

= Baseball 's Sad Lexicon =

" Baseball 's Sad Lexicon , " also known as " Tinker to Evers to Chance " after its refrain , is a 1910 baseball poem by Franklin Pierce Adams . The poem is presented as a single , rueful stanza from the point of view of a New York Giants fan watching the Chicago Cubs infield of shortstop Joe Tinker , second baseman Johnny Evers , and first baseman Frank Chance complete a double play .

Tinker , Evers , and Chance began playing together with the Cubs in 1902 , and formed a double play combination that lasted through April 1912 . The Cubs won the National League pennant four times between 1906 and 1910 , often defeating the Giants en route to the World Series .

The poem was first published in the New York Evening Mail on July 12 , 1910 . Popular among sportswriters , numerous additional verses were written . The poem gave Tinker , Evers , and Chance increased popularity . It has been credited with their elections to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946 .

= = Background = =

Frank Chance joined the Chicago Cubs in 1898 as a reserve catcher , backing up Tim Donahue and Johnny Kling . Frank Selee , the Cubs ' manager , decided that Chance would be better suited as a first baseman . Chance at first opposed the move and even threatened to quit , but ultimately obliged . Joe Tinker was a third baseman in minor league baseball , but in 1902 made the Cubs as a shortstop , replacing Barry McCormick . Johnny Evers made his major league debut with the Cubs on September 1 at shortstop , with Selee moving Tinker from shortstop to third base . Three days later , Selee returned Tinker to shortstop and assigned Evers to second base to back up Bobby Lowe .

Lowe suffered a knee injury late in the 1902 season , providing Evers with more playing time . Tinker , Evers , and Chance first appeared in a game together on September 13 , 1902 . They turned their first double play on September 15 , 1902 . Lowe 's injury did not properly heal during the offseason , making Evers the new permanent second baseman for the Cubs in 1903 . Chance succeeded Selee as manager during the 1905 season when Selee became ill .

The Cubs , led by Tinker , Evers , and Chance , won the National League pennant in 1906 , 1907 , 1908 , and 1910 . In 1908 , the Cubs clinched the pennant after defeating the Giants in part due to Merkle 's Boner . In the Merkle game , Tinker hit a home run off of Christy Mathewson , and Evers alerted umpire Hank O 'Day to Merkle 's baserunning gaffe . In the replay of the Merkle game , Tinker hit a triple off of Mathewson that started the rally that gave the Cubs the victory , clinching the pennant .

From 1906 to 1910 , the Cubs turned 491 double plays , the third @-@ most in the NL during that time . According to Bill James ' formula , " expected double plays " , the Cubs led the NL with 50 more double plays than expected during those five seasons . From 1906 through 1910 , the " Tinker , to Evers , to Chance " double play happened 54 times in 770 games played , and the trio did not collaborate on a double play during any of their 21 World Series games . In 1906 , the trio committed 194 errors , though this was in part due to poor field conditions and scorers .

= = Composition = =

Franklin Pierce Adams wrote a weekly column for the New York Evening Mail , called " Always in Good Humor " . Adams hoped to leave work to attend a Giants game , but his editor found that Adams had not produced enough content for his column . While traveling to the Polo Grounds to see the Giants play the Cubs , Adams wrote the poem that would become Baseball 's Sad Lexicon , while reflecting on Tinker , Evers , and Chance . He considered the lines to be forgettable as he wrote them , and an editor at the paper told him that he did not consider the work to be " much good " .

This work was first published as " That Double Play Again " in the New York Evening Mail on July 12 , 1910 (not on July 10 as numerous sources state) . The Chicago Daily Tribune reprinted it as "

Gotham 's Woe " on July 15 , 1910 . Three days later , on July 18 , the New York Evening Mail republished it under the title by which it is best known today , " Baseball 's Sad Lexicon . " The poem was such a hit that other sportswriters submitted additional verses .

For the poem 's 100th anniversary , Tim Wiles , director of research at the Baseball Hall of Fame , conducted research on the poem . He revealed that the poem was part of series of poems published in the New York Evening Mail and the Chicago Tribune . During the research process , combing the archives in the New York Public Library and the Center for Research Libraries , they uncovered 29 poems , 15 of which detail a specific play or game that had occurred during the 1910 season , with " Baseball 's Sad Lexicon " the first poem published .

= = After publication = =

In 1911 , the Giants overcame the Cubs , capturing the first of three consecutive league championships . The trio played their final game together on April 12 , 1912 . While Chance was hospitalized for a brain injury suffered while playing , club owner Charles Webb Murphy released him after an argument about Murphy 's releasing other players with high salaries . Murphy named Evers manager for the 1913 season , which displeased Tinker , who was traded to the Cincinnati Reds .

Murphy fired Evers as manager after one season , trading him against his will to the Boston Braves in February 1914 . As a consequence , National League president John K. Tener and newspaper owner Charles P. Taft (who also owned the Philadelphia Phillies) made a successful effort to drive Murphy out of baseball . Taft purchased the Cubs from Murphy in 1914 . Sporting Life commemorated the affair with this variation on the poem :

Brought to the leash and smashed in the jaw ,
Evers to Tener to Taft .
Hounded and hustled outside of the law ,
Evers to Tener to Taft .
Torn from the Cubs and the glitter of gold ,
Stripped of the guerdons and glory untold ,
Kicked in the stomach and cut from the fold ,
Evers to Tener to Taft .

= = Impact and legacy = =

Chance died in 1924 . Evers died in 1947 , and Tinker the next year . When members of the trio died , the poem was often used to memorialize them .

All three players were inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946 . Their inductions have been credited to the fame generated by Adams ' poem . Andy Coakley , a teammate with the Cubs as well as a coach for Columbia University , regarded Tinker , Evers , and Chance to be the best infield in baseball history . Bill James , in his 1994 book , Whatever Happened to the Hall of Fame ? , argued that Tinker was less accomplished than George Davis , who at the time was not a member of the Hall of Fame .

The poem gave the trio " everlasting fame " . Evers made an appearance on Information Please , a radio show on which Adams was a panelist in 1938 . Evers thanked Adams for writing the poem , which he credited with his being remembered . However , many forgot Harry Steinfeldt , the third baseman who started alongside Tinker , Evers , and Chance from 1906 through 1910 . Including Steinfeldt , the Cubs infield set a record for longevity surpassed by the Los Angeles Dodgers infield of first baseman Steve Garvey , second baseman Davey Lopes , shortstop Bill Russell , and third baseman Ron Cey , who played together for eight years , from 1973 through 1981 .

Despite their celebrated success at turning spectacular plays in collaboration , relations between the teammates were said to have been often strained . Tinker and Evers feuded for many years . On September 14 , 1905 , Tinker and Evers engaged in a fistfight on the field because Evers had taken a cab to the stadium and left his teammates behind in the hotel lobby . They did not speak for years

following this event . According to some tellings , Tinker and Evers did not speak to one another again following their fight for 33 years , until they were asked to participate in the radio broadcast of the 1938 World Series , between the Cubs and the New York Yankees . Neither Tinker nor Evers knew the other had been invited . However , in 1929 , Tinker joined Evers in signing a ten @-@ week contract to perform a theatrical skit on baseball in different cities across the United States .

= = In popular culture = =

Ogden Nash 's poem " Line @-@ Up For Yesterday , " written in 1949 , references the poem :

'E ' is for Evers

His jaw in advance ;

Never afraid

To Tinker with Chance

The phrase " Tinker to Evers to Chance , " and variations of the phrase using other names , are colloquially used to characterize high @-@ caliber teamwork . Examples include :

The song " O'Brien to Ryan to Goldberg " in the 1949 musical film Take Me Out to the Ball Game

An advertisement for The Hours , a 2003 film , praising the trio of Nicole Kidman , Meryl Streep , and Julianne Moore as the " acting version " of the three baseball players

The expression has also been used to characterize any process that happens with smoothness and precision , as a near @-@ synonym to expressions such as " like clockwork " or " a well @-@ oiled machine . " For example , in Raymond Chandler 's The Long Goodbye (1953) , detective Philip Marlowe goes through his mail , opens it , and tosses it into the waste bin , remarking , " Mail slot to desk to wastebasket , Tinker to Evers to Chance . "

Washington Post journalists Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward used the phrase " Tinker to Evers to Chance " in their account of the Post investigation of the Watergate scandal in their 1974 book , All the President 's Men . The reference described the smooth operation of President Richard Nixon 's White House staff in responding to allegations of misconduct .

Musician Scott Miller , leader of the 1980s band Game Theory , chose Tinker to Evers to Chance as the ironic title of a 1990 compilation album of the band 's greatest would @-@ be hits which , despite significant critical acclaim , had struck out commercially .

The poem was set to music and recorded in 2010 by Chicago singer / songwriter guitarist Chris McCaughan . The song , also titled " Baseball 's Sad Lexicon , " appears on the album We Chase the Waves , by McCaughan 's solo project , Sundowner .