

The Georgia Peach

Stumped by the Storyteller

WILLIAM R. COBB

INTRODUCTION

In his December 29, 2005, Internet blog, John Thorn, the noted baseball author and SABR member, mentioned that the shotgun that killed Ty Cobb's father in 1905 had been part of the famous Barry Halper collection of baseball memorabilia—an incredible, if not unbelievable, assertion.¹ How could such an artifact of tragedy have survived for 100 years to become part of the most famous collection of baseball memorabilia ever assembled? And more importantly, why?

As a lifelong fan of Ty Cobb (but not a descendant or close relative) and a member of the Board of Advisors to the Ty Cobb Museum in Royston, Georgia, I was fascinated by these questions when I discovered Thorn's blog in mid-2006. A discussion among the museum board members resulted in an e-mail to John Thorn, seeking further information about his assertion and about the relic itself. This exchange digressed quickly into a disagreement as to whether a pistol or a shotgun had actually been used in the incident that took William Herschel Cobb's life, and Thorn declined to discuss his statement further.²

A few months later, the Ty Cobb Museum received a phone call from a representative of the New York Yankees organization, inquiring about the shotgun that was used to kill Ty Cobb's father.³ The caller, who identified herself only as a member of the Yankees' marketing department, wanted to know if the museum had any information that could be used to confirm that a shotgun, which the caller said was now held in the collection of an undisclosed Yankee player, was actually the weapon that had been used in the shooting of W. H. Cobb.

These two events inspired me to begin a thorough investigation to review all of the information that could be located about the August 8, 1905, shooting of Ty Cobb's father at the hand of Ty's mother. I wanted, once and for all, to either confirm or disprove the shotgun element of this tragic event in Ty Cobb's life story. And, if disproved, I wanted to identify and understand the source of this particularly distasteful part of the myth. An unintended result of this investigation has been to

provide new insights into other myths about Georgia's most famous baseball player—where they began and how they grew. This investigation also demonstrates that new information to be found in the realm of high-end baseball memorabilia, often well known among collectors and authenticators but not widely publicized, can be highly relevant to the efforts of baseball researchers and historians.

THE SHOTGUN

The first step in my investigation was to review the Sotheby's catalog for the 1999 sale of the Barry Halper Collection, which had netted something over twenty million dollars.⁴ This unindexed, three-volume set, which provides descriptions, some photos, and the realized prices of the auctioned items, is practically a baseball history in itself and would be an interesting read for any SABR member. My first perusal, however, yielded no information on the Cobb shotgun.

Recalling that I had once read that Major League Baseball had purchased about twenty percent of the Halper collection before the auction and donated it to the Cooperstown Hall of Fame Museum, I asked friend and research director Tim Wiles if the Cobb shotgun was among the Halper items that had been received by the Hall of Fame. His reply a few days later was that no such item was in their collection and that he and his colleagues could not imagine that the Hall of Fame Museum would ever accept such a sordid relic were it to be offered.⁵

A subsequent e-mail exchange with Robert Lifson, the memorabilia expert who managed the auction of the Halper collection for Sotheby's, revealed that the John Thorn blog had indeed been correct.⁶ The Cobb shotgun had been listed in the Sotheby's auction catalog. This discovery prompted my second review of the Halper catalogs, in which I found this description on page 439 of volume 1, with no accompanying photo:

1227 Ty Cobb's Shotgun . . .

"Tyrus R. Cobb" is engraved near the trigger of this early twentieth-century double-barrel

shotgun. Cobb's biographer Al Stump told Barry Halper that this was the gun that Mrs. Cobb used to shoot Mr. Cobb, when Ty was still young. The younger Cobb kept the gun throughout his life and used it on many of his hunting expeditions.⁷

Lifson also replied that the shotgun originally was to be included in the auction and thus had been included in the catalog, but that ultimately it had been rejected because the only provenance was Al Stump's statement. There was also a question as to whether Sotheby's was licensed to auction such a firearm.⁸ The shotgun, as lot 1227, did not appear in the published prices realized list, confirming Robert Lifson's recollection that it had been pulled from the auction.

According to the Sotheby's catalog, the source of the shotgun in the Halper collection was sportswriter Al Stump, who had collaborated with Ty Cobb on his 1961 autobiography and during that process spent time with Cobb in the last year of his life. I was to later learn that Al Stump was very well known to experts and collectors of high-priced baseball memorabilia. But some obvious questions remained.

Why would Ty Cobb, who according to all accounts had been deeply and permanently affected by the untimely death of his beloved father at the hand of his mother, have kept the shotgun supposedly used in the tragedy for the rest of his life? Why would he have used this weapon in many of his later hunting expeditions? Indeed, why would he have had his own name inscribed on the weapon?

THE RECORD

The August 8, 1905, death of William Herschel Cobb, a former Georgia state senator, Franklin County school board commissioner, and owner and editor of *The Royston Record*, was widely covered in newspapers throughout the state. All discovered contemporary news articles that provided details of the shooting death of W. H. Cobb and the subsequent trial of his wife, Amanda Cobb, referred to the weapon used in the shooting as a revolver or pistol.

The August 11, 1905, *Atlanta Constitution* includes this description of Amanda Cobb's testimony before the coroner's jury: "When she heard a noise at the window during the night, she took a revolver from the reading table where she had left it and fired two shots at a figure crouching outside." Mrs. Cobb's full testimony before the coroner's jury was included in the same article (see exhibit 1).⁹

A diligent online search by researchers at the State

Mrs. Cobb's Statement.
Mrs. Cobbs' statement to the jury was as follows:
"Mr. Cobb left home Tuesday morning, telling me that he would not be back until Thursday. Mr. Cobb bought me a pistol in Atlanta since we moved here. This I generally kept under my head, but last night I was reading and had it on my table and left it there.
"I retired about 10:30 o'clock, and woke up some time during the night. I heard a kind of rustling noise at the lower window of my room. I got up and got my pistol. As I approached the window I saw a form some distance from the window. As it went behind the chimney I went to the upper window.
"I went from window to window, two or three times, maybe more. The form seemed to get nearer to the upper window, and I pulled down the shade so that I could see just below it. The form seemed to crouch down. I stood at the upper side of the window and pulled the shade to one side and shot twice.
"After shooting I thought everything. I began to scream and went to send Clifford Ginn after a doctor. I called Mr. Welborn. I couldn't call very loud.
"After shooting I threw the pistol down. I don't know how long it was between shots."

Exhibit 1. A copy of an excerpt from the August 11, 1905, *Atlanta Journal* article quoting Amanda Cobb's statement to the jury of the coroner's inquest. Amanda testified that she fired two shots from a pistol that her husband had bought for her. No newspaper or court records have been found that dispute her testimony. She also testified that Clifford Ginn was first to assist her and made no mention of Joe Cunningham having been the first to arrive on the scene.

of Georgia Archives discovered numerous other newspaper articles available digitally and some legal documents from the Franklin County court records.¹⁰ The weekly *Macon Telegraph* carried this description of Amanda Cobb's testimony on September 28, 1905: "According to a statement made by her soon after the shooting she was roused in the night by someone at her window. She rose quickly, and with a revolver fired at a crouching form. Then she screamed."¹¹

Several articles in *The State* (Columbia, South Carolina), the *Savannah Tribune*, and the *Augusta Chronicle* covered the 1905 coroner's jury and the March 1906 trial but failed to mention the weapon used.¹²

The Superior Court records found online at the State of Georgia Archives include the 1905 criminal docket, the 1905 application for bail, and the 1906 jury

verdict, none of which make any reference to the weapon used in the shooting.

In a 2004 SABR Deadball Committee e-mail group dialogue, some of these newspaper articles casting doubt on the shotgun theory were presented and discussed. From the ensuing e-mails, the consensus conclusion seemed to be that these documents were insufficient to dispel the well-known and long-accepted “fact” that a shotgun had been used in the shooting death of W. H. Cobb. The principal argument was that press coverage would have been friendly, even lenient, toward Mrs. Cobb, due to the prominence of W. H. Cobb and the entire family.¹³

This conclusion is contradicted by a close reading of the articles, which reveals that the coverage was in fact harsh, even discussing rumors of infidelity and the revelation that W. H. Cobb had a revolver and rock in his coat pocket at the time of his death, which served to heighten the speculation about this sensational case.

The court itself was hardly lenient on Amanda Cobb. Not until September 29, 1905, did the court grant her request for bail, requiring a \$10,000 bond “with good security,” an extremely large sum in 1905.¹⁴ When the trial finally began on March 30, 1906, the court denied a motion for continuance requested by Amanda Cobb on the grounds of the absence of a principal defense witness. Still further, in 1907, after being acquitted, Amanda Cobb had to file suit against the administrator of her late husband’s estate, forcing a division and sale of lands in order for her to receive the “twelve-months support” for her family as provided by Georgia law.

A notable result from this exhaustive search of the

record is the absence of any mention whatsoever of a shotgun in the press coverage or in the surviving Superior Court records. To conclude as a result of this study that a handgun was used in the shooting death of W. H. Cobb, against the widely held belief that a shotgun as used, would hardly be unreasonable. However, as described above, it is doubtful that such a conclusion would be widely accepted, even among the SABR community.

To finally conclude that the shotgun story is false, a more compelling piece of evidence is required. Thanks to the research of Wesley Fricks, also a board member at the Ty Cobb Museum, such a document has been discovered.¹⁵ The official Franklin County coroner’s report, dated August 9, 1905, which served as the arrest warrant for Amanda Cobb, states clearly and unequivocally that a pistol was used by Amanda Cobb and that the death of W. H. Cobb resulted from a pistol bullet. *Ecce signum!* (See exhibit 2.)

THE SHOTGUN STORY

Having proven the shotgun story false, my investigation turned to an interesting and obvious question: what is the origin of this sensational and widely believed story that Ty Cobb’s mother killed his father with a shotgun? I completed a thorough review of the biographical literature on Ty Cobb in a search for the answer.

Sverre Braathen’s 1928 biography *Ty Cobb: The Idol of Baseball Fandom*,¹⁶ did not mention the death of Ty Cobb’s father at all. Ty Cobb’s 1925 autobiography, *My Twenty Years in Baseball*,¹⁷ also fails to mention his

FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

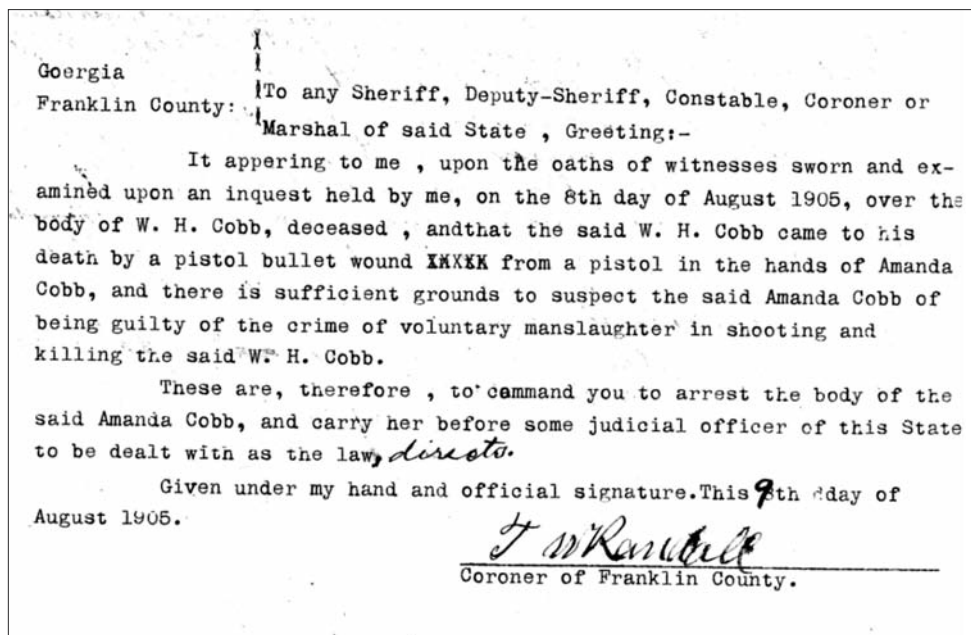


Exhibit 2. A copy of the coroner’s report and arrest warrant for Amanda Cobb, issued August 9, 1905, by the Franklin County coroner. The coroner concluded, based on his examination of the body of the deceased W. H. Cobb and on the sworn oaths of witnesses, that the death was a result of a bullet wound from a pistol fired by Amanda Cobb.

father's death, as does H. G. Salsinger's 1951 *Sporting News* biography.¹⁸

Gene Schoor's 1952 biography, *The Story of Ty Cobb: Baseball's Greatest Player*, stated only that W. H. Cobb was shot and killed "under circumstances which were clouded, in an atmosphere of enigma and cloaked in mystery."¹⁹

John D. McCallum's 1956 biography, *The Tiger Wore Spikes*, was essentially a juvenile biography and provided no specific details about the shooting incident. It did, however, state that W. H. Cobb was killed by a "bullet," which indicates that a handgun, not a shotgun, was the weapon used, since a shotgun shoots "shot" or "pellets," not "bullets." This wording is consistent with the coroner's report in the use of the term "bullet," but McCallum makes no mention of having seen that report.²⁰

Cobb's 1961 autobiography, *My Life in Baseball: The True Record*, written in collaboration with Al Stump, states only that his father had been killed in a gun accident. No details were provided.²¹

Shortly after Ty Cobb's death in July 1961 and the release of Cobb's autobiography, Al Stump wrote an article for *True Magazine* titled "Ty Cobb's Wild 10-Month Fight to Live."²² This article is the first recounting of the shotgun story in the literature that was reviewed in this investigation. It will be examined in detail in the following sections.

In 1975, John D. McCallum expanded his earlier 1956 book and published the first detailed Cobb biography, titled simply *Ty Cobb*. McCallum devotes a full chapter to describing the details of the shooting incident, even including supposed dialogue between Amanda Cobb and Clifford Ginn, a boy who lived nearby who had come to the Cobb house upon hearing the shots and then had gone upstairs to the bedroom where Amanda Cobb stood in shock. Amanda Cobb's testimony in 1906 was that she had summoned Clifford Ginn to come over. This chapter also included three lengthy quotations from articles in *The Royston Record* that ran in the days following the incident. In this 1975 biography, McCallum leaves no doubt that he believed the weapon that killed W. H. Cobb was a pistol. Within this chapter, McCallum states that Amanda "took a pistol out of a drawer"; that Amanda "clutched the pistol between her hands"; that Amanda "stood there clutching a smoking pistol"; and that she had "instinctively reached for her pistol, which she always kept on her nightstand alongside her bed when she was alone nights." McCallum also states that "one gossip said it was a shotgun, while another said it was a revolver." McCallum was thus familiar

with the shotgun story, and he apparently dismissed it completely.²³

Robert Rubin's 1978 juvenile biography *Ty Cobb, the Greatest* mentions only that Ty Cobb's father "had been shot to death by his mother, who mistook him for a prowler."²⁴

In 1984, Charles Alexander wrote a detailed biography of Ty Cobb, also titled simply *Ty Cobb*. In it he relates the shotgun story in much the same way that it appeared in Al Stump's 1961 *True Magazine* article. Alexander describes the incident as the "bizarre and ghastly" death of Cobb's father from two shots from a shotgun, with an intervening time interval between the shots. He also states that Joe Cunningham was the first person to come to the Cobb residence and identify the slain intruder as W. H. Cobb and then quotes Joe Cunningham's daughter as stating that her father had said that the sight of W. H. Cobb's body was "the worst thing I ever saw": he viewed a "gaping hole in the abdomen" and Cobb's "brains literally blown out."²⁵

Since its publication, Alexander's biography has become the nearest thing to the definitive biography of Ty Cobb. It was written by a professional historian and university professor and is presented as scholarly, comprehensively researched, and uncontroversial. It is thoroughly indexed and references a wide variety of sources. It is generally recognized as complete and, more important, unbiased. It is not without errors, however, such as the statement that W. H. Cobb had married Amanda Cobb when she was only 12 years old, an assertion that probably adds to the sensationalism of the shotgun story. Her actual age was 15, a not uncommon age for marriage at the time, as is clearly shown by examination of the available census and marriage records.²⁶

For the next twenty years, all of Cobb's biographers, including Richard Bak (in both his 1994²⁷ and 2005²⁸ biographies), Norman Macht (1992),²⁹ S. A. Kramer (1995),³⁰ Patrick Creevy (fictionalized biography, 2002),³¹ and Dan Holmes (2004),³² relate the shotgun version of the shooting story. Their shotgun stories vary only in the level of detail presented.

Included also is Al Stump's 1994 biography *Cobb: The Life and Times of the Meanest Man Who Ever Played Baseball*, which amplified and expanded on the 1961 Ty Cobb autobiography on which Stump collaborated. This biography also included a slightly rewritten and expanded version of Stump's 1961 *True Magazine* article. Stump prefaces this book by stating that he had lacked editorial control over the 1961 Cobb autobiography, asserting that what Cobb had allowed

into the book was self-serving and implying that this new book would correct the omissions of the earlier work. Stump retells the shotgun story along the same lines as his 1961 article, describing how Amanda “grabbed up a twin-barreled shotgun from a corner rack in the room and in fright fired one load” and then, panic stricken, had “screamed and triggered a second blast. . . . She could barely identify the body of her husband. From the neck up not much was left.”³³

Tom Stanton’s 2007 book *Ty and the Babe*, which focuses principally on the postcareer relationship of the two megastars, mentions the shooting only in passing, without providing any details.³⁴

Don Rhodes, a long-time reporter for the *Augusta Chronicle*, wrote *Ty Cobb: Safe at Home* in 2008. Rhodes quotes extensively from the 1905 and 1906 articles that were printed in the *Chronicle*, taking advantage of the full archives of the *Chronicle* that were available to him.³⁵ He quotes liberally from the “innuendo filled articles” published by the *Chronicle*, including one that relates Amanda Cobb’s testimony about using her pistol in the incident. He does not mention the shotgun story.

Based on this review of the available biographical literature on Ty Cobb, no account of the shotgun story is found prior to Al Stump’s 1961 *True Magazine* article. With the exception of John McCallum’s 1975 book and Don Rhodes’ 2008 book, every biography and every article written since 1961 that made mention of the weapon used in the shooting of W. H. Cobb has accepted and retold in one form or another this now-disproved shotgun story.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE SHOTGUN STORY

Ty Cobb’s autobiography was released shortly after his death in July 1961. In December, Al Stump turned to *True*, *The Man’s Magazine* to publish his article “Ty Cobb’s Wild 10-Month Fight to Live.” *True Magazine* was a leader at the time in the men’s adventure genre, which featured lurid covers and provocative titles that oversold allegedly true stories that were usually fictional or mostly so. Besides the “true stories” of war, demented rulers, love-starved Amazons, and so on, magazines in this genre often included pin-up photos, love-life articles, and exposés of vice in cities throughout the world. These often near-pornographic magazines were nevertheless sold openly at newsstands and drug stores—thus the provocative titles and covers to “hook” the macho-male population.

The cover of the December 1961 issue showed a full-color photo of four ornate and deadly swords as a lead-in to an article titled “They Live by the Sword.”

The cover byline for that issue trumpeted Al Stump’s article with: “Exclusive! The Strange, Wild, Tragic End of Ty Cobb.” Among the other articles in this issue were: “Psychic: The Story of Peter Hurkos,” who was world famous for using ESP to solve baffling crimes; “Daring Dive for Derelict Gold,” about the salvaging of sunken treasure in a deadly minefield of World War II ordinance; and “The Monster Makers,” describing various natural-born and intentionally mutilated human freaks of the middle ages, with grotesquely drawn illustrations. “Men’s adventure” is definitely not the genre from which scholars and historians usually seek truthful, insightful, and unembellished information about anyone or anything. Nevertheless, this is where the Cobb shotgun story began.

In the 1961 *True Magazine* article, Stump has Ty Cobb confess, as they visit the Royston, Georgia, tomb of his father and mother, that “my father had his head blown off with a shotgun when I was 18 years old—by a member of my own family. I didn’t get over that. I’ve never gotten over that.” Later in the article, Stump quotes “family sources and old Georgia friends of the baseball idol” as being his source for the story. He describes the shooting event simply by saying that Amanda Cobb “kept a shotgun handy by her bed and used it.” In this version of the story, he has the shooting occur inside the Cobb house, by placing Amanda in the bedroom “all alone when she saw a menacing figure climb through her window and approach her bed. In the dark she assumed it to be a robber.”

Among the many sports-related articles written by Stump, this was by far the most successful of his career and the most widely read. It received several awards and was later reprinted in two editions of *True Magazine Baseball Yearbook* (1962 and 1969),³⁶ in the resurrected *Baseball Magazine* in 1965,³⁷ and in the *Third Fireside Book of Baseball*.³⁸

THE SOURCE OF THE SHOTGUN STORY

In 1994, an ill and aging Al Stump wrote *Cobb: The Life and Times of the Meanest Man Who Ever Played Baseball*. This book went much farther than the earlier Cobb autobiography, adding details that Stump said had been withheld by Cobb in the 1961 autobiography. It also included an expanded version of Stump’s 1961 *True Magazine* article, which had achieved prominent recognition in sports literature over the years. This book was subsequently made into a movie titled *Cobb*, directed by Ron Shelton. The movie was a commercial flop that received mixed reviews, grossed less than \$850,000, and was pulled from domestic theaters just weeks after its opening.³⁹

Unlike his *True Magazine* article, in the 1994 book Stump identified his source for the details of the shooting of W. H. Cobb as Joe Cunningham, the childhood friend and next-door neighbor of Ty Cobb in Royston. Stump provides several quotations attributed to Cunningham detailing not only the circumstances of the shooting but also Ty's physical and mental reaction to the tragedy.

It is impossible that Al Stump ever had any interaction with Joe Cunningham. Stump never had occasion to be in Royston, with or without Ty Cobb, prior to the 1960 collaboration on Cobb's autobiography. Joe Cunningham died in 1956.⁴⁰ The quotations were therefore fabricated to enhance the believability of his story. Possibly, Stump's information came from interactions with Cunningham's daughter, Susie, who was still alive in 1960 and who had been interviewed and quoted by biographer Charles Alexander for his 1984 book. Or Stump could have fabricated this dialogue based solely on Alexander's 1984 biography.

The question naturally arises about Joe Cunningham, who, either directly as falsely asserted by Stump or indirectly as asserted by Charles Alexander, was the source of the shotgun story: If he was the first to arrive at the scene of the shooting, why was he not mentioned prominently in the widespread newspaper coverage of the incident and in the subsequent trials? If he was the first to arrive on the scene of the shooting, why was there no challenge to Amanda Cobb's court testimony that Clifford Ginn, her brother-in-law, was first to arrive? This type of controversy, if it occurred, would have been widely reported in the press, which sensationalized practically every other aspect of the incident. Yet there is no mention of Cunningham in any of the articles or other records that I was able to locate, and thus there is no evidence that Cunningham had even the smallest part in the shooting tragedy or its aftermath.

There are no clear answers to these questions for several reasons, first among them being that neither Stump nor Alexander had any direct interaction with Joe Cunningham. In Stump's case, the story was either fabricated, obtained at second hand from Cunningham's daughter, or copied and expanded from Alexander's 1984 biography. In Alexander's case, as he points out, it came second hand as a family story from Cunningham's daughter, and is highly suspect for this reason alone.

A recent interview with noted Atlanta sportswriter and editor Furman Bisher clouds the veracity of the Cunningham story even further.⁴¹ Bisher knew Ty Cobb well, having written a widely read 1953 article which

addressed the death of W. H. Cobb and an in-depth *Saturday Evening Post* article about Cobb's return to Georgia in 1958. Furman stated in this recent interview that he also knew Joe Cunningham well and had spoken to him on several occasions. Furman Bisher stated that Joe Cunningham had told him directly in the early 1950s that Amanda Cobb was not the one who shot W. H. Cobb but that the shots had been fired by her paramour when they were caught together by Professor Cobb after he returned home unexpectedly. However, Susie Cunningham Bond, Joe Cunningham's daughter and Alexander's source, told writer Leigh Montville in 1982 that "her father did not think another man shot Ty's father, that Amanda Chitwood Cobb did, indeed, pull the trigger, and that Amanda knew who her target was."⁴² These conflicting stories from Cunningham and his family about what Cunningham did and did not believe cast serious doubt on the truth of anything sourced to Joe Cunningham or his family. More likely, Joe Cunningham, who lived his entire life in the small town of Royston and became the town undertaker, found an outlet in his old age for foggy or perhaps fantasized recollections about the town's most famous citizen and recounted differing versions of the story to family and to visiting sportswriters and historians.

WHO WAS AL STUMP?

Alvin J. Stump was born in 1916 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was raised in the Pacific Northwest, attended the University of Washington, and shortly after graduation landed his first reporter's job at the *Portland Oregonian*. Following a stint as a correspondent in the wartime Navy, he settled in Southern California and worked as a freelance writer.⁴³

Prior to beginning his collaboration with Ty Cobb in 1960, Stump had written many sports-related articles on the lives and careers of other notables, including Mel Ott, Bob Lemon, Gil McDougald, Ralph Kiner, Eddie Mathews, Duke Snider, Jackie Jensen and Jack Harshman.⁴⁴ These articles appeared in *Sport Magazine*, *American Legion Magazine*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Argosy*, and *Saga* (as well as in *True Magazine*), and many were anthologized in a 1952 book, *Champions Against Odds*.⁴⁵ No doubt Cobb, an avid reader, was familiar with these articles and was impressed enough to hire Stump to work on his autobiography.

Ty Cobb's 1961 autobiography was the first book that Al Stump actually wrote. He went on to complete five more books, including a collaboration with Sam Snead in 1962 on another autobiography, *The*

Education of a Golfer. After the 1961 Cobb autobiography, Stump also continued writing sports-related articles for men's magazines, covering such notables as Albie Pearson, Brooks Robinson, Hank Aaron, Frank Howard, Vada Pinson, Curt Flood, Babe Pinelli, and Tommy Lasorda.⁴⁶

Stump always focused on the adventurous and provocative side of the subjects he wrote about, seeing himself as an investigative reporter who sought out the "truth" where others failed. Many of his subsequent titles bore out this approach, such as his 1969 book *The Champion Breed: The True, Behind-the-Scene Struggles of Sport's Greatest Heroes*.⁴⁷ He never again achieved the success his 1961 Ty Cobb efforts gave him—until his 1994 Cobb biography and its subsequent movie adaptation. But he did score a significant scoop in 1972 that brought him notoriety outside the sports world as a key player in the Marilyn Monroe murder conspiracy and cover-up investigation. Stump arranged and attended the first of many meetings between his friend Bob Slatzer, who claimed to have been Marilyn's husband for three days in 1952, and Milo Speriglio, a prominent Hollywood private detective. Slatzer claimed to have the inside scoop on Marilyn's murder and the cover-up that followed and had come to Stump with the story after his life had been threatened by powerful people. Al Stump thus became the first link and the principal channel for information through which many interesting questions were ultimately answered, such as whether the father of Marilyn's twelfth aborted child was Jack Kennedy or his brother, Bobby; whether Bobby Kennedy and Peter Lawford had been with Marilyn at the time she was murdered; and what explosive political and personal secrets Marilyn had intended to reveal at the press conference that was scheduled for the morning after her death. After a 14-year investigation, Milo Speriglio published his book *The Marilyn Conspiracy*, without listing Stump as an author. But Speriglio gave prominent credit to Stump for bringing him the story and convincing him to take on the case.⁴⁸

Stump's second wife, Jolene Mosher, also a writer, said in describing Stump's writing method that he "liked to sit back, have a few drinks, and egg someone on. . . . He'd encourage them to act up, to be really bad. He'd get good stories like that." She also disclosed about Stump: "His only hobby was drinking."⁴⁹ No doubt this tactic, and possibly this hobby, was at play as Stump interacted with Cobb in their 1960 collaboration, producing fodder for the sensational and fictionalized parts of the *True Magazine* story.

Al Stump's literary hero was Ernest Hemingway, a

role model for many young postwar writers who imitated his writing style, even if they were unable to live his adventurous lifestyle.⁵⁰ Hemingway died in 1961 at his own hand from a shotgun blast to the head—only two weeks before Ty Cobb died. This tragic but sensational event was widely reported around the world, and the resulting months-long flurry of articles was surely followed closely by an admiring Al Stump. Afterward, Hemingway's wife told Idaho authorities that the shotgun had discharged accidentally while Hemingway was cleaning it.⁵¹ His estate later sought to prevent the publication of details of the gruesome death scene,⁵² and a family friend took the shotgun that Hemingway had used, disassembled it into a dozen different pieces, and buried the pieces in widely different locations to prevent memorabilia collectors from later profiting from the gruesome relic.⁵³ There is no evidence on which to conclude that the widely publicized shotgun death of Hemingway, Stump's idol, influenced him as he crafted the fictionalized shotgun account of the death of W. H. Cobb. But the similarities to the W. H. Cobb shotgun story created by Stump are striking, particularly the gruesome descriptions of the death scenes. These similarities, and the coincidence of the shotgun death of Hemingway at precisely the same time as Stump's 1961 writing efforts, make for interesting speculation about a possible influence.

Despite the substantial volume of work that Stump produced in his otherwise mediocre 50-year career, he received no national publicity or recognition, and certainly no acclaim, for anything unrelated to Ty Cobb. His only real career success—and his only lasting legacy—was based exclusively on Ty Cobb. Having saved all his notes and papers from the 1960 collaboration to produce his magnum opus in the 1994 Cobb biography and movie, Stump never escaped from the shadow of Ty Cobb hovering over him as the defining subject in his life's work—but, perhaps he never really tried.⁵⁴ In the intervening years, he either saved or created a large amount of additional material relating to Ty Cobb to sustain a newly found and profitable fascination with baseball memorabilia.

AL STUMP'S COLLECTION OF TY COBB MEMORABILIA

At the time of Ty Cobb's death, Stump came into possession of a very large number of Cobb's personal effects. Stump claimed that Ty Cobb had given him many personal possessions that had been in his Ather-ton home when he died and ultimately offered a note from Ty Cobb as evidence of the gift (see exhibit 3). Almost two decades later, Stump began a concerted effort to sell a substantial part of his "collection," and

thus began an interesting but little-known story that illuminates another method that Al Stump chose—beyond gory shotgun stories and sports fantasy writing—to ride Ty Cobb’s coattails to personal fame and fortune.

On November 29, 1980, Stump wrote to Howard G. Smith, a memorabilia auctioneer in San Antonio, Texas, offering “museum-quality” Ty Cobb pieces itemized as follows:

Cobb’s leather-bound hip-pocket whisky flask, his silver-plated shaving mug and brush, straight-edge razor from the thirties, silver pocket knife, German-made, Damascus barreled shotgun used by Cobb in bird-hunting, a snake-

skin-wrapped cane he used in 1960 (real oddity), razor strop, tobacco humidior, wrist watch, pen-and-pencil set and set of decoy ducks. All of these items are prominently engraved or otherwise inscribed with Cobb’s name or initials. I also have numerous photos, autographed, of Cobb, with Babe Ruth, in action poses, at the wheel of his racing cars, posed formally at home, even his baby picture, etc.

He told Smith that these items were only a portion of his personal collection of Ty Cobb memorabilia, which was “the largest privately owned collection in the U.S.” He stated that had offers for the items from three New York-area collectors but that he wanted to

FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

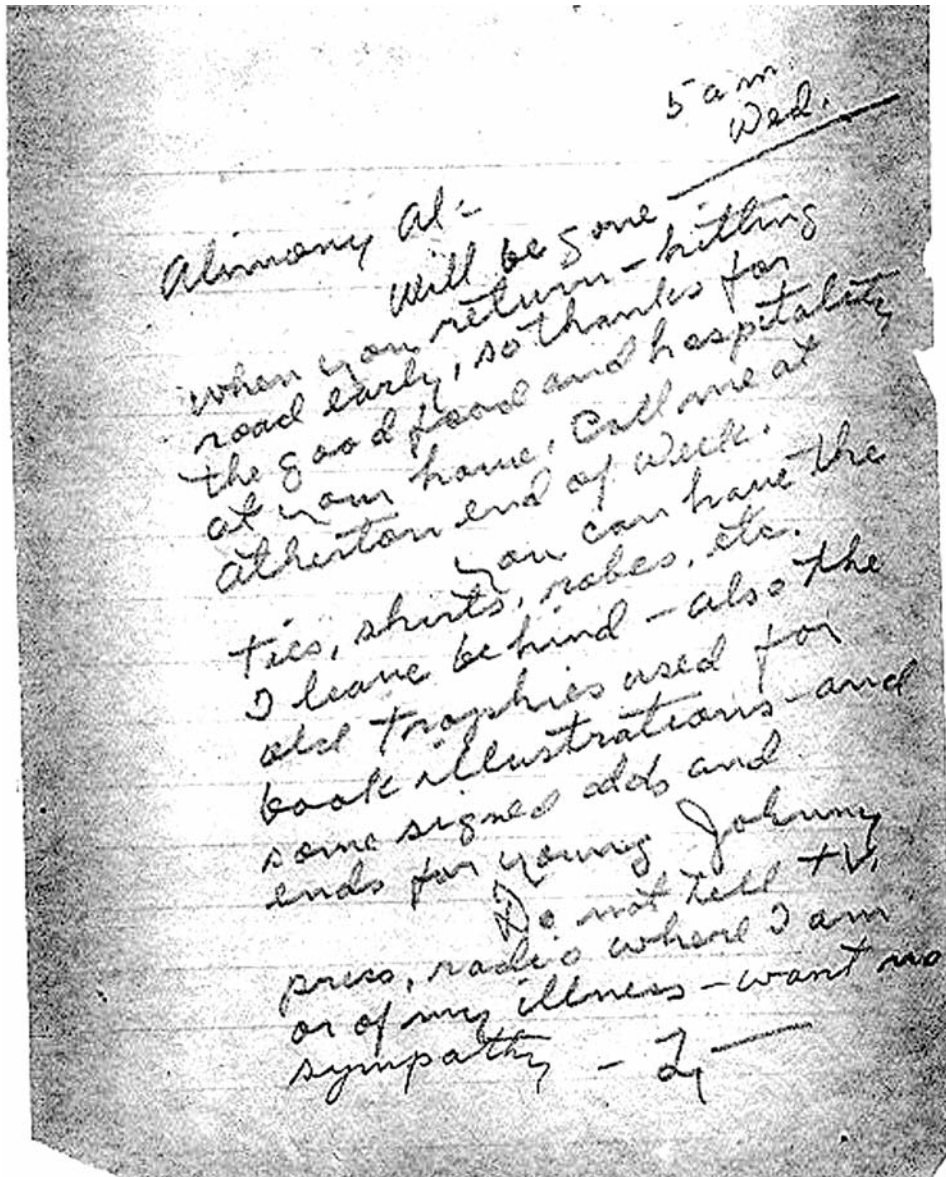


Exhibit 3. The note to Al Stump from Ty Cobb that gives Stump some of Cobb’s personal items, date uncertain. This note was offered in Stump’s December 16, 1980, letter to auctioneer Howard Smith as evidence that Ty told him “to help myself to a bunch of his things stored at Atherton.” The original of this note was auctioned by Butterfields in 2001, and copies often accompany the sale of purported Ty Cobb items as evidence that they are authentic. Close examination of the content of the note shows that it refers to items left by Ty Cobb at the Stump residence after Ty departed from a working session there. Stump offered no other evidence that any memorabilia was gifted to him by Ty Cobb.

further explore the market for possible auction before deciding how best to dispose of this part of his collection (see exhibit 4).⁵⁵

In a follow-up letter on December 16, 1980, Stump sent Smith a list and photos of the 13 items he was offering, along with his asking price for the more

expensive items. Most pertinent to this investigation is the engraved double-barreled shotgun, offered at \$2,500 and shown in the set of photos that Stump provided to Smith (see exhibit 5). This is the shotgun that ultimately became part of the Barry Halper collection and was initially listed in (but withdrawn from) the

FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

Lake Tahoe - 60-61 - Book written - Died 7/61
 LIVED w/ Stump in 4/61 - died 7/61 -
 LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE • 1888 CENTURY PARK EAST, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90067

Los Angeles

Mr. Howard G. Smith, Jr.
 5122 Vance Jackson Rd.
 San Antonio, Tex.

Dear Mr. Smith:

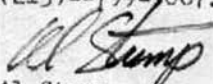
In 1960-61, I collaborated with Ty Cobb in writing his official autobiography (see enclosed), during which he gave me a large number of his personal possessions. I intend now to sell of a portion of my Cobb collection, the largest privately owned in the U.S.

Noting the auction you held on the Herb Elk collection, it occurs to me that you might be able to handle a Cobb sale better than the undersigned. I've had very good offers from three New York area collectors, but would like to explore the market further.

Memorabilia of the greatest ballplayer of all time I intend to dispose of includes such museum-quality pieces as:

Cobb's leather-bound hip-pocket whisky flask, his silver-plated shaving mug and brush, straight-edge razor from the 1930s, silver pocket knife, German-made, Damascus-barreled shotgun used by Cobb in bird hunting, a snakeskin-wrapped cane he used in 1960 (real oddity), razor strop, tobacco humidor, wrist watch, pen-and-pencil set and set of decoy ducks. All of these items are prominently engraved or otherwise inscribed with Cobb's name or initials. I also have numerous photos, autographed, of Cobb, with Babe Ruth, in action poses, at the wheel of his racing cars, posed informally at home, even his baby picture, etc.

My testing of the market in recent weeks indicates that Cobb's possessions can go for from \$200 to \$2500 each. If you're interested, please advise me at: 715 Plymouth Road, San Marino, Cal. 91108 (213)--799-9867.

Sincerely,

 Al Stump
 Sports Editor

(also holographic letters to me from Cobb)

Telephone Area 213 • Advertising 553-7801 • Business 552-2749 • Editorial 552-1021 • Executive 553-0237 • Production 553-4194

Handwritten notes:
 Our Fee is 20% + advertising -
 Why are you selling? (IRS)
 a) Did you list ALL for sale? - Yes
 b) were your offers in bulk?
 c) For what you have for sale, what would you accept?
 (3) Why didn't you sell to the 3 NY Collectors?
 what would be a \$2500 item?
 Talked to Bill Madden
 Who's rec 3 NY Collectors
 Smoking Pipes (3)
 1910 BB Cap
 1954 Top
 3 Bats

Exhibit 4. A letter from Al Stump to auctioneer Howard G. Smith offering the sale of a portion of his collection of Ty Cobb memorabilia, which he describes as the largest privately owned collection of Cobb memorabilia in the country. The handwritten notes on the letter (other than Al Stump's signature) are questions and comments written by Smith as he reviewed the letter and subsequently discussed the sale in phone conversations with Stump.

1999 Sotheby's auction. Its description is precisely the same as that printed by Sotheby's, even including "Tyrus R. Cobb" being engraved near the trigger.⁵⁶

Weeks later, on January 15, 1981, Stump again wrote Smith to provide a more detailed list, now including 18 items, some with descriptions enhanced in ways that belie their credibility. In the first list, Stump itemized a "Benrus watch with leather band (watch doesn't work)." In the second list, this item had suddenly become even more valuable, as Stump implied that this was the watch that Cobb was wearing when he died: "Wristwatch—a Benrus of 1940–1950 period with his full name burned into the brown leather strap. Face of watch is worn. Watch is stopped at 1:20 P.M. Cobb died between 1:15 P.M. and 1:30 P.M., according to doctors. Fair shape."⁵⁷

The shotgun was described as: "Twin-barrel shotgun used by Cobb in bird hunting in the 1920s–30s: Damascus barrel makes it an antique. About 7 pounds with fancy scrollwork on the butt and 'Tyrus R. Cobb' engraved in the steel above the triggers. 'I killed a few hundred ducks with it,' he told me. Gun is Rusty." No mention was made of this gun having been the one used by Amanda Cobb in the shooting of W. H. Cobb—that only became part of the story when the shotgun was sold into the Halper collection and

ultimately described in the 1999 Sotheby's catalog for the Halper auction.

Apparently, no agreement was reached between Stump and Smith as a result of this exchange of letters, because the items they discussed all found their way into other auctions and collections, many ultimately landing in Barry Halper's. Even today, when an item from Stump's collection appears at auction, there most often is also a photocopy of the note, handwritten by Cobb, which tells Stump: "You can have all the ties, shirts, robes, etc. I leave behind—also the old trophies used for book illustrations—and some signed odds and ends for young Johnny." This note is the supposed permission that Stump had for having taken the very extensive number of personal items from Cobb's Atherton residence. Stump's December 16, 1980, letter offered a copy of this letter to Howard Smith, describing it as: "A copy of a letter Ty to me—in which he tells me to help myself to a bunch of his things stored at Atherton." But the letter actually gives Stump only a few items that Cobb left at Stump's Santa Barbara residence when he departed after a working session there on the 1961 autobiography. It is clear that the limited scope of what Ty Cobb actually gave to Al Stump was far exceeded by the essential cleanout from Cobb's Atherton home of every con-



Exhibits 5. Photos of the Damascus-barreled double-barreled shotgun sent by Al Stump to Howard G. Smith. Stump noted in his letter that the shotgun has "Tyrus R. Cobb" engraved in the steel above the trigger. Stump would later fraudulently claim that this was the shotgun used by Amanda Cobb to shoot Ty's father, William H. Cobb, in 1905. This is the shotgun that found its way into the Barry Halper collection and ultimately into the 1999 Sotheby's auction catalog, only to be pulled because of its questionable authenticity. (The complete set of correspondence from Stump to Smith, including letters, envelopes, lists, and photos, was purchased at auction by the author in May 2009 and remains in his personal collection.)



FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

ceivable item that could in any way be associated with Cobb—even his false teeth (see exhibit 6).

WHAT THE MEMORABILIA EXPERTS KNOW

Item 13 of the December 16, 1980, list sent to Howard Smith by Al Stump is described as: “Letters to me from Cobb, typed for him on his personal letterhead stationery and signed ‘Ty,’ in which he discusses what he wanted to go into his autobiography and other matters: 6 x 7 inches.” These letters, estimated by experts in the autograph business to be as many as 50 to 100 in number, created much excitement in the collecting community when they surfaced, principally because of their extensive baseball content—a fact that adds considerable value to any famous player’s correspondence. On cursory inspection, they appear authentic, since they are typed on apparently genuine Ty Cobb letterhead and signed in the green ink that Ty Cobb was well known for using. Ultimately these letters were sold into the market and then were discredited as forgeries by numerous authenticators. They were first offered to Mike Gutierrez, a prominent authenticator, who authenticated them as genuine and then sold them directly and at auction to trusting buyers. Although the signatures on these letters displayed a more shaky hand than authentic Cobb signatures, Gutierrez explained that to be a result of Cobb’s advancing age and declining health and strength—something modern authenticators have disproved through a thorough analysis of steady Cobb signatures dated as late as May 1961, only two months before his death. The fantastic baseball content contained in these forged letters has been quoted by unsuspecting historians, and the incorrect and falsified information has become part of accepted history.⁵⁸ One example of these Ty Cobb letters forged by Al Stump is in exhibit 7.

The forged Stump letters are very well known among memorabilia authenticators and collectors. Jim Stinson, a veteran authenticator and collector, wrote at length about the Stump forgeries in *Sports Collectors Digest*,⁵⁹ and Ronald B. Keurajian, the premier expert on Ty Cobb autographs, has covered them in detail in the definitive article on authenticating Cobb autographs.⁶⁰ Harvey Swanebeck, another long-time autograph collector who purchased one of the Stump-forged Cobb letters in the 1980s, had the unique experience of later finding for sale at a national convention a Ty Cobb letter with the exact same textual content as his own. Evidently Al Stump had created multiple “original” copies of some of the Cobb letters he forged, assuming that the duped purchasers would never meet and compare the content of their forged documents.⁶¹ Even

Ty Cobb Items offered or sold by Al Stump after 1980

Leather-bound hip-pocket whiskey flask
 Silver-plate shaving mug and brush
 Straight-edge razor for the 1930s
 Silver pocket knife
 German-made, Damascus-barreled antique shotgun
 Snake-skin-wrapped cane
 Engraved wooden cane
 Razor strop
 Tobacco humidor
 Wrist watch
 Pen-and-pencil set
 Set of Decoy ducks
 Numerous Photos, all autographed, 16x20 & 8x10
 Ty with Babe Ruth
 Ty standing at the plate
 Ty at the wheel of his racing car
 Ty posed informally at home
 Ty’s baby picture
 1910 Detroit Tigers uniform shirt game-worn by Ty Cobb
 1910 Detroit Tigers cap game-worn by Ty Cobb
 Ty Cobb Signed baseball
 Circular poker-chip holder & 200 chips
 Deck of cards
 Monogrammed dressing gown
 Yellow bone-handled knife
 Three smoking pipes
 Smoking pipe holder
 Corncob pipe given to Ty by Gen. Douglas McArthur
 Rusty cowbell from Cobb’s Ranch
 3 baseball bats
 Ty Cobb signed game-used bat – forged
 Fishing Hat
 Ty Cobb’s Dentures
 Cobb & Co. brass belt buckle – falsely attributed to Ty Cobb
 Christmas Card signed by Ty Cobb dated 1960
 12 Smoking Pipes
 Brass ashtray
 Brass and Leather ashtray
 Cigarette case with matching ashtray
 Wooden tea canister, “Ty Cobb” written in pencil on bottom
 Tape measure in leather case
 Servant’s bell
 Stampette set with three stamps
 2 cork lifters
 Small ceramic tiger
 Wooden key ring holder with mallard design
 Large carving knife set in wooden case
 Hunting knife in leather case
 Pocket knife
 Pen knife
 Comb in pewter case
 Wooden tackle box with lure
 6 Ty Cobb signed baseballs – forged signatures
 50 to 100 signed letters on Ty Cobb letterhead – forged
 Dozens of Ty Cobb signed baseball magazine pages – forged

Exhibit 6. A partial listing of the Ty Cobb memorabilia items from the Al Stump collection offered or sold at various times between 1980 and 2001. Comparison of this list to the six specific items gifted to Stump by Ty Cobb in the note of exhibit 3 raises the question of the legitimacy of Stump’s possession of these Ty Cobb collectibles.

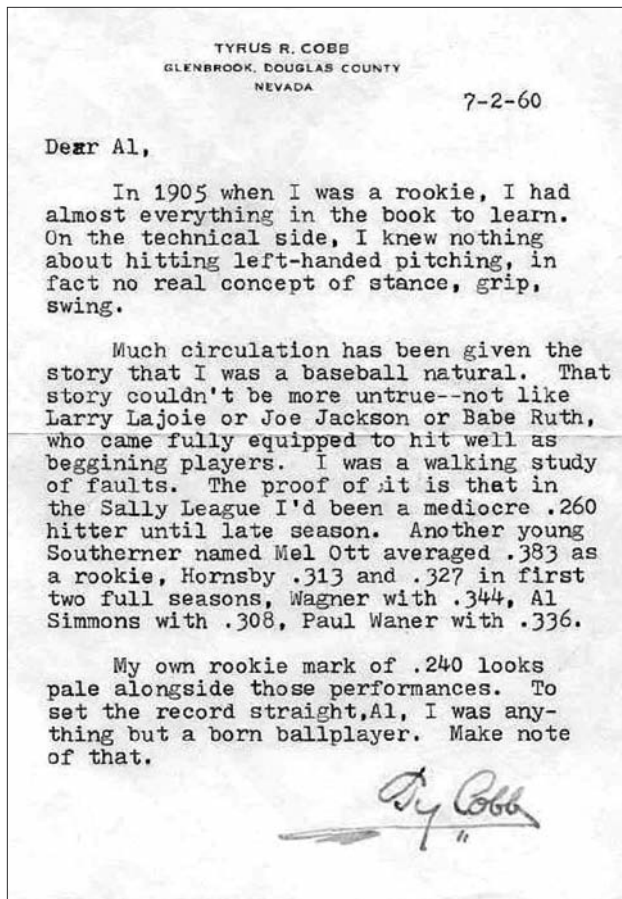


Exhibit 7. One of the estimated 50 to 100 letters from Ty Cobb to Al Stump that were forged by Stump on apparently genuine letterhead taken from Cobb's Atherton residence after Cobb's death. These forgeries contained much baseball-related content, which made them more valuable to collectors. Some of the questionable "facts" in these forged letters became part of baseball history when they were accepted by historians as truthful.

autograph expert Mike Gutierrez, who originally authenticated the Stump-forged Ty Cobb letters, later agreed that the Stump letters were indeed forgeries.⁶²

Stump's forgeries went far beyond written material he created using genuine Ty Cobb letterhead that he had taken from Cobb's Atherton residence. They also included many, many photos and pages from baseball-related publications on which were written tidbits of baseball history, wisdom, or advice (often personalized to Stump) along with a forged Ty Cobb signature in his trademark green ink.⁶³ Exhibits 8 and 9 are several examples of these fake artifacts, which were again offered at auction in 2009 and then withdrawn because experts pointed them out as forgeries. As another example of the extent of Al Stump's deception, in the mid-1980s Stump offered a lot of six Ty Cobb-signed baseballs to Ron Keurajian in a phone conversation. Keurajian declined the offer because he lacked the funds to complete the deal. A month later,

Keurajian met the Michigan collector who purchased this lot, and after inspecting the six Cobb signatures, he concluded that all six were forgeries.⁶⁴

Al Stump's efforts to create and sell off Ty Cobb artifacts was so blatant that the entire high-end memorabilia collectors' industry even today dismisses out of hand the authenticity of anything that has the name of Al Stump in its provenance. Ron Keurajian, now one of the country's leading Cobb autograph experts, recently confided, "I, personally, would not trust anything that originated from Stump."⁶⁵ Robert Lifson, the memorabilia expert who managed the 1999 sale of the Barry Halper collection, examined dozens of Ty Cobb artifacts and Cobb-signed documents sourced to Al Stump, many of them identical to those described by Stump in his 1981 correspondence with Howard Smith. Lifson said in a recent interview that all Stump items in the Halper collection became suspect after it was proven conclusively that a Ty Cobb game-used bat that Stump supplied to Halper was not authentic, based on the dating of the bat by detailed analysis. Of the large number of Ty Cobb documents from Stump that came to Sotheby's, practically all were judged by Lifson to be fraudulent. Lifson went on to say, after reading the content of these letters and examining the forged signatures, that "Stump must have thought that he was creating history, or something." His faking of so many Ty Cobb documents "must have been a pathological issue with Stump, something deep-seated within him. It was just crazy how Stump went to such elaborate lengths to create the forged Cobb documents."⁶⁶

Josh Evans, a widely respected memorabilia expert and principal in the very successful Leland's Auctions, has a much more serious indictment of Al Stump. Evans, a young collector and authenticator in the mid-

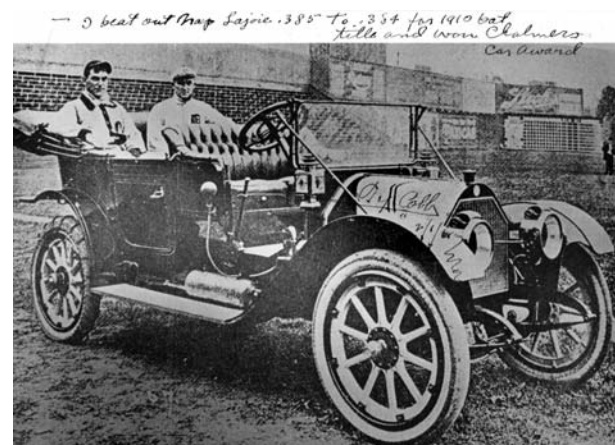


Exhibit 8. A copy of one of many photographs of Ty Cobb onto which Al Stump forged comments that he attributed to Ty Cobb along with Ty Cobb's signature. This photo was offered at auction in May 2009 but was withdrawn when experts notified the auction service that it was a forgery.

FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

BASEBALL MAGAZINE ADVERTISER

BASEBALL MAGAZINE POSTERS

At 15, 50¢ of my posters sold last year of 1910 - over 150,000 - total - J.

HERE IT IS

We know that thousands of fans have been eagerly waiting for it. *Lively and Realistic*, you can almost hear his famous cry—

Ee-Yah! Ee-Yah!

Size 12x20 Inches

Mail us coupon with ten cents for EACH Picture to cover cost of mailing and clerical expense, and pictures will be forwarded at once.

HUGH JENNINGS

You can now secure a complete set of this series. Just the thing for your den.

No. 1
"Ty" Cobb

No. 2
Harry Lord

No. 3
Frank Chance

No. 4
Hugh Jennings

10 Cents Each

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DEAR SIR: Enclosed find ten cents for which please send me the following pictures (draw lines through ones not wanted): "Ty" Cobb, Harry Lord, Frank Chance, Hugh Jennings.

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY *Ty Cobb* STATE _____

Patrons Our Advertisers. We Guarantee Every Purchase

3/01

BASEBALL GUIDE AND RECORD BOOK

WORLD'S SERIES ATTENDANCE, MONEY

Year	No. Games	Attendance	Revenue	Players' Share	Winning Players' Share	Losing Players' Share
1903	5	160,429	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 32,512.00	\$ 1,182.90	\$1,316.25
1904	5	201,574	27,394.30	47,401.70	1,474.00	4,288.50
1905	5	78,068	101,128.53	94,375.50	2,117.58	1,945.96
1906	5	124,222	173,889.00	142,900.00	2,862.79	2,985.00
1907	5	172,063	242,894.50	207,877.00	3,862.72	3,862.72
1912	5	224,027	390,832.00	347,572.28	4,824.58	5,606.47
1913	5	224,027	390,832.00	347,572.28	4,824.58	5,606.47
1914	4	111,009	325,729.08	321,596.84	2,512.28	2,512.28
1915	5	141,351	320,261.50	344,990.55	3,740.25	3,740.25
1916	5	228,459	452,589.00	402,427.45	5,928.00	5,928.00
1917	6	180,604	425,478.00	351,838.28	3,909.52	3,909.52
1918	5	171,137	368,900.00	344,822.74	1,658.00	2,413.00
1919	5	236,728	722,414.00	500,349.00	5,207.61	5,207.61
1920	5	250,000	800,000.00	600,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
1921	4	250,000	900,000.00	700,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
1922	5	185,947	400,475.00	347,572.28	4,824.58	5,606.47
1923	5	201,574	1,092,854.00	950,000.00	11,432.10	11,432.10
1924	7	253,618	672,194.00	590,000.00	5,550.64	5,550.64
1925	7	228,459	720,000.00	600,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
1926	7	328,818	207,854.00	172,306.51	3,584.31	3,584.31
1927	7	328,818	207,854.00	172,306.51	3,584.31	3,584.31
1928	6	199,072	1,174,000.00	1,019,700.00	11,322.28	11,322.28
1929	6	199,072	1,174,000.00	1,019,700.00	11,322.28	11,322.28
1930	6	212,619	922,722.00	790,000.00	8,000.00	8,000.00
1931	7	231,507	979,722.00	830,000.00	8,000.00	8,000.00
1932	7	191,000	740,000.00	600,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
1933	6	164,870	740,000.00	600,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
1934	7	241,110	740,000.00	600,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
1935	6	250,672	1,174,000.00	1,019,700.00	11,322.28	11,322.28
1936	6	238,142	1,019,700.00	850,000.00	8,000.00	8,000.00
1937	6	290,832	851,150.00	700,000.00	7,000.00	7,000.00
1938	6	185,947	400,475.00	347,572.28	4,824.58	5,606.47
1939	7	185,947	400,475.00	347,572.28	4,824.58	5,606.47
1940	7	281,927	*1,322,328.21	1,094,414.04	11,432.10	11,432.10
1941	7	281,927	*1,322,328.21	1,094,414.04	11,432.10	11,432.10
1942	5	277,101	*1,205,249.06	1,019,700.00	11,322.28	11,322.28
1943	5	277,101	*1,205,249.06	1,019,700.00	11,322.28	11,322.28
1944	5	306,708	*1,090,122.00	900,000.00	9,000.00	9,000.00
1945	5	306,708	*1,090,122.00	900,000.00	9,000.00	9,000.00
1946	7	250,000	*1,205,249.06	1,019,700.00	11,322.28	11,322.28
1947	7	306,708	*2,021,948.92	1,687,474.82	16,874.82	16,874.82
1948	6	184,888	1,023,200.00	800,000.00	8,000.00	8,000.00
1949	5	230,716	*1,470,427.88	1,190,555.84	9,905.54	4,272.74
1950	5	230,716	*1,470,427.88	1,190,555.84	9,905.54	4,272.74
1951	6	341,977	*2,708,437.47	2,060,502.27	16,446.09	4,903.83
1952	6	341,977	*2,708,437.47	2,060,502.27	16,446.09	4,903.83
1953	6	307,390	*2,779,109.41	2,091,341.61	16,398.68	4,178.43
1954	4	251,507	*2,741,200.28	2,081,760.72	11,147.60	5,038.08
1955	7	282,149	*2,852,134.34	2,156,511.85	17,528.31	5,924.84
1956	7	343,903	*3,333,194.50	2,501,511.85	21,174.70	6,924.84
1957	7	392,512	*3,927,512.84	3,000,000.00	24,000.00	5,200.00
1958	7	392,512	*3,927,512.84	3,000,000.00	24,000.00	5,200.00
1959	6	392,512	*3,927,512.84	3,000,000.00	24,000.00	5,200.00
1960	7	349,813	*3,480,027.88	2,682,144.82	8,417.04	5,144.54

*Includes \$100,000 radio receipts each year from 1924 through 1945 (except 1928) and \$150,000 in 1946.

†Includes \$175,000 radio receipts and \$65,000 television receipts in 1947; \$150,000 radio, \$180,000 television in 1948; \$150,000 radio, \$180,000 television in 1949; \$175,000 radio, \$200,000 television in 1950; \$150,000 radio, \$180,000 television in 1951; \$200,000 radio, \$225,000 television in 1952; \$175,000 radio, \$225,000 television in 1953; \$150,000 radio, \$225,000 television, \$100,000 pre-game TV in 1954 and in 1955; \$150,000 radio, \$225,000 television, \$100,000 pre-game TV in 1956.

‡Includes \$2,000,000 radio and television receipts in 1957-58 and \$2,250,000 in 1959; money was deposited in Major League Central Fund, with 60 per cent being turned over to Players' Pension Fund.

NOTE—Losers' shares in 1903-05-07 and winners' in 1906-07 include club owners' shares which were added to their teams' players' shares. Players shared in broadcasting receipts from 1944 through 1951 (except 1928) and 1945; money went to 1950-51, to War Relief and Service Fund, Inc., in 1944 and Major League Central Fund from 1946 through 1956 for payments to Players' Pension Fund. Television receipts retained by Commissioner's office in 1947-48-49 and deposited in Major League Central Fund (except for receipts from pre-game TV shows) from 1958 through 1956.

- says I played 1B. when needed - the most unusual play as related here by me - true story

Excerpts from the 1956 book
BASEBALL'S FAMOUS FIRST BASEMEN

Ty Cobb

Quite Tricky, These First Basemen

By IRA L. SMITH

CONFIDENCE MEN operate on the theory that it's easy to victimize people who think they are "getting away with something." And Jake Beckley made use of that general idea when he developed a variation of the hidden ball trick in 1897.

He worked it for the first time on Hans Wagner, who joined the Louisville club in June of that year as a big league rookie.

Beckley had tried to trap Wagner with the ordinary hidden ball trick routine in the first game Hans played against Cincinnati. But the youngster knew Jake had the ball concealed somewhere on him and refused to move off first base until it came to light.

The next time Louisville came to Cincinnati for a series, Jake was ready to trap the alert rookie with his new plan.

Wagner singled to left field early in the first game of the series. As Hans made the turn toward second,

Jake slipped a ball out of his hip pocket and tucked it in his armpit. He took care to leave a bit of it exposed so that Wagner could see it when he returned to the bag.

Sure enough, Hans spotted the ball. "So this old geezer is trying to pull that trick on me again," he probably said to himself. "Well, I'll teach him a lesson."

Waiting a bit until he saw Tim Hurst, the umpire, wasn't looking in his direction, Wagner grabbed the ball and tossed it toward the grandstand. Then he broke for second base at top speed.

Hans didn't know the pitcher had the ball which actually was in play, having overlooked that important fact in his eagerness to beat Beckley at his own game. The pitcher, seeing Hans on the run, threw the ball to the second baseman for an easy putout.

The Louisvilles did some protesting about two balls being on the field at the same time. But Tim

Copyright, 1956, by Ira L. Smith and published at \$3.50 by A. S. Barnes and Co., 232 Madison Ave., New York

PROPERTY OF TY COBB

BASEBALL

"turn ball" as long as the game existed, which was until the 1860's. One feature of this game was that it had no harsh rules limiting the number of players. Usually there were 11 or 12 on a side, but sometimes 15 and 16.

distance was 45 feet—not 46 as Cartwright had outlined. But there was no argument about the difference of 1 foot, and so 45 feet became the standard and remained so until a change was made to 50 feet in 1881, later changed to the present 60 feet 6 inches.

The Knickerbockers who took the field against the "New York Nine" in the first real ball game under organized rules on June 19, 1846, were: D. Anthony, H. Anthony, Tyson, Adams, W. H. Tucker, Birney, Turney, Pauling and Avery. The "New York Nine" lineup was: Davis, Winslow, Lalor, Thompson, Case, Trenchard, Murphy, Ransom and Johnson. Cartwright, a leading player for the Knickerbockers, chose to umpire this historic game instead, and fined Davis of the New York Nine "six cents for swearing."

The "New York Nine" defeated the Knickerbockers, 23 to 1, in four innings. Immediately afterward they disbanded and their individual exploits thereafter are unknown. The unexpected defeat suffered by the Knickerbockers somewhat depressed the athletes, and there was no further interclub baseball by the Knickerbockers until 1851. But through the years between 1846 and 1851 they chose sides and played among themselves. Those were regarded as practice games, each practice presumably developing the Knickerbocker regular in experience.

For a practice game of baseball in 1849, the regular team of Knickerbockers appeared in what was the first baseball uniform. Since the equipment was almost identical with the cricket uniforms that were used elsewhere, there exists belief that those baseball uniforms simply were those which the Knickerbockers had used in cricket matches. The color scheme was blue and white.

On March 1, 1850, Cartwright, a member of the discovery of gold in California, left New York to join the rush to the Pacific Slope. He traveled overland by way of Independence, Mo., and arrived in California in July, 1849, having with him the baseball used in the first game of 1846.

Cartwright soon decided he wished no further part in the gold stampede and in August determined to return to New York. He took passage on the Peruvian bark "Pacifico," which was going back by way of China.

Cartwright became ill between San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands, as Hawaii then was known, and was put ashore at Honolulu, Aug. 28, 1849. After recovering, he determined to make his home in Honolulu. In 1851 his family arrived—a wife and 5 children.

Cartwright died in Honolulu, July 13, 1892. He left a diary dealing with his transcontinental trip, and among the interesting items was this:

"1849-April 25—Monday—Independence, Mo.:—During the past week we have passed the time in fixing wagon-covers, stowing property, etc., varied by hunting and fishing and playing baseball. It is comical to see the mountain men and Indians playing the new game. I have the ball with me that we used back home (New York). Our party consists of 52 wagons and 119 men."

In 1988—when there was so much tumult and shouting by Landis and his group over the cen-

Cartwright's layout was 25' by 30' ideas

No. 3—Diagram made by Alexander Cartwright of New York City late in 1845 and introduced for practice sessions in spring of 1846 by Knickerbocker Baseball Club, New York, of which Cartwright was a member. Players voted in favor of it, and playing field for first game between organized club was marked off according to this diagram, with the pitching distance 45 feet. The game was played June 19, 1846, in Hoboken, N.J., and the New York Nine defeated the Knickerbockers, 23 to 1, in four innings. Since then the only changes in arrangement by Cartwright are that shortstop now plays back of the baseline, catcher plays closer to the plate, positions of umpire and scorer have shifted, and plate has been moved back into the corner of the triangle.

Exhibit 9. Four examples of the dozens of baseball-related pages from publications onto which Al Stump forged comments attributed to Ty Cobb and Ty Cobb's autograph. These four were again offered at auction in May 2009 but withdrawn when experts notified the auction service that they were forgeries.

1980s when Al Stump was actively trying to sell Cobb memorabilia, worked with Mike Gutierrez on selling the Cobb items that Stump supplied. Many of the items were sold to Barry Halper, one of Evans' best customers. After seeing multiple batches of purported Cobb items arrive from Stump via Gutierrez, and becoming ever more suspicious with each batch, Evans notified Gutierrez that, in his judgment, the items were all fakes—not just the now-infamous Stump letters on Cobb stationery, but many other personal items that had supposedly been owned by Ty Cobb. In a recent interview, Evans stated: “The Cobb stuff that was coming to me through Gutierrez all looked like it had been made yesterday. It seemed that Stump was buying this old stuff from flea markets, and then adding engravings and other personalizations to give the appearance of authenticity.” Young Evans was so distressed by the fake Stump material that Gutierrez continued to sell that he first told Barry Halper of his suspicions and then contacted the FBI in an attempt to get an official investigation of Al Stump started. Finally, he tracked down Al Stump and phoned him at home to tell him: “I know what you are doing, forging all this memorabilia. I’ve contacted the FBI. You had better stop!” Evans also related in a recent interview: “To this day, I’ve never seen any piece of Cobb memorabilia from Al Stump that could be definitely said to be authentic. And I have seen a lot of things over the years.” In closing the interview, Evans added: “It was not just Ty Cobb signatures that Al Stump forged. He did a Jim Thorpe signature that I identified as fake. Stump developed a ‘style’ in his illegal forgeries that I came to recognize, always accompanying them with fantastic content that he knew would increase the value to collectors.”⁶⁷

AL STUMP’S FORGED TY COBB DIARIES

The most recent and perhaps most embarrassing episode in the Stump forged memorabilia saga first came to light, as did the fake Cobb shotgun, via the Barry Halper collection. Among the 180 Halper items purchased in 1998 by MLB and donated to the Hall of Fame Museum was a 1946 diary of Ty Cobb’s (see exhibit 10). This diary was an important addition to the Cooperstown collection, which was accompanied by other truly significant relics such as Shoeless Joe Jackson’s 1919 White Sox jersey and the contract that sent Babe Ruth from the Red Sox to the Yankees.

The Cobb diary was a prized acquisition, covering the entire month of January 1946 and containing daily handwritten entries in Cobb’s famous green ink. The museum made a realistic looking copy of the diary

to assure that the valuable original would not be damaged while displayed from 1999 through 2001 in the “Halper Memories of a Lifetime” exhibit in the Barry Halper Gallery. Visitors to this exhibit could view the original Cobb diary, wall-mounted in a clear protective case, and then peruse this realistic-looking copy, turning page by page with their own fingers, reading and relishing each daily entry of very personal notes and comments that Cobb had made to himself. The entries were tantalizing to museum visitors and to writers and historians as well, providing new insights into this complicated icon of the game. The diary, never before seen by the public, included musings Cobb made to himself like “drinking too much” and “I stayed sober” and many other secret tidbits that Cobb wrote as comments or criticisms about other players. These entries had obviously been written with no inkling that they would ever be seen by the any but Cobb’s own eyes. Or, so it appeared.

In December 2008, Ron Keurajian, the Ty Cobb autograph expert, examined the HOF Cobb diary and compared its entries to known genuine examples of Ty Cobb’s handwriting. He concluded that the diary entries were definitely not written by Ty Cobb. Keurajian notified the HOF Museum of his opinion, and officials there ultimately told him that the diary would be submitted to the FBI for further investigation.⁶⁸

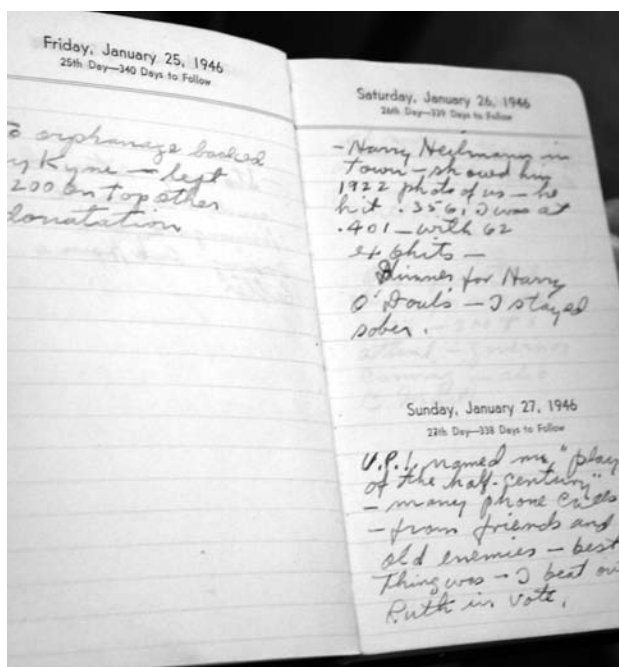
Concerns about the diary’s authenticity were closely guarded while the FBI investigation was underway in early 2009. The actual date that the FBI delivered their final report to the HOF was not released, nor was the FBI report itself. However, by July 5, 2009, Ernie Harwell, the veteran Detroit sportscaster, was onto the story and went public with it in a *Detroit Free Press* article titled: “Questions Remain about the Fake Cobb Diary.”⁶⁹ Harwell quoted Ron Keurajian’s opinion: “The quality of the forgery is rudimentary, at best. It is far from being well-executed, as the hand evidences unsteady lines and the handwriting seems almost child-like. The entries appear contrived. For example, there is one about Joe DiMaggio which states ‘he can’t putt for big money’ and another entry states ‘also drinking too much.’ Anybody who has ever read Cobb’s writings knows that he would not write in such a fashion. Cobb was well-versed in the art of the written word and would never write crude comments such as these.” Harwell closed his article with the remaining questions he alluded to in the title: “Who was the forger? How did he con Halper into buying the diary? Did Halper have it authenticated? If so, by whom? Do any other copies of the fraudulent diary exist?”

Evidently, Ernie Harwell was not aware of a 1995 *Sports Illustrated* article by Franz Lidz titled “The Sultan of Swap,” which provided an in-depth look at Barry Halper and his extensive memorabilia collection.⁷⁰ Along with details about many of Halper’s relics, this article describes in text and photographs many of the items of “Cobbabilia” that Halper had collected. Lidz had access to the entire Halper collection, and had grouped many Cobb items to be photographed for his article, including a game-worn Detroit jersey, Cobb’s dentures and the infamous Cobb shotgun. Lidz wrote: “Halper has the Georgia Peach’s straightedge razor, shaving cup, shaving strop, bathrobe, diaries, dentures, fishing hat, corncob pipe, pocket flask and even the shotgun Cobb’s mother used to blow away his father. *Halper wheedled all this out of Al Stump*” (emphasis added).

The first and second questions posed by Ernie Harwell seem to have been answered by Lidz in 1995. Al Stump was the forger of the HOF diary, just as he was for the large number of letters on Ty Cobb letterhead and the many autographed and annotated baseball publication pages and photographs so well known among collectors and authenticators. And, it was Halper who “wheedled,” i.e. persuaded and cajoled, Stump out of the forgery. To confirm beyond any doubt that Al Stump was the forger of the 1946 HOF diary, autograph expert Ron Keurajian recently made a detailed comparison of its entries to the Stump annotations on the baseball publication pages shown in Exhibit 9 and concluded that they were “all the same hand.”⁷¹

As to the last question Harwell poses: Yes, there are other forged Cobb diaries, as is clearly implied in Lidz’s use of the plural “diaries” in his 1995 article. The Elliott Museum in Stuart Florida has in their collection a Ty Cobb diary covering a full month of 1942. When asked to compare their diary with the HOF diary, Janel Hendrix, the curator there, replied that the HOF diary “. . . looks to be the same as ours. Although ours is a 1942 diary, it is the same type of diary and the writing samples appear to be very similar.” Hendrix added that she had been contacted by the HOF about the disproved authenticity of the diary in the HOF collection and, on that basis, had removed 1942 diary from the Elliott Museum display.⁷²

With this episode now in the public light, it is evident that the Ty Cobb fantasies and forgeries created by Al Stump have infected the very heart of baseball myth and history—the hallowed Hall of Fame at Cooperstown. The legitimacy of the Stump-forged items had seemed reasonable enough when they first began to appear in the 1980s, based on Stump’s well-known



FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

Exhibit 10. Ty Cobb’s 1946 diary purchased by Major League Baseball from Barry Halper and donated to the Baseball Hall of Fame Museum in 1998. This diary was exhibited from 1999 through 2001 in the Barry Halper Gallery at the Hall of Fame. An FBI investigation in 2009 determined that the diary was a forgery. A recent comparison of the writings in this diary to the writings of Al Stump on the baseball publication pages shown in exhibit 9 lead autograph expert Ronand B. Keurajian to conclude that Al Stump was the forger who created this diary.

collaboration with Cobb on the 1961 autobiography. Stump had a believable reason to possess writings by Ty Cobb and other pieces of Cobb memorabilia. The apparent legitimacy of many of these items was further enhanced by the inclusion of the Stump fakes in the famous and highly publicized Barry Halper collection and by their prominent display in the prestigious Hall of Fame Museum. Nevertheless, we now know that Al Stump forged the Ty Cobb diaries, letters, and other autographed items that made up his memorabilia “collection.”

WHAT OTHER WRITERS KNOW

Furman Bisher, sports editor and writer for the *Atlanta Constitution* for 59 years, knew Ty Cobb well. He wrote several articles on Cobb and spent three full days with him in 1958 when he was writing the *Post* article about Ty moving back to Georgia and building his final retirement home. Furman knew Al Stump from his writings and as a result has a very low opinion of him. In my recent interview with Furman, he stated strongly that “the *True Magazine* article was a disgrace” and that “Al Stump took advantage of a dying man.” When asked about the provocative stories that Stump wrote about Cobb, he went further: I would

not believe a thing he said.” Furman Bisher felt so strongly about the injustice done to Ty Cobb by Al Stump that he took more than an hour away from the time he had devoted to writing the last column of his 59-year career with the *Constitution* to be interviewed on Cobb and Stump.

Historian Charles Alexander, in his more recent writings, took direct aim at Stump’s credibility, asserting that Stump had not actually spent the amount of time with Cobb that he had claimed, describing the Stump interaction with Cobb instead as a “14-month intermittent collaboration.”⁷³ Alexander also charged that much of Stump’s writings on Cobb had borrowed heavily, and without attribution, from the 1975 John McCallum biography. Alexander later said that the 1961 *True Magazine* article “read like a gothic horror story.” Alexander also wrote recently that he had been the first author to “pin down the particular circumstances of William Herschel Cobb’s death from gunshots fired by his wife, Amanda Chitwood Cobb, and her trial and acquittal the following spring.”⁷⁴ Charles Alexander did indeed “pin down” details on the shooting of W. H. Cobb, but unfortunately his source of information was both second hand and faulty. He was incorrect in the retelling of the now disproved shotgun story and, as a result, was incorrect in writing his own somewhat gory description of the crime scene.

OTHER STUMP STORIES IN THE TY COBB MYTH

This investigation dispels perhaps the most distasteful element of the Ty Cobb myth with definitive proof. A pistol, not a shotgun, was used in the shooting of W. H. Cobb, and therefore there was no crime scene in which W. H. Cobb’s head was practically blown off at the neck, nor did his abdomen pour forth its contents onto the porch roof of the Cobb home in Royston. Two pistol shots were all that were fired, and even at close range, these could not produce the grotesque scene that myth would have us believe.

Another of the more outrageous stories written by Stump was the “Cobb killed a man” story, which also first appeared in Stump’s 1961 *True Magazine* article and then was enhanced in his 1994 Cobb biography. In Detroit, on August 12, 1912, Ty Cobb and his wife were attacked by three robbers, whom Cobb managed to fight off, sustaining only a knife wound to his back. Ty then traveled by train to Syracuse and played in a game the following day. This attack was reported widely in the press in the days following the incident. Al Stump, who misdates the attack to June 3, 1912, has Ty confessing to having killed one of his three attackers. After Ty’s pistol wouldn’t fire, he supposedly

told Stump that he had killed one attacker by using the gunsight of his pistol to “rip and slash and tear him . . . until he had no face left.” To the 1994 Cobb biography Stump adds this substantiation of the story: “A few days later a press report told of an unidentified body found off Trumbull in an alley.” That a death occurred in this incident was conclusively disproved in the 1996 *National Pastime* article “Ty Cobb Did Not Commit Murder.”⁷⁵ SABR member Doug Roberts, a criminal lawyer, former prosecutor, and forensics specialist, performed an exhaustive study of the Detroit autopsy records for the time period around the 1912 attack and found not a single piece of evidence that a death such as Stump described had actually occurred. Further, Roberts found no Detroit newspaper article describing such a death or the discovery of an unidentified body, as Stump had asserted. Doug Roberts concluded that no murder occurred at the hands of Ty Cobb.

Practically all of Stump’s sensationalized story of the last ten months of Ty Cobb’s life is outrageously false. Stump would have us believe that these months were the alcohol-and-drug-crazed nightmare of a raging lunatic with whom Stump lived in a state of constant fear. Actually, Stump spent only a few days on and off with Ty Cobb, collectively no more than a few weeks during the 11 months between June 1960 and May 1961—three months before Cobb’s death.⁷⁶ Cobb’s constant companion for the last two months of his life told a much different story in a 1982 *Sports Illustrated* interview.⁷⁷ Dr. Rex Teeslink of Augusta, Georgia, then a medical student on summer break, was hired in May 1961 by Cobb as his full-time nurse. Teeslink describes a much different Ty Cobb from the demon Stump created. Concerned that he was becoming addicted to the strong painkillers he was taking for terminal cancer and end-stage diabetes, Ty Cobb proposed and withstood a 36-hour test during which he took no medication at all for pain—hardly the behavior of the addict of Stump’s fantasy. When Teeslink drove Ty to the Cobb family mausoleum in Royston, he was somber—but Ty was whimsical and upbeat. Cobb suggested that they should have a signal so Cobb would recognize Rex when he visited the tomb after his death, so they “could sit down and talk the way we do now.”⁷⁸ Throughout this experience, Teeslink saw none of the rage and unbalance that Stump described. He came to know and genuinely respect Ty Cobb. “He was a master of psychology,” Teeslink said. “Grantland Rice wrote about it. No one ever had done the things he did, thought the way he did. He was amazing. You always had the feeling he knew what you were going to say

before you said it. He'd always be looking around the room, sizing up people. If he was playing cards, he'd know what all six people were holding. He always was thinking, but he never wanted people to know what was going on in his mind. He always wanted the edge." Reflecting on Al Stump's *True Magazine* portrayal of Cobb, Teeslink added: "I'm talking now because I want to set the record straight. . . . The things that have been written, the way he has been portrayed. . . . None of them are true."⁷⁹

Other medical professionals who cared for Cobb in his last days also failed to observe the antics that Stump fictitiously portrayed in *True Magazine*. Jean Bergdale Eilers was a young nurse when she cared for Ty Cobb for a night in May 1961, filling in for his regular private-duty nurse, who was ill. Describing her experience with Cobb, which occurred barely two months before his death, she recently wrote: "Mr. Cobb was up most of the night. He sat in a chair and dictated letters to me. He required a lot of pain medicine and I remember giving him frequent back rubs. . . . He was pleasant and never caused me any problems. I took a baseball with me that night, and he gladly signed it for my 13-year-old brother. . . . When Mr. Cobb was re-admitted in June for his final days . . . I left another ball with him and after about three days I was told he had signed it. That was only about 3 weeks before he died."⁸⁰

So what other outrageous Stump stories about Cobb are either completely false or overblown and exaggerated? That Cobb's close friendship with Ted Williams ended completely after an argument over which players should be on the all-time All-Star team—refuted by Williams himself, who said Stump invented the story and bluntly generalized about Stump: "He's full of it."⁸¹ That Cobb refused to sign autographs for fans and was unfriendly to kids—refuted by Jean Eilers affidavit described above and further disproved by the hundreds of genuine Cobb-signed baseballs, postcards, photos, and other items, many personalized to children, which survive and now sell for thousands of dollars each in the memorabilia market. That he carried a loaded Luger with him to his last hospital stay in the same brown bag that contained a stack of negotiable securities—refuted by Jimmy Lanier, Cobb's personal batboy in 1925 and 1926, who with his son, Jim, visited Cobb in his last days at Emory Hospital, listened as Cobb showed and described the Coca-Cola stock and other securities in the brown bag, and saw no evidence of a gun, either in the bag or elsewhere in the room.⁸² That Ty Cobb's funeral was shunned by all but a few baseball players

and dignitaries—refuted by *The Sporting News*, which reported shortly after Ty's death that the family had notified Cobb's friends and baseball dignitaries that the funeral service, held only 48 hours after Cobb passed, was going to be private and asked them not to attend.⁸³

A more appropriate question would surely be: What Stump stories about Ty Cobb are *not* either outright fantasy or gross exaggerations based loosely on questionable fact?

Ron Shelton, who directed the movie *Cobb* based on Al Stump's writings, called Stump a "supreme storyteller" in the eulogy he delivered at the memorial service after Stump's death.⁸⁴ It is a longstanding Southern tradition to call someone a "storyteller" as a polite way of calling him a liar. Although Shelton surely missed this regional nuance, it nevertheless seems an appropriate moniker for Al Stump. There is no doubt that Al Stump is a proven liar, proven forger, likely thief, and certainly a provocateur who created fabricated and sensationalized stories of the *True Magazine* ilk. Can there be any doubt that scholars and historians should adopt the same approach to Al Stump-written material that the memorabilia experts have adopted toward Stump's forged memorabilia: dismissing out of hand as untrue any Ty Cobb story that is sourced to Al Stump?

CONCLUSION

Ty Cobb created more than the normal amount of controversy during his lifetime, and he lived to suffer the negative effects of his actions on his reputation. Until his death in 1961, Ty was genuinely concerned with his baseball legacy, often expressing concern about being remembered for spikings, fighting, and aggressive play. Even more controversy, beyond that related to Cobb's playing style, has arisen since his death, practically all of it deriving from the sensationalized and fictional writings of Al Stump. These are the writings that are responsible for many, if not most, of the more outrageous—and mostly untrue—elements of the Cobb myth.

I urge each SABR member, and indeed any baseball fan or historian who seeks to know and support the unexaggerated truth, to reexamine his own beliefs about Ty Cobb in light of the results of this investigation. For the others whose inquiring minds insist on believing untruths and exaggerations or who thrive on the excitement and provocation of the *True Magazine* style of history, there will likely never be a proof or revelation that will dispel their beliefs. Sadly, many widely read contemporary sports bloggers, writers, and commentators fall into this latter category, much to the continuing detriment of Ty Cobb's memory. ■

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