

Long before he became a leader of the beat generation and created characters such as Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise in his 1957 novel, *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac conjured up Sky Tibbs and Wino Love, imaginary players in a baseball board game that he invented at age 13. The game, which is now on display at the New York Public Library, featured six teams, which Kerouac named after automobiles. Matchups between clubs such as the St. Louis Cadillacs and the Washington Chryslers unfolded according to a system similar to later baseball games like Strat-o-Matic; Kerouac, who grew up in Lowell, Mass., would

THE BASEBALL BEAT To his final days, Kerouac played the game he created as a boy.



toss an eraser onto the game board and, depending where it landed, refer to a player's card to determine the outcome of the play. Players all had complex skill ratings, and Kerouac kept meticulous statistics and also wrote a league newsletter. "He wields a long black bat that spells destruction for every pitcher he has met," Kerouac wrote of Tibbs, a centerfielder for the Pittsburgh Plymouths. "At home, Jack spent most of his time alone," says John Sampas, the brother of Kerouac's deceased widow, Stella. "He even wrote a short story, 'Ronnie on the Mound,' based on the outcome of one of his games." Kerouac, who died of an abdominal hemorrhage in 1969, at age 47, played the game throughout his life.