



Clete Boyer (right) of Yankees and Ken Boyer (below) of Cards learned fielding in cornfield and competitiveness in a family of seven brothers—all athletes.

IT WAS SUCH a thrill when my husband and I saw our first World Series last year. You see, six of our sons have played professional baseball—and maybe a seventh will soon.

Well, Vernon and I were sure the Dodgers would win the National League pennant, so we went to Los Angeles, thinking our boy Cletis would be there soon with the New York Yankees. With us there were our youngest boy, Leonard, 16, and Wayne, our No. 2 boy, and his wife Lois.

Of course, the Dodgers lost out to San Francisco—and who helped beat them but our own St. Louis Cardinals and our boy Kenton who plays third base! So we went up to San Francisco and, being small-town folks, we got to the ball park a good hour-and-a-half before the game. But there was a mix-up about our tickets, and, would you believe it, we didn't get inside the park until the fifth inning. Even then we had to sit apart—and behind the Giants' dugout, too!

We weren't upset about the mix-up, but we were concerned that Cletis might worry about us when he didn't see us in the seats he had saved for us. But we got straightened out and in the sixth inning of a tight game Cletis, also a third baseman, came to bat, and right among all those Giant fans we screamed and yelled for a hit. Well, Cletis hit one all right.

Wayne yelled: "I don't think it's going out."

But Barbara: "Oh, yes it is. It's going to clear the fence!" Dad has heard so many smashes by our boys that he can tell these things. Sure enough, it was a home run, and the Yankees went on to win, 6-2.

At a time like that you can't help remembering how it all started. Back in the '30s we had a farm near Alba, Mo., a town of about 300, and the boys had to help out with chores before they could play baseball. During the Depression they had to get part-time jobs, too. We had six girls and seven boys, so they had to bring most of their money home.

But they had lots of fun, too. We were darn lucky to be living right across the road from a big cornfield. Vernon and the older boys laid out a baseball diamond there. If our kids weren't in

the house, we knew where we could find them—playing ball across the road.

We hardly ever had extra money around, but Vernon managed to keep the kids in gloves and bats. The gloves only cost about 50 cents apiece, but they were like gold to the kids. Vernon was plumb tired when he came home from work, but he'd find time to practice with the boys. He gave them plenty of work on grounders and fly balls.

The boys always seemed to get along well. I've just been finding out about some of the pranks they pulled. Once Cloyd, our eldest, and Wayne saved up to buy a bike which, in those days, meant more than a car does to spoiled kids today. Well, Ken couldn't resist snitching a ride on that bike. When Cloyd and Wayne caught him, they really shook him up.

I also just learned how the younger boys learned to swim: the older ones would take them to the swimming hole, a deep old mine-shaft, and toss them in. Oh, if I had known!

As they grew up, the Boyers played on the Alba Aces. They used to have games with the Baxter Springs (Okla.) team which had pretty uniforms because they were sponsored by a mine company. They also had a lot of cousins named Mantle—including Mickey.

WE WERE die-hard St. Louis Cardinal fans. Folks in Alba used to go in groups to St. Louis, some 300 miles away. We liked them because of Gabby Street, who was their manager and later radio announcer. The Yankees used to be the most hated team in Alba, but now that three of my boys are working for them, I'd say they were the No. 2 team around here.

Runt Marr used to scout for the Cards, and he signed our first four boys. The Cardinals could have had Cletis, too, but he got a nice bonus from Kansas City, then a Yankee farm team, and definitely isn't sorry he's with the World Champs.

Cloyd was always a big inspiration to his younger brothers. I'll never forget what he said when we took him to the railroad station at Lamar for his first trip to spring training. Cloyd told Wayne and Ken: "Some day we'll all be taking this train to camp together."

The big brothers were always helping the smaller ones. They gave them advice, balls, gloves,

and bats. Cloyd developed a sore arm in the majors, and they say he would have stayed a lot longer if he had switched from pitching to the outfield because he was a good hitter.

But even when Cloyd was having trouble, he helped Ken. When Ken reported to the Cards for the first time, Cloyd took him aside after each workout and gave him tips, then pitched a lot of extra batting practice for him. Cloyd is pitching coach now for the New York Yankees minor-league teams, and I know he's still helping out young fellows.

I guess you'd call Wayne the bookworm of the family. He got as high as Class A baseball before he decided to become a dentist, but he never lost the Boyer love of the game; today he manages a kids' team in Kokomo (Ind.). Whenever we see Wayne, we set him working on our teeth. After all, what's the use of having a dentist in the family unless you put him to work?

Another boy, Lynn, was a real good first baseman with the Cardinals' farm system but broke his wrist and then his collarbone. So he went to Pittsburg Teachers College in Kansas and now teaches in Walker, Mo., not far from us. He coaches basketball and loves to teach baseball to the kids.

Ronnie signed with the New York Yankees farm system last summer, so that made six professionals in the family. Lennie would make the seventh, you know. Barbara, 14, and Marcella, 10, and our baby are still at home, too. All the girls have been cheerleaders for the Boyer boys when they played here. Pansy and some of our other girls would also get out in the cornfield and play ball with their brothers, and I want you to know they were pretty good, too.

VERNON AND I are so grateful to baseball. It made a big difference to our sons. We couldn't afford to send them to college, yet Wayne and Lynn were able to get degrees after their baseball careers ended. And the boys have been just as helpful to us in the big leagues as when they were little ones helping me with the canning and anxious to get out to play ball.

Do you know what happened to Ken's \$6,000 bonus for signing with the Cardinals? Well, Vernon had been doctoring for a heart condition