2. Lori Craig (Prof. Rebecca Edwards) History

Lori Craig's work, "Historical Professional Deaf Players in the Major Leagues of Baseball," was submitted for credit in one class "Deaf History," but really grows out of two classes we shared together, "Deaf History" and the "History of Baseball." She brings the best of both classes together in her research on early twentieth century Deaf ballplayers, most notably William Hoy and Luther Taylor.

It is easy to see how work in both classes informed her research. She knows how to assess their on-field performance, yes, but she also shows us why we should still remember and honor today men whose playing careers ended before 1910.

She explains that the fact that the two men signed in a time when sign language was discouraged and even attacked in American culture makes the careers of these players significant. Due to her time as student in "Deaf History," she understands the need to emphasize that their lack of speech and their preference for sign was a culturally significant event in the world of baseball in the turn of the century. The fact that these men brought sign language with them to their respective teams was pathbreaking in the oralist years of the early twentieth century and Lori explains why so effectively in her work. She knows to pay equal attention to their Deafness and their baseball skills, again bringing two classes together in one research paper.

It was an honor and a pleasure to have her in a variety of classes this entire academic year.

Historical Professional Deaf Players

in the Major Leagues of Baseball

by

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Deaf History

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Sounds ripple through a stadium on a clear summer day. The shuffle of feet in the dirt, the creaks and squeaks of old bleacher seats, and the grunt of the umpire after each throw mark the progress of the game. For some players, this is all unnecessary. Welcome to the world of the deaf professional major league baseball player. This world revolves around an intricate set of hand signals and a dependence on non-verbal signals from coaches, umpires, and fellow players, and it dates back more than one hundred years to baseball's early days as a professional sport.

This world began with Edward "Dummy" Dundon when he signed on to play for the Columbus Buckeyes of the American Association in 1883 and 1884, making his debut on June 2, 1883. Born July 10, 1859, in Columbus, Dundon was a graduate of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum in Columbus (now Ohio School for the Deaf) and was employed by the school at the time he joined the Buckeyes. He was primarily a pitcher (right-handed), going 6-4 with a 3.78 ERA in the 1884 season (the team went 69-39), but he also filled in at first base and in the outfield (Tootle 24-26). Though many have not yet recognized or realized his role as "the first mute to make good in professional baseball and the first to sign a regulation league contract…Dundon was a drawing card from the fact that he was a clever hurler and never kicked" ("Three Deaf Mutes").

Managerial and financial issues, typically the downfalls of professional baseball teams, may have played a strong factor in the franchise dropping out of the 1885 and 1886 seasons (Tootle 27). The Buckeyes returned in 1887 to join the Ohio State League, but Dundon had moved on by then to play with Atlanta and Nashville in 1885 and 1886, respectively, in what is thought to be non-professional positions ("Three Deaf Mutes"). His last game in Columbus, also his last professional game, was September 20, 1884 ("Major League Baseball"). Dundon also

played with the Syracuse team of the International League in 1888-89, pitching 53 and losing 18 games ("Three Deaf Mutes").

Little else is known about Dundon beyond his subsequent career as an umpire, other than that in the winter of 1889, he worked "in the book bindery of the Ohio Institution for the Deaf and Dumb at Columbus," as reported by The Silent Worker. "He is lucky having two strings to his bow" ("At Work"). Dundon died young of unknown reasons on August 18, 1893, in his hometown of Columbus. His brief career as an umpire adds to the continuing controversy over the creation and use of hand signals in the game of baseball. Some unofficial reports note that Dundon served in this role as early as 1886. The November 6 edition of The Sporting News in that year allegedly reported that "Dundon, the deaf and dumb pitcher of the Acid Iron Earths, umpired a game at Mobile between the Acids and Mobiles, on October 20…he used the fingers of his right hand to indicate strikes, the fingers of the left to call balls, a shake of the head decided a man 'not out,' and a wave of the hand meant out" ("Major League Baseball").

This controversy and perhaps unsolvable mystery was only magnified when William Ellsworth Hoy entered the picture. Though some wrongly assert that Hoy was the first deaf professional baseball player – albeit now the most well-known – debate continues as to whether Hoy is the direct link to umpire hand signals. Because information on Hoy is much more easily accessed than others, it only seems fitting to delve into his career.

Hoy, born May 23, 1862, to English-German and Scottish parents, grew up on the family farm in Houcktown, Ohio, with three brothers and one sister. Hoy's deafness began at the age of three occurred following a bout with meningitis. He joined what is now the Ohio School for the Deaf in 1872 at the age of ten (Berger). (Having occurred in 1870, the lowering of admission age to 10 years old at the school was quite recent at the time ["Ohio School"].) It was also

around this time that the school became first of its kind to institute baseball. Hoy graduated in 1879 as valedictorian of his class and presumably played with Edward Dundon on the school baseball team. An 1879 photo of the team identifies Dundon but not Hoy; however, the timelines of their careers overlap (Berger).

As the story goes, Hoy turned to the shoemaking profession and opened a shoe shop in his early twenties, but relatively few people in his area wore shoes in the summer and business was close to non-existent during those months. He would then play baseball outside with local kids to effectively pass the time without business to attend to. A passerby noticed his playing skills and invited him to play on a Kenton, Ohio, team against its rival, Urbana. He played, and in turn scored several base hits off the Urbana pitcher, a professional by the name of Billy Hart. Inspired, Hoy literally closed up shop and after searching through the Northwest League, he joined the Oshkosh, Wisconsin, team in 1886. This was the start of his professional career (Berger).

He later joined the major leagues in 1888 in Washington as a centerfielder, and then played from 1890 through 1899 in Buffalo (Players League), St. Louis (American Association), a second stint in Washington, Cincinnati, and Louisville (the latter three all in the National League). In-between Washington and Cincinnati, he also played one winter season with Boston's winter league in California, with his last play of the season clinching the 1894 pennant for his team ("Dummy" Hoy Homeplate). Hoy then switched in the American League and played for Chicago in 1900 and 1901, then returned to Cincinnati in 1902 to end his time in the majors on July 17 as reportedly the wealthiest player at that time. His career moves from league to league – four in all – make him one of only 29 players to have played in all four. A spell with

Los Angeles Looloos in the Pacific Coast League in 1903 was the end of his professional career (Berger).

In the midst of this whirlwind career, Hoy married Anna Maria Lowry, also deaf, in 1898. Following retirement from baseball, he bought and operated a dairy farm in Mount Healthy, Ohio, for 20 years, and later moved on to a role as a personnel director for the Goodyear Tire Company, in the height of World War I. In need of strong workers, Goodyear had turned to the deaf population for employees as other "able-bodied" men fought in the war overseas. The company established sports teams for both its hearing and deaf workers, and the Goodyear Silents, as the deaf baseball (and also football) team was called, were formed in 1919 and coached by Hoy (Burch 77-79).

Hoy later worked for a book firm before heading in to a retirement at the age of 75. Anna died in 1951, the same year that he was unanimously voted as the first person inducted into the American Athletic Association of the Deaf (AAAD) Hall of Fame, now the USA Deaf Sports Federation. Hoy publicized his two life wishes: to live to see the age of 100, and to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The first he did not reach, passing away at the age of 99 on December 15, 1961, as the oldest living major league player and the last surviving player of both the Players League and the American Association. This was just weeks after he threw out the ceremonial first pitch before Game Three of the Reds versus Yankees World Series in Cincinnati on October 7. He became ill soon after and was hospitalized before succumbing to a stroke in Cincinnati ("Dummy" Hoy Homeplate).

Hoy's second wish is still in the hands of the Hall of Fame Veterans Committee. Recent pushes (within the last ten to fifteen years) have been made by the Committee for Dummy Hoy, formed in 1991, with the first organized campaign attempt for his induction occurring at the 1949

National Association of the Deaf (NAD) convention. Inductions into the Ohio Baseball Hall of Fame in 1990 and the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame in 2003 have kept hope alive. In 2001, Gallaudet University named its baseball field William "Dummy" Hoy Baseball Field. Groups of supporters have rallied at several Hall of Fame ceremonies in recent years, and efforts are still being made to bring Hoy this glory posthumously ("Dummy" Hoy Homeplate).

Besides his deafness, just how much of a stand-out was Hoy? Standing at 5'4" (or 5'5" or 5'6", depending on the source), he was noticeably short in stature; his weight, hovering around 145-165 lbs, was also light for a baseball player, but Hoy learned to overcome these factors in addition to his deafness. He led the National League in stolen bases (82) in his rookie year of 1888, with career totals of 597 or 607 (there is dispute among statistical guides). In 7,123 at-bats in 1,796 games over a fourteen year career, he had 2,054 hits and 1,426 runs with 40 home runs. He twice led his league in walks, and one time each led in stolen bases and at-bats. Hoy also hit the second grand slam in the American League against the Chicago White Stockings on May 1, 1901. His performance on June 19, 1889, in which he threw out three base-runners at home plate in one game (one of only three players in history to do so), is still highly regarded.

Hoy was also the reason that chest pockets were banned from uniforms after a catch in his pocket was disputed as to whether it counted as an out or not ("Dummy" Hoy Homeplate). The Silent Worker reported one tale about his skill – however much a tall tale it may be – that:

> Late at night – away along toward 9 o'clock, or a quarter past –
> when all the villagers were a-slumber, Dummy Hoy was wont to
> gather at the Peace monument at the foot of the Capital building
> and heave a regulation league ball to the treasury department, the

entire length of Pennsylvania Avenue. And he never hit a soul!

("Deaf Professional").

Within sports teams, a noticeable camaraderie exists among players. Hoy, then labeled as a deaf-mute, was nicknamed "Dummy," as were other deaf baseball players of that time. Hoy is not recognized as having vocalized much, at least not during games. As teammate (and roommate in 1899) Tommy Leach described in The Glory of Their Times, "When you played with [Hoy] in the outfield, the thing was that you never called for a ball. You listened for him, and if he made this little squeaky sound, that meant he was going to take it" (qtd. in Ritter 23). A Reds teammate shared a similar anecdote: "When a fly ball came out and I heard this little noise, I knew he was going to take it. We never had any trouble about who was going to take the ball" (qtd. in Stallard 153).

Leach continued, "[Hoy and his wife] could read lips so well they never had any trouble understanding anything I said. They could answer you back, too, in a little squeaky voice that usually you could understand once you got used to it. We hardly ever had to use our fingers to talk, although most of the fellows did learn the sign language, so that when we got confused or something, we could straighten it out with our hands" (qtd. in Ritter 23). Another source asserted that the only word Hoy was ever heard saying was "Rotten!" if he felt too many strikes were called.

The centerfielder was also noted for his gentlemanly conduct on and off the field and his honesty in the game. It was rumored that an umpire once asked his opinion on whether a ball was fair or not because of his keen eyesight. Though it cost his team a run, Hoy told the truth. He also encouraged other deaf players to join professional baseball through several of his own articles in The Silent Worker. One short article, titled "How to Get a Position," encouraged any

deaf player "who is fully satisfied that he can play ball well enough, to…go straight to the club manager and ask for a trial. There will be no trouble about that, and, if the aspirant for the baseball honors is up to the mark, the chances are that the manager will sign him," Hoy wrote. He added, "The intemperate player can never hope to attain the pinnacle of glory in the base ball world, although a few manage to command large salaries" ("How to").

In a separate article spanning an entire page, Hoy dispensed advice on how a deaf player should join and behave on a team in order to best promote himself and not his deafness. He cautioned against any incident that would cause a stereotype to occur concerning the handicap. Wrote Hoy, "…he is obliged to demonstrate in every play he makes that he has superior judgment, wonderful observation and quick wit in order to overcome their natural aversion at having a deaf player hold an important position the team." Hoy's piece, a stunning encouragement yet warning to any deaf player wishing to join a professional team, appeared in an all-sports 1924 issue of The Silent Worker. Written more than two decades after his retirement from baseball, Hoy's words echo clear even today in the lack of current deaf professional athletes (Hoy).

Hoy's name, just as Dundon's, has also been caught in the controversy as the origins of umpire's hand signals. The Baseball Hall of Fame officially attributes this honor to legendary umpire Bill Klem on his plaque in the Hall. Legend states that Klem began using this system at the start of his umpiring career in 1905 – several years after the end of Hoy's professional career. Others stand by Hoy, and trace his creation of the signaling system back to his early professional days in Oshkosh. Since umpire calls were shouted, Hoy would have to ask his coach after every throw whether it was a ball or strike. Before Hoy had received his answer and was ready, the opposing pitcher would send out the next pitch. "Around 1887, Hoy wrote out a request to the

third-base coach, asking him to raise his left arm to indicate a ball, his right arm for a strike. Hoy could follow the hand signals after each pitch, and be ready for the next" ("Dummy" Hoy Homeplate).

Still others maintain that Hoy can be credited with the creation of signaling by the third base coach, but that Klem was the first to implement this in umpiring and that the third base signaling inspired him ("FAQ"). And there is still the idea that Edward Dundon implemented this in his own umpiring days. Hoy's Oshkosh days lasted from 1886-1887, and 1886 was the year in which The Sporting News reported Dundon's use of signals. A documentary film, Signs of the Time: The Myth, The Mystery, The Legend of Baseball's Greatest Innovation, scheduled for release in time for Opening Day 2008, looks into the dispute over Hoy and Klem's contributions to the sport of baseball ("Signs of the Time"). A 1987-1988 off-Broadway play in Chicago, The Signal Season of Dummy Hoy, also revolved around Hoy's legend ("FAQ").

Although no one person has been able to prove Hoy or Klem to be right or wrong, it is true that Hoy paved the way for future deaf professional baseball players – notably, pitcher Luther "Dummy" Taylor. One of three children to hearing parents, Luther Haden Taylor was born on February 21, 1875, in Oskaloosa, Kansas, and attended the Kansas School for the Deaf. Though skilled in boxing, his father urged him to focus more on his baseball pitching. Taylor played in the minors following his graduation in 1895 until his major league debut in 1900 with the last place New York Giants on August 27. Taylor went 4-3 that season with a 2.45 ERA (Lahman).

In 1901, the first full season for both, Taylor and famed pitcher Christy Mathewson worked to build up the Giants. The two shared ties from the previous year: "Of the seventeen recruits tried out by the New York management in 1900-01, only the names of Mathewson and

Taylor, the deaf and dumb hurler, remained on the roster" ("Three Deaf Mutes"). Taylor pitched in a league-best 45 appearances with 18 wins that season (Lahman). The 1901 season also marked historical significance in that the Giants actually had three deaf pitchers on their roster: Taylor, George Leitner, and Billy Deegan.

Little is known about Leitner and Deegan as both careers were short-lived. George Michael Leitner was born in Parkton, Maryland, on June 19, 1872, and debuted with the Philadelphia Athletics on June 29, 1901. This was his only game with the Athletics, as he was presumably traded to the Giants, where he pitched two more games, losing both. The following season, he pitched one game for the Cleveland Indians before another move, this time to the Chicago White Stockings where the right-handed pitcher appeared his final major league game on August 25, 1902. His five career games yielded two losses and a 5.34 ERA. A scrawny pitcher, he stood at 5'7" and weighed only 120 lbs. Leitner died on February 20, 1960, in Baltimore, Maryland ("Major League Baseball").

William John Deegan's career was even shorter, lasting a mere two games with the Giants. The first game, his major league debut, was on August 3, 1901. His second and final major league game was on August 9, 1901. In 17 innings, Deegan gave up 27 hits; such a brief career led to the fact that it is not even recorded whether he threw left- or right-handed ("Major League Baseball").

(One source comments that there have been fourteen deaf major leaguers to date. Most of those traceable seem to have had careers as short or even shorter – yes, a possible feat – than Leitner and even Deegan. Thomas Lynch pitched one major league game for the Chicago White Stockings on August 5, 1884. Reuben Crandol Stephenson played eight games in the outfield for the Philadelphia Phillies from September 9 through September 16. Herbert Courtland Murphy

played nine games as shortstop for the 1914 Phillies from April 14 through May 7. Richard Francis "Dick" Sipek, the first deaf major league player not to be nicknamed "Dummy," played for the 1945 Cincinnati Reds from April 28 through September 29 as an outfielder. Sipek was mentored by Luther Taylor when [Sipek] attended the Illinois School for the Deaf. Matthew Daniel "Danny" Lynch of Texas played second base for the 1948 Chicago Cubs from September 14 through October 2, appearing in seven games ["Major League Baseball"])

In 1902, Taylor moved to Cleveland for a short four games in two months in hopes of more money from the American League. He grew discouraged as none of his new teammates knew sign language, so he re-joined the Giants, who John McGraw now managed. He pitched 7-15 with a 2.29 ERA that year. On May 26, 1902, Taylor's Giants met Hoy's Reds in a historic meeting of professional deaf baseball players. Hoy came up to bat against Taylor, greeting him in sign with "I'm glad to see you!" He then promptly hit a single to center field. By 1903, Taylor had moved up to third in the pitching rotation, going 13-13 with a 4.23 ERA (Lahman).

Taylor (and presumably Leitner and Deegan) brought use of sign with them to the Giants. When he first joined the Giants, player-manager George Davis learned sign language and urged other players to do the same; McGraw learned as well after his take-over (Lahman). "We could all read and speak the deaf-and-dumb sign language, because Dummy Taylor took it as an affront if you didn't learn to converse with him," said teammate Fred Snodgrass in The Glory of Their Times. "He wanted to be one of us, to be a full-fledged member of the team…We'd go by elevated train from the hotel to the Polo Grounds, and all during the ride, we'd be spelling out the advertising signs" (qtd. in Ritter 117).

And yet, it seems that Taylor could be more exclusive in his friendships when deemed necessary:

> "His circle of friends was limited but those who were chosen by him found as loyal a friend as a human bring could wish to find. Even on his own team there were those whose friendship 'Dummy' didn't care to cultivate. When a new man joined the New York club, Taylor sized him up for a few weeks, and when he finally concluded that he would care to number the new player among his friends he handed him a card on which was printed the alphabet of deaf mutes. On being presented with a card, you could feel certain that Taylor had enrolled you in his list of friends." ("Deaf Professional")

The Giants even switched to using sign language instead of the by-then standard baseball signs – until opposing teams caught on.

Taylor's efforts to communicate also got him into trouble, and not just in the practical jokes he and his teammates conducted on each other. He could make a loud shrill/shrieking noise that once had him ejected from a game by umpire Charlie Zimmer because it was so irritating. However, this was not his only negative encounter with an umpire. The general story, combined from two sources, was that the umpire refused to call a game that was being played in pouring rain. Taylor came out of the clubhouse in rubber boots twirling a bright yellow umbrella (one source even mentions McGraw encouraging Taylor in this prank!). Taylor pretended not to notice the umpire yelling at him as he clowned around, mimicking that he was sinking in the mud. Taylor signed unflattering things to the umpire, and unbeknownst to him, the umpire understood some of what was said from having deaf parents and signed back, "Y-O-U G-O T-O T-H-E C-L-U-B-H-O-U-S-E, P-A-Y $25" (Lahman and "Deaf Professional").

McGraw and Taylor did not always share such carefree times, however. In The Old Ball Game, Frank Deford recounts the Giants' batting practice prior to the third game of the 1903 season. Taylor threw a ball back that slammed into the unsuspecting McGraw's face. McGraw's nose was broken, cartilage was severed, and blood vessel ruptured inside his throat. "That caused the most incredible flood, the blood spurting out of both his nose and his mouth. Poor Dummy Taylor was beside himself while the other Giants looked on in shock at their fallen leader…Indeed, the blow would affect McGraw's sinuses and cause debilitating upper respiratory infections for the rest of his life" (71).

The Giants won their first pennant in 15 years in 1904 and again in 1905. 1904 was also Taylor's best season with a 21-15 record and 2.34 ERA. He was even scheduled to start game three of the 1905 World Series, but a rain-out cancelled the game and Mathewson was chosen to start after it was rescheduled. Taylor pitched winning seasons through 1908, after which he was released in favor of a younger pitcher. He pitched seven more seasons in the minors, then began working at the Kansas School for the Deaf – his alma mater – where he coached five different sports (Lahman). The Silent Worker mentions Taylor serving "as an athletic instructor for the deaf mute employes [sic] of a later rubber company in Akron, Ohio" ("What the Goodyear"). After briefly moving on to a deaf school in Iowa, he then served as a coach, teacher, and administrator at the Illinois School for the Deaf for almost two decades, including the time in which he coached Dick Sipek. He retired in 1940, but later worked as a scout for the Giants and also opened a barbershop. Though married three times, he had no children, and died at age 82 on August 22, 1958, after a heart attack 11 days earlier (Lahman).

Though there are two major leaguers in modern times, Curtis Pride and Ryan Ketchner, who have severe hearing loss, the fact remains that deafness is not viewed in the same

parameters as it was in 1883, 1888, 1901, or even 1945. In the times of Edward Dundon, William Hoy, Luther Taylor, and even Dick Sipek, sign language was not a language. To most of society, it was indeed a series of gestures and pantomime, used only by those who did not have the mental capability to create words with their mouths. In this time, oralism was promoted and taught in schools; signing was hidden from public view. It was speech and speech alone that was thought to make humans human and that separated them from other animals. Even at the time that Dundon and Hoy were being educated, oralism had already begun to spread into residential schools for the deaf. As the decades wore on into the early 1900s, deaf people had begun to fear that their language would not survive.

What is most incredible about historical deaf baseball players, particularly the ones described at length here, is their use of sign language not only to speak for themselves, but in communication with their teammates, coaches, and managers. Despite this suppression and oppression by the outside world, there is no record to be found of teammates during any of William Hoy career moves refusing to sign with him. There is no record of John McGraw forcing Luther Taylor to take speech lessons. And there is no record, not a single one, of fans who argued Edward Dundon's umpiring calls because he was deaf.

The significance of this was that the sport of baseball, a major part of American culture itself, was able to look past the domination of oralism to focus on, literally, the love of the game. This was before laws made it illegal to refuse to hire a disabled worker, and yet more deaf professional baseball players were hired in those twenty to thirty years than in the last eighty. This was before politically correct terminology was mandatory. Yes, the nickname Dummy was regularly used, but many accounts of teammates and managers show their agreement that these players were not dumb but instead considered quite intelligent.

This trend, however short-lived in the grand scheme of things that it was, transcended the need for sound in this environment. These players did not need to hear the shuffle of feet in the dirt; they could see who was up at bat. These players did not need to hear the creaks and squeaks of old bleacher seats; they could see their fans waving their arms and hands. These players did not need to hear the grunt of the umpire after each throw; they could see the signals in the fingers and arms of their coaches. This acceptance of deaf professional baseball players in the major leagues during a time when their language could not reach the same status in the rest of society is monumental, and only proves the sport of baseball's most humble beginnings.

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