

# More baseball lore than you will ever need

By CRAIG PIECHURA  
You may get along in life fine without knowing who the first and second Nicaraguans to play baseball in the major leagues were. Let alone the third or fourth.  
But there are baseball trivia fanatics who live, die, bet and fight for that information. And for the sake of those deranged individuals, the first and second Nicaraguans to play ball in the ma-

jors were Denny Martínez, the first and Tony Chavez, who played for the Baltimore Orioles.  
That's one of the more obscure entries in Southfield resident Fred Smith's new book, which he ghost-wrote for the Orioles retired third baseman, Brooks Robinson, also known as The Vacuum Cleaner for his ability to snag sharply-hit grounders.  
Smith scored a big hit last year with a booklet called "Tiger Trivia" co-written with Tiger radio announcer Ernie Harwell. With opening day beginning today, Smith has a new baseball trivia book out geared primarily for the Baltimore market called "Brooks Robinson's Baseball Quiz."  
Smith tells you in the book who coined Brooks' nickname "The Vacuum Cleaner." It was Pete Richer. He tells how that nickname was shortened to "Hoover" by Lee May, the Orioles first baseman.  
"I GOT ONE in there that'll catch everybody," Smith says. "When was the last time there was a major league team in Washington?"  
Now most people would say 1971, the year the Washington Senators closed up shop in the nation's capital. But Fred has thrown you a curve with a trick question.  
"It's last year in Seattle, Washington. That's a little cutie in the book."  
Lest the reader think that the book

only has trick questions and questions about Nicaraguans, it should be noted that there is solid baseball information contained between the covers.  
For example, they expand on the all-time trivia question being asked right now in taverns throughout America: What was the name of the midget that Bill Vecek, then owner of the St. Louis

Browns, sent in to bat against the Detroit Tigers in 1951. The easy answer is Eddie Gaedel.  
But Smith asks whom did he bat for, who ran for the midget when he walked, who was pitching for the Tigers and who was catching?  
Gaedel batted for Frank Saubier, Jimmy Delsing ran for the midget

when he got on base. Bob Cain was the pitcher and Bob Swift was the catcher.  
AFTER WORKING for the American Automobile Association (AAA) for years, in 1974 Smith retired and went to work for the Detroit Tigers selling season tickets and group ticket sales.  
As he puts it, "My wife says I retired and went to heaven."  
He's friends with many of the ballplayers, including Brooks Robinson, but says none of the celebrities can hold a candle to his boyhood idol, Heinie Manush.



FRED T. SMITH

## Here's a trivia test for baseball lunatics

Q. Who is the only pitcher to ever hit a grand slam home run in the World Series?  
A. Dave McNally hit a grand slam home run on Oct. 13, 1970 at Memorial Stadium against the Cincinnati Reds as he coasted to a 9-3 win. It was, incidentally, McNally's second home run in a World Series, which tied him with Bob Gibson of the St. Louis Cardinals as the only pitcher to ever hit two home runs in the World Series. He hit the other one against the Mets in 1969 off Jerry Kosman.

Q. What was Babe Ruth's lifetime batting average?  
A. Babe Ruth played in the 'big leagues' for 22 years and had a lifetime average of .342. He had 714 home runs, 708 of which came when he played with the Yankees and Red Sox and six of which came during his last season when he briefly played for the Boston Braves.  
Q. Who was the mighty slugger immortalized in Ernest Thayer's poem "Casey at the Bat"?  
A. It is believed to be Dennis

Casey, who batted cleanup for Baltimore in the old National League in 1884 and 1885.  
Q. Which ball player hit into the most triple plays during his career?  
A. Brooks Robinson hit into four triple plays, a major league record.  
Q. Did Lou Gehrig ever play shortstop?  
A. Lou Gehrig played in 2,164 games in the American League. Out of that, 2,130 were consecutive games. He played nine in the outfield and the rest at first base.

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