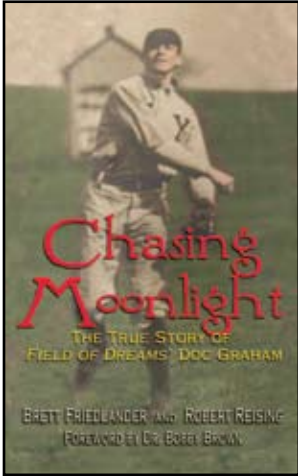


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The True Story of Field of Dreams' Doc Graham



Late in the afternoon on June 29, 1905, a kid called Moonlight bolted out of the New York Giants' dugout and took up his position in right field for the first and only time as a major league baseball player. It was an event of such little consequence that even those from the announced crowd of 2,000 at Brooklyn's Washington Park didn't take notice.

And yet a century later, Archibald "Moonlight" Graham has become so well known that a film crew traveled all the way from Tokyo, Japan, to create a documentary on him and a

California company trademarked his name for its line of baseball-themed apparel.

No one in the ballpark on that otherwise ordinary afternoon could have imagined that pilgrims would one day journey to Graham's grave site to leave candy, coins, baseballs, and other tokens of gratitude and esteem. Or that the Minnesota Twins would play a tribute game in his honor, marking the 100th anniversary of his flash of major league glory.

So what was it about that half an inning that makes so many people want to talk about it so many years later?

Ten years after Graham's 1965 death, author W. P. Kinsella stumbled across his record while researching a book on the legendary Shoeless Joe Jackson. Kinsella was so intrigued by Graham that he used his name for a secondary character in his award-winning novel, *Shoeless Joe*.

Hollywood director and screenwriter Phil Alden Robinson decided that Graham deserved a larger audience when his adaptation of *Shoeless Joe* was released to the moviegoing public under the title *Field of Dreams*. He chose Academy Award-winning actor Burt Lancaster to play the beloved Doc Graham in what would be his final screen appearance.

Neither the book nor movie came close to communicating the character and complexity of the quiet North Carolina native who spent the bulk of his adult life isolated in a small, out-of-the-way town not far from the Canadian border. In their new biography of Graham—*Chasing Moonlight*—authors Bret Friedlander and Robert Reising prove that truth is just as interesting as fiction.

Graham came from one of North Carolina's most respected families. His father, Alexander, was a superintendent of schools in North Carolina and was so beloved that the *Charlotte Observer* once suggested that "perhaps not a man in [town] was as well-known." His younger brother, Frank Porter Graham, became president of the University of North Carolina, a United States senator, and an early champion of the civil-rights movement. Frank was held in such

high regard that he was once offered a chance at the vice presidency by none other than Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1902, Graham's first year as a professional ballplayer, his team was disbanded at midseason because of, among other considerations, a lack of competition. Still an unknown rookie, Graham, who had just earned his undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina, began attending medical school at the University of Maryland in Baltimore.

While completing his medical training in Maryland and later New York City, Graham continued to play baseball. During the four seasons when he played minor league ball in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Graham was a respected, caring man who dedicated his life to helping others. Instead of calling attention to his philanthropy, he simply chose to quietly extend a \$10 handshake to a local miner who happened to be down on his luck.

After his brief appearance in the major leagues, Graham moved to Chisholm, Minnesota, where he practiced medicine for the next 44 years. His pioneering research on children's blood pressure is still used at such respected institutions as the Mayo Clinic.

After getting his license, becoming a doctor, and moving to Minnesota, Graham was offered one final chance to choose the sport he loved over the profession for which he'd been trained when the Boston Red Sox purchased his contract following the 1910 season. This time, he turned down the offer.

Some may look at Graham's decision to leave baseball behind after just five minutes in the majors as a tragedy, but the only real tragedy is that the world didn't get to know the good doctor until long after he was gone. With the publication of *Chasing Moonlight* that tragedy can be rectified.

Brett Friedlander has spent 25 years as a professional writer, earning national, regional, and state honors including a 2007 N.C. Press Association Award for two chapters from *Chasing Moonlight*. A reporter for the *Wilmington Star-News*, he lives in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Robert Reising starred as a catcher on Michigan State's 1954 Big Ten championship team. He later served as head baseball coach at Duke, Furman, and the University of South Carolina. As a professor of history at UNC-Pembroke, he became the leading authority on Jim Thorpe. He now teaches English at the University of the Cumberlands and lives in Williamsburg, Kentucky.

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