

LITTLE LEAGUE

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Williamsport has given the world much; its thriving industries, its world-wide newspaper; its welcome topography for vacationers; but Williamsport's greatest contribution, when the history of cities will have been written, is Little League Baseball. This week, Williamsport and the world celebrates the 35th year of an idea whose impact on home and community in the United States and the world is inestimable. In that period of rebirth after World War II, the idea of such a program for youth was perfectly conditioned to the times. By 1950, there were leagues from Maine to California. Growth was to continue at a phenomenal pace. Throughout the United States and Canada thousands of volunteers staked out new fields, trained to become managers and umpires and gave impetus to this new concept of community life--revolving around nine boys on a playing field. A memory of mine is of my nephew crouched behind the plate, signalling, one-glove catching a ball when he was about 10, then ambling out to the mound to give a pitcher advice. This year, by a new ruling, the by-laws of Little League reads--"Boys and Girls"--and that is a totally revolutionary change. Today then, more than two million boys and girls are enrolled, and further expansion and league growth are indicated for future years. The sport which began in Williamsport as a neighborhood venture with only three teams, now includes as many as 7000 leagues in more than 20 countries. Little League has taken

on maturity, stature and universal public acceptance. By unanimous action of the Congress of the United States, the idea, sprouted in Williamsport, was granted a Federal Charter to become the only agency of its kind to hold such Federal sanction. The international concept has been seen at the World Series in Williamsport in many years; the teams from Mexico, Taiwan, Japan and other countries, are some I can remember--there is that picture of catcher and pitcher wildly embracing when Mexico won the big one; or the little Japanese batsman bowing respectfully to the umpire before he kicked the dirt off the plate and belted out a double, or a no-hit confident Chinese pitcher. International understanding? There is no better sight of it than that exemplified at Williamsport during Little League World Series week, when the whole world turns a momentary glance to a small baseball diamond, where under-twelve boys demonstrate the same spirit which Wellington spoke of on the playing fields of Eton. Williamsport's idea is producing the sportsmen--and the future leaders of the world. Welcome Little Leaguers--and fans--to Williamsport--birthplace of Little League Baseball--and the site of another world series. Final games this weekend.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.