

Whatever dark reasons could be placed on the Cardinals, the organization was more than willing to cooperate with local efforts to purchase the franchise. The Rochester-based directors of the club met with Red Wing General Manager (but St. Louis employee) George Sisler Jr.; however by mid-November no serious progress had been made. Cardinals' General Manager Frank Lane stated the team was "apprehensive" about the delay, while affirming that the major league club was "doing everything we can to give Rochester the opportunity to retain the franchise." He balked at issuing a threat, but confirmed that he had offers from two other cities, later identified as Atlanta and Jacksonville.

Devine was more sympathetic to the locals, but even he was not encouraged after a meeting between he, Cardinals' real estate specialist Al Banister and the Wings' board of directors. St. Louis was asking for a minimum down payment of \$75,000 and gave a Dec. 1 deadline for action. Banister opined that the stadium and surrounding real estate could be sold relatively quickly, most likely for light industrial use.

It was clear that community ownership was the only option. Fortunately for Rochester baseball fans, a friend of Hallauer's had taken up his challenge to save baseball in Rochester. His name: Maurice E. "Morrie" Silver.

The 47-year-old Silver was a Rochester businessman well-known for his civic pride, honesty and entrepreneurial skill. He had graduated from the city's East High School and planned to attend Cornell University, but his father's illness forced him to find work. He began by selling newspapers on street corners and became so proficient that the local Gannett Newspapers hired him in their circulation department.

In 1937 he opened a music school that peaked at 500 students. He expanded this into a music store specializing in the sale of phonograph records. The business, Columbia Music Co., subsequently became the largest seller of records in the country. In 1945 he diversified, changing the name of his business to the Columbia Music and Appliance Company. Five years later the M.E. Silver Corp. was born. It became a leading distributor of appliances and electronics products in Western New York and Pennsylvania. Once asked by a reporter to explain the secret of his success, he replied "Because I love people and I try to live by the Golden Rule. Maybe that's corny, but it's true."

Silver threw \$25,000 of his own money into the pot (insisting it not be revealed) and took his case to the public. The front page of Rochester's Thanksgiving Day newspaper asked the public for \$200,000 to save the Red Wings. (The directors felt that figure would cover the \$75,000 down-payment as well as give the club some working capital.) Sisler set up shop at the club's Norton St. offices, and former Brooklyn Dodger batboy Bill Gannett of the Rochester Convention and Publicity Bureau established operations downtown to begin accepting pledges. The total purchase price was set at \$550,000, so 55,000 shares were ticketed to sell at \$10 apiece.

The drive started at 9 a.m. on Nov. 26. Rochester had five days to raise the money. The first day was a heady success, bringing in \$55,220, over a quarter of the required sum. International League President Frank Shaughnessy visited town on the third day, during which the drive hit \$138,420. The campaign included a \$500 pledge from the players and officials of the first-year Rochester Americans' hockey club. The Amerks also arranged to give two free game tickets to the first 500 making pledges, and designated their next game at the War Memorial as Red Wing Appreciation Night and set up a booth to accept pledges. Shaughnessy called the response "an amazing reaction, better than in any other city forced with a similar problem."

The next day the leaders of the Italian Civic League announced pledges totalling a minimum of \$20,000. The