

A day of fun, food and baseball

Annual opening day at R. E. Moore Sportsplex is March 21

The annual opening day at the R. E. Moore Sportsplex is set for Saturday March 21. It will be a day of fun, food and baseball for the entire community!
OPRA invites and encourages the entire community

to come out and take part in the day's events. There will be an opening ceremony starting at 10 a.m.

"The Annual R. E. Moore T-ball Tournament will be going on during the day and is always a hit," said a park

spokesperson. "Lunch will be served as a fundraiser for the renovations to the park. Drawings will take place throughout the day. Make plans to attend and support our local youth, as well as reminisce about the past."

Early playing salary was \$5 to \$7 per game

Reminiscing about the road leading to the major leagues

by Lou Antonelli

Naples is a town of about 1,400 people. It is the birthplace of one of the most versatile ball players in Major League Baseball during the 1920s and '30s.

Randolph Edward Moore was born in Naples on June 21, 1906, and would go on to befriend George Herman 'Babe' Ruth and former Yankees manager Casey Stengel during his time in the big

leagues.

His son, Randy G. Moore, is a resident of Mount Pleasant, formerly of Omaha, and has countless stories of his dad's journey as an East Texas kid who would go on to have a 10-year career in the majors.

In an era before little league baseball and year-round travel baseball, Moore's path to the MLB is one that is completely differ-

ent from that of today's professional baseball players.

Moore Jr. said his dad would move from town to town in search of playing for any team that would give him a small sum of money for a night's work of playing baseball.

"When he started playing, there was no Little League," Moore Jr. said "Every town had a team, and when he got up in his short teenage years, 14, 15, 16, he would go around to towns, and they would pay him five dollars to seven dollars a night. He would catch a train in Naples, and ride to Texarkana and they would pay him 10 dollars a night to play. He continued to do that, to do what he wanted to do."

Moore began playing for the Mount Pleasant Cats in 1923 at 17, and played with the team until 1925, before finishing the year with the Longview Cannibals.

At 21, Moore began playing for the Waco Cubs of the Texas League, before making his MLB debut with the Chicago White Sox the same year.

Moore only appeared in six games, going hitless in 15 at bats, but he had made it to the majors. Another stint with Waco in 1928 prompted the White Sox to bring him back to Chicago again, this time playing in 24 games and recording 13 hits while hitting .213 at the plate.

Moore then went back to the Texas League, this time with the Dallas Steers, and had one of the greatest seasons in the history of the league.

In 168 games with Dallas, Moore had 245 hits and batted .369. His 245 hits included 187 singles, both of which are records of the Texas League that have stood for 85 years.

During his two years with the White Sox organization, the team trained in the same Florida town as the New York Yankees, which featured a burly outfielder by the name of Babe Ruth.

Moore Jr. said his dad befriended the Great Bambino. Ruth discovered Moore's affinity for fishing.

"When my father was with the Chicago White Sox, Chicago trained at St. Petersburg (Florida) and the Yankees trained at St. Petersburg," Moore Jr. said "They played each other in afternoon games at St. Petersburg, and Ruth found out that my father liked to go fishing. He wanted to do it once a week and my dad said 'Babe, if I go too much they're going to run me off.' Ruth always told him, 'Kid, I'll always take care of you.' They went on their fishing trips and became real good friends."

After Moore's record setting 1929 season, the Boston Braves purchased Moore's contract, where he would spend the majority of his career in MLB. From 1930-32, Moore was a valuable player for the Braves, despite usually coming off the bench whenever the team needed him. His versatility was one of the reasons he did not get a chance to play regularly for the Braves.

"In the majors, the very thing that got him to the majors, his versatility, was what kept his batting average down because Bill McKechnie- Boston Braves manager- wouldn't play him everyday," Moore Jr. said. "He wanted him to be available if any infielder went down. His batting average in the majors was .278, and my father on numerous occasions told me that if they would have played him more they would have won more ball games."

Moore finally got his chance to play regularly in 1933 and had the best year of his career. Moore finished 23rd in the MVP voting that year, hitting .302 with eight home runs, 23 doubles, seven triples and 70 RBI while slug-

ging .425 and recording 211 total bases. His numbers are impressive considering he played 10 games at first base, 12 games in left field and 111 games in right field.

Moore played for the Braves until the winter of 1935, when he was traded to the Brooklyn Dodgers along with Ed Brandt for Ray Benge, Tony Cuccinello, Bobby Reis and Al Lopez. The trade to the Dodgers led to Moore meeting a man who would become a great friend, manager Casey Stengel.

Casey Stengel was allowed the trading rights at Brooklyn for the Dodgers Association to do all the trades," Moore Jr. said. "He traded for an outfielder, a pitcher and my dad an infielder. The pitcher hurt his arm in spring training; the outfielder got hit on the hand in the batting cage and broke three fingers. My father got a double on opening day of the season, slid into second and broke his ankle."

This was a contributing factor to Stengel being fired early in the 1936 season. Moore then became friends with Stengel when he saw Moore in the clubhouse packing his things.

"Four days later he was in the clubhouse with a cast on his leg cleaning his locker out, and Casey Stengel came by and he said, 'What are you doing?'" Moore Jr. said. "My dad said he was going home and wasn't going to stay there. He knew he was from Texas but didn't know where from. My dad told him he was from Omaha, Texas. Casey said 'Well you country so-and-so, you got me fired. So I believe I'll go home with you.'"

Stengel then rode with Moore from Brooklyn to Omaha, Texas.

"They drove a Dodge Coupe from Brooklyn to Omaha," Moore Jr. said "They lived in the house that we still have there at the ranch, and it went on to be a legendary house with players. Of course Stengel was there, and he was in and out of Omaha and really liked it. He came back there in 1965 and dedicated our ballpark."

Stengel began going to Omaha regularly because he enjoyed Texas more than going home to California. Other

players soon began coming to the ranch house, and eventually went into business together in the Texas oil fields.

"Another baseball great who came and visited was Al Lopez, a Hall of Fame catcher for Brooklyn at the same time my dad was up there," Moore Jr. said "It was Lopez and Casey, and two other players. Watty Clark who was a pitcher for Brooklyn, and Johnny Cooney who was a real good ball player for Brooklyn. They all got in the oil business together, and invested in some properties in Talco which they had for a number of years."

Moore played for the Dodgers until May 1937, when he was traded to St. Louis for Paul Chervinko. On Sept. 9, the Cardinals, ending his career in the majors at the age 31, released Moore.

Being from East Texas, Moore kept in shape during his baseball career in a way that would be strange to major league players of today.

"My father kept himself in shape by quail hunting in the off season," Moore Jr. said. "Casey would walk along with him, but he never did hunt. He just walked to be with him. My dad would hunt all morning with one set of dogs. That's how he stayed in shape. At that time, East Texas had a lot of good quail county."

With Moore staying in shape by hunting all day, his baseball skills stayed sharp by having equipment from whatever team he was with shipped to him.

"He worked real hard to make it to the major leagues, and he worked hard to stay up there," Moore Jr. said. "He would have the clubs he was with send him a bag of balls in the off season. Fungo bats, balls, gloves and some bats."

He had three guys who pitched batting practice to my father. Then they'd use the fungo bats and my dad would shag fly balls. When the season started he was ready to go, and that's how he kept his job up there."

Moore's relationship with Stengel allowed Moore Jr. to have an exciting experience at a World Series game in New York while watching Stengel manage the powerhouse Yankees.

"Casey got in the habit of coming to our house after he got fired from Brooklyn," Moore Jr. said. "Later when he got the Yankee job, it was just a shoe-in. He wins 10 pennants and seven World Series, so we all went to the World Series up there. It was very difficult to get tickets to the World Series. We had a box right behind the Yankee dugout. One time I was sitting there before the game. My father kept talking to two men behind him, I never did look back."

"He just kept looking back at these two men. A ball boy stepped out of the Yankee dugout and my dad asked him for a baseball. He looked back and said 'sign this for my son Randy.' When the ball came back, one side was Bill McKechnie, my father's manager at Boston, and the other side was Jim Thorpe. I turned around then and looked at Thorpe."

In a time where baseball players made a fraction of what they do today, Moore Jr. said his dad's salary wasn't what made it special, but the experiences that stemmed from it.

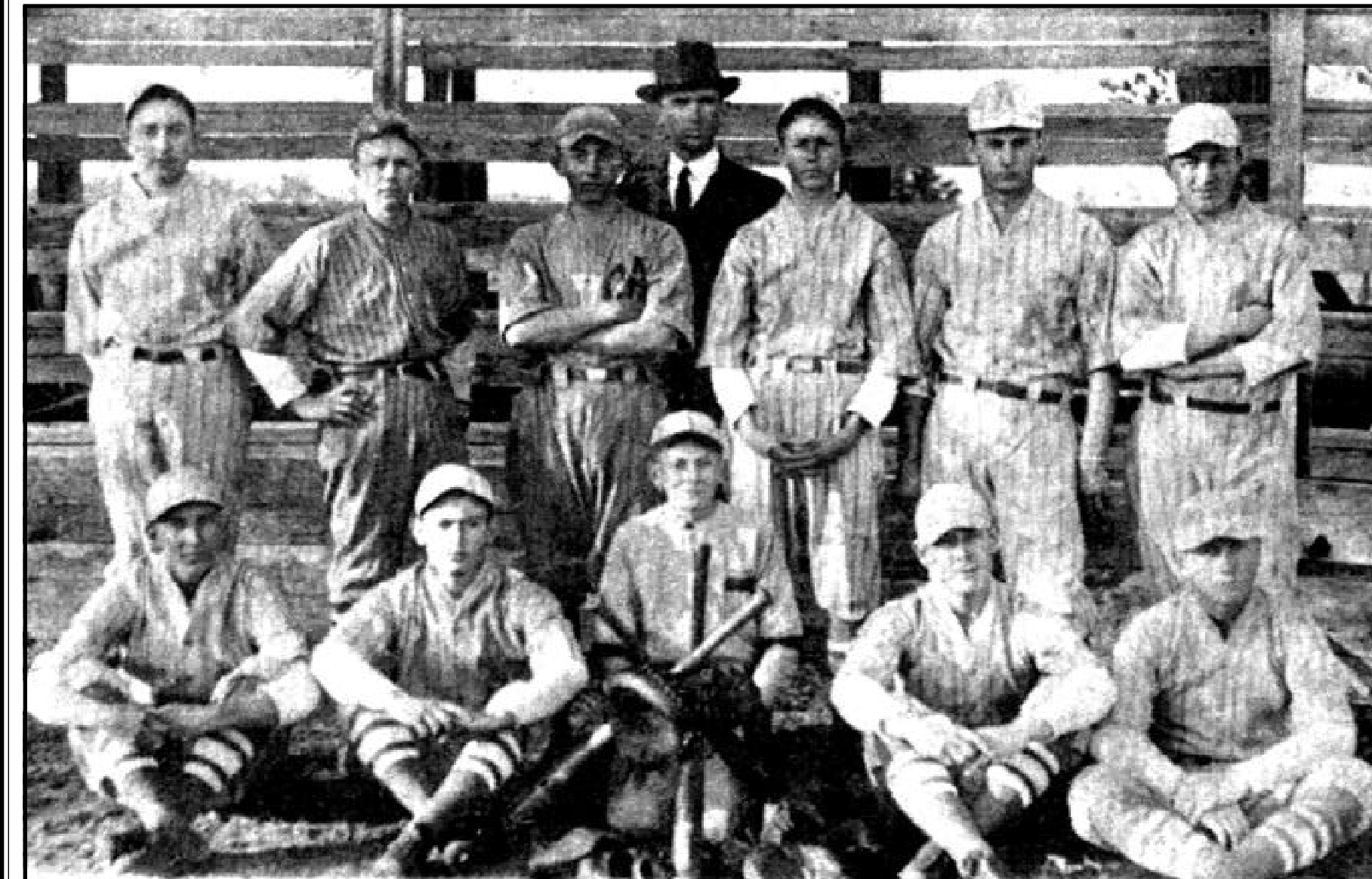
"The most important thing is not what he made," Moore Jr. said. "Of course during the Depression the salaries weren't very much, but it was the fact that it entered him into other businesses. People wanted him to come in and tell them about (Babe) Ruth, Casey, Dizzy Dean and Rabbit Maranville. He used it as an entrée, and ironically the entrée is still there. People ask me about it."



RANDY E. MOORE WITH THE BOSTON BRAVES



RANDY MOORE POSES WITH HIS NEW 1929 MODEL A



1921 Naples High School Buffaloes

Randolph Moore started his baseball career as a member of the Naples High School Buffaloes in 1921. This team photo was made at Martin Ball Park in Naples. Seated on the front row, left to right, were Grady (Dick) Lowery, Loyd Legg, Ivan Dycus, Randolph Moore and W. D. Berry. Members of the baseball team, standing left to right, were Wendell Smith, John A. Williams II, Paul Patterson, Acey Drew, Jack Archer and Walter (Hook) Floyd.

O&Y Photo