Koufax was known for his shyness and reticence. Nahem was outgoing and funny, well-liked by reporters because he was always approachable and quotable. When a sportswriter asked him about his lackluster performance during spring training in 1940, Nahem replied, "I am now in the egregiously anonymous position of pitching batting practice to the batting practice pitchers."8

Nahem's niece Beladec Nahem Griffiths considers her uncle's sense of humor one of his best characteristics. Sam and his younger brother Joe "were hilarious together at parties," she recalled. "They were reminiscent of their heroes, the Marx Brothers."9

Given his intelligence, gregariousness, and sense of humor, Nahem might have made an outstanding baseball commentator on radio and TV, similar to other second-rate but funny and affable ex-ballplayers like Joe Garagiola and Bob Uecker.

But Nahem had other commitments. He was a devotee not only of Groucho Marx but also of Karl Marx. A right-handed pitcher with left-wing politics, he may have been the only major leaguer during his day who was a member of the Communist Party. After his playing days were over, Nahem went to work as a longshoreman and factory worker, despite having a law degree, and remained active in radical causes. His political activities caught the attention of the FBI, which put Nahem under surveillance.

Even as a ballplayer, though, Nahem made a major contribution to challenging baseball's most egregious injustice—its color line. He was key player in a little-known episode in the battle to desegregate baseball in the U.S. military. Like many other radicals in the 1930s and 1940s, Nahem fervently believed that baseball should be racially integrated. While serving in the army during World War II, he challenged the military's racial divide by organizing, managing, and playing for an integrated team that won the U.S. military championship series in Europe in September 1945, a month before Jackie Robinson signed a contract with the Dodgers. The fascinating story of Nahem's life and legacy is little-known but deserves recognition.

**Early Days**

Samuel Ralph Nahem's parents—Isaac Nahem and Emilie (née Sitt) Nahem—came to America from Aleppo, Syria, in 1912. Born in New York City on October 19, 1915, Nahem, one of eight siblings, grew up in a Brooklyn enclave of Syrian Jews. He spoke Arabic before he learned English.

Nahem demonstrated his rebellious streak early on. When he was 13, he reluctantly participated in his Bar Mitzvah ceremony, but refused to continue with Hebrew School classes after that because "it took me away from sports."
To further demonstrate his rebellion, that year he ended his Yom Kippur fast an hour before sundown. Recalling the incident, he called it “my first revolutionary act.”

The next month—on November 12, 1928—Nahem’s father, a well-to-do importer-exporter, traveling on a business trip to Argentina, was one of over 100 passengers who drowned when a British steamship, the Vestris, sank off the Virginia coast.

Within a year, the Great Depression had arrived, throwing the country into turmoil. With his father dead, Nahem’s family could have fallen into destitution. “But fortunately we sued the steamship company and won enough money to live up to our standard until we were grown and mostly out of the house,” Nahem recalled. He remembered how, at age 14, he “used to haul coal from our bin to relatives who had no heat in the bitterly cold winters of New York.” So, despite his family’s own relative comfort, “I was quite aware of the misery all around.” That reality, Nahem remembered, “led to my embracing socialism as a rational possibility.”

Brooklyn College: Athletics and Activism

Education was Nahem’s ticket out of that insular community and into the wider world of sports and politics. In 1933, in the midst of the Depression, Nahem entered Brooklyn College, part of the City College system, known as the “poor man’s Harvard.” Many students came from working class, immigrant Jewish families. The campus was a hotbed of political radicalism and activism. Students espoused every variety of radical ideas, including anarchism, socialism, and Communism, supported unions at home and opposed fascism in Spain. Having already been exposed to left-wing ideas and the Communist Party by his cousins Ralph Sutton and Joe Cohen as well as his younger brother Joe, Nahem was soon participating in its campus activities. Nahem was better off economically than most of his fellow students, but he quickly absorbed the campus’s leftist political atmosphere while, as an English major, immersing himself in his love of literature.

Although a brilliant student and an idealistic activist, it was on the athletic field that Nahem really stood out. As a teenager, Nahem played baseball and football on Brooklyn’s sandlot teams because he didn’t make the teams at New Utrecht High School. He started off as a catcher but shifted to pitching when he began wearing glasses because they couldn’t fit beneath the catcher’s mask. He quickly grew in size, reaching six foot one and 190 pounds in college at a time when the average adult male was five feet eight inches tall. At Brooklyn College he became a top-flight athlete, pitching for the baseball team and playing fullback on its football team.

During his freshman year, Nahem recalled, “I really emerged as a personality, different from the shy, unaggressive, and, yes, uninteresting (but handsome) boy I was.” Nahem began dating girls and excelled in his English classes, where he was often the teacher’s pet, “especially since I was an athletic hero.” “I do recall the interest I awakened in my professors by my feats. ‘He throws a good curve and understands modern poetry. He knows how to use big words!’ He was drawn to Russian and French literature and American writers like Hemingway, Faulkner, Dreiser, and Jack London.

Nahem’s brother Joe, a year behind him at Brooklyn College, was also a baseball and football star. In April 1934, they combined for a no-hitter against St. Peter’s College, with Sam pitching the first five innings and Joe the final four. The New York Times, the Brooklyn Eagle, and other daily papers frequently reported on their exploits on the gridiron and the diamond. “Who can deny a certain thrill in seeing one’s name in print?” Nahem recalled years later. In the spring of 1935, following a good football season, Nahem was back in the news as Brooklyn College’s ace hurler. “Nahem Stars on the Mound and at Bat,” the Times headlined its April 26, 1935, story, reporting that he not only defeated Fordham University by a 3–2 score, but, batting fourth in the lineup, he also got two hits and scored Brooklyn College’s first run.

Getting into Pro Ball

At the end of his sophomore year, Nahem earned a try-out with the hometown Brooklyn Dodgers, managed by Casey Stengel. Nahem recalled, “I was throwing batting practice and an errant fastball hit this famous Okie pitcher, Van Lingle Mungo, in the ass. After the tryout, Stengel put his arm around me and said, ‘We’ll sign you up. If you can hurt that big lard-ass, you must have something on the ball.”

When Nahem told his mother that he was going to play professional baseball, she asked, “When are you going to quit those kid jobs and get a job?”

“I said, ‘I’m making $100 a week,'” Nahem recalled. “She said, ‘Go play!’”

Nahem dropped out of college to play professional baseball, but starting in the winter of 1935, he would attend St. John’s University during the offseason. He earned his law degree and passed the bar in December 1938.

When he wasn’t studying, Nahem bounced around the Dodgers’ farm system. Playing under the assumed name of Sam Nichols, he pitched for Brooklyn affiliates in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Jeanerette, Louisiana, in 1935 and 1936, respectively. Returning to his usual moniker for the 1937 season, Nahem had an All-Star campaign (15 wins–5 losses) for the Clinton Class B, Iowa, club. He advanced to Single A Elmira, New York, for the 1938 season.

Brooklyn recalled Nahem in August 1938, but he was not to report until
Elmira's season ended. Although he was pitching for his semi-pro Bushwicks club while on recall to the Dodgers, the 22-year-old Nahem made his major league debut on October 2, the last day of the season. He pitched a complete-game six-hitter to beat the Phillies, 7–3, at Philadelphia's Shibe Park. He also went 2-for-5 and drove in a run.

Nahem returned to the minors in 1939, splitting the season with Dodgers affiliates in Montreal and Nashville. In Montreal, his manager, the future Hall of Famer Burleigh Grimes, taught Nahem the slider, which he described as "halfway between a fastball and a curve." During spring training in 1940, the media described Nahem as "a great pitching prospect" and "the very jewel of a rookie." However, in an intrasquad game, Dodgers manager Leo Durocher left Nahem in to face 19 batters and allow 14 runs in one inning, perhaps resulting in his assignment to Nashville. The move disappointed Nahem, whom the Nashville Tennessean reported considering returning to New York to practice law with his brother Joe.

Instead, Nahem arranged to be optioned to Louisville in 1940, the Red Sox's highest affiliate. Struggling with Louisville, the Dodgers traded him to St. Louis in a package to land star outfielder Joe Medwick. St. Louis assigned Nahem to its Houston farm club where he helped lead the club to a Texas League championship with an 8–6 record and league-leading 1.64 ERA. Overall he had a 51–44 record in the minors.

**Nahem's Best Season**

The Cardinals brought Nahem up to the big league club in 1941. They paid him $3,200—about $55,000 in today's dollars. Cardinals general manager Branch Rickey had a "heart to heart" talk with Nahem that helped restore his confidence. According to Nahem, Rickey told him that "he had faith in me. What a psychologist he is! He said I was his boy, and he was picking me to make good. He told me I would pitch well the rest of the season, and darned if I didn't."

Nahem recalled that when he joined the Cardinals in 1941, "I got a new concept of pitching" by watching his teammate Lon Warneke, an outstanding veteran. "I saw that it wasn't like how I pitched them: High, low, inside, outside. He threw low and inside, high and outside. He threw inside and he threw outside. This farmer had a theory of pitching far more complicated than mine, a law school graduate and bar-passer first crack. And his theory was really fascinating. Balance is everything in hitting, and if you can get the guy just a tip off balance, that really does something."

Discussing Nahem, Dodgers outfielder Roy Cullenbine told the *Brooklyn Eagle*: "With that sidearm delivery of his, he fools you. His fastball is on top of the plate before you think he's let go of the ball. Besides he's big and with that sidearm motion he somehow manages to fire the ball at you with his uniform for a background. He's tough." Cardinals catcher Gus Mancuso told The Sporting News, "Nahem is not a speed-ball pitcher like these others, but he has a better all-round variety of stuff, and fine control. He can pitch to spots, and he is smart. His slider is a real humdinger." Nahem credited Mancuso with being a big help. "I owe my steadiness and confidence to him," Nahem told the *Brooklyn Eagle*.

In his first starting assignment for the Cardinals, on April 23, 1941, Nahem showed great promise. He pitched a three-hitter, beating the Pittsburgh Pirates 3 to 1, striking out three and giving up only one walk. The *Times* called it the "Redbirds' best hurling performance of the season." That victory was the "greatest game I ever pitched in my whole career," Nahem recalled many years later. "Tell me about heaven." Explaining his accomplishment, Nahem said that the Cardinals had five rookie pitchers competing for two slots on the roster. "There's something in the blood that inspired me in certain moments."

A week later, on April 30, Nahem gave up only six hits in eight innings against the New York Giants and won his second game in a row. On May 30, against the Cincinnati Reds, he gave up only seven hits and two runs in nine innings, but after nine innings the score was tied 2–2. Manager Billy Southworth replaced him with reliever Ira Hutchinson, who gave up a run in the 13th inning and took the loss. Against the Giants at the Polo Grounds on June 7, Nahem gave up three runs in the first two innings before being removed for a reliever. The *Times* reported: "Sam Nahem, the Brooklyn barrister, was chased back to his law books in less than two rounds." On July 5, he faced the Reds again. He pitched a complete game, giving up only six hits and two runs (one unearned), but he lost to Reds' ace Johnny Vander Meer, who allowed the Cardinals only one run.

During the 1941 season, Nahem started eight games and relieved in 18. He won five games before losing two. In 81⅔ innings he registered a 2.98 ERA. Despite this excellent performance, in August the Cardinals shipped Nahem to their AA minor league team in Columbus, Ohio. Again, Nahem voiced his objections to being sent to the minors. "I am not reporting [to Columbus];" he told the Columbus team president Al Banister, according to a newspaper story. But he soon "cooled off," the paper reported. "realizing his career was at stake." He pitched five games at Columbus, went 0–2, and had a disastrous 9.41 ERA.

On February 19, 1942, the Cardinals sold Nahem to the Phillies. That season he made 35 appearances for the Phillies, posting a 1-3 won-lost record and a 4.94 ERA. After the season was over, Nahem joined the military. It looked like his pro baseball career was over, but he would have a brief encore in 1948.
A Literary Lefty

Nahem spent nine years in the minors. Nahem described the minors as "hot dusty bush leagues" characterized by "long night bus travel, small crowds, crummy food, small time love affairs." He dealt with the boredom and isolation by reading. "I read my way through those years. What does one do in Columbus, Ohio for the summer? The complete works of Honore de Balzac. What about Jeanerette, Louisiana? Of course, the complete works of Theodore Dreiser."  

Nahem would sometimes bring his books into the dugout. Hald quote Shakespeare and Guy de Maupassant in the middle of conversations. News stories about Nahem frequently emphasized his education, his legal training and erudition as well as his glasses.  

After he was assigned to Montreal, one newspaper reported: "Montreal fans will find Sam Nahem, one of the Royals' new pitchers, unusually interesting. He speaks French."  

During spring training in 1940, an Associated Press reporter wrote: "Sam wears spectacles and talks less like a ballplayer than any diamond star this reporter knows. For reading material Nahem does not devote his time to pulp magazines—the Westerns, Adventure stories and whatnot—but goes for the realistic Russians, Dostoievski, Gorki, Chekov, and Tolstoi." Nahem enjoyed his reputation as a highbrow hurler, telling the reporter, "I am a great believer in psychology and I admire the Russian outlook on life. On those days when my pitching has been horrible, I lost myself in the Russian classics. I read much more when things are going bad for me than when I'm winning."  

But Nahem insisted that "[m]y heart is wrapped up in making good in the majors. Of course, if I don't, I'll always have something to fall back on and even if I make good in the big show I can't last forever and when I'm washed up my law will be good to fall back on."  

In 1941, when Nahem was trying to make the Cardinals' roster, another Associated Press story began: "Bespectacled Sam Nahem is a scholarly gent" and "a full-fledged attorney who can spel 50-cent words in several languages and likes nothing better than a good argument with a rival batsman or on the relative importance of environment and heredity." Nahem's "black hair curling back over his high forehead gives him a professorial air, accentuated by the glasses he wears," wrote Brooklyn Eagle sports columnist Tommy Holmes, adding that with Nahem's law degree from St. John's, "the Dodgers have actually come up with a clubhouse lawyer."  

Though better-educated than most other players, Nahem's gregarious personality and boisterous sense of humor made him popular with his teammates. But occasionally Nahem's background impeded his relationships with other players. He once recalled:  

"Andy Seminick [the Phillies' catcher] really put me in my place once. He once said to me: Sam, we all know that you went to college and that you're a lawyer from New York. For heaven's sake's, Sam, I come from a coal mining family. Then I realized that I had a condescending attitude toward them. It was arrogant of me. That wasn't right because everybody is interesting in their own way and I hadn't been pursuing that. So I was well chastised."  

"It was almost detrimental to him at that age. He was almost too bookish for the jocks he was around," explained his son Ivan. "But that's who he was."  

Nahem recalled, "I wasn't a natural woman-hunter, and most players, even the successfully married ones, were skirt-chasers. They really were. I wasn't too happy at that. [But] the class of women in the big leagues was higher than in the minor leagues. That was another reason to aspire to the big leagues."  

Few of Nahem's minor league teammates had ever met a New Yorker before. Someone gave him the nickname "Subway Sam," which lasted throughout his baseball career.  

Nahem enjoyed the physical and psychological aspects of being a good athlete, but "when I became political and radicalized I tried to think of sports in political and social terms," he recalled.  

Nahem had to deal with anti-Semitism among teammates and other players. "I was aware I was a Jewish player and different from them. There were very few Jewish players at the time," Nahem said. "I don't blame the other players at all. Many of them came from where they probably had never met a Jewish person. You know, they subscribed to that anti-Semitism that was latent throughout the country. I fought it whenever I appeared. Much of it was implicit: Jews and money, Jews and selfishness." To combat the stereotypes, "I especially made sure I tipped as much or more than any other player."  

As a left-wing radical and a Jew who faced anti-Semitic bigotry, Nahem was sympathetic to the plight of African Americans.  

"I was in a strange position," he explained. "The majority of my fellow ballplayers, wherever I was, were very much against black ballplayers, and the reason was economic and very clear. They knew these guys had the ability to be up there and they knew their jobs were threatened directly and they very, very vehemently did all sorts of things to discourage black ballplayers." His views were particularly selfless, because as a marginal player he was more likely than a real star to be replaced by a black pitcher.  

Nahem talked to some of his teammates to encourage them to be more open-minded. "I did my political work there," he told an interviewer years later. "I would take one guy aside if I thought he was amiable in that respect and talk to him, man to man, about the subject. I felt that was the way I could be most effective."
"That’s why he was so political,” his daughter Joanne explained. “He believed that people deserved more, so he had a great faith in humanity.”

It is not surprising that Nahem was attracted to the Communist Party (CP). From the 1920s through the 1940s, the CP—although never even approaching 100,000 members—had a disproportionate influence in progressive and liberal circles. It attracted many idealistic Americans—including many Jews and African Americans—who were concerned about economic and racial injustice. In the U.S., the CP took strong stands for unions and women’s equality and against racism, anti-Semitism, and emerging fascism in Europe. It sent organizers to the Jim Crow South to organize sharecroppers and tenant farmers and was active in campaigns against lynching, police brutality, and Jim Crow laws. The CP led campaigns to stop landlords from evicting tenants and push for unemployment benefits. In Harlem, it helped launch the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” campaign, urging consumers to boycott stores that refused to hire black employees.

The cause of baseball’s color line was a natural for the CP. Beginning in the 1930s, the CP, along with the Negro press, civil rights groups, progressive white activists, and radical politicians, waged a sustained campaign to integrate baseball. They believed that if they could push baseball to dismantle its color line, they could make inroads in other facets of American society. It was no accident that Lester Rodney, sports editor of the CP’s Daily Worker newspaper, was one of the leading figures in the effort to integrate baseball. In 1938, the CP-led American Youth Congress passed a resolution censuring the major leagues for its exclusion of black players. In 1939, New York State Senator Charles Perry, who represented Harlem, introduced a resolution that condemned baseball for discriminating against black ballplayers. In 1940, leftist sports editors from college newspapers in New York adopted a similar resolution. Black sportswriters—particularly Wendell Smith of the Pittsburgh Courier and Sam Lacy of the Baltimore Afro-American—made baseball part of a larger crusade to confront Jim Crow laws. After the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, Negro papers enthusiastically supported the “Double V” campaign—victory over fascism overseas and over racism at home.

For several years, left-wing unions marched in May Day parades with “End Jim Crow in Baseball” signs. On July 7, 1940, the Trade Union Athletic Association, comprised of 30 left-wing unions, held an “End Jim Crow in Baseball” demonstration at the New York World’s Fair. Unions and civil rights groups picketed outside New York’s Yankee Stadium, the Polo Grounds, and Ebbets Field and Chicago’s Comiskey Park and Wrigley Field to demand an end to baseball’s color line. In June 1942, large locals of several major unions—including the United Auto Workers and the National Maritime Union, as well as the New York Industrial Union Council of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)—sent resolutions to Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Moun-

tain Landis demanding an end to baseball segregation. That December, ten leaders of the CIO, the progressive union federation, went to the winter meetings of baseball’s executives at Chicago’s Ambassador East Hotel to demand that Major League Baseball recruit black players, but Landis refused to meet with them. A year later, in December 1943, the publisher of the Chicago Defender, a leading black paper, arranged for the well-known actor, singer and activist Paul Robeson to head a delegation (that included Wendell Smith) to meet with Landis and major league owners at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. Robeson told them: "The time has come when you must change your attitude toward Negroes.... Because baseball is a national game, it is up to baseball to see that discrimination does not become an American pattern. And it should do this this year.”

It is unlikely that Nahem actively participated in many of these protests, even as he was playing pro baseball and attending law school during the off-season. He was probably the only Communist Party member on a professional baseball roster, but none of the profiles about him during his playing days referred to his left-wing politics. It is possible that he didn’t discuss his political ideas with reporters, or perhaps they liked him enough to keep his controversial views out of their stories. As Nahem recalled, “The sportswriters liked me a lot, since no matter what, I always had some cliché I could twist around for them.”

### Playing Baseball and Battling Bigotry in World War II

During World War II, the American military ran a robust baseball program at home and overseas. President Franklin Roosevelt believed it would help soldiers stay in shape and boost the country’s and the soldiers’ morale. Many professional players were in the military, so the quality of play was often excellent. After Germany surrendered in May 1945, the military expanded its baseball program while American troops remained in Europe. That year, over 200,000 American soldiers were playing baseball on military teams in France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, and Britain.

Many of the Negro Leagues’ finest ballplayers saw military service during the war, but like other African Americans they faced discrimination and humiliation as soldiers. Most black soldiers with baseball talent were confined to playing on all-black teams. Larry Doby, who would later become the first African American in the American League, was blocked from playing baseball for the Great Lakes Navy team near Chicago. When Jackie Robinson went out for the baseball team at Fort Riley, Kansas, a white player told him that the officer in charge said, “I’ll break up the team before I’ll have a nigger on it.”
Monte Irvin, a Negro League standout who later starred for the New York Giants, recalled that, "When I was in the Army I took basic training in the South. I'd been asked to give up everything, including my life, to defend democracy. Yet when I went to town I had to ride in the back of a bus, or not at all on some buses." A few African Americans played on military teams in the South Pacific, but not in other military installations.  

Nahem entered the military in November 1942. He volunteered for the infantry and hoped to see combat in Europe to help defeat Nazism. But he spent his first two years at Fort Totten in New York. While stationed there, he pitched for the Anti-Aircraft Redlegs of the Eastern Defense Command. The team was part of the Sunset League, comprised of teams from military bases in the New England area. In 1943 he set a league record with a .85 earned-run average. He also finished second in hitting with a .400 batting average and played every defensive position except catcher.  

The New York Times and other local papers reported on these military games.  

While stationed at Fort Totten, Nahem pitched in several exhibition games with current and former major leaguers serving in the military. In June 1944, he pitched in the Polo Grounds in a game to raise money for War Bonds before 30,000 spectators. On September 5, 1944, his Fort Totten team beat the major league Philadelphia Athletics by a 9–5 score in an exhibition game. Nahem not only pitched six innings, giving up only two runs and five hits, but he also slugged two homers, accounting for seven of his team's runs.  

Sent overseas in late 1944, Nahem served with an anti-aircraft artillery division. In April 1945, from his base in Reims, he was assigned to run two baseball leagues for servicemen in France, while also managing and pitching for his own team, the Overseas Invasion Service Expedition (OISE) All-Stars, which was comprised mainly of semi-pro and ex–minor league players. The All-Stars represented the Communications Zone, which controlled the flow of supplies and replacements to the combat forces at the front. Besides Nahem, only one other OISE player had major league experience—Russ Bauers, who had compiled a 29–29 won-lost record with the Pirates between 1936 and 1941. When Nahem wasn't pitching, he played first base.  

Defying the military establishment and baseball tradition, Nahem insisted on having African Americans on his team. It isn't clear whether Nahem faced any opposition from higher-ups or team members to recruiting black players. Nor is it clear how he decided which black players to recruit. The two players who joined Nahem's team were among the biggest stars in the Negro Leagues. One was Willard Brown, an outfielder with the Kansas City Monarchs and one of the Negro Leagues' most feared sluggers. The other was Leon Day, a star pitcher for the Negro National League's Newark Eagles. Day had defeated the legendary Satchel Paige in the 1942 Negro League East-West All-Star Game. One article indicates that Day joined the OISE team "late in the season." Each branch of the military, as well as the different divisions, had their own teams. The competition among the American teams in Europe was fierce. During its regular season, Nahem's OISE team won 17 games and lost only one, attracting as many as 10,000 fans to their games. Nahem beat the Navy All-Stars in England, then pitcher Bob Keane beat the same team in France, to advance the OISE team to the semi-finals. On September 1, in the semifinal round, Nahem pitched the OISE All-Stars into the European Theater of Operations championship series by beating the 66th Division team, representing the Sixteenth Corps, by a 5–4 score in 11 innings. Nahem also got four hits in five at-bats. The other team that reached the finals was the 71st Infantry Red Circlers, representing the Third Army, commanded by General George Patton. Either Patton or one of his top officers assigned St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Harry Walker (an All-Star) to assemble a team to represent the Third Army. Walker arranged for some major leaguers to be transferred to his team. Besides Walker, the Red Circlers included Cincinnati Reds’ six-foot-six inch sidewhamp pitcher Ewell “the Whip” Blackwell, Reds second baseman Benny Zientara, Pirates outfielders Johnny Wyrostek and Maurice Van Robays, Red Sox catcher Herb Bremer, Cardinals pitcher Al Brazle, Pirates pitcher Ken Heintzelman, and Giants pitcher Ken Trinkle. Against the powerful Red Circlers, few people gave Nahem’s OISE All-Stars much of a chance to win the European Theater of Operations (ETO) championship, known as the GI World Series. It took place in September, a few months after the U.S. and the Allies had defeated Germany. The OISE All-Stars and the Red Circlers played the first two games in Nuremberg, Germany, in the same stadium where Hitler had addressed Nazi Party rallies. The U.S. Army laid out a baseball diamond and renamed the stadium Soldiers’ Field.  

Blackwell pitched the Red Circlers to a 9–2 victory in the first game of the best-of-five series in front of 50,000 fans, most of them American soldiers. In the second game, Day held Patton’s Third Army all-star team to one run. Brown drove in the OISE team’s first run, and then Nahem (who was playing first base) doubled in the seventh inning to knock in the go-ahead run. OISE won the game by a 2–1 score. Day struck out 10 batters, allowed four hits and walked only two. The two teams flew to Reims, France, for the next two games. The OISE team won the third game, as the Times reported, "behind the brilliant pitching of S/Sgt. Sam Nahem," who outdueled Blackwell to win 2–1, scattering four hits and striking out six batters. In the fourth game, the Third Army’s Bill Ayers, who had pitched in the minor leagues since 1937, shut out the OISE squad, beating Day by a 5–0 score. The teams returned to Nuremberg for the deciding game on September 8,
1945, Nahem started for the OISE team in front of over 50,000 spectators. After the Red Cirlers scored a run and then loaded the bases with one out in the fourth inning, Nahem took himself out and brought in Bob Keane, who got out of the inning without allowing any more runs and completed the game. The OISE team won the game, 2–1.84

A Jewish Communist and two Negro Leaguers had helped OISE win the GI World Series. The Sporting News adorned its report on the final game with a photo of Nahem.85

Back in France, Brigadier General Charles Thrasher organized a parade and a banquet dinner, with steaks and champagne, for the OISE All-Stars. As historian Robert Weintraub noted: "Day and Brown, who would not be allowed to eat with their teammates in many major-league towns, celebrated alongside their fellow soldiers."86

After winning the ETO World Series, the OISE All-Stars traveled to Italy to play the Mediterranean Theater champions, the 92nd Infantry Division Buffaloes, an all-black division. Several of the Third Army's Red Cirlers players—including Blackwell, Heintzelman, Van Robays, Zientara, Garland Lawing, and Walker—joined Nahem's integrated OISE team.87 The OISE All-Stars beat the Buffaloes in three straight games, with Day, Keane, and Blackwell gaining the wins. Then Day switched to the all-black team and beat Blackwell and his former OISE teammates, 8–0, in Nice, France.88

One of the intriguing aspects of this episode is that, despite the fact that both Major League Baseball and the U.S. military were segregated, no major newspaper even mentioned the historic presence of two African Americans on the OISE roster. If there were any protests among the white players, or among the fans—or if any of the 71st Division's officers raised objections to having African American players on the opposing team—they were ignored by reporters. For example an Associated Press story about the fourth game simply referred to "pitcher Leon Day of Newark."89

In October 1945, a month after Nahem pitched his integrated team to victory in the GI World Series, Branch Rickey announced that Robinson had signed a contract with the Dodgers.

**Playing for the Brooklyn Bushwicks and Philadelphia Phillies**

Nahem played high-caliber baseball during his almost four-year service in the military. He was only 30 when he was discharged from military service. Major league teams were supposed to give their military veterans a chance to resume playing, but when Nahem came back from the war in early 1946, he did not return to the Phillies. Under the reserve clause, he was still the Phillies' property unless they formally released him, but there is no record that they did so. Whether the team let him know he wasn't wanted or whether Nahem decided to give up on the majors and finally start practicing law is not known.

After returning to New York, Nahem worked briefly as a law clerk and intermittently in his family's export-import business, and played baseball on weekends for a top-flight semi-pro team, the Brooklyn Bushwicks, who were on a par with, and occasionally even better than, the best minor league teams.90 The Times and other New York papers regularly covered the Bushwicks' games and Nahem's exploits on the mound. In August he pitched an 11-inning no-hitter against the Freeport Gulls, giving up only two walks and facing 35 batters, winning by a 1–0 score. It was the first no-hitter by a Bushwicks pitcher in ten years. Nahem's performance with the Bushwicks revealed that he was still an excellent pitcher, so his absence from a major league roster remains a mystery.

In June 1946, a columnist for the Nashville Tennessean reported that while pitching on Sundays for the Bushwicks, and practicing law during the week, Nahem was also a candidate for the New York State Assembly from a Brooklyn district; The Sporting News and the Chicago Tribune both published brief notes reporting Nahem's candidacy, too.91 But an article in the Brooklyn Eagle the following month reported that Nahem "has given up any idea of running for the State Assembly."92 In August, however, The Sporting News wrote that Nahem was thinking of running for Congress from Brooklyn.93 Little is known about this aspect of Nahem's life and there's no evidence that he actually ran for any office. His oldest son Ivan wasn't aware that Nahem had ever run, or considered running, for public office.94

Nahem couldn't have mounted much of a campaign because by October 1946, he was with the Bushwicks in Caracas, Venezuela, representing the United States in the Inter-American Tournament. Against teams representing Mexico, Venezuela, and Cuba, Nahem won three and lost one. He clinched the tournament title for the Bushwicks with a 7–6 win over Cuba.

Nahem was back with the Bushwicks for the 1947 season. In June, he beat the Negro Leagues' Homestead Grays, 4 to 1, striking out eight batters.95 In July he threw a six-hitter and struck out 10 hitters to beat the Memphis Red Sox, another Negro League team, 7–2.96 On October 12, 1947, he pitched the Bushwicks to a 3–0 victory with a one-hitter against the World Series All-Stars, a barnstorming team that included major leaguers Eddie Stanky, Phil Rizzuto, and Ralph Branca, who was the losing pitcher. It was his 17th win that season.97 He eventually won 21 consecutive games. During the 1946 and 1947 seasons, Nahem was 33–6 for the Bushwicks.98

During those two years, while still playing for the Bushwicks, Nahem also played for the Sunset Stars, a semi-pro team based in Newport, Rhode Island. The Stars played their games on Wednesday nights and Nahem—who
had played in the same league in 1943 while stationed at Fort Totten—was popular with the Rhode Island fans. The Stars played local Rhode Island teams as well as Negro League teams and barnstorming teams like the House of David. In a game in June 1946 against the Boston Colored Giants, a Negro league team, Nahem pitched 12 innings and struck out 22 batters, only to lose 3–2. That year he played in 16 of the Stars' 18 games and struck out 193 batters in 147 innings, posting a 1.81 earned-run average.

Nahem played winter ball with the Navegantes del Magallanes club of the Venezuelan Professional Baseball League, where he pitched 14 consecutive complete games in the 1946–47 season to set a league record that still stands today.

Nahem once explained that he made more money playing for the Brooklyn Bushwicks, the Sunset Stars, and the Venezuelan club in the same year than he made as a major league pitcher.

At the start of 1948, Nahem was still pitching with the Bushwicks. But by April, the Phillies beckoned again, and he began another brief fling in the major leagues. On April 30, his first game that season in a Phillies uniform, he pitched two innings in relief against the Dodgers, allowing only one hit but walking five batters and giving up four runs.

The Phillies were one of baseball's most racist teams, known for its verbal abuse toward Jackie Robinson in his rookie season the previous year. Their manager, Ben Chapman, gained notoriety for his vicious taunting of Robinson and was still managing the team during the first half of the 1948 season.

Years later, Nahem recalled that “[Chapman] left me in once to take a real beating. When you're a racist you are also an anti-Semitic. Some reporters asked him about it, whether he kept me in there for some reason other than the demands of the game. He denied that it was anti-Semitism."

"I was very much for Jackie Robinson and at one point I tried to counter some of this racist stuff openly," Nahem recounted. "One of the southerners was fulminating in the clubhouse in a racist way and I made some halfway innocuous remark defending blacks coming in to baseball. Boy, he went into a real tantrum and really came down on me. So I decided I would not confront anyone openly. Your prestige on a ballclub depends on your won-lost record and your earned-run average. I didn't have that to back me up. I only had logic and decency and humanity. So after that I would just speak to some of the guys privately about racism in a mild way."

In one game, Nahem threw a pitch that almost hit Roy Campanella, the Dodgers' African American rookie catcher. "He had come up that year and had been thrown at a lot, although there was absolutely no reason why I would throw at him," Nahem recalled. "A ball escaped me, which was not unusual, and went toward his head. He got up and gave me such a glare. I felt so badly about it I felt like yelling to him, 'Roy, please, I really didn't mean it. I belong to the NAACP.'"

During the 1948 season Nahem won three and lost three games for the Phillies, in relief, on a team that had its sixteenth straight losing season, finishing sixth in the National League. He pitched his last major league game on September 11, 1948, giving up one hit and one run, and striking out two batters in the ninth inning against the Boston Braves. A week later, the Phillies released him.

During four seasons spread over ten years, Nahem pitched 224⅔ innings in 90 major league games. Plagued with control problems, he struck out 101 batters but walked 127.

Nahem took full advantage of his pitching repertoire. Nahem was one of the few—and possibly the only—big league pitcher who threw exclusively overhand to left-handed batters (mostly curves and fastballs) and exclusively sidearm to right-handed hitters (mostly sliders and fastballs). Not surprisingly for a right-handed pitcher, he performed better against right-handed batters (who hit .232 against him during his major league career) than left-handed hitters (.307).

Nahem was grateful for the friendships, experiences, and notoriety that his baseball career provided. But looking back, he noted that he wasn't very happy in his major league days. Part of it was a matter of lifestyle. "We traveled a lot; we didn't have a stable place to stay." Another part was his failure to live up to his expectations. "One day I'd pitch OK in relief, the next day they hit the shit out of me. It's hard to be happy in something you're doing in just a mediocre way."

He once said: "I often wish that God had given me movement on my fastball, but he didn't." In another interview, he observed, "I had just-above-mediocre stuff, just enough to flash at times." He particularly regretted that, even as a big leaguer, he never received the mentoring that could have helped him improve his pitching. Long after he retired, he learned that coaches for opposing teams noticed that he tipped his pitches—he raised his arms higher during the windup when throwing a curve—but his own coaches had never spotted this flaw. "If I had some decent coaches, they would have spotted it, too," Nahem said.

Looking back on his major league career, Nahem wistfully observed that "if I executed what I understand now, I could have been quite a decent pitcher. I had enough stuff to be a fairly good pitcher. ... I was a smart pitcher out there, but at the last second, I wouldn't have confidence in my control, so I would forget to pitch high or low or outside and just try to get it over the plate." In a revealing exchange, he once asked Phillies teammate Robin Roberts, a future Hall of Fame pitcher, if he was ever scared when he was on the mound, Roberts said he wasn't. "That is what really pisses me off," Nahem responded. "I'm scared stiff out there!"

Despite his trepidation on the mound, Nahem kept his sense of humor.
intact. While with the Phillies, he was brought in as a reliever to face three of the Cardinals' best hitters—Red Schoendienst, Enos Slaughter, and Stan Musial. He retired Schoendienst and then signaled Philadelphia first baseman Dick Sisler to come to the mound. As Roberts recalled, "We all saw Dick laughing while he trotted back to first. After the inning was over Dick said that Sam had told him, 'I got the first guy, you want to try these next two?"

After leaving the Phillies, Nahem pitched briefly for the San Juan team in the Puerto Rican League at the end of 1948. Then he rejoined the Bushwicks for the 1949 season. He won seven games in a row by the end of June and finished the season with a 10–7 record. That season he still occasionally played for the Sunset Stars. He was so popular with the local fans that the local paper, the *Newport Mercury*, published a story about his wedding headlined "Sam Nahem Marries New York Commercial Artist." On June 10, 1949, the paper reported: "After playing in the 13-inning game Wednesday which ran past midnight Nahem caught the 2:10 train at Providence and arrived in New York three hours before his wedding."

In August, Nahem's Stars lost to the Boston Colored Giants, a Negro league team, but he struck out seven batters and got three hits in five at-bats. He pitched his final game for the Bushwicks in October, then hung up his spikes.

**Starting Over After Baseball**

By the time Nahem ended his playing career, the Cold War was in full swing, casting a chill on American radicals, but he remained a committed leftist. Just as he had participated in radical causes during the 1930s, like raising money for the anti-fascists during the Spanish Civil War, Nahem continued his political activism. In 1949, at age 34, he married art student Elsie Hanson, whom he'd met at a Communist Party–sponsored concert and fundraiser.

In 1950, his name appeared in *The New York Times* on a list of candidates running for the New York State Assembly from New York City as the candidate of the American Labor Party (ALP), a left-leaning group whose most prominent member was Congressman Vito Marcantonio. Perhaps the ALP thought that his fame as a former ballplayer would garner votes. Whether he actually campaigned for the seat isn't known, but he didn't win. In 1951, according to his son Ivan, he participated in protests against the controversial convictions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were sentenced to death for being Soviet spies.

During that period, he worked briefly as a law clerk in New York. Nahem said that he wanted to practice civil liberties law, but that the jobs in that field were dominated by graduates of Ivy League law schools, stiff competition for a graduate of St. John's School of Law. During the Cold War, even organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union, much less mainstream law firms, were wary of hiring lawyers with left-wing views, especially Communists.

"He went into the law thinking he'd be Clarence Darrow," his son Ivan explained, "but he was soon disillusioned and bored, and quit." He worked briefly for his family's import business as a door-to-door salesman, and as a longshoreman unloading banana boats on New York's docks.

Like many leftists during the 1950s Red Scare, the FBI kept tabs on Nahem. FBI agents would show up at his workplaces and tell his bosses that he was a Communist. He lost several jobs as a result. It isn't clear when their surveillance of him began or ended, but as late as 1961—six years after he had moved to California and was working in a chemical fertilizer plant while serving as a leader in his local union—the FBI was still keeping a file on him.

To escape the Cold War witch-hunting, and to start life anew, Nahem, his wife Elsie, and their two children (Ivan, born in 1950, and Joanne, born in 1953) moved to the San Francisco area in 1955, settling first in Mill Valley, and then blue-collar Richmond in the East Bay. A third child, Andrew, was born in 1961. Elsie found work as a commercial artist.

Nahem got a job at the Chevron fertilizer plant in Richmond, owned by the Standard Oil corporation. During most of his 25 years at Chevron (over twice the time he spent playing pro baseball), he worked a grueling schedule—two weeks on midnight shift, two weeks on day shift, then two weeks on swing shift. By 1957, like many other Communists, Nahem and Elsie became disillusioned with Russia's stifling of democracy in Eastern Europe and within its own borders, and left the Communist Party. But he remained an activist. He served as head of the safety committee for the Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers International Union at the Richmond plant. He was often offered management positions, but he refused to take them, preferring to remain loyal to his coworkers and his union. He ended as head operator, the best job he could get and still stay in the union.

Nahem liked to relax by watching football and baseball on television and passing on his enthusiasm for sports to his kids. "When I was a kid," son Ivan recalled, "some of my best times with him were playing catch."

While still working at Chevron, Nahem moved to nearby Berkeley in 1964. That year the Free Speech Movement started on the nearby University of California–Berkeley campus and the town became a hotbed of radicalism. Despite his grueling work schedule, Nahem immersed himself in the new wave of activism. He took his children to civil rights and anti-war demonstrations. His son Ivan recalled Nahem hosting lots of dinner parties where the talk was all about politics. In 1969, Nahem helped lead a strike among Chevron workers that attracted support from the Berkeley campus radicals.
After he retired from Chevron in 1980, he volunteered at the University Art Museum and frequented a Berkeley coffee shop, where he loved engaging in political discussions with local students, artists, and activists. After George Bush defeated Al Gore for president in 2000, Nahem told a nephew: “For much of my adult life I’ve seen the working class vote against their long-term interests. This is the first time I’ve seen them vote against their short-term interests.”

Nahem’s wife died of cancer in 1974. He never remarried, but he had a long-term relationship with Nancy Shafsky. He died on April 19, 2004, in Berkeley at age 88. Nahem was survived by his three children and three grandchildren. His older sister Victoria married a man named Abraham Silvera. They had a son, Aaron Albert (Al) Silvera, who played in 14 games for the Cincinnati Reds in 1955 and 1956, making Nahem the uncle of another major leaguer.

Nahem was proud of his accomplishments on the diamond, which gave him a lifetime of memories and stories that he shared with his friends and family.

“I loved the feeling of a baseball in my hand, and the perfect meeting of the bat with the ball was the nearest thing to an orgasm,” he wrote in his autobiographical essay during his later years. “In both you are disembodied, weightless.”

Although he often talked about his days as a major league pitcher, he rarely discussed the accomplishment that best combined his athletic talent and his political views—his role in integrating military baseball.

Notes
1. The author wishes to thank Ivan Nahem, Beladee Nahem Griffis, Joel Isaacs, David Nemec, Bill Nowlin, Robert Elias, Mike Lynch, Robert Weinstaub, Rory Costello, Warren Corbett, Lee Lowenschaid, Shawn Hennessy, Isaac Silvera, John and Dan Wormhoudt, Colleen Bradley-Sanders (Brooklyn College archivist), and Matt Goldenberg and Cassady Lent (Baseball Hall of Fame librarians) for their help.
2. Email from Sam Bernstein, June 5, 2018.
3. According to Koufax’s best friend, Fred Wilpon (who would later own the New York Mets): “The greatest hero in Sandy’s life was his grandfather. And his grandfather was a socialist with high intellectual values and goals and ideals. And I think Sandy learned from that. Baseball players at that time were chauvin. He didn’t think that was right.” Sam Lefkowitz, Sandy Koufax: A Lefty’s Legacy, New York: Perennial, 2003, 207.
5. Email from Beladee Nahem Griffis, January 7, 2018.
15. During his playing career, many news stories about Nahem reported that he graduated from Brooklyn College, but research by Brooklyn College archivist Colleen Bradley-Sanders indicates that he left Brooklyn College in 1935 after his sophomore year. Colleen Bradley-Sanders, email message to author, May 25, 2018.
16. “Priest, Pitcher, Cop Pass Tests for Bar,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 23, 1938; George Kirskey, “Dodger Fans May Demand Nahem Plead Own Defense,” Nashville Tennessean, March 7, 1940 (United Press). At the time it was possible to earn a law school without completing an undergraduate degree.
17. Nahem’s Baseball-Reference.com minor league stats page (https://www.baseball-reference.com/register/player.fcgi?tid=nahem-0001s) does not contain this information, but his contract cards in the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s Major League Contract Card Collection clearly state he played for Allentown and Jerseyette under the assumed name “S. Nichols,” perhaps to maintain amateur eligibility. Minor league statistics for these years can be found on Baseball-Reference.com by searching the names “S. Nichols” and “Sam Nichols,” which may be the names used in statistical guides of the period.
19. Nahem’s minor league contract cards state that he was recalled by Brooklyn from Elmhurst on July 15, 1938, but the recall was not announced in newspapers until September 1938. Nahem and some of his teammates were not to join Brooklyn until the conclusion of Elmhurst’s play-off run, according to “Potter, Nahem, Fallon, Gaddy” Join Dodgers After Play-Offs,” Elmhurst Star-Gazette, September 6, 1938, 16. Over two weeks later, it was reported that Nahem would not join Brooklyn until the spring, as the Dodgers had reached their player limit through other recalls, according to “Harry O’Donnell, Sports Shorts Assembled on the Premises,” Elmhurst Star-Gazette, September 24, 1938, 9.
22. Nahem is called “a great pitching prospect” in Roscoe McGowan, “Mungo of Dodgers Bunt on Comeback; The New York Times, February 18, 1940, and he is called “the very jewel of a rookie” in Stanley Frank, New York Post, February 22, 1940. The article is in Nahem’s clippings file at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, but the article’s headline is missing.
24. Kirskey, “Dodger Fans May Demand Nahem Plead Own Defense.”
27. Ehrsson with Abramovitz, Jewish Major Leaguers in Their Own Words.
Sam Nahem (Dreher)


58. Silber, Press Box Red.


67. Captain Robert H. Wormhoudt from Iowa helped Nahem organize the OISE All-Stars, although it is unclear what his role was; he did not play on the team. The Des Moines Register reported that "It was be [Wormhoudt] who organized the OISE base nine, which won the G.I. world series from the Third Army's 71st Division team, 3 games to 2, last fall." See Sec Taylor, "Stillin' In with the Athletes," Des Moines Register, January 27, 1946. Wormhoudt's sons John and Dan knew nothing about their father's involvement with baseball during the war. But in a phone interview Dan explained that his father grew up in and around Des Moines, dropped out of the University of Chicago, and in the early 1930s moved back to Iowa, where
he worked as a union organizer in a steel mill in Davenport. According to Dan Wornhoudt, his father was a member of, or close to, the Communist Party and remained a radical for the rest of his life. He also loved literature and later became a published poet. Nahem pitched for the Dodgers’ minor league team in Clinton, Iowa, during the 1937 season, so it is possible that these two radicals met in Iowa and then joined forces when they were both stationed in Reims, France eight years later to pull together the OISE team. It is more likely, however, that they met for the first time in France. Both were stationed in Reims as part of the anti-aircraft artillery division. They shared political views and literary tastes, so it wouldn’t be surprising that they met each other and became friends. After the war, Wornhoudt moved to New York City to work in broadcasting, but was blacklisted during the McCarthy era and moved to California, where he eventually became manager of public relations for Disneyland. Phone conversations with John Wornhoudt (June 12, 2018) and Dan Wornhoudt (June 22, 2018), email from Dan Wornhoudt (June 23, 2018).


71. Sec Taylor, "Sittin’ in with the Athletes," Des Moines Register, January 27, 1946.

72. "70th Anniversary of the 1945 ETO World Series," An Associated Press story in the Des Moines Register a few months later claimed that the OISE team was 37-3 that season. See Sec Taylor, "Sittin’ in with the Athletes," Des Moines Register, January 27, 1946.

73. "70th Anniversary of the 1945 ETO World Series."  


75. Blackwell was one of the strongest opponents of baseball integration and Jackie Robinson. Ramperstad, Jackie Robinson, 183; Roger Kahn, Rickey and Robinson: The True Untold Story of the Integration of Baseball (New York: Rodale, 2014), 255.

76. The stadium’s playing surface was so big that it fit a baseball diamond, a soccer field and a football field. German POWs had to be recruited to build extra bleachers to accommodate the large crowd. Putting a baseball field in Hitler’s stadium was a powerful symbol. "We had a conqueror’s frame of mind," recalled one American soldier. "The Germans had surrendered unconditionally, and this proved it." See Weintraub, The Victory Season. See also, Raymond Daniel, "Nezi Shrine in Nuremberg Stadium Now Serves as a Ball Field for GI’s," The New York Times, June 28, 1945.


81. Contemporary accounts of the final game agree that Keane took over for Nahem in the fourth inning and pitched the rest of the game, and that Richardson knocked in Smyda for the winning run. See OISE Base Takes GI World Series: 50,000 See All-Stars Defeat Third Army by 3-2 in Ninth Inning of Deciding Game, "The New York Times," September 9, 1945; "All Stars Win European Title in GI Playoff," The Sporting News, September 13, 1945; and "Oise Nine Captures ETO Baseball Crown," London Stars and Stripes, September 10, 1945. The account on the Baseball in Wartime website agrees with these accounts. The accounts in Weintraub’s The Victory Season (p. 60) and in SABR's profile of Russ Bauer (https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/4c6eac97) report that Bauer came in to relieve Nahem. But Bauer relieved Day in the fourth game for five and two-thirds innings, making it unlikely that he would have pitched in the next game. http://www.baseballinwartime.com/player_biographies/bauer_runs.htm. The Victory Season also has a different account of the OISE win. He writes that Nahem put Leon Day in the game as a pinch runner in the seventh inning and that Day stole quickly to second, then stole third base, and then raced home on a shallow fly ball, tying the score. It also reports that Willard Brown knocked in the winning run in the eighth inning. I've found no other accounts of the final game that corroborate this version of events. In an email to me on December 26, 2017, Weintraub generously acknowledged that his account of that game is probably right, that the final game was won in the seventh inning, and that Day was the winning pitcher. In their, "Basketball Pleasure Evening," The Sporting News, September 13, 1945.

82. "All Stars Win European Title in GI Playoff," The Sporting News, September 13, 1945.

83. Weintraub, The Victory Season.

84. There's no record of how Walker, an Alabaman, felt about playing on a team with two black players or about competing against other all-black teams. In the McCarthy era, he and his brother Fred "Dixie" Walker, a Dodgers outfielder, were unhappy when the Dodgers brought Jackie Robinson to the big leagues. Accounts vary about whether the grumbling by the Walker brothers and other players (particularly those, like Harry, who played for the Cardinals) evolved into a plan by some players to go on strike rather than play against Robinson. If such a plan was ever hatched, it quickly fizzled, but both Walker brothers were branded as racists and were both soon traded. Years later, Harry Walker was asked about the incident but avoided a direct answer. "Nothing was ever concrete on it," he said. "There was a rumor spread through the whole thing. And everybody was involved to a point, but that was never done." George Vecsey, Star Musial: An American Life (New York: ESPN, 2011), cited in http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/3b6b3068sdddnopt4sym. The players' rebellion against Robinson is described in Lowenfish, Branch Rickey, Ramperstad, Jackie Robinson, Kahn, Rickey & Robinson, and Tygier, Baseball’s Great Experiment. Kahn claims that Dixie Walker explained the secret plan to him in detail. Corbett disputes the existence of a players strike against Robinson in Warren Corbett, "The Strike Against Jackie Robinson: Truth or Myth?" Baseball Research Journal, Spring 2017. https://sabr.org/research/strike-against-jackie-robinson-truth-or-myth.


87. Founded in 1917, the Bushwicks fielded an ethnically mixed team that included many future and former major leaguers, frequently played exhibition games with major league players, and regularly scheduled games with Negro league teams, which helped pave the way for baseball's eventual racial integration in 1947. Advertising "Big League Baseball at Workingman's Rates," their games attracted an average of 15,000 paying fans for Sunday doubleheaders in the 1930s and 1940s. The team folded in 1951. Thomas Barthel, Baseball's Peerless Semipro: The Brooklyn Bushwicks of Dexter Park (Haworth, NJ: Saint Johann Press, 2009).

88. Red O'Donnell, "Top O' the Morning," Nashville Tennessean, June 2, 1946. O'Donnell wrote, "Sam Nahem, former Nashville Vol pitcher, is a candidate for assemblyman from New York.... Lawyer Nahem is no longer in organized baseball, but pitches on Sundays for the Bushwicks, Flatbush semi-pro nine.... Sam attended the Vine Street Temple while with the Dellers; "Errors Cost Mort Fourth Loss," The Sporting News, June 26, 1946; Arch Ward, "In the Wake of the News," Chicago Tribune, July 18, 1946. It is possible that The Sporting News and Tribune articles simply picked up the story of Nahem's candidacy from O'Donnell's column.


91. Sam’s younger brother Joe was also an outstanding athlete. Like Sam, he played baseball and football at Brooklyn College. He was a year behind Sam at Brooklyn College but graduated from St. John’s law school in 1937, a year before Sam. In 1937, while Sam was in his third year in the minor leagues, Joe signed a contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers and pitched that season with their Class-D minor team, the Redville Luckies in Redville, North Carolina. The Brooklyn Eagle reported that in his debut with the team he pitched a five hitter, winning the game, 5-2. In 1940 and 1941, Joe pitched for the semi-pro Queens Club in the same league.


106. Roberts and Rogers, *The White Kids*, 51. This story was also recounted by Nahem’s son Ivan, who explained: “For Sam, this was an unpardonable error. He wanted to apologize, but baseball protocol prohibited any show of remorse.” According to official records, Nahem only faced Campamella once that season—on August 17. He came in to relieve in the sixth inning and struck Campanella out. It is likely that Nahem threw the errant pitch to Campanella during that at-bat. http://www. retrosheet.org/boxsets/1948/BO08107FPII1948.htm.


112. Ephross with Abramowitz, *Jewish Major Leaguers in Their Own Words*.


114. Ephross with Abramowitz, *Jewish Major Leaguers in Their Own Words*.

115. Ephross with Abramowitz, *Jewish Major Leaguers in Their Own Words*.


125. Ephross with Abramowitz, *Jewish Major Leaguers in Their Own Words*.


127. In early 2018, Nahem’s son Ivan requested copies of his father’s FBI file. The FBI
sent him II pages of his father's file and indicated that other records had been destroyed. Among the records sent to Ivan Nahem, a memo from the FBI's San Francisco office dated October 31, 1960, indicates the Nahem was under surveillance at least since January 1956. (It is likely that the FBI was tracking him before that, when he was still living in New York.) The memo notes that Nahem was a member of the Communist Party and that he was an elected member of the Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers International Union's safety committee at the Standard Oil plant in Richmond. It appears that the FBI was trying to determine if Nahem's membership in the Communist Party and his leadership position in the union violated the union's by-laws.

128. Email from Joel Isaacs, November 26, 2017.