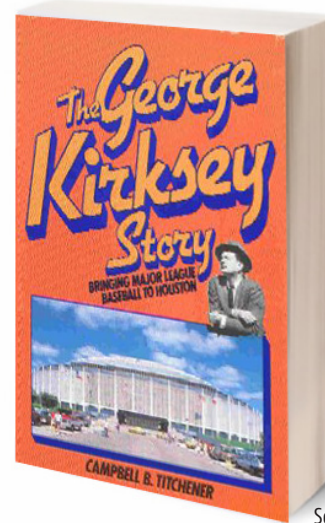




MY TRIBUTE TO GEORGE KIRKSEY

The Father of Major League Baseball in Houston

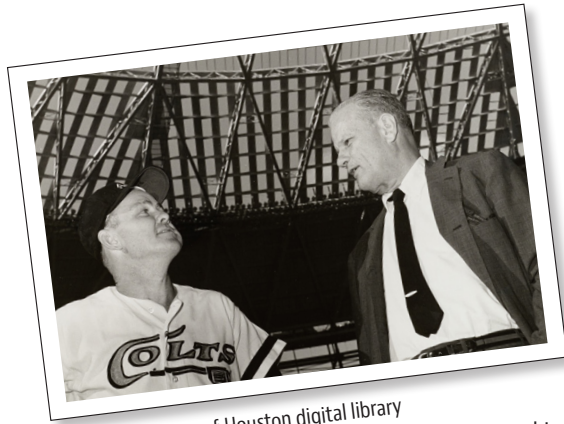


Source: Astosdaily.com

When I was in my early 20s I met George, who was then in his early 60s. We became friends quickly, soulmates, despite the vast age difference.

George had grown up in Hillsboro, and after graduating from the U. of Texas as a journalism major, worked his way up the ladder until he became National Sports Editor for United Press. He covered sports from drafty press boxes long ago, when reporters dashed to be the first in a single phone booth to call in their story to their paper.

In World War II, George enlisted and due to his experience was given the management of the office in London which reported on the bomber raids over Germany, and on the boys who flew them, and on the ones who did not return.



Source: University of Houston digital library

He came back to Houston and started a public relations firm. He dreamed of bringing major league baseball to Houston.

He cultivated like-minded businessmen, and organized several of them into a group called The Houston Sports Association: Craig Cullinan, R.E. "Bob" Smith, County Judge Roy Hofheinz, and George. They dreamed of an air-conditioned domed stadium, and they built it to accommodate not just baseball, but football and many other events as well.

They created a team called The Houston Colt 45s and held a groundbreaking for a temporary stadium—no shoveling of dirt, but instead Colt pistols were fired into the dirt. In time, a lawsuit from the gun manufacturer over the use of the name forced a change.

Houston had been selected as the site for the NASA Manned Spacecraft Center, and the astronauts were moving here, so the new baseball team became the Houston Astros, and the new domed stadium, the Astrodome.

The City erected a plaque to George Kirksey as the Father of Houston Baseball, and it was installed in a prominent place in the 'Dome.

George eventually sold his small interest in the Houston Sports Association that he had created, and sold his small interest in KTRK Channel 13, and for the first time in his life, had a plump bank account.

He bought some Italian loafers (he became known as Mr. No-socks before anyone else thought of going without them) and Italian sport coats and he and I went to Europe. He showed me 'his' London and 'his' Paris as he remembered them from the war, and its climax. I showed

him 'my Europe' that I had discovered over 13 months as a student.

George was in admiration of Hemingway, and his journalistic style reflected Hemingway's. While in Paris, George showed me Hemingway's haunts, including the bars Hem had 'liberated' from the Germans.

I introduced George to Munich and Geneva and to my friends there, two cities in which I had passed over a year as a student, and in subsequent years when he returned to Europe, he had two good bases from which to operate.

Soon this attractive and charismatic man had 'a girl in every port'. He enjoyed life to the max, buying a sleek racing type car which he persuaded the innkeeper/owner of Hotel Hirschen in Langnau-in-Emmenthal, Switzerland, to keep for him in the barn while George was back in the U.S.



Source: Astrostalk.wordpress.com

One night back in Texas, I received the crushing news that my friend and role model had been killed in an auto accident near Aix-les-Bains, France, after being seen in the company of a lovely young woman at a Michelin 3 Star restaurant.

George, you are not with us now, and without you we would not have had the Astros, who just won their first World Series. You cannot know what happened in that last game, but.....with tears in my eyes as I write these words, I say: **GEORGE KIRKSEY, THIS WIN'S FOR YOU!**