

MORGANTOWN NOIR

THE BROAD SIDE

SHE GIVES NOT AN INCH OF GROUND

TOM BREDEHOFT'S "FOOTE" BLENDS WHIMSY AND GRAVITAS FOR A UNIQUELY WEST VIRGINIAN MURDER MYSTERY

by Kyle Warmack,
Program Officer

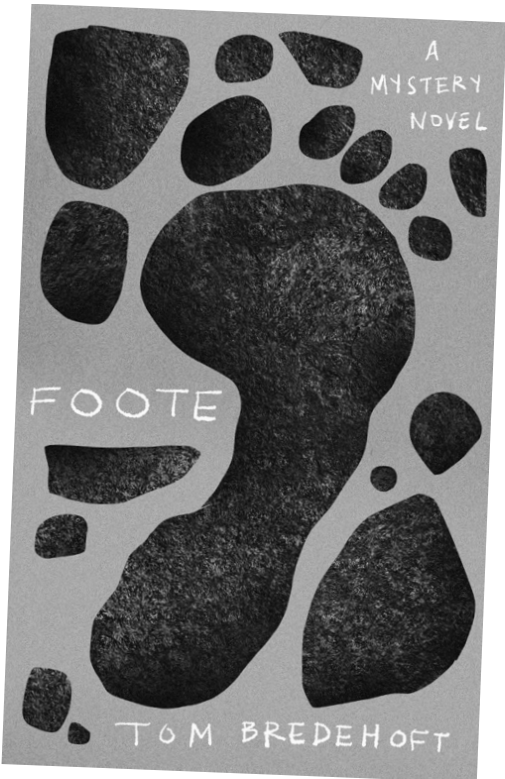
Sometimes we read a book to transport ourselves to faraway places. At other times, we need one to sprinkle stardust on our everyday surroundings and imbue them with intrigue and excitement. Author Tom Bredehoft's *Foote*, recently released by West Virginia University Press, leans heavily into its semi-fictional Morgantown setting for both plot and worldbuilding, which is part of why it's such a pleasure to read.

The Morgantown patrolled by "Big Jim" Foote, a taciturn local private investigator with more secrets than friends, is no mere cameo or background texture. Rather, it's an essential framework for the plot that slowly emerges, first with a scared young woman looking for her missing mother, then a violent murder at a local ramp festival. For reasons that soon become clear in the novel, Big Jim uses Morgantown's geography to screen his investigative movements—sticking to the woods and rail trails as much as possible while pursuing leads in Sabraton, Prickett's Fort, or downtown Morgantown.

The West Virginia otherworld Bredehoft patiently builds in this compact, 244-page whodunit is a delightfully odd noir melange. The author skips the tired old trope of the femme fatale, but veteran readers of detective fiction will delight in Big Jim's friction with the police, the plot twists that focus suspicion back onto the protagonist, and even the appearance of hired thugs who want to keep this gumshoe's nose out of where it don't belong. Yet where else can you find a reclusive, hirsute PI who doesn't drink, doesn't own a car, and knows more about Bigfoot than he does about people?

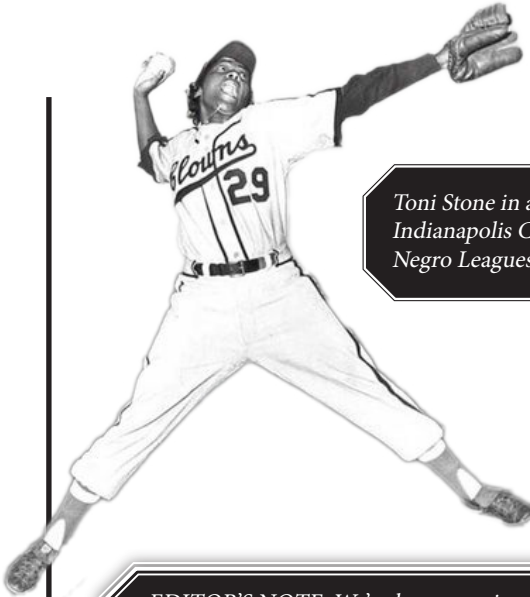
Bredehoft skilfully employs genre conventions as familiar landmarks in an otherwise bizarre world, and more than once wrung a chuckle from me as I mentally compared Big Jim's predicaments to those of Phillip Marlowe or Sam Spade. While there's plenty of whimsy in the novel, however, this compact tale packs an emotional punch, as the protagonist's long hikes and bike rides—it takes a while to get from Morgantown to Prickett's Fort on foot, after all—force reflections on the changing nature of West Virginia and the world around us. Some of these lingering questions will stay with me a for a while, like what it means to find and protect one's community, or how tough love and forgiveness apply in situations as dark and complicated as the present-day opioid crisis.

I received my copy of the novel direct from the author's hands when we met for the first time at the West Virginia Book Festival in October. Regular readers of *The Broad Side* are by now familiar with my borderline obsession surrounding fictional Mountain State serial detectives, and won't be surprised to hear that I asked Tom Bredehoft if his quirky shamus Big Jim Foote would become a recurring character. He says he's optimistic Foote will soon be on the case again—and I, for one, hope so, too.



Tom Bredehoft's mystery novel **Foote** is available from West Virginia University Press. To purchase directly from the publisher, visit <https://wvupressonline.com/foote>

BLUEFIELD'S BASEBALL GREAT MARCENIA "TONI" STONE
by Stan Bumgardner for the West Virginia Encyclopedia



Toni Stone in action with the Indianapolis Clowns. Courtesy of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We've been enjoying the responses to our **Readers' Poll**, which will close at the end of December (more details on back!).

One common request is for more content from the online West Virginia Encyclopedia (eWV). Since the Council consistently adds new articles to eWV, you'll be seeing more of them featured here in **The Broad Side**!

Marcenia Lyle "Toni" Stone (July 17, 1921 – November 2, 1996) was the first woman to play professional baseball for a previously all-men's major-league team—in the former Negro League. The 5'7" right hander was born in Bluefield, Mercer County, to Boykin and Willa Maynard Stone. Her **father** was a World War I vet and graduate of Tuskegee University, and her mother was a hairdresser. In 1931, the family moved to St. Paul, Minnesota.

Stone first played for the semi-pro Twin Cities Colored Giants in St. Paul (1947) and then later for the San Francisco Sea Lions (1949) and the New Orleans Creoles (1949-53)—the latter two being part of the Negro League's minor league system.

By the early 1950s, the Negro Major League had lost much of its top talent to Major League Baseball, which had begun integrating in 1947 when Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier. In the years that followed, Major League teams depleted much of the Negro League's best talent. Desperate to fill empty positions and address the problem of dwindling crowds, the Indianapolis Clowns of the Negro American League signed Stone in 1953 to replace the team's former second baseman, Hank Aaron, who had joined the National League's Milwaukee Braves. Stone protested the existing protocol demanding that women players wear skirts and was allowed to don a full regulation uniform. While critics felt that Stone's signing was a mere publicity stunt, Aaron recalled that she was a "very good baseball player," and Chicago Cubs great Ernie Banks described her playing style as "smooth."

The Miami Times, while implying that Stone's signing was a gimmick to sell tickets, still asserted, "She gives not an inch of ground as she executes double plays with the finesse of a Jackie Robinson. She's agile, has good baseball instinct, and knows what a Louisville Slugger is for. Her timely batting has amazed baseball experts from coast to coast."

At one point during her 50 games with the Clowns in 1953, Stone was batting .364, fourth highest in the league. Though record-keeping in the Negro Leagues was historically spotty, Stone achieved a respectable career average of .243. Among her hits was a single off 47-year-old Satchel Paige, considered by some to be the greatest pitcher ever. All the while, she faced sexism

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SOUNDS OF THE FUTURE

FILM COMPOSER JAY CHATTAWAY'S PAPERS AT WVU LIBRARIES

West Virginia University alumnus Jay Chattaway, who received an honorary doctorate from the institution in 2019 because his graduate music studies at WVU were interrupted by the Vietnam War, didn't set out to define the music of the future as we know it. But in 1991, after he'd been composing soundtracks in Hollywood for over a decade, Chattaway's agent submitted some of his client's work to top-billed television show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. With luck, the composer from Monongahela, Pennsylvania, could score an episode or two.

Eigteen years and almost 200 episodes later, with an Emmy award under his belt, Chattaway finally finished composing for Gene Roddenberry's iconic science fiction series. By then, his work was ubiquitous across four different series of the franchise: *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*, and *Enterprise*.

For students of motion picture music, or simply ardent fans of one of sci-fi's most beloved and definitive shows, WVU Libraries' West Virginia and Regional History Center (WVRHC) has a treasure in store: Jay Chattaway's papers (collection number A&M 3895).

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SOUNDS OF THE FUTURE

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According to the Jay Chattaway collection's description, the materials span from 1964 to 2016 and include "production materials related to music composed by Chattaway for [Star Trek] and other projects, including sketches, scores, cue sheets, breakdowns of spotting notes, spotting notes, and other material (such as manuscript notes, letters, etc.)."

Having only become available to the public within the last few years, Chattaway's papers could become a major boon for researchers seeking new behind-the-scenes *Star Trek* material. Insights can be gleaned from "spotting notes" pertaining to where music is to be inserted into each episode, providing atmosphere for narrative and emotional beats. Cinema and music historians might analyze how *Star Trek* music of the 1990s and 2000s differed or paralleled other television soundtracks of the era, or how Chattaway's unique sensibilities compare to the show's other composers.

Or perhaps the collection's greatest utility will be for a future composer from the Mountain State, as yet unknown in concert halls or the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Perhaps they'll draw inspiration from a glimpse into Chattaway's working processes, or incorporate allusions to his award-winning work into their own compositions.

Whatever the outcome, West Virginia's archives and repositories of past knowledge (large and small, whether cared for by university staff, government employees, or local community members) are essential to the development of *future* ideas. If we are to boldly go where no one has gone before, we'll always need to know where we're coming from.

The **West Virginia and Regional History Center (WVRHC)** is located on WVU's main campus in Morgantown, and serves as the Special Collections library of the university. Their mission is "to acquire, provide access to, and preserve information resources in all formats which elucidate the history and culture of West Virginia and the central Appalachian region."

To research online or learn more about the WVRHC, visit

<https://wvrhc.lib.wvu.edu/>

THEY KNEW TOO MUCH

While we're on the subject of archives and outer space, don't forget that the Clarksburg Public Library houses the collection of pioneering ufologist Gray Barker (1925-1984), an inveterate chronicler of the Mothman, Flatwoods Monster, and the man who minted the term "men in black."

Braxton County-raised Barker went to Glenville State College, and broke into extraterrestrial stardom with his first book, *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, published in 1956. The Gray Barker UFO Collection, located in the historic Waldomore house adjacent to the Clarksburg Public Library, “consists of approximately 29 drawers of file folders, 300 books, 75 groups of magazines, photographs of Barker and various props used by Barker.”

To start your own cosmic research trek,
visit [**https://www.clarksburglibrary.org/barker-collection**](https://www.clarksburglibrary.org/barker-collection)

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from other players and particularly from her manager, Buster Haywood. Some players made sexual advances toward her, and others intentionally tried to get her injured during games. She refused, though, to back down in this male-dominated sport. As she later recounted, “‘I’d get right in an umpire’s face and let him have it.” In 1953, the *Jackson* (Mississippi) *Advocate* wrote that “Toni Stone is capable of holding her own against the strongest male opponents and readily admits that none of her opposition takes it any easier on her because of her sex.”

After the 1953 season, the Clowns sold her contract to the Kansas City Monarchs, where she played one more year before retiring. She was the first of at least a dozen women to play in the Negro League. In 1993, she was inducted into the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame. She died in 1996 at age 85. That same year, an off-Broadway play about her life (written by acclaimed playwright Lydia R. Diamond) was produced, and in 2022, Google honored her with one of its daily "Doodles" as part of Black History Month.

WE'RE LISTENING!

We've been enjoying your responses to **The Broad Side** readers' poll, and would like to hear from even more of you! Since your answers have been so informative, we're going to keep the online form open through the end of December to give more readers a chance to respond.

We want to know what you think! We've prepared a 10-question reader's poll so you can tell us more about what you'd like to see in future issues of **The Broad Side**. Type the link below into your browser and share your opinion before December 31, 2022!

We'll share the results of the poll in our first issue of 2023.

<http://bit.ly/tbspoll>

EVENTS OF THE FUTURE

December and January are usually mellow months for Council programming, as organizations focus on the holidays and batten the hatches for winter weather. However, be sure to bookmark our web calendar so you can stay up to date on the latest in *History Alive!* presentations, lectures, traveling exhibits, grant-funded events, and more.

Visit wvhumanities.org/event for information, and click “Subscribe to Calendar” to automatically add events to your itinerary.

The West Virginia Humanities Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit, is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council is supported by the NEH, the State of West Virginia, and contributions from the private sector. The purposes of the West Virginia Humanities Council are educational, and its mission is to support a vigorous program in the humanities statewide in West Virginia. The Broad Side is ©2021 by the West Virginia Humanities Council. All rights reserved.

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