

On the Line
Hit Ain't
Easy, Guv

By Bob Considine



Ever try to explain baseball to a foreigner who has never seen the game? If you are ever called upon to do so, here's some advice:

Don't.

Cricket is a simpler game to understand. So is chess played blindfolded. What you grew up to recognize as the simplest sport imaginable is about as simple as the engineering designs for making plutonium.

"I say," a London bobby once said to me at a wartime U.S. servicemen's baseball exhibition at Wembley. "I've been watching your baseball for the better part of two hours and cawn't make head nor tail of it."

"Simplest game in the world," I assured him. "Now take that fellow who is coming up there to bat. He's going to try to hit the ball between those two long white lines that stretch from where he'll be batting — it's called home plate — to the fences in left and right. He hopes to hit the ball hard enough so that he can run to first base—that's the sack down there on the right — before one of the fielders can throw the ball over to the first baseman ahead of him. If he hits it far enough he can proceed on from first base and try to reach second base, or even third, or even make a complete circuit of the bases. In that case he has scored what we call a run."

The man looked at me as if I were talking Urdu.

"Well, now, of course if he hits the ball up in the air and it is caught by a fielder he is out immediately, retired. He can't legally take first base . . . unless he hits a fly ball that lands in the stands — in fair territory between those two white lines we were talking about . . . foul lines we call them."

"So The pitcher, you'd call him the bowler, I guess, is going to do everything in his power to keep this batter from getting safely on base or hitting the ball out of the stadium. He has a certain number of pitches allotted to him to take care of each batter he faces. If he makes the batter miss the ball three times then the batter is out, retired, finished until his time comes around again, unless, of course, if the catcher drops the third strike and then the batter is allowed to try to run to first base before the ball can be thrown there."

The bobby sighed.

"If he misses getting the ball over the plate four times during this pitching sequence the batter is entitled to a walk."

"Why walk? Why not run?"

"He could run to first if he wishes but it would be pointless, since he is granted that base because the pitcher couldn't or wouldn't get the ball over the plate. Now, one other thing, if the batter connects with the ball and hits it outside of the foul lines, however hard, that's also a strike. So! Here's our batter. You'll see how simple the whole game is if you pay attention."

The hitter smacked a foul down the third base line.

"That's strike one!" I cried out. "Now he has only two more strikes coming to him."

Again, the hitter fouled off down the third base line.

"That's strike number two," my man shouted, "and now he has only one more strike coming to him."

I began praying the bum at the plate wouldn't hit another foul, but he did.

"Strike number three and he is retired" the poor man said, pleased as punch.

"Nope, we have an additional little rule. He can hit fouls all day as long as he has two strikes on him, and it won't count against him." I felt like apologizing.

"The hell with it," he said, and moved regally away.

Father Greeley
Begins Next Week

If you pinned him down as to whether he is a "conservative" or a "liberal," Father Andrew Greeley would be constrained to say "liberal."

But the liberalism of Father Greeley is not the sort that wears the collar of the self-conscious and self-elected liberals from whom so much is heard nowadays in the Church in America. He has no use for bishop-baiting, for "alienation," or for the attitude that the Church in this country ought to be torn down and rebuilt from the ground up.

In short, our new columnist, Father Greeley, who will appear in this space next week joins no cliques. We think you'll find him sprightly, realistic and refreshing.

April 29
In History

1920

The League of Nations was hailed by French Cardinal Amette as essentially a Christian notion the week the Archbishop of New Orleans, J. W. Shaw, excoriated women wearing "indecent contemporary" clothing. The national Catholic Women's Club founded a chapter in the Rochester diocese, and a street car strike was on in the city.

1945

Pope Pius XII predicted that Mother Cabrini would be named a saint as soon as the war was over, and decried the violence which marked the death of Mussolini. It was noted that no prayer marked the opening of the U.N. talks; and the Rochester Community and War Chest Campaign was initiated with Mass in the Cathedral. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, speaking in Auburn, announced dedication of his radio programs to the Blessed Virgin.

1960

The Supreme Court is expected to rule next week on the constitutionality of legislation curtailing business activities on Sunday. It was announced that 70 percent of the crime in Los Angeles was attributable to drug addiction; and the Holy Name Society at St. Monica Church noted its 50th anniversary. Joe Caprierschó blasted the pins in the Holy Name Bowling Tourney for a 636 total, moving Toscano's Barber Shop into first place.

On The Right Side
Recommended
Reading

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Recently I was invited by the tall, efficient pastor of St. Margaret Mary's Church in Rochester, Father Raymond G. Heisel, to address the parish Adult Discussion Group. It is a group which ranges in theological components from a charming, professedly arch-conservative female to a gracious liberal male who exercised his skepticism of my ideas with what Father John Guy would describe as a Jane Austinish civility.

I think the talk was not very good. But a secondary and more important result of the discussion was the introduction to the group of historian M. Henri Daniel-Rops.

Who is M. Daniel-Rops? He is a French church historian and a member of the French Academy who died in 1965 at the age of 64. His personal history follows the frequent pattern of French intellectuals. He was a nominal Catholic in his early years. He became a strong and revolutionary Catholic in adult maturity. He continued his enthusiasm for the Church as Christ's visible witness of His presence in the world. And he wrote of the Church's enduring divinity despite the awful sinfulness and stupidity within its membership.

He wrote a 10-volume history of the Church which he completed the year he died. The prelude to his Church History was a volume entitled "The People of the Bible," which

was published on July 1, 1943, and was confiscated within 200 days by the anti-Semitic Gestapo.

The value of Daniel-Rops' history of the Church is four-fold. It is historically sound. It is fascinating reading. It is popular. And finally, despite the scandals riding high throughout the history of the Church, the author is sublimely optimistic.

For example. After describing appalling appointments of unworthy bishops in the 18th Century, Daniel-Rops comments: "Those were exceptions, but however few they may have been of those scabby sheep, they were too many." But he is tranquil as he continues: "The picture was dark indeed . . . Would the Church have sufficient vitality . . . to renew herself? First thoughts suggest a categorical No. Such however, was not the reply of history."

"Hard facts would give the lie to these pessimistic forecasts. The collapse predicted did not occur . . . Less than 20 years after the death of Voltaire, she counted 2500 martyrs who had truly died for the faith. In 1789 there were too many worldly bishops. There were also those, some of them the very same men, who between 1792 and 1795 perished rather than desert their flocks. In 1789 there were too many religious unfaithful to their vows, too many thoughtless nuns. But there were communities such as the Carmelites of Compiègne, who went to execution all together, without a single apostasy."

In this column, I often speak of THE PEOPLE, and describe these as the solid, faithful mothers, fathers, grandparents, who are more involved in the care of their families and their particular vocations than they are in theological speculations.

They are usually the unsophisticated Catholics, who may be well educated or may have little formal education, but they have in common a depth of loyalty and devotion which contravenes the debilitating sniping at the Pope and bishops and priests.

Of these, D.-R. writes: "The Christian people in vain were offered a Church without the Pope, founded on the Revolution . . . In vain the authorities tried to dechristianize manners, customs and even the calendar . . . Yet so many men and women remained loyal to the ancient faith, their influence ultimately proved decisive. 'Our Revolution has failed in the sphere of religion; France has returned to Roman Catholicism' wrote Clarke in 1796."

D.-R. observes: "France was no solitary witness . . . There is always a danger, when considering the state of the Church in a given period, of allowing more importance to the conduct of the wayward sheep who attract notice, than to the solid worth of all those unnamed men and women whose deeds are unrecorded . . ." (THE CHURCH IN THE 18TH CENTURY—Ch. IV: Storm and Stress)

My hope is that the introduction of M. Henri Daniel-Rops' "History of the Church of Christ" will flow from the Discussion Group of St. Margaret Mary's Church, Rochester, to the whole diocese through this column. The set of 10 volumes is published by Doubleday's Image Books. They sell for less than \$1.50 a volume, and can be bought individually or as a set.

The Morriss Plan
A Chilling
Parallel

By Frank Morriss



As I write this, those still old fashioned enough to believe in prayer are asking that it will be God's will to bring three brave Americans home safely to earth. When you read this, the saga will have reached an ending.

Meanwhile, some of our best minds are feverishly working to snatch safety for three men out of the nettle of danger. The work specifically is directed to maintaining a life environment until these three can be brought unharmed out of the dark womb of space into the hospitality of an environment where they can function without the artificial helps that have almost failed them — but not quite.

If the struggle ends in victory, the cheers will still be ringing as you read this. And the cheers will not be for the great technological victory, even though the prime mission failed, but will be over the fact that three lives have been saved.

I cannot help but contrast this with the absolute indifference of most of America's best minds toward keeping alive those whose lives depend upon the environment of the mother's womb. In the Odyssey and Aquarius we can tell what man's will is for those three voyagers. Oxygen was provided with a system to deliver it. There was means to keep the air suitable for life. No expense or ingenuity was spared. It would take madness for anyone to say it would be all right for some saboteur to have inter-

fered with the working of that system. Such interference would be seen as contemptible because it would rob three men of life.

God's will for the great majority of those conceived is quite evident in the system He provides in the mother's womb to sustain life. An umbilical cord (not in essence different from that running between the Lunar Module and the command ship) carries oxygen and food to the unborn child. A doctor could list the countless minute details God has taken care of so that the life environment will be proper, and a child may emerge from the womb that sustains him into the environment where he may function on his own.

Those who so easily interfere with this system are nothing more than saboteurs who are as contemptible as any enemy who might interfere with the life-support system of a spaceship. Why is this not recognized? Why the feverish concern for three astronauts and the absolute indifference — no, the absolute hostility — toward the unborn?

It cannot be simply that we consider Lovell, Haise and Swigert valuable to us. Even if we knew that the three would never do anything further of importance, no one would dare have suggested that we call off our efforts to get them back. Not even if we learned that they had been rendered permanently incapacitated by the accident would we have ceased to try to save their lives. To

have done otherwise would have branded us as monsters of selfishness.

Nor can it simply be stated that we wanted to get them back. We wouldn't have tolerated some cynic about the space program who might have suggested a rescue effort wasn't worth the expense or energy. There was no question of our effort flagging. It went unuttered, but all Americans knew these men had the right to every effort we could make, to every chance we could provide so that misfortune would lose and they would live.

We had helped put them there; we had called for the mission they were on; its success would have redounded to our honor as past successes had delighted us. They had a right to live and they had a right to call upon us to help them live.

But what about the unborn? We claim our reward for the act that conceives, but then we recognize no right for the living product of that act. We put children in the womb as surely as we put the astronauts in their ship; but our interest with our children ends. In fact, we claim that, having established the mission of life, we can suddenly terminate it in a fatal manner. With Apollo, we aborted the technological triumph of a moon landing (the asset we had striven for) in order to save three lives. In the case of countless unborn, we seize the triumph of sexual pleasure, we claim the asset — but we abort the lives. What a chilling contrast!