

## The Cronin Papers (Part I)

Written by Maury Brown  
Thursday, 31 August 2006 05:27

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The Cronin Papers (Part I) -

The Mays/Chapman Incident

Joe Cronin has been talking to me.

So has Jacob Ruppert, Ban Johnson, Connie Mack, and Clark Griffith.

They've come to me through letters and telegrams... my early Christmas gift.

I get a fair dose of emails requesting assistance in regards to research, pretty much everyday. And, when Chris Hayward dropped a line asking for some help researching the business of baseball, I thought it would just be more of the same.

I was wrong.

This email came with the subject line: ***Greetings from Joe Cronin's Grandson.***

There was something you just don't see everyday.

Hayward writes

A brief introduction if I may. I'm the grandson of

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Joe Cronin the HOF'er and as you can imagine, a die hard Red Sox fan. I have been a huge fan of your writing and reporting and I read Hardball Times, Business of Baseball and the many other web pages and blogs constantly. I recently resigned from my Wall Street job and am looking to chart my own course in professional baseball.

Cronin played from 1926-1945, managed from '37 to '47, he was the GM of the Red Sox from end of the '47 season to 1958, and... from 1959 to 1973, he was the president of the American League. He has been enshrined in Cooperstown since 1956.

In other words... Cronin is a legend. He's one of the few that has covered nearly every aspect of the game at high levels. When you get to talk to blood relatives of people like this it's always privilege.

What transpired over the course of several emails with Mr. Hayward was he got a little business of baseball knowledge from me (not much, to be really honest in return for what I got) and I got a package that would make any researcher blush.

In the Fed-Ex package sent is several folders jammed with copies of historical documents that Cronin had collected as part of his personal collection. Chris' gift is a treasure trove for those into the historical aspect of the business of baseball. From Commissioner Reports, to '46 Radio Contracts, to an investigation into Roger Hornsby and gambling, to stock ownership conflict within the Washington Senators. Chris... a thousand thanks.

But, what I'm going to briefly cover today, is the collection of documents surrounding the Mays/Chapman incident.

On August 16, 1920, the one and only Major League Baseball player to ever be killed by a pitch occurred.

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Carl Mays was looking for his 100th win up against the Cleveland Indians, who had spitballer Stan Coveleski on the hill.

In the 5th inning, Ray Chapman came to the plate, crouching and crowding the plate, something that bothered any big-league pitcher.

On a 1-1 pitch, Mays unleashed a fastball high and inside that came directly for Chapman's head. Chapman never moved, the ball striking him directly in the left side of the head, just above the ear. The ball hit with such force that the ball literally bounced back toward the mound toward Mays. Mays, thinking that the ball must have somehow been hit, tossed the ball to first base for the 1-3 out.

Chapman got off the ground, made two staggering steps toward first, and collapsed on the field, bleeding from his right ear. The umpire called for a doctor, while Tris Speaker who was on-deck rushed to Chapman's side, along with many players from both teams to try and help him off the field at the Pologrounds, which meant going out through centerfield. He mumbled incoherently to Speaker about telling Mays not to worry, got as far as second base, and collapsed. He was carried off the field on a stretcher, and was rushed to the hospital.

Chapman struggled through the night at the hospital after doctors removed a portion of his skull to decrease the pressure from the blow... it was to no avail. At 4:40am on August 17, Raymond Johnson Chapman died. What followed was an investigation, and near chaotic series of events involving what to do about the incident, and whether Mays had purposely hit Chapman in the head.

As Chapman's body lay in a New York funeral home, and Carl Mays -- visibly shaken from the ordeal -- talked to the Manhattan District Attorney's office, players from AL Teams started talking of boycotting any games that Mays was to pitch in.

Teams like the Browns, Senators, Tigers, Red and White Sox all threatened to not take the field should Mays pitch. The Cleveland media got in the act, as well (scans of letters from the Plain Dealer to be forthcoming at a later date).

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In the end, cooler heads prevailed. What you see in the images below are some of the telegrams and letters that were circulated between clubs and the American League front office, of which Ban Johnson was presiding. It gives some direct insight into the tensions and the controversy that surrounded the tragic event.

Once again, I owe great thanks to Chris Hayward for providing such a treasure trove of documents.

**Clicking on the following will show in high resolution:**



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