Writers' fete, Bowie bombs...

PITTSBURGH — "Commissioner Kuhn, outstanding people, and distinguished guests, I'd like to say my dad is in the audience."

Reggie Jackson's father was enthusiastically applauded when he stood at the Baseball Commissioner's Luncheon at the Grand Ball Room of the Hilton Hotel here yesterday afternoon. Too bad baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn wasn't equally well-received.

The baseball commissioner was given a very cool reception (unlike Monday's reception by the general public) by the over 400 baseball writers attending yesterday's luncheon The get-together was part of the never-ending gratitudes showered on the visiting writers in town for last night's 45th All-Star Game.

And while Kuhn received little applause he got fewer laughs. But in fairness to the commissioner, his material was terrible.

Jackson, the towering Oakland slugger, did seem honored at winning the commissioner's award for receiving the most All-Star votes. Jackson pulled 3.5 million, more than even Hank Aaron.

"*The little extra I do on the field comes* from the three-and-a-half million," he said.

"I'm just waiting for them to name a candy bar after me," Jackson quipped. Hank Aaron (Oh Henry!) and Babe Ruth (Babe Ruth) are the only two baseball candies currently on the counter.

*

The absence of a black manager in major league baseball sparked a demonstration Monday and yesterday outside the Hilton by four Pittsburgh groups, the Black Catholic Ministries, the Catholic Interracial Council, the Direct Action Coalition, and the Pittsburgh branch of the NAACP.

The protestors simply state two unarguable points. First, major league baseball has never had a black American manager on the field.

Also, major league baseball has never had a black American executive in a baseball business office (except Atlanta).

Cocktail chit-chat here has everyone hoping that Atlanta will name Henry Aaron's brother, Tommie, as the Braves' new mentor. But Ed Robinson, a Braves' vice-president announced both Tommie and Henry were not under consideration.

"Tommie is involved in a tight pennant race and we think it would be unfair to take him out of Savannah at this time," Robinson said.

The real injustice is keeping Tommie Aaron managing the Savannah franchise of the Southern League. And since when has the National League become subservient to the needs of the Southern League?

Clyde King, the likely choice for managers proved his mediocrity in San Francisco. Why put the Braves through it?

It now looks like baseball clubs are indeed afraid to have a black manager with so many white customers. Surely the men are available. Frank Robinson, Maury Wills, Hank Aaron, Tommy Aaron, and legitimate candidates Elston Howard, Jim Gilliam, Willie Mays and Larry Doby deserve a shot at big league management. At least before Clyde King is recycled.

*

For the baseball fan, the game began at 8:30 p.m. last night. But for the writers here in Pittsburgh the whole affair has been going on for two days. It's a tough job.

Yesterday it was breakfast at the Hilton again, the Commissioner's Luncheon at noon, dinner at the Grand Ball Room and a post-game bar and sandwich party until 2 a.m. Between the gluttony and overindulgence of spirits, many of the writers looked like they were really suffering.

You don't have to be a celebrity to have someone ask for your signature. Just walk through the hotels that host major league ballplayers in short hair, a bright outfit, and look like you know where you are going.

"Here, you, sign this," the leader of a group of belligerent looking juveniles told me.

They had no intentions of being disappointed, so I magically became Tommy John, even though he isn't on this year's All-Star team. The kids didn't seem to notice.

Said one well-dressed, middle-aged man after borrowing my pen to get Ralph Garr's autograph, "Are you anybody?"

I had to tell the truth. "No, I'm nobody."

—Rick Starr

...boycott threatened

PITTSBURGH (AP) — If there are no black managers on the bench, there soon will be no black fans in the stands, a coalition of Pittsburgh civil rights groups warned baseball officials yesterday.

Protesting the lack of a black major league manager, about 15 persons from four Pittsburgh civil rights groups spent several rainy hours picketing the Hilton Hotel—headquarters for the All-Star Game.

The hotel, crammed with the game's notables, was just the first target, protest leader Robert L. Pitts said.

"If we have to we will organize boycotts of baseball ticket windows later in the year," he said. "And we plan to move on pro football this season, too."

He charged there are no starting black quarterbacks, head coaches or general managers in the National Football League.

"It has to change," he said. Pitts, executive director of the Black Catholic Ministries said the Atlanta Braves are in a "great position to make a positive step."

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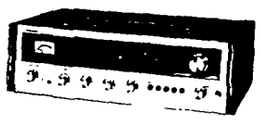

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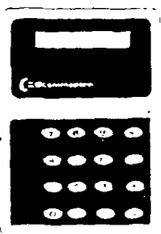

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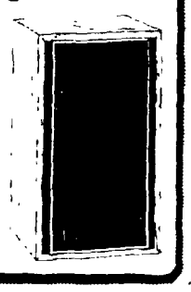

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