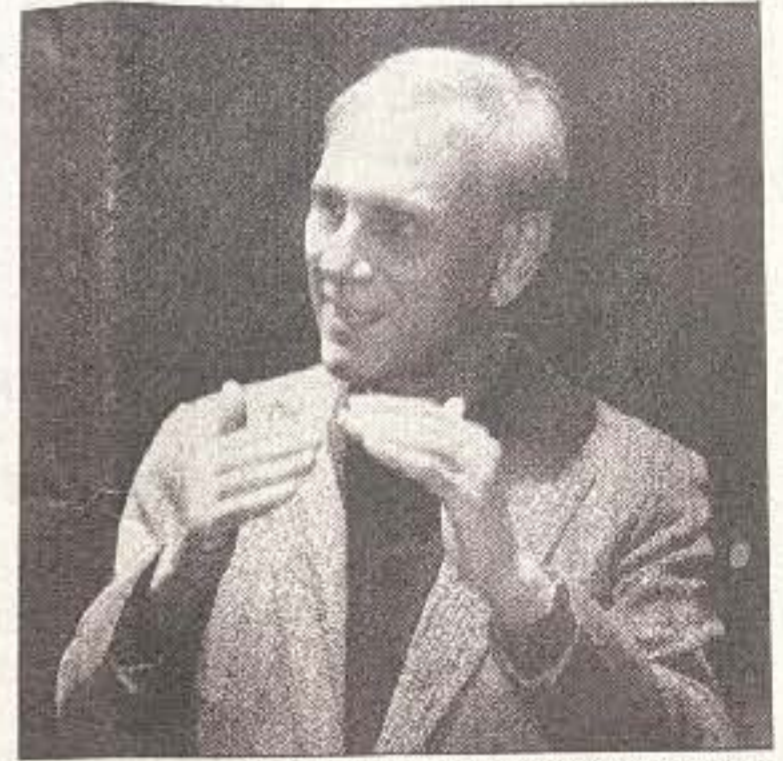


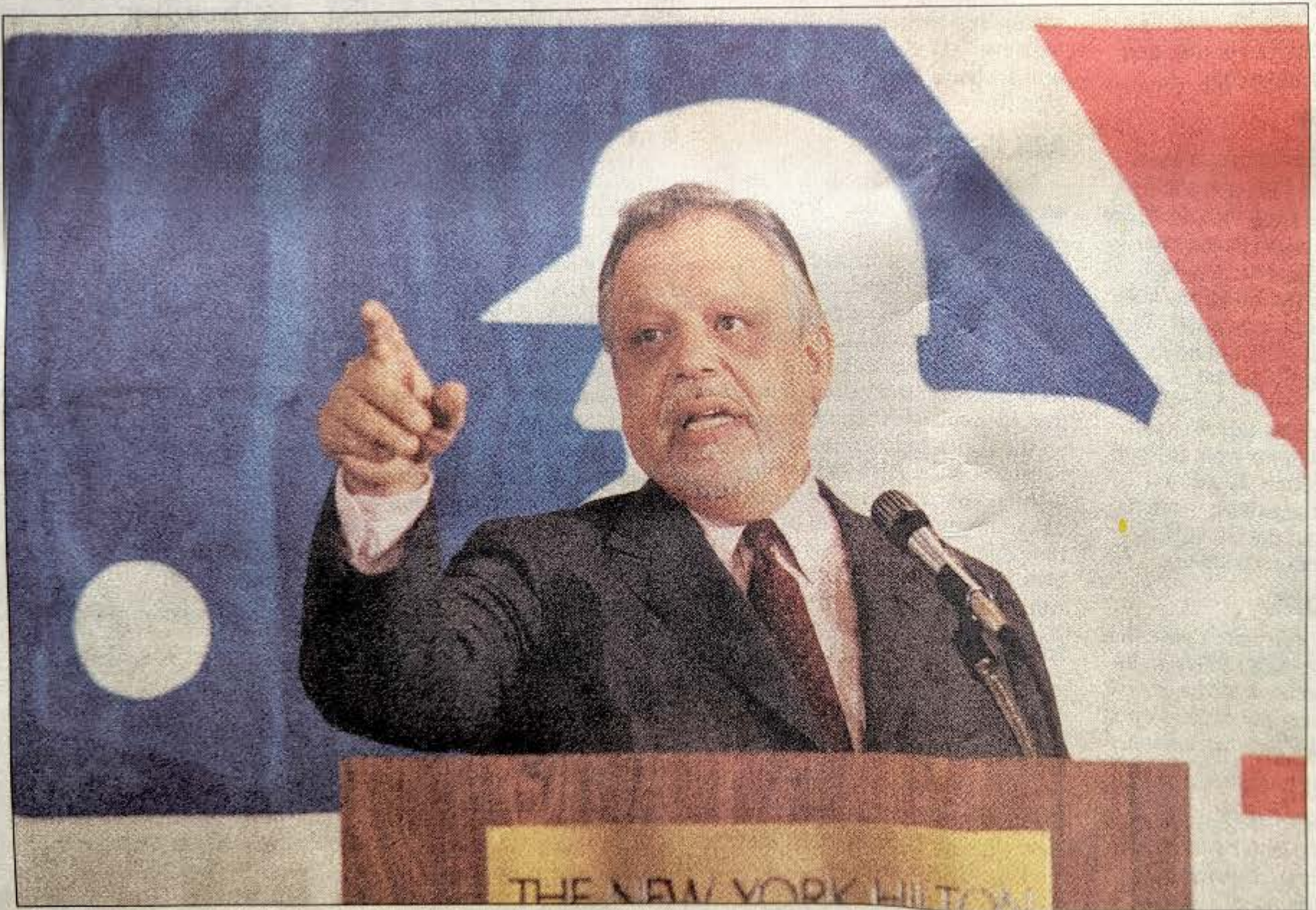
BOOKS

'FEARLESS' ABOUT FAIRNESS



Neil Thomas Proto / Contributed photo

Neil Thomas Proto, author of "Fearless: A Bartlett Giamatti and the Battle for Fairness in America."



Bettmann / Getty Images

A. Bartlett Giamatti announces "the banishment for life of Pete Rose from baseball." The MLB commissioner's life is examined by Connecticut author Neil Thomas Proto.

Bart Giamatti's too-short life RE-examined



Focus on Sport / Getty Images

Not long before he died in 1989, then-baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti, center, sits with American League President Bobby Brown and National League President Bill White.

GIAMATTI

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ing his teaching philosophies and through the intertwined histories of Yale University and New Haven. Proto was, to use his own term, thorough.

He discovered a man of integrity and personal honor, one who was able to shape and use the English language in a Churchillian manner.

"I think Giamatti had a well-informed moral imperative in his life. It was to be a responsible citizen and included being a responsible parent, teacher and president of Yale. And there is courage within that. There were principles that were important to him," Proto said in a recent interview.

It was clear that courage was needed to deal with some of the prejudice Giamatti faced, he said. Proto's research revealed a culture at Yale throughout the early 20th century that supported eugenics, the pseudo-scientific belief that some races are inherently superior to others.

"Individuals were excluded from Yale because of quotas, absolutely unacceptable rules based on race or religion. Those days are gone and must never return," Proto quotes Giamatti as telling students.

Proto believes that one of Giamatti's lasting impacts on Yale was to replace the nebulous idea of "leadership" as a guiding principle — a code used at the time to justify the

exclusion of nonwhites, Proto said — with a focus on civic responsibility and citizenship.

The more Proto probed, the more he believes that to understand Giamatti's belief in fairness and in civic participation, one has to understand his parents and his extended family who had lived in New Haven (Giamatti himself grew up in Massachusetts). New Haven and Giamatti were more connected than one might suppose.

"He had aunts and uncles in New Haven he would visit every weekend. He went to his Aunt Ellen's house for Sunday dinner," Proto said. "From there you start to see why he felt so strongly about the city. You begin to see why he did what he did and who he was."

While Giamatti and Proto took very different paths in life, the commonality of their Italian-American background gave Proto something with which to associate during his research. "I began to see how he valued the Southern Italian culture and what he thought about it," Proto said.

Today, Proto lives in Washington, D.C. but his heart — and a lot of his family — is still in New Haven. He makes the occasional trip back up to his alma mater, Southern Connecticut State University, to give talks and to assist with the creation of its pre-law society journal.

Like Giamatti, Proto had a strong support network. "This book is a tribute to my parents and my home and everyone I cared about," Proto said.

Steve Scarpa is a freelance writer.

By Steve Scarpa

When Neil Thomas Proto started delving into the life of Yale University president A. Bartlett Giamatti, he expected to tell a story of tremendous personal and professional accomplishment — a tale of a life well-lived.

What he found was something quite a bit more complex.

Proto's book, "Fearless: A. Bartlett Giamatti and the Battle for Fairness in America," will be released by Excelsior Editions, an imprint of the State University of New York Press, on May 1.

A lawyer, author and teacher, Proto started researching Giamatti six years ago. A New Haven native Proto was heavily involved in the local political scene in the campaign of Mayor Biagio

DiLieto and was acquainted with Giamatti, who served as Yale's president from 1978 to 1986 and the commissioner of Major League Baseball after that.

He met Giamatti, who died of a heart attack in 1989, for the first time in December 1979, a meeting he recounts in his book. "I recall stacks of pages and ordered books on the surrounding shelves, not mere ornaments to memory or accoutrements to the pretense of power but reflective of an intellectual rather than an academic culture, books read and still relevant to a life in purposeful and vigorous movement," Proto writes.

Delving into Giamatti's life and legacy was a joy and a challenge, Proto said. Proto's search led him to talk to childhood friends, colleagues, family members. It led him to Giamatti's own writings, through countless libraries examin-

See Giamattio on D2



Baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti, shown here in an Aug. 22, 1989, file photo with Texas Rangers owner George W. Bush, and Laura Bush, behind him.