

Gregory, the manager, screamed interference. Then Malloy fell on Jim Hawkes, pounding Hawkes's face with his fists. Suddenly, everybody was fighting

CLASS D VIOLENCE

By CHARLES EINSTEIN

Old Amos Gregory had worked hard with Jim to get him ready for the majors.

Now the kid was about to blow his chance, and Gregory was powerless to stop him

THERE were no outstanding landmarks in the town of Weilton, not as such—not unless you knew where to look. There certainly were no imposing buildings, and as for the older structures in town, they had only a secondary historical value. Other nearby communities, such as Hobarth, with its covered bridge, and West Calmus, with the Gordon house that dated back to 1771, served scholars better, and tourists too. In fact, if you had heard of Weilton at all, it was because you knew, for some reason or other, that Weilton had a team in the Class D Valley League; and, around the nation, few were the baseball fans who knew even that.

But the local ball club was a thing of importance to the people who lived in Weilton, and Sunday Field, where the games were played, was one of the landmarks of the town. Weilton itself was a small oasis in a desert where other minor-league franchises, beset by rising prices and sagging crowds, by

television and by cutbacks on the part of parent major-league clubs, shifted and vanished like nomads. The make-up of the Valley League had changed times over since the war. Old teams had gone, new teams had come; one year the league played with seven clubs, another with five; last year two teams had dropped out in midseason.

But the Weilton team, nicknamed the Wildcats, remained. Old Amos Gregory, the manager, had forgotten more baseball than a generation of players, whose names he had forgotten too, ever knew. One time he had been a catcher in the big league, and till he was forty-two years of age he had caught in the fast minors. The memories remained. Most of the names he had forgotten, but not all. He remembered the time he left home plate unguarded to field the bunt that died toward third, then sprawl-turned his body, the dirt caking up into his mouth and eyes in the August heat, to tag

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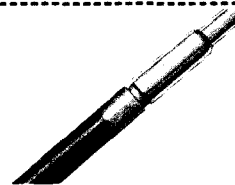
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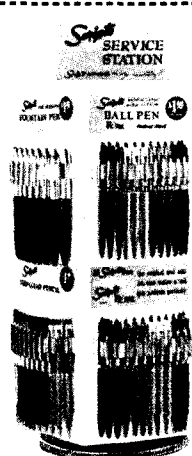
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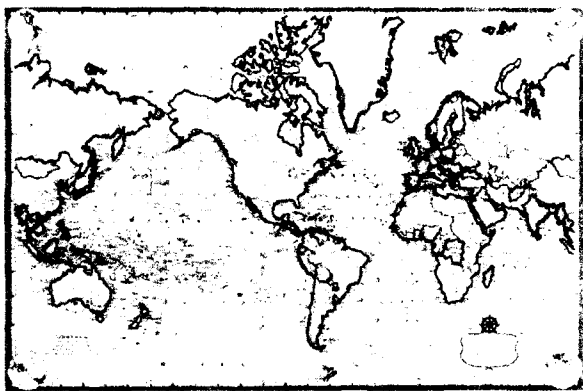
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the dusty figure of a man sliding home, a man named Cobb. It was in the record book as a put-out, nothing more and, for that matter, nothing less—the record book of thirty-two years ago. But Amos Gregory remembered what it had been like; and he believed, secretly but surely, that Ty Cobb remembered it too.

Each year the rumors sifted about—something was going to happen to the league, or the team, or the players or even the New York Ravens, the major-league club with which the Weilton franchise had a working agreement. But even the rumors respected Amos Gregory: he was there as manager, and there to stay. The playing talent he had to work with was divided into the three groups common to Class D baseball—the very young, the very old and the very bad. In his pervading wisdom, old Amos Gregory knew how to handle them: he kept fielding practice to a minimum and inevitably let them hit the 3-and-1 pitch.

The players and the townspeople understood old Gregory, even if Peter Cowle did not. To be sure, Peter Cowle did not understand many people. He figured he did not have to. At college, where he had taken a course in publicity and promotion, he acquired the general idea that people, taken individually, were valuable chiefly as statistics. Cowle was the nephew of the general

manager of the New York Ravens, and, as is done quite normally in baseball, the Ravens had farmed him out to one of their minor-league teams—not as a player, but as a front-office man. The Cowle family bore a tradition in the business end of baseball, and Peter Cowle was determined to carry the tradition onward. Nobody thought too much of the idea, but tradition was tradition. So young Cowle was assigned, in the most distant downward direction possible, to Weilton—as vice-president, which meant nothing. Possibly they figured it would kill him off.

COWLE arrived in Weilton in February. By late March the town found itself wondering bemusedly what mistake he was going to make next. He had already scheduled a bathing-beauty parade as a crowd lure to precede a June double-header at Sunday Field, only to discover that no local beauties wished to parade.

Then Cowle took a run at Bess Lucas, the minister's daughter, who was going steady with Jim Hawkes, the Wildcats' locally bred second baseman. Bess told Cowle she could not join him for cocktails and a moonlit drive, and Peter Cowle, a little angered, explained what he thought of young men like Jim Hawkes, who played Class D baseball in this day and age.

Finally, Cowle suggested that the



Lumberman (l.) brands logs with his hammer. At right, typical brands. Below, a towboat guides log raft through Puget Sound.



Branding logs like cattle

■ In the fine, fat fir log resting on his Puget Sound beach, a normally law-abiding citizen saw a lot of winter firewood. He cautiously pulled out his chain saw; steel teeth began raking through fir. It was an odd first cut, only six inches from the end. The sawyer didn't own a miniature fireplace; he was just amputating the brand marks pounded into both ends of the maverick log.

Although he was standing on his own property, he looked worried when the towboat chugged into sight a few minutes later. He hastily hid his tools and scowled at the crewman who jumped ashore to loop a cable around the log. "You're trespassing," the beach owner said, without conviction. "Yeah?" the crewman answered, nudging the sawed-off butt with his boot. "You could land in the poky for that, bud. Okay!" he called. "Take her away!" As the towboat and its two-ton charge moved out of sight, the citizen stood brooding—about who owns a beach to what point, about the rules of salvage and trespass, and about the Washington State log-branding laws.

Other Puget Sound shore dwellers have pondered the same subjects for years—since the first branding and salvage laws were passed. Brands, applied with a two-pound hammer which has a raised design on the strik-