

Phil Cavarretta played in three World Series with the Cubs, including the 1938 Series, which began with a parade at Wrigley (top). PROVIDED

THUMBS-UP FOR CLASSIC 'FLICKS'

Marquee to air unseen Cubs footage from '20s through '50s in 2 half-hour episodes

In 1991, HBO aired the award-winning "When It Was a Game," a compilation of 8- and 16-mm home movies of major-league baseball from 1934 to 1957. The films, in their original color, came from fans and players and had not been seen publicly. They revealed stunning sights, putting the game's historic figures in a new light.

Filmmaker George Roy won a Peabody Award for "When It Was a Game," and he followed the film with iterations in 1992 and 2000. They stayed true to their prede-



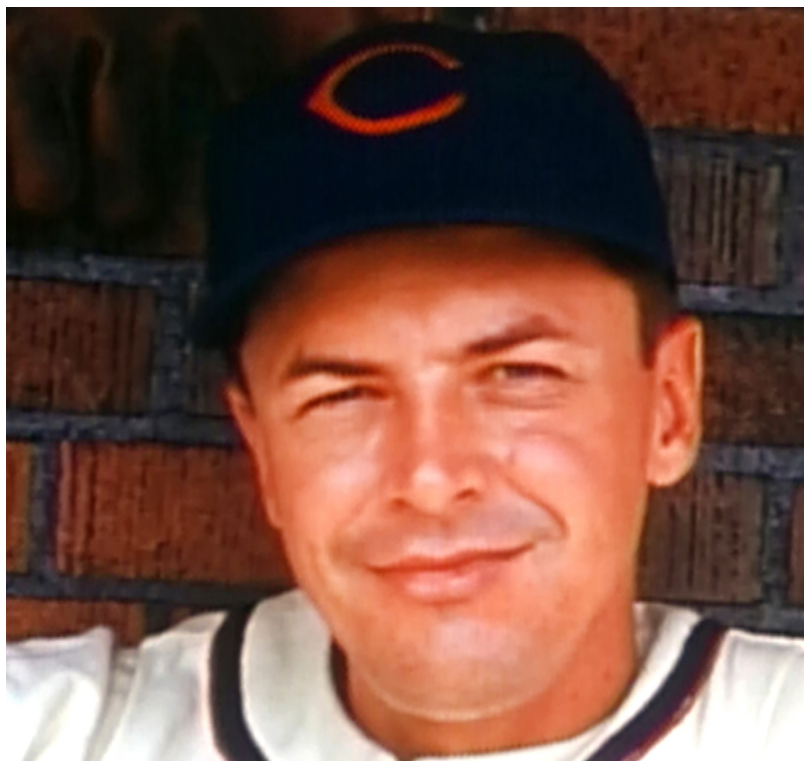
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cessor, showing footage from across baseball.

A few years ago, Marquee Sports Network general manager Mike McCarthy asked Roy to continue the lineage with a singular focus.

"Mike was a big fan of 'When It Was a Game,' and when he got to Marquee, he made it pretty clear it would be great if at some point we could create a Cubs version," Roy said this week. "I always thought it was a great idea. I knew I had some good Cubs stuff. Our schedules weren't



Stan Hack played 16 seasons for the Cubs (1932-47) and hit .301 for his career. PROVIDED

quite in sync for a bit. And about four, five months ago, we circled back to the concept, and the rest is history.”

Next Thursday, after coverage of the Cubs’ season opener, Marquee will debut “Cubs Flicks,” the first of two half-hour episodes of films, most of which have never aired. The films, which date from the late 1920s to the late 1950s, are outtakes from the original HBO production. Roy, who now operates Jersey Line Films, partnered with Stephen de Groot of Dutch Productions. McCarthy was an executive producer.

Cubs radio voice Pat Hughes narrates, with contributions from Cubs historian Ed Hartig, former Cubs beat writers Bruce Miles and Fred Mitchell, authors, poets and people who lived the history. The second episode will debut May 29.

“To capture the spirit of ‘When It Was a Game’ was one of our goals,” said Roy, who has two other Peabody Awards and five Emmys from the dozens of sports documentaries he has produced. “But with that said, the challenge was to try to make it different. We tried to give it a snappier, contemporary feel. The basic premise of the show is the same. This was more personality-driven; this is the essence of what the Cubs franchise was like through these years.”

Said de Groot: “The piece is not necessarily a chronological history of the Cubs. We generated stories around the strength of our footage and asked people about those specific things. We were fortunate enough to find people who could talk about it with authority and accuracy, and those are the things that we stressed.”

The film begins appropriately with spring training on idyllic Catalina Island. Players are filmed boating to the island and practicing at the foot of a hill topped by Cubs owner William Wrigley’s mansion. Hollywood actors are seen joining the Cubs, who look like they’re having the time of their lives.

Cubs legends such as Gabby Hartnett and Hack Wilson are seen out of uniform on excursions. Players play to the camera, often goofing around and laughing. And viewers are treated to what is believed to be the oldest 16-mm color film of a World Series, the 1938 Series between the Cubs and Yankees.

For film that was 30 to 60 years old when Roy obtained it, it looks fantastic. At the time, he transferred the film to Beta SP, then digitized it. Roy credited de Groot for his technical work on “Cubs Flicks,” noting the challenge of working with 8-mm film.

“He did a lot of the stuff when it came to balancing out the films and trying to make them look seamless,” Roy said. “If you saw the before and after, you’d see what a great job he did.”

De Groot put the video through his editing systems, reducing the jitteriness of the footage — keep in mind, these are home movies — and improving the color.

“We did what we could within the tricks of our edit systems and colorization programs,” de Groot said. “I don’t mean to say that we colorized, but we might tweak the saturation. There’s also some filters that can clean up the static and dirt that’s on the screen. It’s amazing what can be done with old film.”

What Roy and de Groot did with this film is amazing. They brought alive an era of baseball and a way of life that’s unknown to most viewers. The most familiar element, of course, is Wrigley Field, which, at certain sight lines, looks almost exactly as it does today. That’s what makes the film hit home — the knowledge that much of what you’re seeing happened in a place you still can see.

“We’re hoping that the younger people will watch and will be as interested as folks that have been longtime baseball fans,” Roy said. “We tried to design it in a way in which it was quick and interesting and anecdotal and it doesn’t come across as this sort of boring thesis on baseball. We’re hoping that it appeals to Cubs fans both young and old.”








Remote patrol

Ozzie Guillen, Frank Thomas, Scott Podsednik and Gordon Beckham will rejoin host Chuck Garfien on NBC Sports Chicago’s White Sox pre- and postgame shows. The network will air “White Sox Season Preview” at 6:30 p.m. Monday. Its 151-game schedule begins next Friday with Sox-Astros.

◆ The next episode of **George Ofman’s** podcast, “Tell Me a Story I Don’t Know,” is the first of a two-part interview with Sox TV voice **Jason Benetti**. It drops Tuesday.

◆ ESPN’s **Dick Vitale** held a raffle for an exclusive Sweet 16 viewing experience with him Friday at his home in Sarasota, Florida. More than \$100,000 in proceeds benefitted the Dick Vitale Fund for Pediatric Cancer at the V Foundation. The lucky winner was **Tammi Johnson** of Algonquin.

STARTING LINEUP

							
FRI 24	TEX 3:05 p.m. at CLE 8:05 p.m. Marquee (exh.)	at OAK (ss) 3:05 p.m. (exh.)	at POR 9 p.m. NBCSCH				
SAT 25	at LAA 2:10 p.m. Marquee (exh.)	at CIN 8:05 p.m. (exh.)		at MIN 4 p.m. NBCSCH	at TEX 7 p.m.	at MIA 6:30 p.m. Apple TV	at SD 9 p.m.
SUN 26	KC 3:05 p.m. Marquee (exh.)	COL (ss) 3:05 p.m. mlb.com (exh.)	at LAL 2:30 p.m. NBCSCH	VAN 5 p.m. NBCSCH	at TEX 5 p.m.		
MON 27	SOX 3:05 p.m. Marquee (exh.)	at CUBS 3:05 p.m. (exh.)	at LAC 9:30 p.m. NBCSCH				
TUE 28	SOX 2:05 p.m. Marquee (exh.)	at CUBS 2:05 p.m. (exh.)		DAL 7:30 p.m. NBCSCH			
WED 29			LAL 7 p.m. NBCSCH		at GR 6 p.m.		
THU 30	MIL 1:20 p.m. Marquee	at HOU 6:08 p.m. ESPN		STL 7:30 p.m. NBCSCH			

COVERING THE BASES

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