

“Bigotry is Bad for Business”: The Desegregation of Spring Training
Camps in the Minnesota Twins Organization, 1960-1964.

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Abstract

The 1960s saw the beginning of the most difficult yet most progressive time for the civil rights movement. In 1960, young African-Americans and college students from across the country started a new movement amidst the civil rights movement; that of a non-violent movement. These new activists pushed the civil rights movement into overdrive, resulting in some of the most violent and shocking race events that the United States had ever seen. This new movement cast a large shadow over another rights issue in America: that of the integration of spring training camps in professional baseball. The issues that black players faced in spring training were quite similar to those blacks faced in society across America. In order for America to fully integrate, baseball's spring training camps needed to be integrated as well. If it could not do that, then America would have to face a harsh reality: that its past-time would be forever tainted by discrimination and bigotry towards its own citizens.

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Introduction

The 1960s was a time of turmoil for all Americans. The civil rights movement, although just in its actions, was causing societal upheaval in all parts of the country. The push for desegregation was not something that the whole country was prepared to handle after nearly a hundred years of white social supremacy. In the south, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was staging sit-ins and voter registrations. Such demonstrations were met with police violence and later, private acts of violence against activists and their leaders. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons, or NAACP, was fighting an internal battle. They were not using non-violent tactics, but rather fighting from the inside in trying to gain rights as citizens of the United States. Such rights had been denied to them ever since emancipation almost 100 years ago.

With all this conflict from the civil rights movement, how had it affected mainstream America? The entire country was still up at arms about integration in education and military and there were no signs of slowing down. In professional sports, with the breaking of baseball's color barrier by Jackie Robinson in 1947, all racial issues seemed to settle with the sport. It was true that black athletes were able to play, but they would not be completely accepted by fans, players, and coaches until at least 30 years into the future. One of the major issues with baseball's integration was the way black athletes were accepted by towns on the road. One might argue that the Milwaukee Braves' players had no issues during their home games, but what would happen once they hit the road? Would they be accepted in baseball towns across the south as they had been in the north? Jackie Robinson was not openly welcomed in his first trip

to Dodgers spring training. He was not afforded the same luxurious accommodations as the white players on the team, such as a lavish hotel room with some of the nicest service in the city. He was afforded almost nothing that the white players were every year for spring training. This was also an issue in 1960 for the newly formed Minnesota Twins.

Teams with black players on the rosters often ran into difficulties on the road. The state of Florida was one of two states (the other being Arizona) that held the majority of professional baseball's spring training camps. In Florida, the majority of teams leased the use of baseball fields in a number of cities. The Yankees were one exception to this rule, as they had their own training facility. The rest of the teams then had to deal with the bothersome task of finding housing accommodations and fields to practice and play on. Although teams had been coming down to Florida for years, the fields on which they played finally became an issue. Such issues came with black players and hotels in the South. Many of the communities in Florida that held baseball's spring training camps still instituted strict systems of segregation. Often times, the black players would not be allowed to practice at the same times as whites, or even practice on the same fields. This was only one of the issues.

Another major issue was the housing situation. White players stayed in the luxurious hotels that their teams often paid for. However, some teams were not aware that some of the hotels in the South still enforced strict segregationist policies that prevented the black players on the team from staying in the same hotel as the white coaches and players. The black players were forced to find other accommodations, often in unkept hotels or boarding homes. This was such a large issue not only because it was clearly racist and discriminatory, but it was also detrimental to the players' morale and team unity. All year round players did not have to worry about being placed in separate hotels away from the other players and coaches because it was the

regular season and teams were expected to be away from home for long periods at a time. However, spring training was a different animal because they were down there for only one month a year and communities were nice enough to accommodate teams with a field and lodging. This one month a year was terrible for organizations with black players though because they had to be separated for a large portion of the thirty days. This was also a time of year where players could bring their families down for vacation. The situation became so bad that players did not want to bring them down anymore because they were treated so badly.

The treatment of the black baseball players in Florida reflected the attitudes and conduct that they had been victim to ever since emancipation. The only difference was in the fact that instead of desegregation within the bounds of public transportation or education, this situation deals with baseball. Baseball is an American institution that should not have to be subject to the ugliness of racism and discrimination. Alas, much like integration in education, it takes much more than a single act, like that of Jackie Robinson, to be rid of it forever. Unfortunately for professional baseball, the deep rooted hatred towards blacks still lingered on the baseball diamonds until the middle 20th century, a hundred years after blacks should have received their citizenship and rights. This paper will investigate the racism and discrimination in baseball's spring training camps in the early 1960s, specifically with the Minnesota Twins, and discuss state's reaction to the situation through the government, press, and the public. Why did it take four years to solve the segregation situation in spring training camps for the entire professional baseball league? Why were the Twins the last team to integrate, and why, even though there were charges brought up against the Twins' organization for employment discrimination in 1962, did it take another two years for the black players to finally be afforded the same service as the white ones? The players' reaction to their treatment during spring training was first told by the

press, who then told the general public, and through their disgust with the situation, the government finally stepped in and solved the situation.

Historiography

Integration in baseball has oft been written on during the 20th and 21st centuries, especially during the middle and later 20th century, recently after the majority of the events with integration in baseball occurred. Jackie Robinson's breaking of the color line was a big deal during the 1940s and 50s because it opened the gates for many other African-Americans in baseball. This is where the majority of literature of blacks and integration in baseball stemmed from. After the integration of blacks into baseball, literature started popping up about the Negro Leagues in baseball during the early 20th century, Jackie Robinson, integration, and other black players that came to shine once given the chance.

The integration of spring training camps was shadowed by the overall integration of baseball during the mid 20th century. This is the reason for the small amounts of literature on the topic. With the exception of some scholarly articles and Chris Lamb's "Blackout: The Story of Jackie Robinson's First Spring Training," there has not been a lot of literature at all on integration in spring training. This was the reason that I decided to research a topic like this because there was not a lot of secondary literature available. Instead I was able to go straight to the archives to get the original, primary documents like government and official records and there were plenty of those available. I found lots of different sources during my research. There was lots of correspondence between the two Minnesota governors in the period, Elmer Andersen and Karl Rolvaag, and the Cherry Plaza Hotel, Minnesota Attorney General Walter Mondale, the Executive Director of the State Commission Against Discrimination, James McDonald, and the

Minnesota Twins' Owner Calvin Griffith. The other sources that I found and used were primarily newspaper articles from the period, including ones from the New York Times, the Minneapolis Spokesman, Minneapolis Tribune, and the Saint Paul Sun. There was a campaign of sorts that was started by writer Wendell Smith from the American paper in Chicago against the treatment of black players in Florida. However, I was not able to locate many of these articles in the Minnesota Historical Society archives, with the exception of one that appeared in the Minneapolis Spokesman.

The majority of the research in this paper is from primary sources from the Minnesota Historical Society. The archives held a lot of different government documents and correspondence that revealed a lot of information about the period of 1960-1964. The correspondence between the governors of the period and their subordinate offices and commissions showed how frustrating the situation in Florida was for the government, who was dealing with a professional organization (the Minnesota Twins) that refused to bend to state authority. The correspondence between the Minnesota Twins and the Cherry Plaza Hotel showed how serious the Cherry Plaza Hotel was about their segregationist practices and how unwilling they were to cooperate with the state of Minnesota and the Twins organization. For a situation that really took a backseat to the rest of the civil rights movement, there were a large amount of sources available.

The Big Move

In 1960, the Washington Senators packed up and took off from the nation's capital for greener pastures. Their attendance lacked the required numbers for keeping a professional team afloat and they were forced to move. Their destination was Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, the "Twin Cities." The Washington Senators' roster included a few Hispanic players, and also black players Earl Battey and Lenny Green. The transfer of location meant a lot of different things, such as new management, but some things stayed the same, such as the roster and the location of the team's spring training camp. The new Twins, like the Senators, would travel down to Orlando, Florida to attend spring training camp.

Segregated Spring Training Camp

Spring training functioned as a preseason for Major League Baseball. It was a month long engagement where new players would get a chance to prove themselves and veterans could stretch their legs for the upcoming season. Unfortunately, the newly formed Twins did not even get a chance to take the field before issues arose with the local housing accommodations. In the spring of 1961, the Twins organization placed the players at the plush Cherry Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida.¹ However, due to policies consistent with those in the community, the Plaza denied the black players a room. Earl Battey, one of the black players, was instead placed at the

¹Associated Press, "Indians, Angels, Red Sox, Giants, Cubs Are Integrated in Training – In Florida, Only Dodgers Stay Together at Base," *New York Times*, 2.18.61.

Sadler Hotel.² Such other accommodations, however, were not even close to as luxurious as the ones the white players received.

The Twins were not the only team still segregated during spring training in 1961. Negro players on the Milwaukee Braves team, including Hank Aaron, were some of the most outspoken against the Jim Crow conditions in Florida.³ Black athletes on teams like the Pittsburgh Pirates were receiving better accommodations, but were still separated from the rest of the team. Teams were quoted as being optimistic at reaching a settlement, however, many teams still were still segregated in 1962 and later.

Sometimes, black players would not even receive a hotel key during spring training. One boarding house in Bradenton, Florida, was used exclusively every year during spring training for the negro players of the Milwaukee Braves. This particular boarding home is that of a Mrs. K. W. Gibson. She prides herself on “setting the best table in town,” but that does not keep players from sometimes sleeping out in the hallways because of the lack of living space.⁴ The hotels in Florida stood by their policies but also added that they are willing to start working solutions to these problems, as losing a yearly franchise such as a professional baseball spring training camp would be dreadful. Other larger and nicer hotels stated that they were unable to comply with keeping all members of a team under their roof because they have regulars that come around every spring just like the baseball players do.⁵ However, the hotel management would rather accommodate their yearly visitors rather than see black athletes roaming the hotel’s hallways.

²Howard Fox to Earl Battey, 1.3.62., in the Minnesota Twins Papers, Minnesota Historical Society

³Associated Press, “Spring Break Segregation: Baseball’s Festering Sore,” *New York Times*, 2.19.61.

⁴Associated Press, “Spring Break Segregation: Baseball’s Festering Sore,” *New York Times*, 2.19.61.

⁵Ibid.

The Twins did not plan on changing their policies during the 1961 season. The players simply played the hand they were dealt during the first year. However, with the growing outcry for change in Florida from all over professional baseball, the upcoming years would see vast change in the segregationist policies of Florida hotels during spring training.

The First Cries for Change

The 1961 Minnesota Twins spring training camp saw little to no opposition against the segregationist policies of the Cherry Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida. However, in January of 1962, Twins players Earl Battey and Lennie Green were sitting at the head table of the “Hot Stove League” baseball banquet while a derogatory and high inappropriate story was told by “Rosy” Ryan Story, the former general manager of the Minneapolis Millers minor league club, which disseminated in 1960.⁶

Upon hearing the story, which referred to black players as “blackbirds,” Battey and Green promptly stormed out of the banquet.⁷ Bill Bond, the executive editor of the St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch criticized Battey for his actions. He also applauded Bond for his “use of vernacular,” which put the black community in St. Paul in an uproar.⁸ This event was a big milestone for the spring training integrationist movement because if the Twins’ players could not even receive respect in their own city, something definitely needed to happen and fix the situation.

⁶“Earl Battey, Lennie Green ‘Take Walk,’ When ‘Rosy’ Ryan Story Refers To Negroes As ‘Blackbirds,’” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, 1.26.62.

⁷Blackbirds is used as a racial slur in this context.

⁸“Earl Battey, Lennie Green ‘Take Walk,’ When ‘Rosy’ Ryan Story Refers To Negroes As ‘Blackbirds,’” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, 1.26.62.

Early Opposition to Segregation

In 1962, more and more voices started crying out in opposition to the spring training situation in Florida. A campaign was started by the Chicago American newspaper, mostly from the words of writer Wendell Smith. In Minnesota, the Twins were obviously the big concern, but in order for the rest of the teams in Florida to finally integrate their camps, a mass effort towards all the teams had to be initiated. Smith wrote in March of 1962 that only five teams remained to integrate throughout Florida. The new Washington Senators team was under heavy fire from critics, as their explanation for still having a segregated team was simply that they could not come to terms with their hotel in Pompano Beach, but were hopeful for the following year.⁹ It seemed like the white managers and owners of teams wanted to eventually come to terms with their hotels during spring break, but they were in no hurry and had no motivation to push along the process.

Other teams were starting to consider moves to other locales in Florida, hoping that their fortunes with hotel policies would improve. The Pittsburgh Pirates failed again to solve their problems in Fort Myers and were contemplating a move to Bradenton.¹⁰ Bradenton was where the Milwaukee Braves were currently training, but their program was also possibly moving onward. Pirates general manager Joe L. Brown said “It [integration] develops a togetherness that helps a club. The players get to know each other better.”¹¹

⁹Wendell Smith, “Twins One of 5 Big League Teams with Camp Jimcro,” *Minneapolis Spokesman* (from the Chicago American), 3.23.62.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

The campaign of the American, which started in 1961, the first year of the Minnesota Twins, was a large boost to the national voice of opposition to segregation in Florida.¹² Vada Pinson of the Cincinnati Reds said, “We owe Chicago’s American a great debt of gratitude. We are now living like first class citizens. In past years we were shunted aside and forced to live in some miserable places. Now everybody on our club is comfortable and happy. We’re enjoying spring training this year. We hated to come to Florida before this happened.”¹³

State Government Gets Involved

The year of 1962 also saw the long delayed intervention of the state government of Minnesota. Governor Elmer Andersen had presided over the state since 1961 and finally spoke out against the segregation of his state’s professional ball club in the late spring of 1962.¹⁴ Governor Andersen finally did something about the situation by contacting Twins’ president Calvin Griffith while the owner was down in Florida. He demanded the situation be handled immediately to which Griffith replied that there was nothing they could do until next year as the hotel’s policies were unyielding. Andersen was not happy with the situation, but he yielded to it for the time being. He did not believe that any “...athletic team amateur or professional which caters to the general public of Minnesota should stand for having any of its members humiliated by race segregation practices, or any other unfair restrictions, not visited upon other members.”¹⁵ It was apparent that the government of Minnesota was not going to allow this mess to continue much longer.

Governor Andersen was not about to let the Cherry Plaza ruin Minnesota’s reputation for

¹²The American was a Chicago newspaper.

¹³Wendell Smith, “Twins One of 5 Big League Teams with Camp Jimcro,” *Minneapolis Spokesman* (from the Chicago American), 3.23.62.

¹⁴“Governor Andersen In Protest Against Jimcro Of Twins’ Tan Players,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, 4.6.62.

¹⁵“Governor Andersen In Protest Against Jimcro Of Twins’ Tan Players,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, 4.6.62.

staunch tolerance of other races, ethnicities and religions. In a letter to Griffith in April of 1962, he brought up the issue of segregation in the spring training camps for the Twins. He was actually writing Griffith while he was staying at the Cherry Plaza. He wrote, “Our state has a very fine tradition relative to good relationships between people of different creeds, color, national origin, etc. I have deep convictions about this personally. As you may know, our state was one of the early states to pass an FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Commission] law, and again is leading the way with the passage of a Fair Housing law which provides for ending discrimination in the sale and leasing of residences.¹⁶” Governor Andersen wanted to make sure that Griffith knew of his dedication to solving this issue in Florida, and that he was willing to do whatever was necessary.

Griffith responded by saying to Andersen that the owners of Tinker Field, where the Twins practiced during spring training, were contemplating the construction of a new grandstand for the field.¹⁷ So until that decision was made final, Griffith would wait to meet with Andersen to discuss anything further with regards to the Twins’ future spring training camps in Orlando.

While Governor Andersen was voicing his opinion to Griffith, the Twins’ owner, he was also trading correspondence with Frank Flynn, the manager of the Cherry Plaza Hotel in Orlando. He wanted to make sure that his state’s baseball club was being treated fairly and that the few players of color on the team were not being discriminated against. In a series of correspondence between Andersen and Flynn from May to July of 1962, the Cherry Plaza Hotel made it very clear to the governor that they would not bend to his wishes of having desegregated housing facilities for the Twins. In fact, they never really made it very clear for the governor, as

¹⁶Governor Elmer Andersen to Calvin Griffith, 4.3.62, in the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 84, 146.E.5.3B.

¹⁷Calvin Griffith to Governor Elmer Andersen, 5.7.62, from the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 84, 146.E.5.3B.

they constantly avoided his questions because their housing contract was with the Twins' organization, not the state.

In a May 14th letter, Governor Andersen first apprised the issue of segregation in the Cherry Plaza Hotel and inquired as to the policies of the hotel and whether or not they could field the entire Twins team, regardless of color.¹⁸ The letter also mentioned the pending grandstand vote that Griffith had mentioned to Andersen in a previous correspondence. Andersen was not writing the hotel on behalf of the Twins, he was writing on behalf of the state, because if the hotel could not accommodate the entire Twins team, they would not only lose their business, but would also garner a bad reputation for the treatment of colored persons. Andersen had a responsibility to Minnesota to address such a public interest issue.¹⁹

The response from Frank Flynn, the general manager of the Cherry Plaza Hotel, was not what Governor Andersen was expecting at all. In a May 23rd letter, Flynn wrote in response to Andersen's first letter, stating that although he respected his concern for the issue, that the hotel's deal was specifically with the Twins, and that the housing contract is dealt with through the executive secretary of the Twins, and not with the state.²⁰ He however did manage to end the correspondence with saying that they enjoyed the Twins in Orlando and hoped for continued business with them.

Andersen then wrote back to Flynn, again inquiring as to whether the hotel "would provide housing for a major league baseball team on an integrated basis?"²¹ The response by Flynn was an obvious evasion of the discrimination inquiry posted by Andersen in his first letter,

¹⁸Governor Elmer Andersen to Cherry Plaza Hotel, 5.14.62, from the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 83, 146.E.5.2F.

¹⁹Governor Elmer Andersen to Cherry Plaza Hotel, 5.14.62, from the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 83, 146.E.5.2F.

²⁰Frank Flynn to Governor Elmer Andersen, 5.23.07, from the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 84, 146.E.5.3B.

²¹Governor Elmer Andersen to Frank Flynn, 5.31.07, from the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 84, 146.E.5.3B.

and the governor needed to know whether or not the hotel would cater to the Twins' entire team. He believed that it was a simple question and that Flynn should be able to give him a simple answer.²²

Flynn again wrote back to Governor Andersen on the last day of May in 1962. He again wrote with the same coy personality as his first response to Andersen, stating that even though Andersen believed he had an obligation to answer such questions about the policy of his hotel, that he is entitled to his opinion and it is still none of his business. It seemed like Flynn was not willing to give up something to Andersen that he could publish or give an inch to the governor in integrating his hotel. In a possible attempt to dissuade Andersen from further correspondence, Flynn almost seemed hurt in his words, but then ended the letter with a snide remark that most likely stung Andersen, "I am somewhat disillusioned by your commencement and continuance of this exchange of correspondence, and if you are disappointed in its conclusion, let us rejoice together that, in our great country, we are still entitled to freedom of thought and expression."²³

The attempt by Flynn did not dissuade Andersen from writing back one more time. Andersen stated that since Flynn operated a public facility, that the public was entitled to know its policies on housing persons of color, and whether such a policy extended to the Twins.²⁴ He wrote, "If you think my inquiry is of direct interest only to the management of the Twins and your hotel, you are wrong. This is not a matter of opinion. Questions of discrimination are not of limited private concern."²⁵ Andersen definitely felt entitled to something after such a series of letters that seemingly produced no results whatsoever.

²²Ibid.

²³Frank Flynn to Governor Elmer Andersen, 6.19.62, from the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 84, 146.E.5.3B.

²⁴Governor Elmer Andersen to Frank Flynn, 7.5.62, from the Papers of Governor Elmer Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 84, 146.E.5.3B.

²⁵Ibid.

Governor Andersen also wrote to Griffith on the same day of his last correspondence to the Cherry Plaza. He voiced his opinion that he believed the hotel was not planning on changing their policies. He needed Griffith to know that for the future of the Twins in Minnesota, that their spring training needed to be on a desegregated basis, otherwise several unwanted problems would start popping up in the Twin Cities. Andersen knew that this was a serious situation and that Griffith needed to know all of this, but he also wanted to make sure that Griffith had the governor's faith by saying, "You are off to a good start in Minnesota. You're making money. The public is with you. I want to support you in every way that I can."²⁶

It was clear that the governor was getting nowhere in 1962, but before spring training started again, some ground needed to be covered. In this department, another part of the state government stepped in and provided relief to the beleaguered governor.

State Commission Against Discrimination

In 1962, the Minnesota state government set out to end this issue of segregation of its Twins once and for all. Governor Elmer Andersen received aid in this from the State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD, formerly the Fair Employment Practices Commission). This committee consisted of nine members who were appointed by the governor and each served terms of five years. The primary purpose of the commission "is to secure compliance with the Minnesota State Act Against Discrimination, which makes it an unlawful act to discriminate against a person in his quest for employment or housing because of his race, creed, color, religion or national origin."

²⁶Governor Elmer Andersen to Calvin Griffith, 7.5.62, from the Papers of Governor Elmer L. Andersen, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 84, 146.E.5.3B.

This commission was headed by James C. McDonald. McDonald was a key advocate in the integration of spring training, as the commission saw the segregation in Florida of the Twins as against the state's laws dealing with discrimination. In a memorandum to Governor Andersen in March of 1962, McDonald outlined the plan to validate the charges of discrimination in Florida against the Twins' colored players. He cited a passage under the Minnesota State Act Against Discrimination Chapter 363.03, Section 5(2), Sub-section (b), which stated, "Except when based on a bona fide occupational qualification, it is an unfair employment practice, (2)(c) to discriminate against an employee with respect to his hire, tenure, compensation, terms, upgrading, conditions, facilities, or privileges of employment," with those specific examples underlined.²⁷

After citing the specific state statutes against such discrimination, McDonald's plan was to contact Earl Battey, one of the black Twins players, and corroborate some rumors about the situation in Florida.²⁸ Such rumors included that the Twins colored players were staying at the Sadler Hotel which is a Negro-operated and occupied business, and that those ballplayers staying at the Sadler were getting a station wagon to take them from hotel to the fields, instead of the white players who got a bus.²⁹

Next, McDonald filed a complaint against the Minnesota Twins organization that they were violating the Minnesota State Act Against Discrimination in not solving the housing situation in Florida. The complaint placed Calvin Griffith, the president of the Twins, as the employer in violation of the act. The commission felt that Griffith and the Twins traveling

²⁷James McDonald to Governor Elmer Andersen, 3.22.62, from the Papers of the State Commission Against Discrimination, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁸James McDonald to Governor Elmer Andersen, 3.22.62, from the Papers of the State Commission Against Discrimination, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁹Ibid.

secretary, Howard Fox, had not done enough to settle the issues in Florida.³⁰ Fox had traveled down to Florida before the 1963 spring training camp and reported that he had found no other facilities that were large enough to take the entire integrated team. The Twins had a contract to continue coming down to Florida for spring training until 1964. However, this was not possible in the eyes of the commission unless the entire team could stay at the same locale.

Calvin Griffith also had agreed to extend this contract if the city would build another stadium.³¹ This would extend the contract indefinitely because a new stadium would take some time to build. Another option was another hotel that was reported to be under construction in another part of Orlando. This hotel would accept the team on an integrated basis, and Fox said that that would be most acceptable and said that he would transfer them there in the middle of spring training if necessary.³²

In 1962, strides were made in a plan to deal with the situation in Florida. However, without much action, nothing can be accomplished on the frontlines. However, public knowledge of the situation was growing, and the press started releasing more and more disapproving reports of the Twins players' in Florida. It was only a matter of time before the state government would make a drastic move and be able to integrate the Twins' spring training camp once and for all.

³⁰State of Minnesota, State Commission Against Discrimination, *Complaint of Employment Discrimination: Minnesota Fair Employment Practices Commission v. Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, Inc.*, Case #3-ER-123, 12.13.62, from the Papers of the State Commission Against Discrimination, Minnesota Historical Society,

³¹State of Minnesota, State Commission Against Discrimination, *Complaint of Employment Discrimination: Minnesota Fair Employment Practices Commission v. Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, Inc.*, Case #3-ER-123, 1.18.63.

³²State of Minnesota, State Commission Against Discrimination, *Complaint of Employment Discrimination: Minnesota Fair Employment Practices Commission v. Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, Inc.*, Case #3-ER-123, 1.18.63.

Activism Contributes Its Voice

The year was 1963. Another year went by without significant progress in the fight against segregation in the spring training camps. The Twins were one of five remaining squads left to integrate their camps but now the state government finally was finally involved. This year saw the involvement of Twin Cities local activist groups and the contribution of one of the greatest figures of the civil rights movement.

In early January, a memorandum was sent out to members of the Minnesota SCAD, stating the location and time of the Conference of Human Rights Committees. Members of the Twins ballclub were invited to speak on and discuss the situation in Florida. The commission learned that the Twins had made a deal with the Cherry Plaza Hotel to return again this year, but without any changes in their policies about the entire team staying at the same hotel. This was of great concern to the commission and to the black players because of all the talk between Governor Andersen, Calvin Griffith, and Frank Flynn of the Cherry Plaza about a possible desegregated spring training camp in 1963.

The press also lashed out again against the continued issues during its Twins' spring training camp. However, the press did not know how hard the government was working to alleviate the situation, while the Twins management was simply settling for the same hotel and same city. They could have changed cities, moved to a different location where a hotel would take the entire team. The team just settled for the same, hoping that the hotel would bend when, as Governor Andersen speculated, it did not. Andersen had spoken to team owner Calvin Griffith already but Griffith did not do anything about the situation, he simply took the deal that

was waiting for the team instead of fighting for the rights of his colored players. If the Twins could not solve the problem this year, they would be one of only two teams left with segregated spring training facilities.³³

University of Minnesota

Since 1963 was already a lost cause for the Twins in spring training, they had nothing to do but wait until 1964 to see whether or not the situation was alleviated. However, by 1963, the national civil rights movement had continued on, pushing through more and more states in the south, where segregation was still rampant. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been traveling around the country, speaking to groups upon groups of people about civil rights and integration. In January of 1963, King came to the Northrup Auditorium at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities.³⁴ He spoke on many issues, as an obvious advocate for integration nationwide, but he was also quoted in saying, “Bigotry is bad for business,” which was a response to an inquiry about the influence of the business community in the South.³⁵ This was also directed at the policies of the hotels in the south that continued to segregate ballplayers during spring training. King was obviously concerned about the situations down there, but he also knew that such a statement would make such businesses reconsider their practices.

A New Governor

In 1962, the gubernatorial elections in Minnesota were held. Incumbent Republican Governor Elmer Andersen and Democrat Karl Rolvaag were the primary vote receivers. However, due to a four month recount, the results of the election were not presented until 1963. In 1963, Rolvaag was announced as the winner, winning by exactly 91 votes out of over 1.3

³³“Tan Twins Must Face Jimcros Again In Spring Training,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, 1.31.63.

³⁴“Martin Luther King Speaks To 3,000 At The University,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, 1.31.63.

³⁵Ibid.

million cast.³⁶ Rolvaag would now have to take over and be the lead voice of the Minnesota state government for the sake of the Minnesota Twins' future in Florida during spring training.

The Final Push

A changing of the guard occurred in 1963. Minnesota welcomed a new governor and the Twins remained the last team in the entire major leagues with a segregated spring training camp. However, with the appearance of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Twin Cities, perhaps the city was waking up a little bit more to the situation in Florida. The local civil rights groups definitely had the motivation to finally quell this state of affairs. However, would the new governor be as concerned with the situation as Andersen had been?

In January of 1964, James McDonald sent out a memorandum to the members of the Minnesota SCAD and also to Governor Rolvaag, hoping for the same amount of participation and aid that Andersen had given. The main issue was that after two years of struggle, the Twins' colored players were still receiving discriminatory treatment in the spring training camps in Florida. This was mostly due to the policies of the hotels, but also some due to the fact that the Twins' organization would not move their spring training facilities or ask other hotels to accommodate them.

In another memorandum to the members of the Minnesota SCAD, McDonald outlines the last couple years' effort against the situation in Florida. In 1962, the original complaint against the Twins organization violating the Minnesota State Act Against Discrimination was filed by the then Fair Employment Practices Commission. The team continued to state that it was

³⁶Minnesota Historical Society, "Karl F. Rolvaag," at http://www.mnhs.org/people/governors/gov/gov_33.htm (accessed 9.23.07).

attempting to alleviate the situation with the Cherry Plaza Hotel, but it was now 1964 and nothing had progressed yet. The Twins were still guilty of violations under the state statute, and instead of trying to change the policies of the same hotel, perhaps they should start looking at changing facilities.

A change in facilities never occurred. The legal complaint against the Twins in 1962 remained, and the team still seemed to be doing nothing about it. In a memorandum from Attorney General Walter Mondale to Governor Rolvaag it was indicated that the Minnesota SCAD had received information that there were Orlando local hotels that could and would accommodate the entire Twins team on an integrated basis, but Griffith had not approached them with much interest.³⁷

According to Griffith and Fox, Orlando was to blame for the persisting segregation issues. They said that because of the contract the team had with the city, they could not move to another city, and the fact that they had not come to a solution with the Cherry Plaza Hotel was unfortunate. Fox said that even though they are the only remaining team with segregated housing during spring break, he highly doubted the other 19 teams in Florida were completely integrated.³⁸ Other teams, such as the Yankees, were enjoying integrating eating, housing, and even theatres.³⁹ One team, the St. Louis Cardinals, had even purchased a hotel in which to stay at to avoid such discriminatory problems. However, Griffith said that that was really not an option for the Twins.⁴⁰

After two years of problems, this was really starting to become a larger issue for the

³⁷Walter Mondale to Governor Karl Rolvaag, 2.5.64, from the Papers of Governor Karl Rolvaag, Minnesota Historical Society.

³⁸Dick Cunningham, "Twins Officials Blame Orlando for Spring Training Segregation," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 1.23.64.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Twins and for Minnesota. The team, barely three years old, had not figured out a solution to this problem yet, and it was starting to affect the team. Catcher Earl Battey said, “You don’t help anybody that way,” in reference to Griffith failing to find a place for the Negroes outside of the Sadler in 1964. Battey went so far as to saying that this situation was really starting to affect team morale.⁴¹

The organization’s inability to fix the housing situation in Florida led to a decision by the Attorney General of Minnesota, Walter Mondale. He stated that it was a major disappointment that the Twins had to be the last team in the major leagues to integrate their spring training camp.⁴² The Minnesota SCAD met and voted unanimously to appoint a Board of Review to settle the legal complaint against the Twins for the failure to settle the spring training issue.⁴³ This Board of Review then called a public hearing to do as McDonald stated, “take such action to eliminate the discriminatory practice as it [the Board of Review] may deem necessary.”⁴⁴

After two years of useless correspondence and contact between the Minnesota SCAD, the Twins Organization and the Cherry Plaza Hotel, James McDonald finally decided to take matters into his own hands and now the situation in Florida should finally be solved. However, at this point, the local activist groups in the Twin Cities area were tired of waiting for action from the state government. In the late spring of 1964, the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP decided to take matters into their own hands.

⁴¹Dick Cunningham, “Griffith: Segregation of Team Uncertain,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, 1.24.64.

⁴²Walter Mondale to Governor Karl Rolvaag, 2.5.64, from the Papers of Governor Karl Rolvaag, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴³James McDonald to Governor Karl Rolvaag, 2.21.64, from the Papers of Governor Karl Rolvaag, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

NAACP Picketing

After another failed attempt at integrating the Twins spring training camp in 1964, the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP had had enough of waiting for the government to take stronger action. Their plan was to picket the Twins' season opener at the Metropolitan Stadium, by not necessarily boycotting the game, but "simply an expression of our displeasure with the team's management for not making a strong effort to change the discriminatory policy."⁴⁵ Twins' President Calvin Griffith said that he would try to prevent the demonstration outside the stadium, "if it's at all legally possible."⁴⁶ Griffith seemed to continue to downplay the Twins role in prolonging the discriminatory situation in Florida by saying that, "My views on segregation are well known, but the fact is, the people of Minnesota don't have the right to tell the people of Florida how to act."⁴⁷

A combination of the local Twin Cities NAACP chapters collaborated to picket the Twins' opener. Such an action was necessary to finally persuade the state government to act on this issue. A local NAACP president stated that, "The Negro members of the team aren't in a position to do too much, and it's the responsibility of civil rights groups to act in their behalf."⁴⁸ This sort of protest had occurred before in 1962. The Philadelphia NAACP sponsored a local picket of the home opener for their Phillies, and threatened to continue to picket the games until the discriminatory practices in spring training camps ceased.⁴⁹

The action deemed necessary by the local activist groups and the Minnesota SCAD in appointing a Board of Review to deal with the situation once and for all was long overdue. Once

⁴⁵Jerry Kirshenbaum, "NAACP to Picket at Twins Opener," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 2.17.64.

⁴⁶"Griffith Will Try To Prevent Rights Picketing Of Twins," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 2.18.64.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Jerry Kirshenbaum, "NAACP to Picket at Twins Opener," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 2.17.64.

⁴⁹"Governor Andersen in Protest Against Jim Crow Of Twins' Tan Players," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, 4.6.62.

these actions were finally executed, the light at the end of the tunnel for integrating the Twins spring training camp was rapidly approaching.

Conclusion

The integration of spring training camps made black athletes look forward to the upcoming season a lot more than when they were segregated. To start a season forced to live in such conditions did not aid in the morale of the black players nor did it help with overall team unity. Through 1962, there was still no improvement to the situation of the Minnesota Twins. The players could do nothing but hope more advocates towards their cause would appear and aid in their struggle for integration.

That was where Governor Elmer Andersen and the Minnesota SCAD, helmed by James McDonald, stepped in to push along the efforts to integrate the spring training camps. Through 1962, there was not much progress, but many plans were outlined for the next season that the government hoped would alleviate the situation in Florida. Governor Andersen was very concerned about the growing situation in Florida, and it already started to seem like the Twins were avoiding the situation at all costs. Also, the Cherry Plaza in Orlando was avoiding the discrimination issue as much as they could also. They did not want to be revealed as being involved with a business that was publicly discriminating on the basis of race. All in all, there was not much progress that occurred in 1962.

In 1963, the Twins organization again failed to come to an agreement with the Cherry Plaza hotel. The failure of the team to come to an agreement with the hotel forced activist groups to start aiding in the effort during this year. Also, the appearance of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the cities enlightened both the Negro players on the Twins and the local activist groups to

the gravity of the situation. Although this year again did not have a lot of results, the events that occurred set the stage for the eventual solution to the problem in 1964.

The Twins' organization had two years to come to an agreement with the Cherry Plaza Hotel. In 1962, it was very apparent to Governor Andersen that the Cherry Plaza was not going to be very giving whatsoever in its policies. However, by 1964, the situation still had not changed so the state government was forced to take matters into their own hands. The vote by the Minnesota SCAD to assign a Board of Review to the Florida situation finally ended the segregation in the Twins' spring training camp. However, with the failure to desegregate the 1964 camp, the local Twin Cities NAACP chapters also decided to take matters into their own hands. The boycott of the Twins home opener in 1964 aided the Minnesota SCAD in ending the segregation issue.

It seemed like the big reason for the three year struggle for integration was the contract between the Twins and the city of Orlando. Without that contract, there would have been a simple solution in moving to a different city than Orlando. However, for being such a large legal issue, there was not much action on part of Calvin Griffith to put pressure on the Cherry Plaza from a legal standpoint. If not for that contract, the Twins might not have been the last team to integrate their spring training camp.

The turmoil of the civil rights movement was enough pressure on the nation. The added pressure that came with the segregation of spring training camps in major league baseball did not help the nation's overall situation in this period. The reaction of the press to the situation in Florida alerted the government and general public to how drastic the situation was. Governor Andersen, who was not in office for the entire ordeal, was one of the earliest and strongest advocates against the segregation of the black players in Florida. However, he did not have the

cooperation of the Twins' president Calvin Griffith or that of the general manager of the Cherry Plaza Hotel, Frank Flynn. The reactions of the state government and that of the local activist groups showed how much they cared about their new baseball team and how much they wanted racial discrimination in their state and across the country to end. During the 1960s, the civil rights movement was progressing civil rights all across the country, and the victory for the Twins' organization and for all the teams in Florida against discrimination was an integral victory for the movement along its long and difficult road.

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