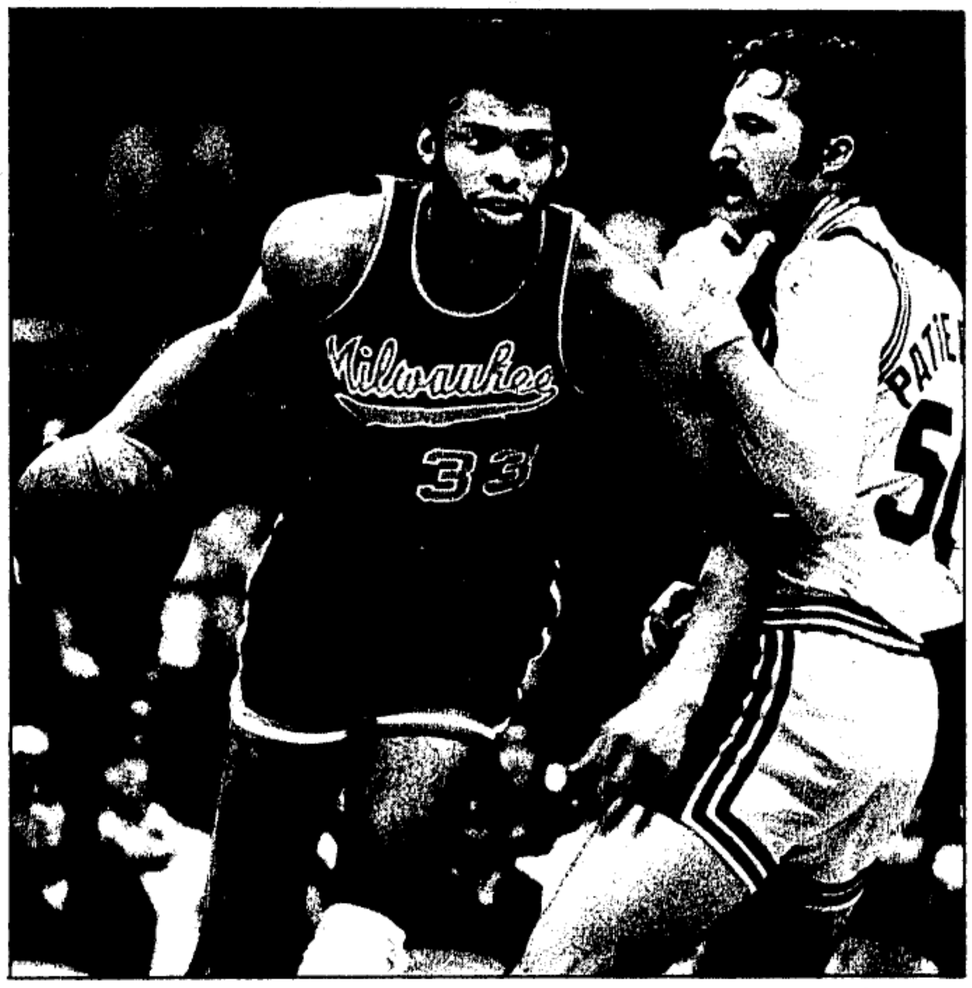
Nevertheless, Walton left no doubt, especially with his rebounding, that he would bring about an immediate transformation in the Portland Trail Blazers. Certainly the men from the Northwest won't be doormats anymore.

ORCHIDS FOR FITCH: When Coach Lenny Wilkens of the Blazers decided he wanted to play another season, the Portland club had to acquire his playing rights from the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Had he wanted, Bill Fitch, general manager and coach of the Cavaliers, could have held up the Blazers for Wilkens' services. Even at 37, Wilkens still is one of the best guards in basketball.

But instead, Fitch gave up Wilkens for undisclosed consideration believed to be almost minimal, and for that he is to be complimented.

Fitch said, "For those who criticize our permitting Lenny to compete, and perhaps haunt our club in at least four games this season, I can only say that I would rather face that situation than stand in the way of a man who has given all that has been asked of him as a player and friend in Cleveland."



Kareem Abdul-Jabbar . . . A Costly Punch

obituaries

(Continued From Page 48)

Antonio, toronto, Syracuse and Birmingham. In recent years, he had been in the furniture business.

Stephen V. (Steve) Hamas, who won letters in five sports at Penn State University and later became a top-ranking heavyweight boxer, died in Northport, N. Y., October 10. He was 67.

Hamas' greatest fame as a boxer occurred in 1934 when he beat Max Schmeling in 12 rounds. The former champion, however, knocked out Hamas in the ninth round in a return match a year later.

Hamas stepped into boxing prominence in 1932 by stopping Tommy Loughran in Madison Square Garden.

As a college athlete, Hamas earned letters in football, baseball, track, lacrosse and boxing. Three of the letters were in football, in which he excelled.

He was a halfback with the Orange (N. J.) Tornadoes of the National Football League in 1929.

Edward Vincent (Ed) Sullivan, a New York sportswriter for 12 years before he became a prominent television personality, died of cancer in New York October 13. he was 72.

Sullivan, who was host of a TV variety program that lasted more than two decades, was a sportswriter for the Mail, the World and the Morning Telegraph—all defunct—before he joined the Daily News. At the Daily News, he authored a gossip column, "Little Old New York," which appeared in the paper until the time of his death.

He had started his writing career as sports editor of the Port Chester (N.Y.) Daily Item shortly after graduating from high school.

Mary A. Stuhldreher, widow of Harry Stuhldreher, one of Notre Dame's Four Horsemen and later a prominent football coach, died in Pittsburgh October 4. She was 69.

Mrs. Stuhldreher wrote a number of sports articles, including "Football Fans Aren't Human," which appeared in the Saturday Evening Post. It became the basis for a movie, "Father Was a Fullback." She also was a contributor to Sports Illustrated.

Mrs. Stuhldreher, whose husband died in 1965, was dean of women at Duquesne University from 1966 to 1969.

Joseph P. Dolan, head of the Physical Education Department at Northeast Missouri State University, died in Kirksville, Mo., October 10. He was 56.

Dolan was a nationally recognized authority on the treatment of athletic injuries and wrote several books on the subject. He had worked on training assignments with the Green Bay Packers, the New York Giants and the Chicago Bears in the NFL and with the baseball Yankees.

Mrs. Helen Maravich, 48, mother of a pro basketball star and wife of a college cage coach, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in Boone, N. C., October 9.

Mrs. Maravich's son, Pete, is with the New Orleans Jazz of the NBA and her husband, Press, is coach at Appalachian State University. He formerly coached at Louisiana State and North Carolina State.

Helmuth Koinigg, 25, making only his second start in grand prix auto racing was killed at Watkins Glen, N. Y., October 6 during the United States event.

Koinigg, who was from Salzburg, Austria, died when his Surtees-Ford went through two fences and under a guard rail. He was in 21st position at the time of the accident.

Keith Topping, a former Stanford end who played in three Rose Bowl games, died of a heart attack in Pasadena, Calif., recently. He was 62.

Topping, who was in the 1934-35-36 Rose classics, was drafted by the Detroit Lions, but declined to report.

Wilbur C. Pickett, Jr., a competitor in many Sports Car Club of America races, was killed in an airplane crash near Leesburg, Fla., October 6. He was 44.

Three other persons also died in the crash of the twin-engine private plane.

Stephen Tarigo, 34, a veteran stock car driver, was killed in a collision during a race at the San Jose (Calif.) Speedway recently. He lived in Sunnyvale, Calif.