

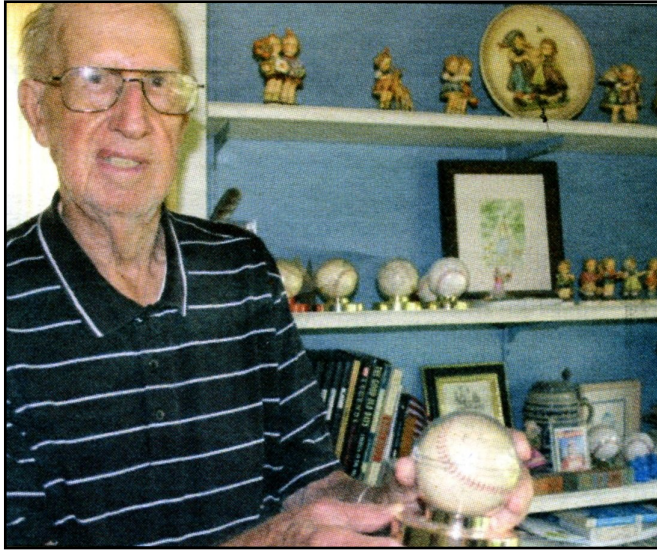
New Ulm man wore multiple hats working for Milwaukee Braves in 1950s

Ask any fan of major league baseball and they'll probably agree that October is a favorite part of the season with all the excitement of playoffs and World Series action. But talk with Carl "Red" Wyczawski, age 91, of New Ulm, about the game of baseball and he'll most likely tell you it's his favorite topic to discuss at any time of the year.

Born in Thorpe, Wis., in 1926, he grew up with the same dream as nearly every other boy of becoming a big league ballplayer. As a 10-year-old kid he recalled throwing strikes against a garage door to imaginary hitters and getting an autograph on a baseball from Babe Ruth when Ruth made a publicity appearance at

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a downtown Chicago department store in 1936.



His baseball playing days took him as far as signing a minor league contract to play for the Superior Blues in the Class C Northern League in 1948. Red struck out twice in the only professional game he played for the Blues before management told him he'd be better off throwing batting practice, assisting the business manager, driving the team bus and becoming the right hand man for team manager Johnny Mostril.

"I earned \$120 a month playing ball, but they paid me \$150 a month to do the other things for the club, including writing game stories about the Blues for the Duluth and Superior newspapers," Red recalled.

He remembered driving the team bus to a game at Eau Claire that summer when they heard that five members of the Duluth Dukes including the manager were killed in a bus accident.

"After the game our team wouldn't get on the school bus I was driving

Red and his baseball autographed by Babe Ruth

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so I drove the bus alone back to Superior while the players rode back on a bigger public bus," he said.

It was another step in Red's baseball ladder that was leading him to a job with the Milwaukee Braves.

Big time baseball radio announcers Harry Carey, Dizzy Dean and Ernie Harwell were his favorites, but Red's college professor once told him that he didn't have a radio voice because it had a nasal quality. So, in 1949, Red went into sports writing and worked for the Superior Evening Telegram and the Eau Claire Leader.

In 1950, the Eau Claire newspaper sent Red to cover the Boston Braves' Class C Eau Claire Bears farm club and the big league team in spring training at Myrtle Beach, S.C., for six weeks where he sent daily stories back to the paper by teletype.

Then the Korean War started, and Red was the first man drafted for the service from Wisconsin. He served two years stateside at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo. "There were 720 guys in our engineer construction battalion and over 200 of them died in Korea," he said.

After his discharge from Army life he briefly worked for the Sporting News magazine before returning to the Eau Claire paper. His next opportunity came when the Braves moved from Boston to Milwaukee in 1953.

"There was an opening for an assistant publicity director job, and out of 17 guys who applied, I got the job," Red explained. Red credits his work as the official scorer for the Bears team and his work as a sportswriter with helping him get the prized position. Red took a \$5 cut in salary from the paper to go work for the Braves at \$150 a month but he was in the big leagues and living the dream.

The next four years were a whirlwind of activity for Red who juggled multiple duties as an assistant to Don Davidson in the Braves' public relations office. He did a considerable amount of public speaking for the organization during good will tours

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in the winter to cities throughout Wisconsin. Red estimates he made 260 public speaking appearances for the Braves in his four years with the team.

On game days in Milwaukee's County Stadium Red controlled the switches for the scoreboard up in the press box and made public address announcements with his trademark microphone line, "Now hear this," to keep fans posted as to the batting order of players coming to hit, changes in the lineup and delivering a constant flow of information to the crowd during the contest.

When not working the game, Red spent countless hours wearing one of his many hats for the team writing stories for the Braves' yearbook and scorecard, sending out press releases, compiling official player statistics, publishing the weekly "Smoke Signals" news notes, making appearances with players and anything else that needed attention.

Red also was the public address announcer for the All-Star game played in Milwaukee in 1955 which was one of his career highlights.

Despite the heavy workload, being connected with a major league baseball team in the 1950s was pretty heady stuff.

"Out of 700 players in the big leagues during that time I probably met 400 of them and knew some of them on a personal basis," Red commented.

Getting to know the Braves' players was part of his job especially with three future hall of famers on the team in Henry Aaron, Eddie Matthews and Warren Spahn.

Aaron and Matthews were among Red's favorite Braves' players along with Billy Bruton, Jack Dittmer, Lew Burdette, Joe Adcock, Del Crandall and Chuck Tanner.

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“Aaron was a 19-year-old rookie in 1954, and he and Bruton were both black ballplayers, and they went through some tough times because of racial discrimination in those days,” Red stated. “Aaron would get a lot of hate mail and threats, and Bruton once told me out of frustration, ‘I’d give my left arm to be white.’”

One of Red’s duties was to arrange for player interviews with the media. And then there was the time Red had to represent Mathews in a court appearance before a judge. “Eddie was stopped for driving his car one night when he was going home with the headlights off,” Red recalled. “But can you believe it, I got him off from the ticket,” he laughed.

Red remembered another historic moment when he was told to take care of a photographer from New York who was at the game and needed to take some photos for a new sports magazine

“I arranged for him to get a photo of Matthews while batting at the plate,” Red explained. “The photo, taken by Mark Kauffman, appeared on the very first cover of Sports Illustrated in 1954. He sent me five copies, and I gave four of them away, but kept one for myself which is worth a couple hundred dollars to collectors today.

Red said the 1954 season also was notable for Milwaukee when the Braves became the first team in the majors to draw over 2 million loyal fans. The next year, Red recalled, the Braves played a game against Pittsburgh at County Stadium early in the season during an unexpected May snowstorm. “There were 12,000 fans who showed up for the game and the Pittsburgh players had a good time throwing snowballs up at us in the press box.”

Red married his wife Mary in 1954, and they were driving to Brainerd for their honeymoon when he turned on the radio to hear that Jim Wilson had just pitched a no-hitter for the Braves against the Philadelphia Phillies. “The radio

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announcer said that I missed a good game that day,” Red recalled.

One of the innovative ideas Red helped implement for the Braves was the use of a golf cart to bring pitchers in from the bullpen during the game.“

Al Oliver, the field superintendent, and I went to the Braves’ owner for \$2,000 to get the cart, which had a Braves logo painted on it and lettering that read “Braves Courtesy Car,” Red noted. He has a photo of it in one of numerous scrapbooks meticulously filled with news clippings and many other photos taken during his career with the Braves.

Red left the Braves organization in 1956, a year before Milwaukee won the World Series in 1957. He came to New Ulm to join his father-in-law, Ben Green, in his successful Green’s Clothier men’s store business. Red later became president of Green’s from 1963-1988 when the store closed.

During that time Red was deeply involved in the fabric of the community serving as mayor for 24 years. He used his baseball experience and promotional skills to benefit New Ulm’s strong high school, VFW, Legion and amateur baseball programs. He served on the New Ulm Baseball Association Board and was chairman of the state amateur baseball tournament that New Ulm hosted in 1958. “It was Minnesota’s 100th anniversary, and I remember having Gov. Orville Freeman sign 100 baseballs that we gave away at the tournament,” Red said.

As an avid follower of sports Red chaired the Minnesota Sports Commission and helped raise money for the University of Minnesota’s Williams Fund by hosting golf tournaments. He even brought Hank Aaron, who was baseball’s home run leader at the time, to New Ulm for a speaking appearance in 1978 to honor the Legion team that played in the Legion World Series at Yakima, Wash. In 2012, Red was inducted into the Minnesota Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame and later the American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame.

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Red has had the opportunity to attend 14 different major league World Series, including the '57 World Series won by the Braves. When the 1965 World Series was played at Met Stadium between the Twins and Los Angeles Dodgers, Red was among the ticket agents from communities around Minnesota who were selected to present special certificates to Twins players on the field.

Red's player happened to be Frank Quilici, who had the distinction of getting two hits in the same inning of game one which the Twins won. Fast forward to 1986 and Red had the honor of throwing out a first pitch at a Twins game. age baseball team in the 1950s was pretty heady stuff.

In Red's photo collection one of his favorites which he took is of his son Steve with New York Yankee star Roger Maris in 1961 at a Twins game at Met Stadium when Maris was chasing the single season home run record.

Red also has attended nine All-Star games and added to his major league history who's who collection of signed baseballs. He went to the 1962 All-Star game in Chicago and sat in seats at Wrigley Field behind the third base dugout, and he noticed Rogers Hornsby sitting in front of him. Always one to have a baseball with him in his pocket, Red was able to get his autograph. It's one of 52 hall of fame signatures on baseballs in his collection.

To sum up Red's time in baseball all you need to do is look in Red's scrapbook collection, and you'll find a signed photo from the Twins current manager Paul Molitor.

Molitor wrote: *"To Red, one of the great baseball enthusiasts I know."*

No wonder why Red said, *"My life in baseball has been a lot of fun."*