

THEATER REVIEW

In the Days Of Baseball's Innocence

By WILBORN HAMPTON

Remember when baseball was just a game? When sports idols did not spend the off-season in rehab or completing their community service? Was there ever such a time? For the nostalgic, Eddie Frierson is offering a visit to a bygone era of baseball with "Matty," an appealing one-man show about Christy Mathewson, the clean-cut boy next door who was one of the game's greatest pitchers.

For Mr. Frierson, who wrote and performs the solo piece, "Matty" is clearly a labor of love for the legendary New York Giants star. By the time he pitched his last game, in 1916, Mathewson had won 373 games, had struck out 2,499 batters and had posted three straight seasons with more than 30 wins. He briefly managed the Cincinnati Reds, then served in France in World War I, where he was the victim of a gas attack. He died of tuberculosis in 1925, and was one of the first players elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame when it was established in 1936.

Mr. Frierson deftly mixes his pitches, combining the biographical curves of Mathewson's life with change-up anecdotes about baseball's early days and fast-ball observations on umpires, sportswriters and life in general (the latter accompanied by homespun advice for Little Leaguers).

Mathewson's off-the-diamond activities are not ignored either. The pitcher appeared in a movie, a Broadway show and a vaudeville revue and wrote a series of books for youngsters. And if you thought sports celebrity endorsements began with

MATTY An Evening With Christy Mathewson

Based on the life and writings of Christy Mathewson; written and performed by Eddie Frierson; directed by Kerrigan Mahan; costumes by Suzan Kay Frierson; lighting by Lawrence Oberman; set by Robert Smith; stage manager, Tiffany Yelton. Presented by Black Bags Three Productions in association with Edmund Gaynes and the Mathewson Foundation. At the Lamb's, Downstairs, 130 West 44th Street, Manhattan.



Ed Kreiger/"Matty: An Evening With Christy Mathewson."

Eddie Frierson portrays Christy Mathewson, the Hall of Fame pitcher.

breakfast cereals, Mathewson was the official spokesman for Tuxedo pipe tobacco. "There is an art to making whole lies out of half-truths," Mathewson observes with a boyish grin.

The Christy Mathewson one meets through Mr. Frierson is an "aw, shucks" kind of a guy who gets over life's hurdles, even the suicide of his kid brother, on the strength of sports platitudes. But he is charming company and tells a good tale. The best parts of the show are the reminiscences.

Mr. Frierson single-handedly re-enacts the 1908 playoff game between the Giants and the Chicago Cubs that turned into a riot at the Polo Grounds; a shaggy-dog account of Charlie Faust's sojourn as the Giants' good-luck charm for several seasons is amusing, and Mathewson's role in uncovering the 1919 Chicago Black Sox scandal is a footnote to baseball history.

Kerrigan Mahan has directed Mr. Frierson in a polished performance that takes place on Robert Smith's garage sale of a set, packed with enough trophies, vintage baseball caps and photos of veteran players to start a Cooperstown annex. One doesn't have to be a baseball buff to enjoy this pleasant evening of memorabilia, but it helps.

One-man show is a perfect pitch

HERE is one fearsome, compelling moment in Eddie Frierson's one-man show, "Matty — An Evening with Christy Mathewson," directed by Kerrigan Mahan, now at the Lambs Theater downstairs.

Frierson has himself written the script, based on the life, sayings and writings of the man who was arguably America's first major baseball legend, and in 1936, 20 years after his retirement as a player and nine years after his death, one of the originals inducted into the Inaugural Class of Baseball's Hall of Fame.

The Frierson/Mathewson moment is, however, nothing particularly to do with either Mathewson's formidable achievements or even his obviously extraordinarily engaging personality.

The moment is, virtually, at the end of the quite long, yet blissfully painful evening, and the somewhat garrulous, yet always interesting and charming, chat is about to wind down. The Big Six's (as Mathewson was



popularly referred to) career was over, and he was clearly about to die, at the comparatively young age of 45, of tuberculosis, probably acquired from exposure to poison gas during his service in World War I.

But just as we are getting ready to shuffle out of the theater — hopefully amused by all the baseball reminiscence and lore — unexpectedly the houselights go up. Startlingly, Frierson/Mathewson looks out at the audience, grins and invites questions.

Instantly a one-man show becomes a living lecture from a dead man — it is as if we had been able to ask Emlin Williams/Charles Dickens how he proposed to end "Edwin Drood"!

The audience jumps at the opportunity — treating Frierson exactly as if

he were Mathewson reborn. How did he invent the "screwball" — he called it the "fade-away" — or what did he think of Shoeless Joe Jackson and the Black Sox scandal?

And Frierson is totally convincing — not only in giving, say, a beautifully technical account of the "fade-away," but in behaving seemingly with all the authority and knowledge of Mathewson's acquired personal history. It's pure virtuosity.

As for the show as a totality, this is a lively visit with a fascinating man, full of anecdote, the absolute value of which might depend on your appetite for baseball mythology. I myself enjoyed the show very much, but I am certain that my son — a baseball fanatic — would have enjoyed it more.

But he — lost in all the stories and glimpses of legends past — might have missed the full, thrilling impact of that startling theatrical moment when illusion becomes reality, and the actor totally takes over the persona of the acted.



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December 5, 1996

BY FACSIMILE

To: Eddie Frierson
From: Bob Costas

IT'S 100% TRUE THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A BASEBALL FAN TO BE COMPLETELY ENGAGED BY EDDIE FRIERSON'S PERFORMANCE. HE LEAVES THE AUDIENCE WITH A REAL APPRECIATION OF CHRISTY MATHEWSON, AND THE PLACE AND TIME IN WHICH HE WAS AN AUTHENTIC AMERICAN HERO. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF YOU ARE A BASEBALL FAN, YOU WILL BE AMAZED AT HOW MUCH YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT "MATTY", HIS CONTEMPORARIES, AND THE DRAMATIC BASEBALL EVENTS OF THEIR TIME.

BOB COSTAS
NBC SPORTS

/car

USA TODAY Baseball Weekly

FOR BASEBALL

ON SALE THROUGH DECEMBER 17, 1996

USA TODAY BASEBALL WEEKLY • DECEMBER 11-17, 1996 • 25

ON STAGE

Mathewson time machine offers a wonderful ride

In this age of channel-surfing and cyberspace, anything that can hold our attention for a couple of hours deserves accolades. That such a show is performed by one man and casts baseball in a favorable light is remarkable.

A REVIEW

By Tim Wendel

Say hello to Matty, Eddie Frierson's one-man play about Hall of Fame pitcher Christy Mathewson. This show is as memorable as an exciting World Series game, and it wakes up the echoes about why we love baseball. It reminds us that no other sport enjoys such history or as many heroes and scoundrels.

The play's lone set is a crowded attic. Moving between a tattered easy chair, cluttered desk and coat rack, Frierson recreates baseball's world at the turn of the century. He impersonates voices so well that he can duplicate conversations. By the end of the show a visitor will have heard from more than 30 characters, including Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Fred Merkle, Grantland Rice, a Boston bellboy, and John McGraw, the New York Giants' fabled manager from 1902 to 1932.

The heart-to-heart that Frierson, impersonating McGraw, has with the audience to start the second act is moving. He wades into the crowd, transforming it for 10 minutes into the New York Giants' clubhouse. For this is the fiery, no-nonsense McGraw, who gets in his players' faces and demands their best efforts and utmost respect. And, for laughs, Frierson does the same. After a quick dissertation on his baseball philosophy, he asks one theater-goer if he understands.

"Yes," the patron shrugs.

"Just yes?" says Frierson/McGraw, his voice rising.

"Yes, sir?"

"Try 'Yes, Mr. McGraw.'"

By the end of this act, Frierson has the crowd yelling, "Yes, Mr. McGraw" to every request. They're ready to follow him out onto the field and another New York victory.

FRIERSON GREW UP A baseball player. After he pitched his high school team in Nashville to a Tennessee state championship, he went to UCLA and pitched for the Bruins.

"But I soon figured out that while I may be good, I wasn't good enough," Frierson says. "That's when I got real interested in the stage."

After graduating with a theater arts degree in 1982, he began looking for a subject for a one-man show. George Custer and Andrew Jackson went by the boards before Frierson decided upon Christy Mathewson.

Nicknamed "The Big Six," Mathewson invented what is now known as the screwball. His accomplishments in 16 years with the Giants included records for endurance (46 games started in 1904) and victories (37 in 1908). In the 1905 World Series, he shut out the Philadelphia Athletics three times in five days.

Mathewson also acted in the movies and on the vaudeville stage, wrote a series of books-for

MEMORIES of a legend



A Natty 'Matty': Eddie Frierson as pitching great Christy Mathewson.

boys and was a World War I war hero.

But that can be learned from baseball history. To know a person so well that you can become that luminary for two hours on stage takes more than cracking open a few books. Frierson spent 12 years researching his one-man show, traveling to Mathewson's hometown (Factoryville, Penn.), his college (Bucknell), his winter home (south-central Los Angeles) and where he died of tuberculosis (Saranac Lake, N.Y.)

In his travels, Frierson found Mathewson's personal remembrances, which became the basis for Matty. But the show didn't jell until Frierson rewrote the production with the help of director Kerrigan Mahan.

The extensive research resulted in a great show, and Frierson was accepted into the Mathewson family as an adopted grandson.

"Almost every word in the show comes directly from Matty's memoirs," says Frierson.

WHEN THE HOUSE lights go up at the end of the show, Frierson takes questions from the audience. Ask him about the Hall of Fame at Cooperstown and he'll give you a puzzled look. Even though Mathewson was in the Hall's inaugural class, he died 11 years before Cooperstown opened its doors.

Frierson stays in character until the end. On his stage, the Yankees are still the Highlanders. Matty knows nothing about Frank Thomas or Ken Griffey Jr. or Albert Belle. But he can tell you about Honus Wagner. How he was the toughest batter Mathewson ever faced. How Wagner walked and talked and swung a bat, and for a moment you're back there. Seeing baseball as it used to be and sometimes still is.

Matty recently completed a four-month run in New York, and Frierson is putting together a national tour. When it comes to your town, go see it.

For those who remain rankled about how the national pastime has conducted itself lately, Matty is a great way to become hooked on baseball again.

As we went to press, the national tour for Matty was still being put together. Its schedule will be printed in Baseball Weekly as soon as available.

FOR MORE ON MATTY

If you would like to learn more about Christy Mathewson, these books can help:

► *Matty: An American Hero* by Ray Robinson (Oxford University Press).

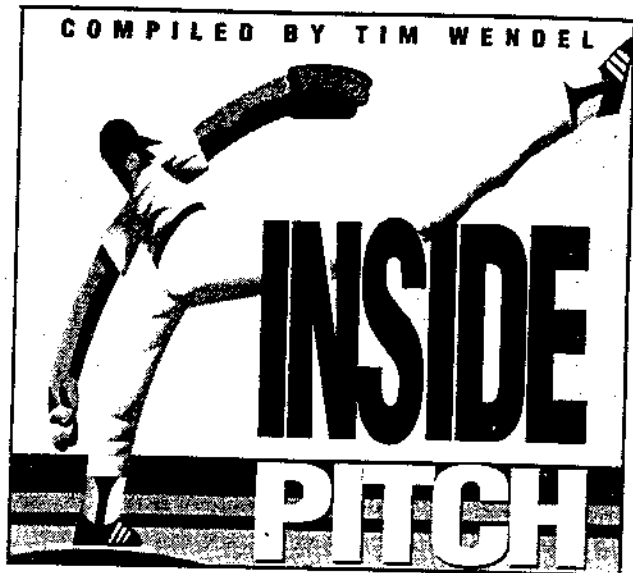
► *Pitching in a Pinch or Baseball from the Inside* by Christy Mathewson with Eric Rolfe Greenberg (University of Nebraska).

► *Christy Mathewson: A Game-By-Game Profile of a Legendary Pitcher* by Ronald A. Mayer (McFarland & Co.)

USA TODAY
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COMPILED BY TIM WENDEL

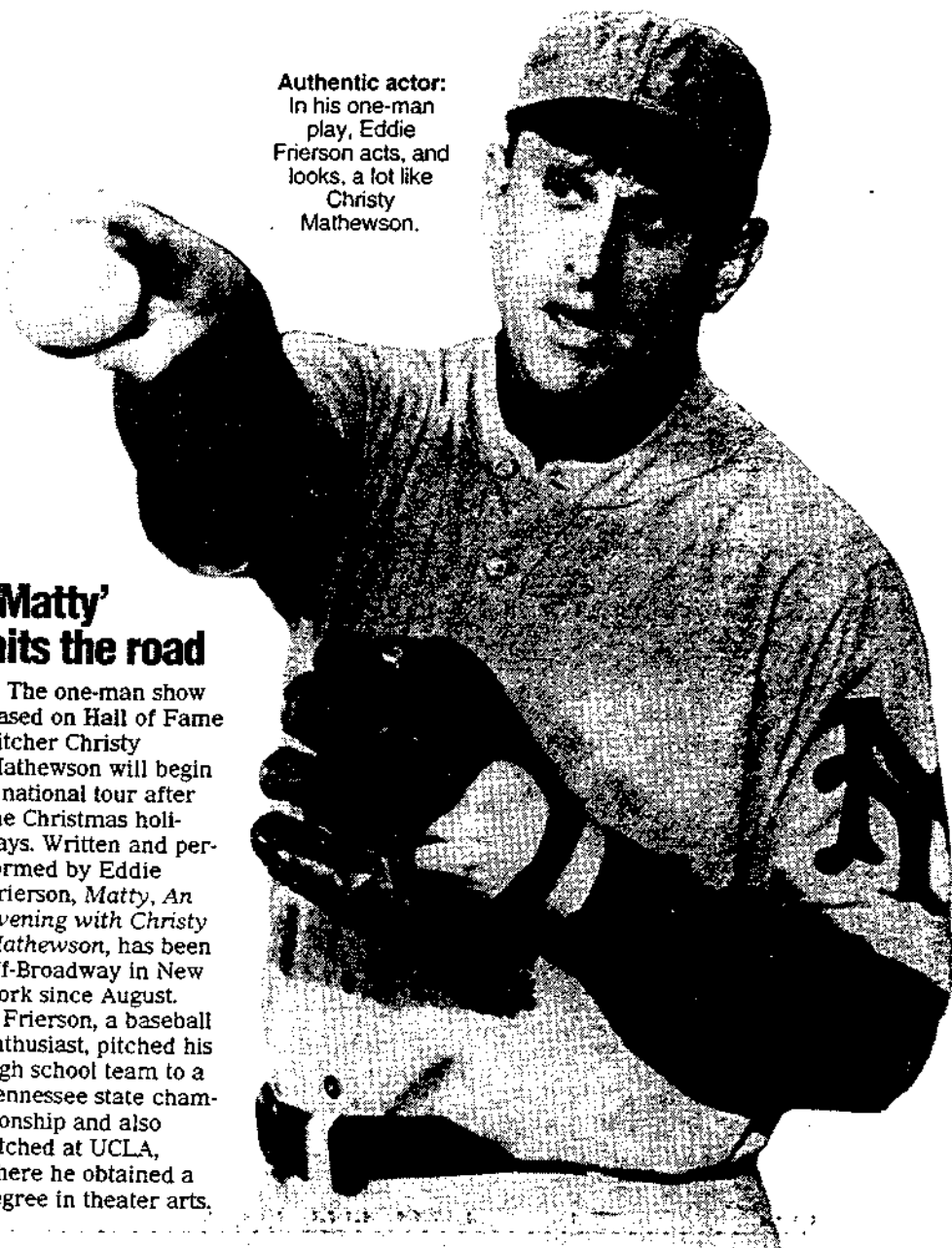


Authentic actor:
In his one-man
play, Eddie
Frierson acts, and
looks, a lot like
Christy
Mathewson.

'Matty' hits the road

The one-man show based on Hall of Fame pitcher Christy Mathewson will begin a national tour after the Christmas holidays. Written and performed by Eddie Frierson, *Matty, An Evening with Christy Mathewson*, has been off-Broadway in New York since August.

Frierson, a baseball enthusiast, pitched his high school team to a Tennessee state championship and also pitched at UCLA, where he obtained a degree in theater arts.



Putting flesh on the Matty myth

Actor Eddie Frierson's one-man play brings the career of Hall of Famer Christy Mathewson back to life

By Ray Robinson

In recent years there have been a number of one-man theatricals featuring such idiosyncratic personalities as Mark Twain, Will Rogers, Harry Truman and Truman Capote. Now Christy Mathewson, the patron saint of baseball's age of innocence and winner of 373 games as a pitcher, is on display in *Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson* at New York's intimate, 116-seat Lamb's theater, thanks to the commitment and kinetic energy of Eddie Frierson.

For eight shows a week (two matinees), Frierson, who wrote the 2-hour, 10-minute labor of love, plays Matty to the hilt. As he sweats under a heavy wool New York Giants uniform, then later appears in a tweedy cap and suit, Frierson, 37, manages to put flesh on the Matty myth, mostly through a series of anecdotes. In the course of impersonating one of the first collegians to play big-league baseball—Mathewson was a Bucknell dropout—Frierson also brings us quick portraits of other baseball characters of the early 1900s. Among them are the dynamic but foul-mouthed John McGraw, the manager of the Giants; umpire Bill Klem, who claimed never to have missed a call in his life; Fred Merkle, who made *bonthead* part of the language; Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the commissioner credited with "saving" baseball; and the infamous knave of diamonds, Hal Chase. Frierson, employing broad mimicry, makes them all come remarkably alive.

On a night early in the New York run, I went to see Frierson perform. What interested me more than anything was Frierson's devotion to his subject. Why had he chosen to "study Matty" and to excavate his history? Why the decade of research, innumerable interviews, trips to the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, to Factoryville, Pa., where Mathewson was born, and to Bucknell's campus, in Lewisburg, Pa.? Some night, I said, with no intent to be unkind, regard it as an obsession. "Oh, no," Frierson replied. "Matty is no obsession; he's a good friend."

Mathewson played for the Giants when Teddy Roosevelt was President, ceased pitching before America entered World War I and died in 1925, the year Lou Gehrig began his consecutive games streak. Yet Frierson has found this clean-cut, God-fearing athletic genius—a true hero in his time—someone worthy of being presented to American audiences today.

Even as he continues to play Mathewson, Frierson comes up with fascinating new material on his man. "The other day, I ran across an account of a game at the Polo Grounds, where Matty struck out 16 men—and only 300 people were there to watch it!" This serendipitous fragment might work itself into a future show. Frierson prefers stories to statistics, but this statistic might fit.

Frierson was born in Akron, Ohio, then his family moved to Nashville. In 1977, he pitched for Hillwood High's Tennessee state championship team. After the family moved again, this time to California, he pitched for UCLA. He wanted to become a big-league player, but realizing he wasn't good enough, he finished his degree in theater arts. However, he has never strayed too far from his first love of baseball. As head coach of Santa Monica High, he has guided the baseball team to several championships.



Role model: Frierson (left) is similar in build to the pitcher he portrays in his one-man show and, like Mathewson, has blue eyes and brown hair.

and dramatic tension. So during the next couple of years the two men relentlessly pursued the task.

"Matty was a man of integrity and principle," Frierson says. "both as player and person. He's someone who would have been a terrific role model for today's youngsters. He might have played a significant part in a world that has become cynical and coarsened. In baseball and other sports today, we have too many chronic whiners and complainers. It wasn't perfect in Matty's day but there was more civility, more respect."

In many ways, Frierson is the ideal person to play Mathewson. He weighs 195 pounds and is a bit over six feet, close to Mathewson's measurements. Matty had blue eyes and brown hair, as does Frierson. Like Matty, who was called "Big Six" in his day because he was slightly over six feet tall, large for that era, Frierson is well-coordinated and handsome, in a traditional way.

In presenting *Matty* at the ancient Lamb's, where, incidentally, Mathewson used to dine with such Broadway icons as song-and-dance man George M. Cohan and cowboy philosopher Will Rogers, Frierson tries to think and talk the way Mathewson did. (Mathewson's high-pitched voice was never recorded, so Frierson has never heard him speak.) Many of the lines in the show are borrowed from Mathewson's book, *Pitching in a Pinch*. One of Frierson's favorites is Mathewson's statement that a person is wise to have an alibi for defeat—but he should always keep it to himself.

Frierson believes he learns more each day about the great pitcher. When Ben Kingsley won an Oscar for his portrayal of Gandhi, he said: "What was hardest was to empty my mind of everything to play Gandhi."

In his own way, Eddie Frierson is trying to do the same thing with Matty. ♦

Ray Robinson, a freelance writer in New York City, is the author of "Matty: An American Hero."

David Rothenberg Associates

Time Out New York

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Theater



Let's play two: Eddie Frierson as Matty.

Matty

Written and performed by Eddie Frierson. Dir. Kerrigan Mahan. Lamb's Theatre (see Off Broadway).

You could scour every ballpark across the land and be hard pressed to come up with a guy more in love with America's favorite pastime than Eddie Frierson. Anyone doubting this need only see his one-man show, *Matty*, an oddly engaging, near fanatic homage to both the game and to Christy Mathewson, baseball's first true-blue national hero. Not just a fan, Frierson is also a unique historian (he wrote the script after 12 years of research) and a charismatic performer to boot.

Assuming the character of Mathewson, or Matty, as he was commonly known, Frierson pitches and pines for lost pals amid the antique clutter of Robert L. Smith's comfortable set, guiding the audience through the rough-and-tumble world of turn-of-the-century big-league ball. Wisely, he often shifts the show's focus away from its solo aspect, conjuring the spirits of many notorious personalities with whom Matty spent his illustrious life. For instance, there's Fred Merkle, the New York Giant whose anxious first-base behavior cost his team the National League pennant in 1908. The press dubbed his error the Merkle boner and taunted him with the name Bonehead, killing his spirit and ruining his career, but coming an insult still used today. Ah, the things we owe the press.

Although Frierson and director Kerrigan Mahan have given this piece a shape rarely found in one-person shows, an existence such as *Matty's* provides infinite fodder for storytelling, and by play's end the average theatergoer has heard more than enough. Devout followers of baseball, however, will certainly find *Matty* a real joy and may even be driven to jump up in a Phil Rizzuto froth and exclaim "Holy cow! It's a hit!" —Sam Whitehead

THE STAR-LEDGER, Thursday, September 5, 1996

Today's Spotlight

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

One-man 'Matty' comes through in the clinch

By MICHAEL SOMMERS

NEW YORK — The first big baseball fan in my family was a great-great aunt whose apartment in the Bronx overlooked the old Polo Grounds. Back around 1903, so it's said, she nearly ruined her marriage by spending too many hours out on the fire escape, cheering like crazy for that gentlemanly New York Giants idol Christy Mathewson.

"The Prince of the Polo Grounds," as Mathewson was called, was a college-educated all-American farmboy whose presence changed the game of baseball. At the turn of the century, Mathewson's sunny good sportsmanship helped to transform pro baseball from a bunch of brawlers into proud national heroes.

Though no mollycoddle, Mathewson promised his Baptist mother that he'd never play ball on Sundays—and never did. Such clean-cut charms drew ladies to the ball park for the first time. A legendary pitcher (373 career victories), his sporting ways endeared him to millions of fans during the 1900-16 era.

He was a good guy. "Always throw your best pitches in the pinch," was typical of the uplifting advice that Mathewson spread through a popular series of juvenile books he authored during the height of the fame. At one point Mathewson was so well known that a letter addressed simply to "Big 6" (another nickname) managed to arrive at his winter home in California.

Mathewson served overseas in the Great War, managed the Cincinnati Reds, and was later president of the Boston Braves before his death of tuberculosis in 1925 at age 45. He even took a turn on the vaudeville stage in the off season.



Eddie Frierson plays baseball legend Christy Mathewson in the one-man Off Broadway show 'Matty.'

You'll learn this about the legend—and more—in "Matty: An Evening With Christy Mathewson," a new one-man show written and performed by Eddie Frierson.

"Matty" is a warm and genuinely affectionate tribute to a great ball player that's sure to please anyone who truly loves the game. Wonderful yarns about baseball during its rowdy early days and colorful anecdotes about Mathewson's fellow stars of the diamond make for an entertaining two hours.

Expect no high-tech presenta-

tion: This Off Broadway show is performed in modest circumstances. There's little flash but boy, there's plenty of heart.

Frierson, who once played baseball for UCLA, resembles Mathewson and performs the show in a direct, affable manner that certainly suits his hero's friendly personality. Frierson doesn't appear to be acting so much as channeling Mathewson's spirit. This easygoing authenticity is strong enough to override the sometimes where-are-we? limbo of his anecdotal script. Robert Smith's nice set places

WHAT: 'Matty: An Evening With Christy Mathewson'

WHEN: Performances are Tues. through Sat. at 8 p.m.; Wed. and Sat. matinees at 2 p.m.; Sun. at 3 p.m.

WHERE: Lamb's Theater, 130 W. 44th St., Manhattan

HOW MUCH: Tickets are \$30. Call 121 21 239-6200

Mathewson in an attic cluttered with 1900s memorabilia that's backed by a simple mural of the Polo Grounds.

Unlike my ancestress, I'm not a huge fan of the game, but some of the stories that Mathewson, excuse me, Frierson tells are fascinating. There's the tragic results of an infamous replayed game in 1908—a quarter of a million people tried to get into the park—caused by the enforcement of Rule 59, which led to several deaths including the suicide of the baseball commissioner.

You'll hear the hilarious saga of hapless Charley Faust, the "jinx killer." Experience up close the strategic roaring style of Giants manager John J. McGraw. And listen to Mathewson's dark recall of Hal Chase, the sleazy first baseman who took a leading part in the Black Sox scandal of 1919. Sometimes Frierson impersonates these other legends to tell their stories better.

Through it all, Frierson's low-keyed invocation of Mathewson sticks to the guy's unpretentious true-blue ways both as a sportsman and as a gent. Under director Kerrigan Mahan's guidance, Frierson winningly offers up an authentic champion who was a little embarrassed by his fame. Some of the showboats who play the game now might take a lesson or two from Christy Mathewson.

By Robert Palazzo

FOR THE DIAMOND ANGLE (www.thediamondangle.com)

On July 26th, about two weeks ago, my friend Scott and I visited Cooperstown to witness what I consider one of the best individual stage performances I have seen in a long time. What we saw that evening can only be described as captivating; perhaps the most captivating live performance I've ever had the pleasure of viewing. Eddie Frierson, about 40 years old, immerses himself into the character and persona of one of baseball's greats, Christy Mathewson of the New York Giants. Mathewson was inducted posthumously into the inaugural class of the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936. Frierson began his research on the life and career of Mathewson in 1984 and has taken that research and created a stunning portrayal of the man.

Using the character of Mathewson, dressed in the clothing of the era, Frierson stimulates our sense of life's ironies, as this performance is about more than baseball, more than the life of Christy Mathewson, but instead about Life, with a capital 'L'; its odd twists and turns, how people's actions affect other people, intentionally, as well as, unintentionally. It's Matty as philosopher, reflecting on life as described in a musical lyric of a contemporary and colleague of his, George M. Cohan: "Life's a funny proposition."

The play is divided into two acts, which are further divided into thirteen scenes. Act one consists of: Bonehead, Umpires, Opportunities, Repercussions, The Alibi, and The Giant Jinx Killer. Act two consists of: The Early Days, Practical Jokes, McGraw, Factoryville and Nicholas, Fears, Deception, and Consumption. Rather than change scenery or lower the curtain, Frierson/Matty instead transitions from one scene, one phase in his life, to another, without any break. Introducing almost thirty different characters to assist Matty in telling his story, Frierson morphs from one character to another effortlessly, creating the illusion that there really is more than one person on stage. Frierson has a way of looking into, and speaking directly to, the audience, almost challenging you to prove that it isn't really Christy Mathewson standing in front of you. During one of the scenes, since we were sitting in the front row, he asked a rhetorical question, looking me square in the eye and I almost answered him; never out of character, even to the point of keeping his fingers clenched while holding an imaginary ball, this guy is good!

The first act (containing six scenes) opens with Frierson on stage already in the Matty character, wearing a NY Giants jersey, trousers and cap, under a wool sweater and scarf; surrounded by an assortment of props - a reading chair; a small table next to the chair, with a pipe rack, glove and baseball on it; a desk and chair; several pieces of luggage that have old advertising pieces propped against them (Mathewson was quite the product endorser in his day); a small green stool; a picture of George M. Cohan; and sheet music scattered all over the floor. Matty tells us how he was raised in a pleasant but strict home. He was taught never to smoke and to always honor the Sabbath; he was true to his mother in one of those cherished rules, as he never participated in a game played on Sunday, at any level of ball. As for smoking, well, that was another story.

In the first scene, he tells us about Fred Merkle, a rookie teammate whose base running at the end of a game against the Cubs resulted in a controversial ruling by then National League President, Harry Pulliam. Matty unknowingly played a part in this, with the game being declared a tie and forcing a one game play-off with the Cubs at the end of the season. His teammates on the NY Giants felt they had been cheated and had already won the NL pennant. Matty knew the players would follow his lead and either play or not play, depending on his decision. With every intention of telling the team owner they would not play, Matty suddenly changed his mind and told him they would play.

The results of NL President Pulliam's decision was that, hounded and ridiculed by the press and fans, he became a broken man and soon committed suicide. Matty, reflecting on this, tells us, "Some men can accept their decisions while others cannot. He was a good man who only wanted to be a good league president; it's only a game!" As for Matty's decision to play, well, he tells us four fans died at the game that day, two as they were struggling with each other, still embraced as they plummeted to the concrete below. "I could have prevented all this" Matty tells us. "It was only a game!"

Matty tells us about Charlie Faust, legendary good luck charm of John McGraw's Giants from 1911 through 1914. Was it true; were the facts as presented by Matty accurate? Many baseball historians and SABR members have questioned the story but one thing is clear, to hear Matty tell it to you, you become a believer. As act two opens, Matty is wearing a wool suit and hat. Leaning against the desk, he strikes a match on the sole of his shoe and lights his pipe. The smell of tobacco reaches out to the audience adding to the realness of the performance (I'm sure the HOF management did some soul searching prior to approving this).

When talking about John McGraw, his manager with the Giants, Frierson becomes McGraw and gives one of the plays top performances. Walking into the audience, Frierson/McGraw confronts them, as if they were members of the Giants. To one unsuspecting person, he yells, "I don't want to see the back of your heads when I'm talking to you. Turn around and look at me!" To another, "Are you thinking son? There are only two possible answers - Yes, Mr. McGraw or No, Mr. McGraw. So, I ask you again - are you thinking son?" The confused gentleman responded, "Yes, Mr. McGraw", only to have Frierson/McGraw bellow back, "You're not paid to think!!"

There is a touching moment when Matty tells us about how he advised his brother Nicholas, who "was a better player than I ever was", to get a college education; that baseball would still be there afterwards. Without giving away the scene, let's just say that five to ten minute scene showed the extent to which this actor had put his own emotions into this performance. At that moment, Frierson and Matty became one.

Through the story of Jake Beckley, a ball player who he unintentionally hit during a game, Matty addresses the vulnerability fear causes in all of us. Will we conquer fear or will we let it control us, and overtake the decisions we make in life? Using Hal Chase as an example, Matty shares with us the 'underbelly' of the game, the gambling and cheating, culminating in the ultimate fix, the 1919 World Series. After a season of coaching the Giants (he had retired in 1916), Matty was asked to sit in the press box and cover the 1919 World Series. At first, he thought it was strange hops, or coincidences, but soon he knew - the Sox were throwing the Series. He filed his report with baseball and the rest is history.

Matty tells us that he and his wife retire to Saranac Lake, NY. But Frierson/Matty begins to cough more frequently as he speaks now, setting the stage for his disclosure that he has contracted consumption, now known to you and me as Tuberculosis. As he slouches in his reading chair, his coughing becoming increasingly more pronounced, one knew we were entering the final scene. At one point, probably not seen by more than a handful of us who were sitting next to the stage, Matty coughed into a hankie and shoved it into his pocket, but not before I saw the red blood on it.

As he sat in that chair, becoming weaker, he described how he lay on his back for months as he was dying. (*My mother had TB prior to my birth and this scene was especially riveting for me as I know the pain she suffered, lying on her back for two years while her lungs healed*). He rose from the chair, took a few steps, and as he looked back at the empty chair, the lights dimmed and we knew Matty had passed on.

Moments later, the lights brightened, and still in character, Frierson/Matty took some questions from the audience. While we thought was somewhat risky, no one threw him a curve and asked a question that Matty would not have been able to respond to. You see, he had truly convinced everyone that he was Matty. Wrapping up, Matty had a message for all the young people in the audience to leave with: "Always do the right thing, treat others as you would want to be treated, character is important and be conscious of how your actions, words and decisions impact others; because life's a funny proposition."

For more on Frierson's act, see his webpage: <http://www.matty.org>

TheaterWeek

September 23, 1996

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Stagestruck

by Peter Filichia

Best One-Man Show was Eddie Frierson's *Matty*, about erstwhile Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson. In answer to Emory's question in *The Boys in the Band*—of "Think the Giants are gonna win the pennant this year?"—the answer was almost always yes when Mathewson was pitching during the early 1900s. As the hurler, Frierson is endearing, charming, sincere, butch, and deserves as many praiseworthy adjectives as Mathewson had victories (373). Even the most baseball-phobic of the stagestruck would have a great time at this show. For they'd be interested in Mathewson's reminiscences about George M. Cohan (he was an especially big fan of his "Life's a Funny Proposition, After All"). Or that Mathewson co-authored a Broadway play, *The Girl and the Pennant*. See *Matty* at the Lamb's, where, as it turns out, one of Mathewson's stories actually took place.

I could go on.

the
BOSSA NOUVEAU
MORALES #49

VOICE

OCTOBER 9, 1996 WEDNESDAY



Play Ball

MATTY—a one-person show at the Lambs' Theatre about legendary New York Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson written and acted by Eddie Frierson—offers an entertaining reprise of the life and times of one of baseball's early greats. Frierson, as Mathewson looking back, pours energy and down-home charm into an evening of raconteur theater, mixing reminiscence about oddballs (John McCraw, >>

>> the Giants' manager who got his way no matter what, and Charley Faust, a fan taken up and humored as a team rabbit's-foot who seems to have been the ancestor of today's chicken-and gorilla-suited cheerleaders, were two) with insider stories and baseball arcana. Known as a college boy and a gentleman, Mathewson seems to have been almost everyone's friend (even famously vicious Ty Cobb), but he hated anything that blackened the game and his noticing of patterns of losing led to the scandalous fall of Shoeless Joe Jackson. Frierson's Al Gore style meshes well with Mathewson's apple-pie Americanness and conveys, despite the hard knocks of the player's life, both the richness and happy unreality of baseball legend.

—MARTIN WASHBURN

THE WESTSIDER

SEPTEMBER 12-18, 1996

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

THEATER / ON AND OFF BROADWAY

Before Free Agency, The Home Of the Free Inspired 'Matty' & Co.

BY D.L. LEPIDUS

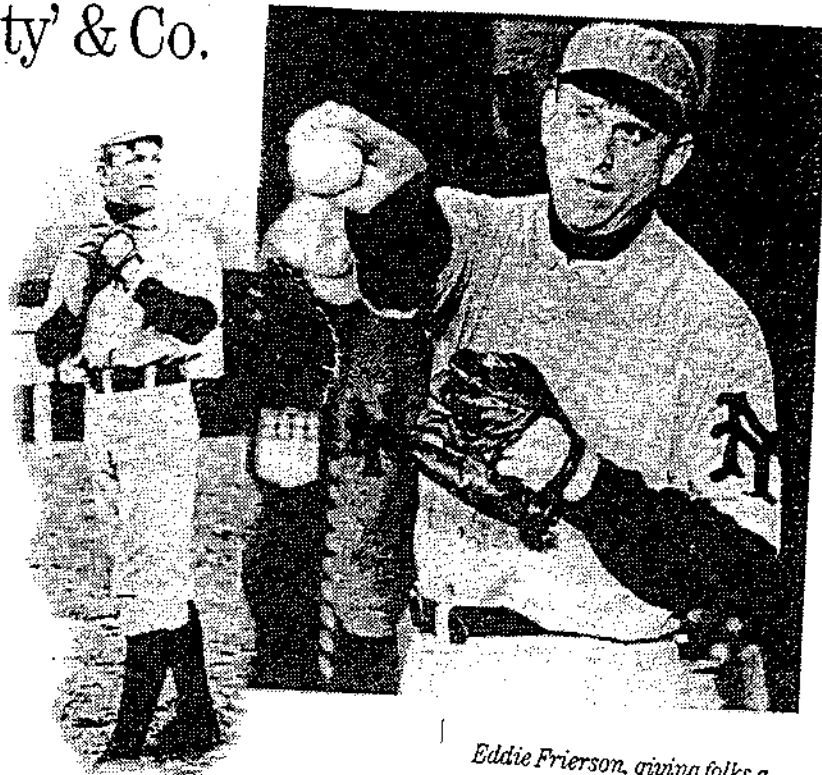
"Matty," a play performed by one actor though hardly a one-character play, has just opened at the smaller of the two theaters in the Lamb's Club on West 44th Street. Written by, and starring,

Eddie Frierson, it is a double rarity. For one thing, it is a one-actor play which manages to be highly theatrical, dramatizing rather than narrating; for the other, it is a play set in a different era than ours which nevertheless has much to say by inference to our own.

Frierson has dramatized the story of Christy Matthewson, Hall of Fame pitcher for the New York Giants from 1900 to 1916. He has certainly done his research, not only into Matthewson's life but also into his sport and era. The result is a fascinating portrait of a time when, shall we say, ballplayers were a different breed than today's self-centered, pampered millionaires. Frierson has chosen to dramatize the great hurler's life and times by creating a kaleidoscope of unforgettable characters. There's hard-driving, ruthless, acid-tongued John McGraw, the Giants' manager, one of the greatest baseball geniuses ever. There is hapless Fred Merkle, whose so-called "bone-headed" base-running cost the Giants the pennant and forever labeled this gifted though not too bright player "Bone-Headed Merkle" (in fact, this was when this epithet was coined). There is a gallery of umpires, gamblers, sports writers - and Frierson plays them all. It's like there's a

50-character play going on up there. He even briefly does Matthewson's wife who, when asked during spring training by a prying sportswriter what it's like living with a man with no vices, who doesn't drink or swear, coyly replies, "Why, sir - what makes you think I'd be married to such a prude?"

"Matty" is an inspiring evening in the theater, managing to be about no more than "mere baseball," with much to say to our own hyper-cynical time. Don't be deterred if this city's Cultural Ayatollahs are less than enthusiastic. They don't care about sports and they don't care for writing which celebrates such old-fashioned, naive things as principles.



Eddie Frierson, giving folks a tip on how best to throw the screwball, his out pitch, and the real guy, circa 1906

"Matty." Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St., Call 239-6200; "Old Wicked Songs." Promenade Theatre, Broadway at 76th Street, Call 580-1313; "What Doesn't Kill Us." Producer's Club, 358 W. 44th St., Call 642-8836. ☞

The New York Times

229 WEST 43 STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036

Dec. 3, 1996

Dear Eddie Frierson:

I saw your show on Friday, Nov. 29, and enjoyed it immensely. Someone had recommended it to me, and I was curious. (I was the one who asked you, in the "interview" after the scripted performance, whether Shoeless Joe should be in the Hall of Fame, and what was the most evil thing Matty ever did.)

I saw it too late to do you, or me, any good in a newspaper mention -- considering that you are closing soon. But I did want you to know for what it's worth that I thought you caught the spirit of the times -- which includes, of course, the present -- with great spirit and theatricality.

Yours,



Ira Berkow
Sports columnist

Transcript — LAZY MONDAY AFTERNOON — September 9, 1996

MATTY

An Evening With Christy Mathewson

Lamb's Theatre

130 West 44th Street

Whether you are a baseball fan or not, Eddie Frierson's play, "MATTY: An Evening With Christy Mathewson," is a superb theatrical experience at the Lamb's Theatre (130 West 44th in Manhattan).

Written and performed by Mr. Frierson, "MATTY" tells a tale of baseball's Hall of Fame star Christy Mathewson at a time when baseball was in its infancy. But "MATTY" is more than a play about baseball, it is about a man whose presence transformed a ruffian dominated sport into the national pastime.

Mathewson was a country boy who went on to college at Bucknell University before starting his brilliant pitching career with the New York Giants. Women began flocking to the Giants' games to watch "the college boy" pitch. He was the toast of New York and the Country, setting records for career victories and most games won in a season. He was also a man of moral convictions — never pitching on a Sunday because of a promise to his mother.

After his years with the Giants, Mathewson briefly played with and managed the Cincinnati Reds, then served in France in World War I, where he was the victim of a gas attack. He died of tuberculosis in 1925 and was one of the first players elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame when it was established in 1936. Beyond baseball he was also a writer of novels and stories for boys, an endorser of products, an author on Broadway and an actor in Vaudeville.

Author and star Eddie Frierson, who once played baseball for UCLA, resembles Mathewson and gives a winning narrative performance. He also portrays other characters at the time including Mathewson's fiery baseball manager, John McGraw, "Jinx Killer" Charley Faust, evil first baseman Hal Chase and many others.

Directed by Kerrigan Mahan, "MATTY" is solid and superior theatre even for someone who doesn't know a double play from a double steal. "MATTY" hits a home run!

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Friday, October 4, 1996



Sermon on the Mound

A great new play on Christy Mathewson sweeps NY for World Series fever

Posted Friday, Oct. 4, 1996

By Kevin Fitzpatrick

NEW YORK -- Ninety-one years after shutting out the Athletics three times in the World Series, Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson is back in town for another Post Season appearance. And just like when he won 30 or more games for the National League club three years in a row, he's thrilling another crowd in the Big Apple.

OK, Mathewson isn't 106 years old. But with the Major League Baseball Post Season going full tilt across the country, it is time to make mention of a great new one-man play drawing rave reviews in a tiny theater Off-Broadway in Manhattan. "Matty" was written by and stars Eddie Frierson, an ex-pitcher who is plainly mad for Mathewson. If you could act your way into Cooperstown, Frierson would be there.

David Rothenberg Associates



Actor Eddie Frierson plays Hall of Famer Christy Mathewson.

"Matty" isn't just a play about one of the greatest pitchers of all time. Talking shutouts for two hours could be dull; so Frierson lets his star swing at life lessons, homespun advice, and baseball lore to make you smile. "This is a blast," the actors said after a recent afternoon matinee. "and to see the way the show affects people every day is really great." To an appreciative crowd, some in Mariners jackets and Orioles caps, he is correct. "Matty" is a hit with fans and non-fans alike.

A struggling actor in the 1980s (he even read for parts in *Bull Durham* and *Field of Dreams*, but was passed over). Frierson said he'd been interested in writing a one-man play for himself, similar to what Hal Holbrook had done with his Mark Twain shows.

"My dad spends a lot of time in used bookstores," Frierson recalls. "He found a copy of 'Pitching in a Pinch,' a book Mathewson wrote in 1912. He gave it to me and it sat on my shelf for a couple years. Then in 1984 when I was going from L.A. to Florida for a reunion, it was the book I took on the plane with me. I thought, this is great! The dialogue, he's my size, he's a right-handed pitcher... he threw a screwball. I tried to throw one... all kinds of things. It was perfect."

Frierson plays the first act in a vintage Giants uniform.

Then he started the research. This would take 12 years of his time, thousands of hours, and countless trips to towns, libraries, and ballparks all over the country.

"When I began, I knew the basic folklore of Christy Mathewson," says the 36-year-old Frierson, a native of Nashville. "He was this golden god, the grand perfect man and everything... He was a special man... I found out that when he died, every big league club donated money to erect this memorial gate at Bucknell University (Mathewson's alma mater). I can't imagine every team donating money to any one cause today." This was just one of the dozens of discoveries the actor-playwright would uncover in his quest to bring the long-dead Hall of Famer to the stage.



Along the way, Frierson taught high school and was a baseball coach in Santa Monica, Calif. As he worked in the entertainment industry, in

David Rothenberg Associates

small parts and doing commercial voice-over jobs, he worked up the play that would become "Matty." He performed it as a school fundraiser, making his kids sell tickets. Trips to Mathewson's birthplace, family home, old schools, and the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum also followed. The old pitcher's descendants embraced Frierson, and opened up their family memories to him. As a fellow pitcher, he could understand the feats performed on the field (Mathewson won 30 or more games four times, including a modern National League record of 37 in 1908). But it was as a deferent level that he understood Mathewson the humanist, which comes out in the legendary hurler's words.

"He was like Tommy Lasorda, without doing it," Frierson says. "As far as motivational speaking, for that stuff he used baseball as a metaphor for life, saying we all have these same kinds of umpires in life, we all have these same highs and lows, and how do we deal with it. He said, 'I don't have the answer, but this is how I coped kind of stuff.' He didn't get in front of people, although he did speak to kids. He had a real good way of expressing himself on paper."



The set is filled with old uniforms, balls, bats, photos and other baseball memorabilia to make fans drool.

For "Matty" Frierson broke the play into two acts. First, he covers Fred Merkle and the infamous "bonehead" play of the 1908 National League playoff game (the first ever). He portrays the storied moments at the Polo Grounds just like an ESPN replay. It's tragic is what it is. "Matty" then moves through vintage umpire yarns (something you-know-who should listen to), the legendary manager John McGraw, players Frank Chance and Johnny Evers and the highlight of the show, the story of Charley Faust, "The Giant Jinx Killer." With Frierson acting out all parts, the old ballgame memories spring to life with a switch of a cap.

The second act (some wags would call it a doubleheader) is more about Mathewson the man and how he lived and worked through the twilight of his career. "Big Six" (named for the biggest fire engine in New York City) succumbed to tuberculosis at age 45 in 1925, after retiring in 1916. Frierson wraps up the show with a pep talk, the kind he used to give to wayward boys, and a question-answer session with the audience.

"Matty" is full of the Matty-isms, the sayings, that made Big Six such a name:

- Always have an alibi.
- Touch one life in a positive manner and you have succeeded in your own.
- Everyone should play ball. I should almost say from the time a baby is on all fours, he should be bouncing a rubber ball.

David Rothenberg Associates

- Be humble and gentle and kind.
- Always throw your best pitch in a pinch.
- Give your friends names they can live up to, not play down.

"This is where the guy belongs," Frierson said. "If the thing is to get Christy Mathewson and his whole life back into the public spotlight, this is the only place where it can happen. We came in here on a shoe string budget, and we've gotten reviews that people would kill for."

Frierson lets his hero cross over in the 1990s, by letting the audience ask him, as Mathewson, his opinions and for stories not in the show. In character, "Mathewson" can field them all (Hint: ask him about Ty Cobb). He even hands out baseball cards to the kids in the front rows of the 120-seat theater. "The guy is so terrific how can you not like him at the end of the night?" Frierson asks.

The show has been a big hit in its short life. "Matty" ran for 36 weeks in Los Angeles. In early August, Frierson and company took the show to Pennsylvania for "Christy Mathewson Birthday Weekend" at Keystone College in Factoryville (formerly Keystone Academy where Matty went to grammar school). He took part in "Christy Mathewson Night" at the ballpark in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre for the Phillies Triple A club, the Red Barons. Frierson was there in Mathewson's uniform and threw out the first pitch. He led a big parade from downtown Factoryville to Keystone. The whole town followed along and came into the theater for a show. "Matty" opened in New York Sept. 4 and is scheduled to run through Dec. 1. The plan is to hopefully take the show on the road to colleges if it ends a New York run.

Does "Matty" have a place in baseball today, and could Mathewson make it against today's home run-hitting superstars? How would he do in San Diego, Atlanta, or Cleveland? "I think he'd be fine," the actor says confidently. "He'd be a cross between Orel Hershiser personality-wise and Nolan Ryan, where everybody loves you. If you're throwing a no-hitter in the sixth, and you're in Texas and from New York, the fans are going to scream for you to throw a no-hitter. I think he was universally loved and would be now. He would be the grandest of the superstars. He would be a Greg Maddux with a little more personality, the same quietness, where everybody goes, "Man, this guy is great." I think he'd do very well."

MATTY is playing at the Lamb's Theater, 130 W. 44th Street, between Broadway and Sixth Avenue. Shows are Tuesday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$30; group sales are available. Tele-charge 212-239-6200; Group sales call 212-889-4300.



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THEATER By Jeannie Lieberman

Amusing and Enlightening 'Matty'

Matty
BY: Eddie Frierson.
DIRECTOR: Kurigun Mahon.
CAST: Eddie Frierson.
WHERE: Lumber Theater, 130 West 44th St.
Telephone: (212) 230-6200.

IN A BASEBALL season in which some players have been drug plagued and morally aberrant, it is indeed refreshing to harken back to the early 1900s, when creator/performer Eddie Frierson's personal hero, legendary New York Giant pitcher Christy Mathewson, or "Big Six" as he was known to his adoring fans, became the first clean-cut, "college-boy" icon of the sport he helped because the national pastime.

Matty's 27-year career peaked in 1905 as he commenced 16 record-setting seasons with the Giants (inventing the "fade-away" or screwball). He went on to manage the Cincinnati Reds, serve in World War I, coach the Giants, and become president of the Boston Braves before succumbing to tuberculosis at the age of 45. Posthumously he was an inaugural member of baseball's Hall of Fame in 1936.

En route this Factoryville, Pa., "larn boy" co-authored a Broadway play, acted in movies and vaudeville, became a successful investor on Wall Street, was an outstanding golfer and wrote a series of inspiring books for boys.

Enhanced by Suzan Kay's costumes, Robert Smith's memorabilia cluttered set and Lawrence Oberman's evocative lighting, Matty vividly re-creates oddball moments in baseball history: like the little-used Rule 59 in the 1908 playoff game, which resulted in a Polo Grounds riot with the Chicago Cubs, or hilarious characterizations of the autocratic "Divine Right" attitudes of certain umpires and nickname-loving sportswriters, good-luck charm Charlie Faust's impact on the team and, by contrast, Mr. Mathewson's recognition of and attempt to uncover the

1919 Chicago Black Sox scandal.

In addition to amusing and enlightening anecdotes, Mr. Frierson infuses his lengthy but never dull re-creation with good-natured, instructive homilies like: "Lose generously in public, but lose bitterly to yourself, you can learn from defeat"; reflects on endorsements (Tuxedo Tobacco in this case) — "the art of making whole lies out of half truths."

So steeped is he in his subject and so confident in his role, Mr. Frierson turns up the house lights and, in a magical moment of theater, fields questions from the audience in character (one savvy member asked, "Do you think the Giants will ever leave New York?" Answer: "I can't imagine a better town to play in").

Wholesome and endearing, Matty via Mr. Frierson leaves his audience with the benediction-like sentiment: "It's not the glory on the ballfield, it's not the applause and it's certainly not the money that buys contentment for us in this lifetime. It's the family of friends that we make and hold that becomes our greatest asset and most enduring success."

It is happily evident that new friends of both Matty and Mr. Frierson are made at every performance, and that makes everyone feel good.

New York Times Journal

Friday, September 13, 1996

Arts & Entertainment

Frierson's 'Matty' is a homer

By Gene Kilik

On the Lambs Theatre stage cluttered with the memorabilia of a lifetime, Eddie Frierson acts out the

life of an American hero, Hall of Fame pitcher-Christy Mathewson.

Starting early in the century, Christy Mathewson, "Matty," or Big Six as he

was called by the baseball press, pitched 16 seasons for the New York Giants, winning more games than any other pitcher in the history of the National League. In

an era when professional baseball players were a bunch of ruffians, Matty was a college boy from a religious family in a small town in Pennsylvania.

He never pitched on Sunday. Because he was an amazing pitcher and had the image of a clean-cut American boy, the press made him a larger-than-life hero.

Mathewson served in the army in Europe during WWI, became a Big League manager and coach, was a sports writer for *The New York Times*, wrote several books, toured in vaudeville,

and was president of the Boston Braves. He died of tuberculosis in 1925 at age 45.

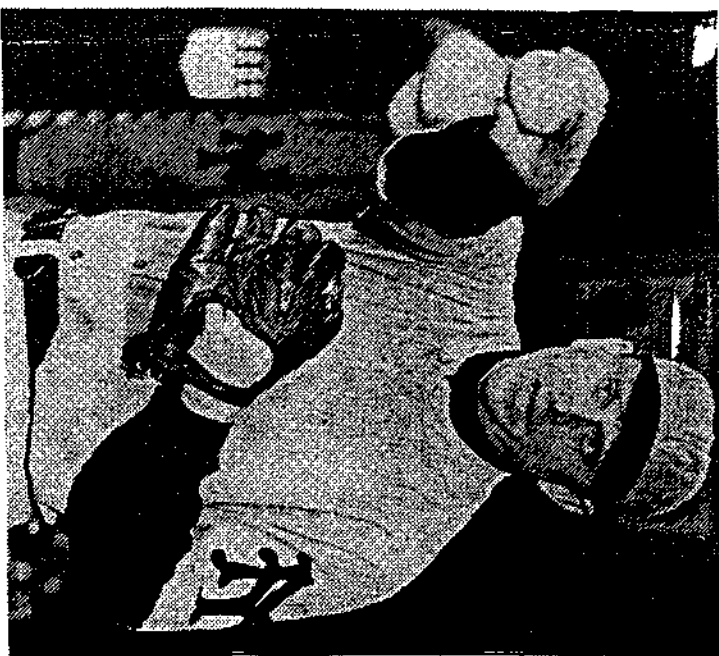
One doesn't have to be a baseball fanatic to get a kick out of Eddie Frierson's virtuoso title performance as "Matty." A one-time pitcher himself and no doubt a baseball zealot, he plunges into the characters of a host of old-time legends of the game, including Iron Man Joe McGinnity, Umpire Bill Klem, Chief Meyers, Judge Landis and, most memora-

bly, the legendary tyrant manager of the Giants, John McGraw.

His fascinating performance traces the game from 1908 when the press pinned the moniker "bonehead" on rookie Fred Merkle, to the "Black Sox" scandal in which Hal Chase, a Mathewson nemesis, had a sinister role.

"Matty" may tell more than many might want to know about Christy Mathewson, but Eddie Frierson's research, writing and performance are breathtaking. He furnishes an excellent feeling for the times.

Lawrence Oberman's clever lighting clearly marks changes of scene and character. The designer of the comfortably crowded set is Robert Smith. Kerrigan Mahan is the director. The fine period costume design is by Suzan Kay Frierson.



Eddie Frierson as Christy Mathewson in 'Matty.'

STROLLING ALONG
WITH PAT FERRO
19 PARK AVENUE
WYCKOFF, N.J. 07481

October 23, 1985 Suburban News

ENTERTAINMENT

Baseball's 'Matty' comes to life at Theatre

BY PAT FERRO

There's a lot of life—real life—in the story of baseball legend Christy Mathewson, played by Eddie Frieron in an intimate auditorium at the Lamb's Theatre on 44th Street in the heart of Broadway.

Mathewson (1880-1938) went from a small Pennsylvania town to become the "Prince of the Diamond" as a pitcher for the New York Giants. Among the many achievements of "Big Six"—one of the nicknames tagged on the Hall of Famer—are 221 or more wins for 12 straight seasons, 373 lifetime victories and three shut-out games pitched in the 1908 World Series.

Besides his ballpark record, Mathewson was an honorable gentleman who wrote books for boys, toured in vaudeville, made a motion picture and

served in the Army during WW I. There were also tragedies in the short life of "Matty" involving his brother, as well as baseball, that are effectively brought out by Frieron.

"Matty" comes to life on a small stage, like an attic cluttered with period pieces. Effective lighting punctuates the characters and incidents illustrated by Frieron. A rear wall cyclorama paints a broad view of the Polo Grounds bringing back a happy landscape. The performer utilizes his talents for doing voice-overs to skillfully portray many of the men associated with Christy Mathewson including "Bonehead" Merkle, "Iron Man" Maginly, Judge Landis, umpires, etc. His interpretation of Giant's manager John McGraw is particularly wonderful as he goes into the

audience. Credit Director Kerrigan Mahan with polishing "Matty" to bring out the moving moments and amusing sidelights to mold a performance that is truly fascinating.

Frieron has devoted 12 years researching in libraries, Cooperstown and with Mathewson family members to write this one man tribute. He was brought up in Nashville where he pitched his high school team to a state championship and later took the mound for UCLA. He coached baseball at a California high school where his proudest accomplishment was nurturing Tony Tarsco's skills into the big league ability. (The Baltimore Oriole outfielder is the one who would have made the

catch in the opening game of the play-off series with the Yankees when a 12-year-old fan deflected the ball). Frieron abandoned hopes for a career in baseball when he realized he would not make the

major and pursued studies in theatre arts or as he stated "I traded one insecure profession for another." Christy Mathewson never completed his autobiography, perhaps because the man was too modest, but Eddie Frieron is blending his research into the project and expects to see this book published next year.

If you like baseball, you'll love "Matty." If you enjoy live theatre, you'll love "Matty." If you appreciate a strong biographical acting performance, you'll love "Matty." Be assured that you do not have to be a baseball buff to stay attentive during this solo enactment. Eddie Frieron dramatically presents Christy Mathewson while bringing in many other big league immortals of the period. This is also a show about a man's integrity, values and homespun philosophy (always have an alibi, but keep it to yourself, lose bitterly, but learn from it) that go beyond the diamond.

"Matty" deserves a good Lamb's Theatre run. It is the kind of show that could tour small theatres and college campus stages across the country with success. High School audiences, under sponsorship of an organization like Project Impact, would benefit from an abbreviated version.

"MATTY"

There is a luminous purity about Christy Mathewson, the New York Giants famed pitcher, that would have appealed to Tennyson; had Matty been cast into a cesspool by invidious and ineffectual batsmen he would have emerged immaculate, flannel transmogrified to samite, and nary a hair out of place. In 1901 he was the anomaly in the scruffy, disreputable baseball fraternity: he didn't smoke, he didn't drink, and, honoring a pledge to his mother, he refused to take the mound on Sunday. Furthermore, this paragon was an author, appeared on Broadway and in movies and vaudeville, managed the Cincinnati Reds, and as a newspaperman uncovered the 1919 Black Sox scandal.

He was not, however, to be mistaken for the local parson. In the dugout and on the road mischief was his middle name, and his practical jokes dented many an inflated ego. And greatly in his favor was the fact that feisty, foul-mouthed John McGraw, the shrewdest manipulator of baseball talent in history, was his closest friend.

"Matty", the compelling one-man play ensconced at the Lamb's Club, captures the Galahad aspects of its hero in a comfortably unemphatic way. Superbly researched (over a period of many years) and organized with a fine-tuned sense of theatricality, "Matty" is irresistible in its depiction of an era: a pastime attempting to emerge from its sandlot and scruffy provenance, a game beset by greedy owners and unprincipled players, an entertainment which took on the local trappings of Greek tragedy. Add to these a transient cast of zanies, blowhards, and those whom the fates have blacklisted and you have a well-spiced stew to gobble up.

Playwright Eddie Frierson, who also plays Matty, has winnowed through bales of baseball lore and concentrated on the most revealing and colorful kernels. In Act One Frierson outlines the 1908 pennant race between Chicago and New York, culminating in Fred Merkle's famous failure to touch second base on the game-winning single. Merkle, far from being the culpable hayseed history had limned him, was a rookie of considerable talent who contributed significantly to three subsequent pennants. His "failure" was standard baseball practice: no player ever bothered to run to the next base when the winning run scored on a clean hit. Only the Cubs Evers of the renowned Tinkers to Evers to Chance infield would have known of the arcane rule that allowed a force-out at second in this situation. So great was the fallout from

prexy Henry Pulliam, who ruled the game a tie, committed suicide at the New York Athletic Club soon after.

Frierson shapes this incident with a full appreciation of its complexity. He is also adept at thumbnail sketches of umpires like Bill Klem, and the combustible McGraw. But his finest achievement is the truly incredible saga of Charley Faust, the indomitably optimistic and talentless player who arrives from hicksville (actually Kansas) and in St. Louis meets McGraw and somehow captivates the curmudgeon into letting him suit up and sit on the visiting team bench. By a series of coincidences which play on the well-honed superstitions of the baseball fraternity, Faust becomes a Giant without portfolio, a talisman, a guerdon which summons the team to three consecutive pennants. The climax is reached in Boston when, with the pennant safely in hand, McGraw calls for Faust to pitch in late inning relief. He escapes with modest damage and is slated to bat fourth in the top of the ninth. The first three Giants go down meekly and the game is over. But no, the Beantown contingent demanded to see Faust at bat and, to great cheers, Charley strode to the plate and with the windmill scattershot style that marked his pitching efforts he made the fourth out of the inning.

Salting the laughter are many sorrows and Matty loses an heroic younger brother to a mysterious ailment, perhaps a variant of the consumption which killed another brother and finally Matty himself. The smiling evil of talented first baseman Hal Chase haunted him for years as did the conviction that he could have prevented Pulliam's suicide and Merkle's lifetime of derision by acting more decisively in the matter of the playoff game- which Matty lost, but which should never have been played.

Frierson negotiates the various characters in his play with tremendous verve, but he saves his subtlety and insights for Matty, in a performance of such striking verisimilitude that he even risks answering — in character-unrehearsed questions from the audience. His responses, unscripted and off the cuff, knocked my socks off. One elderly fellow inquired about how often he pitched. Once every two or three days- and he would be ready to relieve as well. Chew on that you overpaid ever-ailing prima donnas now doing mound duty. This was a pitcher, and Iron Man McGinnity, who earned his sobriquet by hurling both ends of doubleheaders, was his team-mate. No need for middle relievers and closers with that staff.



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THE WINGED FOOT

Matty Lives Again

Christy Mathewson sits to the side of the stage and answers questions. Ask any question. Ask about John McGraw or the Merkle Boner or the Snodgrass mull or President William Howard Taft or how Honie Run Baker got his name. If you ask about poor Fred Merkle, be kind because he's Mat-ty's friend.

It was the event to remember of the 1908 pennant race, the kind of landmark of history, baseball and New York that linked grandfathers, fathers and sons, and hardly a man who was there can tell you about it besides Matty.



Steve Jacobson

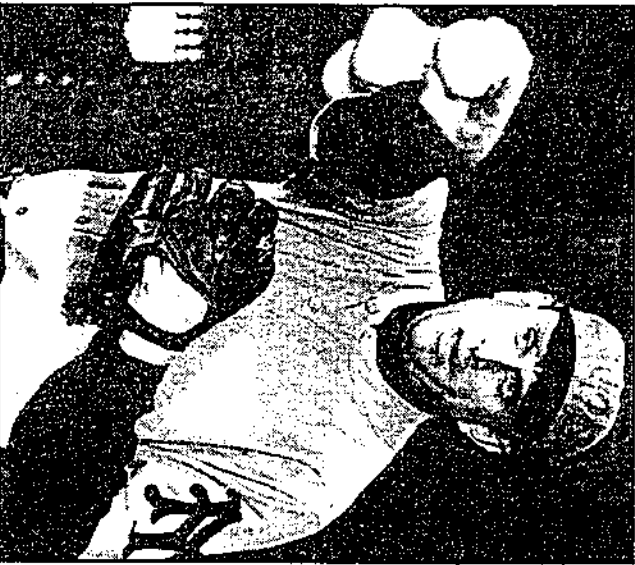
Klem, Hank O'Day, Charlie (Victory) Faust and more. That Matty is being done by Ed Frierison is merely a tribute to the artist's work.

He shouts at the umpires, gets red in the face and begins to cough, just a little at first. He screams at Merkle to get back and touch second base. He does his impression of McGraw scolding his Giants, and when McGraw demands, "Are we clear?" the on-lookers respond, "Yeah!"

It was Sept. 23, 1908. The New York Giants were in first place with the second-place Cubs — Tinker to Evers to Chance — coming to town. Matty won 37 games that year with his ladeaway. He was the

If you don't know about the Merkle Boner, well, you're missing something. And if you don't know about Matty, you're missing something more. Considering that Christy Mathewson has been dead since 1925, there aren't many chances to speak with him, except at the Lambs Theatre in Manhattan. That is Matty there on stage. He does the dialects of Merkle, McGraw, Joe McGinnity, Bill

That's former college baseball player and present actor Ed Frierison (above), who is playing Hall of Famer Christy Mathewson (right) in "Matty" at the Lambs Theater in Manhattan. Here, Frierison is showing the audience how Matty threw his famed ladeaway.



Special to Newsday

That's former college baseball player and present actor Ed Frierison (above), who is playing Hall of Famer Christy Mathewson (right) in "Matty" at the Lambs Theater in Manhattan. Here, Frierison is showing the audience how Matty threw his famed ladeaway.



Tom Seaver of his day, only moreso. He was out of Bucknell University, a rare college man among rowdies. Matty spoke five languages, was president of the student body, played basketball and football as well as baseball, was in the glee club and band, was a fine golfer and gave exhibitions of checkers against several people at a time.

He wouldn't even wear a uniform on Sunday. The whole game of baseball loved him.

The Giants and Cubs were 1-1 in the last of the ninth in Aught-Eight when Merkle singled Moose McCormick to third with two out. Without the believability of the baseball action, everything on stage would fall apart. But that's Matty's antique pitching motion right out of flickering film. When his pitch hits a batter on the head — fss, thump — it's a jolt.

All Bridewell hit a single for the winning run. Young Merkle made an abrupt right on the way to second and headed for the clubhouse in centerfield, as all the Giants did, as was the custom to evade the crowd on the field. "It was the first game Merkle ever started," Matty explained. Johnny Evers, the Cubs second baseman shouted for the ball and Matty knew pandemonium when he saw it. Two weeks before, Evers had tried the same thing at Pittsburgh, but the umpires hadn't seen it. On the train to New York, Evers cited Rule 59 to them.

"That play had never been called in the history of baseball," Matty said. With the crowd on the field and some players fighting to get off the field and some trying to get back, the ball came back to the infield. McGinnity of the Giants intercepted and heaved it into the grandstand. Merkle got back to second but there was a baseball — which baseball, nobody ever will know — there first, forcing Merkle. The run didn't count and the umpires decided it was too dark to continue — and anyway there

Please see JACOBSON on Page B23

Matty Lives Again

JACOBSON from Page B8

were too many glass mugs thrown onto the field because in those days, the writers described the hats women wore to the games, women being new to the crowd then; they wrote whether George M. Cohan sang to the crowd; they blamed the umpires for everything, and beer was served in glass mugs in the grandstand.

The tie game had to be played off after the last scheduled game. The Giants agreed to play because Matty agreed. A quarter-million people gathered outside the Polo Grounds to watch the progress of the game on a billboard. The Polo Grounds was so jammed that two men fell to their deaths off the roof. Three-Finger Brown beat Matty, 4-2, and Matty agonized that if he hadn't agreed to play, those two spectators wouldn't have died.

He explains that on stage to anyone who asks. Ask about modern salaries and players and Matty doesn't know about that. Ask about the actor's art and Matty doesn't understand what you're talking about. That's not Ed Frierson on stage, it's Matty in the uniform of those Giants. That's Matty getting red and coughing more ominously.

Frierson, 36, was a theater major and pitcher at UCLA, a teammate of Tim Leary and Mike Gallego until he decided his future was brighter in drama. He was coaching baseball at Santa Monica High School when his father found a copy of "Pitching in a Pinch," by Christy Mathewson, himself, and gave it to Ed. It was so fascinating that Ed's dad suggested the son find out if there were Mathewsons still in Factoryville, Pa., and if Bucknell remembered him.

First stop, Bucknell. Frierson knew about the fade-

away, now called a screwball. What he didn't know about was the Christy Mathewson Memorial Gate, built in 1927 with donations from all 16 major-league teams. He found that Mathewson left Bucknell before graduation to prove to his father-in-law that he could make a living playing ball. In 1925, when Mathewson died at 45 on the day the World Series opened, both teams wore black armbands in his honor.

Frierson found Matty's letters, his diaries, drafts of his books and the newspaper and magazine stories that weren't always ghost-written. He found the autobiography he began and never wrote out of modesty. Frierson had a treasure of material to write and act — hours and hours more than he could stage.

Research took him to Cooperstown, where he slept on the centerfield grass of Doubleday Field, and to the tuberculosis sanatorium at Saranac Lake. He found notes that indicated Mathewson, covering the 1919 World Series for the New York Times, suspected the White Sox of throwing the games. He sent a memo of specifics to the National Commission, which filed it away. Mathewson didn't press on because he didn't want it to be true. He never wrote it.

Frierson felt he had found universality. "His take on life," Frierson called it. "We all have the same highs and lows and meet the same people, and how do you deal with them? He said life stinks, sometimes."

He found that Taft, who had owned a piece of the Cubs, was the first president to throw out the first ball on Opening Day at Matty's urging. When Taft stood up from his overcrowded seat in the seventh inning, the crowd stood out of respect.

When the Giants traveled, the presidential car often was added to the Giants' train and Matty often shared cigars, brandy and laughs with Taft.

In fact, Matty urged Woodrow Wilson to send him to war as an example for Americans. It was in France that Matty got a whiff of mustard gas.

Through November, Matty will tell you about that himself.

Friday

October 24, 1997

Volume LX, No. 296

The Daily Item

Serving the Susquehanna Valley

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He's bringing 'Matty' home



Daily Item photo by Joe Hammit

Actor Eddie Frierson portrays Christy Mathewson, a former athlete, scholar, soldier and Bucknell University graduate, for students at the Milton Elementary School. Frierson's one-man show, "Matty," is currently running off-Broadway.

Christy Mathewson returns to Bucknell tonight

By Karen Blackledge
Staff reporter

Eddie Frierson has discovered his off-Broadway show portraying baseball great Christy Mathewson to be an interesting marriage of baseball and theater.

"Most baseball fans could care less about the theater, and most theater-goers aren't into baseball," he said. "It's interesting how they both enjoy the show."

"Usually the people who despise baseball are pleasantly surprised. It's a challenge for me," he said, describing the show as "very the-

atrical and pure entertainment."

Frierson will bring "Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson" to the Weis Center for the Performing Arts at Bucknell University at 8 tonight.

Mathewson was a Bucknell graduate: the school's football stadium is named after him. Mathewson is buried in Lewisburg and his widow, the former Jane Stoughton, lived in the borough until her death in 1968, Frierson said.

A 37-year-old resident of Los Angeles, Frierson had been looking for a one-person

■ Please see **MATTY**, A6

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

WHAT: "Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson," written and performed by Eddie Frierson

WHEN: 8 tonight

WHERE: Weis Center for the Performing Arts, Bucknell University

TICKETS: 524-1000

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: "Best one-man show ... Frierson is endearing, charming, sincere, and deserves as many praiseworthy adjectives as Mathewson had victories."

— THEATER WEEK

Actor gives pupils a lesson in baseball ... and life

By Karen Blackledge
Staff reporter

NEW COLUMBIA — With arms swinging wildly, he positions himself to pitch as the Giants' jinx killer did.

"Charlie Faust was a lucky man and the New York Giants' good luck charm," Eddie Frierson said during his portrayal of Christy Mathewson, an athlete, scholar and soldier and Bucknell University graduate.

Although Mathewson, who died in 1925, would now be 117 years old, Frierson brought him to life Wednesday in an abbreviated version of his one-man show, "Matty," before White Deer Elementary School sixth-graders. Later Wednesday, Frierson took his show to the Montandon and Milton elementary schools.

At 8 tonight, he will present his off-Broadway show in Bucknell's Weis Center for the Performing Arts.

Frierson captured the White Deer pupils' attention with his version of Faust, a kid from Kansas; Fred Merkle, who won the dubious distinction of being called "Bonehead"; and Moose McCormick, who was a classmate of Mathewson at Bucknell.

Bucknell's football stadium is named for Mathewson.

"We could not lose with Charlie Faust sitting on our bench. Then, (manager) John McGraw decided to drop him from the squad. Charlie was the first to show up at the Polo Grounds. He broke down and cried at the clubhouse all afternoon. McGraw knew we had all begun to believe Charlie was our good-luck charm. By the end of the afternoon, we were all pounded and Charlie was back. We took him west with us in 1911, and won the first 15 games in a row ... He was the Giant jinx killer," said Frierson, wearing a wool reproduction of a Giants' uniform in gray and brown.

"Three days after we clinched the pennant, Charlie slid into home plate and yelled, 'Hey people, who's

Bucknell graduate Christy Mathewson returns home

■ **MATTY**, from Page A1

show. "My dad gave me a copy of Christy's book and the characters came alive," said Frierson, a baseball pitcher as was Mathewson.

"On my first visit to Bucknell's library, I met Doris Dysinger. I told her I was doing research on Christy Mathewson and her first words were 'Oh, Christy,'" he said.

"She pulled out all the boxes and stuff so I could start finding out more about him," Frierson said Wednesday after doing an abbreviated version of his show at White Deer Elementary School.

Frierson chose Mathewson as his subject because, he said: "He was a friend to presidents, a co-author of a Broadway play and an inspiration to kids.

"The show kind of took over. It was real important to get this stuff out there," said Frierson, a Nashville, Tenn., native and graduate of the UCLA theater arts program.

Frierson relates to Mathewson not only in his love of baseball but in "the way he looked at life," Frierson said. "He gave a speech when he visited a juvenile asylum. He told the kids not to spend their lives in the minor league, that there is no reason for them to be unhappy."

Wearing a reproduction of a 1910 New York Giants baseball road uniform, Frierson said his message when he visits schools is: "We all are the same with common experiences. We know the same types

of people. We just do different things, whether we are teachers or pick up garbage."

Frierson performed part of his show, when it was in the process of being developed, during an alumni weekend at Bucknell in 1988, and again when Bucknell's football stadium was rededicated in Mathewson's name in 1989.

Mathewson was the first-ever All-American college football kicker, he said.

Frierson, who has been accepted by organized baseball and the Mathewson family as an adopted grandson, will tour the country with the show.

Mathewson, a farm boy from Factoryville, played baseball for more than 27 years. He played his first professional baseball game in Honesdale in 1897. He played on the Taunton, Mass., team, signed with Norfolk, Va., and in 1900, became a member of the New York Giants club of the National League.

During his career, Mathewson pitched 635 games, recording a National League record of 373 career victories, including a second National League record of 37 wins in 1908.

He holds the record for most consecutive innings pitched (68) without walking a batter. He pitched 83 shutouts, ranking third on the all-time list and ranks in the top 10 on the all-time strike-out list.

After retiring in 1916, he managed the Cincinnati Reds. He was inducted posthumously into baseball's Inaugural Class of the Hall of Fame in 1936.

the looney now?"

Although Faust was actually 30, he seemed as if he were 12.

"He really was our mascot. We loved having him around," Frierson said.

Frierson, who bases his performances on research of Mathewson's life and his 1912 book, "Pitching in a Pinch," said Merkle, a first baseman with the Giants, got to be known as a bonehead after Rule 59 was enforced for the first time in baseball.

"Giants' fans were coming onto the field, not to celebrate but to get to the fastest way out of the ballpark through the center field gate. Merkle had touched the second base bag and was on his way to the clubhouse. Merkle was ruled out at second base. Moose McCormick's run

didn't count and the game was a tie," Frierson said.

"The next day, the papers said Merkle was a bonehead and had cost the Giants the game. Before that day, the word bonehead never existed. It was a nickname that stuck with Merkle his whole life," he said.

Drawing from those examples, he said, "Faust had a love of life and never felt out of place because he was different. He was a success. He always had a smile and a kind word to say."

He told the pupils to, by all means, play ball, whether it is baseball, football or some other sport.

"It will teach you about business, the game and life," said Frierson, who lives in Los Angeles and played high school and college baseball.

"But," he said, "if you can't make

the big league, give it up. Try to find a vocation where you can make an honest living. Money won't bring happiness. It's family and friends that make our greatest happiness and enduring success. Conceit and overconfidence are the greatest enemies a player can have. Be humble and kind."

Quoting Charlie Faust's dad, Frierson said: "If you're able to touch just one life in a positive manner, you have succeeded in your own."

About Merkle, Frierson said: "Defeat can eat you alive. Never be afraid to take a chance. Roll failure off your back. Every day's a new game. The basic foundation for success is self-confidence. Lose graciously out in the open. You can learn everything from defeat."

Pitch is on the way

1-man play portrays Christy Mathewson

By JOHN BEAUGE
FOR THE PATRIOT-NEWS

Eddie Frierson did not know Christy Mathewson in 1981 when he started doing research on the Hall of Fame baseball pitcher for a one-man play.

"Matty was just a baseball card to me then," the actor with ties in the Harrisburg area said. "A legend. A Hall of Famer. Oh, yeah, I remember him. Wasn't he the guy who invented the screwball? Yep. That was him."

When he stumbled across Mathewson, "I thought all I had found was an interesting subject for a one-man theatrical show that I was trying to develop for myself," Frierson said. "The subject for the one-man show developed me instead."

Midstaters will get the opportunity to see what he means when Frierson presents "Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson" at 8 tonight at the Weis Center on the Bucknell University campus. Tickets are \$15.

Among those planning to be in the audience is Frierson's uncle, Eddis Davies of Mechanicsburg.

Choosing an athlete for the subject of his show was probably more than coincidence. Frierson is a former pitcher and high school coach and Davies is in the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame.

Another uncle, the late Bob Davies, was most valuable player in the National Basketball League in 1951 when he played for the old Rochester Royals. He was known as the "Harrisburg Houdini" for the way he could dribble behind his back.

An uncle, Dick Davies, who lives near Knoxville, Tenn., was a member of the 1964 U.S. Olympic gold medal basketball team.

His mother, the former Bettye Davies, and her side of the family attended the former John Harris High School. She also lives near Nashville.

Staging the show as part of Bucknell's homecoming activities is significant because Mathewson, a native of Factoryville in Wyoming County, was a member of the class of 1902.

"I'm tickled to death it's all part of homecoming," said Frierson during a telephone interview from his Sherman Oaks, Calif., home.

After Mathewson's 1925 death due to tuberculosis attributed in part to exposure to poison gas during World War I, each of the major league teams donated money to erect a gate in his memory outside the football stadium at Bucknell. The stadium was renamed in 1999 the Mathewson-Memorial Stadium.

Frierson performed an early version of the show in connection with the stadium renaming.

"This is a different product," he said.

The curtain went up for the first time on "Matty" in 1987 at a convention in Washington, D.C., and it has been staged nationwide since, including a stint off-Broadway in New York City.

Frierson said he was pursuing two dreams when he enrolled in UCLA in 1977 — to pitch for the Bruins and obtain a bachelor's degree in theater arts.

Although he had helped his Hillwood High School team in Nashville to a Tennessee state baseball title in 1977, he realized at UCLA he would never be a Hall of Fame pitcher, he said, so he began concentrating on his theatrical career. Upon graduation in 1982, he started looking for subjects to develop into a one-person show.

Among those he considered were John Barrymore, Edwin Booth, Gen. George Custer and Andrew Jackson.

"At this time, I still remained



Actor Eddie Frierson, above, will present his one-man show on baseball player Christy Mathewson, pictured at right, at Bucknell tonight.



"I toured the entire country, visiting all the places that meant so much to Mathewson during his lifetime."

— EDDIE FRIERSON

close to my baseball roots by coaching at Santa Monica High School," he said. Baltimore outfielder Tony Tarasco was one of his players.

In 1933, his father, Ed, an educator, gave him a book titled, "Pitching in a Pinch: Or, Baseball From The Inside," by Mathewson. A year later on a five-hour, cross-country plane trip to a family reunion, Frierson read it and became engrossed.

With his father's encouragement, he set out to research the life of Mathewson.

"I toured the entire country, visiting all the places that meant so much to Mathewson during his lifetime," he said.

"And, from his birthplace in Factoryville to his winter home in South Central Los Angeles to his final home in Saranac Lake, N.Y., to his final resting place in Lewisburg, I was greeted with open arms."

He was asked to pitch batting practice in a Cracker Jack Classic, now known as the old-timers all-star game. His locker was between Bob Feller's and Joe DiMaggio's.

"Since 1984, the only night I spent in a hotel during my research was my first night in Lewisburg," Frierson said. "The friendliness, hospitality and willingness of everyone I met to introduce me to other facets of Christy Mathewson's life is truly a testament to this man's own kind and giving nature."

He describes Mathewson as a hero. At Bucknell he played football, basketball and baseball, was a member of two literary societies and two fraternities, played brass horn in the band, sang first bass in the glee club and was class president and historian.

Later he was an adviser to presidents, the toast of New York with George M. Cohan and John McGraw, philosopher, teacher, scholar, national idol, international celebrity, Broadway play co-author, two-reel movie star, stiff actor on the vaudeville stage, journalist, for-ester, musician and singer, Frierson said.

Mathewson was a checkers champion, practical joker, shrewd businessman, major stockholder in the railroad system, author of five children's books on baseball, war hero, trilingualist, counselor, big brother, devoted husband and father, he said.

As a pitcher for the New York Giants, Mathewson refused to play on Sundays because his mother, a very religious person, asked him not to. He later was player-manager for the Cincinnati Reds, coached the Giants and was president of the old Boston Braves.

Nearly every word of the show's two hours comes directly from Mathewson through his book or newspaper articles, Frierson said.

"This evening of theater is not a chronicle of a goody-goody or a moly-coddle," he said. "It is a collection of a man's personal observations during a fascinating time in our history."

The play is not a conventional one, Frierson said. It is the memoir of a great American's life as it was experienced by the man who lived it.

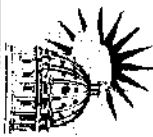
"I have found people who are dragged to the theater are the ones who enjoy this the most," he said.

Mostly cloudy. High: mid-to upper 50s. / See Back Page

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The Patriot-News

FRIDAY
October 24, 1997

April Second Sunday Celebration at the Missouri History Museum in Forest Park

Sunday APRIL 10

MacDermott Grand Hall

1 p.m.

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"MATTY:

An Afternoon with Christy Mathewson"

Learn more about multi-faceted baseball player Christy Mathewson, winner of 373 games during his career, by attending this acclaimed one-man theatrical performance. This two-hour presentation, previously presented at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, follows the tradition of such stage vehicles as Hal Holbrook's "Mark Twain Tonight" and James Whitmore's "Give 'em Hell, Harry!" Performed by **Eddie Frierson**, this portrait of the early 20th-century pitching legend is based largely on the subject's own words. The show concludes with "Matty" crossing over into the 21st century and engaging the audience in a question-and-answer session.

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"Christy Mathewson was a great pitcher, a great competitor and a great soul. Both in spirit and in inspiration he was greater than his game. For he was something more than a great pitcher. He was one of those rare characters who appealed to millions through a magnetic personality attached to clean honesty and undying loyalty to a cause."
— Grantland Rice, sportswriter and friend

"We need real heroes, heroes of the heart that we can emulate. We need the heroes in ourselves. I believe that is what this show you've come to see is all about. In Christy Mathewson's words, "Give your friends names they can live up to. Throw your BEST pitches in the 'pinch.' Be humble, and gentle, and kind." Matty is a much-needed force today, and I believe we are lucky to have had him. I hope you will want to come back. I do. And I continue to reap the spirit of Christy Mathewson."
— Kerrigan Mahan, Director of "MATTY"

"A lively visit with a fascinating man ... A perfect pitch! Pure virtuosity!"
— Clive Barnes, NEW YORK POST

"A magnificent trip back in time!"
— Keith Olbermann, FOX SPORTS

"You'll be amazed at Matty, his contemporaries, and the dramatic baseball events of their time."
— Bob Costas, NBC SPORTS

"One of the year's ten best plays!"
— NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

"Catches the spirit of the times -- which includes, of course, the present -- with great spirit and theatricality!"
— Ira Berkow, NEW YORK TIMES

"Remarkable! This show is as memorable as an exciting World Series game and it wakes up the echoes about why we love baseball. When MATTY comes to your town don't miss it! A great way to get hooked on baseball again!"
— Tim Wendel, USA TODAY

Be sure to visit the Matty Web Site:

www.matty.org

Oakland Museum of California
in association with The Mathewson Foundation
presents

Eddie Frierson
in

“MATTY”



An Evening With Christy Mathewson

Directed by Kerrigan Mahan

Oakland Museum of California Auditorium
Sunday, November 27, 2005 Curtain 2:00 P.M.

“MATTY”

Written and Performed by Eddie Frierson
Directed by Kerrigan Mahan
Costume Design Suzan Kay Frierson

ACT ONE

Bonehead
Umpires
Opportunities
Repercussions
The Alibi
The Giant Jinx Killer

ACT TWO

The Early Days
Practical Jokes
McGraw
Factoryville and Nicholas
Fears
Deception
Consumption

There will be one 15-minute intermission

The taking of photographs or the operation of any recording device, without permission, is STRICTLY prohibited.

This evening's performance is dedicated in loving memory of Suzan Kay Frierson whose love, devotion and undaunted support of this project inspired it to fruition.

SOME PEOPLE YOU'RE LIKELY TO MEET TODAY: George M. Colhan, Fred Murtle, Johnny Evers, "Turkey Mike" Donlin, Frank Chance, Umpire Hank O'Day, Harry Pulliam, "Iron Man" Joe McGinnity, Umpire Bob Emslie, Umpire "Mr." Bill Klein, actress May Tully, Chief Meyers, White & Kremer, Jane Mathewson, Charley Faust, a fan, some newspaper boys, "Old Anns", "Broadway Alec" Smith, a Boston Bellboy, Frank Bowerman, Andrew Freedman, a young player, Granlund Rice, Nicholas Mathewson, "Eagle Eye" Jake Beckley, Joe Kelley, "Bugs" Raymond, Hal Chase, Jimmy Ring, Hugh Fullerton, Judge Kenessaw Mountain Landis and others.

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Grace Mathewson Van Lengen, Betty Cook, Doris Dyingier, The National Baseball Hall of Fame, Bob Costas, The Society for American Baseball Research, Brad Tufts, Keystone College, Bucknell University, Nick Newton, Keith Obermann, Toby Zwickel, Bettye Davies, Natalie Beck and, of course, Dad.

CHRISTY MATHEWSON

Christy Mathewson is an American hero. His life, on and off the field, epitomized America. He was a farm boy who became one of the greatest to ever play America's game, a hero figure to the nation's youth, and a courageous soldier. Mathewson was cheered in every city he played. And, he never forgot his roots.

He earned his first money playing baseball for Mill City (PA) in 1895. In 1897, he played his first professional baseball in Homestead, Pennsylvania. In 1900, he joined the National League's New York Giants, for whom he would pitch 16 1/2 seasons and win 373 games, including 37 in 1908. As a big league player in 1905, Christy shut out the Philadelphia Athletics three times within five days during the World Series, scoring his greatest baseball triumph. In 1908, he bent all previous records for endurance by pitching 425 innings, winning 37 games (officially) and losing 11. Christy helped the Giants win five pennants, playing in the World Series in 1905, 1911, 1912 and 1913 (no series was played in 1904). He pitched two no-hitters, against St. Louis in 1901 and Chicago in 1905.

Following his retirement in 1916, Mathewson managed the Cincinnati Reds. And, in 1918, he served his country in World War I. Upon returning, he coached the New York Giants from 1919 through 1921. In 1923, Mathewson became President of the Boston Braves and held that position until his untimely death from tuberculosis on October 7, 1925. He was inducted posthumously into the Baseball Hall of Fame's Inaugural Class in 1936.

EDDIE FRIERSON

In the summer of 1984 Eddie Frierson began his research on the life and career of one of baseball's greatest pitchers, Christy Mathewson. His in-depth study has involved thousands of travel miles, dozens of interviews and hundreds of uncounted hours in college, library and museum archives.

A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Eddie helped pitch his Hillwood High School baseball team to a State Championship in 1977. He then threw collegiately for the UCLA Bruins. While at UCLA it became clear that this right-hander "wasn't going to make the bigs" so he made the most of his time in Westwood and obtained his degree in Theatre Arts — thus bypassing the dream of a professional baseball career in order to pursue his love for acting. With "MATTY" Frierson combines the best of both worlds and, as an "Honorary Inductee" into Baseball's Hall of Fame in Cooperstown he has clearly gone farther in baseball through the stage than he ever would have on the field.

Eddie has performed on both coasts in dozens of theatrical productions. He has received numerous awards and can be heard all over the country as the voice of PETCO Pet Stores. As a kid, he and his sisters sang with THE BILL GAITHER TRIO and he has also been featured in hundreds of television shows, cartoons and many feature films. He is the Narrator/Balldancer in this summer's release THE DUKES OF HAZZARD and he was featured last summer as the NS-4 robots in I, ROBOT. Currently, he is featured in CHICKEN LITTLE. Listen carefully in the movie THE ROOKIE while Dennis Quaid looses up in the pen in Durham as you'll hear Eddie announce "Your attention please ... now batting for the Bulls, number 38, Eddie Frierson!"

"Geek! It's a Wonderful Game," performed by Julie Lambert and the Dodsworth Section Band courtesy of Elektra Records by arrangement with Warner Special Projects.

"MATTY" words and music by Dave Freshberg © 1990 by Shenkware Music, all rights reserved. Used by permission. Recordings of "MATTY" are available on the following Dave Freshberg albums: QUALITY TAKE (Sterling S1006-2, 1994) and LET'S EAT HOME (Cartoon Jazz CD-4402, 1990).

**"A lively visit with a fascinating man...
A perfect pitch! Pure virtuosity!"
Clive Barnes, New York Post**

As part of its 46th Anniversary festivities and just in time for baseball season, the Save the Playhouse Benefit series in association with the Mathewson Foundation presents a special three performance home series of Eddie Frierson's widely acclaimed theatrical performance, "MATTY: An evening with Christy Mathewson".

Written and performed by Eddie Frierson, "Matty" is the life story of Christy Mathewson, legendary hall-of-fame pitcher for the New York Giants (1900 to 1916), gentleman, philosopher and first true American hero who inspired a whole generation of fans to make baseball America's pastime. Mathewson was arguably America's first major baseball legend - a college-educated all-American farm boy from baseball's age of innocence, a multi-faceted baseball player with homespun wit. Besides his ballpark records, still among the most impressive ever posted, he was an author of books for boys, toured in vaudeville, made a motion picture, and was a war hero, a coach, a sports writer and very likely the first major sports figure to be a product spokesperson.

Frierson's nuanced portrait, which relies largely on Mathewson's own words to tell his stories, was dubbed "a Perfect Pitch! Pure Virtuosity!" by Clive Barnes of the New York Post.

Frierson, who researched and developed the play, is also a college-educated all-American ballplayer. A baseball scholarship brought him to UCLA to pitch for the Bruins. While there he also pursued a degree in theatre and, as he says, realizing that he would never be a hall-of-famer, bypassed a professional baseball career in order to pursue acting. Staying close to his athletic roots after graduation, he was the head baseball coach at Santa Monica High School while looking for the perfect vehicle to launch his acting career. He found that vehicle with the Christy Mathewson story, spending twelve years researching and developing it into "Matty", which had one of its first public performances at the Santa Monica Playhouse in 1989. Ironically, he has clearly gone farther in baseball through the stage than he ever would have on the field as it is because of his performance as "Matty" that he was ushered into Baseball's Hall of Fame in Cooperstown as an "Honorary Inductee".

Santa Monica Playhouse is honored to welcome Eddie Frierson and MATTY back to the boards and thanks you, its loyal audiences, for your support of the *Save the Playhouse Campaign*.



Santa Monica Playhouse, in association with the Mathewson Foundation, presents

"One of the TEN BEST plays of the year!"

National Public Radio

MATTY:

An evening with Christy Mathewson

Written & Performed by
Eddie Frierson

Directed by
Kerrigan Mahan

Costume Designer
Suzann Kay Frierson

Christy Mathewson

THREE NIGHTS ONLY!

Fri, April 21 & 28, 7:30pm; Sat, April 29, 7:30pm; Adm. \$20

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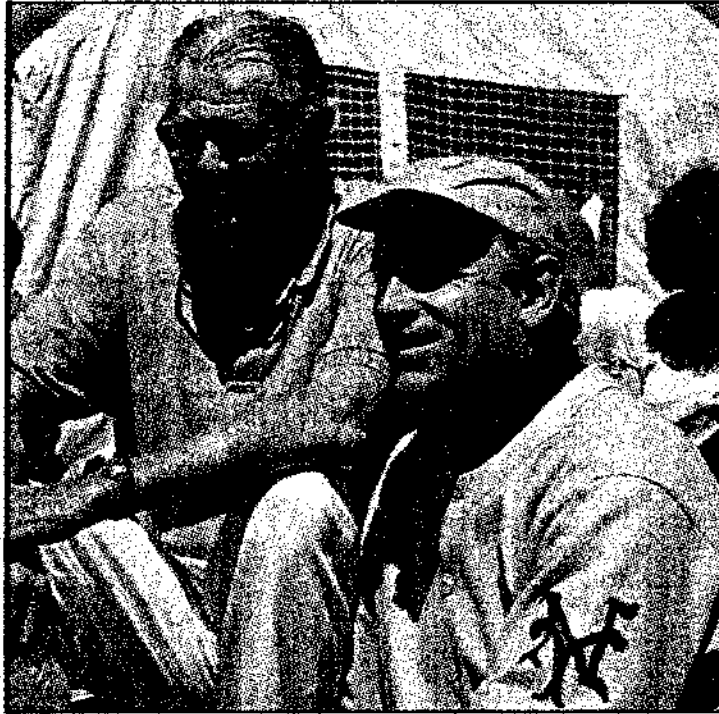


PHOTO COURTESY OF ALICE STUFFLE

Sportswriter Frank Deford and actor Eddie Frierson, playing **Matty**, enjoyed the activities at Christy Mathewson Park Saturday afternoon following the parade in Factoryville.

Mathewson Days highlight weekend

Christy Mathewson Days were the highlight of the weekend on the Keystone College campus and in the entire Factoryville area. The 11th annual celebration, jointly hosted by the college and the community, were marked by great weather and a record turnout of participants.

A packed house of over 300 people enjoyed actor Eddie Frierson's one-man show, "Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson," and also enjoyed listening to nationally

known sportswriter Frank Deford read excerpts from his book, "The Old Ball Game," describing the life and times of Christy Mathewson and legendary New York Giants manager coach John McGraw.

An old-fashioned ice cream social followed at Keystone's Gambal Athletic Center where Mr. Deford signed copies of his book. Saturday featured the annual Big 6K Run/Walk, Breakfast on the College Green and a parade through campus and town.

Making his pitch as Mathewson

Eddie Frierson performs a one-man show tonight at Keystone College.

By **LISA SOKOLOWSKI**
lsokolowski@leader.net

MOOSIC – It isn't easy being Eddie Frierson, especially because he isn't himself most of the time. He is Hall of Fame pitcher Christy Mathewson in his one-man play, and that isn't easy either.

"It's a hard sell," said Frierson, who threw the first pitch in the

Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons' 9-8 loss to visiting Pawtucket as Mathewson on Thursday night.

"It's a one-man show, so that's strike one. Then there's 'Christy Mathewson. Who's she?' And it's like, 'Eddie Frierson who?'"

Mathewson, who was born Christ-topher Mathewson in Factoryville in 1880, starred for the New York Giants. He finished his career with a record of 373-188, including 79 shutouts. He finished 13 seasons with 20 wins or more and had a lifetime ERA of 2.13.

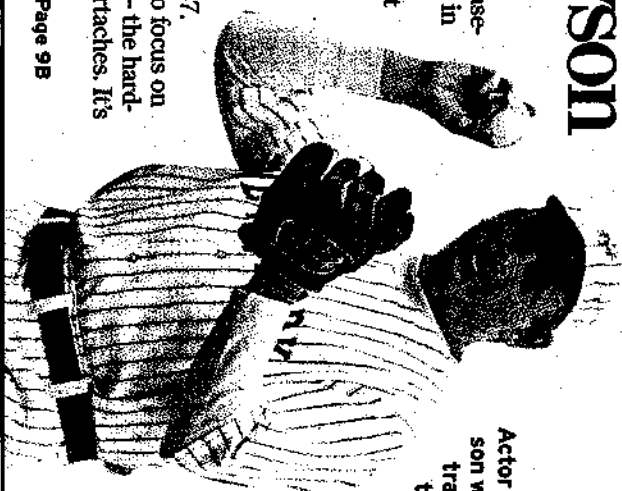
All of those facts and figures can

be found in the Baseball Hall of Fame, in which he was enshrined in the first class in 1936.

Frierson doesn't make that the premise of his play, which he began performing in 1987.

Instead, he tries to focus on Mathewson's life – the hardships and the heartaches. It's

See **MATHEWSON**, Page 9B



Actor Eddie Frierson will be portraying Christy Mathewson in the show 'Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson' tonight at 7 at Keystone College in LaPlume.

MATHEWSON

Continued from Page 18

those moments that get the old ladies out to baseball games, he said.

But it's the youngsters he's trying to attract. At Thursday's game, a young boy looked at him and asked if he was Roger Maris. Another asked if he was on the New York Yankees.

Priestson, still clad in his New York Giants uniform, told the kids to come out to the show, and they'll find out who he is.

Priestson is performing his show "Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson" for free today at Keystone College in LaPlume. The show begins at 7 p.m., is open to the public and is part of this week's 11th annual Christy Mathewson Days celebration.

The evening will also feature the acclaimed sportswriter Frank Deford, who wrote "The Old Ball Game," a book about Mathewson and New York Giants manager John McGraw.

Deford was at Lackawanna County Stadium on Thursday night to autograph copies of his book. Keystone College had them on sale for \$13 for a paperback, \$24 for a hardcover, plus tax.

Deford wrote an article for Sports Illustrated about Christy Mathewson in 2003 and was approached by Atlantic Monthly Press to turn it into a book. Mathewson died of tuberculosis in 1925, so there wasn't much legwork for Deford.

"It was a lot of hantwork," said Deford, who, at 67, missed seeing Mathewson pitch by 22 years. "It was going to libraries and sitting in historical societies.



TIMES LEADER STAFF PHOTO/DON CHERY

Author Frank Deford, right, talks with John Diamond of Kingston on Thursday at Lackawanna County Stadium after signing a copy of his book "The Old Ball Game," a book about Christy Mathewson.

I love going there and reading old newspapers on a microfilm. For all intents and purposes, I could have been writing about the 15th or 16th century. There's nobody left to talk about it. They're all dead."

Except Priestson, who at 46 is already older than Mathewson ever was.

"With every day, it gets a little bit sadder," said Priestson, a Stephens Ranch, Calif. resident. "I think sad is the wrong word. Christy Mathewson died at 45 and a couple months, and I've kind of just started."

Priestson read "Pitching in A Pinch," a book by Mathewson and ghostwritten by John N. Wheeler, in 1984. That book was published in 1912. It created

Priestson's interest in doing the one-man show.

He went first to Bucknell University, from where Mathewson had graduated before playing professional ball. A then 24-year-old Priestson came to Factoryville. And now he's back.

"He's fascinating," Deford said of Priestson. "I read about this guy on the Internet. When you type Christy Mathewson into Google, he pops up, which he ought to. Mathewson, to most people, is an obscure figure. He lived over 100 years ago. For him to become Christy Mathewson, when he could become Babe Ruth or Cal Ripken, Jr. ... I'm really intrigued by him."

Deford, a resident of Westport, Conn., and Priestson will

stay in town until all of the festivities are finished. They end with a Christy Mathewson Day Parade tomorrow, which would be Mathewson's 125th birthday.

Some people will come out and celebrate those who are oblivious to who Mathewson is probably won't.

"Is that the real Christy Mathewson?" someone asked after Priestson threw out the first pitch.

"No," a friend replied. "He's been dead for 100 years."

It's actually only been 80, but whose counting? Besides Priestson, of course.

Said Priestson: "The world was robbed of somebody who could have made it a better place when he died."

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Early Baseball Hero Reborn on Stage

At the
Baseball
Hall of Fame



Local actor Eddle Frierson, dressed as hall-of-famer Christy Mathewson, signs photos for fans in the lobby at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

Local actor brings acclaimed one-man play 'Matty' to local church for Father's Day.

By Stephen K. Peoples
Signal Staff Writer

In the early 1900s, before George Herman "Babe" Ruth, America's greatest baseball hero, was New York Giants pitcher and Hall of Famer Christy "Matty" Mathewson.

Those who missed the Mathewson days will get a second chance Sunday, Father's Day, as stage actor Eddle Frierson brings his acclaimed one-man play, "Matty," to Valencia United Methodist Church.

See **MATTY**, page A3

Matty

Continued from page A1

Frierson's performance begins at 4 p.m., and a barbecue dinner will follow. Admission is free; proceeds from donations will benefit the church's youth programs.

An encore performance is set for 6 p.m. on June 25, at the church.

Frierson started writing "Matty," a nostalgic flashback to a simpler time, in 1984. The Stevenson Ranch resident has performed it more than 750 times since its acclaimed off-Broadway debut and run in 1996, when National Public Radio tagged it one of the year's 10 best plays.

He's also performed "Matty" at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., with members of Mathewson's family in attendance.

"This is great theater," said Frierson, 45, a working voice-over actor as well as stage performer. "You don't have to like or know a thing about baseball to enjoy yourself at this show. It isn't about baseball as much as it is a celebration of the ups and downs of life, and how we're all in this same boat together. The stories are told by a man who really can be called a true American hero — something we need more of today. It's a thrill that I can introduce him to the public now, even though he's been gone for 80 years."

Mathewson's career stats made him a legend in his own time, and in perpetuity: 373 wins, 2,499 strikeouts and three straight seasons with more than 30 wins. Today, a pitcher who wins 20 is consid-



Photo Courtesy of Keystone College

This photo was taken on Main Street in Factoryville, Pa., (Christy "Matty" Mathewson's hometown) as part of the annual "Christy Mathewson Day" festivities.

ered an ace.

"This year marks the 100th anniversary of the greatest individual performance ever in a World Series, when Mathewson shut out Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics three times in five days to win the series," Frierson said. "If Babe

Ruth was loved, Matty was worshipped."

Mathewson retired from playing in 1916 and managed the Cincinnati Reds for a short time. After the United States entered World War I in 1917, he enlisted and served in

See FRIERSON, page A6

SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

Frierson

Continued from page A3

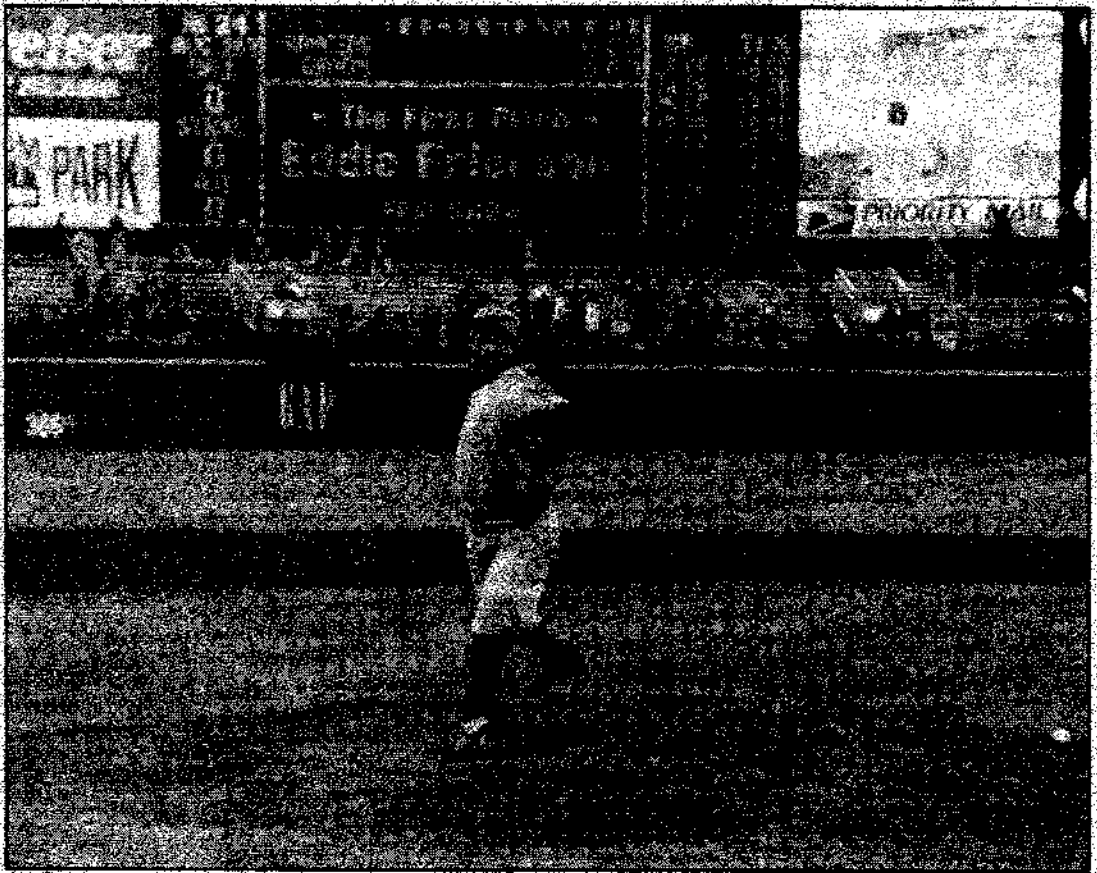
France, where he suffered a poison gas attack. He died in 1925 of tuberculosis and was among the first players elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame when it was founded in 1936.

Mathewson's clean-cut, boy-next-door image made him a star off the diamond as well. He appeared in the 1914 silent film "Love and Baseball," as well as a Broadway show and a vaudeville revue. He wrote several books for children. He was also one of the first major league stars to do product endorsements — for pipe tobacco.

Frierson first performed "Matty" at Valencia UMC after moving to the Santa Clarita Valley with wife, Natalie, a singer with the Los Angeles Opera, in late 1999. The couple has three children: Suzan, 9; Christy, 7; and Matty, 3 1/2.

"Pastor Pete Falbo invited me to perform it then," Frierson said. "This year, he and the staff thought a return pair of performances to mark Father's Day would be a great gift to the community, and I agree. I'm only sorry Pete won't be here for the shows — he's taken a new assignment in Yorba Linda."

Frierson is a major supporter of the Valencia United Methodist Church's youth programs. "They're among the best in the valley and growing," he said. "The musical programs for kids K-6 are unequaled. We thought that any funds raised from donations — and there is no obligation whatsoever to give — would help build the VUMC's budding junior high and high



Courtesy of the San Francisco Giants

Frierson, once again in Mathewson garb, got the opportunity to throw out the first pitch before a San Francisco Giants game at SBC Park. Mathewson played for the New York Giants, who moved to San Francisco in 1958.

school kids' programs."

The price is right, Frierson added: free admission to a play that cost \$75 a ticket during its New York run. He urges parents to bring their kids to Sunday's performance to share a meaningful Father's Day experience as a family.

Catching "Matty" may actually be the next best thing to taking dad or granddad to a Dodgers game — unless you care to fly to Chicago to see them play the White Sox.

After the June 25 Valencia

performance, Frierson's next major "Matty" performances will be July 21-23 at the Houston Museum of Art, part of the Baseball Hall of Fame's "Baseball in America" traveling exhibit.

"This man has blessed my life in ways I never could have imagined," Frierson said. "I know I have a blast performing 'Matty.' It's just nice that the critics in Los Angeles, New York and everywhere in between seem to love this man and this play as much as I do."

As Frierson noted earlier, "Matty" isn't strictly about baseball; the sport and Mathewson as its first hero are metaphors for life. At the end of the game, he said, "If you're able to touch just one life in a positive manner, you've succeeded in your own."

Valencia United Methodist Church is located at 25718 McBean Parkway. More information about Frierson and "Matty" is available at matty.org.