

## **“God Bless Joan Payson”: The Remarkable Coverage of the First Woman to Buy a Sports Team**

Joan Whitney Payson developed an extraordinary relationship with the press after becoming the first woman to buy a sports team in North America. As owner of the New York Mets from their inception in 1962 until her death in 1975, Payson made baseball writers feel appreciated, inviting them to help choose the team’s name, hiring a manager they loved, acquiring players they knew, and presenting them with World Series rings. One reporter who treated Payson well ended up on the Whitney payroll, hired by Joan’s brother, the publisher of the *New York Herald Tribune*. For half a century, Payson’s habit of downplaying her role with the team has produced an inaccurate public image of an uninvolved figurehead. This paper consults the Whitney family papers, period coverage, and original oral history interviews with players and sportswriters to reveal previously uncovered factors that prompted flattering coverage of “the mother of the Mets.”

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