



## Rhubarb in the Catbird Seat

*By Red Barber, Robert W. Creamer*

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For more than fifty years Red Barber was the voice of baseball. The game was broadcast sporadically until the late 1930s, when Barber burst into prominence by bringing it home to radio listeners, play by play. More than half a century later, he could still be heard, broadcasting over National Public Radio from his retirement home in Tallahassee. Announcing for the Brooklyn Dodgers and later for the New York Yankees, he became a legend long before his death in 1992. Red's story reveals the growth and changes in baseball over the years, the demands of sportscasting, and the difference between radio and television reporting. Here is Red giving major play-by-plays of his own life and career with characteristic wit and integrity.

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

His voice was instantly recognizable. Red Barber's languid drawl was so familiar to baseball fans of the '30s through the '60s that it seemed like he'd single-handedly invented the art of play-by-play announcing. The truth is, he pretty much did: the old redhead sitting up in what he called his catbird seat, telling stories as integral to the game as the sound of horsehide on leather. His autobiography is, in a sense, the story of American sportscasting, but it is also much more than that; it is also a story of triumph over prejudice, and integrity over comfort. A son of the Old South, Barber grew up in a racist world, and took that world with him when he moved north to Brooklyn, and he experienced first-hand its head-on collision with what would be the new world of integrated baseball. Barber was the Dodgers broadcaster when Branch Rickey decided he would smash the color line; Barber was one of the first he informed of his plans.

"I believe," Barber recalls in the most moving section of a wonderful memoir, "that he told me about it so far in advance so that I could have time to wrestle with the problem, live with it, solve it ... I set out to do a deep self-examination. I attempted to find out who I was." This is remarkable candor in a sporting memoir, more remarkable for the way Barber brings us in to his own confrontation with himself, and his conclusion that Jackie Robinson ultimately did far more for him than he, as the voice that introduced Robinson to baseball fans, ever did for Robinson.

Barber is helped throughout by his magnificent ability to tell stories, remember details, and turn past into present. Just as he painted full, rich, compelling pictures with his words over the airwaves, so he does on the page, bringing another series of steps in the long march of baseball to life. Barber witnessed plenty of rhubarbs from his perch in the catbird seat; fans of baseball--and autobiography--will revel in the insights Barber brings to sorting them out. --*Jeff Silverman*

### From the Back Cover

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### About the Author

Robert W. Creamer, formerly a writer and editor for *Sports Illustrated*, is the author of *Stengel: His Life and Times* (also available as a Bison Book) and *Babe: The Legend Comes to Life*.

Bob Edwards, host of *Morning Edition* on National Public Radio, is the author of *Fridays with Red*.

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