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A Box Full of Memories

By Bun Curtis

After a long, most enjoyable telephone conversation with Louise Allen on the occasion of her birthday, I was in a perfect mood to explore Mom's box of memories for possible material for an ENTERPRISE article. It had been several years since my last visit to the box and, thus, I had no good idea of what I might find.



A simulation of Caress Curtis' Memory Box

After about an hour of reading all kinds of documents, I came up with an October 31, 1947 letter to Mom from the then colorful owner, Bill Veeck, of the Cleveland Indians. He was answering Mom's letter of great concern about the news of a possible trade of Lou Boudreau, the Indians' "boy manager" to the St. Louis Browns.

Mr. Veeck seemed to take Mom's views on the possible trade to heart and explained his thinking: "You seem to base your main objection to this proposed deal on the fact that it is with St. Louis, and I would like to explain this to you briefly. You see, the Browns happen to have the shortstop nearest in ability

and a couple of pitchers who would help our club. Then, too, having finished in such a lowly position, they are a little more anxious to make a deal than most other clubs. Furthermore, I would not be honest if I did not mention that St. Louis can be strengthened more without hurting the Indians' chances than any club in the league."

If I recall correctly, Mom's objections to the deal were that the Indians would be losing Lou and any three St. Louis Browns could not compensate for Boudreau's loss.

Bill went on to say that the Indians were not content to remain a fourth place club and felt that they should strengthen the weaknesses in the Indians' lineup

even if it meant trading one of the Indians' stars.

He concluded with the following: "If a deal involving Boudreau should be made - and mind you, that is only a possibility at the moment - I trust you will reserve your judgment until it has been proven that I erred."

Mom was relieved when Lou Boudreau was still an Indian at the beginning of the 1948 season. She was ecstatic at the end of the season. Lou managed the Indians to both the American League pennant and the World Series championship. In doing so, he batted 355, hit 18 home runs and batted in 106 runs and was the American League's Most Valuable Player. Moreover, the Associated Press declared him the male athlete of the year.

Mom knew best.

The other item to draw my interest from Mom's box of memories was a rough draft of an essay she had started to write for a contest. Since Mom referred to radio in the essay instead of television, I suspect that it

was written no later than the late 1940s. Apparently, the essay was to be written in 500 words or less since Mom had numbered each 50 words until she had reached 450 and had less than 50 words that might have been included. The subject was a familiar one to Bereans, the naming of Berea, but Mom had added a new twist.

Her essay was entitled, "What's in a Name?" and is still in rough draft form as written by my mother, Caress Curtis, as follows:

"The name of my hometown, Berea, a namesake, when left to the whims of such authorities as trainmen, journalists, and radio announcers becomes Beereeah, Buhreer and Baireah. Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, Unabridged gives "Boroea" as the preferred spelling, which is also the choice of the twentieth century Holy Bible.

Recently, while looking through our family Bible, which is dated 1856, I found that the Scriptures, in the tenth and eleventh verses of the seventeenth chapter of the Acts, read: "The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who when they were come thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these (people of Berea) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word (of God) with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so."

The Bibles of John Baldwin, James Gilruth, and Henry Sheldon must have read this way, too, when they met, one evening in September of the year 1836, to decide upon a name for their village in Ohio. The population, then, was large enough for the people to demand a post office; thus, a name had to be sent to the government. Being a religious community, the people had frequently expressed themselves as being on the Lord's side, and the town was now being referred to as 'Lord's Side, Ohio', by the surrounding communities.

James Gilruth favored Tabor, name of the "Lonely Mountain" near Jerusalem. John Baldwin preferred Berea, because he, no doubt, hoped that the people of his community would continue to pattern their character after the inhabitants of the ancient Grecian city mentioned in the Scriptures.

Henry Sheldon reached into his pocket and brought forth a shiny silver dollar and suggested that the name Tabor be scratched on one side and Berea on the other, and that the coin be then tossed into the air, leaving the choice to Providence. They agreed, and as the coin was flipped, John Baldwin called 'heads' which was the side with Berea marked on it. The liberty lady side of the

dollar appeared on top and decided the name of the village.

So it has remained to this day as far as the United States Post Office and this Ohio community is concerned. We spell it Berea and pronounce it Buh-ree-uh. Insofar as the name is concerned, the Grecian city, which still exists, has like the dictionary and the Bible, undergone a change. It is usually spelled Verroia, or Veria, and is pronounced "Verr-e-uh."

(A short addition by Bun): The meaning of the word Berea is "well watered". The choice of the name, Berea, was prophetic in that, later, the man-made lakes - Baldwin, Coe, and Wallace - joined the original Rocky River and Lake Abram. Furthermore, in the Scriptures "waters" is often symbolic of "people". Hence, Berea can aptly symbolize "the good people".

A Memorable Day for the Indians, 1948

Some People keep their favorite memories in a box, as Mrs. Curtis did, or in a special drawer. Others paste tickets from an event or clippings in a scrapbook. This photo was found in a scrapbook and the memories it brought really made us smile.



Here, Cleveland Indians' left-handed pitcher Gene Bearden gets a triumphant ride on the shoulders of his Indians teammates after winning the 1948 playoff game against the Red Sox in Boston, to win the American League pennant. They went on to win the World Series, beating the Boston Braves.

Left to right: Mel Harder, Jon Berardino, Joe Tipton and Al Rosen.

Will History repeat itself this year?

Photo received from the Cleveland State University Library Collection.