

Francis T. "Fay" Vincent

1938 -

If there ever was a modern version of a Renaissance man it would have to be Francis Thomas (Fay) Vincent, Jr. He is the quintessential man for all seasons, whose several careers would have sufficed for any number of men, this despite being handicapped. However, it was all to begin in Waterbury, Connecticut, this grand journey, culminating with his ascendancy to the high office of Commissioner of Major League Baseball.

Born in the Brass City on May 29th, 1938, the son of Francis Thomas Vincent and Alice (Lynch) Vincent, he inherited his Irish nickname, Fay, from his father, a Yale University varsity athlete. The young Vincent was to spend his early formative years in the Crownbrook section of Waterbury, and he often spoke fondly of his remembrances of the Walnut Street area before moving with his parents to New Haven where his early schooling took place. It was then on to the Hotchkiss school in Lakeville, CT where Vincent captained the football team.

It was at Williams College in Williamstown, Mass, that Fay's athletic career was to come to a sudden end as a result of a prank by a classmate that caused him to fall four stories out of a dormitory window. The accident caused grievous injuries to his vertebrae, leaving him partially paralyzed. Once again the city of his birth was to play a role in his life as he chose to return to the Waterbury Hospital to recover, thereby defying long odds and walking again, albeit with a cane.

He graduated summa cum laude from Williams, earned a law degree from Yale, and eventually became a partner in a Washington, D. C. law firm specializing in corporate banking and securities matters. It was logical then, that he was chosen as associate director of corporate finance of the Securities and Exchange Commission. After a brief stay in 1978 he was lured back to the private sector, and headed to Hollywood to take the top post at floundering Columbia Pictures. Said Vincent, "I was in law enforcement on Friday and running a worldwide entertainment business on Monday." Such well known movies as "China Syndrome," "Gandhi," "Kramer vs. Kramer," and "Tootsie," were produced during his tenure.

When a revived Columbia pictures was



purchased by Coca-Cola, he remained briefly as an officer of the parent company until former Yale President and newly named Baseball Commissioner, A. Bartlett Giamatti beckoned. He joined his old friend as assistant commissioner and was soon to draft the formal agreement banning Pete Rose. Fay Vincent was named Commissioner upon the untimely death of Giamatti in the fall of 1989. His administration was noted for its stands on equal opportunity employment, fighting alcohol and drug abuse, and the daunting task of improving relations between the players and owners.

The title of his autobiography, *The Last Commissioner*, perhaps best summed up his legacy, as he was an outspoken guardian of the integrity of the game, devoid of any conflicts of interest, in the tradition of such illustrious predecessors as Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, A.B. "Happy" Chandler, Ford Frick, Bowie Kuhn, and Bart Giamatti.