

Hobby Publications from the 1970s



Was it the Golden Age for Hobby Publications?

By George Vrechek

I had the good fortune to acquire five boxes of hobby publications from 95-year-old sport publication dealer Goodie Goldfaden in early 2010. Goodie has been in the business since the 1920s and knows a few things about publications coming and going. The boxes represented Goodie's accumulation of hobby publications generally starting in the 1950s and petering out by the 1980s. Many of the publications were addressed to Goldfaden; others bore the names of West Coast collectors like Jim McConnell and Robert Rolfe or even Frank Nagy of Detroit. Goodie advertised in many of the publications and was sent complimentary copies of fledgling publications. Goodie told me that it was important for him to advertise "in a number



of the publications because not everyone was reading the same thing." Some issues Goodie never got around to pulling out the staples to open the pages – gem mint, unread magazines, if you will. Most issues, though, have suffered the ravages of time with pages that have yellowed, crumbled, and faded over their relatively short lives. Despite the breadth of the Goldfaden publications, they still represent only a portion of the pulp created in what has to be the Golden Age of hobby publications. "Even today, there's still value added inside the pages," hobby publication collector Richard Rubin commented, "These were guys writing from the heart, when the cash register didn't drive the hobby, and reading their articles and the advertisements reminds us why we still collect."

Initial Impressions

Hobby publications historically have not been products of major publishers like Time Warner, Condé Nast, or Hearst; nor have they originated in major metropolitan hubs. Many likely started on dining room tables and were created by young collectors who thought they could

make a few dollars to help defray their hobby habits or add to their collections. “If you have cards for sale or trade, drop me a line,” writes one publisher in 1964. Once the climate for hobby publications improved, other individuals entered with the idea of making a living, or perhaps a quick buck. Publications have ranged from large, professional, timely efforts to one-shot mimeographed pamphlets. Sometimes they were just labors of love, but the love eventually ran out. *Sports Collectors Digest* is one of the few that have survived.

Goodie’s boxes contained a little bit of everything – the 1956 edition of the *American Card Catalog*, the 1968 *ffc Directory of Sports Collectors*, convention programs, and multiple issues of periodicals: *The Trader Speaks*, *Sports Collectors News*, *Old Judge*, *Sport Fan*, SABR newsletters, *Sports Collectors Digest*, *Baseball Hobby News*, *Grandstand Manager*, *The Sport Hobbyist*, *Trading Post*, *Sports Gazette*, and others. Goodie’s business has involved saving stuff that others throw out, so it was not surprising to find miscellaneous pieces of (well organized) paper going back 50 years. However Goodie’s *The Card Collector’s Bulletins* (CCB) by Jefferson Burdick and Charles Bray were no longer around. In previous *SCD* articles I reported on the long history of CCB from 1937 to 1984 representing essentially all of hobby publication history until the 1950s.

Copy, Ads, and Topics

Hobby publications did not adhere to strict policies as to providing copy as well as advertising. I found a monthly magazine that was completely advertising except for one note from the publisher explaining that they were too busy that month to write (but not so busy that they couldn’t run the ads). Advertisers were concerned about the timeliness of the publications and subscribers complained of late delivery through the bulk mail. Publishers were the captains of their ships and they wrote pretty much whatever they felt like writing including criticisms of other publications, advertisers, or even their own subscribers. The style was frequently more like what you read in blogs today rather than in printed media.

Topics included prices and price guides, rules for buying and selling, reprints, mounting, deadbeats, theft, conventions, checklists, and new issues. Baseball cards were number one, followed distantly by football and basketball. Autographs are mentioned but not much else, not even many stories about the athletes. Old-time collectors were collecting cards issued that year as well as vintage cards. It is interesting to read about the few new issues in hobby publications from the 1970s. The same enthusiasm continued into the early 1980s with writers gushing over the newest Donruss All-Stars or some such issue which has since disappeared from the radar.

Publishers and Writers

Collectors are usually in it for the long haul and start very young. It is not surprising to find in old publications the names of collectors who are still around. Publishers of the Goldfaden material from the 1960s and 1970s included the following:

- Bob and Helen Jaspersen, *Sport Fan*, St. Paul, Minnesota and later Rosemont, Pennsylvania
- Mike Bondarenko, *Sports Collectors News*, originally Black River Falls, Wisconsin
- Dan Dischley, *The Trader Speaks*, Lake Ronkonkoma, New York
- Charles Brooks, *The Sport Hobbyist*, Detroit, Michigan
- John Stommen, *Sports Collectors Digest*, Milan, Michigan

- Richard Burns, *The Sports Trader*, Grenada, Mississippi
- Lew Lipset, *Old Judge*, now Carefree, Arizona
- Melvin Lindheim, *Sports Gazette*, New York, New York
- John Eichmann, *Sports Scoop*, Seattle, Washington

Hobby writers freely moved from publication to publication. “Freely” was more about not getting paid than their mobility. Writers were often paid with free subscriptions or advertising. There were exceptions; for example, in 1964 the short-lived *Card News & Comments* offered an entire “\$1 to the collector who we feel has contributed the most for that issue in the way of articles, checklists, etc.” The publishers usually handled the bulk of the writing. Outside writers in the Goldfaden material included Mike Aronstein, Buck Barker, Jim Beckett, Lionel Carter, Dwight Chapin, Walt Corson, Denny Eckes, Richard Egan, Dan Even, Larry Fritsch, Wirt Gammon, Ron Greenwood, Bill Haber, Barry Halper, George Husby, Irv Lerner, George Lyons, Dave Meiners, Dave Miedema, Frank Nagy, Keith Olbermann, Preston Orem, Pat Quinn, Gavin Riley, Elwood Scharf, Jack Smalling, Bob Solon, Don Steinbach, John Stirling, John Sullivan, Ted Taylor, Jack Thompson, Lloyd Toerpe, and Tim Turner – a virtual collector and dealer hall of fame. I asked Goodie why he never wrote for any of the publications. He said, “I never employed anyone in the business. I’d make calls to see collections in the morning and come into the store in the afternoon. I never had the time.”

According to *Sports Collectors News (SCN)*, the publication with the largest circulation in 1968 was *Sports Trader* with 1,000 subscribers. By 1976 according to *SCN*, hobby publishers had a circulation of 20,000 led by *The Trader Speaks (TTS)* with 10,000 subscribers, followed by *SCD* and *SCN*. Circulation of 10,000 would still be a decent number, if *TTS* were around today. Let’s take a look in some of the Goldfaden boxes, especially material from the 1960s and 1970s.

1961 Sport Collector

It’s hard to find a hobby publication without the word “sport” in the title. “Sport” and “sports” were hard to keep straight and apostrophes for possessives came and went. Fred Greguras of Omaha put out *Sport Collector*, an eight page mimeo, for a \$1 per year subscription. A full page ad ran \$2 and even Frank Nagy popped for a full-pager. Wirt Gammon and John Sullivan contributed articles to this not exactly aesthetically pleasing and short-lived effort.

1963-4 Sports Gazette

Publisher Melvin Lindheim’s sample issues start with a dozen mimeographed pages on now crumbling paper. By mid-year at least the covers had improved. Later Barry Newman of Cambridge, Maryland, appears as the editor and Bob Schwartz of Philadelphia as co-publisher. Carter, Solon and others start writing for them. Readers are encouraged to write the editor to let him know how you liked the articles or just go ahead and write your own article.

jfc Directory of Sports Collectors, 1968 2nd Edition

John F. Cummings of Merrifield, Virginia, put together this nicely printed, odd-sized booklet. Goldfaden (shown here with the booklet) took out a full page ad right in the middle of the booklet for ADCO Sports Book Exchange, owners Goodwin and Esther Goldfaden, offering

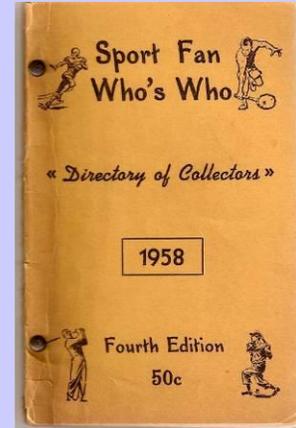
350,000 sports publications for sale. Collectors opting to be included in the \$2 booklet included: Barker, Jaspersen, Lerner, Solon, Gammon, Sullivan, Smalling, Toerpe, Jim Rowe, George Brace, and Robert Thing. Other lists of collectors had been published in Burdick's *American Card Catalog*, Irv Lerner's *Who's Who in Card Collecting*, and Mike Jaspersen's *Sport Fan Who's Who*.



Bob and Mike Jaspersen



Goodie Goldfaden recently holding the 1968 jfc Directory of Sports Collectors



Sport Fan in the Early 1970s

Bob Jaspersen started *Sport Fan* in 1951, stopped in the late 1950s, and then started again in the late 1960s. In 1970 he wrote that 1970 was the year of the conventions. He reported on the second West Coast sports collectors' convention held at Jim Nowell's home complete with a small photo of the 25 attendees including Carter, Lerner, Ray Hess, Ray Medeiros, Nowell, Jim McConnell, Bob Jaspersen, and Mike Jaspersen. Former big leaguer Bud Daley attended. This same September/October 1970 issue included Lloyd Toerpe's report on the first convention in Detroit as well as others in the New York City area and St. Petersburg. Since no one had been to a baseball card convention before, anyone attending one assumed that they were attending the first ever. Consequently, several "firsts" were reported by different authors in the same issue. Lionel Carter thanked Irv Lerner for his recent *Who's Who in Card Collecting* that included Barker, John Wagner, and Carter in the Collectors' Hall of Fame. Mimeographed 10 to 14 page bi-monthly issues are 90% copy versus 10% ads with several writers in addition to Jaspersen and an occasional photo. The emphasis is clearly on collectors and their pursuit of sports collectibles. Jaspersen's

SPORT FAN

September, October, 1970 ROSEMONT, PA. FOUNDED IN 1951



Left to right, Jim Mac Allister, Jeff Morey, Waite Hoyt, former major league pitcher; Bob Jaspersen and Pat Quinn.

AUTOGRAPH BUFFS STRIKE IT RICH AT COOPERSTOWN

By Bob Jaspersen

If we hadn't been there to see it with our own eyes we wouldn't have believed it. Even after seeing it we still found it hard to believe. The scene was the huge lobby of the beautiful Otsego Hotel in Cooperstown, N.Y., and the time was the eve of the annual induction ceremonies into the coveted Baseball Hall of Fame. There they were---Jesse Haines, Lou Boudreau, Ford Frick and Earle Coombs, who were to be enshrined the following day, plus Casey Stengel, Lloyd Waner, Edd Roush, Luke Appling, Lefty Grove, Joe Muga, Stan Covelesko, Ossie Bluego, Mrs. Lou Gehrig, Red Ruf-

(Continued inside)

SPORT FAN ATTENDS COAST CONVENTION

By Bob Jaspersen
SPORT FAN Publisher

The second annual West Coast Sports Collectors convention, held at the home of Jim Nowell in Brea, Calif. on Aug. 22-23, gave evidence that these get-togethers are growing in popularity and will undoubtedly spread to all corners of the nation within a few years. SPORT FAN publisher Bob Jaspersen and son Mike, who attended two earlier conventions this year, and Irv Lerner of Phila., publisher of Who's Who in Card Collecting, flew to California for their first meeting with collectors in that section of the country. Also attending from the Phila. area was Jay Ludwig, of Oreland, Pa., who made the

(Continued inside)



Front row, left to right, Jay Ludwig, Allan Kays, Rusty Moshier, Jeff Johnson, Ken Baker, Steve Black, Paul Wright, Steve Brazell. 2d row, Pat Connealy, Harry Hoffman, Keith Jackson, Steve Marshall, Lionel Carter, Joe Deiprie. 3d row, Mike Jaspersen, Jim McConnell, Bob Jaspersen, David Keiners, Irv Lerner, John Thom, Ray Hess, Dale Britton, Ray Medeiros, Matt Matushofski and Jim Nowell.

tone is optimistic, humorous, and personal. *Sport Fan* merged with *Sports Collectors News* in 1977. Bob Jaspersen continued to write about the hobby until shortly before his death in 1982 from complications involving diabetes.

1970 Sport Fan reports on second West Coast convention.

- May 1973 Sport Fan*
- 1 Mr. and Mrs. Tom Altshuler
 - 2 Dan Dischley, Bob Jaspersen, and Charles Brooks
 - 3 Carol and Lloyd Toerpe
 - 4 Lionel Carter, Rich Egan, and Gar Miller
 - 5 Dave and Dan Thiess
 - 6 Jack Smalling and Tom Muelling
 - 7 Owen Ricker and Bob Marek
 - 8 Irv Lerner
 - 9 Bob Solon



10th Annual Midwest Sports Collectors Convention Program

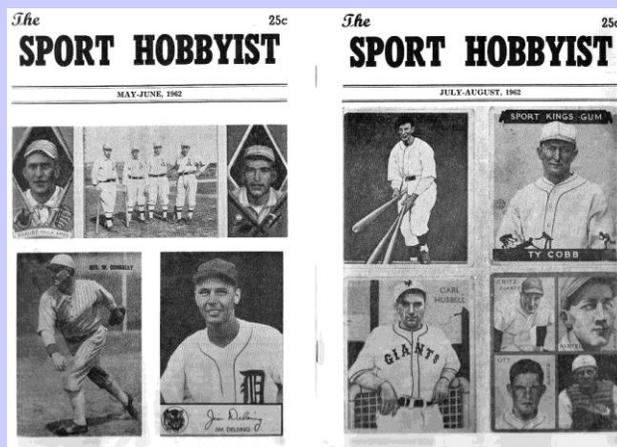
Bob Jaspersen wrote a great summary of the Detroit shows in this 1979 convention program booklet saved by Goldfaden. A quick summary is as follows:

- 1970 - Fifty collectors gathered at the Detroit Hilton. All are mentioned by name. Jay Barry, Dennis Graye, Dick Reuss, and Lloyd Toerpe were the “hosts.”
- 1971 - 500 attended and there were 34 dealer tables. CBS television did a feature. Frank Nagy was an auctioneer. At the time Nagy owned over 700,000 cards.
- 1972 - “A highlight was the appearance of dealer Goodwin Goldfaden of Los Angeles, who donated a number of old guides, cards, and pins as door prizes.”
- 1973 - Former Tiger Hoot Evers spoke for 90 minutes! Nagy outbid Mrs. Babe Ruth for a photo of Babe and the All-Star team that toured Japan (\$425). Nagy then sold 523 T206s including Plank to Fred McKie. “Bill Mastro spent 5 hours to complete a deal for 5 Glendales he needed.”

- 1974 - 3,000 attended in Troy, Michigan. Irv Lerner spotted a stack of phony #68 1959 Ted Williams Fleers and prevented them from being sold. Chuck Blazina tried to give away football cards and found no takers.
- 1975 - “Following the meeting, Dan Dischley called a meeting of sports hobby publishers, all of whom were present. Adjourning to the bar, in addition to Dischley, were John Stommen, Mike Bonderanko, Charles Brooks, and Bob Jaspersen, where they held a two hour discussion and pledged to join forces in fighting some of the hobby’s undesirable elements.” (The mean age of the hobby publication czars at the time was 31.)
- 1976 - Free admission and 167 tables.
- 1977 - A record 200 table holders attended including all the same publishers. Jim Rowe sold 60 Play Ball cards for \$60. (I guess they thought that Jim made out on that one.)
- 1978 - Nagy said attendance was 15,000 for the 4 day event. McConnell, Riley, and Heitman came from California. “Bill Mastro did \$1,000 of business on Thursday evening.”

The Sport Hobbyist

High school student Charles Brooks of Detroit began *The Sport Hobbyist* in 1956 and kept at it, off and on, through the late 1970s. The *Sport Hobbyist* published by Charles Brooks is not to be confused with *The Sport Hobbyist* published by LaVerne Isenberg of Dorsey, Illinois, or the *Sport Hobbyist* published by Ray Billbrough of Flushing, Michigan. Isenberg published the magazine in 1959 and 1960. In 1962 Brooks was the publisher again with fellow Detroit and avid collector Frank Nagy as associate editor. Brooks wrote in 1962, “There have been several lapses in publication but once again *SH* has been revamped...From the beginning it was always a struggle to make ends meet financially. The hours were long but the results were rewarding. Then came college and *SH* all but disappeared. In 1959 I went into the armed forces for two years. *The Sport Hobbyist* switched hands and made a brief struggle to keep going and then faded. And now two years after that last lapse another effort is being made.” In 1964 Brooks and Nagy announced they didn’t have the time and inclination to keep at it so Ray Billbrough would be taking over. However by 1971, Brooks and Nagy were back publishing *The Sport Hobbyist*, unable to control their hobby addiction. Brooks even rolled out a verbatim excerpt from the explanation he had used in 1962 as to what had happened.



Goodie had an assortment of issues from the publishers over the years. The format started with a mimeographed monthly of around 20 pages. At least 50% of an issue consisted of articles written primarily by Brooks and the balance was advertising, including occasionally ads for cuckoo clocks and Nagy’s auctions. Other contributing writers included Carter, Barker, Nagy, Jake Wise, Preston Orem, Wirt Gammon, Dan Even, Walt Corson, and even Ernie Harwell – quite a lineup, for a time. Brooks also wrote about the sports and players, something I didn’t

usually see in other hobby publications. Nagy had a humorous article about his own writing struggles. Articles covered exhibits, conventions, matchbooks, and new issues.

Walt Corson Bio

Walt Corson had been one of the *American Card Catalog* contributors and a name frequently found in old hobby publications. The April 1957 *SH* included a letter from Corson, "I entered this world on June 15, 1899, the same way I go to bed (nude). Pretty much self educated and have had many occupations during my lifetime, my present one being the aluminum store window business in which I do very well. In the past I spent 12 years as a music teacher, teaching all instruments. As a boy of ten I began collecting the cards then inserted in packages of cigarettes and at the present time my collection numbers a cool 300,000 or more, about the second largest in America (after Jeff Burdick).. However one year ago I was operated on for cancer and since life is so uncertain for one with this dread disease and since my heirs are not in any position to successfully market my collection upon my demise I began to disseminate my vast holdings about two months ago. I have sold over \$2,400 worth of cards from my collection to date and fail to see where it has decreased to any extent." He went on to list his remaining rare sets going back to the 1880s and asked those interested to contact him. Nagy eventually bought the balance of Corson's collection.

Wagner Story

In 1972 *SH* had an article by 27-year-old William Lowell reporting his purchase of a mint Wagner. Lowell wrote, "When I got back into collecting six months ago, I placed a short ad in Charles Bray's publication (*CCB*) and among the answers I received was a long letter from an elderly gentleman in New York City who offered several hundred T-206 cards to me along with 20 Turkey Red cards at an extremely good price. I wrote for the Turkey Red cards. When they arrived they were absolutely mint. Because some of my T-206 were not real good (I had 521), I wrote him back about the condition of the T-206 he had offered. I let him know that I had all but Plank and Wagner but that I could use about all of his 500 plus T-206 as replacements. He wrote back that all his cards were mint and that he thought he had the Wagner card that I was looking for. As the story unfolded, I learned that he had collected all the cards which he eventually sold me when they were new 1909-1911 from friends of his family and two uncles who lived with them, (he was 8 years old in 1909). He is an incorrigible collector, or better, accumulator of everything. These cards he has kept packaged in plastic since they were new...He claims to have received the Wagner card from one of his uncles out of a package. He remembers this because of his special interest in Wagner." Lowell bought the Wagner and the rest of this gentleman's T-206s. I couldn't find any follow-up articles on this find. I hope it was all true, but wouldn't any kind of collector know that he had a Wagner? Was plastic or cellophane even around much in 1910? How could he have got so far in six months of collecting? *SH* was paying \$5 at the time for articles. This one had to be worth \$6.

Hobby Store

In 1974 Brooks opened the 4,000 square foot Sport Hobbyist store in Detroit. He held mini-conventions at the store. Interestingly, Brooks was advertising his publication in Mike Bondarenko's *Sports Collectors News* and vice versa. Nagy complained that in publishing a hobby paper he "could get \$5 worth of grief from a \$1 subscriber." The last issue Goodie had of *The Sport Hobbyist* was from early 1977.

*Charles Brooks, center, in 1975 at one of his mini-conventions. Brooks published *The Sport Hobbyist**



Interview with Cynthia Brooks

I was able to contact Cynthia Brooks, the wife of Charles Brooks. She and “Chuck” retired to Sarasota, Florida, in 1996. Chuck suffered a stroke in 2008 and is now in a nursing home. Cynthia said that Chuck had been with IBM and Detroit Edison and that he had also worked as a stock broker prior to devoting full time to the hobby in the 1970s. Cynthia said, “Chuck was so thrilled when they held the first show in Detroit in 1970 when collectors who only knew each other through the mail got to meet for the first time.” Cynthia had fond recollections, “Chuck was an affable, easy going guy, who loved his cards.” Brooks was probably not the best on the details or money management, but loved new ideas. He eventually stopped publishing and sold the store. He still ran frequent card and autograph shows in Detroit into the 1990s. Perhaps 5 million cards migrated back from the store to the Brookses’ home. Cynthia said that they “literally shoveled the cards out” prior to selling the home and shipping 1 million cards to Florida. Chuck picked through the cards; what was left was a lot of beat up cardboard. Chuck’s good friend and collector, the late Tom Tuschak, moved to Florida at about the same time as Brooks. Brooks sold the balance of his cards on the Internet.

THE TRADER SPEAKS

Dan Dischley’s *The Trader Speaks*

The Trader Speaks (TTS) started in 1968 and continued under Dischley until 1983. Dischley was a police officer from Lake Ronkonkoma, New York, who spent 40 hours per week working his regular job and at least as much time on his publication. He was one of the founding members of SABR and was 24 when he started *TTS*. The monthly *TTS* was printed in a small tabloid format and mailed first class. Annual subscriptions were \$6 in 1973; issues ran about 32 pages with about 8 pages of articles. The covers usually featured eye catching vintage cards. Keith Olbermann checklisted Cocoa Puff Globetrotters in one of the first issues Goodie had. Lionel Carter covered the scarcity of 1948 Sunbeams. Bob Solon discussed Kellogg variations. Bill Haber reported that Topps had only printed 300 sets of the 1972 “test issue” of eight 1953 Topps cards, three of which had the wrong names identified. Gavin Riley complained about Topps creating scarce issues that may have never even been market “tested,” but instead wound up in the hands of a few dealers.

Policing the Publication(s)

Dischley also “policed” his own publication, printing the names of advertisers guilty of trespasses. Advertising and subscription privileges were suspended and postal inspectors and subscribers notified, if subscribers had unresolved problems with an advertiser. A David Rubenstein of Brooklyn had not delivered on \$7,950 of merchandise with one subscriber and failed to deliver to another 10 subscribers in 1973. Dischley wouldn’t allow reprints to be advertised in *TTS*, complaining of reprints not clearly marked as such. George Lyons was

against reprints and collector issues as well. In May 1977 Dischley wrote an open letter to Charles Brooks, publisher of *The Sport Hobbyist*, that he should resolve issues with a list of people who had reported problems involving credits or money due them from Brooks. Elwood Scharf warned to be on the lookout for an issue that included Ruth described as issued in Germany. The cards were actually photos of the Burdick collection at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art that were printed in Germany and sold in the Met gift shop for 50 cents a set. T206 guru Bill Heitman covered the lack of uniform grading disclosures, the need for dispute resolution, and reporting names involved in disputes. He also complained about bickering and “fist fights” among collectors, thievery, unwarranted card “mania,” and that “backbiting and backstabbing” had to stop.

Articles in the Late 1970s

Barry Halper, Lew Lipset and others contributed articles. In 1977 George Lyons reported a Wagner had sold at auction for \$3,876. *TTS* reprinted a December 1945 article from *Esquire* that was an excellent summary of the card collecting hobby complete with interviews with Jefferson Burdick. In 1978 Jim Beckett’s price survey results were featured. *TTS* began a monthly one-page superstar price summary of their own. Bill White recalled how a Philadelphia junk shop sold uncut sheets of Bowmans in 1948 that had been rescued by trash haulers from the local printing plant. Bruce Dorskind interviewed Goudey executives about cards from the 1930s and their competitors. Elwood Scharf contributed several articles with details of the annual exhibit card issues. Gavin Riley reported on the plans for a national convention in 1980.



Plenty of Ads

The Trader Speaks had the reputation as the publication for serious collectors. Goodie Goldfaden continued to subscribe for years. Goodie’s copies from the mid 1970s led me to the observation that the articles never increased in size but the publication did. Dischley admitted to the problems involved in keeping the size of the publication affordable for first class mailing while not turning it into an advertising piece. In explaining a 50% increase in ad rates to advertisers in 1977, Dischley disclosed how he had started *TTS* in 1968 as a hobby, never having been a publisher. He got names of collectors and started advertising in *The Sporting News* and other larger publications. He found himself for a time with the only reliable, large hobby publication and had 10,000 subscribers, which exceeded the subscriptions of all other competitors combined. Dischley was working 80 hour weeks trying to continue to do everything. You could sense the frustration at times as he chastised readers, “You should know if you have a free ad coming so don’t bombard me with letters.” Also subscribers should not “waste a phone call for I’ll hang up on you unless you call at the times listed! 99% of you are not guilty of the aforementioned crime and I thank you. The other 1% had better take reading lessons.”

In 1976 he decided to quit his job as a policeman and also sell a restaurant he owned to devote full time to *TTS*. His accountant said that he was losing money in certain areas. The publisher didn't want to scrimp on the timely first class mailing or print quality, but he did want to feed his growing family of five. Rates went up and articles went down. For the year 1980 the publication averaged 5 pages of articles per issue and 76 pages of ads. Dischley sold the publication to his neighbor Sonny Jackson in 1984 and it was absorbed into *SCD* shortly thereafter.

Dischley in 2010

I was able to reach 65-year-old Dan Dischley in Concord, North Carolina. Dan moved there from New York in 2007. He is still active putting together "career albums" for former major league players and hobbyists. The albums contain photos, stats, autographs, and cards. Surprisingly, Dan said he wasn't a card collector – although he did own five Wagners at one time or another. He was interested in the Cincinnati Reds, autographs, and particularly photographs. Through family, neighbors, and word-of-mouth he got to know major leaguers like Cal Abrams, Mickey McDermott, Mickey Grasso, Wes Westrum, Pete Rose, and Gus Bell. He saw a hobby publication in 1968 and thought that he could do a better job of publishing a paper – and he did. He recognized the importance of timely delivery in order to attract auctions and advertisers and he worked hard. He seemed to be at the right place at the right time with *TTS*. The major people in the hobby came his way. He mentioned Bill Haber, Barry Halper, Pat Quinn, Irv Lerner, Larry Fritsch, and dozens of others. Dan said he "got in early and...gave them what they wanted."

Dan was bothered by dishonesty he was finding in the hobby and grew tired of the long hours to put out *TTS*. After turning *TTS* over to Jackson, he went into the vending machine business and other activities including serious pool and poker. I mentioned that I liked the *TTS* covers and asked who designed them. "I designed them, usually about 5 minutes before the issue went to the printer I grabbed whatever I thought would work," he answered. Dan Dischley is an interesting pioneer who dealt with practically everyone in the hobby.

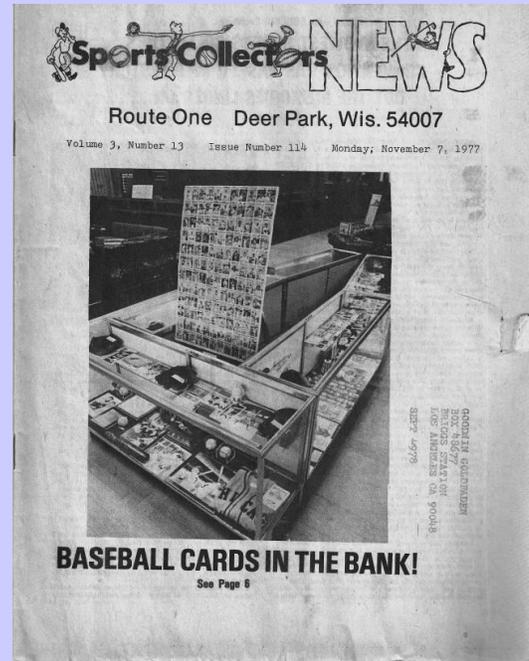
SPORTS COLLECTORS NEWS

Mike Bondarenko's Sports Collectors News

Mike Bondarenko started Sports Collectors News (*SCN*) in 1968 when he was 16 years old. Goodie's copies start in 1969, the second year of publication. Until 1974 issues are mimeographed and stapled with no photos. Thereafter they went to a printed tabloid. Bondarenko wrote in the May/June 1969 issue, "Once again we are incorporating an issue with another and coming out with a double-issue. As was mentioned last month, we are not fond of doing this, but, it is felt that it would be best to incorporate another *SCN* so that we can get caught up in time." In the early 1970s *SCN* folded for awhile but was back by 1974 on a bi-weekly schedule for \$5 per year. A year later they went back to monthly. In 1976 they changed again to weekly and announced a program to double subscriptions to 5,000. Issues ran from 32 to 54 pages with about 50% articles to ads initially and then going closer to 25% copy when they got to the bi-weekly issues. Still there was plenty written about cards, athletes, conventions, and checklists. Keith Olbermann volunteered to be *SCN*'s "Card Wizard" each

issue answering questions about cards. Ted Taylor, George Lyons, and Lionel Carter were among the writers. The *SCN* Collector of the Year award went to (*The Sports Trader* publisher) Richard Burns with 121 votes.

Left- The table of Goodwin and Esther Goldfaden at the 1976 West Coast Convention



Complaint Department

An anonymous writer known as the “The Old Prospector” wrote in 1969, “In the past I have received a lot of criticism and static regarding some of the things I have written in your paper.” He then goes on to write, “Collectors are too docile and unwilling to take up anything contrivernal (sic) or something someone may disagree with...everyone is so sickeningly sweet.” The editor adds, “Please address criticisms to issues and not personalities.” Bondarenko devoted several pages in 1974 to fraud in the hobby and what to do about it. The most common problem was someone accepting money and then not delivering. Bondarenko announced that they would publicize and report fraud and assist in prosecution.

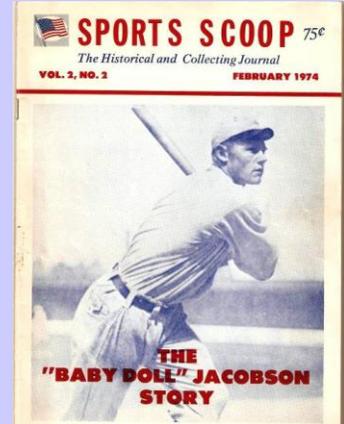
Issues covered by subscribers and writers included complaining about out-of-towners coming into town to buy or run shows. (I remember an attitude in the early 1980s that if someone was going to get a good deal buying locally, it should be locals. Any show not run by the local collectors’ association was to be avoided, boycotted.) Hobbyists complained that the conventions were “degenerating into swap meets” for dealers with no programs, speakers, or auctions.



Artists Bob Barker and Robert Laughlin contributed to the Sports Collectors News

Other News and Prices

In 1975 the front page news was that Goldfaden had sold all his publications to Notre Dame University. This proved to be just one of the many times Goodie sold out only to be back in business again with publications as well as photos, cards, pennants, and autographs. Prices realized in auctions were reported such as 50 cents per card for T206s, 35 cents for 1952 Topps (although high numbers were \$6), and 17 cents per card for 1954s. A 1975 Hostess set went for \$35 which amounted to 70 cents for a three-card panel or more than the T206s! It was not uncommon to see old cards at mouth-watering prices in today's climate and newer cards selling at prices not much different than today. Bill Mastro sold one of his two Wagners to Ken Blazek of Trafford, Pennsylvania, at an undisclosed price according to a small 1974 article. *SCN* reported the demise of Steve Mitchell's *Sports Scoop*, a two year venture following a previous defunct publication – *Sports Collectors Journal*. The publisher felt there were only so many advertising dollars for the major publications and that the minor publications, club newsletters, and dealer mailings further reduced the potential advertising. Not all would survive; he was right.



Ton 10 Lists

Subscribers voted Bob Solon as the dealer providing the best service. Others in the top 10 were: Ralph Nozaki, Dick Millerd, Irv Lerner, John Spaulding, Bill White, John Parks, Frank Nagy, Cooper Long, and TCMA. The most “interesting” collectors as determined by the publisher were George Lyons, Larry Fritsch, Lionel Carter, Elloit Harvith (boxing historian), Bob Jaspersen, Max Schrage (autographs), Richard Burns (former *Sports Trader* publisher), Jack Thompson, George Martin (former *Ballcard Collector* publisher), and Mike Aronstein (TCMA).

A Little Controversy Never Hurt?

George Lyons wrote for *SCN* and had an uncanny ability to get people riled up. A Lyon column in 1977, in which he criticized Jim Nowell and *SCD*'s John Stommen, drew criticism from readers Ron Lambert, Jack Johnson, and Gavin Riley. (One reader called Lyons a “newcomer,” true fighting words in that newcomers usually upset the existing apple carts by being willing to pay higher prices and “making long distance phone calls.” Newcomers should busy themselves at the kiddie table until the “old-timers” had finished off their wantlists at reasonable prices.) Publisher Bondarenko let it all air out as he had with a spat between Charles Brooks and Frank Nagy regarding two separate Detroit shows that featured “poison pen letters” with “scathing personal attacks” (to the publisher) from the wife of a convention committee member. *SCN* reported that the one-shot publication called *The National Sports Collector* from E. Williams Publishing was really a fellow named Bruce Minor who had disappeared along with subscribers' and advertisers' monies. The very active Mr. Brooks was trying to organize a national collectors' organization. The idea had been kicking around for years. Barry Halper was promoting the notion in *The Trader Speaks* as well. Readers continued to express opinions over reprints by Brooks and collector issues by Ted Taylor. Lionel Carter complained about prices; George Lyons took exception to Carter. A writer would say

something nice about another writer and then add that their last column “reached a new depth of drivel.” Hot stuff!

Beckett Guide is Born

Surprisingly an accurate, accepted price guide was still lacking in the mid-1970s. The 1975 *Sports Collectors Bible* by Bert Sugar helped but did not win the hearts of all collectors; some groused about the \$8 price for a paperback and the lack of an index. Dr. James Beckett came to the rescue with his statistical knowledge and interest in cards. He surveyed collectors and dealers starting in 1976 utilizing forms and announcements in the hobby publications. In April 1977 he reported the results as to average values for common cards by set in average condition – adjusted to remove abnormal high and low opinions. The question of how much of a premium should be assigned to star cards was still in its infancy. One advertiser was still selling stars for about the same as commons and was called “brave.” The approach did not last.

Young Yeko

Bruce Yeko was featured in a 1978 article. Yeko was a full-time dealer with 15 to 20 million cards. A *Sporting News* ad had inspired him as a teenager to collect and obtain additional cards. After college, he moved from Milwaukee to New York City, sold cards to Gordon B. Taylor, lost his accounting job, and then started full-time as a dealer in 1963 at age 22. In 1967 he bought a 4 million card collection for under \$10,000. He had the foresight to charge premiums for star cards. Cards were everywhere in his apartment.

Bondarenko Interviewed in 2010

SCN publisher Bondarenko is now 57 years old and is the Chief of Police for Prescott, Wisconsin. He has great memories of publishing *SCN*. Mike ran the mimeograph machine, hand stapled issues together, and stuck stamps on the early *SCNs*. “It was laughable how home-made the whole operation was.” he remembered. He collected cards and autographs and said, “You could write to sports stars and get back signatures on postcards.” For a few months he tried *SCN* on a full-time basis. Mike said that the writers for hobby publications were “ordinary people, not trained in journalism, who wanted to help get the information out to other collectors.” It bothered him how things were changing in the 1970s from a hobby to a business. He had started *SCN* as an amateur journalist trying to give collectors an affordable venue for exchanging information. When John Stommen came along with *Sports Collectors Digest*, it blew *SCN* “out of the water with pictures and professional printing.” Mike and his wife (and ad manager) Paula decided to keep *SCN* as a part-time endeavor until folding it in 1978. Mike wound up in law enforcement by 1979 and is still a collector and a police officer.

SPORTS COLLECTORS DIGEST

Sports Collectors Digest Early Years

John Stommen of Milan, Michigan started *SCD* in 1973. Goodie’s copies picked up in 1974 when *SCD* was a printed tabloid of around 32 pages. *SCD* had a healthy percentage of advertising in each issue, 75% or more in some cases. All 1974 subscribers got to run free 50 word ads in each semi-monthly issue. The publisher initially had some of the same problems as others keeping up with the schedule. Second class mail permits delayed deliveries to some

anxious subscribers. *SCD* covered local “conventions,” included articles by traditional hobby writers like Carter, and reprinted articles on collecting from mainstream publications. Such articles were typically along the lines of – local man finds treasures in old shoe box. Circulation in mid-1974 was reported to be 2,647. Many subscribers were also involved in local collectors’ clubs in that each issue had reports of upcoming conventions throughout the country. You could attend the Chicago convention for \$5 covering all three days. If you wanted a display table, it would run you another \$5. If that was a little pricey, you could go to a three day show in Cincinnati for \$2.50.



The Stommens and Dave Meiners

John Stommen’s wife Barbara was the circulation manager and son Jeff the associate editor. The Stommens also published the local newspaper in Milan and owned an agricultural radio network. Dave Meiners contributed detailed articles as the “Sports Advocate” including a 1974 story and chart titled “Inflation Rocks the Hobby.” Hobby writers at the time were warning that the recent ridiculous increases in prices would soon mean that a collector would need to spend up to \$10,000 to collect complete runs of Topps and Bowman sets, clearly the death of the affordable hobby. Meiners covered changes in typical card prices of popular sets since 1966. I couldn’t find where the author explained where he got the numbers, but they looked believable. Hobby publications had not yet gotten into reporting card market prices in their issues. Meiners was expecting some feedback from readers and got little – an “average of two letters a month.” (Letter? What’s a letter?) He urged readers to contribute articles. A popular view was that some veteran collectors had valuable knowledge that they weren’t willing to share fearing that the information would hurt their chances of continuing to pick up cards at good prices. Meiners also wrote an article criticizing pettiness he had observed among collectors and hobby writers, perhaps just adding fuel to the fire. Meiners finished with two long articles, the first threatening to quit and the second quitting. Otherwise, *SCD* was pretty free of controversy in the issues I reviewed. They had plenty of ads, the publisher stayed in the background, and circulation was growing. A mid-1975 issue had 56 large pages with 10 pages of articles and the rest ads. The Stommens sold to Krause Publications in 1981. Krause Publications is now a subsidiary of F+W Media. John Stommen died in 2001. *SCD* is in its thirty-eighth year of continuous publication.

Summary

Hobby publications started with Jefferson Burdick’s *Card Collectors Bulletin* in 1937. Charles Bray took over as editor in 1948. *CCB* became mostly a Bray auction publication after Burdick’s death in 1963. Bob Jaspersen’s *Sport Fan* started in 1951, took a break in the 1960s, and lasted until 1977. Goodie Goldfaden’s boxes of hobby publications give us a good idea of the hobby history in the late 1960s and 1970s. About fifty publications came and went. The

largest that survived until the late 1970s were Dischley's *The Trader Speaks* (1968-1984), Stommen's *Sports Collectors Digest* (1973-ongoing), Bondarenko's *Sports Collectors News* (1968-1977), and Brooks's *The Sport Hobbyist* (1956-1978). We have saved covering publications in the 1980s and thereafter for another day.

It was a tough business. If the information were available, we would probably find that the publishers and writers were working for far less than the minimum wage. Despite the \$5 problems caused by \$1 subscribers, people seemed to enjoy what they were doing. This age of numerous printed newsletters, programs, directories, magazines, and letters may not be seen again. Thanks for hanging onto the hobby pulp, Goodie, and thanks to our early hobby publishers and writers for spreading the word.

George Vrechek is a freelance contributor to SCD and can be reached at vrechek@ameritech.net.

A big OBC thank you to [Sports Collectors Digest \(SCD\)](#) for allowing us to reprint George's article here on the OBC site.