

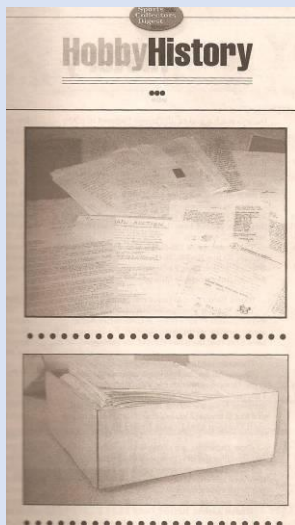


# A LOOK AT EARLY HOBBY CORRESPONDENCE

## What's different? What's the same?

By George Vrechek from correspondence of the late Lionel Carter

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You've all heard about the "good old days." As in: "Why when I was a boy, baseball cards were a penny and you got a stick of gum to boot. We traded cards without caring about the value. Not like today with collectors overly concerned about value and condition. Yes, things were a lot different then. There are just too many products these days and they cost way too much."

### Carter's boxes

One way of checking out the "good old days" is to go back and read some of the letters and publications from the time. I've had an opportunity to do just that. Hobby pioneer Lionel Carter was nice enough to loan me two boxes of material: one contained old hobby publications, the other contained correspondence to Carter from other collectors from 1940 to the 1980s. The hobby publications were certainly interesting. However I enjoyed going through the stack of correspondence. The comments are more direct, you see the process for acquiring cards, and get a better sense of what it was like to be a collector then.

Who else but Lionel Carter would have saved seemingly every shred of hobby correspondence for 50 years – neatly laying them flat in a stack? Carter started collecting in 1933 and gradually

learned of other serious collectors. He always focused on baseball cards in the best condition. In his effort to complete sets, Carter ran ads and wrote letters – lots of letters in that the internet wasn't quite ready yet and long distance phone calls were a major event. Letters to Carter came from just about any long-time collector that you can imagine: Jefferson Burdick, Preston Orem, Charles Bray, Bob Jaspersen, Woody Gelman, Frank Nagy, Buck Barker, Bob Solon, Frank Barning, Dan Even, Gavin Riley, E.C. Wharton-Tigar, Elwood Scharf, Bill White, George Husby, Larry Fritsch, Bill Mastro, Don Steinbach, Harry Kenworthy, Dan Jaskula, Bert Sugar, Steve Vanco, Lew Lipset, Jack Smalling, Howard Leheup, John Rumierz, Jim Nowell, Irv Lerner, Vic Witte, John Stirling, Wirt Gammon, Charles Brooks.....and I'm just getting warmed up.

### General Observations

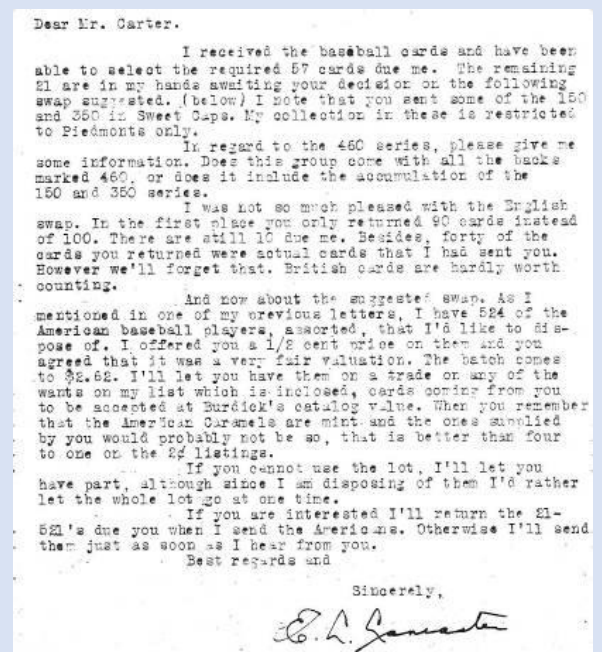
The card prices then were certainly hard to imagine today and there were no premiums for star players, but there were incredible similarities to today's hobby. People were upset with increasing prices; sets were too long, poorly designed or too numerous. Collectors were looking for a fair trade, a good deal and were aware of market values. Even Jefferson Burdick complained about having to pay "book" value for a card; and he wrote the book!

There were at least 500 letters to Carter from 1940 through the early 1980s. The stack of paper I waded through was 7 inches high. Most letters were hand-written; the rest typed. None were off a computer. A few were on interesting letterheads from hobby related organizations or the writer's business. Some writers were 14, some were 80. Wantlists as such were surprisingly brief. Many exchanges started as a result of ads Lionel Carter placed in publications or articles that he wrote for hobby publications. Therefore a fair number of people got in touch a few times to trade or sell cards and then might not be heard from again, or might be heard from years later. There were quite a few letters from editors of these early hobby publications. Several people exchanged letters with Carter over 20 or 30 years, Bob Jaspersen and Buck Barker in particular.

Some writers were very organized and to the point, some rambled. A few wrote to complain about something Carter wrote or the hobby in general. Carter can be very critical. But his articles were always well written and with a sense of humor. There were a few snits over fair trades or the timeliness of responses. A typical letter might start by apologizing for a delay in responding, updating as to health, commenting on other hobbyists' activities, and then getting to the point of: do you have any cards that I need? Nobody seemed to just throw cards in an envelope, not calculate their value and not expect anything in return. However, Carter was always interested in mint cards so the correspondence was likely slanted.

### Ed Lancaster, Lancaster, PA

Ed writes to Carter in 1940: "I received the baseball cards and have been able to select the 57 cards due me. The remaining 21 are in my hands awaiting your decision on the following swap suggested (below). I note that you sent some of the 150 and 350 in Sweet Caps. My collection in these series is restricted to



Dear Mr. Carter.

I received the baseball cards and have been able to select the required 57 cards due me. The remaining 21 are in my hands awaiting your decision on the following swap suggested. (below) I note that you sent some of the 150 and 350 in Sweet Caps. My collection in these is restricted to Piedmonts only.

In regard to the 460 series, please give me some information. Does this group come with all the backs marked 460, or does it include the accumulation of the 150 and 350 series.

I was not so much pleased with the English swap. In the first place you only returned 90 cards instead of 100. There are still 10 due me. Besides, forty of the cards you returned were actual cards that I had sent you. However we'll forget that. British cards are hardly worth counting.

And now about the suggested swap. As I mentioned in one of my previous letters, I have 524 of the American baseball players, assorted, that I'd like to dispose of. I offered you a 1/8 cent price on them and you agreed that it was a very fair valuation. The batch comes to \$2.52. I'll let you have them on a trade on any of the wants on my list which is inclosed, cards coming from you to be accepted at Burdick's catalog value. When you remember that the American Caramels are mint and the ones specified by you would probably not be so, that is better than four to one on the Ed listings.

If you cannot use the lot, I'll let you have part, although since I am disposing of them I'd rather let the whole lot go at one time.

If you are interested I'll return the 21-524's due you when I send the Americans. Otherwise I'll send them just as soon as I hear from you.

Best regards and

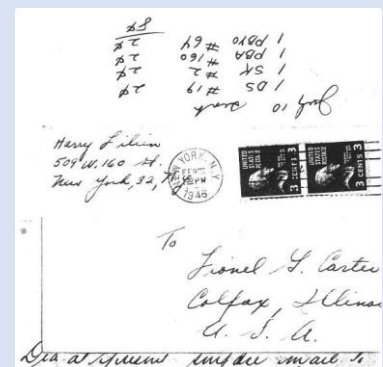
Sincerely,  
Ed Lancaster

Piedmont only. In regard to the 460 series, please give me some information. Does this group come with all the backs marked 460 or does it include the accumulation of the 150 and 350 series. I was not so much pleased with the English swap. In the first place you only returned 90 cards instead of 100. There are still 10 due me. Besides 40 of the cards you returned were actual cards I had sent you. However we'll forget that. British cards are hardly worth counting. And now about the suggested swap. As I mentioned in one of my previous letters, I have 524 of the American baseball players, assorted, that I'd like to dispose of. I offered you a ½ cent price on them and you agreed that it was a very fair valuation. The batch comes to \$2.62. I'll let you have them on a trade on any of the wants on my list which is enclosed, cards coming from you to be accepted at Burdick's catalog value. When you remember that the American Caramels are mint and the ones supplied by you probably not be so, that is better than four to one on the 2 cent listings."

I thought this oldest letter from the pile said much: Collectors used the American Card Catalog first published in 1939 for both categorizing cards and pricing them in trades. They were concerned about condition, price, and even back variations. They didn't think too much about non-sport cards ("the English swap"). They were interested in older cards. Although trading for 1910 cards in 1940 would be like trading for 1973 cards today. Also to put things in perspective, the \$2.62 should be price level adjusted to about \$33.70 in today's dollars so that you don't think they were really going to the mat over 2 bucks.

**Harry Lilien, NYC**

1946 "I guess you are surprised to hear from me after such a long time. I got out of the army a few weeks ago...I haven't looked over my collection since I've returned. My brother, Sid, was taking care of it until he went into the army. From what I did see it doesn't seem as much was issued during the war. I guess it was because of no gum.



**Albert Price, Little Rock, AK**

1946 "I will be looking forward to receiving the Exhibit cards...I have accumulated some scarce Zeenuts... Several times I've started to list the duplicate cards that I have to trade, but in each instance have failed to undertake the task." Later in 1950 "I still owe you 34 cents from the last trade we made."

**GJ Krause, Brooklyn, NY**

1947 "These cards (various T205s) are in very good to fine condition with the exception of Collins – his card is poor – creased. If however you require these cards in mint condition to replace poorer ones then of course I can be of no help to you. I have been collecting cards of T205 and 206 for years and feel that I will never complete these sets and would gladly give anyone any card in my collection if I thought I could be of any help." Carter adds a note that he wrote again 3-7-56

**Dr L. Kurzrok, NYC**

1948 "Sorry to be away so long but have been operating and delivery babies day and nite. Need 1933 Big League 56, 73, 238. 1938 Big League 242, 257, 265, 267, 269, 275, 281, 286."

**R.S. Jones, Garden City, NY**

1948 "As a collector of silks, leathers, gum, soda and cigarette cards for the past few years I have accumulated many duplicates which I would like to trade. I would be happy to trade using the catalogue prices as a basis. If you are interested in trading I would be glad to exchange want lists. Hoping to hear from you." Carter adds a note to this 1948 letter that the next exchange is 2-13-57.

**Hugh Johnson, Bowling Green, KY**

1948 "I suppose you have seen my ads announcing that I am breaking up my entire collection of over 8,000 different cards. Since I could find no buyer with the cash to swing the whole lot, I am selling in sets. Your ad sounds as if you are interested in Goodwin #162 Champions. I have that set complete in what I think is very nice condition and it was a tough job to get all fifty and a few cards here and there. The price is \$22.50 and I'll send on approval if you say so." (Egads! Just the 8 baseball cards in the set book at \$13,000 today - Vrechek) "Also have World Champions 2<sup>nd</sup> Series complete sets in fine condition which are bringing far higher bids (relative to catalog) than the 19<sup>th</sup> century."

**William Arthur, Carlstadt, NJ**

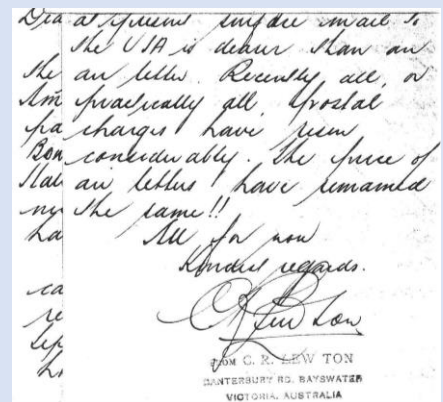
1950 "I am quite a new collector in the card collecting field, collecting baseball cards. Mr. K. Schoeneman has helped me to obtain quite a number of the T206 set. In fact at the present writing I need three (3) cards to complete the set....Of course my problem is one which most card collectors of this set (T206) do experience and that is that I need the following cards namely – O'Hara, Plank, and Wagner.... Obligated by your good judgment and information, I surely shall be, and with regards, remain Sincerely William H. Arthur"

**Dana Tasker (Sp?)**

1950 "You were kind to remember me with Connie Mack's picture. I was in Sanford Maine winter of 1899-1900 when Connie came to talk to Fred Parent, I suppose in the interest of the new league as a whole....Am sending you a card from Tip Top bread series, don't know if it is just New England or wider range." (That "new" league being the junior circuit American League.- Vrechek)

**CR Lewton, Victoria, Australia**

1951 "The Empire on Parade is a New Zealand issue and were given away in packages of breakfast food. .. I have noted your suggestion in contacting collectors in the USA through an ad in the Card Collectors Bulletin. In the first place, I have no way of getting money to the USA. This rules out the chances of buying cards and I'm in touch with Ben Cook, an American general collector. You'll note that I have sent this letter by air, the reason being that surface mail to the USA is dearer."



**Bill Leonard, Chicago Tribune, columnist**

1951 "I am keeping the four G&B cards, in return for which you may have any two of the Ramly cards, and I'm returning the eight Goodwin Champions....As I possibly mentioned in an earlier letter, I am interested in 19<sup>th</sup> Century baseball players only. Altho I have hundreds of the T205 and T206 cards, and many of the Mecca and Hassan folders, I consider them essentially trading

material for baseball items of the pre-1900 era. My interests, naturally, are in the cards numbered 172, 284, 300, 321, 403, and 680 in Mr. Burdick's comprehensive catalog...Most of all, I crave the Goodwin 172, Buchner 284 and Mayo 300 sets. Unfortunately, the catalog doesn't list the number of cards known to be included in any of these sets."

1956 "Thank you for thinking of me and inviting me to your get-together of collectors on April 7...keep me in touch with plans for the July convention. I should like to participate, if possible, as well as to meet other collectors."

**Leo Burke, Detroit, MI**

1953 "I have the Topps cards from #221 to #280 inclusive with the exception of 252, 253, 257, 261, 265, 268, 271, 275. A total of 51 cards. Will sell these to you for \$1. I will pay the postage." (6 of the cards listed were never issued. - Vrechek)

**Bob Jones, Philadelphia, PA**

1953 "Here are a few you may need. Send me whatever they are worth to you."

**Dick Dobbins, Berkeley, CA**

1954 (Yes 1954) "It continues to anger me the great number of sets put out on major league players. No wonder you draw the line before you get to minor league pictures. I am just the opposite as I like to draw the line before I get to major league things...I have most of the easy to get PCL sets...I believe I have by now the most extensive collection on PCL materials in existence. I estimate that I have upwards of 8,000 pictures of PCL players in PCL uniforms...I would just as soon hold off on the M D cards, as I don't have many traders of them, and I think they are going to become quite valuable in the near future. I know Buck Barker has the Signal cards enclosed."

**Robert Mildrum (Sp?), Baldwin, NY**

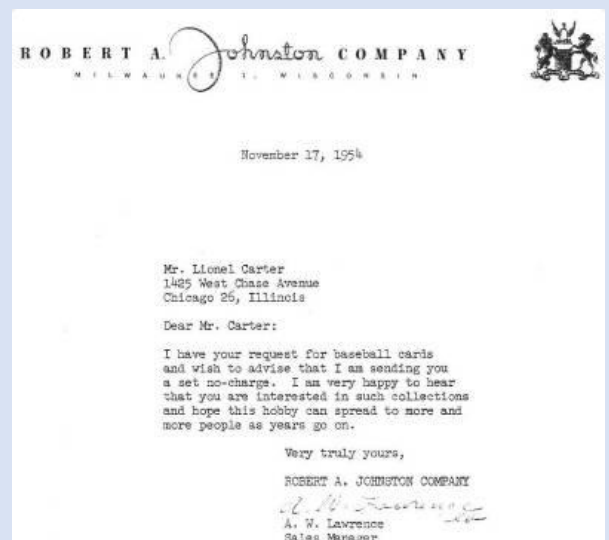
1954 "Do you know you can buy complete sets of Topps and Bowman BB from Sam Rosen on NY? Did you ever get a catalogue of baseball items for sale from Goodwin Goldfaden of LA?"

**Jay Osterhovall (Sp?)**

1954 "Just a quick answer to give you a tip -Samuel Rosen of New York City is selling 1952 Topps #311 to #407 mint for \$2.50...It is the only way you will ever get them." (That wasn't \$2.50 each either but for the whole series. Why didn't Jay "tip" me off?)

**MW Plowman, Peterborough, Ontario**

1954 "I've sent 97 Baseball Players, 97 NHL Players and 4 cards that were on the want list that you sent me. Please find enclosed statement showing a balance due of 546 points. As there were 59 cards I needed for my collection I've given you a special bonus of 30 points." (His elaborate point system by type of card seemed to be: you give me 3 cards and I'll give you 2.)



**Johnston Cookies**

Sends Lionel a complete set for free.

**David Bush, Hornell NY**

1954 "Sorry I have taken so long! There are 41 cards and I know that they are not all perfect so I will give them to you for 75 cents."

**N. Grasso, Newark, NJ**

1954: "I have over 800 cards from 1933 to 1941...my price is kinda high...I have been getting as high as \$1 per card."

**Larry ? , Evanston, IL**

1954 "I was very much surprised to note you say in your letter 'I'm driving a hard bargain' rather odd coming from you. I hardly think such is the case at all – let me convey some additional facts on some past ways I've sent cards your way"...etc etc He goes on and on and on, but winds up with "No hard feelings but I just can't understand how you figure I'm driving a hard bargain – I never had such in mind I'm sure. Best, Larry" And in 1955 "The reason I sold my "E" card collection was not one reason...I had been losing interest in cards for over a year or so – had to push myself last year to go after the new sets – this year when they came out I wasn't at all enthused. There were a few sets I wanted very much. I offered real fancy prices for them but got nowhere over the course of 2 years – felt I wanted them to reach a goal on all the sets I wanted in my collection – without them I just lost interest I am going to keep my Batter-Ups and Diamond Stars because of their holding memories of my boyhood days, might keep 2 or 3 of the other Bowman sets – the rest I'll put in Bray's sale soon but will wait til you come over and we'll see if you want any of the stuff first. Hope you can make it soon.." Then discussed his interest in stamps. In another letter "If you want the cards listed on reverse side of this sheet you can have them for \$80...condition is very nice...cash only." The reverse listed 192 Batter Ups, 110 Tip Tops, 102 Remars, 23 Sun Breads, 26 Glendale Meats, 9 Stahl Wieners, 20 Dan Dees, 24 Signal Oils – about 13 cents per card, but probably a little pricey for the time.

**Barry Berglund, Marquette. MI**

1955. Barry is a youngster looking to complete his 39 Playballs. "I have many in these series but it seems they are all the same numbers. For instance I have 12 of Paul Dean and 8 of Joe DiMaggio."

**Unnamed collector**

"Yours was not the first letter suggesting I keep my cards. However, although I will probably regret it later, I am still selling. There are a number of reasons, the main one being the service angle. Then I was in jail, and had to borrow \$100 to get out. You'd never believe me if I told you what I was in for, so I wont."

**Gene DeNardo, one of Burdick's buddies, on stationary for the 1953 American Card Catalog**

1955 "The enclosed cards are about as perfect as I have seen and should be satisfactory to you. However if you do not need them now just return them."

**Miriam Jacobs, Dayton, Ohio**

1955 "I have only been collecting baseball cards for the past few months...I have #80 of list 172, a complete T201, 80 end panel T202s; about a quarter of the gold border series; a complete T206 except 143, 148, 368, and 383; complete R713, R715 and R716; T232 complete for 1952, 1953, and 1954 and some T3s..I am just a novice at card collecting and certainly appreciate any help I can get."

**Ernest Keener, Sylvia, NC**

1955 "I need the subjects in sets T205 and T206 listed on the attached sheet with exception of Wagner and Plank in T-206" (Must have had them already.)

**Michael Stagno, Bronx, NY**

1955 "I have 1939 – 44 different 6 cents each or all for \$2.50; 1941 (colored) 32 cards \$2; all of the above \$4."

**Bob Elmo, Yonkers, NY**

1956 "I have about 1,000 1952 Topps, but they still have to be sorted. Also have Old Mill, Sweet Corporal, Piedmont, Hassan cigarette cards 29 different - \$3.50. Enclosed are 3 cards on your want list – free."

**Bob Minor, Moberly, MO**

1956 "I tried to find the best centered cards of the lot which is a rare thing these days in cards. Send me what you think they are worth in cards. I have quite a few of these B&W. If you like I will send you all of them and you can pick what you want and send the rest back."

**Jack Smalling, Ames, IA (later address list publisher)**

1956 "Thank you very much for your recent letter. I am a boy of 15 years. I have been collecting gum cards since 1949....Here is a list of cards that I need for my collection: Bowman 1948 #8, 36, 38, 1949 Bowman #216, 1952 Bowman #218, 1952 Topps #318-322 323 333 336 etc...I am especially interested in securing number 216 in the 1949 Bowman series. I would at least like (to know) who the picture is of if you don't have a double to trade." (216 is Schoolboy Rowe)

**Steve Vanco, Chicago, IL**

1955? "Am enclosing a set of 1954 Baseball Colored Cards (33) Red Heart Dog Food for your consideration. Would appreciate your remitting for same as soon as possible as I am leaving on vacation and naturally need the money. Also please remit in cash (bills) at my risk."

**Pearl Ann Reeder, Hobbies Magazine, Chicago**

1956 Regrets being unable to work out a deal with Bob Jaspersen to "relinquish his interest in the Sports Fan and have it made a part of Hobbies Magazine."

**A Collector who shall go unnamed, Belvidere, IL**

1956: (June 28<sup>th</sup>) "You probably won't believe this explanation of why you didn't receive your money, but honest to God this is the truth! When you sent me the cards I was all set to pay you, but I happened to have a date that day your cards arrived and that took all my money. After that I had the money, but I forgot about you and the rest of our fellow card collectors, because I quit

collecting cards for awhile. However, the other day (another unnamed collector) called me and told me that you were mad at me because I hadn't paid you, that's when I remembered I still owed you the money. He also told me that you were going to tell all your friends that they shouldn't do business with me, well I would appreciate it if wouldn't tell your friends this because I have started collecting cards again but that still doesn't settle the matter about your money, well it will please you to know that you will receive your money some time next week (Thank God, he finally added a period, if not a check! - Vrechek) I hope that even though it took me a year and a half to pay you for the cards that we can still do business. And I know this will never happen again." July 9, 1956 "Enclosed you will find a payment in full for the cards I bought from you, it seems like 20 years ago. All kidding a side about a year ago. I hope that you will write me and let me know whether we can do any more business. I know this will never happen again, because I will pay in advance before I receive the cards. Well thanks again for being so patient." (I didn't see any further correspondence.)

**Robert Kelleter, Bedford, NY**

1956 "I received your letter last week. Sorry I didn't answer it sooner but I was busy being a junior in high school...I started collecting last year..I don't have too large a collection. The biggest reason it isn't very large is where to get the money...My 1941 PlayBall set lacks only #54 and #60. My Mecca set lacks 4 cards...I am also trying to get complete recent Bowman and Topps sets. My collection includes about 200 White border cigarette cards, 40 Gold Borders, a dozen Triple Folders, maybe 100 1939 Playballs, 2 almost complete sets of Parkhurst Hockey..sets of Oakland Oaks, Mothers Cookies" (Poor kid)

**Roger Harris, Rutland, VT**

1956 "I am enclosing a few gum cards from your list, which I do hope you can use. Please accept them with my compliments...I can understand your wanting cards in perfect condition. I also try to have my collections in as good condition as possible. Being in the mail order stamp business with my father, we often get requests for "super superb" condition, mathematically centered, lightly cancelled, etc. However, with stamps, most collectors are satisfied with just good copies as there is usually a stiff premium on the superb material....I am 19 years old....I have yet to meet a collector, personally, of insert cards, but I am going to the Tri-State Hobbies Convention next month in Concord NH and hope to make some contacts. Since New England is known for having people who seem to hold on to things, there should be quite a few interesting attics around here yet to be scrutinized."

**Ed Lancaster, Lancaster, PA (whose 1940 letter to Carter appeared earlier)**

1956 "Last fall you mentioned a new card publication "The Sports Fan" which I subscribed to and received the first issue in November. Since then I have heard nothing....Do you have any facts on the situation?

7 days later he sends a card that the January and February issues arrived yesterday. "Have you noticed that the American Beauty and probably Cycle cards in the T205s are trimmed slightly less in both dimensions? As I remember, these were 20 for 5 cents and packed differently than Piedmont, Sweets, etc." Later in 1956 "Here are 21 cards from your want list. If any meet with your requirements remit to me .05 each in stamps, and return those you can't use."



**Lawrence Brandt, Evanston, IL**

1956 April "How are you? Seems like ages since I've heard or written to you. I had a note from S. Rosen saying he has the first series of the new Topps baseball but that Bowman has discontinued all card sets – too bad, I always liked the Bowmans over the Topps. I saw a couple of the new Topps the other day. Can't say too much for them as it seems like they've got the same old poses for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row with diff. backgrounds...Do you wish any of my bread cards? I still have them all. If you don't want any I'll let 'em go in one of Bray's sales."

**Tom Werner**

1957 "I found a few you need. As for the gum or cigarette cards from 1905 to 1930, I don't have any...I am only a boy of 14 years old. I assume that you are a collector and not a dealer, but I'll ask you anyway if you would like to buy a lot of assorted cards from 1951 to 1956. I am trying to get rid of my doubles."

**Walt Corson, ACC co-editor, Glen Moore, PA**

1957 "In T206 backs I have them complete except Ty Cobb. Have others you want in mint or near mint. Have T202 and T205 complete. T206 Need Wagner, T207 need 15 my wants about like yours in this."

Later in 1957: "I've already broken up my collection so will continue. Have sold \$2,400 worth in the last 2 or 3 months and I can't see any hole in my collection at all. Figure it will bring about \$30,000 when all sold. I have not sold any of the better items yet." He then quotes prices for what he has available: R319 Complete \$120, R321's fine 50 or 60 cents each, R331 complete set 50 cents each, C56 50 cents each, "also have hundreds of other sports sets."

**Charles Spink, Editor of the Sporting News**

1957 "The 1957 Baseball Register will be ready the latter part of May or early June. It will be priced at \$4.00 in paper-binding, \$6.00 in cloth-binding."

**Howard LePiors, Port Huron, MI**

1957 "I would like to trade or sell a complete set of 1956 Topps football and a complete set of 1951 Topps Baseball (red backs)" Carter notes on the letter that he offered him 1948 to 1953 cards at 2 cents each and 1954 to 1956 cards at 1 cent each. Later in 1957: "I am enclosing \$2.25 which will cover the amount due you for 15 sample cards \$1.90, and 32 Topps and Bowmans at 1 cent each."

**1957: Mr. GA Greasby, Milwaukee, WI**

Greasby was born in 1892 and has some old cards but collects cigar bands. He'd like Carter to write for their hobby club.

**E.C. Wharton-Tigar, London, England**

1958 "You may recall that we have corresponded several times in the past and once, I remember, when I was in Canada in 1953....Would you like to make an exchange of cards?" His want list is enclosed. His collection became one of the most significant ever.

**Kay Mills, 16 year old Vice President of "Signature Seekers: The Nation Wide Club for Autograph Collectors"**

1957. Kay offers her collection for sale, asks for postage beyond 3 cents, Topps Doubleheaders are 3 cents each, Wheaties 2 cents each, 1951 redbacks and bluebacks 5 cents each, 75 of the Topps Ringside cards are \$1.75 in total, 1951 Connie Mack All-Stars are 5 cents each but not in very good condition. Kay asks Carter if he'd like to be editor of their bulletin, since he has a mimeograph machine.

**Keith Sutton, Honesdale, PA**

1959 “also read your interesting article on Topps 1958 issue. I’m interested in obtaining the scarce cards: 443, 446, 450 and 462...Dealers in New York...do not have them for sale, even in the complete sets. Topps claims they were printed, but it is doubtful that they were ever distributed – no one has seen them. Your article was the first inkling that I’ve had that the four showed up in the Midwest.”

**Gar(land) Miller, Swedesboro, NJ**

Undated late 50s? “I am an avid baseball fan and sports collector...I am not quite as fussy about the cards but I do want them in rather good shape.”

**Richard Roundtree, Oklahoma**

Undated, “Preston Orem once told me that he just threw away around 15,000 cards of Topps and Bowmans because he didn’t want to go to all the trouble of sorting them!”

**Tom Hurley, St Petersburg, FL**

Undated: “Enclosed find one 5X7 photo of Cubs 1889... and one 5X7 Cubs 1907..Now these are 60 cents a piece.”

**Harold Esch, Sports Record Bureau, Orlando, FL**

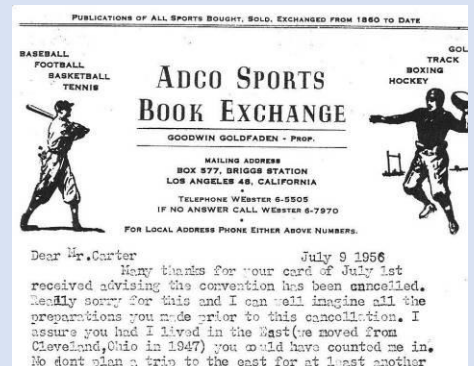
1958 “I feel the 20 cent per card price (for 1933 Goudeys) to be quite high...but to assure myself of having them I’ll pay the 20 cents...50 to 75 cards would suit me fine at this time...If you can, I’ll appreciate your picking out the best conditioned cards in the lot.” (No sense wasting time looking for Ruths or Gehrigs in those lots - Vrechek)

Late 1950s: Correspondence with the mother of collector **Jimmy Lacey** (22 years old). Carter helped her sell his cards for much more than she was offered.

**THE EARLY DEALERS**

**Goodwin Goldfaden, Adco Sports Book Exchange, Los Angeles (Letterhead – Publications of All Sports Bought, Sold, Exchanged from 1860 to date)**

Early 1956 “Many thanks for your card advising the convention has been cancelled. Really sorry for this and I can imagine all the preparations you made prior to this cancellation...I do remember in 1947 when we came out here from the East, we stopped over in St. Louis, and the wife and I had a most pleasant visit with Charles “Buck” Barker. No



matter where I go I always manage to contact someone with whom I had correspondence with or dealings in the past.”

**Gordon B. Taylor, NYC**

1957 Price List; 1952 Topps high numbers are 15 cents, will buy for 10 cents. The next year his sell price goes to 30 cents, but will still buy at 10 cents.

**Sam Rosen, NYC**

1958 Offers to buy 1952 Topps high numbers for 1 ½ cent each – “providing they are in good condition.” – But I see in his price list that he is selling them for 5 cents each, pretty good margin. A nickel will get you a 1951 team card or All Star as well. He identifies the #131 to 190 '52 Topps whitebacks as not available at 3 cents. These are mighty tough to find today. His 1958 Topps Basketball 80 card set goes for \$1.60. A 1954 Topps baseball set will cost you \$5.

**Samuel Tanenbaum, Hartford, Conn**

1959 Tenenbaum is a dealer in old books. :”...in the relationship of the dealer to the collector. The dealer has to show a profit for his time and money. He will naturally gravitate to those who will give him most of that profit. I have also noted, that the dealer is most invaluable to the collector, and the smart collector realizes that. For he knows that the dealer is only interested in making a living, while a brother collector will gouge the eyes out of a fellow collector, when that fellow needs something that he has. I have seen that too often to be mistaken, and have seen them get prices from each other that have made me blush in shame. I find this game most profitable in dealing with those collectors who will buy all and everything which they haven't got along their collecting line. If a man collects baseball cards, I like to see him collect everything in baseball cards. The fault that I find with you, is that you only want to collect certain types of cards, and to cater to a collector like yourself, I have to expend too much time, in trying to suit you...There is no money in my selling four cards.” (I didn't see any subsequent correspondence .)

**Woody Gelman, on stationary of The Card Collectors Company (Formerly Sam Rosen), Franklin Square, NY**

1959 “By the way the four missing numbers in Topps 1958 was not done on purpose. Topps listed them on the checklist but couldn't get the photos in time. On the next printing they got 'em in.” And later in 1959 “I visited with Jeff Burdick over the weekend. The catalogue is really coming along. The hobby owes Jeff its undying gratitude. He has certainly given us collectors hours of pleasure every week by his organization of the hobby. I found 20 clipper ship cards recently. I suppose that this is the apex of my collecting. Regards, Woody”

**Larry Fritsch, Stevens Point, WI**

1958: “Enclosed is 34 cents for the cards you sent me. Thanks a lot.” Price List from 1959 is in Carter's pile

1952 Topps Highs are 50 cents each. 1960: Looking for exhibits and how to tell the year of printing

1961: Looking to complete his 1948 Leaf set

## JEFFERSON BURDICK

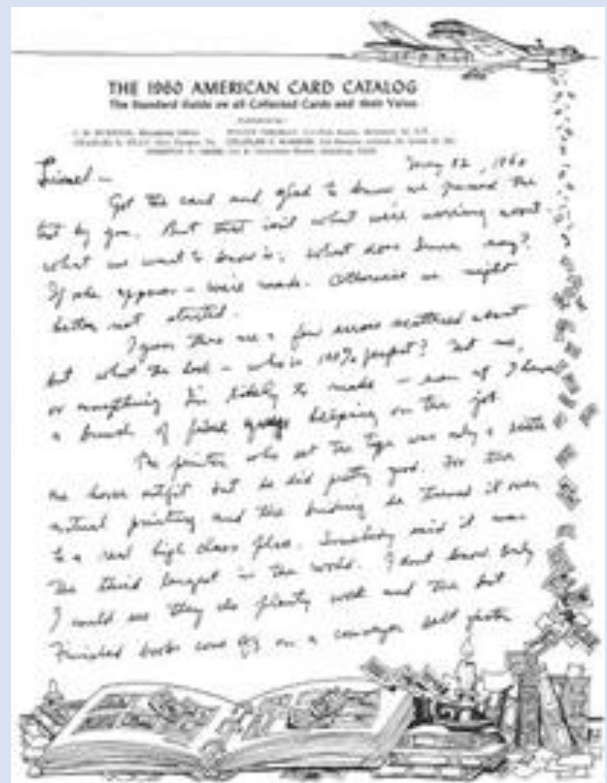
Buried in the middle of the 7 inch pile of correspondence I came across several letters and postcards. The handwriting was a little difficult to read and the lines sometimes slanted upward to the right. But the words were clear and of great interest to me since I had spent such effort in researching the writer: Jefferson Burdick, the “father of card collecting.” Burdick visited the Carters in Chicago and they visited him in Syracuse. They kept in touch until shortly before his death. Carter was a collaborator, assisting in the American Card Catalog listings and descriptions. Unfortunately Burdick didn’t always date his correspondence so I have guessed on some of these:

July 29 (1949?) Crouse Ave, Syracuse written on the back of a Graybar Electric Sales Sheet dated 8/12/48 Regarding different E121s “Saw 44 of them and kept 5 for myself...Ty Cobb Mgr, Det Am. Batting (view to hips), Lou de Vormer – C, NYA portrait. This is almost the

same as one I had, must have been taken a few seconds between. Practically only difference is in one mouth is closed and in other is slightly open...”

Postcard Sep 4 1950: “Lionel, On the E121 list – I don’t see how you can ignore the numbered cards entirely as, after all, they are the same series...I doubt Bray gave you enough data to do an accurate listing job due to diff. positions of same player that wouldn’t show up in the name alone...Forget the E220. Not enough known about them but try to weed any of them out of the 121 list. I suspect a few of them got in it. Condense all lists as tightly as possible, the 121 is a pretty long one anyway. Sincerely, Jeff.”

Sept 24 (1950s?) “Here are 32 cards that may help with the listing. Have stamped a B on the backs so that if mixed with others they can be sorted out easily.” This note is written on the back of a printed page that precedes the catalog of 1939. (Burdick wasn’t big on wasting paper) The page written by Burdick includes: “Old cards are bits of history, and share in the love which all Americans hold for reminiscences of years gone by....Do not stick cards to the pages. Cards which are tightly stuck down in albums should be discounted when buying because of the labor of removing cards and the probable damage to them. Warm water and careful drying and pressing is the usual process, but some damage is unavoidable .... All advance subscribers to this catalog will receive the first issue of the new volume free...Full details of dates and subscriptions will be in the first issue which is scheduled for August 1, 1939...The Bulletin is issued to help collectors and dealers. It is THEIR magazine, and all contributions and suggestions will be highly appreciated



and will receive utmost consideration. It is issued on a non-profit basis, and the only motive is to promote the hobby of card collecting.”

March 30 (later 1950s?), now on Wolf Street, Syracuse This is a great letter that is hard to excerpt but it responds to Carter’s complaint to Burdick about a collector who shall remain nameless who Burdick suggested visit the Carters. Apparently he did, wasn’t that interested in the cards, overstayed his welcome and had too much to drink. One Burdick sentence will have to suffice: “Collectors, in general, are a pretty good lot but in the final analysis are no different than any other cross section of the population.”

Carter has a page out of a letter from Burdick to Buck Barker that Barker forwarded. “Why not let Carter (King of the Mounties) do an article on mounting. It’s a problem. I’m struggling with it at the museum and haven’t yet solved it. Of course, much of my stuff will be pasted down – all the plain back and printed general backs are being pasted. But can’t do that with descriptive backs and there are many long sets of those that will be tough to handle.”

September 21 (1959?) from St Petersburg, FL

Burdick describes his arduous journey by bus from NYC to Florida and the retirement communities he finds there. He met with a collector in Petersburg, Virginia but only found one in St. Petersburg, Florida. “Tuesday I’m going to Lakeland to buy an album from a school teacher ... a lot of T206 and over 100 Contentneas (T209s book for \$75 to \$150 in mint these days - Vrechek) and I’ll have to pay about catalog (hey, you wrote the catalog - Vrechek) ...Friday I’ll go over to Augustine to see their antique show and hope to find some cards, but probably not. The South isn’t good ‘card country’ although I once did get a big cigar box full of dandy old cards from South Carolina. You never can tell when they’ll turn up.” More trips are planned involving visits with collectors

May 12, 1960 Written on 1960 ACC stationery

About the just published ACC “I guess there are a few errors scattered about but what the heck – who is 100% perfect?...The printer who set the type was only a little one horse outfit but he did pretty good. For the actual printing and the binding he turned it over to a real high class place...But even so, out of about 300 I checked there were 3 defects...(Buck Barker) did a lot of work and I thought it all pretty good although I’m not a real judge of the technique of baseball writing.... But I began work on that book last Thanksgiving... It’s not just writing it. You have to dig up the data to write and that means hundreds of letters to people all over the country. Then their mass of replies has to be sifted out and arranged in some order – and try not use anything that isn’t absolutely correct. Anyway, Lionel, by next Catalog time someone else will have to carry the ball. 4 of 6 on this job are past 60 and that will make us too old for another one, if indeed, we are here at all.”

November 28, 1960, Madison Ave, NYC

Four page letter to Carter complimenting him on his writing abilities, the difficulty in getting published despite such abilities and the economic realities of having a book printed yourself. “A book is just a pound of waste paper unless you can sell it... Orem and Payne are listed as co-publishers of the Catalog but actually they have no financial interest in it at all...only the 4 of us are in it financially...No, I don’t have all the sets complete. A lot of people think I have

everything, but I don't. Lack a lot of R300, Batter Up, lack 2 of the 34 Big Leagues and 2 of the Diamond Stars (batting average backs)...I know of only 6 Wagners here at the Museum and Public Library, Bray, Wagner, Gammon and 1 that turned up last winter. A kid here in the Bronx had it...I didn't know Orem had one and I never heard of Colzietti either. There probably several more about. All so far have originated in the NYC area."

January 23, 1961 Madison Ave, NYC

"The doctors gave me a 'totally disabled' rating"...Burdick regrets not being able to travel with the Carters. "I'll just get out one of them 'trip around the world' card sets and I'll be there – a magic carpet without leaving my easy chair... I guess I told you that costs for our Catalog are now around \$6,000 and the figure will be more, of course, before all are sold. You will probably figure that 3000 copies at \$4 is 12,000 and so there is plenty of margin yet. But a lot of copies are sold to bookstores at less than \$3 a copy and we don't know how long the 3,000 copies will last. Maybe 10 years, with a lot of advertising spread along every year. Maybe a lot will never sell...."

Regarding being at the Museum: "I usually go up on Tuesday and Friday...In a few years a lot of us old timers will be gone and you will be senior collector and top authority. Speaking of us going – Glidden Osborne of London just died. Probably had the biggest collection of cigarette cards in the world. I wonder how he left his collection – maybe to a museum or to the Cartophilic Society of which he was so long president."

May 29, 1961 Madison Ave, NYC

Burdick suggests that Orem may be selling his collection to pay for his baseball book publishing. "My health is definitely on the down trend. A few years ago a doctor examined me and pronounced me a "Medical Museum." Today I have at least 2 or 3 additional ailments – rather bad ones... I hope to hold together long enough to complete the card mounting job here, but there's no guarantee...I'm getting pretty badly bent and twisted out of shape and my clothes, for example, just don't drape around me gracefully any more. Some might say I looked like something the cat dragged in...Old Fred Baum was just here for a couple of hours... Comes up to the Museum most every time I'm there.. He collects all tobacco and coffee and is wilder at it than even you baseball boys are about the National game...I agree with you that there are too many BB cards being issued...In the early days it was bad enough when they put out a 250 card set. Now its four times that, or almost, and between the gums, cookies, meats, and a few other things – well – I gave up...I guess somebody else will have to round out the collection with such things.

August 22, 1961, Madison Ave, NYC

Another great letter about cards, variations, checklists, increasing prices and the catalog. "I haven't tried to collect all the new cards of past ten years but get a few that especially interest me. Have few of the long baseball sets but I agree with you in that it is being overdone. Its too much for some of the younger collectors who don't have that kind of money to spend on cards...Once an idea clicks, everybody gets in the game and tries to cash in on it."

November 24, 1961 Madison Ave. NYC

"Lionel- For nigh onto 2 months now the world has been waiting for a report of the latest Carter safari. The tension has been mounting terrifically and has reached the breaking point in this area. Naturally I feel a strong interest in the journey (having strongly considered being a member of the

troop) and I know others must be concerned....We want to know how you found old man Orem and how is the book going? I have bought quite a lot from his collection this summer. His prices were a little uppity on some things (low on others) but I paid them gladly as I feel I'd never get another chance in my lifetime at most of that stuff. He had a remarkable collection considering he had been at it only 5 years....I feel the book business will be a disappointment (to him). It's a tough racket for anyone. A lot more money is lost on books than is made. Only the retail book dealers can save him and they are a hard boiled lot....Orem sold his Hans Wagner for \$150. Nagy in Detroit got it. Some kid collector asked me what it was worth in my opinion. All I can do is stick to the Catalog and I recall you saying you wouldn't pay even \$50 for one. There may be a small demand at over \$50 but I don't believe its very large. Charley Bray decided to stick with the \$50 rate in the Catalog. Johnny Wagner writes that Gammon is now asking 30 cents for ordinary T206 and T205 which is too high. And a lot of the BB gums since 1948 are selling too high. There's a lot of that stuff around and it shouldn't sell at over catalog for selected items – with lots at a lower figure. Dealer Taylor has skipped the coop, so it seems, and looks like he forgot to settle some outstanding obligations. Nobody knows his present address.”

December 10, 1961, Madison Ave., NYC

Burdick writes a nice letter to Carter commenting on the long vacation that Burdick would have been physically unable to make, mentions Carter's work and then adds: “I worked over 23 years at my last job and a lot of 45 to 50 hour weeks...All that time I was doing a lot of card work too and it meant a tight schedule as I couldn't work late hours at night as most do. I have to get a full 9 hours sleep. At that time I went to bed at 8 PM, read the paper for an hour and slept from 9 to 5:30 or 6 AM...You'd better think twice about selling the collection. There is quite a bit of loose card money about these days and there are probably several others like ( a certain collector) who would snap up a good collection like yours for 1000 or so. I guess Orem started a craze for selling, but its different with him. He's an older man and he expects to have other interests (his books) to keep his hobby time going. All the same. I think he will regret selling the cards – not only because he liked the cards but because the books won't take their place. He can do a lot of book writing, but to print and sell them all may require a lot more money than he can take in from them. The writing may be the easy part of it. A profit is another thing, but of course, he may do it the same as collecting cards, with the pleasure being sufficient payment.... I do think that every collector should arrange for some disposition of his collection when he passes on and if he can foresee the date of passing, it might be OK to dispose of them himself shortly ahead of such date – but you aren't in that category yet. I made arrangements for my cards in 1948 when I was only 48 years old, as at the time I was getting rather poor physically and I didn't know how long. However, the miracle drugs (cortisone) came on in 1950 and allowed me to work until 1959 and in the meanwhile to sort out from 2 to 6 cartons of cards each year and ship them on.(to the Metropolitan Museum) Now I'm finishing the job here. Another full year before I can scrape bottom. Just counted the 119<sup>th</sup> tobacco insert and its 31,708 to date. Thanks for the news and love to Irma, Jeff”

April 28, 1962 Madison Ave, NYC a typed letter

Burdick writes about the challenge of getting to Charley Bray's in Pennsylvania without being able to drive a car – not easy. “On retiring – I still say the trick is to retire early enough. As time goes on, I see ever so many waiting until they literally have one foot in the grave before they quit. Then the retirement period is too short – as it probably will be for me. Nobody can figure accurately how many years are left for them but they should try to figure out at least ten years of happy

retirement...In my case, I have the huge accumulation of cards here, which I hope to get entirely in order before I pass on. Have been at it over 2 ½ years now and it looks like another year almost before I can hope to finish it. Some would do it faster by burning the midnight oil but I have to get long and regular rest – sometimes I don't, as last night when I doubt I slept an hour....I am more concerned about the card collecting angle (than the baseball season). Looks to me like there are too many long sets being issued. Also a lot of prices being paid are too high. I may be wrong but that's the way it looks from here. I personally discontinued collecting all the sport sets about ten years ago, also the funny ? jokes and horror monster stuff. I have most of the others and even a token lot of even the sports and monsters but nowhere near completion and I'm not trying to fill them in in any way."

May 23 (most likely 1962) Burdick's handwriting is more restricted. "The enclosed sugar bag will show you my present address.(Bellevue) Probably in for a couple of weeks for a thorough checkup and treatment. My condition was getting so unbearable that I had to do something...I hope to be out about the time the show opens at Bray's but you can see I won't be in any condition to make the trip over unless I could do it in a private car and I don't know of anyone with a car who would make the trip...I'm more sorry than I can tell you about missing the show. I had thought of it all winter with keen anticipation and I'm sure it will be good....Give my regards to Charlie and Mrs. Bray...Best, Jeff"

July 7, 1962 Handwriting is even more restricted. The Carters had hoped to see Burdick on one of their vacation trips but it hadn't worked out. "I'm planning on moving sometime late this year. Just when and where to is not yet known and I may even abandon the idea but at least I want to get somewhere else if at all possible...Will be looking forward to writeups of the (Carter) trip. Almost as good as being there. Another unique Carter service. Don't plan on me flying to Chicago. I'm still too shaky on the feet to roam very far. Have resumed work on the cards at the museum and hope to finish the job this Fall. Its an awful mess. Special regards to Irma, Jeff"

Burdick died March 13, 1963

### **Charles "Buck" Barker, St Louis, Mo**

Buck Barker was one of the key editors of the American Card Catalog. His interest was in baseball cards. He was a fan. Buck was generous with his cards and unconcerned with condition. His handwriting was playful. He started each of his numerous letters to Carter with a different friendly greeting. There were even a few pictures of Buck included.

1959 "Waiting for a letter from Jeff. He says he is living in a hotel on Madison Square..By the way I wanted to call it Burdick's American Card Catalog and so did Woody, but we were voted down. Jeff was against it of course. Frankly, it would have boosted sales besides."

1961 "Orem's book came at last. It is really good..As he says you can't get the info anywhere else."

April 2, 1963 "So sorry to hear about Jeff. I thought he was just discouraged."



1965 “Dear Old Banker, Lend me your ears – no, a banker would want interest.”

1970 “Dear Lionel de Agincourt, Your clips (from newspapers) were so interesting I can’t say “no”. Will let Ray Medieros and maybe George Tinker see them too. Been reading your good stuff – latest from Bray (Card Collectors Bulletin, editor). Did Broder (yes, the Broder of Broder cards - Vrechek) say he got that thing out after Woody (Gelman) told him not to?...Working on a good Zeenut deal with Dobbins. Can use M116 Bereen, Kane, Smith, White, Walsh in that order. Adios, Buck” What a name dropper that Buck.

1971: “Dear Fellow Has-Been, Have decided not to exert my self on cards now, (being over-hobbled to say the least) except to obtain 1) one card of each player 2)one card of each set 3) favorite sets 4) Latin American players 5) Favorite players 6) Anything else that really strikes my fancy.” (Favorite players were Minoso and Ashburn) He ads the names of 3 hobbyists who rub him the wrong way and 3 the right way. He is working on E cards, T-207s, M116s.

### **Bob Jaspersen, St Paul, MN and Rosemont, PA**

Jaspersen wrote in Palmer method, long letters written sideways on note pads; numerous letters over many years. Bob was the editor of Sport Fan magazine. Lionel Carter was a writer for SF.

1955 “You’re responsible for 2 new subscribers (to Sports Fan) Mr. Bray and one Mr. C.C. Barker of St. Louis.” In another letter from 1955: “Glad to hear too that our idea for a national convention appealed to you. Chicago was proposed as the site due to its geographical location, though 75% of the country’s collectors live east of the Hudson River.”

1967 Bob writes about visiting Charles Bray. “We poured over a number of his own cards, although he said he had disposed of his personal collection a couple of years ago. Since then though he’s picked up some old numbers that he is hanging on to...He said you were promoting a convention for card collectors.”

August 25, 1955

Mr. Lionel Carter  
1911 Summerdale Ave.,  
Chicago 40, Illinois

Dear Mr. Carter:

Was pleased to receive your letter of August 21 and also pleased that you have joined our family of sports collectors through SPORT FAN. I'm starting your subscription with the June-July issue as I think you would enjoy that edition ~~xxxx~~ very much. Your copy of the 1955 SPORT FAN WHO! WHO will also be sent to you shortly.

Yes, you were correct in assuming that your dollar would be for 12 issues of SPORT FAN. We sincerely hope, Mr. Carter, that you will enjoy it as much as we enjoy getting it out. We have over 100 readers and have been publishing it since January, 1951.

Of the list of gum and other card collectors you sent me only the name of Wirt Gammon is familiar to me. Incidentally, Gammon writes a monthly column for SPORT FAN and it is very popular with our readers.

Glad to hear too that our idea for a national convention appealed to you. Chicago was proposed as the ~~xxxx~~ site due to its geographical location, though 75 per cent of the country's collectors live east of the

1973 “When a collector dies, his survivors simply fail to notify the hobby press. I hadn’t learned of Preston Orem’s death until months later.” He goes on to describe delays in learning of the deaths of Fred Imhoff, Jim Armstrong, Jim Lacey, Frank Jock, Walt Corson. “Sport Fan was never intended to be a money-maker. When we started it back in 1951, it was only because the Trading Post had died, and the hobby was left without a single publication....Two days ago, I received my first copies of the new Sports Collectors Digest. Do you get it, Lionel? Just between you and me, it is the best of all the hobby papers. It is head and shoulders above all in appearance. And after reading through the first 4 issues, I say down and asked myself: ‘Just why would anyone even bother to subscribe to the other papers?’ And unlike some of the others you don’t need a

magnifying glass to read it.” (I really didn’t make this letter up just to get this article printed – Vrechek)

1975 “You asked me in your letter the date of that gathering of collectors at your home, which you referred to as the ‘first convention of sports collectors.’ That gathering took place in 1958..I believe you said Buck Barker was there. I’ve never met Buck.”

1979 Bob writes “Just a note to explain why your coverage of the Chicago Convention didn’t make the current issue (of Sports Fan).” (no room, yet in that the publication is only 10 pages). “It was too well written to boil down to size.” He adds “The California Convention was certainly different than the one you and I attended 9 years ago in Jim Nowell’s home.” PS “You mentioned in your letter, Lionel, that you didn’t like our small “type.” We need that “small type” because of our “long-winded” writers. Only kidding, old buddy.”

1980 Bob thanks Lionel for “the interesting piece in nominating Charles Bray for the Frank Jock Memorial Award.” Apologizes for cutting some of Carter’s last article – didn’t censor it but didn’t have enough room on the page. “Anytime I have an issue that carries the Lionel Carter byline within its pages, I feel the readers are getting something special.”

Bob writes in June 1980 that he plans to attend the National in Los Angeles, although he’s not all that enthused about it. (A certain collector/writer) in another hobby publication “blasted the old guard of the hobby...(he) has been in the hobby only 5 or 6 years , yet tries to act as a spokesman for all of us.”

Feb 1981 “ I had a note from Lew Lipset of New York, telling me of (Harry) Kenworthy’s death and that he and two partners had purchased the Kenworthy collection -- ---for \$60,000. How about that? Harry Kenworthy stopped off to visit me here in the summer of 1969....Harry got a John Montgomery Ward cabinet card off me for \$1.25”

August 1981 “Sorry to hear Bob Wilson has disposed of his collection...Interesting to hear about Ed Golden (Carter had traded with him in 1936.) Is he still collecting or did you say he had sold out? I often wonder if John Wagner still has an interest in cards.”

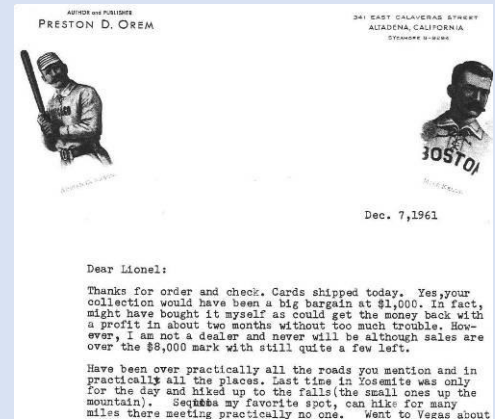
May 1982. “I’ve thrown in the towel. I notified my managing editor that I wanted out, so he drew up a retirement package....I am hoping to sell the bulk of my collection because I have too much stuff that is of no more interest or use to me. I’d like to find some dealer out here to back up his truck and haul it all away.”

Bob Jaspersen and Buck Barker both died on the same day December 18, 1982.



## Preston Orem, Pasadena, CA, an ACC Editor

1956 Law Office stationary “I collect all insert cards, but primarily sports. Started on April 1<sup>st</sup>, this year. Already have over 9,500 with more coming in every day, plus several thousand duplicates...Have all the catalogs, bulletins etc. Had Mr. Bray send me two years back issues of the Bulletin and summarized the prices brought at the auctions so that I have a fair idea of value now...Goldfaden is a fabulous and incredible dealer in old baseball records, etc. He does business in a garage with no windows; wooden frame; how he stands it in the summer I don't know. Overflow is in his house garage, and he leaves his car out.”



1957 (very efficient) “Answering your two letters at once. Will watch for the Signals you need; thanks for the good break you gave me on the cards. I have the E210's in strip cards, really the same or better types, but understand the numbers, players, etc are different, not like E121, where blank backs are just the same.” The one page letter has about a dozen more topics in it.

Later 1957 same idea of many to-the-point topics in a one pager “No, never got 8-9-10 of Treasure, presume it folded, our Western Hobby News has apparently collapsed also, as I do not get any more. Do you collect Mayo?”

1958 “Actually not as many runs now as in 1910-1911, palmy days of real b.b. I analyzed all this, want more runs than now, but fewer home runs, more stolen bases, etc. Also I claim Keeler could not make present majors...Big bums like Sauer and Snider are now the stuff.”

1959 “Cards received, your valuations just about what I would figure.” The rest of the letter is too exhausting to excerpt other than “Barring injuries, a limit of about 14 men should be put on a game, 18 to 25 men in a game is just ridiculous.”

1959 Had quite a session with Bray, Burdick, Gelman etc..Jeff B. is a prince, an astonishing one-track mind, on nothing but cards. Rather surprised to find I have more Red Cross and Victory bb than Burdick and Bray together...so (they) do not have everything, by a long shot. No Museum for me ever, shudder to think of pasting the cards down with library paste as they are doing. Burdick will not admit it rots the backs of cards but it does...Actually cards a stepchild at the Museum but B. does not realize it.”

1959 “Only take poor on Goodwin and Buchner. So your wife paints too, mine painted and prepared the whole house. She also lays cement, etc. Returning postcards, I only collect inserts.”

1961 On Author and Publisher Preston Orem letterhead on this and all subsequent letters “I am not a dealer and never will be although sales are over the \$8,000 mark with still quite a few left...Future writing will be highly controversial subjects and expect to publish through a New York firm. The baseball writing interesting training and I enjoyed the research but has no commercial value as very little interest in bb history.” His book is entitled “Baseball 1945-1881 from the Newspaper Accounts. A fact filled book, spiced with early day box scores...”

1962? “Will publish no more books although second Baseball book and volume on British Guiana have been set up for lithographing.” “List of what I have in Sports cards is enclosed; pretty close to the bottom of the barrel now.: Price list has: Bowman baseball sets, all in “excellent”: 1950 (\$16), 1951 (\$15), 1952 (6 sets) (\$12) Topps 1953 (7 sets) (\$10), 1954 (8 sets) (\$7.50) – (You get the idea, really bottom of the barrel stuff – Vrechek)

March 28, 1963 “I was just about to write to Jeff at the hospital when your letter arrived with the sad news. A really dedicated man if I ever saw one and altruistically, to a harmless, unexploited (or at least, comparatively), type of collecting.”

### **John D. Wagner, Harrisburg, PA**

John Wagner sent Carter a box of tobacco cards out of the blue just after WWII. Wagner’s name was among the dozen or so collectors listed in Burdick’s very first issue of Card Collectors Bulletin in the 1930s. Wagner applauded Carter as a veteran and collector. Carter politely declined the cards, returned them, but then traded with Wagner and others for tobacco cards. Wagner was born in 1899 and had been in the Air Force.

Wagner sent Carter a response to a Who’s Who in Card Collecting Questionnaire: “Both of my Wagner T206 cards came from NYC area. The first found among a large lot had from dealer back around 1938 on approval. This is the one Jeff (Burdick) got from me for the museum at no cost but he insisted on the going rate of \$25 so after check bouncing back and forth three times at least kept it a long time before finally cashing it. The second one was found among 1,200 BB T206 around 1940-1 in 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Antique Shop. Dealer picked up the lot few days earlier and glad to get rid of them as out of his mainly furniture line he said. Neither of these two cost hardly anything but sure not for sale. Fellow collectors who have seen mine as well as the other five or six known claim it’s the best tho not mint. Set T206 shall always be kept since it has so very many fine memories attached with not only collecting but individual players learned to know later in life – now only Elmer Flick and Freddie Parent in 1<sup>st</sup> series 150 are still alive and in their 90s. What’s left of the collection is in storage mostly and loaned out. Sold the home some items disappeared among them a box of early guides, a carton of cards – prints and other goodies of special interest including BB and Political Posters. While a patient at Valley Forge Hosp during 1948, Charley Bray purchased my entire non Baseball Collection since that time of course have replaced many of the sets.”

Wagner goes on to say: “Never been much of an organized collector – duplicates passed on as one of a kind enough. Completing sets never tried too hard. No idea how many once had.”

1957 letter to Carter: Wagner is following up with a widow of a collector. “She has an idea its worth lots of money and wanted to take it to NYC to dispose...Wow, what a shock she will get if cards are all common T206.”

1958 On the trail of a large accumulation of cards 100 miles away. Owner thought he had some valuable cards and Wagner “would be glad to pay full catalog or better..so feel sure in about a year or so may hear from him.” Another antique dealer he found had “several cartons full” of cigarette cards, “but mostly in poor condition. 6 of which did not have so paid \$2 for these and few others....he had 50 cents tags on a few 1933-4 cards don’t know where he derived at those figures

but just passed on them...Another party...told me she has 26 albums of all kinds of cig. and advertising cards.” Wagner went to see her but shop had just closed and had to stay overnight in town. “next day when got to see things the good ones or those she had mentioned were among the missing.” Wagner describes several other hunts and near misses he has had in his efforts to round up cards. So it wasn’t by chance that he found the Wagners as earlier described. He was at this a long time and was cheerfully persistent. He collected postcards and other collectibles as well such as coins, war memorabilia, and political items.

1959 “Have found the coin shops have some nice cellophane envelopes just the right size for all small cards.”

1967 “Have been doing little in way of collecting the past 10 years..came near selling all my earthy possessions only to snap out of it.” And “It’s the guy that gets there at the right time that get the loot.”

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### **Charles Bray, East Bangor, PA**

Numerous short notes with month and day but no years on one-half piece of paper along with results of auctions and purchases by Carter in Card Collectors Bulletin. Bray ran the Bulletin after Burdick and charged 15% commission on auctions. Some of the transactions were close to \$40 in total! Easily among the biggest numbers I noted in any of the correspondence.

“I mentioned to Orem that I’d see him at convention in 1960 at Los Angeles. He says he hopes to see me before 1960 as that’s a long way off.”

Early 1960s? “I don’t look forward going to Florida this year. It’s full of military hardware and well fortified all around the coast. People around Jacksonville have been assigned to shelters.”

“Had a quick trip to Buffalo. Brought back a carload of postcards from a Mr. Wheat who was retiring to Florida. Should last me 2 or 3 years.”

And “Bought a few things from Orem. He sure knows how to charge.” Orem’s “stuff is scarce and seldom seen.”

“Haven’t heard from (Gordon B.)Taylor in NYC for some time. He must have found the going rough as he still owes me for some lots purchased. He was very prompt on his payments in the past”

“I have not quit collecting. Have some nice old cards...that were not in the big one (auction). This is amazing to me. There is always something new to collect.”

### **Howard Leheup, Longmeadow, Mass**

Many letters on small notepads in pencil, several pages

1958 “Had a nice visit with Bray and Burdick at the museum. But unless Burdick was there I doubt if you could see any cards if you wanted to right now. The only cards ready now are the 19<sup>th</sup> century cards in 29 albums. It will take Burdick about a year to get the cards in albums. I doubt if he will mount the gum cards. Talk of having them together in a large cabinet.” He discusses

dealers Rosen and Gordon B. Taylor. Taylor worked for Gordon, got collectors names, and went in business for himself. "Taylor collects himself pretty hard for a dealer." A 6 page letter. Many similar letters, all about cards, buying and trading, who to deal with and who not to.

1958 "Just a report on the Topps BB 1958. I am running into trouble getting some numbers that are cut good. For example #16...there are about 10 numbers that run this way." He is still working on those Diamond Star high numbers.

1963 Howard writes to Carter shortly after Burdick's death in 1963 that he "Was sure surprised and sorry to hear your news about Jeff passing away. I visited him once in Syracuse and twice in New York. As I wrote Buck Barker, if Orem had Jeff's collection he would have a small fortune. I knew he had arthritis, but did not know he was near death. His death will be a tough blow to the card hobby." Later in 1963 he writes "I bought 9 boxes of Topps BB 1963. So I ended up with 1 to 576 only short #513 and 520. I picked those two cards up from another collector so I am all set on the 1963 series. When I finished up I had 402 different 1963 dups. I sold those to John Wagner for \$3 and postage. So I have a pretty nice set of Topps BB 1963 576 cards that cost me \$4.65. He lists the collectors that he has swapped with: Brandt, Paul, Decker, Bill White, Gene DeNardo (got all he had), Ben Cook, Buck Barker, Jake Wise, Dale Low, Bob Minor, Harry Kenworthy and adds he can't make contact with Paul Mosser anymore.

Carter wrote a hobby obituary on Leheup in Sport Collectors News March, 1975: "Howard E. "Slim" Leheup, 74 "Howard.... (had) his own ideas of fairness, honesty and courtesy for in any deal with Howard, he always insisted that you get the better of the transaction...I don't know when I first began writing to Howard as the earliest correspondence in my file is 1953, but I would guess it was back in the days before WWII. I believe Howard once mentioned that he collected the white bordered and gold bordered cigarette cards as a kid." He was a general collector who decided to concentrate eventually on sport cards. He bought cards from dealers in New York and resold them to cover costs but kept the best centered, mint cards. "Gradually...shifted his interests to English coins." He only had cards from 2 sets left by 1973 518 of the T206s and 150 Murad College Seals. Leheup was 6'5" perhaps, huge hands, a sense of humor and friendly smile. He visited with Carters numerous times over 35 years.

### **Paul Mosser, Detroit, MI**

1949 "Yes I recall that we had some transactions back in 1946. At the time you had no duplicates that I needed...I believe I gave you a list of baseball sets in which I still needed a lot of material including green bordered Red Suns...and asked you to let me know whenever you received any duplicate material. Months went by and in one of the issues of the Bulletin I noted you ad listing material you had for trading. Lo and behold listed in there was a green bordered Red Sun. Imagine my disappointment. So I just figured what's the use. Perhaps you figured because you paid cash you had no further responsibility. I believe that if I sell someone some of his card wants he should make an effort to reciprocate. If he's not able at the time then later on when he does receive some material the other fellow can use....I find that I sold you \$10.23 more than you sold me. That seemed pretty well one sided so naturally I didn't pay anymore attention to your want lists."

March 1954: Mosser picks up where he left off in 1949 "Perhaps I did not explain the situation to you very clearly in my previous letter "reminding Carter that he has sold him \$1.95 more stuff than

Carter has sold him so that Carter needs to sell him some more stuff. However Mosser has gone loosey-goosey on the strict accounting by allowing Carter to buy “without obligation on the buyer’s part” certain 19<sup>th</sup> Century cards, T25s, T129s and issues since 1948. He finishes with “Well I hope I’ve made the situation clear.”

March 1956: “Dear Mr. Carter”....What follows is a very technical description of differences in names, positions, and teams involving the Cracker Jacks Series of 144 and 172. Mosser is helping Carter with a checklist intended for the American Card Catalog.

November 1956: “Dear Lionel....Very glad to hear from you.” He apologizes for the delay in writing. “Some collectors can’t stand for such delays and when you do get around to writing you find you are on the black list.” He then continues the findings he’s made on the Cracker Jack check list.

February 1957 “Dear Lionel....Many thanks for those 2 E cards and I’m enclosing 60 cents in payment – some stamps left over from the Christmas mail....With Best regards, Paul”

January 1961 Mosser has made 4 trips to Los Angeles which average 2,550 miles. He keeps a daily log “of each trip we’ve ever taken...Each day’s account covers one page.” Mosser is in his early 60s. The letter goes to 4 pages of detail regarding traveling without a word about cards. “Happy traveling, Paul.”

### **Frank Nagy, Detroit**

No date on letter, but appears to be from the mid-1950s: “I am a new collector of all types of sport cards. I have most of the recent sets but lack plenty of the older cards. I really lack cards from bread etc. I saw in one of your ads in the Sport Hobbyist about selling Remar Baseball cards for 10 cents each....” Carters note at bottom states that he sold Nagy 12 Indian Gum cards for 50 cents (in total.) Diamond Stars and Playballs were 25 cents each though

No date, but looks like it may be 1962. Nagy is asking Carter to write for the publication he and Charles Brooks have worked on the “Sport Hobbyist.” “Since I wrote last to you I have completed my T206 including Plank and Wagner and with it I am like a kid with a new toy.”

No date perhaps 1966 “I went to Phila once and visited Walt Corson and ended up buying his complete collection as you know. Last week I received a letter from his wife letting me know that Walt died on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Its been only about 2 weeks before that, that I bought all of Walt’s Reach and Spaulding Guides.”

No date: Offers to help Carter organize a convention of card collectors.

### **Ray Hess, Altadena, CA**

1954 “One reason I have so very few cards is that they don’t have many sets out this way like they do where you are.”

1956 Now in Loneport, NJ

“Went up to Phila last Sunday and I’m sorry to say I didn’t contact either Jones or DeNardo. I only spent about 5 hours there and most of it was taken up with my folks...A funny thing happened

when I was there. I thought I might have some old cards lying around somewhere and sure enough I went through the cellar and found some. Some I remember you sending me,...and the others I picked up around 1935 or so, any way I am going through them and will send you the dupes.”

1976 from Palmdale, CA

“Many a time I thought of just giving up on the whole thing and sell out but ...since going to the big convention in Detroit have run in to many great people plus my love for the collection that I do have has made me think twice. Of course getting over to Frank Nagy’s house this past summer just made my whole trip.”

**Ed Curtis, Winona, MN**

1960 “Collecting is a lot of fun – all types of hobbies. In my opinion they’re all equal as far as interest value goes. Each has its easy items, hard ones, and near impossible ones and these elements don’t change either regardless if there’s a million people or only 100 collecting one type of hobby.”

**Mike Andersen, Lexington, KY**

Early 60s? “Do you have an extra one of Williams in the ’54 set? I consider this their biggest goof, since it had no rhyme or reason behind it...Down here we had nothing but Piersalls. Only one Williams in the whole town.”

**Bob Schwartz, Philadelphia, PA**

Undated “Yes, the Card Collector caters mostly to the younger set, Sports Gazette is a rather sloppy job, and Sports Hobbyist NEVER comes out on time, BUT you forgot to mention just one thing. What would happen to our hobby if these sloppy, late card papers never came out at all?”

**Allan Larson, Shelby, Montana**

1960 “As far as I know I am the only collector in Montana.”

**Fred Greguras, Omaha, NE**

1960, Fred is editor of the “Sport Collector” and writes “We will give you 5\$ and a 1 year subscription if you will write 6 articles for us. 1 for each issue. John Sullivan is one of the other writers.”

**Paul Dykes, Hopkinsville, KY**

1962 Sends a Zeenut to complete a trade with Carter that he had forgotten to even out in about 1954.

**Alf Yates, Southampton, England**

1964 “I have been a swapper of cigarette cards for ...60 years...I have not a single American card amongst my duplicates, but I have stacks of sets and odd cards issued in Britain and South Africa.”

**Bill Mastro, Bernardsville, NJ**

Undated 1967? Mastro orders \$21.18 worth of cards from Carter – one of the bigger transactions I saw.



**Bill Haber, Brooklyn, NY**

1976 “As you know Jake Wise had 125 different V355s in his collection, and I liked these so much I decided to keep them for myself rather than sell them as I did so many other of Jake’s items. Shortly after acquiring Jake’s V355s I was able to obtain one additional card with 9 more to go. That’s the way it stood for better than 2 years. Within the past 2 months I’ve acquired 4 more. Only 4 to go. I gear myself toward completion. If I feel I have little or no chance to complete a set, I won’t bother starting on it.”

**Gordon Williams, San Diego, CA**

1976 Keeps trading despite leg amputation. “Every adult collector in San Diego came to the hospital.”

Many letters from Williams regarding trading

**Dan Even, postcard collecting guru**

1981 writes complementing Carter on an article, “Made me recall my first collecting experiences, and they were all pleasant ones, better than some I have with so-called collectors today, who are more profiteers and hoarders. The newest trend seems to be buying up young “stars” in hopes of capitalizing on their fame at a later date. We’re creating mini stockbrokers out there....If I don’t like the treatment I get from a collector or a company, I simply don’t deal with them again. Dan wrote in 1961, Dubuque, Iowa, for copies of Carter’s Card Collectors Bulletins.

**Gavin Riley, in response to an editorial by Carter**

1980 “I designated Los Angeles as the site of the First National Convention because the time for such an event is long overdue and nothing is ever accomplished by sitting around on one’s duff waiting for some form of spontaneous combustion. Indeed as we look back over our hobby’s past, every major step forward has been taken by individuals who saw a need and just did it. Jeff Burdick was not authorized to write any book on the hobby and no one gave him the right to use such a grandiose title as American Card Catalog. The same held for Goodwin Goldfaden when he started the first sports memorabilia store or Sam Rosen with the first mail order business or Charles Bray and Burdick with their bi-monthly auctions, or more recently Jim Nowell’s first convention and Jim Beckett’s price guide.”

**Vic Witte**

1981 “You were among the first dozen ball card collectors – I was in the first 50, I’d guess. Like most of us pioneers I am now pretty much on the sideline.”

**Dan Jaskula**

1980 Looking for the National Chicle set “...have come near to memorizing every player who is in the set....It is the one that has elusive qualities..”

1981 “When I hear from the great ones like yourself, I feel I have finally arrived.”

**Danny Shamer**

1981 “You inspired me to stay in the hobby. I became very disenchanted with the sports collecting community three or four years ago; I grew tired of collectors who never answered letters, wrote scribbling messages on torn sheets of paper, or received so much mail that they couldn’t remember

one collector from another. I also was sick of the money-hungry dealers, the outrageous prices, the hoarding of material.”

### **Bob Solon, Oak Park, IL**

1984 “I have very few regrets about selling my collection – the only resentment I have is that except for you and 2 or 3 other folks who were “old timers” not one of the collectors who bought priceless? stuff from me has shown the least bit of customer loyalty.”

### **Edward Golden, Carter’s first trading buddy from 1936.**

1958 “I would like to go visiting card collecting friends – Carter, Leheup, Bray, Burdick, Wagner, Corson for a start, but I keep putting it off like answering your letters.”

1981 Golden at age 80 writes that “his swapping days are over, but I do buy packets of 1981 cards when I visit the stationery store.” “Maybe I have a Mantle.” “Recently fell down in the street (sober) and cracked my hip – they put a pin in it and I’m as good as new.” Then he gave his predictions for the upcoming baseball season races.

### **Let’s hear from Lionel Carter**

What you haven’t read are letters from Carter. Unfortunately his recipients probably weren’t the archivists that Carter was. Lionel shared with me some of his writings.

Written June 1991: After describing the DeLongs in Colfax and the card games with baseball cards, Carter writes: “In 1938 I wrote the first baseball card article that was ever published in the general hobby section of the Kaw Chief Stamp Journal out of Lawrence, Kansas. This came to the attention of Edward Golden in Noroton Heights, Connecticut who wrote me and told me that a Jefferson Burdick of Syracuse, New York was putting out a card magazine. I wrote to Jeff, and a whole new world of card collecting opened up to me! Long before this everyone in Colfax had given up card collecting except me and my younger brother, who was only a lukewarm collector. What people don’t realize was that in the early days of the 1930’s, people didn’t just collect sports cards, but most serious collectors collected the various tobacco issues of presidents, Indians, trains, kings and queens, military uniforms etc. and looked down on sports cards with disdain. In fact, when Burdick decided to put out the first American Card Catalog he came to see me in Chicago as he regarded me as a ‘sports card expert’!”



He describes the “junky 1941 Goudey set” and by the 40s Charles Bray was running card auctions in the Bulletin. “When I returned to the states I would bid on sets of cigarette cards...won a set of mint T201s with a bid of \$5.” (The double folders run about \$5,500 in ex-mint today. However, using the CPI and putting ourselves back in time, \$5 in 1945 for cards issued in 1911 would be the equivalent of spending \$50 today for a set of cards from 1969. Still a pretty good deal – Vrechek) “After being discharged in 1945, I would bid on sets of tobacco cards, compare the condition of

the cards in my purchase with those in my collection, then put the worst copies back in the next sale. Often I'd sell them for more than I paid for my set! It was while doing this that I chanced upon a card of the ever rare 'Plank, Phila. Americans.' I did lots of swapping. I was constantly mailing small packages of cards to other collectors, particularly with Eddie Golden and Harry Lilien

in New York City. I'd mail cards to Harry every week and to Eddie every other week, and we'd stuff our letters and packages with clippings from local papers... Sometimes a collector would give up and leave the hobby and sell his cards, and I made some terrific purchases that way."

Other items from Carter: "Most kids preferred the Goudey cards so that I ended up with several cigar boxes of DeLong which no one liked (Traded them off for cards I didn't have later)... But it's a lonely hobby when you are the only one in it, and the only "dealers" were the candy store and drug store proprietors" Upon finding out about Burdick: "Burdick's paper was a mimeographed paper of 5 or 6 sheets on which he listed card sets, collecting news, and names of collectors who 'found' him. Of the latter I was the 35<sup>th</sup> collector to contact him. Today to my knowledge only John D. Wagner and I survive... In June 1949 Burdick turned the Bulletin over to Charles Bray, who had come upon the collecting scene in April, 1944 in handling the auction of the collection of Alfred O. Philipp and the Bray Mail Auction became a regular feature of the Bulletin... Collecting cards in those days was really fun, the cards weren't worth much, so no one worried about the value, it was just a swap of card for card ordinarily.. or it was until Topps and Bowman cards started coming out in the early 1950s and the younger collectors wanted to swap those cards for an equal number of cards issued in the 1930s. No way!"

"In 1946..finally met my first collector face to face: Larry Brandt.. We'd buy several boxes of each series as it was offered in the stores then we'd open all the individual packages (one card to one stick of gum for 1 cent in those days), heap the cards on the floor in a big pile and throw the wrappers and gum down the incinerator. We'd flip a coin to see who got to pick the first card, then we'd each pick a card in turn, selecting not the star players but the best centered cards regardless of the player."

"Collectors were known as 'hard to swap with' or 'easy to swap with.' One of my favorite swappers was 'Buck' Barker of St. Louis, who was a real character and one of the best liked collectors. Buck would mail cards to me from my want list and I'd try to locate cards from his want list from other collectors' duplicate lists, being careful not to add the cards he sent to my collection until we had agreed upon a swap to him in return. Invariably I would finally give up and send the cards he had sent me back to him, bringing my indebtedness to him down to zero for a few months until he came up with some more cards I needed... Buck would write all over the backs of his cards, even change the team names on the front of the cards... He was always changing his collection around by teams... came to Chicago and swapped. I gave Buck a list of second hand book stores... Buck went downtown and came back that evening with stacks of rare candy and gum cards of the period between 1910-1915!"

### **Observations**

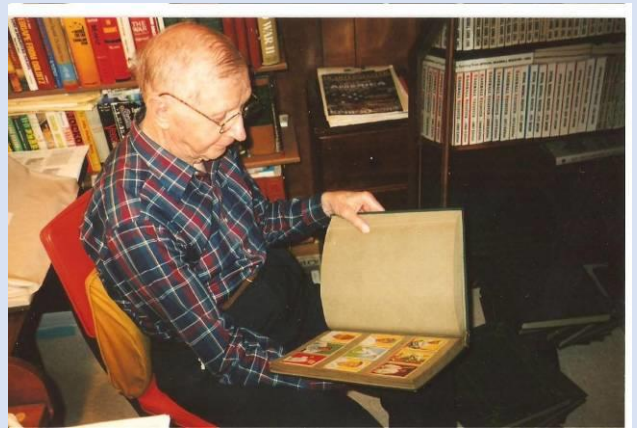
I'd guess that what I have included in these articles is less than 2% of everything in the 7 inch stack of correspondence. I've tried to be representative while covering certain "legends" as

thoroughly as possible. Until the last note in 1981 from Ed Golden (“Maybe I have a Mantle.”) there has been no mention of star cards. There has been no mention of rookie cards. I never saw an entire transaction over \$50. I never saw a card priced at more than a few dollars. Most trades or sales were for less than a few dollars. No one was looking for an autographed anything. I never saw a letter that came off a computer. I never saw an envelope with more than 13 cents postage.

Letters came from Australia, England, California, Maine and across town from Carter. Writers were very young and very old; some were particular; others not. Some wrote just once; several sent numerous letters over many years. At least one had been in jail, one drank too much, another was the Chicago Tribune’s nightlife columnist, and one I didn’t include was from a priest in Nebraska. Some collectors were also dealers. Most writers had what would be considered significant collections in today’s hobby. Most were knowledgeable about the card issues that they were collecting and used the American Card Catalog terminology.

I would say the best writers I came across were Jefferson Burdick and Lionel Carter, but there were words of wisdom from many. My thanks to Lionel Carter for hanging on to this 7 inch pile of paper.

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George Vrechek can be contacted at [vrechek@ameritech.net](mailto:vrechek@ameritech.net)

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*Lionel Carter died in 2008. A big OBC thank you to [Sports Collectors Digest \(SCD\)](#) for allowing us to reprint George's article here on the OBC site and to the late Lionel Carter for making this information available!*