We’re going back to St. Louis, Missouri in the summer of 1951.

It’s August 19. It’s hot – a high of 87 degrees with 93% humidity.

To make matters worse, the lowly St. Louis Browns are 36-79……37 games behind the first place Cleveland Indians. The day before, the Browns drew only 1,871 fans to their game with the Detroit Tigers.

**Slide 2** - Master showman, Browns Owner Bill Veeck, has big plans for today’s game. After all, it is the 50th Birthday of the American League:

* To honor the 50th Anniversary of the American League, Veeck promised fans free Falstaff beer, ice cream and cake
* 18,369 fans showed up – the largest Browns home crowd in over four years
* They got more than beer and cake!

**Slide 3** – Today’s slate included a double header between the Browns and the Detroit Tigers. The Tigers win the first game 5-2. Between games, the St. Louis Browns band played – featuring Satchel Paige on drums

**Slide 4** – After the Browns’ band finished, a seven foot high birthday cake was rolled out on the field. Note the figure of John Falstaff beside the cake (remember, free Falstaff beer). You can also see a head popping out of the cake.

**Slide 5** - A 3’7” young man, dressed in a Browns uniform, jumped out of the cake – waved to the crowd – then ran into the dugout. The fans thought it was the Browns batboy. The Falstaff representatives thought they were duped by Veeck – “is this all there is?” to the big promotion. This, surely, fell well short of the “showmanship” reputation Veeck brought with him from Cleveland.

**Slide 6** – The Browns’ lineup for the second game had an unusual twist – Frank Saucier (hitting .111) was batting leadoff in place of Jim Delsing – the usual leadoff man - who was batting .270.

**Slide 7** - Very few people commented on the Brown’s scorecard that was distributed that day. Those that did were told it was a printing mistake. *A copy of this program recently sold for $1,100.*

**Slide 8** - “For the Browns……. number 1/8, Eddie Gaedel batting for Saucier.”
 - Stadium Announcer, Bernie Ebert

Home plate umpire, Eddie Hurley, called out Browns manager, Zack Taylor, to find out what was going on. Taylor produced a signed contract indicating that Gaedel was truly on the team. However, league rules required that all contracts be approved by the AL President, Will Harridge. Veeck, knowing that Harridge would object – placed the signed contract in the mail on Friday afternoon – knowing that it would not reach the league office until later the following week. As expected, Harridge voided the contract the next day (Monday)! Veeck also sent a telegraph to Harridge early that Sunday morning. Unexpectedly, Harridge went to the office on Sunday, saw the telegram and immediately tried to contact Veeck. Veeck ignored his calls until after Gaedel batted.

**Slide 9** - Note that Gaedel is swinging three miniature bats. We’ll talk about them later.

**Slide 10** - “Eddie, I'm going to be up on the roof with a high-powered rifle watching every move you make. If you so much as look as if you're going to swing, I'm going to shoot you dead.”

 - Bill Veeck, “Veeck as in WrecK”

Veeck took out a $1,000,000 life insurance policy on Gaedel to protect himself in case something went wrong. Gaedel was paid $100 for his appearance.

Gaedel did not swing and was walked on four pitches. He was promptly replaced by pinch runner Jim Delsing, patted Desling on the butt and trotted back to the Browns’ dugout, bowing for the crowd a couple of times along the way.

**Slide 11** - Gaedel made one more appearance on a major league field.

Comiskey Park, 1960. In 1960, Veeck dressed up Gaedel and three other small people to portray Martians kidnapping White Sox stars Nellie Fox and Louie Aparicio.

**Slide 12** – Unfortunately, life did not end well for Eddie. Gaedel had a hard time finding steady employment, often working as a bar tender in his Chicago neighborhoods. He is shown here working at Chicago’s Midget Bar.

**Slide 13** – Eddie’s life ended tragically on June 19, 1961. Here’s the front page of the next day’s NY Times.

**Slide 14** – Ah, but as Paul Harvey used to say, what’s the rest of the story? Eddie has certainly not been forgotten. In fact, from a baseball memorabilia viewpoint, his appearance was quite notable.

**Slide 15** – After the game, Gaedel’s uniform somehow ended up in the home of Browns’ GM Bill DeWitt. It was stuffed away in a drawer until one of DeWitt’s kids found it and decided to wear it for a Halloween costume. After that, it was given to the National Baseball Hall of Fame where it resides in this exhibit.

**Slide 16** – Remember the three toy bats we saw in the earlier picture? Well, Eddie gave the bat he used in the game to his brother. The 18” bat was put up for auction in 2017. Want to guess what that toy bat sold for at auction?

**Slide 17** - **$45,600**!!!!!

**Slide 18 -** His jock strap is in the Baseball Reliquary museum in Monrovia, California.

**Slide 19** - Today Gaedel's autograph is considered the most coveted rarity of all post-war Major Leaguers, with just a handful of examples surfacing in the hobby market. A postcard photo of EG sold at auction a few years ago ( ~2009) for almost $7,000 in very , very poor condition

**Slide 20** - 1952 St. Louis Browns team ball currently listed on eBay for $1,900 (it includes signatures of HOFers Rogers Hornsby and Satchell Paige)

**Slide 21** - St. Louis Browns team ball sold for $11,900 with Gaedel autograph (bottom) - $10,000 more because of Eddie’s signature

**Slide 22** – thanks to the work of Eddie’s biggest fan, Tom Keefe of Seattle WA, Eddie’s memory lives on and is celebrated every August 19 with Eddie Gaedel Day. Tom Keefe provided the merchandise we’re passing out today.