



Between You and Me

BY ED BANG

BUTTON! Button! Who's got the button!" There were occasions when I was a wee youngster I hunted high and low in an effort to find "the button." At the moment, however, if I were in quest of any particular button, I'd hie my way to Hotel Carter where the National Button Society is holding its annual gathering and exhibition of buttons, buttons and more buttons, under the sponsorship of the Ohio Button Society.

You're inquisitive, eh? Want to know how come I am bringing the collection of thousands upon thousands of buttons—the value of which it would be difficult to even guess at—into my sports column. Well, I guess you'll have to give the blame (no, that's not the word), rather, the idea, to Charles A. Otis, better known as "Tot" and "Mr. Cleveland."

Charley owned The News when I came to Cleveland back in 1907 and our close friendship and admiration has lasted down through the years. It was Tot who suggested to Mrs. Robert Montgomery, 2096 E. 96th St., president of the Cleveland Button Society and director of public relations for the national gathering, and Mrs. Henry Green, 3531 Bainbridge Rd., Cleveland Heights, who models the gowns of a century gone, dangling 999 buttons from her expressive hands, to recruit me for the cause.

There you have my button background of the present before you, but I must enlighten you as to my old background of many years ago, and I'm not referring to the time when boys were lucky to have two buttons on their trousers to hook their hawsers to.

"No, folks, I go back to other days, brighter days in silks, satins and, believe it or not, ruffles. Imagine Bang bedecked in an outfit of that sort today. It showed my youthful manly figure to every advantage. That was the case in my late teens and early twenties. I wore tight silk, knee-length, black pants. My shirt (or was it just a dickey?) had ruffles all down the front. My coat was of brilliant purple satin with stockings to match. Oh yes, and less I forget, the cuffs of my shirt, which projected from the sleeves, were of lace.

Briefly, those were the days when I was an amateur Thespian, appearing in the hero role time and again in theatricals for a beloved priest, Father Lamb, on the West Side in Sandusky. I flattered myself I was good because, at all events, my services were in demand and the shows made money for the parish.

Yes, my dear readers, that was the era when I first became acquainted with buttons de luxe, the sort that one can find in profusion at the National Button Society exhibit at Hotel Carter. I saw similar buttons there yesterday and I guess I became a little nostalgic when I do many buttons of bright hue, which in my day didn't cost too much, but which are of incalculable value today.

Of Course, No Button Exhibit Would Be Complete Without Baseball Represented

Then, too, wise old Charley (Beg pardon, Tot, I mean young) tipped the ladies off I might embellish the tremendous National Society collection of buttons with something distinctly out of the ordinary, namely working press buttons handed to members of the Fourth Estate as credentials for the annual world's baseball series. Once again Charley was right.

I called Max Rosenblum, who always inherited my baseball classic buttons, and with those I had on hand, turned over quite a number.

A 1917 New York National League button brings back thoughts of Heinie Zimmerman chasing Eddie Collins across home plate in the series the Chicago White Sox beat the New York Giants. The 1918 Boston Red Sox button was emblematic of the "work or fight" order for everybody, including ball players, but hostilities were well in hand and the series was played, Boston beating the Chicago Cubs. The 1919 Chicago White Sox emblem recalls the "Black Sox" series which was thrown to Cincinnati. Cleveland and Brooklyn buttons from 1920 are on display, the Indians winning that event.

Next in line are the '23 souvenirs of the two New York clubs, Yankees prevailing. One '24 button is of the Washington Senators, who downed the Giants in seven games, and also the Giants' emblem. The Yankees' 1926 button didn't mascot them to victory, for the St. Louis Cardinals beat them, with old Grover Cleveland Alexander starring. It was the other way around in '27 and '28 for the Yanks, who humbled the Pittsburgh Pirates and Cards. A '28 Cardinal button is also displayed. The Chicago Cubs' '29 emblem failed them, for the Philadelphia Athletics smothered them in five games.

There are emblems of the Cards (1930) and Athletics (1931), the Mackmen winning the first series while John Martin, "The Wild Horse of Osage," went crazy at bat and wild on the bases to win the '31 event. The '32 button of the Yanks proved a charm for they won four straight from the Cubs and the late Babe Ruth called his homer.

Both New York and Washington are represented by series buttons for '33, the Giants winning. In '34 the Tigers collided with the Cards and lost, so their press emblem wasn't as lucky as that of the St. Louis crowd, but the following year it was, for the Tigers beat the Cubs. There are others, of course, but the ultra important buttons are of the '48 series in which the Indians bested the Braves from Boston.

Eddie McAuley came through with four All-Star Game buttons, 1946 at Fenway Park, Boston; 1947, Wrigley Field, Chicago; 1948, Sportsman's Park, St. Louis; 1949, Ebbets Field, Brooklyn. Also world's series buttons for three classics between the Yankees and Dodgers in '41, '47 and '49 (six buttons), all three being won by New York; the 1940 series which Cincinnati won from Detroit; the all-city '44 series between the Browns and Cardinals in St. Louis, won by the Cards; the '45 classic won by the Tigers over the Cubs.

That's it, folks, and I recommend a visit to the Carter Hotel, not only to see the world's series buttons, but those ultra valuable buttons that go back for decades and a century and more.

P.S.: Yes, Tot, I'll be seeing you at the National Button Society luncheon Saturday, and I hope you'll dig up a few buttons that you wore in the early '70s.