**Press Kit**

**The Uncommon Life of Danny O’Connell: A Tale of Baseball Cards, “Average” Players, and the True Value of America’s Game by Steve Wiegand**

“Turning the pages of *The Uncommon Life of Danny O’Connell*will take you back to unwrapping a wax-pack of baseball cards. Surprise, delight, nostalgia, and discovery await. The bonus is better than a pink plank of gum. Where Steve Wiegand succeeds is not just in the telling of the beautiful story of Danny O’Connell. He also causes us to reflect on how we baseball fans connect so deeply and uniquely to our sport.”

**—Tom Verducci, *NY Times* Best-Selling Author, and Fox & MLBN Analyst**

“*The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell* is a compelling and whimsical journey through the short but intriguing life of a scrappy MLB player, featuring many great behind-the-scenes baseball tales—served with a side of baseball cards. A great read indeed.”

**—John Newman, Host of *Sports Card Nation* and Columnist, *Sports Collectors Digest***

“Being an 'average' Major League Baseball player, especially if you maintain that standing for several years, means you’re a better ball player than 99 percent of all those who ever swung a bat or picked up a glove. It also means that even if your name most often appeared in agate type, you’ve crossed paths with many of the game's headline names. And it may just mean that your story is much richer than your 'average' stats suggest.”

**―Bob Costas, Legendary American Sportscaster and Commentator who’s won 28 Emmys for his TV Work**

“Steve Wiegand has written a thoroughly enjoyable book about the joys of baseball, and the pleasures of collecting baseball cards. I wish I still had the cards I carefully collected in my youth. Alas, my mother threw my collection away when I went off to college.”

**—David M. Rubinstein, Lawyer, Philanthropist, Former Government Official, Author, Businessman (Carlyle Group)**, **and Co-Owner of the Baltimore Orioles Baseball Team**

“For baseball buffs, this deep dive into the life of Major League Baseball player Danny O’Connell (1929-1969) is a reminder of the game’s reliance on unsung heroes.”

**—Kirkus Reviews**

“*The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell* is not only a masterclass in storytelling—an illuminating narrative of one of the unheralded heroes of the game. It also informs and entertains by offering social and baseball history and the business of baseball cards to give context to O’Connell’s career. A must read for both fans and followers of baseball.”

**—Ron Shapiro, Legendary Sports Agent and *New York Times* Best-Selling author**

*Author*

Steve Wiegand

Sun City West, AZ

[stevewiegand11@gmail.com](mailto:stevewiegand11@gmail.com)

916-704-2549 (cell)

*Publisher*

Bruce L. Bortz

Bancroft Press (one of the top ten independent book publishers in America since 1992)

4527 Glenwood Ave.

La Crescenta, CA 91214

818-275-3061(office)

410-627-0608 (cell)

410-764-1967 (fax)

[bruceb@bancroftpress.com](mailto:bruceb@bancroftpress.com)

[www.bancroftpress.com](http://www.bancroftpress.com)

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*Publisher Info*

* Been a top-ten indie since its start in 1992
* Profiled by Publishers Weekly
* Publishes 4-6 books a year
* Distributed nationally by Baker & Taylor Publisher Services
* Frontlist and backlist titles frequently optioned or bought by Hollywood producers
* Publishes almost all types of books, from memoirs to mysteries, young adult novels to history and biography
* Bancroft books have received numerous starred reviews—four, in fact, for two 2018 summer books—and have won numerous awards
* *The Missing Kennedy,* a NYT ebook bestseller, was on the cover of *People Magazine* when published in 2015
* Published the books of four Pulitzer Prize winners (Alice Steinbach, Stephen Hunter, Elizabeth McGowan, and Mark S. Johnson)
* Operated internship program with colleges and universities around the country each semester (and summer) since 1992

**Overview**

In late August 2022, a roughly 9.4-square-inch cardboard rectangle bearing the likeness of a baseball player sold at auction for $12.6 million. About the same time, a similar-sized card could be had for $3, without having to bid on it.

The distinction, aside from the obvious $12,599,997 difference in price tags, was that the former card bore the visage of the immortal Mickey Mantle, while the latter was that of the very mortal Daniel Francis O’Connell III. The question, prize-winning U.S. history writer Steve Wiegand raises in *The Uncommon Life of Danny O’Connell*, is which player, and which baseball card, more truly represents the heart and soul of America’s Grand Old Game?

Wiegand makes a convincing argument for O’Connell. In a first-of-its-kind biography of what in baseball card collecting parlance is a “common” player, the author points out that “common” does not mean “average” — and there is nothing average about anyone who can survive as a Major League ballplayer for a decade or more.

Danny O’Connell was born to play baseball. From the sandlots of Depression-era Paterson, New Jersey, through five years of minor league apprenticeship, to a dozen years of playing and coaching in the big leagues, O’Connell was consumed by his desire to play the game he loved the best he could.

His best was not much, measured by the statistical standards of a Mantle, a Willie Mays, a Babe Ruth or any of the other icons that are ordinarily the subjects of baseball biographies: a .260 lifetime batting average, 39 career homers, no All-Star Game appearances, no World Series rings. On the other hand, he played more seasons and amassed more hits than 90 percent of all the men who have played in the major leagues since 1876. He was the most valuable player on his first team, and his last. He was greatly admired by teammates and opponents alike for his baseball smarts, his fielding skills and his razor wit, all of which allowed him to survive in a profession to which millions of American boys aspired in the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s but very few achieved.

Woven into O’Connell’s story is the story of how baseball uncannily mirrored America itself in the years following World War II, from its adjustments as the world’s undisputed economic superpower to its ongoing struggle to achieve racial equality. It traces the evolution of baseball players from the equivalent of indentured servants to entrepreneurial millionaires – and of baseball cards from the objects of children’s dreams to instruments of Wall Street speculators.

Most of all, *The Uncommon Life of Danny O’Connell* reveals the multidimensional man behind a flat—and mostly forgotten—cardboard image. It’s a love letter to not only the “common” players of baseball’s “Golden Age” but to all of life’s “average” folks who achieve heroism by doing their best at something they love. And if they’re lucky, getting their picture on a baseball card.

Whether you’re a baseball fanatic, an American history buff, or someone who just loves a good story about a good man, this book is for you.

**SEVEN COMPELLING REASONS TO READ OR REVIEW THE BOOK**

***THE UNCOMMON LIFE OF DANNY O’CONNELL***

1. **Inspirational Story**: Follows the journey of Danny O’Connell, an "average" hero whose life offers relatable and inspiring lessons on perseverance, dedication, and the value of hard work in achieving one's dreams.
2. **Historical Insights**: Provides a vivid glimpse into America's past, particularly the post-World War II era, showcasing the evolution of baseball alongside societal changes and the racial integration of the sport.
3. **Baseball and American Culture**: Offers an in-depth look at how baseball mirrors broader societal trends and values, highlighting its significance beyond just a sport.
4. **Personal Growth and Challenges**: Chronicles the personal growth and challenges faced by O’Connell, from his humble beginnings to his struggles and achievements in the major leagues, making for a compelling human story.
5. **Behind-the-Scenes Look at Major League Baseball**: Gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at the life of a major league baseball player during baseball's "Golden Era," including the highs and lows, the camaraderie, and the day-to-day life of athletes.
6. **Exploration of Baseball Cards**: Explores the evolution of baseball cards from simple collectibles to valuable commodities, weaving this narrative thread through O'Connell's life story and connecting it to broader economic and cultural trends.
7. **Detailed Research and Authenticity**: The author's meticulous research and authentic storytelling provide a rich, detailed account of O'Connell's life and times, making it a valuable read for baseball enthusiasts, historians, and anyone interested in American culture. "The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell" is more than just a sports biography; it's a reflection on the American dream, the nature of heroism, and the enduring appeal of baseball as part of the country's cultural heritage.

**20 Insights from the Book**

1. **Danny O’Connell’s Early Introduction to Baseball**: His first encounter with baseball was through a card found in a liquor store, setting off a lifelong passion for the game.
2. **The Significance of a .260 Batting Average**: O’Connell’s career average symbolizes the value of consistency and the unsung heroes in the sport.
3. **Baseball Cards as Cultural Artifacts**: The evolution of baseball cards from tobacco package inserts to valuable collectibles reflects broader societal changes.
4. **The Move West**: O’Connell’s transition from the New York Giants to the San Francisco Giants mirrors the broader migration patterns and cultural shifts in mid-20th century America.
5. **Integration and Its Impact on Players**: O’Connell played during the critical era of baseball’s racial integration, offering insights into the challenges and changes within the locker room and on the field.
6. **Economic Realities for Mid-Century Ballplayers**: Despite appearing financially well-off, O’Connell and his contemporaries faced financial uncertainties common to athletes of the era.
7. **The Unpredictability of Trades**: O’Connell’s experiences with being traded reveal the personal and professional instability faced by players before free agency.
8. **The Community Impact of Baseball’s Golden Era**: Baseball served as a communal and unifying force, with players like O’Connell at the center of local and national narratives.
9. **The Changing Landscape of Baseball Memorabilia**: The shift from personal keepsakes to high-stakes investments reflects changing attitudes toward sports memorabilia.
10. **The Role of Statistics in Baseball's Evolution**: O’Connell’s career, analyzed through modern sabermetrics, offers new perspectives on his contributions to the game.
11. **Veteran Presence and Leadership**: O’Connell’s role as a seasoned professional highlights the importance of veteran leadership in sports teams.
12. **The Golden Age of Baseball from a Player’s Perspective**: Insights into what the so-called Golden Age was really like for the players, beyond the romanticized narratives.
13. **Family Life of a Baseball Player**: The book reveals the challenges and dynamics of maintaining family life amidst the demands of professional baseball.
14. **Baseball and American Warfare**: O’Connell’s career interruptions due to military service highlight the intersections between sports careers and national service.
15. **Fan Culture and Engagement**: How fan interactions and the culture of baseball fandom have evolved since O’Connell’s time.
16. **Paterson, NJ, as a Microcosm of Baseball Talent**: The surprising number of notable baseball figures from Paterson, including O’Connell, showcases the city’s contribution to the sport.
17. **Baseball’s Technological Evolution**: The book touches on how the technology of broadcasting games and player training has evolved since O’Connell’s days.
18. **Baseball as a Reflection of the American Experience**: O’Connell’s life and career mirror broader American themes of aspiration, resilience, and community.
19. **The Role of Baseball in Promoting the American Dream**: O’Connell’s journey from humble beginnings to professional baseball epitomizes the American Dream within the sports context.
20. **Post-Career Transitions for Athletes**: The book explores the seldom-discussed challenges faced by players like O’Connell in adapting to life after baseball.

These revelations not only shed light on Danny O’Connell’s personal and professional life but also offer a window into the cultural, social, and economic fabric of mid-20th century America through the lens of baseball.

**20 Topics the Author Can Expertly Talk About**

1. **The Evolution of Baseball Cards**: The transformation from simple game memorabilia to high-value collectibles and investment assets.
2. **The Cultural Impact of Baseball in America**: How the sport reflects societal changes and influences American culture.
3. **The Role of Minor Leagues in Developing Major League Talent**: Using Danny O’Connell’s journey as a case study.
4. **The Historical Significance of Baseball’s Integration Era**: Highlighting O’Connell’s career overlap with baseball's integration and what it signified for the sport and America.
5. **The Economic Dynamics of Baseball in the 1950s and 1960s**: Analyzing players' earnings, team revenues, and the financial aspects of the sport during O’Connell’s career.
6. **The Psychological Impact of Being Traded**: Exploring the personal and professional implications for players during an era of less mobility.
7. **Baseball's Golden Era**: Debunking myths and exploring what made this period (including O’Connell’s playing days) so special.
8. **The Transition from Player to Retiree**: Challenges faced by players like O’Connell in adjusting to life after baseball.
9. **The Influence of Baseball on Local Economies**: Examining the move of the Giants to San Francisco and its economic impact through the lens of O’Connell’s career.
10. **The Role of Baseball in the American Dream**: How the sport provides a pathway for social mobility and achieving the American Dream.
11. **Baseball and American Identity**: How the sport mirrors American values and societal shifts during the mid-20th century.
12. **The Importance of Role Players in Baseball**: The significance of "average" heroes like O’Connell in the sport’s history.
13. **Sports Collectibles as an Investment**: The rise of sports memorabilia, including baseball cards, as a significant investment category.
14. **The Shift in Baseball’s Popularity and Cultural Significance**: How baseball has evolved from America's pastime to its current status.
15. **The Personal Lives of Baseball Players in the 1950s and 1960s**: Insight into the family and personal dynamics of players during O’Connell’s era.
16. **The Impact of Military Service on Athletic Careers**: Examining how military drafts and service affected players’ careers, using O’Connell as an example.
17. **Innovations in Baseball Strategy and Management**: Analyzing how strategies and team management have changed since O’Connell’s playing days.
18. **Baseball’s Integration with Technology and Media**: The evolution of broadcasting and technology in baseball from the mid-20th century to today.
19. **Fan Engagement and Loyalty in Baseball**: How fan culture and engagement with baseball teams have evolved over the decades.
20. **Historic Baseball Stadiums and Their Cultural Significance**: The story of iconic stadiums and their impact on communities, with a focus on O’Connell’s experiences in different ballparks.

**Steve Wiegand’s Media Experience**

Wiegand appeared on various C-Span shows from the ’70s through the ’00s, as a talking-head "expert" on various aspects and personalities having to do with California politics, particularly Jerry Brown, Pete Wilson, and Arnold Schwarzenegger, different ballot propositions, and state government finances.

Because of his “Dummies” history books (he’\s written two), he was also part of a panel on one of the C-Span book shows about teaching U.S. history.

He also did some NPR appearances on shows such as "All Things Considered" on various breaking news topics that ranged from the politics of California wildfires to the wrongful death lawsuit against the heavy metal group Judas Priest, in which two families claimed their kids killed themselves after the band suggested it when the kids played an album backwards.

Wiegand is in the top ten percent of authors when it comes to handling himself with television and radio.

**Praise for *The Uncommon Life of Danny O’Connell***

A baseball player in a baseball uniform

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Bancroft Press Announces the Release of "The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell" During the MLB All-Star Game**

**[Los Angeles, April 17, 2024]** — Bancroft Press, a leading independent publisher, is thrilled to announce the release of "The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell: A Tale of Baseball Cards, 'Average' Players, and The True Value of America’s Game" by celebrated author Steve Wiegand. This extraordinary book will be officially launched on July 16, 2024, coinciding with the excitement of the MLB All-Star game, celebrating the spirit of baseball and the extraordinary stories of its unsung heroes.

"The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell" delves deep into the life of Danny O’Connell, a player often labeled as "common" in the world of baseball card collecting, but whose story reveals the rich tapestry of character, perseverance, and the human spirit that defines the true value of America’s favorite pastime. Steve Wiegand, with his prolific background in American history and storytelling, brings to life a narrative that transcends the game of baseball, offering readers a compelling look into the heart and soul of the sport.

**Praise for the Book**

The book has already received high praise from notable figures in the world of sports, literature, and history. John Newman, host of Sports Card Nation, hails it as "a compelling and whimsical journey," while Tom Verducci, NY Times Best-Selling Author, commends Wiegand for capturing the connection fans have with the sport. Kirkus Reviews and legendary sports agent Ron Shapiro have also lauded the book for its deep dive into the life of an unsung hero and its masterful storytelling.

**A Must-Read for Baseball Fans and History Buffs**

Set against the backdrop of post-World War II America, "The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell" is more than just a sports biography. It is a reflection on the American dream, the essence of heroism, and the enduring appeal of baseball as an integral part of the country's cultural heritage. From the sandlots of Depression-era New Jersey to the major leagues, O’Connell’s journey is a testament to the spirit of dedication and hard work.

**Book Launch Event**

To celebrate the launch, Bancroft Press has planned a series of events around the MLB All-Star game, inviting fans, historians, and sports enthusiasts to delve into the world of Danny O’Connell. Readers will get an inside look at the era of baseball’s "Golden Age," the evolution of baseball cards, and the extraordinary within the ordinary lives of players like O’Connell.

**Availability**

"The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell" is available in hardcover for $33.00 and as an ebook for $9.99. It can be purchased through major retailers and directly from Bancroft Press. With 342 pages, a professional index, and a 16-page photographic insert, this book is a valuable addition to the libraries of baseball fans, historians, and anyone interested in the compelling stories of American culture.

For more information about the book and the author, or to request a review copy, please contact:

**Bruce L. Bortz**  
Publisher, Bancroft Press  
4527 Glenwood Ave., La Crescenta, CA 91214  
bruceb@bancroftpress.com  
[www.bancroftpress.com](http://www.bancroftpress.com/)

Join us in celebrating the launch of "The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell" and rediscover the magic of baseball and the stories of its average heroes who embody the true spirit of the game.

**About Bancroft Press**

Bancroft Press has been a leading independent publisher since 1992, publishing a wide range of works from memoirs to mysteries, young adult novels to history and biography. Known for its commitment to quality and innovation, Bancroft Press brings to the forefront stories that inspire, entertain, and enlighten.

For further inquiries, please contact:

**Bruce L. Bortz**  
Publisher, Bancroft Press  
bruceb@bancroftpress.com  
[www.bancroftpress.com](http://www.bancroftpress.com/)

410-627-0608

Top of Form

**Ten Book Launch Events Planned for Houston’s All-Star Game in July 2024**

1. **Danny O'Connell Legacy Exhibition:** A curated exhibition showcasing memorabilia, photographs, and personal items from Danny O'Connell's career and life. This interactive exhibit at a local museum or in the ballpark itself would offer fans a tangible connection to the era and the man behind the book's story.
2. **Author Meet and Greet at Minute Maid Park:** Host a signing event with Steve Wiegand at Minute Maid Park before the All-Star game. This allows fans to meet the author, get their books signed, and possibly include a short talk or Q&A session about O'Connell's impact on baseball.
3. **Panel Discussion on Baseball History:** Organize a panel discussion featuring Steve Wiegand, baseball historians, former players, and possibly family members or individuals connected to Danny O'Connell. This event, held at a local university or cultural center, would explore the themes of the book and O'Connell's place in baseball history.
4. **Baseball Card Collecting Workshop:** Partner with local sports memorabilia shops to host a workshop on the history and art of baseball card collecting, highlighting the role of cards in preserving the legacy of players like O'Connell. This could also include a showcase of rare and valuable cards.
5. **Youth Baseball Clinic:** Collaborate with local youth baseball leagues to hold a clinic that emphasizes the values of hard work, perseverance, and love for the game that Danny O'Connell embodied. Special guest speakers could include local MLB players or coaches.
6. **Storytelling Night: Tales from the Diamond:** Invite baseball fans, former players, and sportswriters to share their stories and memories related to baseball, focusing on the "Golden Era" and the unsung heroes of the sport. This event could be held at a local bookstore, library, or bar.
7. **Baseball Movie Night:** Organize an outdoor movie night featuring classic baseball films, with a pre-show talk by Steve Wiegand about how these films capture the spirit of baseball as reflected in O'Connell's life.
8. **Scavenger Hunt:** Create a baseball-themed scavenger hunt around Houston, incorporating locations significant to baseball history as well as places connected to Danny O'Connell’s life or that inspired scenes in the book. Participants could win copies of the book, baseball memorabilia, or tickets to the All-Star game.
9. **Library Exhibit and Talk:** Set up a display at local libraries featuring the book, along with a collection of baseball literature and memorabilia. Accompany the exhibit with a series of talks by Steve Wiegand and other baseball historians.
10. **Special All-Star Game Booth:** Secure a booth or table at the All-Star Game fan festivities where copies of "The Uncommon Life of Danny O'Connell" can be sold. Include interactive elements like a trivia contest about baseball history, a photo booth with vintage baseball props, and a video loop showing highlights of O'Connell’s career and interviews with the author.

**About the Author**

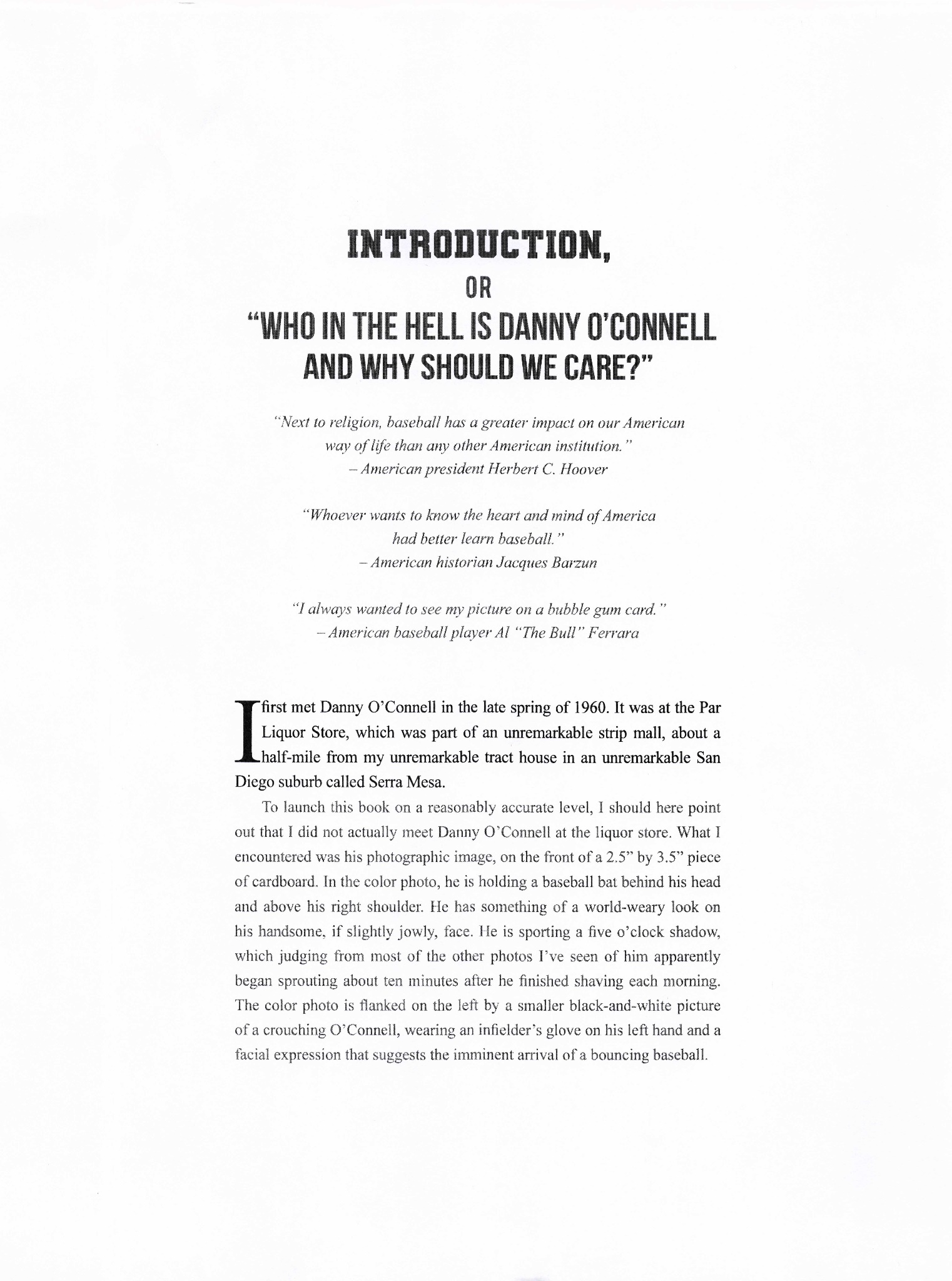
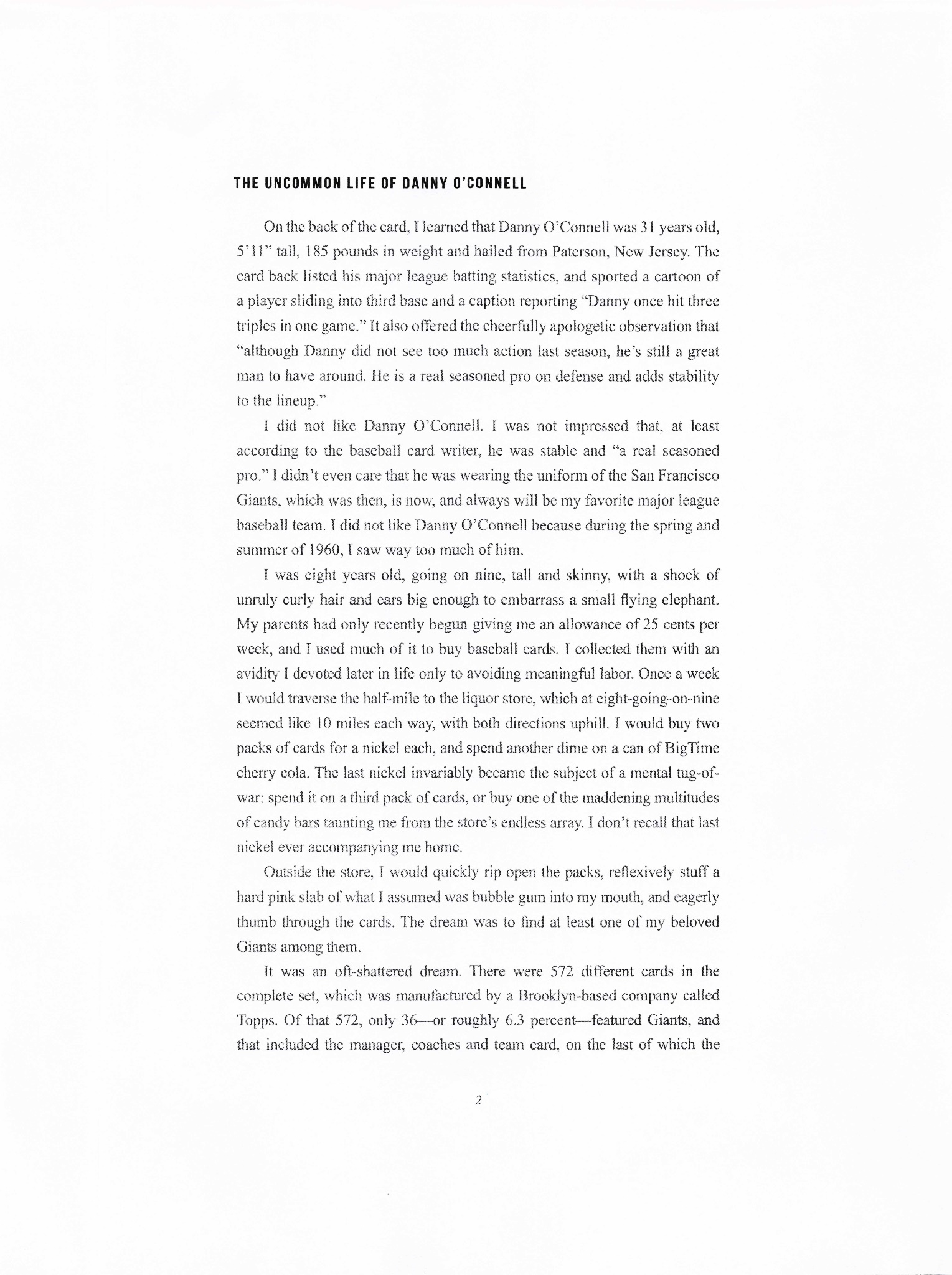
Steve Wiegand is a lifelong baseball fan even though his own prowess in the game peaked at age 11, when he hit a real over-the-fence home run for the immortal Robin’s Frosties Little League team. It was the only homer of his career and probably an accident.

Destined for indoor work, he spent 35 years as a reporter and columnist for the *San Diego Evening Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Sacramento Bee*.

He is the author, co-author or contributing author of 10 books, including *1876: Year of the Gun; The Dancer, the Dreamers and the Queen of Romania; U.S. History for Dummies; the Mental Floss History of the World; The American Revolution for Dummies* and *Lessons from the Great Depression for Dummies.*

Wiegand is a member of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR.) When not watching the San Francisco Giants fall short of his completely reasonable expectations, he enjoys playing poker and the harmonica, although usually not at the same time.

He lives in Arizona.

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