

Famed Flashbacks

Future Hall of Famer meets some real gems

Back in the 1960s, however, they were hardly diamonds in the rough

By Fred W. Crans

SCHAUMBURG, IL (June 19, 2024) – Like many of us who grew up in the 1960s, Karen Conway (Bellwether Class of 2023) enjoyed her childhood in a simpler time -- free of social media, video games and various applications that I can neither name nor understand.

In the '60s, kids (that's what they were called then) spent their summers playing outside all day with their neighborhood friends, inventing games, riding bicycles and going swimming if they got the chance.



Karen Conway, Bellwether Class of 2023

Little Karen Conway was luckier than most. Growing up in Lutherville, Maryland, she lived next door to a family (the Turleys) that possessed the two pinnacles of 1960s status – a color television set and a swimming pool. Friends with the Turley children, little Karen would enjoy the swimming pool during the warm summer days, and every Sunday night, she would watch “The Wonderful World of Disney” on their color television.

What a Wonderful World it must have been ...

The Turleys were an interesting family, or should I narrow that down and say that Mr. Turley was an interesting guy. From October to February, he operated a bowling alley and pursued a career in financial management.

In February, he would disappear, coming back to Baltimore only a few times over the summer. He worked with a team of diamond experts who spent the summers traveling across the country trying to defeat other diamond experts for the title of world champions. It may have seemed strange, but Mr. Turley did pretty well. By 1959, he was earning \$35,000 a year at his summer job – a salary equal to \$354,000 in today's money. In his time, Mr. Turley was a big deal.

Hence, the swimming pool and color TV.

One summer, when Mr. Turley and his fellow professionals were in Baltimore on business, Mr. Turley invited his co-workers over to the house for a cookout and, since she was a regular at the Turley house and pool, six-year-old Karen was invited as well.

It was a huge affair -- more than 25 of Mr. Turley's team of co-workers and managers showed up. Since they were "on the road" the only wife that was there was probably Mrs. Turley.

Young Karen, flashing eyes, beautiful smile and ever-curious manner, began what she would do over her remarkable career.

She introduced herself to the group as she walked among them. And who could ignore the effervescent young girl with the sparkling personality.

When Karen was telling me the story 60 years later, she was still in awe of that day. Her memory of the event centered on three people. One was a cocky dude from Manhattan named E.C. Ford.

Karen thought E.C. must be pretty important because his co-workers referred to him as "The Chairman of the Board." The second was a homely little guy with a huge smile who said strange things like, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it," and "What we do is 90% mental. The other half is physical." Six-year-old Karen didn't exactly understand what he was talking about, but everyone else seemed to think he was very funny; and besides, he was very nice to children.

Then, there was one person that stood out above all the rest – a tow-headed blond guy from Oklahoma who had been named after an old catcher for the Philadelphia Athletics. Sixty years later, Karen was still transfixed when she spoke about him. “He was beautiful,” she said. “You simply could not take your eyes off him.”

That was young Karen Conway’s day with Mr. Turley and the diamond experts.

Nice story, but so what?

Further examination of Mr. Turley and the “diamond experts” is in order. E.C. Ford, “The Chairman of the Board,” was better known by the color of his hair. It was white – hence the nickname “Whitey.” He was perhaps the greatest money pitcher in major league baseball. The little guy who “talked funny” was Lawrence Peter “Yogi” Berra – one of the greatest catchers of all time.

And the tow-headed blond guy from Oklahoma who was named after Mickey

Cochran was Mickey Charles Mantle – the greatest Yankee in the post-WWII era.

Mr. Turley was Bullet Bob Turley a mainstay starting pitcher ...

... and the “diamond experts” were the New York Yankees.

On one afternoon in Maryland, four Hall-of-Famers converged: Yogi, Whitey, The Mick and Karen Conway.



The “diamond experts”

And now, in the words of Paul Harvey, you know the rest of the story.

Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020, has more than five decades of healthcare supply chain experience and service in a variety of executive leadership roles that spans military and private-sector communities as well as provider, supplier, group purchasing organization and consultant segments. He currently serves on the Advisory Council of Bellwether League Foundation and as Healthcare Business Development Executive for St. Onge Co. For more, visit Bellwether League Foundation's web site at <https://www.bellwetherleague.org/>.



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