
JUNE 2021 | ISSUE 7

Joyce's Journal

A monthly dispatch from Joyce A. Miller, Writer



MORE BIRTHDAYS!

I know in the May newsletter I wrote about Joe and Pearl having birthdays. But June is my birthday month so I'm talking about birthdays again! For my birthday coming up on June 6th, I have two special requests. You all know how much I love birthdays! First, I want you to buy a book for YOURSELF! Something fun, and read it during the month of June. You don't have to tell me what you chose but I would love to know. Second, I would love to get mail from you. It doesn't have to be a birthday card. It could be a letter, photo, recipe, drawing, poem, pressed flower--whatever it is, I'll be delighted! Words--reading them and writing them--are magic. I can think of no better birthday gift than knowing that others are reading and writing in celebration of my birthday.

Joe's friend and war buddy, Johnny Miljus also had a June birthday, June 30, 1895. He was born in the Lawrenceville section of Pittsburgh. Nicknamed the Big Serb and Jovo, he was likely the first American Serb to play baseball.

A GLIMPSE OF
WHAT'S INCLUDED:

**The Inside Game's
review of Joe Harris,
the Moon!**

I sent my first draft of my greyhound memoir to a friend to read and comment on. Hopefully she'll have it back to me by the end of June so I can continue to work on it!

I'm giving away three signed copies of **Joe Harris, the Moon** on Goodreads this month for my birthday. If you don't have your copy yet or if you need a copy for a Father's Day gift, please check it out.

As the bonus for the June newsletter, I'm enclosing a copy of SABR's Deadball Era Subcommittee review of my book they did for their May newsletter, **The Inside Game**. Overall, it's a positive review but the reviewer did point out that I made some factual errors. Please forgive me!

I live in the Church Hill section of Richmond, VA with my husband and my retired racing greyhound. Before I started writing, I worked for 30 years at a nuclear physics research laboratory.

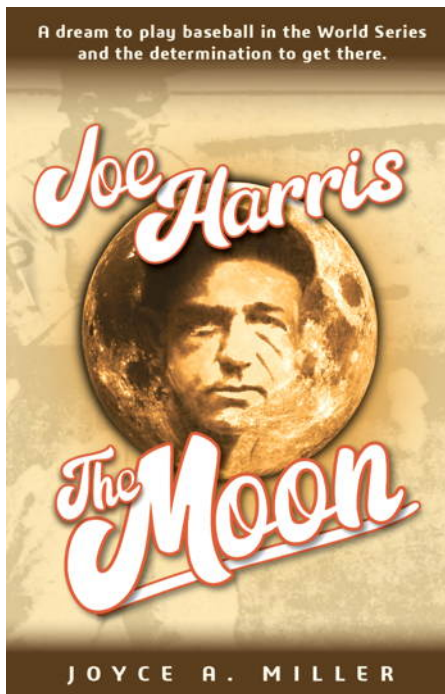
Show up and shine!



JOYCE A. MILLER, WRITER

www.joyceamiller.com

@JOYCEAMILLERWRITER on Instagram



JOE HARRIS, THE MOON

By Joyce A. Miller

2020, Joyce A. Miller
[ISBN 978-1-5381-7354963-0-
6.198 PP. \$15.00 USD, Soft-
cover]

Reviewed by
T.S. Flynn
tsflynn@mac.com

Joe Harris, The Moon is a novelized biography of the author's great uncle, the eponymous ballplayer from southwest Pennsylvania coal country whose playing career spanned 20 seasons, including 10 in the major leagues. Told chronologically, the novel is organized into short chapters titled by year and covering events from 1903 through 1932. The final chapter, "1959," serves as an epilogue.

The reader is introduced to Harris on the day he began his working life at age 12, tending

to one of several mules that pulled carts in and out of a coal mine. The hardscrabble experience and the short evenings between the boy's shifts are conveyed with a breezy, easy-to-read tone that tends toward romanticization. The language and style are appropriate for readers of any age.

Harris's life story is quite interesting. After toiling in the mine for nine years and playing amateur ball on the side, Joe's big break came at age 21 when a St. Louis Browns scout helped him land a contract with the Class D Bay City club of the Southern Michigan League for the 1913 season. A two-game tryout with the New York Yankees interrupted his 1914 season with Bay City. He failed to impress manager Frank Chance and returned to Michigan to finish the season.

Following two subsequent seasons with the Chattanooga Lookouts, Harris earned a second shot at the big time with Cleveland in 1917. This time, he proved to be a capable major leaguer, but when the season ended Harris enlisted in the Army and soon found himself in the trenches of France fighting in the Great War. This is the most compelling section of the book. A bona fide combat hero, Sergeant Harris led his unit in battle and even saved a wounded soldier named Johnny Miljus who was shot in the shoulder and fell in no-man's land. Harris and Miljus would reunite in 1927, when both suited up for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Harris survived the hor-

ror of combat only to be badly injured when he caught a ride in an overcrowded ambulance that lost control and crashed into a ditch. Harris suffered a skull fracture and several broken ribs, delaying his return to the States by a month.

Harris rejoined the Indians in 1919 and played surprisingly well considering the extent of his injuries. Insulted by a \$5,000 offer for the 1920 season and, according to the novel, disappointed with teammates who agreed to throw the inconsequential final game of the season, he looked elsewhere for employment. An independent club in Franklin, Pennsylvania, half of a two-team industrial league, matched Cleveland's \$5,000 offer and sweetened the deal with an apartment and an ownership stake in a pool hall. The arrangement provided security until the team folded just two years later. Harris then became the first player reinstated to Organized Baseball by Commissioner Kenesaw Landis, and was acquired by the Boston Red Sox.

The novel's accounts of Harris's major league seasons are brief, highlighting his exploits in a game or two per season, as he drifts from Boston to stints with Washington, Pittsburgh, and, finally, Brooklyn. There is no mention of his 1929 season with the Pacific Coast League's Sacramento Senators or his brief stint with the 1931 Buffalo Bisons of the International League. Instead, his tenure with the 1930-31 Toronto

Maple Leafs, also an IL club, is presented as his swan song. It's a comfortable choice for closing the story of his baseball career, as Harris was reunited with his former Cleveland teammate, Toronto manager Steve O'Neil.

Unfortunately, several factual errors afflict *Joe Harris, the Moon*. For example, descriptions of the 1914 New York Yankees uniforms in the novel match those worn by the 1914 New York Giants, and Harris's two-game Yankees tryout — which took place in Chicago

and St. Louis — happens in New York in the novel. The most glaring error in the book is the description of Walter Johnson's 1925 World Series Game Three shutout as a no-hitter. The tone, language, and lack of accurate detail make *Joe Harris, the Moon* a light and somewhat entertaining introduction to an overlooked personality in baseball history.

T.S. Flynn is a White Sox fan living in Twins territory. He is an educator and a member of the Halsey Hall SABR Chapter.