

The Casey Stengel Chapter Newsletter

The Lineup

Volume 1 Number 4

August 2024

Coaches / Publishers: Damian Begley, Evelyn Begley, Kevin Carter,
David Lippman, Ernestine Miller

Batting Order	The Lineup	Page Position
1	Table of Contents & Note: The National SABR Convention	1
2	August Highlight: Van Lingle Mungo – Book & Song	2
3	Trivia Questions for Van Lingle Mungo	6
4	The NY Giants & Mets Focus on: Oral History & Biographies	7
5	The Brooklyn Dodgers Focus on: Oral History & Biographies	8
6	The NY Yankees Focus on: Oral History & Biographies	9
7	Trivia Answers for Van Lingle Mungo	10
8	Sharing Our Stories: M. Frank’s Westchester Column	11
9	Sharing Our Stories: The Jints Column by Gary Mintz	12

NOTE: This newsletter welcomes written submissions from members at any time on any topic. One recent event where many readers have had experiences is the National SABR convention that is both enjoyable and educational.

Has any reader attended the eighth convention in Paramus, NJ (1978)? How about the convention at Albany (1989)? Let’s hear from you so we can include your memories in our “*Sharing Our Stories*” columns!

The annual SABR Convention meets in various cities and has been held in New York City in 1991, when jazz pianist Dave Frishberg (who wrote and sang the hit song *Van Lingle Mungo*) was a guest, and in 2017. Send in your stories to share with our readership!

Van Lingle Mungo: The SABR Book of 40 Biographies and *Van Lingle Mungo: The Song* by Dave Frishberg

In our July issue, we highlighted the BioProject Research Committee and its many projects, including “Completed Books” such as **Van Lingle Mungo: The Man, The Song, The Players** (SABR, 2014). Edited by Bill Nowlin with Associate Editors James Forr and Len Levin, it was produced thanks to them and to these other SABR members: Mark Armour, Lawrence Baldassaro, Ralph Berger, Alan Cohen, Warren Corbett, Rob Edelman, Dave Eskenazi, David Fleitz, Jerry Grillo, Eric Hanauer, Mark Hodermarsky, Joanne Hulbert, Bill Johnson, James W. Johnson, Greg King, Norm King, Tara Krieger, Armand Peterson, C. Paul Rogers III, Steve Rudman, Jim Sargent, Rick Swaine, Jim Sweetman, Stew Thornley, Joseph Wancho, Charlie Weatherby, and Gregory H. Wolf.



But ... who is Van Lingle Mungo and what song is in the book’s subtitle?

If you have not yet heard this tune with its bossa nova background, play the 3-minute song by clicking here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKzobTIF8fM> and if you prefer a more jazzed up version (with minimal changes), enjoy it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-R4Frfp0YQ>. The melody was composed by David Frishberg who also wrote the lyrics. As you listen to the voice singing, you may be surprised that those vocals are also provided by Dave Frishberg! He is the piano player on the record as well. More on him later.

Van Lingle Mungo was a righthanded pitcher with the Brooklyn Robins / Dodgers (1931–1941) and the New York Giants (1942–1943, 1945), known for his

great fastball in the 1930s. When Mungo changed his pitching style in 1940 after arm surgery, he was not as fast, nor as successful.

In Alan Cohen's superb article <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/van-lingle-mungo/>, he tells us that the 1934 All-Star Game was Mungo's first (of five) as an All-Star. This game -- when Carl Hubbell (*right*) struck out five future Hall of Famers in a row: Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx, Al Simmons, and Joe Cronin (detailed here <https://sabr.org/gamesproj/game/july-10-1934-carl-hubbell-strikes-out-five-hall-of-famers-in-a-row-at-all-star-game/>) -- did not end well for Mungo. He allowed four runs by the American League players, resulting in a loss for him.



Cohen describes many other games that show us the personality and skills of Mungo so that by the end of this fascinating piece, you can see how Mungo's temper at times undermined his talent. No wonder Casey Stengel was quoted saying, "Mungo and I get along fine. I just tell him I won't stand for no nonsense, and then I duck" which "refers to the wild, mean, and often violent temper seen in Van Mungo — both on and off the field" (see <https://www.baseball-almanac.com/poetry/vanlinglemungo.shtml>).

Another way Cohen brings Mungo to life is by providing context and background for the accolades by contemporaries and even by non-players regarding Van Lingle Mungo. By downloading the free SABR book you will also find out why his given name was Van Lingle <https://sabr.org/latest/sabr-digital-library-van-lingle-mungo-the-man-the-song-the-players/> and you can read the biographies of all the players (and the lone umpire) named in the Dave Frishberg song "*Van Lingle Mungo*" including the substituted names.

So how did this song happen and why was it titled "*Van Lingle Mungo*"? Well, this book gives readers a biography of Dave Frishberg, too! Stew Thornley's

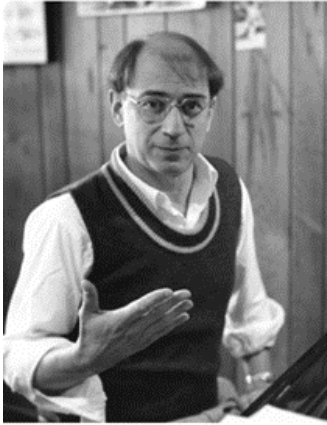
interview <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/dave-frishberg/> revealed the intriguing insights into the origin, lyrics, and success of his song.

Frishberg grew up a block from the Mississippi River in St. Paul, Minnesota as a serious fan of the St. Paul Saints (a minor league team for the Dodgers) and was invited to sit in the press box at Lexington Park by the play-by-play announcer Dick Siebert, a former MLB first baseman. He saw his first game in 1942 although he wasn't sure if he saw Mungo pitch, "but I certainly remember his name from seeing the newspaper stories, 'Millers Get Mungo.' He was a big name at that time." The Millers played in Nicollet Park in Minneapolis and Mungo was 11-3 that year so he was called up to the NY Giants.

In 1984, Frishberg joined SABR and responded to inquiries on SABR-L about the specifics of his song. His personal journey was published in The National Pastime (2007) <https://sabr.org/journal/article/dave-frishberg-and-the-writing-of-van-lingle-mungo/> and there he wrote about his time in New York City working as a jazz pianist:

"One night I was paging through the newly published Macmillan's Baseball Encyclopedia ... and my eyes fell on the name Van Lingle Mungo. "VAN LINGLE MUNGO" — the name scanned perfectly with a recurring melodic figure in my song, and I instantly sang it out loud. I knew then that the lyric would be only names - not names of famous stars, but names that evoked my childhood memories and, incidentally, illuminated some fragments of forgotten baseball history. I dived into the book assembling names that scanned, rhymed and related loosely to those years, the years of my childhood passion for the game.

"Within an hour or so I had a complete lyric."



The lyrics in 1969 actually were changed by Frishberg (*left*) himself and he explains why, in detail, in his 2007 article as well as in Stew Thornley's 2013 piece.

Despite the two different versions, the song was a big hit.

The song was so popular that Frishberg was invited to sing the song on television. Thornley writes that The Dick Cavett Show brought in Van Lingle Mungo (*below*) from

Pageland, South Carolina. Frishberg remembered that Mungo was supposed to “listen to me sing the song. This was 1969, when Cavett had a nightly show in New York. Backstage, Mungo asked me, “When do I get the first check?””



Mungo was disappointed that no royalties from the song would be going to him, but Frishberg explained that Mungo “could get even by writing a song called “Dave Frishberg.” “I'm gonna do it,” Mungo replied laughingly” but he never did.

[https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Van_Lingle_Mungo_\(song\)](https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Van_Lingle_Mungo_(song))

Frishberg also recounted meeting Eddie Basinski, the only player he ever met listed in his famous song -- other than Mungo -- but Basinski was not impressed that Frishberg, in his youth, had eagerly watched him play in 1946 (for the St. Paul Saints) nor had he ever heard of the song!

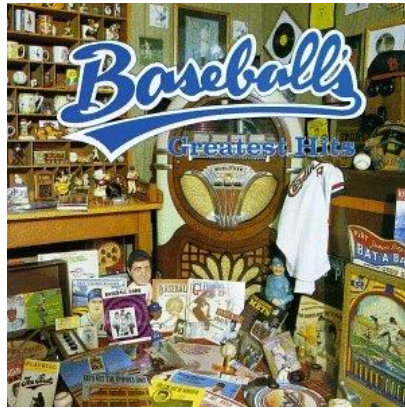
The song “*Van Lingle Mungo*” is in the National Baseball Library (a section of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York) and was included in Baseball's Greatest Hits, a 1990 compilation of baseball-themed songs. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baseball%27s_Greatest_Hits

Thanks, and kudos to the SABR members who contributed to the publication in 2014 of **Van Lingle Mungo: The Man, The Song, The Players** and to those featured in the book's contents, most especially to Mr. Mungo and Mr. Frishberg.

The Names of the Players in the Song

(Umpire Art Passarella was the only non-player vocalized in the song)

John Antonelli
Eddie Basinski
Augie Bergamo
Frenchy Bordagaray
Lou Boudreau
Harry Brecheen
Roy Campanella
Phil Cavarretta
Frankie Crosetti
Bobby Estalella
Ferris Fain
Augie Galan
Danny Gardella
Johnny Gee
Frankie Gustine
Stan Hack
Sig Jakucki
Eddie Joost
Johnny Kucks
Whitey Kurowski



Max Lanier
Thornton Lee
Ernie Lombardi
"Heeney" Hank Majeski
Pinky May
Barney McCosky
George McQuinn
Johnny Mize
Hugh Mulcahy
Van Lingle Mungo
Claude Passeau
Art Passarella
Johnny Pesky
Howard Pollet
Johnny Sain
Hal Trosky
Virgil Trucks
Johnny Vander Meer
Eddie Waitkus
Early Wynn

Trivia Questions (Answers on page 10)

1. An early recording (the Oklahoma Toad album) replaced Lou Boudreau and Claude Passeau with what other two names?
2. What did Frishberg later say about the names Bobby Estrella and Johnny Gee?
3. Who was the last surviving person named in "Van Lingle Mungo"?

The NY Giants and Mets Focus on: Oral History & Biographies

The New York Focus here is on baseball players, team staff, and media personalities who have been researched by the Oral History Committee and the BioProject Committee. They will be given space in each volume of our chapter newsletters even if they were with a team only part-time.

As of July 1, 2024, the Oral Histories included about 31 New York Mets, 37 Brooklyn/LA Dodgers, 41 New York/SF Giants, and 90 New York Yankees. Because the Yankees have almost three times as many oral interviews as the Mets, Dodgers, and Giants combined, each issue will include more of those Yankees.

In this issue, however, the Brooklyn Dodgers merit a page of their own; two of the names in the *Van Lingle Mungo* song – Eddie Basinski and Frenchy Bordagaray – are highlighted on that Brooklyn page. On this page are two players who have both an Oral History interview and a SABR BioProject article.



NY Giant Chuck Diering was awful in his one (1952) NY Giants season, but he gave an interesting interview to Brent Kelley <https://sabr.org/interview/chuck-diering-1992/> and in his SABR Bio by Malcolm Allen, he fully detailed reasons why it was “a sad time” for him. Read it here <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/Chuck-Diering/>. When Chuck Diering played for Baltimore in a center field 450 feet from home plate, his fielding was outstanding. “Fans in both Boston and New York were moved to applaud his defense on a July road trip https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_Diering and Yankees manager Casey Stengel raved “That fella sure can go get ’em.”



NY Mets Tommie Agee -- Enjoy this Oral History interview <https://sabr.org/interview/tommie-agee-1990/> by Bob Littlejohn and then read this SABR BioProject biography by John Vorperian <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/Tommie-Agee/> about fan favorite Agee. Remember the Miracle Mets in 1969? Agee was a huge part of that World Series Championship and was posthumously inducted into the New York Mets Hall of Fame in 2002. Let's Go Mets!

The Brooklyn Dodgers Focus on: Oral History & Biographies

Eddie Basinski, an infielder with the Brooklyn Dodgers (and other teams) was the last surviving person in the song *Van Lingle Mungo* and you can find out why he brought his violin to Ebbets Field when he was a Dodger by checking out <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/eddie-basinski/> written by Steve Rudman, Dave Eskenazi, and Mark Armour.



Then, if you ever go to the *NY Times* obituary of him at <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/14/sports/baseball/eddie-basinski-dead.html>, you will understand why he is holding his violin and is quoted as saying “There is a great correlation between fielding ground balls and playing the violin.”



Frenchy Bordagaray was interviewed during an Old-Timers Game and shared his thoughts about his two stints for the Brooklyn Dodgers and his one year with the NY Yankees in 1941 while DiMaggio was having his DiMaggio’s 56-game hitting streak <https://sabr.org/interview/frenchy-bordagaray-unknown/>.

Stanley George Bordagaray showed up at spring training in 1936 with a mustache he’d grown for a bit role in *The Prisoner of Shark Island*, filmed during the offseason. ALL players were clean shaven those days but for a good story, the sportswriters for the Dodgers encouraged him “to grow out his mustache and goatee. The *Brooklyn Eagle* [had] a contest [for] what sort of beard Bordagaray should grow. After a few months, Dodgers manager Casey Stengel made him shave, saying "If anyone's going to be a clown on this club, it's going to be me."” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frenchy_Bordagaray#New_York_Yankees_and_return_to_the_Dodgers_\(1940%E2%80%931945\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frenchy_Bordagaray#New_York_Yankees_and_return_to_the_Dodgers_(1940%E2%80%931945))

There is even more lore, including three other instances of manager Casey Stengel being just stunned by the actions of Frenchy that will simply make you shake your head, all of which have been captured by Norm King in his excellent

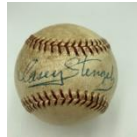
SABR Biography <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/Frenchy-Bordagaray/>. Here they are:

* In an exhibition game, Bordagaray's hat fell off while chasing a fly ball. He stopped to retrieve the hat, and then continued chasing the ball. Stengel stood in the dugout with his arms hanging and his mouth open. He couldn't believe what he was seeing! Stengel later told him that cap wasn't going anywhere, but all Bordagaray said was "I forgot."

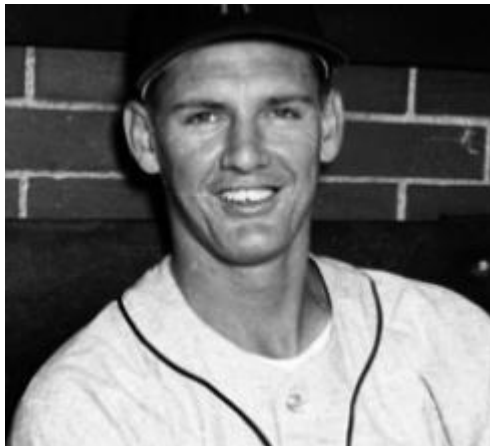
*When Frenchy was suddenly picked off while standing on second base, Stengel went out to argue, to no avail. Back in the dugout, he asked Bordagaray what happened. Frenchy explained that he was tapping his toe on the bag and that the infielder caught him between taps.

*Bordagaray got tagged out at the plate when he tried to score standing up instead of sliding. He told Stengel that he didn't slide because he had some cigars in his back pocket that he didn't want to ruin.

Find out what he did the next day on the bases after he hit a home run! 😊



The NY Yankees Focus on: Oral History & Biographies



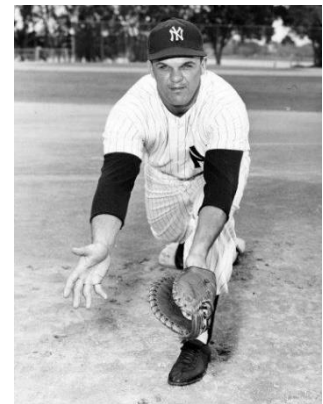
Johnny Kucks was chosen to pitch game 7 of the 1956 World Series after Casey Stengel conferred with Yogi Berra because the sinkerball pitcher could throw ground balls, as Alan Cohen writes <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/Johnny-Kucks/> and he shut out the Dodgers 9-0 with a 3-hitter. His only strikeout came against Jackie Robinson, the final batter in the ninth. It was to be JR's last at-bat ever. This intriguing SABR Biography also details the Yanks' infamous 1957 Copacabana

scandal (at that time). John Charles Kucks, Jr. (pronounced "Cooks") was interviewed by Tom Harris <https://sabr.org/interview/johnny-kucks-1993/> and on that page, you can actually read the PDF transcript as you listen to the audio.



Virgil Trucks, whose name was listed as a rhyme with Johnny Kucks in the tune *Van Lingle Mungo*, was a Yankee in 1958. You can hear the revelatory Oral History Committee interview <https://sabr.org/interview/virgil-trucks-2011/> by Gregory Wolf, who also wrote the SABR BioProject article <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/Virgil-Trucks/>. Here is where you'll learn about the Military baseball rosters during WWII and why "Fire" Trucks believed the Navy squad managed by Bill Dickey with Phil Rizzuto, Johnny Mize, Dom DiMaggio, Pee Wee Reese, Johnny VanderMeer, and Trucks himself was the top service team. Also, read about his two no-hitters in one season (1952) and why he really disliked Casey Stengel.

Bill "Moose" Skowron showed his sense of humor as he recounted stories to Gene DeLisio about Roger Maris, Mickey Mantle, Joe Pepitone, Tony Kubek, Bobby Richardson, Doctor Bobby Brown and other Yankees from the 1960s <https://sabr.org/interview/bill-skowron-1979/> and you will also relish this wonderful piece written by Joseph Wancho <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/bill-skowron/> which explains why Moose took dancing lessons for baseball.



Trivia Answers (from page 6)

1. Lou Boudreau and Claude Passeau were replaced by Virgil Trucks and Johnny Kucks.
2. "Imagine my dismay when I subsequently learned that [Bob] Estalella's name didn't rhyme in the first place, because it was pronounced as in Spanish: 'Estaleya.' So you see, the whole rhyme scheme should have been scrapped, starting with "Danny Gardella," and now I stand facing humiliation in Baseball Songland. What did I know? I never heard his name uttered, only saw it in print. Same goes for Johnny Gee, whose name I mangled with a soft 'g.' There may be other names I'm mispronouncing, but at this stage further corrections would only confuse me.
3. Eddie Basinski became the last surviving player mentioned in the song. He died on January 8, 2022, at age 99. Dave Frishberg died November 17, 2021 at age 88.

SHARING OUR STORIES

M. Frank's Westchester Column: Baseball Artifacts By Mike Frank

On July 20th of this year, I took a train to Peekskill, NY where the Lincoln Depot Museum <https://lincolndepotmuseum.org/> hosted the historian and collector Brian Caplan, Esq. who presented 19th century baseball artifacts.



He laid out several impressive tables of baseball photos, cards, scorecards, books, and souvenirs, all over a century old. There were some equipment artifacts as well.

Ten years ago, I went to the museum with a postcard club shortly after it opened. Now there are well-ordered exhibits which tell the story of the Civil War and Mr. Abraham Lincoln, who came through there when it was the Peekskill train station.

Mr. Caplan is actually on the Board of the Lincoln Depot Museum so hopefully he'll do his presentation again. Upcoming exhibits are *The Collectors Corner, Sept. 21-22* that will include a program on local patriotism and propaganda, and a celebration of *Toy Soldiers, Nov. 16-17*.

The Museum is three blocks from the current Hudson Line depot, but next time I'd drive since there's a good indie bookstore and a library sale building up the hill.

For more information and/or to be on their mailing list, contact LincolnDepotFDN@gmail.com.

The Jints Column

By Gary Mintz

(Continued from the July 2024 newsletter)

I next met up with Willie, this time in San Francisco, in June of 2012 at AT&T Park for “Polo Grounds Night” in San Francisco. By this time, I had established the *New York Giants Preservation Society*, and the group was actually honored on the field. When the ceremony concluded, Peter Magowan, the one-time head honcho of the Giants, led us off the field, through the Giants dugout and to the Giants Clubhouse. Unbeknownst to us, Willie Mays was sitting in Clubhouse Manager Mike Murphy’s chair in Murphy’s office. This was truly an unexpected surprise by Mr. Magowan, the keeper of the NY Giants flame in San Francisco. Again, we were able to briefly chat with Willie, this time receiving an autographed ball which I still stare at today. My dad was again on my mind as I knew he should have been there instead of me.

I would cross paths with Willie again at the Giants Trophy Tours in Manhattan in the January’s of 2013 and 2015. Willie would enter the room, and everyone would rise in unison saluting their hero. They saw him as a 25-year-old, not as the aging man he was at that time. He was WILLIE MAYS, END OF STORY.

I presented him with a check to the **Say Hey Foundation** from *The New York Giants Preservation Society* and took a picture with him and the check. So, I had met him 4 times. I’m sure he didn’t know me, remember me, or anything like that, but that was more than okay with me. I had seen my team win 3 championships in 5 seasons when I never envisioned them winning one. The bonus was seeing Mr. Mays make that cross-country trek three times. I never was fortunate enough to see Willie in-person again.

He was still so beloved though. The New York Giants Preservation Society would honor him on his birthday when the group became a virtual one due to COVID. One year we called him and sang “Happy Birthday” to him and the last two years we have celebrated him with Zooms totally dedicated to him with “*May: The Month of Mays.*” On 2/4/24, this past February, the group celebrated Willie Mays Day with a special Zoom and donated a check in the amount of **\$2,424.24** to the Say Hey Fund. His aide, Rene Anderson, in fact sent everyone who donated a

special thank you note, dictated by Willie himself. Michael Mays, Willie's son, thanked me in a text message for remembering his dad and what we do in New York to preserve his legacy. To us, we were just celebrating our hero.



Gary Mintz (*above*) with Willie Mays

The night Willie passed away; I opened up the NYGPS Zoom room for those who needed to express their feelings. Everyone was down, but most couldn't help but smile knowing the happiness that one man had brought to them. We would hold an official Zoom for members the following week where members would talk about what Willie meant to him/her. The New York Giants Preservation is a group that most members would tell you they belong to due to one person, WILLIE MAYS. Most every member still root for the San Francisco Giants due to one man, Willie Mays. Most in the group don't believe he is gone. They believe he lives in each and every one of them and I agree wholeheartedly.

A few weeks ago, the San Francisco Giants held "Willie Mays: A Celebration of Life at Oracle Park." Somehow, I was on the guest list to be invited. How did this happen? I had to go, wanted to go, and needed to go. I would be representing the New York Giants Preservation Society and my father! I was checked in at the left field entrance by Lyz Lowry who had assisted the Giants executives in the Trophy Tours coming to New York. I signed the greeting book

with a short passage to Willie and signed my and my father's name. I needed my father to know that none of this would have been possible without him nurturing his young son so many years back.

It was a tremendous event with many of Willie's family and closest friends making passionate speeches on behalf of Willie. There were luminaries from the political, entertainment, and the sports world on hand. A star-studded lineup worthy of Willie, if there is such a thing! The celebration was truly a bittersweet but incredible event, one that will give me a lifetime of memories. Yes, people were sad, yet the overall theme was how happy Willie had made all of us in attendance with how he played the game and how he lived his life. The reception after further cemented this gala.

So, I was, and still am, associated with Willie Mays. I saw him play, reveled in his impact on baseball and society, met him in person knowing I was in the presence of the greatest ballplayer to ever lace up a pair of spikes, and celebrated his life in a memorial service dedicated to him. I am lifting this from *Brian's Song* with slightly altered words, but they are so fitting of the greatest to ever play the game.... WILLIE MAYS:

“Willie left a great many loving friends who will miss him and will think of him often. But when they think of him, they will remember how he lived and played. How he *did* live and play!”

(The July newsletter began part 1 of 2 parts of this story of Mr. Mintz and Mr. Mays.)

Gary Mintz is the author of *Baseball From 3,000 Miles Away: The Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs of Being an East Coast San Francisco Giants Fan.*



The Casey Stengel Chapter publishes this monthly newsletter on our website www.sabrny.org and emails it to chapter members to inform them about news, events, and subjects of special interest.

We ask members to submit news, events, and short pieces of special interest to our chapter. Thank you!

Damian Begley filmeditor@juno.com

Evelyn Begley ebegley2@gmail.com

Kevin Carter kcarter@sabrny.org

David Lippman kiwiwriter47@gmail.com

Ernestine Miller erniemil@aol.com