

## The Celebrated No-Hit Inning

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This is A TRUE STORY, you have to remember. You have to keep that firmly in mind because, frankly, in some places it may not sound like a true story. Besides, it's a true story about baseball players, and maybe the only one there is. So you have to treat it with respect.

You know Boley, no doubt. It's pretty hard not to know Boley, if you know anything at all about the National Game. He's the one, for instance, who raised such a scream when the sportswriters voted him Rookie of the Year. "I never was a rookie," he bellowed into three million television screens at the dinner. He's the one who ripped up his contract when his manager called him, "The hittin'est pitcher I ever see." Boley wouldn't stand for that. "Four-eighteen against the best pitchers in the

league," he yelled, as the pieces of the contract went out the window. "Fogarty, I am the hittin'est hitter you ever see!"

He's the one they all said reminded them so much of Dizzy Dean at first. But did Diz win thirty-one games in his first year? Boley did; he'll tell you so himself. But politely, and without bellowing. . . .

Somebody explained to Boley that even a truly great Hall-of-Fame pitcher really ought to show up for spring training. So, in his second year, he did. But he wasn't convinced that he needed the training, so he didn't bother much about appearing on the field.

Manager Fogarty did some extensive swearing about that, but he did all of his swearing to his pitching coaches and not to Mr. Boleslaw. There had been six ripped-up contracts already that year, when Boley's feelings got hurt about something, and the front office were very insistent that there shouldn't be any more.

There wasn't much the poor pitching coaches could do, of course. They tried pleading with Boley. All he did was grin and ruffle their hair and say, "Don't get all in an uproar." He could ruffle their hair pretty easily, since he stood six inches taller than the tallest of them.

"Boley," said Pitching Coach Magill to him desperately, "you are going to get me into trouble with the manager. I need this job. We just had another little boy

at our house, and they cost money to feed. Won't you please do me a favor and come down to the field, just for a little while?"

Boley had a kind of a soft heart. "Why, if that will make so much difference to you. Coach, I'll do it. But I don't feel much like pitching. We have got twelve exhibition games lined up with the Orioles on the way north, and if I pitch six of those that ought to be all the warm-up I need."

"Three innings?" Magill haggled. "You know I wouldn't ask you if it wasn't important. The thing is, the owner's uncle is watching today."

Boley pursed his lips. He shrugged. "One inning."

"Bless you, Boley!" cried the coach. "One inning it is!"

Andy Andalusia was catching for the regulars when Boley turned up on the field. He turned white as a sheet. "Not the fast ball, Boley! Please, Boley," he begged. "I only been catching a week and I have not hardened up yet."

Boleslaw turned the rosin bag around in his hands and looked around the field. There was action going on at all six diamonds, but the spectators, including the owner's uncle, were watching the regulars.

"I tell you what I'll do," said Boley thoughtfully. "Let's see. For the first man, I pitch only curves. For the second

man, the screwball. And for the third man let's see. Yes.

For the third man, I pitch the sinker."

"Fine!" cried the catcher gratefully, and trotted back to home plate.

"He's a very spirited player," the owner's uncle commented to Manager Fogarty.

"That he is," said Fogarty, remembering how the pieces of the fifth contract had felt as they hit him on the side of the head.

"He must be a morale problem for you, though. Doesn't he upset the discipline of the rest of the team?"

Fogarty looked at him, but he only said.) "He win thirty-one games for us last year. If he had lost thirty-one he would have upset us a lot more."

The owner's uncle nodded, but there was a look in his eye all the same. He watched without saying anything more, while Boley struck out the first man with three sizzling curves, right on schedule, and then turned around and yelled something at the outfield.

"That crazy By heaven," shouted the manager, "he's chasing them back into the dugout. I told that!"

The owner's uncle clutched at Manager Fogarty as he was getting up to head for the field. "Wait a minute.

What's Boleslaw doing?"

"Don't you see? He's chasing the outfield off the field.

He wants to face the next two men without any outfield!

That's Satchell Paige's old trick, only he never did it except in exhibitions where who cares? But that Boley" "This is only an exhibition, isn't it?" remarked the owner's uncle mildly.

Fogarty looked longingly at the field, looked back at the owner's uncle, and shrugged.

"All right." He sat down, remembering that it was the owner's uncle whose sprawling factories had made the family money that bought the owner his team. "Go ahead!" he bawled at the right fielder, who was hesitating halfway to the dugout.

Boley nodded from the mound. When the outfielders were all out of the way he set himself and went into his windup. Boleslaw's windup was a beautiful thing to all who chanced to behold it unless they happened to root for another team. The pitch was more beautiful still.

"I got it, I got it!" Andalusia cried from behind the plate, waving the ball in his mitt. He returned it to the pitcher triumphantly, as though he could hardly believe he had caught the Boleslaw screwball after only the first week of spring training.

He caught the second pitch, too. But the third was unpredictably low and outside. Andalusia dived for it in vain.

"Ball one!" cried the umpire. The catcher scrambled

up, ready to argue.

"He is right," Boley called graciously from the mound.

"I am sorry, but my foot slipped. It was a ball."

"Thank you," said the umpire. The next screwball was a strike, though, and so were these sinkers to the third man though one of those caught a little piece of the bat and turned into an into-the-dirt foul.

Boley came off the field to a spattering of applause. He stopped under the stands, on the lip of the dugout. "I guess I am a little rusty at that, Fogarty," he called.

"Don't let me forget to pitch another inning or two before we play Baltimore next month."

"I won't!" snapped Fogarty. He would have said more, but the owner's uncle was talking.

"I don't know much about baseball, but that strikes me as an impressive performance. My congratulations."

"You are right," Boley admitted. "Excuse me while I shower, and then we can resume this discussion some more. I think you are a better judge of baseball than you say."

The owner's uncle chuckled, watching him go into the dugout. "You can laugh," said Fogarty bitterly. "You don't have to put up with that for a hundred fifty-four games, and spring training, and the Series."

"You're pretty confident about making the Series?"

Fogarty said simply, "Last year Boley win thirty-one

games."

The owner's uncle nodded, and shifted position uncomfortably. He was sitting with one leg stretched over a large black metal suitcase, fastened with a complicated lock. Fogarty asked, "Should I have one of the boys put that in the locker room for you?"

"Certainly not!" said the owner's uncle. "I want it right here where I can touch it." He looked around him. "The fact of that matter is," he went on in a lower tone, "this goes up to Washington with me tomorrow. I can't discuss what's in it. But as we're among friends, I can mention that where it's going is the Pentagon."

"Oh," said Fogarty respectfully. "Something new from the factories."

"Something very new," the owner's uncle agreed, and he winked. "And I'd better get back to the hotel with it. But there's one thing, Mr. Fogarty. I don't have much time for baseball, but it's a family affair, after all, and whenever I can help I mean, it just occurs to me that possibly, with the help of what's in this suitcase "That is, would you like me to see if I could help out?"

"Help out how?" asked Fogarty suspiciously.

"Well I really mustn't discuss what's in the suitcase. But would it hurt Boleslaw, for example, to be a little more, well, modest?"

The manager exploded, "No."

The owner's uncle nodded. "That's what I've thought.

Well, I must go. Will you ask Mr. Boleslaw to give me a ring at the hotel so we can have dinner together, if it's convenient?"

It was convenient, all right. Boley had always wanted to see how the other half lived; and they had a fine dinner, served right in the suite, with five waiters in attendance and four kinds of wine. Boley kept pushing the little glasses of wine away, but after all the owner's uncle was the owner's uncle, and if he thought it was all right

It must have been pretty strong wine, because Boley began to have trouble following the conversation.

It was all right as long as it stuck to earned-run averages and batting percentages, but then it got hard to follow, like a long, twisting grounder on a dry September field.

Boley wasn't going to admit that, though. "Sure," he said, trying to follow; and "You say the fourth dimension?" he said; and, "You mean a time machine, like?" he said; but he was pretty confused.

The owner's uncle smiled and filled the wine glasses again.

Somehow the black suitcase had been unlocked, in a slow, difficult way. Things made out of crystal and steel were sticking out of it. "Forget about the time machine," said the owner's uncle patiently. "It's a military secret,

anyhow. I'll thank you to forget the very words, because heavenknows what the General would think if he found out Anyway, forget it. What about you, Boley? Do you still say you can hit any pitcher who ever lived and strike out any batter?"

"Anywhere," agreed Boley, leaning back in the deep cushions and watching the room go around and around.

"Any time. I'll bat their ears off."

"Have another glass of wine, Boley," said the owner's uncle, and he began to take things out of the black suitcase.

Boley woke up with a pounding in his head like Snider, Mays and Mantle hammering Three-Eye League pitching. He moaned and opened one eye.

Somebody blurry was holding a glass out to him. "Hurry up. Drink this."

Boley shrank back. "I will not. That's what got me into this trouble in the first place."

"Trouble? You're in no trouble. But the game's about to start and you've got a hangover."

Ring a fire bell beside a sleeping Dalmation ; sound the Charge in the ear of a retired cavalry major. Neither will respond more quickly than Boley to the words, "The game's about to start."

He managed to drink some of the fizzy stuff in the

glass and it was a miracle; like a triple play erasing a ninth-inning threat, the headache was gone. He sat up, and the world did not come to an end. In fact, he felt pretty good.

He was being rushed somewhere by the blurry man. They were going very rapidly, and there were tall, bright buildings outside. They stopped.

"We're at the studio," said the man, helping Boley out of a remarkable sort of car.

"The stadium," Boley corrected automatically. He looked around for the lines at the box office but there didn't seem to be any.

"The studio. Don't argue all day, will you?" The man was no longer so blurry. Boley looked at him and blushed. He was only a little man, with a worried look to him, and what he was wearing was a pair of vivid orange Bermuda shorts that showed his knees. He didn't give Boley much of a chance for talking or thinking. They rushed into a building, all green and white opaque glass, and they were met at a flimsy-looking elevator by another little man. "This one's shorts were aqua, and he had a bright red cummerbund tied around his waist.

"This is him," said Boley's escort.

The little man in aqua looked Boley up and down.

"He's a big one. I hope to goodness we got a uniform to fit him for the Series."

Boley cleared his throat. "Series?"

"And you're in it!" shrilled the little man in orange.

"This way to the dressing room."

Well, a dressing room was a dressing room, even if this one did have color television screens all around it and machines that went wheepety -boom softly to themselves.

Boley began to feel at home.

He blinked when they handed his uniform to him, but he put it on. Back in the Steel & Coal League, he had sometimes worn uniforms that still bore the faded legend 100 Lbs. Best Fortified Gro -Chick, and whatever an owner gave you to put on was all right with Boley. Still, he thought to himself, kilts!

It was the first time in Boley's life that he had ever worn a skirt. But when he was dressed it didn't look too bad, he thought especially because all the other players (it looked like fifty of them, anyway) were wearing the same thing. There is nothing like seeing the same costume on everybody in view to make it seem reasonable and right. Haven't the Paris designers been proving that for years?

He saw a familiar figure come into the dressing room, wearing a uniform like his own. "Why, Coach Magill," said Boley, turning with his hand outstretched. "I did not expect to meet you here."

The newcomer frowned, until somebody whispered in his ear. "Oh," he said, "you're Boleslaw."

"Naturally I'm Boleslaw, and naturally you're my pitching coach, Magill, and why do you look at me that way when I've seen you every day for three weeks?"

The man shook his head. "You're thinking of Granddaddy Jim," he said, and moved on.

Boley stared after him. Granddaddy Jim? But Coach Magill was no granddaddy, that was for sure. Why, his eldest was no more than six years old. Boley put his hand against the wall to steady himself. It touched something metal and cold. He glanced at it.

It was a bronze plaque, floor to ceiling high, and it was embossed at the top with the words World Series Honor Roll. And it listed every team that had ever won the World Series, from the day Chicago won the first Series of all in 1906 until Boley said something out loud, and quickly looked around to see if anybody had heard him. It wasn't something he wanted people to hear. But it was the right time for a man to say something like that, because what that - crazy lump of bronze said, down toward the bottom, with only empty spaces below, was that the most recent team to win the World Series was the Yokahama Dodgers, and the year they won it in was 1998.

1998.

A time machine, thought Boley wonderingly, I guess

whathe meant was a machine that traveled in time.

Now, if you had been picked up in a time machine that leapedthrough the years like a jet plane leaps through spaceyou might be quite astonished, perhaps, and for a whileyou might not be good for much of anything, until thingscalmed down.

But Boley was born calm. He lived by his arm and his eye, and there was nothing to worry about there. Pay him hisClass C league contract bonus, and he turns up in Western Pennsylvania, all ready to set a league record for no-hittershis first year. Call him up from the minors and hebats .418 against the best pitchers in baseball. Set him downin the year 1999 and tell him he's going to play in theSeries, and he hefts the ball once or twice and says, "I better take a couple of warm-up pitches. Is the spitter allowed?"

They led him to the bullpen. And then there was the playingof the National Anthem and the teams took the field. And Boley got the biggest shock so far.

"Magill," he bellowed in a terrible voice, "what is that otherpitcher doing out on the mound?"

The manager looked startled. "That's our starter, Padgett.He always starts with the number-two defensive lineupagainst right-hand batters when the outfield shift goes"

"Magill! I am not any relief pitcher. If you pitch Boleslaw, you start with Boleslaw."

Magill said soothingly, "It's perfectly all right. There have been some changes, that's all. You can't expect the rule to stay the same for forty or fifty years, can you?"

"I am not a relief pitcher. I"

"Please, please. Won't you sit down?"

Boley sat down, but he was seething. "We'll see about that," he said to the world. "We'll just see."

Things had changed, all right. To begin with, the studio really was a studio and not a stadium. And although it was a very large room it was not the equal of Ebbetts Field, much less the Yankee Stadium. There seemed to be an awful lot of bunting, and the ground rules confused Boley very much.

Then the dugout happened to be just under what seemed to be a complicated sort of television booth, and Boley could hear the announcer screaming himself hoarse just overhead. That had a familiar sound, but

"And here," roared the announcer, "comes the all-important nothing-and-one pitch! Fans, what a pitcher's duel this is! Delasantos is going into his motion! He's coming down! He's delivered it! And it's in there for a count of nothing and two! Fans, what a pitcher that Tiburcio Delasantos is! And here comes the all-important nothing-and-two pitch, andandyes, and he struck him

out! He struck him out! He struck him out! It's a no-hitter, fans! In the all-important second inning, it's a no-hitter for Tiburcio Delasantos !"

Boley swallowed and stared hard at the scoreboard, which seemed to show a score of 14-9, their favor. His teammates were going wild with excitement, and so was the crowd of players, umpires, cameramen and announcers watching the game. He tapped the shoulder of the man next to him.

"Excuse me. What's the score?"

"Dig that Tiburcio !" cried the man. "What a first-string defensive pitcher against left-handers he is!"

"The score. Could you tell me what it is?"

"Fourteen to nine. Did you see that "

Boley begged, "Please, didn't somebody just say it was a no-hitter?"

"Why, sure." The man explained: "The inning. It's a no-hit inning." And he looked queerly at Boley.

It was all like that, except that some of it was worse.

After three innings Boley was staring glassy-eyed into space. He dimly noticed that both teams were trotting off the field and what looked like a whole new corps of players were warming up when Manager Magill stopped in front of him. "You'll be playing in a minute," Magill said kindly.

"Isn't the game over?" Boley gestured toward the field.

"Over? Of course not. It's the third-inning stretch,"

Magill told him. "Ten minutes for the lawyers to file their motions and make their appeals. You know." He laughed condescendingly. "They tried to get an injunction against the bases-loaded pitchout. Imagine!"

"Hah-hah," Boley echoed. "Mister Magill, can I go home?"

"Nonsense, boy! Didn't you hear me? You're on as soon as the lawyers come off the field!"

Well, that began to make sense to Boley and he actually perked up a little. When the minutes had passed and Magill took him by the hand he began to feel almost cheerful again. He picked up the rosin bag and flexed his fingers and said simply, "Boley's ready."

Because nothing confused Boley when he had a ball or a bat in his hand. Set him down any time, anywhere, and he'd hit any pitcher or strike out any batter. He knew exactly what it was going to be like, once he got on the playing field.

Only it wasn't like that at all.

Boley's team was at bat, and the first man up got on with a bunt single. Anyway, they said it was a bunt single. To Boley it had seemed as though the enemy pitcher had charged beautifully off the mound, fielded the ball with machine-like precision and flipped it to the first-base

player with inches and inches to spare for the out. But the umpires declared interference by a vote of eighteen to seven, the two left-field umpires and the one with the field glasses over the batter's head abstaining; it seemed that the first baseman had neglected to say "Excuse me" to the runner. Well, the rules were the rules. Boley tightened his grip on his bat and tried to get a lead on the pitcher's style.

That was hard, because the pitcher was fast. Boley admitted it to himself uneasily; he was very fast. He was a big monster of a player, nearly seven feet tall and with something queer and spardy about his eyes; and when he came down with a pitch there was a sort of a hiss and a splat, and the ball was in the catcher's hands. It might, Boley confessed, be a little hard to hit that particular pitcher, because he hadn't yet seen the ball in transit. Manager Magill came up behind him in the on-deck spot and fastened something to his collar. "Your intercom," he explained. "So we can tell you what to do when you're up."

"Sure, sure." Boley was only watching the pitcher. He looked sickly out there; his skin was a grayish sort of color, and those eyes didn't look right. But there wasn't anything sickly about the way he delivered the next pitch, as a sweeping curve that sizzled in and spun away.

The batter didn't look so good either same sickly  
grayskin, same giant frame. But he reached out across  
the plate and caught that curve and dropped it between  
third-base and short; and both men were safe.

"You're on," said a tinny little voice in Boley's ear; it  
was the little intercom, and the manager was talking to  
him over the radio. Boley walked numbly to the plate.  
Sixty feet away, the pitcher looked taller than ever.

Boley took a deep breath and looked about him. The  
crowd was roaring ferociously, which was normal enough  
except there wasn't any crowd. Counting everybody,  
players and officials and all, there weren't more than three  
or four hundred people in sight in the whole studio. But  
he could hear the screams and yells of easily fifty or sixty  
thousand. There was a man, he saw, behind a plate-  
glass window who was doing things with what might have  
been records, and the yells of the crowd all seemed to  
come from loudspeakers under his window. Boley winced  
and concentrated on the pitcher.

"I will pin his ears back," he said feebly, more to  
reassure himself than because he believed it.

The little intercom on his shoulder cried in a tiny voice:

"You will not, Boleslaw! Your orders are to take the first  
pitch!"

"But, listen"

"Take it! You hear me, Boleslaw?"

There was a time when Boley would have swung just  
-.\_ to prove who was boss; but the time was not then. He  
stood there while the big gray pitcher looked him over  
with those sparkling eyes. He stood there through the  
windup. And then the arm came down, and he didn't  
stand there. That ball wasn't invisible, not coming right  
at him; it looked as big and as fast as the Wabash Can-  
nonball and Boley couldn't help it, for the first time in  
his life he jumped a yard away, screeching.

"Hit batter! Hit batter!" cried the intercom. "Take your  
base, Boleslaw."

Boley blinked. Six of the umpires were beckoning him  
on, so the intercom was right. But still and all Boley  
had his pride. He said to the little button on his collar,  
"I am sorry, but I wasn't hit. He missed me a mile, easy.  
I got scared is all."

"Take your base, you silly fool!" roared the intercom.

"He scared you, didn't he? That's just as bad as hitting  
you, according to the rules. Why, there is no telling what  
incalculable damage has been done to your nervous sys-  
tem by this fright. So kindly get the bejeepers over to first  
base, Boleslaw, as provided in the rules of the game!"

He got, but he didn't stay there long, because there was  
a pinch runner waiting for him. He barely noticed that it  
was another of the gray-skinned giants before he headed

for the locker room and the showers. He didn't even remember getting out of his uniform; he only remembered that the, Boley, had just been through the worst experience of his life.

He was sitting on a bench, with his head on his hands, when the owner's uncle came in, looking queerly out of place in his neat pin-striped suit. The owner's Uncle had to speak to him twice before his eyes focused.

"They didn't let me pitch," Boley said wonderingly.

"They didn't, want Boley to pitch."

The owner's uncle patted his shoulder. "You were a guest star, Boley. One of the all-time greats of the game.

Next game they're going to have Christy Mathewson .

Doesn't that make you feel proud?"

"They didn't let me pitch," said Boley.

The owner's uncle sat down beside him. "Don't you see? You'd be out of place in this kind of a game. You got on base for them, didn't you? I heard the announcer say it myself; he said you filled the bases in the all-important fourth inning. Two hundred million people were watching this game on television! And they saw you get on base!"

"They didn't let me hit either," Boley said.

There was a commotion at the door and the team came trotting in screaming victory. "We win it, we win it!" cried Manager Magill. "Eighty-seven to eighty-three! What a

squeaker!"

Boley lifted his head to croak, "That's fine." But nobody was listening. The manager jumped on a table and yelled, over the noise in the locker room:

"Boys, we pulled a close one out, and you know what that means. We're leading in the Series, eleven games to nine! Now let's just wrap those other two up, and!"

He was interrupted by a bloodcurdling scream from Boley. Boley was standing up, pointing with an expression of horror. The athletes had scattered and the trainers were working them over; only some of the trainers were using pliers and screwdrivers instead of towels and liniment.

Next to Boley, the big gray-skinned pinch runner was flat on his back, and the trainer was lifting one leg away from the body

"Murder!" bellowed Boley. "That fellow is murdering that fellow!"

The manager jumped down next to him. "Murder? There isn't any murder, Boleslaw! What are you talking about?"

Boley pointed mutely. The trainer stood gaping at him, with the leg hanging limp in his grip. It was completely removed from the torso it belonged to, but the torso seemed to be making no objections; the curious eyes were open but no longer sparkling; the gray skin, at closer

hand, seemed metallic and cold.

The manager said fretfully, "I swear, Boleslaw, you're an nuisance. They're just getting cleaned and oiled, batteries recharged, that sort of thing. So they'll be in shape tomorrow, you understand."

"Cleaned," whispered Boley. "Oiled." He stared around the room. All of the gray-skinned ones were being somehow disassembled; bits of metal and glass were sticking out of them. "Are you trying to tell me," he croaked, "that those fellows aren't fellows?"

"They're ballplayers," said Manager Magill impatiently.

"Robots. Haven't you ever seen a robot before? We're allowed to field six robots on a nine-man team, it's perfectly legal. Why, next year I'm hoping the Commissioner'll let us play a whole robot team. Then you'll see some baseball!"

With bulging eyes Boley saw it was true. Except for a handful of flesh-and-blood players like himself the team was made up of man-shaped machines, steel for bones, electricity for blood, steel and plastic and copper cogs for muscle. "Machines," said Boley, and turned up his eyes.

The owner's uncle tapped him on the shoulder worriedly. "It's time to go back," he said.

So Boley went back.

He didn't remember much about it, except that the owner's uncle had made him promise never, never to tell

anyone about it, because it was orders from the Defense Department, you never could tell how useful a time machine might be in a war. But he did get back, and he woke up the next morning with all the signs of a hangover and the sheets kicked to shreds around his feet.

He was still bleary when he staggered down to the coffee shop for breakfast. Magill the pitching coach, who had no idea that he was going to be granddaddy to Magill the series-winning manager, came solicitously over to him. "Bad night, Boley? You look like you have had a bad night."

"Bad?" repeated Boley. "Bad? Magill, you have got no idea. The owner's uncle said he would show me something that would learn me a little humility and, Magill, he came through. Yes, he did. Why, I saw a big bronze tablet with the names of the Series winners on it, and I saw"

And he closed his mouth right there, because he remembered right there what the owner's uncle had said about closing his mouth. He shook his head and shuddered. "Bad," he said, "you bet it was bad."

Magill coughed. "Gosh, that's too bad, Boley. I guess I mean, then maybe you wouldn't feel like pitching another couple of innings well, anyway one inning today, because"

Boley held up his hand. "Say no more, please. You

want me to pitch today, Magill?"

"That's about the size of it," the coach confessed.

"I will pitch today," said Boley. "If that is what you want me to do, I will do it. I am now a reformed character. I will pitch tomorrow, too, if you want me to pitch tomorrow, and any other day you want me to pitch. And if you do not want me to pitch, I will sit on the sidelines. Whatever you want is perfectly all right with me, Magill, because, Magill, hey! Hey, Magill, what are you doing down there on the floor?"

So that is why Boley doesn't give anybody any trouble anymore, and if you tell him now that he reminds you of Dizzy Dean, why he'll probably shake your hand and thank you for the compliment even if you're a sportswriter, even. Oh, there still are a few special little things about him, of course not even counting the things like how many shut-outs he pitched last year (eleven) or how many home runs he hit (fourteen). But everybody finds him easy to get along with. They used to talk about the change that had come over him a lot and wonder what caused it. Some people said he got religion and others said he had an incurable disease and was trying to do good in his last few weeks on earth; but Boley never said, he only smiled; and the owner's uncle was too busy in Washington to be with the team much after that. So now they talk about other things when Boley's name comes

up. For instance, there's his little business about the pitching machine when he shows up for batting practice (which is every morning, these days), he insists on hitting against real live pitchers instead of the machine. It's even in his contract. And then, every March he bets nickels against anybody around the training camp that'll bet with him that he can pick that year's Series winner. He doesn't bet more than that, because the Commissioner naturally doesn't like big bets from ballplayers.

But, even for nickels, don't bet against him, because he isn't ever going to lose, not before 1999.