

SLUGGER FROM SNOHOMISH

BY BILL FAY

ON AN early September afternoon in 1940, Charley Bannsworth, the mayor of Snohomish, Washington, stopped Laverne Gilkey in front of Bill Schott's meat market. Gilkey was the Snohomish High football coach.

"You shouldn't let that Torgeson youngster play fullback," the mayor objected. "Earl's going to be a big-league baseball player someday—if you don't break his leg."

Gilkey didn't take the hint. Torgeson started the opening game and scored two touchdowns. Several days later, Gilkey was summoned to the office of Pete McCurdy, president of the school board.

"It's this way"—McCurdy waved a piece of paper—"the mayor and a lot of important people have signed this petition. They want you to drop Torgeson from the team. Guess you'd better look for a new fullback—or a new job."

Gilkey bowed to political pressure. Snohomish (pop. 2,794) lost a fullback, but the Boston Braves eventually gained a first baseman. Torgeson batted .281 and slugged 16 home runs last season. Boston baseball writers—ignoring another freshman named Jackie Robinson—voted Torgeson "Rookie of the Year."

"Maybe Robinson's percentages were higher," Bostonians argued, "but

Torgy kept the Braves relaxed and rolling. Maybe he clowns a lot but his tricks win games—even if they don't show up in the box score."

Example: Nick Strincevich of Pittsburgh fired three successive fast balls very close to Torgeson's chin during a night game. Torgeson survived by hitting the dirt—quick. After arising from ball four, he removed his glasses and strode toward Strincevich—bat in hand. Pirate fielders rushed in to protect Strincevich. Boston reserves spilled off the bench to reinforce Task Force Torgeson.

But nothing happened. Torgy merely waved his bat under Strincevich's nose like an admonishing finger. "Nicky," Earl observed, more in sorrow than in anger, "you've been a very naughty boy."

The gentle rebuke shook Strincevich worse than a home run. The Braves batted Naughty Nicky out of there in a hurry and won the game.

Whether Torgeson will remain his jovial self, now that terrible-tempered Eddie Stanky, late of Brooklyn, has moved into the Boston infield at second base, is a red-hot question.

The Braves are betting 8 to 5 that Torgy will be a good influence on Stanky. Eddie always was a pleasant fellow—off the field—and many of his Durocherisms were exaggerated by the press.

● Steve Greene, the side-horse specialist on Penn State's national intercollegiate champion gymnastic team, wears suspenders to hold up his white-flannel gym trousers. Greene can't wear a belt because he hasn't any hips—"at least, not enough to influence a belt," is the way Steve puts it.

Polio knocked Steve off his feet when he was nineteen months old. He rode into Germantown, Pennsylvania, High School in a wheel chair. He didn't want to attend gym class but Leopold Zwarg, a gruff teacher who trained the Prussian Elite Guard before World War I, insisted.

"On the side horse you will mount," Zwarg ordered. Friends boosted Steve onto a long leather cylinder which bore absolutely no resemblance to an equine mid-section. Two pommels—iron hand grips shaped like croquet wickets—projected where the saddle should have been. Steve grabbed them to keep from falling off.

That was nine years ago. Steve uses the pommels for an entirely different purpose now. He grips them—flips upward—holds steady with rigidly extended legs parallel to the ground. The maneuver demands tremendous arm and shoulder strength—plus precise timing and co-ordination. Steve has both. He remains unbeaten in four years of intercollegiate competition.

"I weigh a big fat 113 pounds now," Steve brags, "and about 70 of those pounds must be in my arms and shoulders. My legs are pipe cleaners, but I can walk on them since I took up gym work."

Steve takes two hours of daily practice on the pommels, sandwiched around a tough electrical engineering major. He rides real horses at home in Chestnut Hills, but claims padded gymnastic steeds are more dangerous. His nose has been broken three times in gym falls.

"It's fun, though," Steve says. "People wonder why we get any thrill out of tying ourselves in knots on parallel bars and side horses. They wonder where the competition comes in. Well, we're rated on form, but there's a lot more to it. For one thing, we fight an opponent who never relaxes or lets up for a second—gravity."

"A halfback can stumble and still run for first down, but if a gymnast loses balance for a split second, he's through. Another thing, it's the fairest sport in the world. There aren't any breaks. Footballs take funny bounces now and then, but nobody ever repealed the law that governs falling bodies."

● It happened during the war. The Pittsburgh Pirates reached Boston too late for batting practice. Johnny Barrett was still buttoning his shirt when he ran up to the plate to lead off against the Braves' Al Javery.

Barrett doubled. Jim Russell tripled. Elbie Fletcher tripled. Bob Elliott doubled. Frankie Gustine hit a home run. Five pitches. Five hits. Five runs. And no batting practice!

The same thing takes place many times every season under less spectacular circumstances. Showers or wet grounds curtail pregame drills, but the players go on a batting spree. Con-

versely, teams slam the ball all over the park in batting practice, then are shut out in the game. No wonder fans ask, "What good does it do a batter to slug those soft straight pitches in practice? He has to hit fast balls and curves when the game starts."

Eddie Lopat, ace left-hander of the New York Yankees and a hard hitter, clears up the batting-practice mystery thus: "You smooth out your swing against those soft pitches in batting practice. You co-ordinate eye, bat and ball—and gain some confidence, too. Once you get that co-ordination, you should be able to follow the break of curve balls in the game. But if you went out there cold and flailed away at curves in practice, you might never get that co-ordination in your swing—and you'd be worse off when you ran up against curves in the game."

Getting back to that five-run barrage against Javery, Manager Casey Stengel called time when Gustine's wallop sailed over the left-field wall. He ran up to Phil Masi, the Braves' catcher, and asked, "What's wrong? Doesn't Javery have his stuff today?"

"How would I know?" Masi snapped. "I haven't even seen the ball yet."

● Manuel Ortiz was boxing as an amateur around Los Angeles and working on truck farms for \$1 a day in 1937—when Joe Louis was well on the way to his first million. Ortiz whipped Lou Salica for the bantam-weight title in 1942—when Louis' ring earnings soared over the \$3,000,000 mark.

Harold Dade outpointed Ortiz in January, 1947, but Manuel regained the crown two months later. Then he flew to Honolulu and beat Kui Kong Young for a \$57,000 purse. Next stop: Manila. Manuel knocked over Del Rosario for another \$30,000.

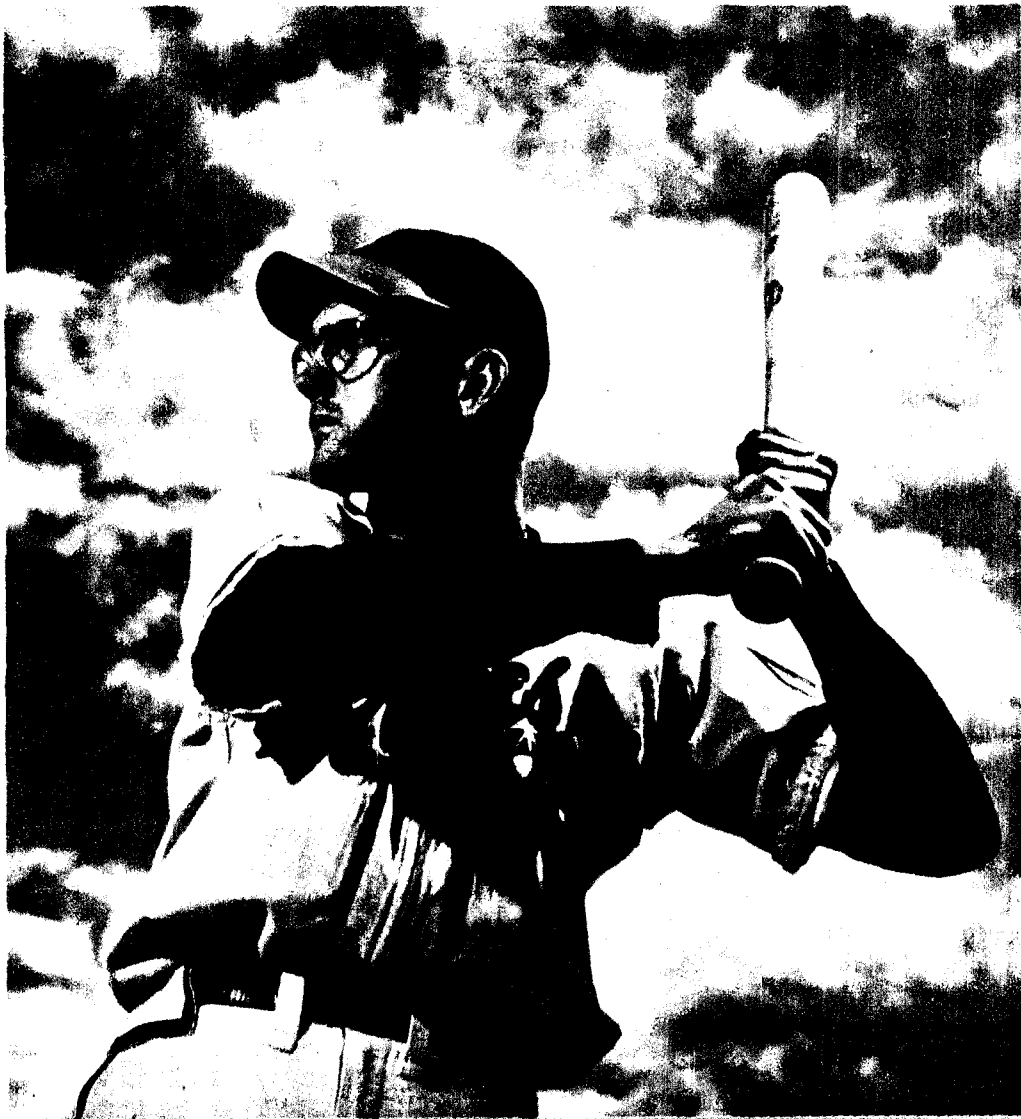
All the while, Manuel was plowing the returns from 100 small-purse fights into his truck farm near El Centro. He bought a large billiard parlor and lunchroom in El Centro last January—when Louis' total earnings passed \$4,000,000.

Ortiz revealed recently that he might retire in a few months. The announcement coincided with a story from London which said that Joe Louis (fortune depleted and eager to make income-tax money) was being paid off with 2,600 pairs of ice skates for two exhibitions in Sweden.

Ortiz has no income-tax troubles, two thriving businesses, three thriving children, a flattened left ear and a bulging bank roll estimated at \$250,000. Moral: If you save your money, live down on the farm and stay away from the New York fight leeches, you'll never end up boxing for ice skates.

● Sounds from the fairway: "Now you take that Snead—there's a man with a head on his shoulders—or wait a minute—is that a head?"

● Washington observers have a simple explanation for Governor James Folsom of Alabama. The governor is following in Happy Chandler's political footsteps and hopes to be commissioner of baseball someday. ★★



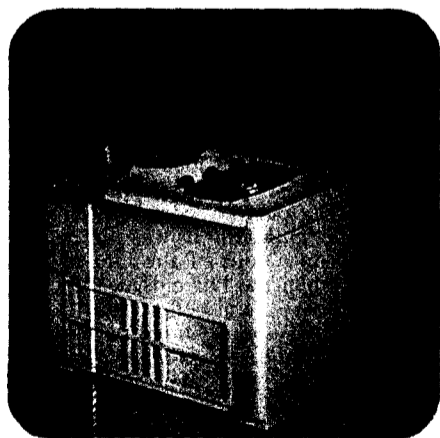
Hard-hitting Earl Torgeson of the Braves was named Rookie of the Year by Boston's baseball writers. He batted .281 and slugged 16 homers in 1947

PHOTOGRAPH FOR COLLIER'S BY HY PESKIN



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with the COBRA TONE ARM!



Above, main illustration—Zenith "Beacon Hill" Chairside in richly grained mahogany, 18th Century design. Electro-Glide; Cobra Tone Arm; Silent-Speed INTERMIX Record Changer; AM; Zenith-Armstrong FM on both bands; international Short Wave; Radiorgan Tone Control; built-in Wavemagnet and FM antenna; Super-size Concert Grand Speaker, \$430.* In smaller illustration above, the "BEVERLY HILLS" CHAIRSIDE. Identical with the "Beacon Hill" except for the cabinet, which is blond "bisque" mahogany in elegant contemporary design. \$430.*



At left—Zenith "Mayfair" Chairside in choice mahogany, period design. Electro-Glide; Cobra Tone Arm; Silent-Speed INTERMIX Record Changer; AM; Zenith-Armstrong FM on both bands; Radiorgan Tone Control; built-in Wavemagnet and FM antenna; 10-inch Concert Grand Speaker; \$325.*

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*Hair looks better...
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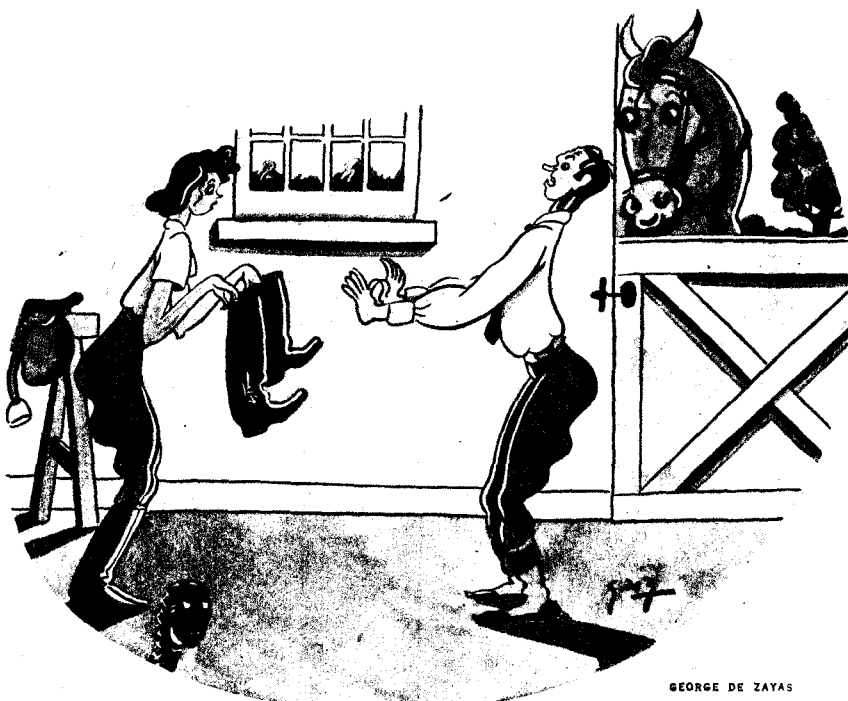


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GEORGE DE ZAYAS

KEEP UP WITH THE WORLD

BY FRELING FOSTER

One of the oldest fallacies in the United States is the belief that the fangs of a snake left imbedded in a leather boot contain sufficient venom to poison and kill everyone who wears it afterward. Actually, venom is ejected the instant the fangs strike their target, and any amount remaining in them would be too small to be dangerous and it would, moreover, shortly lose its potency through bacterial action.

One of America's greatest robberies was the holdup of an armored truck that had stopped at the Rubel Ice Plant in Brooklyn, at noon on August 21, 1934. Within three minutes, the seven robbers took 24 bags of currency and escaped in two cars which they abandoned at a near-by point on Gravesend Bay to board two waiting powerboats manned by three confederates. No shot was fired by the gang during the holdup; the loot totaled \$427,950 in small bills, the largest amount of cash ever taken by gunmen in this country, and not a dollar of it was recovered. By the time sufficient evidence had been secured, four years later, to indict these criminals, one had completely disappeared, three had died and four were serving long sentences for other felonies. Thus, only two of the ten men were tried and convicted for this crime.

Since 1931, scientists have constructed, sealed and buried eight "time vaults," filled with documents and devices of the 20th century, for the enlightenment of civilizations that may exist thousands of years from now. One vault is in Japan, one is in Siberia, three are in England and three in the United States—New York City, Atlanta, Georgia, and Tucson, Arizona.

During recent years, businesses in this country have suffered such huge losses through the theft of tools and materials by their employees that today the fidelity insurance carried by firms covers 20,000,000 workers, or one third of our total labor force.

After the lottery was introduced in this country in 1612, it became and remained, for nearly three centuries, a major method of raising funds for churches, colleges and the building of public works, and for other purposes such as the reimbursement of individuals for damages caused by fires. At the peak of their popularity around 1830, when at least 1,000 lotteries were being held annually, a movement against them started their decline and eventually brought about their abolishment by a federal law in 1895.

Pelicans lose their vocal powers upon reaching maturity; praying mantes are the only insects that can turn their heads from side to side; and the only animals known to carry food on journeys are certain species of pygmy bats which curl their tails into pouches, fill them with insects and feed while in flight.—By Reginald Rowland, Jr., New York City.

Probably no bell had a stranger history than the reproduction of our Liberty Bell, made for the Daughters of the American Revolution and exhibited at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. As it contained the metal of 250,000 pennies contributed by patriotic children, it was to be taken later on a tour of the United States. But when the fair closed, the famous six-foot, 6.5-ton bell mysteriously disappeared and no trace of it has ever been found.—By Frank MacCarthy, Springfield, Massachusetts.

While ordinary photographic lenses cover an angle of 50° and the best wide-angle lenses cover no more than 140°, an "extreme wide-angle" lens, developed recently in Germany, has a range of 210° and, therefore, takes in objects on each side and slightly behind the camera.

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