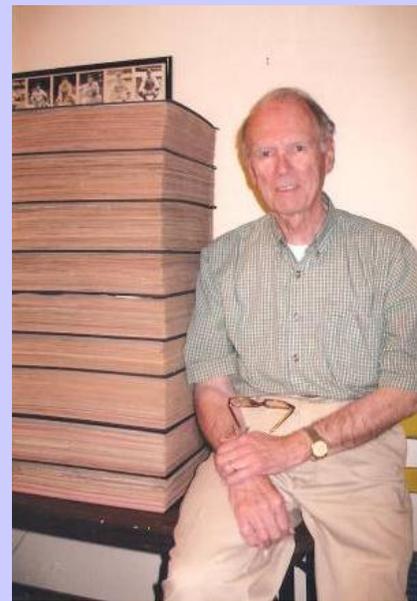


Ray Medeiros, Collecting Baseball History and Friends Since 1941



By
George Vrechek

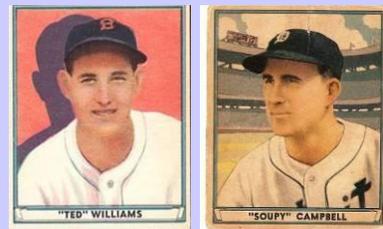


One of the truly interesting good guys in the hobby is Ray Medeiros, a long-time collector and sometime dealer. I first met Ray in 1982 during the short-lived episode in his life of running a card store in Torrance, California. I remembered him as very collector-friendly and particularly enthused about stadium postcards. He gave me a few postcards of his own creation to take along with my purchase. I met Ray again during the National Convention in 2002. He helped organize a small show for sports postcard collectors held at Harry Caray's restaurant in Chicago. I remembered Ray as a gracious host.

Ray has followed my prior *SCD* articles on hobby pioneers, most of whom he knew personally. I had the opportunity to interview Ray recently as I thought I would check in with another one of the collectors who attended the first and second national sports card shows held in Brea, California. Ray was there in 1969 and 1970. Irv Lerner, Lionel Carter, Jim Nowell, Goodie Goldfaden, Jim McConnell, Ed Broder, Ray Hess, John England, Bob Jaspersen, and Mike Jaspersen were among the other hobby veterans attending at least one of the shows in 1969 and 1970.

“Soupy” and Ted at the Candy Store

Ray first became a collector in 1941 as a seven-year-old Red Sox and Braves fan from Fall River, Massachusetts. One Saturday he had a few pennies in his pocket and stopped into his local candy store to buy three penny packs of 1941 Playball cards. One of the cards was the amusingly nick-named “Soupy” Campbell. Another card turned out to be Ray's all-time favorite player, Ted Williams. Since then Ray has gone a little deeper into collecting Ted Williams material, amassing some nine scrapbooks on just Ted.



Sports Sections and Scrapbooks

There weren't many cards around after 1941, so it wasn't until 1945 that Ray's collecting renewed. War-time paper drives resulted in mountains of newspapers placed on the sidewalks of Fall River. Ray “got hooked” pulling out the sports sections from the piles of papers and documenting events like the eight straight wins out of the gate by Red Sox rookie pitcher Dave

Ferriss. Ray's next step was to organize the sports sections into scrapbooks. Newspapers and cards started to get pasted into scrapbooks obtained from Woolworths for 10 cents each.

Ray recalled, "In 1949 the family moved to Westport, Massachusetts, and shortly after I discovered an abandoned home which contained a daily newspaper for every day beginning in 1891 and running into the middle of 1943 when the last occupant was removed to a home for the elderly. I obtained permission to enter for the purpose of taking sports pages out of the papers. I did that for a couple of months and wound up with a lot of fascinating material which all wound up in scrapbooks."

Finding Collectors

In 1947 Ray discovered the *Trading Post* publication as a result of their ad in *The Sporting News*. The Sports Exchange *Trading Post* was one of the earliest publications geared to the sports collector and reached a national audience. Ray went after guides, yearbooks, cards, and postcards. Through the *Trading Post*, Ray started to contact some of the pioneer collectors in the hobby including Charles Bray, Wirt Gammon, and Buck Barker. Ray remembered vividly his first contact with Buck Barker. Ray sent Buck clippings from sports sections appearing in the 1920s. Buck responded by sending Ray a note on an old linen postcard depicting Sportsman's Park in St. Louis. This one postcard started Ray on a life-long endeavor of collecting postcards dealing with old stadiums.

When you talk to Ray, it is mostly about other people rather than his own accomplishments. It was interesting hearing about many of the hobby pioneers Ray was able to meet.

Pitched Cards

Ray remembered the 1948 Leafs as ugly, and he picked up a smattering of cards from 1948 through 1951. In 1951, some of his friends decided they were too old for the cards from their youth and handed Ray thousands of 1939, 1940, and 1941 Playballs, as well as 1942 Double Plays. Ray remembered the kids in 1941 kneeling and pitching cards, destroying the corners in the process. Somewhat like his eventual mentor, Buck Barker, Ray never got too concerned about condition. Ray recalled Barker complaining in jest about Lionel Carter's endless pursuit of the perfect card. Buck was pursuing something from every player no matter how banged up it was.

Wild Blue Yonder

In 1953, Ray joined the Air Force for a 13-year run. Ray met his first collector face-to-face while on his honeymoon in 1954. Ray stopped to see Frank Jock, who had been collecting since the early 1900s and recalled the meeting as follows: "We visited Frank Jock at his cottage in a delightful little town in Maine called Kezar Falls. In his backyard he built a ten by ten cabin which housed his enormous collection of publications, scrapbooks, clip-files and a one-of-a-kind collection of photographs he took during his time serving in the balloon corps with the U.S. Army in France during World War I. That rare and enormous collection went to the American Legion in Portland, Maine, when he passed away in 1967."



Bob Jaspersen

Ray also met *Sport Fan* founder Bob Jaspersen and exchanged collectables with him over many years. Ray recalled, "Frank Jock and Bob Jaspersen became close friends at about the same time I did in 1949. Bob's wife, Helen, grew up in northern Massachusetts and when she and Bob visited relatives there, they would make a quick run up to Frank Jock's place. Jeanne (Ray's wife) and I would do the same whenever we were back in Massachusetts. Bob thought the world of Frank and his wife, Madelyn, and upon Frank's passing, helped her dispose of his collection. Years later, when Bob decided to honor a collector who had made more than ordinary contributions to the hobby, he chose to honor Frank in the process by calling it the Frank Jock award. Bob didn't pick his winners but instead asked readers of *Sport Fan* to nominate individuals they thought deserving with reasons for their choice. *Sport Fan* made it possible for me to know about Bob and by 1970, we were exchanging visits and did so until his death in 1982."

Left to right Ray Medeiros, Mike Jaspersen, and Bob Jaspersen



Bailey in Greenland

While in the service, Ray met fellow soldier and card collector Mel Bailey and began completing sets going back to 1939. Ray was stationed in Greenland, Newfoundland, Spain and California and made short runs to numerous places such as Germany, Algeria, Morocco and Labrador. Cards and scrapbooks survived all the moves. Both Medeiros and Bailey spent time at Air Force bases in Greenland. The temperature in Greenland during Ray's stay never got warmer than nine below zero; there was plenty of time for indoor collecting. While in Greenland, Ray put together eight volumes of scrapbooks he called "100 Years of Baseball."



Visiting Buck

Ray was also able to stop in St. Louis several times during his military career and headed directly to Buck Barker's home. Ray recalled that "Buck would never let you stay ahead in a transaction." No sooner would you send something to Buck than he would respond by sending you even more great stuff in return. When Ray visited Buck, they would talk about some collectable. Buck would leave the room for a few minutes and return from an unseen storage area with his arms full of stuff.

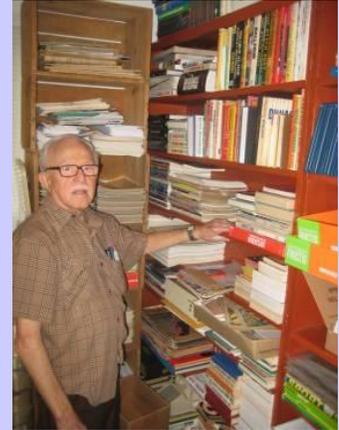
Ray stated that many of the old-time collectors "were superb people but in my experience, Buck Barker did more for the hobby, the collectors in the hobby than anyone, simply because he was the most generous person I've ever known. If he had information he believed others would benefit from, he shared it either by



letter, in person, or in print. If he knew you liked a particular item and he came across it, without fanfare or a request for anything whatsoever in return, he sent it to you and value never came up in discussion. While there have indeed been many individuals who helped ‘grow’ the hobby, many of them really helped ‘grow’ the business side of the hobby, not a sin, but not quite what Buck Barker was all about.”

Buying from Goodie in 1948

Ray met another hobby pioneer I have interviewed, 95-year-old publication dealer Goodie Goldfaden. Ray recalled, “In 1948, I ordered annuals like *Who's Who in Major League Baseball* from Goodwin Goldfaden and thus began a long friendship with Goodie. Although thoroughly and completely a businessman, he always was fair and kind to me, even letting me owe him a considerable amount of money for a pile of old *Baseball Magazine* posters I liked but lacked the money to purchase. He gave me the whole works and took a token amount for it and told me to pay a little at a time until it was paid in full. That was in 1959 when I was on active duty in the Air Force and was leaving on an assignment to Greenland. Eight years later, I walked into his store on Santa Monica Boulevard and his first words after hello were, ‘Are you interested in some more *Baseball Magazine* posters?’ In all my life I've known only two people with what has to be a nearly photographic memory and he's one of them. He also remembered what I had purchased back in 1948!”



While Goodie pulled something out of the warehouse, Ray noticed the papers on Goodie’s desk. Invoices and correspondence were there from all over the world since Goodie ran small ads in foreign trade papers and phonebooks. Ray and his wife Jeanne would visit antique stores in pursuit of their hobby. They found one particular dealer who had a nice stack of things all set aside in a box marked for Goodie Goldfaden’s next return to their store. Goldfaden would visit antique dealers and buy all they had – by the pound.

Howard Leheup

Howard Leheup was another hobby pioneer Ray met. Leheup lived in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, and journeyed into New York City frequently to assist Jefferson Burdick in pasting his collection into books at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ray recalled, “Howard worked for the railroad and on days off rode the train (free for employees like himself) from Springfield, Mass. down to Grand Central Station then hoofed it over to the museum. He never was recognized for all the time and effort he put into the preservation of Burdick's enormous collection. Howard had a fabulous collection of cigarette cards. He often told me about how he used to pick up T-series cards from underneath and beside city park benches in Springfield. Men opened their packs of cigarettes and usually tossed them and he built complete sets of most of the issues of the period. On one of my visits we were sitting at his dinner table looking through albums of his early sets. He floored me when he told me to look into a box underneath the table. I pulled it out and placed it on the table but saw nothing unusual. He told me to lift the tissue paper and when I did it revealed what may well have been hundreds of copies of T-3s which looked as though they had just come off the press! He auctioned off his collection through

Charlie Bray during the mid 1960s and received little for it then. Today, especially because of the superior condition of the cards, it might well have made him millions.”

Hess and Loughman

Ray continued recalling hobby veterans. “Two gentlemen who go back many years need to be recognized for their generosity and support of the hobby - Ray Hess, who used to follow the Phillies when they played in Baker Bowl in the 1930s and Bill Loughman, who had in his collection at least one copy of a sports page for every day of the twentieth century plus most of the years dating back to the beginning of the 1880s. He never hesitated to research them for writers of books, magazines and newspapers. Both gentlemen are in the mold of a Buck Barker and yet sadly, few people today know who they are.”

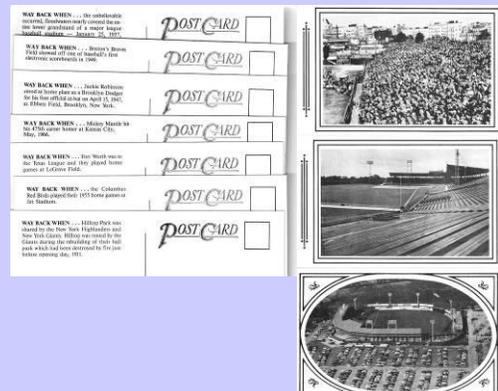
I gave 89-year-old Ray Hess of Palm Springs, California, a call. Hess had fond memories of traveling all over the country with Ray Medeiros saying that “Ray’s car seemed to know where he was going.” They took off together to far-flung shows and came back with postcards, cards, and publications. They met in the late 60s when Medeiros called Hess out of the blue after finding his name in a hobby publication. They got together that night to trade and have stayed in touch ever since. In those days Hess recalled “trading consisted of giving the other collector one card in exchange for one card.” “Value” was not in the equation. Hess respected Medeiros’s “tremendous knowledge of baseball, ballparks, and his contribution to the hobby.” Hess got a kick when I read him portions of his 1954 letter to Lionel Carter that I had copied from Lionel’s correspondence. Carter saved letters from other collectors and had traded with Hess for over 25 years.



Bill Loughman of Elmhurst, Illinois, is a youngster of only 79 years. He also enjoyed working with Medeiros in assembling sports pages and collecting baseball guides. They were both raised when cards weren’t too plentiful. Loughman told me that he created his own (5,000!) cards from magazine pictures and index cards. He also put together scrapbooks in much the same way as Medeiros, although he said Ray’s scrapbooks “were piled too high to be able to jump over.” As a former airline pilot, Loughman went around the country pursuing discarded newspaper print and photo archives. Like Medeiros, Bill admitted being a (very organized) “pack rat.” He was another long-time (60-year) Goldfaden customer.

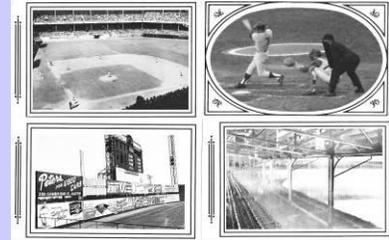
California Collecting

In 1966 Ray and his family moved to San Diego and he entered civil service as a budget officer. One of Ray and Jeanne’s three children, Robbie, had spinal meningitis and severe asthma. Ten-year old Robbie died in 1966 which resulted in Ray losing interest for a time in collecting. By the late 1960s though, Ray was back collecting and attended the first and second gatherings of collectors organized by Jim Nowell of Brea, California

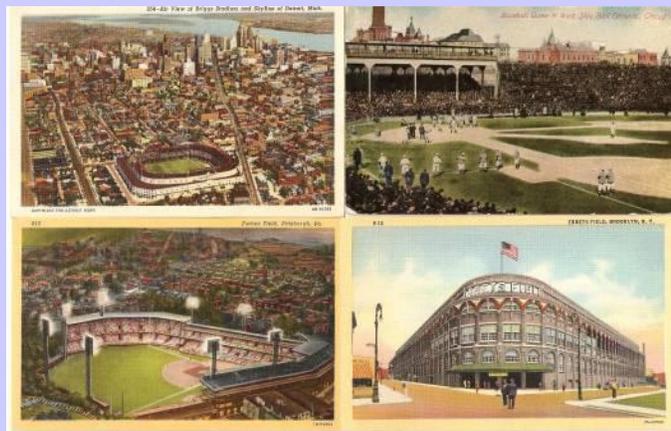


and held at Nowell's home in 1969 and 1970.

Jeanne was also interested in postcards and paper ephemera. Together they opened a store for one year in Torrance, California. Ray developed an eight-card stadium postcard set to use as handouts at the store. Ray was easily encouraged by customers to keep at it and by 1987 had produced 128 "Way Back When" stadium postcards showing major and minor league stadiums and special events occurring there. The postcards include most of the great old ballparks. In addition to the classic aerial views, the cards depict street scenes outside the parks, fans lining up to enter, batting practices, construction activity, and even flooded playing fields.



Ray's collection of old stadium postcards could be the subject of another entire article. Shown here are four cards Ray generously sent me to start my own collection of pre-linen era and linen era postcards: Briggs Stadium of Detroit, the West Side Ball Grounds of Chicago (with a 1911 postmark), Forbes Field of Pittsburgh, and Ebbets Field. Ray warned me that "collecting stadium postcards is a lot like eating peanuts - once you start, it is hard to stop."



Ted Williams Scrapbooks

Ray told me how he wound up putting together scrapbooks on Ted Williams. "In 1973 while looking through some of the envelopes I had saved which contained clippings that never made it into the scrapbooks, I discovered that I still had a sizeable amount of material about Ted Williams. I decided to preserve those items of my favorite ballplayer and bought myself one more scrapbook. I pasted them in and in a short while was visited by my friend Dwight Chapin who was then a writer for the *Los Angeles Times*. Dwight saw the scrapbook and looked it over with delight and thought it came out quite well. Not long after, he dropped by with a few Williams clippings and told me they belonged in the scrapbook. Soon afterward another friend, John Thom saw the book and did the same. Then the procession swung into full gear.



"Today the small scrapbook has grown to nine volumes, is three feet thick, contains 2,854 pages and has 9,176 items pasted in. Yes, I counted them because friends kept asking me how many were in it. I now keep a running count of anything I add and the material continues to come from all corners of the U.S. Every summer I spend a week adding new material. It isn't work...just a labor of love. I'm sure glad I didn't collect rocks!"

Ballparks and Stadiapex

From 1986 to 1988, Ray and Jeanne published *The Ballparks Bulletin* and had over 800 subscribers including executives of baseball and football clubs, professors, politicians, architects, historians, writers, fans, and one beer vendor. Ray recalled, "It was great while it lasted but costs climbed along with subscribers forcing us to close down a genuinely satisfying period in our lives." Ray and Jeanne moved to Colorado Springs in 1994. Ray decided to sell his card collection in the 1990s but has continued collecting stadium postcards, *Baseball Guides*, and maintaining the baseball scrapbooks. Ray helped organize "Stadiapex" meetings where postcard collectors could buy, sell, and trade their collections. One such meeting was the one I attended in Chicago in 2002. I now have some more of Ray's creations involving memorable events that occurred in stadiums of the past.

Collecting - Friends

Like any life-long collector, Ray still keeps an eye out for those special items that might fit neatly into the mound of meticulous scrapbooks. Ray left me with this thought, "Let readers of *SCD* know that once upon a time, the hobby was a lot of fun, not because of the potential for making a million and retiring at an early age, but because those old-timers were collecting friends in the process."

Ray can be reached at mwaybackwhen@comcast.net and would enjoy hearing from other collectors

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