In Search of Victory:  
The Story of Charles Victor ("Victory") Faust

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CHARLES VICTOR ("Victory") Faust left Marion, Kansas, in the early summer of 1911 to bring victories and a championship to the National League's New York Giants baseball club. He intended to do it as a player, but he accomplished it as the quintessential mascot. Many people at the time thought of Charley merely as the "mad mascot of Manhattan," a lunatic from Kansas who was insanely lucky. There is reason to believe, however, that he was a skillful self-promoter with the eccentric genius of a Bill Veeck or a Charley Finley.

Some boys who dream of becoming major-league baseball players leave home to join a team when they turn sixteen. Charley Faust decided to run away from home and join the Giants when he was thirty. At the time of his departure he was a tall (6'2''), skinny man with weak eyes that did not seem to align properly and with an ever-present, semi-toothless smile on his face. He has been described as a gawky, awkward, grinning farmboy, who whether walking or running moved with a loping trot that reminded one of a jackrabbit hopping across the prairie.

Charley had grown up on his parents' farm two miles across the Cottonwood River from Marion, a small town in central Kansas that time has gently caressed, leaving it today much like it was at the turn of the century. Charley was the oldest of six children whose father was a German-Russian immigrant. His heritage was apparent in that he talked with a classic German accent, introducing himself as Charles "Victor" Faust. Although local townsfolk believed him to be slightly retarded, he was a surprisingly articulate speaker and writer.

Sometime in late March or early April 1911, Charley set out for Wichita, the nearest "big city," in search of some diversion from the drudgery of farm routine. There he found a fortune-teller who, for five dollars, told him he would become the greatest pitcher the world had ever known if he would join the New York Giants. Three times she told him this, adding that when he had established himself and had helped the Giants win a pennant, he would meet a girl named LuLu, marry her, and become the father of future generations of baseball stars. Charley returned to Marion, and during the next several months he must have pondered that fortune many times. At some point in the heat of July he concluded that the prophecy would come to pass, and, with ticket in hand, he rode the train to St. Louis and destiny.

On the morning of July 28, 1911, Charley wandered into the Planter's Hotel in St. Louis and asked to see John McGraw, the manager of the New York Giants. The Giants were in town on their second western swing of the season. He was directed to a trio of men in the lobby consisting of McGraw and pitchers Christy Mathewson and Red Ames. Charley introduced himself and carefully related to McGraw the "fortune" he had been told in Wichita. Instead of showing him the door, McGraw surprisingly agreed to "see his stuff" later that afternoon at the ball park. Perhaps McGraw, who had just been handed a three-

The author is grateful for the research assistance of Brian T. Wall in the preparation of this article.

4. Ibid.
certainly was not an unreasonable assumption, McGraw decided to have a little fun with Charley. Snodgrass recalled that McGraw asked Charley how his hitting was and received a positive response. "Well," McGraw said, "we're having batting practice now, so get a bat and go up there. I want to see you run, too, so run it out and see if you can score." Word was passed to the players shagging balls in the infield to ease up and play along. When Charley's bat first met the ball he nudged one down to the shortstop, who bobbed it a moment to allow Charley to round first base and head for second. There he was forced to slide, but he escaped on an errant throw. And so, all dressed up, on around the bases he scrambled into home. The crowd loved it, as did the players, and Charley tasted his first moment of stardom. He was allowed to stay on the bench that day but it was an inauspicious start; the Giants lost 5-2 to the Cardinals.15

THE NEXT DAY Charley showed up and was outfitted in a uniform, but one that was measured for a man the size of Wee Willie Keeler.16 No matter; Charley considered himself a Giant and was on his way to fulfilling the prophecy. The sight of Charley's batting, fielding, and baserunning had so taken the spectators that McGraw had him repeat the performance before the game that day and the Giants won 8-0.17

By the third game of the four-game series, which was on Sunday, Charley had become so popular that twenty-seven thousand attended the game. "Shortly before game time, Charley was called out onto the field and surrounded by the St. Louis and New York players. One of the Cards approached, removed his cap, and began a little speech while holding a green, plush-covered jewel box. As quoted in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the ballplayer said, "Mr. Faust, on behalf of the fans of St. Louis, who thoroughly appreciate your great work since becoming a member of the New York team, I present this slight token to you and hope you will continue to succeed in your chosen profession." Charley was overwhelmed. He doffed his cap once, twice, and then the ballplayers urged him to open the box. Surely thinking it must contain a diamond-studded watch or other equally valuable item, Charley eagerly opened it. To his chagrin it held a small medal commemorating his brave exploits on the field. It was a gag gift, certainly, but nonetheless Charley wore it proudly on
The New York Giants outfitted Charley Faust in a uniform and St. Louis fans gave him a medal, a gag gift that he wore proudly on his uniform. Photograph courtesy St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

his uniform, and the Giants went on to win 6-0.10

Whether or not his embarrassment kept him from appearing at Monday’s game is unknown. But it is a fact that things were dull at the park before and during the game because Charley was missing, although the Giants continued their winning ways.

Charley seemed to have no trouble, however, showing up at the Union Station Monday night when the Giants were boarding the train for Chicago. He came running up to McGraw asking for his promised contract and railroad ticket. “Oh, didn’t you get them?” Mack asked, according to St. Louis sportswriter S. Carlisle Martin. “Why I left them at the hotel for you.” As Martin recounted the story, “this was ten minutes before train time and Charley hiked back to the hotel and as the train pulled out Mack and the boys had a good laugh.” Although they thought they had had the last laugh on him, several days later in Boston, while they were registering at the hotel, Charley appeared. It had taken him several

19. Ibid., August 1, 1911, p. 7.
freight trains to do it, but he was there and in good humor, no less.\textsuperscript{20}

Although Charley was allowed to sit on the bench for the next few games, McGraw began to tire of him and tried to shake him two or three times by keeping him out of the clubhouse and off the bench.\textsuperscript{21} But Charley was persistent and never gave up. Slowly the players began to realize that the games they won were always characterized by Charley's presence on the bench. Although McGraw himself was not superstitious, he was shrewd enough to capitalize on the superstitions of his players. (It has also been said that McGraw had a weakness for comedians, as they tended to keep his club in good humor.) By August 13, 1911, Charley was firmly entrenched with the Giants, who were beginning a winning streak

that would carry them into first place. Soon some of the more superstitious players really grew to look upon Charley as the "Kansas Jinx-Killer." 

Although Charley was hardly a player, he could and did predict plays, the results of series, and other such happenings. Coupled with his pregame antics on the field, this attribute made him a drawing card that brought the club free advertising and larger crowds. Consequently, the club more or less officially adopted Charley as its mascot, issued him a uniform, and paid his railroad fares and other incidental expenses. No contract was drawn up, however, unless one counts the document McGraw reportedly wrote on the back of a shirt collar. Such acceptance was pretty heady stuff for a "busker" from Kansas, and the fact that the events all occurred within a couple of weeks is especially remarkable.

Even the lack of real playing time did not dampen Charley's spirits. Every day he warmed up in uniform, sincerely hoping for a chance to pitch in each game. But the opportunity was never quite right. The Giants were in the thick of a pennant chase. McGraw may have liked comedians, but they did not win ball games for him. With pitchers such as Christy Mathewson and Rube Marquard, Charley had to settle for pitching from the sidelines. Nevertheless, Charley was a force to contend with both on and off the field. His "act" of pitching, running, and hitting, repeated before every game, soon became routine. Before long he had pitched to all of the stars of the National League, and from Honus Wagner on down, no one could connect with his unique assortment of breaking pitches.

Although Charley's usual routine at the ball park started when he performed his pregame antics, after which he retired to the bench to cheer on the team, his real importance came when the team fell behind. When that happened, McGraw would send him to the bull pen to warm up. After a while it would always work, just like magic. The Giants would make a comeback and go on to win. A case in point is related by Christy Mathewson in his book *Pitching in a Pinch*:

[One] day in St. Louis the game had gone eleven innings, and the Cardinals needed one run to win. They had several incipient scores on the bases and "Rube" Marquard, in the box, was apparently going up in the air. Only one was out, Faust was warming up far in the suburbs when, under orders from McGraw, I ran out and sent him to the bench, for that was the place from which his charm seemed to be the most potent. "Charley" came loping to the bench as fast as his long legs would transport him and St. Louis didn't score and we won the game. It was as nice a piece of pinch masking as I ever saw.

Thus Charley was a good-luck charm as well as a jinx-killer, and he helped in other ways as well. His fondness for daily massages and manicures allowed him to counsel his teammates whenever they came into the barbershop; most often he told them how to hit the ball. His versatility was also displayed when he once led the boys' brass band from the Catholic Protectory in New York before a game against the Pirates. Unfortunately, he was no more a bandleader than he was a ballplayer.

It was his style, however, that counted. By late September 1911 he was so popular that opposing teams capitalized on his name to attract home crowds. On one occasion Charles Webb Murphy, president of the Chicago Cubs, had a huge banner waving in front of the park heralding the advent of "The Kansas Cyclone." A crowd of more than twelve thousand turned out that day and had great fun.

Off the field there were more high jinks and fanfare. All sorts of tricks were played on Charley. Once while riding on the train the players told him to lay his arm in the sleeper hammock at night because that was what Christy Mathewson and other great pitchers did. There was also the time that the players filled his suitcase with pig iron as he was about to head for the depot. As he staggered under its weight they told him it wasn't heavy, it was just that his arm was weakened from riding in a Pullman all day.

But Charley was not always the butt of the

25. Ibid.
30. Ibid., September 28, 1911, p. 7.
jokes. He had become so popular that in late August 1911 he was offered a contract in vaudeville at Hammerstein’s in New York. His salary was two hundred dollars a week, and his act was a total success. He gave imitations of the great ballplayers like Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson, and Honus Wagner; slid bases; and dodged vegetables, finally getting yanked off the stage with numerous hooks.\(^{30}\) While Charley “knocked ’em dead” in vaudeville, however, his team suffered. He was gone for a week and they lost three ball games. When Charley read of his team’s misfortunes, he broke his contract on the grounds that “his ball club” needed him. It was true. When he returned, they won the next three games and kept on winning.\(^{31}\)

By October 7, 1911, the Giants had already clinched the National League pennant and were meeting last-place Boston at the Polo Grounds. The afternoon game was played under a cold, gray sky, and a stiff north wind blew across the muddy field. Fewer than one thousand fans braved the elements to see the Giants go through their paces and get a little exercise. Despite the weather and the small crowd, it was a glorious day for Charley Faust, because his long-held dream of being a major-league baseball player finally came true. After warming up for over eight innings, Charley

was actually sent in to pitch. Although only three of the Giant regulars had played through the full game, still the fans were greatly surprised when McGraw summoned Charley in from the bull pen. The crowd responded by giving him a loud cheer as he came loping in from the outfield.

THE GIANTS were hanging onto the short end of a 4-2 score when Charley took the mound and began the windmill windup that had become his trademark. The first Boston "Rustler" who faced him unloaded a double. Charley then settled down and got an assist as the next hitter moved the runner to third on a fielder's choice. A sacrifice fly then brought the runner home, and there were two out. Charley ended the inning when a grounder was drilled to the shortstop for the third out. He was waiting to bat when his catcher Grover Hartley made the third out in the bottom of the ninth. The visitors obligingly stayed on the field, however, to let Charley hit. And hit he did, although weakly to the pitcher. But the latter intentionally threw over his first baseman's head and Charley was off and running. The ball was quickly retrieved and then thrown over the second baseman's head while Charley kept on running. As he made a long slide through the mud into third, the throw was off line, and he picked himself up and sprinted for home, only to be tagged out on a
Tailenders Down
Champions, 5 to 2

Donlin's Home Run and Drucker's Wildness Decide Game—Faust
Pitches One Innings.

THE SCORE.

Boston 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
New York 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1

BOSTON.
Sweeney, cf. 3 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Donlin, cf. 4 4 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Kirk, 1b. 4 1 1 0 0 0 0 0 0
Miller, 1b. 3 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Bridwell, 2b. 4 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0
Hours, ss. 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Terry, 1b. 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
McDonald, 2b. 6 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Ingenton, 3b. 4 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0
Ryder, e. 4 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 0
Tyler, c. 4 1 0 2 0 0 0 0 0

Total...31 8 9 5 2 7 10 2

NEW YORK.
Becker, cf. 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0
Duden, cf. 4 1 1 0 0 0 0 0 0
Ryder, 2b. 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Murray, rf. 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Blane, 1b. 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Push, ss. 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Herzog, 2b. 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Fletcher, ee. 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Wilson, ce. 1 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0
Harley, c. 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Marquard, p. 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Drucker, p. 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Pierce, p. 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Total...33 2 7 2 4 5 10 1

Two-base hits—Bridwell, Ryder, Her-
son, Home run—Donlin. Sacrifice hit-
Tyler. Sacrifice fly—Sweeney. Stolen
bases—McDonald. First base on errors
Boston, 1; New York, 1. Left on base
Boston, 2; New York, 6. Double plays
Tyler, Bridwell, and Hudson. Struck out
by Marquard, 4; by Drucker, 1; by Tyler,
1.1; off Marquard, 1; off Drucker, 4, of
Drucker, 0; off Tyler, 2. Hit by Pitcher-
by Tyler, 1; off Marquard, 1; total
off Marquard, 2 in 5 innings, totat bat, 177
off Drucker, 2 in 3 innings, totat bat, 129
off Faust, 1 in 1 inning. Time at bat, 2
Empire—Messrs. Fishman and Bush. Time
of game—One hour and fifty-five minutes.

The basement boarders of the National
League pushed the new champions into
the background at the Polo Grounds yest-
derday afternoon, and romped away with
a 5 to 2 victory over the cohorts of John
McGraw. Only three of the Giants' regu-
lar men played through the full game, and
outside of furnishing Rube Marquard with
an opportunity to loosen the kinks of his
pitching wing, and making a full-headed
major league of Charley Faust, the ses-

sion produced little of interest to New
York fans. Less than 1,000 fans—all be-
longing to that species which would grave
a blizzard to see a game—shivered through
tuesday's mistake.

Manager McGraw went after the game
with the same enthusiasm that a man
might rush to scat himself in the elec-
tric chair. He simply didn't care for

34. Ibid., October 13, 1911, p. 12.
35. Column by Fred Lieb, undated newspaper clipping, Char-
ley Faust file, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Inc.,
Cooperstown, N.Y.

Charley Faust pitched one inning when the Giants met Boston on October 7, 1911, thus assuring his place in the
record books. Box score from the New
York Times, October 8, 1911.
All of the blame could not be placed on Charley’s shoulders, for the Philadelphia team with its one-hundred-thousand-dollar infield was superior to the Giants in many respects. Apparently the loss did remove some of the shine from Charley’s star, however. When McGraw took the Giants on an exhibition tour to Cuba that winter, Charley was not with them. Then again, he may have opted out voluntarily. He told S. Carlisle Martin long before the Series began that he was heading for San Francisco to find and marry “Lulu” after the season ended.36

Charley probably did not help his case when he appeared at the December 1911 National League meetings and attempted to auction himself off to the highest bidder in the meeting room. Although he was not allowed in, Charley offered his services in a letter that he slid under the door. Just as soon as the letter was pushed under, however, it was pushed out. The ever-persistent Charley pushed it back. This game went on for fifteen minutes before a house detective directed him on his way.37

Were these the acts of a fool? Or were they the well-laid plans of an eccentric? Because Charley worked in vaudeville in the fall of 1911, he knew what his “act” was worth. And it was, worth a lot more than the Giants had been paying him. To capitalize on his success seems shrewd rather than foolish.

Although Charley was not successful at the winter meetings, he again tried his luck at the Giants’ annual pre-season doubleheader with Yale at the Polo Grounds in April 1912. He made a speech between games and then had a conference with the Giants’ president John T. Brush about his contract. While Charley stood

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Allowed to play again in a game with Brooklyn October 12, Charley pitched a one-hit inning, stole two bases, and scored a run on a sacrifice fly. Box score from the New York Times, October 13, 1911.
on the outside of Brush’s limousine looking in, Brush told him he would have to see how much money he had left in the bank before they could come to final terms. But the final terms never were agreed upon. By opening day of the 1912 season, Charley still had not been fitted with a uniform.

**Charley’s Star** was definitely fading. Although he would come and go, he did generally show up at the ball park every day. He practiced with the players and sat on the bench. In a clear attempt to shake Charley, however, McGraw refused to give him back his uniform. But Charley would not take the hint. He went right to the top to seek assistance with his cause. Every chance he got he talked to August Hermann, chairman of the National League, and asked him to take action on his behalf. And although Hermann repeatedly told him that he could do nothing for him, Charley’s persistent appeals never abated.

Despite the absence of a uniform or an official contract, Charley still had success as a good-luck charm and jinx-killer when the Giants repeated as National League pennant winners in 1912. By the last game of the season, however, Charley had finally given up. He skipped the game and headed for California. By October 7, 1912, he was working as a carpenter in Pasadena at the Vista Del Rio Hotel. A smug smile may have crossed his face around October 16, 1912, when word reached the coast that the Giants had again lost the World Series; this time it was to the Boston Red Sox by a margin of 4-3. Certainly Charley could not be blamed for the loss this time. Moreover, it was the famous “Snodgrass muff” in the tenth inning of the decisive game, when center fielder Snodgrass dropped an easy fly ball, that set the stage for Boston to score two runs and win the game. One can speculate that Charley’s presence might well have prevented such an unfortunate miscue.

Charley continued to live on the West Coast, however, and by late 1913, a complete season away from the game, he had moved to Seattle. Although his glory days at the ball park and in vaudeville were fading memories, he apparently yearned to regain them, and he sent a letter to John McGraw and the club touting a younger brother who was “even better” than he was. Receiving no response, he prepared to return to the East Coast for some personal negotiations. Once again, Charley decided that he needed August Hermann on his side, and he planned his trip to arrive in Cincinnati on February 1, 1914, for the start of the National League winter meetings. Whether it was madness or “hype,” he appeared in New York the day before to call upon James Sullivan, secretary-treasurer of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) to claim a mountain-climbing medal. Charley claimed that he was told in the fall that if he climbed a certain mountain in California in record time, he would receive a medal and an entry in the AAU record book. To please his caller, Sullivan reportedly took down a book and, after perusing the pages, said that he could not find Charley’s mountain-climbing record. Unknown to Charley, Sullivan was looking in the telephone directory. In any case, Charley left and said he would climb the mountain again to verify his record.

This incident received bold headlines and nearly six column inches of space in the New York Times. If nothing else, Charley had certainly found an effective means to announce his arrival and his publicity-generating ability. At the winter meetings he did get to meet with Hermann and followed up with a letter and a telegram to him and to McGraw. Charley was still seeking his elusive contract, the imprimatur of official capacity.

Sadly, it was not to be. By December 1, 1914, Charley was confined to the Western State Hospital for the Insane, Fort Steilacoom, Washington. He died there slightly more than six months later of pulmonary tuberculosis. It was this confinement as well as his eccentric

42. *Ibid.*

game suspension as a result of a run in with an umpire in Cincinnati, was looking for a little diversion that morning from the pressures of the pennant chase.

In any event, Charley took McGraw up on his invitation, and later that day, dressed in his Sunday best, he walked out of the grandstand at League Park wearing a dark suit and a black derby hat. He ambled over to the Giants' bench, which in those days was just that. It was under an awning about halfway between the grandstand and the foul line. As he passed the players warming up, Charley asked them to point out McGraw. When he found him, as Fred Snodgrass, a Giant at the time, recalled, McGraw sized him up and said, "Take off your hat and coat, and here's a glove. I'll get a catcher's mitt and warm you up, and we'll see what you have." The two men set up in front of the bench and made a few throws back and forth. "I'd better give you my signals," Charley said. After Charley had passed along five or six signals to McGraw, he went back to his spot and began his windup. Snodgrass likened it to a windmill; both arms went round and round in circles before he released the ball. It soon became evident to McGraw that the signals had no effect on the delivery or the pitches, for Charley's pitches were all off speed, that is, they had little or no speed. Eventually McGraw threw down his mitt and, with bare hands, caught the balls being tossed.

Perhaps thinking him to be a "nut," which

12. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
13. Ibid., p. 95.
behavior that caused people and sportswriters of the day to believe Charley was insane. A check with this institution, however, revealed that the available records simply do not indicate the basis for confinement.46

So what is the “bottom line” on Charles Victor Faust? Except for Lulu, Charley’s fortune had come true, and a personal victory, almost beyond comprehension, had been achieved. His entry in *The Baseball Encyclopedia* shows that he pitched in two games for a total of two innings. He gave up two hits, no walks, and had an ERA of 4.50. His record was 0-0.47 But that one-line entry sheds little light on this man’s short but noteworthy career. His strangely effective ability to kill jinxes and bring good luck has been documented. As Casey Stengel would say, “You can look it up.” The Giants won a National League pennant with Charley on the bench in 1911, the first time they had done so since 1905, and again in 1912. The team, though a very good one, needed something extra to put it on top. That “something extra” appears to have been Victory Faust.

46. Aileen Ebbeson, Western Washington State Hospital, to author, September 12, 1980.