

6th Inning Stretch Told in Four Parts
by Sharon Wood Wortman with
Ed Wortman

I.

A producer from Fox Sports Network calls—
will I sit in at PGE Park during a Beavers-
Omaha game?

We'll talk bridges in between the sixth
inning's
double plays, knuckle balls, and pop flies.

Shelling peanuts flaky as rusted steel,
I begin to see our river spans as a World
Series team of nine—

Among them the oldest vertical lift
the longest tied arch
the largest Rall bascule
a one-of-a-kind double-decker—

Others that play together in a way
the fans of Portland get to go the distance.

Ed, being an expert in playing positions,
says Sellwood
would have to be the manager, for the way
it's over the hill.

I put Hawthorne in as DH, designated
hitter—
the old bridge might not run so fast,

but Hawthorne can still lift a deck with
enough impact
to keep the big and small wheels of this
world at bay.

II.

The two jocks sit me down between them
behind home plate and hand me a headset.

St. Johns, our only suspension bridge,
appears first on the screen.
Since teams don't have chaplains, I put St.
Johns in as pitcher—for its curves.

Flexible Steel in as the catcher,
because it can hold Amtrak, MAX,

pedestrians, people on bikes, in cars,
in its big black mitt all at once.

First base: Burlington Northern Santa Fe
Railway Bridge 5.1,
since it defends against runners coming

through like a train.

Newer members Marquam, Fremont, and
Morrison,
with the youngest legs, play right, center,
and left field.

This leaves the sturdy and dependable
Burnside and Broadway
to cover second and third base.

Last, what else but the flashy Ross Island as
shortstop,
for the way it cantilevers itself all over the
place?

III.

The inning lasts a long time,
along with my proposition that right here—

between the Tualatin Mountains
and the Eastbank Esplanade live the

Ted Williams
Jackie Robinson
Albert Pujols of bridges
the Ichiro Suzuki
Sandy Koufax
Willie Mays of bridges
the Joe DiMaggio and Hank Aaron of
bridges.
The oh, Baby, Ruth of bridges.

This being a very small stadium of a city,
the announcer on my right says he studied
bridges

in the third grade at Alameda Elementary, I
am guessing about 1978—
the same year the Yankees once again
swept the Dodgers.

IV.

At the end of the sixth, we all shake hands,
me swaggering off
like I am a Major League clean-up hitter
who's picked up the pace of their statistics.