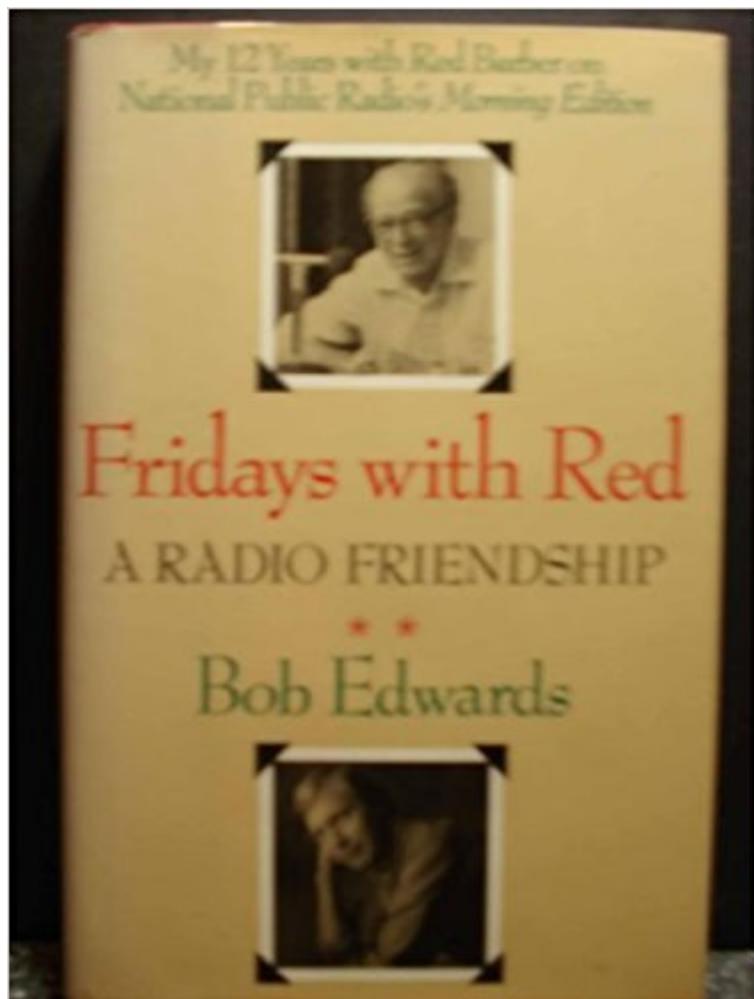


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# Fridays With Red: A Radio Friendship



## **Synopsis**

Wit, wisdom, a silky southern voice--these were the qualities that captivated millions of faithful Red Barber fans each Friday as he chatted with Morning Edition host Bob Edwards on subjects ranging from gardening to sports to the mysteries of life. This affectionate memoir will delight readers. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Red Barber, who made his reputation as a baseball broadcaster in Cincinnati, Brooklyn and the Bronx, spent the years from 1980 until his death in 1992 at age 84 doing five-minute spots on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" with Edwards. This affecting reminiscence is a chronicle of those years, with excerpts from tapes of the show about sports, flowers, cats (Barber was an unregenerate ailurophile) and religion (he was a lay reader in the Episcopal Church, authorized to preach sermons). It is also the account of the friendship that developed between the two men and of a mentor who taught his protege by example. The author includes tales of Barber's glory days and his association with figures from Jackie Robinson and Pee Wee Reese to Ethel Merman and Ethel Barrymore, and goes on to his battles against deafness, blindness and the progression of his beloved wife's Alzheimer's disease. The book should have a wide appeal. Photos not seen by PW.

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The year is 1950, and Red Barber, the popular voice of Brooklyn, is describing Ebbets Field, home

of the Brooklyn Dodgers: "For those of you who haven't seen Ebbets Field, it's a double-decked stadium and the double-decking begins at right field's corner... and there is no stand in back of right field. That's the famous fence or wall, the right field wall." Anyone who heard Barber's voice on National Public Radio's Morning Edition with host Bob Edwards will take pleasure in this book. A baseball announcer for 33 years, Barber popularized the phrase "to be in the catbird seat" (i.e., to be sitting pretty) when he was the play-by-play announcer for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Born in 1908, Red Barber was 84 when he died in October 1992. This informative and balanced biography of a man full of wisdom and pathos is recommended for sports collections. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 6/15/93.- Jim Paxman, Tennessee State Univ., NashvilleCopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Through the words of Red Barber, this book reminded me of all that was good about baseball and radio and summers growing up in the South. Reading the book was a reminder of that bygone era, although I admit the passing decades have made it seem easier and more trouble-free than it actually was. I also enjoyed hearing the background of the NPR chats between Bob Edwards and Red, as I was one of those listeners who always made sure I was out of the shower by the time it came on each Friday morning. This book gave me the sense of eavesdropping, without intruding, over the conversations of two good friends.

and, if pages 148 - 231 had been as engaging as pages 1 - 147, I would have awarded four stars. Red Barber remains an American icon worthy of our attention and admiration. Basketball is American alright; but baseball is The American Sport, and Red Barber kept it high in his catbird seat for five decades. from time to time even now he returns to continue to remind me and millions...crepe myrtles in bloom are still a sure sign watermelons are ripe.

For baseball lovers Red Barber is an icon. For many NPR listeners so is Bob Edwards. I did not hear these segments when they were broadcast. For many of them I was living abroad. However, reading this collection by Bob Edwards compiled after Red Barber died is a delightful historical study. These "snippets" provide depth of insight into the development of the sport, development of friendship and each of the men involved. Acceptance of change and people is a major theme in these vignettes with all the difficulty, pain, disappointment, fulfillment and joy the acceptance entails. Whether baseball fan or NPR devote or both this book inspires, challenges and is a "good read".

This is a beautiful little book about a man dedicated to his craft and the relationship he developed with a radio commentator 40 years his junior. Bob Edwards brings Red Barber to life and anyone fortunate enough to have heard their all too short weekly get togethers will enjoy the background information on the amazing Red Barber. Edwards voice is familiar to millions but he grew to respect and admire this (perhaps) old fashioned southern gentleman and his gentle ways. Barber was truly a man of strong convictions and a basic goodness that shines through in this book. Heartwarming and fascinating.

I heard most of these... I am a old NPR fan until they became republican!

I remember listening to NPR's Bob Edwards weekly interviews with legendary sportscaster Red Barber -- every Friday at 7:35 Eastern, for four minutes -- only a few years after the interviews began. It was the highlight of my morning commute, even though I could care less, back then, about baseball or any other sport. The interviews were a sunny moment in which a delightful old southern gentleman might share stories about his garden or tell a tale about a baseball hero. I found this book at a used bookstore, started to read it, and... well, there went the rest of MY day. Bob Edwards' memoir isn't really an in-depth biography of Red Barber. It is, however, a really well-written, immensely readable tribute to the conversations the two men had, and an ode to Barber's accomplishments (he was on the air for almost 63 years). Edwards includes several of their conversations (each was, after all, only four minutes long) and adds comments and context. If you're a sports fan, particularly a baseball fan of a Certain Age, there's no question that you'll enjoy this book. There's LOTS of wonderful anecdotes, from the historical (Red Barber was the first to televise a major league baseball game), to the people-anecdotal (when WOR first played "A Symphony in D for the Dodgers," said Barber, "I thought [Larry MacPhail] would just break all buttons on his vest"), to the thought provoking (night games were reluctantly adopted even though the owners "said it was against tradition, that you were supposed to play in God's sunlight"). What fun! But I got the most out of this book from my professional persona as a journalist. Because, after all, that's what Red Barber was; he spent several hours at a time telling people what he saw, and bringing a game to life. I learned a lot from the attitudes he shared. Primarily among them was to avoid partisanship. In one interview, he told Edwards, "I did everything I could not to be a rooter, Bob, because... I was describing to millions of people who could not see the event for themselves... And I felt it was up to me to describe what happened to the ball and to the people who touched the ball, and then let each listener in her or her way have whatever rooting interest they wanted to have." I don't think I could

better express what journalists aim for. He was also a master at painting a picture in words. As Edwards writes, "Red painted pictures more real than the work of any artist." He's famous for bringing folksy expressions to the game: "the catbird seat," "ducks on the pond," and a close game as "tighter than a new pair of shoes on a rainy day." I dare say many younger baseball fans (at least those who haven't watched *A Baseball - A Film By Ken Burns*) will be surprised by how much of the game's lingo came from Barber. I was particularly touched by Barber's awareness of his own personal growth, with the most famous example of his relationship with Jackie Robinson. "Red Barber had grown up in a completely segregated world," writes Edwards. "He said, 'In the words of the song in *South Pacific*, I had been "carefully taught."'" Red would have to make a lot of adjustments in attitude before he could broadcast a game in which a black man was equal to a white man." To use one of his own expressions, Barber won his own battle and he beat himself. Barber explained that he remembered back in 1935 when Judge Landis told broadcasters that their only duty was to report, and to leave their personal opinions back in their hotel rooms; that helped him adjust to the upcoming black player. "What was my assignment in this? Only to report. And suddenly all the scales fell off of my eyes and I had no problem whatsoever. All I did about Jackie Robinson, and the other black players who followed, was simply to report, report them as I did any other ballplayer." That's a lesson that I think a lot of today's journalists can learn, when it comes to sharing one's own opinions and perceptions in print. But not every one of these conversations is so deep. Red Barber gave a bit of broadcasting advice that I hope to apply to my own writing, though it's in a wholly different genre: Follow the ball. "You follow the ball... at the moment it's hit. But then you pick up the defensive ballplayer, especially the outfielder. A lot of broadcasters make the mistake of trying to judge that a ball's going to go into the stands and then it gets caught and then they've got egg on their face. ... Always go with the outfielder, and he will tell you. And if the ball goes into the stands, he will look up and watch it go into the stands with you." This is a fun book for anyone, though. Imagine the chats you'd have over your backyard fence, if you happened to live next door to a man who defined an era.

Allow me to preface this review by saying that I read this book at the suggestion of both my parents who are avid NPR junkies. I did not know who Red Barber was, and I do not know anything really about sports. I enjoyed most the parts that were about the history of Morning Edition, of NPR, broadcasting, and how sports used to be back when there were less entertainment options. I feel like I would have enjoyed the book a lot more if I had actual knowledge of who I was reading about and a connection of the man himself. Although, at the end where Edwards discussed his death I did

feel like over the course of the book I got to know this brilliant and interesting character. This is a must read for fans of Red and those interested in sports history, but I do not fall into either of those categories so this book really didn't speak to me all that much. But, I do have a deep reverence for both Bob Edwards and the subject of this interesting memoriam.

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