

LIST OF NEW YORK'S BASEBALL SITES

Major League Stadiums and related sites

The New York metropolitan area is the scene of some of the most legendary events and home of the greatest figures in baseball history. From the first recorded baseball game at Elysian Fields in 1846, New York has been the “Capitol of Baseball” for more than 170 years.

New York’s baseball history is written in many places – legendary stadiums, distinctive hotels, ordinary homes. Some of these sites are well-marked and internationally-known – others are marked with small plaques, tiny reminders, or even nothing at all. But every one of these sites listed played a major role in the history of baseball, is worth a visit, and deserves to be known and remembered. Enjoy!

1. **Yankee Stadium** (161st Street and River Avenue, The Bronx) Accessible by the No. 4, D, and B trains from Manhattan. The new Yankee Stadium, opened in April 2009. Costing \$2.3 billion, it stands one block north of the original, on the 24-acre former site of Macombs Dam Park, and incorporates reproductions of many features from the original Yankee Stadium across the street, including the frieze, the Indiana limestone exterior, hand-operated scoreboards, the section numbering, and the unusually-shaped outfield dimensions. New features include a museum of Yankee history that displays Thurman Munson’s locker, a Great Hall on 161st Street with large double-sided banners that honor Yankee greats (black and white era when facing west, full color era when facing east), and an accessible Monument Park. Home plate was brought from the original Stadium, and Yankee relief pitcher and Hall of Famer Mariano Rivera requested that the team reposition the home bullpen and provide it with a door to link it with Monument Park. The Yankees followed Rivera’s request. The stadium also offers a massive food court on the third-base side, specialty stores that sell Yankee memorabilia, and a restaurant on the upper deck. The seats are wider than those in the old stadium, to accommodate America’s expanding girth.

2. **Heritage Park/Old Yankee Stadium** (161st Street and River Avenue, The Bronx) Accessible by the No. 4, D and B trains from Manhattan. Demolition of the original stadium began on November 4, 2009, and was completed on May 13, 2010. Heritage Park was opened in April 2012, a multi-use community park that offers residents softball and soccer fields, playground spaces, and a blue outline that shows the location of the original Yankee Stadium interwoven into the grass. Other features that honor the original Stadium include the preservation of a section of the frieze from the old Stadium in the park's northwest corner, and a pedestrian walkway from the Metro-North commuter rail station to the new stadium, whose paving stones mark highlights from the stadium's long history in chronological order. Also preserved is the old stadium's legendary bat-shaped recycling chimney with its Hillerich & Bradsby seal and Babe Ruth's signature. It also offers benches and plaques honoring Lou Gehrig's legendary speech, Joe Louis knocking out Max Schmeling, Knute Rockne telling his players to "Win One for the Gipper," "The Greatest Football Game Ever Played," Joe Louis's great bout with Max Schmeling, Nelson Mandela declaring himself a Yankee, Papal masses, and Billy Joel's concert. Viewfinders enable visitors to peer at historic photographs of great events of Yankee Stadium's past from differing angles. Vast tracts of ink have been spilled on Yankee Stadium's immense history, so it will not be recapitulated here, but Marty Appel's "Pinstripe Empire" is recommended as a starting point, and "Yankee Stadium: The Official Retrospective" as well.



Heritage Field from the air...the blue lines mark the old Yankee Stadium diamond and walls. The old Ruppert Place, leading from center left, now has hexagonal plaques that list historic events at the old stadium. At bottom is an area restored as green space. At 161st Street, part of the frieze from the old Yankee Stadium is preserved. Beyond it is the new Yankee Stadium.

- Polo Grounds** (157th Street and 8th Avenue, 2971 8th Avenue, Manhattan)
Accessible by B and D trains to 155th Street-8th Avenue) The last of the four homes to the New York Giants was built as the result of a 1911 fire that shattered the third. The Giants played there until moving to San Francisco in 1957, the Yankees as their tenants until 1922, and the Mets for their inaugural seasons in 1962 and 1963. Demolition began on April 10, 1964. The Polo Grounds was one of the most unusual stadiums in baseball history, with its 483-foot center field depth and 257-foot depth to left and right fields. These statistics changed quite frequently because of other design features in the stadium and because home plate was moved forward and backward in various off-seasons, adding to confusion for historians. Only four home runs were ever

hit into the center field bleachers – one by Luke Easter in a 1948 Negro League game, one by the Milwaukee Braves’ Joe Adcock on April 29, 1953, and two on consecutive days: Lou Brock on June 17, 1962, and Henry Aaron the following day. Second-deck overhangs made it easier to hit a homer to left than right, even though the wall in left was 279 and the one in right was 258 feet. During the 1950s, groundskeeper Matty Schwab and his family lived in an apartment under Section 5 of the left-field stands, built for him by the Stoneham family, which owned the Giants. The gesture was Stoneham’s successful effort to keep Schwab on the Giant payroll and not going to the hated Dodgers across the river. In 1962, Mets groundskeeper Johnny McCarthy turned the four-room apartment into a “Pink Room” with showers, plywood floors and lockers, and made it their room. The Mets’ original mascot, Homer the Dog, did back flips before games at the Polo Grounds. The ballpark was also the birthplace of the long Met tradition of “Banner Days.” The ballpark was accessible by the last remnant of the 9th Avenue Elevated, the Polo Grounds Shuttle, which operated from the old 155th Street station, and ran across its own Harlem River bridge to Sedgwick Avenue station, a partially-underground stop that connected with the now-abandoned New York Central Putnam Division line. From there, the shuttle went underground (unusual for an elevated line) to another partially-underground stop at Anderson-Jerome Avenues, and then connected with the IRT Woodlawn line at 167th Street. Both stations are still partially intact, but difficult to access. Opened in 1933, the station and the rest of the Concourse Line have their own color code. In the Concourse Line’s case, it is orange and black, in honor of the Giants. The other mass transit access to the Polo Grounds remains intact: the 155th Street-8th Avenue Station on the D and B Trains, whose sole entrance is a massive staircase at the east end of the station, to accommodate the ballpark’s crowds. The other one is the 155th Street Station on St. Nicholas Avenue, whose mezzanine was designed to enable fans to easily access the Polo Grounds via the John T. Brush Staircase. Today the Polo Grounds site is occupied by the Polo Grounds Towers, a New York City housing project, and has a marker honoring the site of home plate and another on 2971 Eighth Avenue, that says: “This development was built on the location that Willie Mays and the Giants made famous. Let’s keep it beautiful.” Mays himself is honored with a playground bearing his name.



The Polo Grounds, seen from The Bronx, in full color, in the good old days.



The Polo Grounds Plaque



The Polo Grounds Towers sign





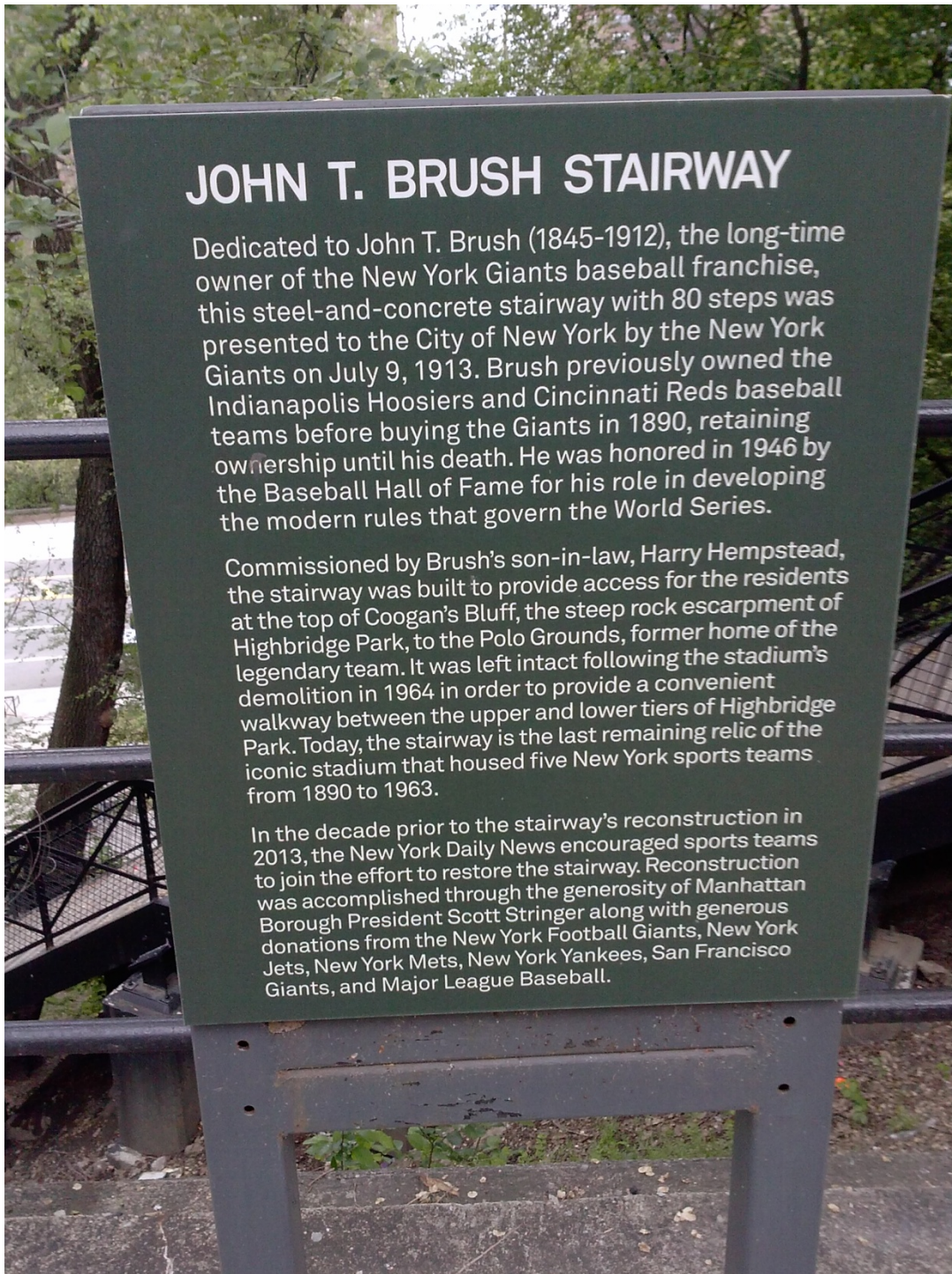
Scenes from the unveiling of the Polo Grounds plaque on August 21, 1968. Willie Mays himself, joined by Mayor John V. Lindsay, does the honors.

- John T. Brush Memorial Stairs** (157th Street and Edgecombe Avenue)
Accessible by C Train to 155th Street) The sole remaining actual piece of the Polo Grounds is this unusual item, a staircase built in 1913 to provide fans with access from the heights of Coogan's Bluff down to the Harlem River Driveway and to the ramps that led down to the Polo Grounds. This staircase and ramp made the Polo Grounds unique among baseball stadiums, in that it was the only one that could be accessed by fans going down a cliff or hill. In addition, the Giants paid for and dedicated a plaque on the staircase that honored their team's late owner, John T. Brush, who had recently died of tuberculosis. The

staircase was preserved after the Polo Grounds was torn down to provide local residents with access from the heights of Edgecombe Avenue to the lower level of the Harlem River Driveway, but was neglected, falling into abandonment and becoming unusable. In the last few years, the city, joined by the Polo Grounds' original tenants: the Yankees, Mets, Giants, New York Jets football team, and New York Giants football team, teamed up to restore it, along with adding a picnic area, a clean-up effort and murals depicting New York Giants baseball stars created by local artists. South of the site is St. Nicholas Place. Willie Mays lived in his rookie season with the Goosby family at the corner of St. Nicholas Place and 155th Street, and would play stickball with local youth. That portion of St. Nicholas Place is named in Mays' honor.







JOHN T. BRUSH STAIRWAY

Dedicated to John T. Brush (1845-1912), the long-time owner of the New York Giants baseball franchise, this steel-and-concrete stairway with 80 steps was presented to the City of New York by the New York Giants on July 9, 1913. Brush previously owned the Indianapolis Hoosiers and Cincinnati Reds baseball teams before buying the Giants in 1890, retaining ownership until his death. He was honored in 1946 by the Baseball Hall of Fame for his role in developing the modern rules that govern the World Series.

Commissioned by Brush's son-in-law, Harry Hempstead, the stairway was built to provide access for the residents at the top of Coogan's Bluff, the steep rock escarpment of Highbridge Park, to the Polo Grounds, former home of the legendary team. It was left intact following the stadium's demolition in 1964 in order to provide a convenient walkway between the upper and lower tiers of Highbridge Park. Today, the stairway is the last remaining relic of the iconic stadium that housed five New York sports teams from 1890 to 1963.

In the decade prior to the stairway's reconstruction in 2013, the New York Daily News encouraged sports teams to join the effort to restore the stairway. Reconstruction was accomplished through the generosity of Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer along with generous donations from the New York Football Giants, New York Jets, New York Mets, New York Yankees, San Francisco Giants, and Major League Baseball.

John T. Brush Memorial Staircase, after renovation. (all photos by author)

5. **Hilltop Park** (168th Street and Broadway. Accessible by A, C, and 1 trains to 168th Street) The original home of the New York Yankees from 1903 to 1912 is now mostly the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. The rocky and hilly terrain – combined with the British Royal Highland Regiment (the Black

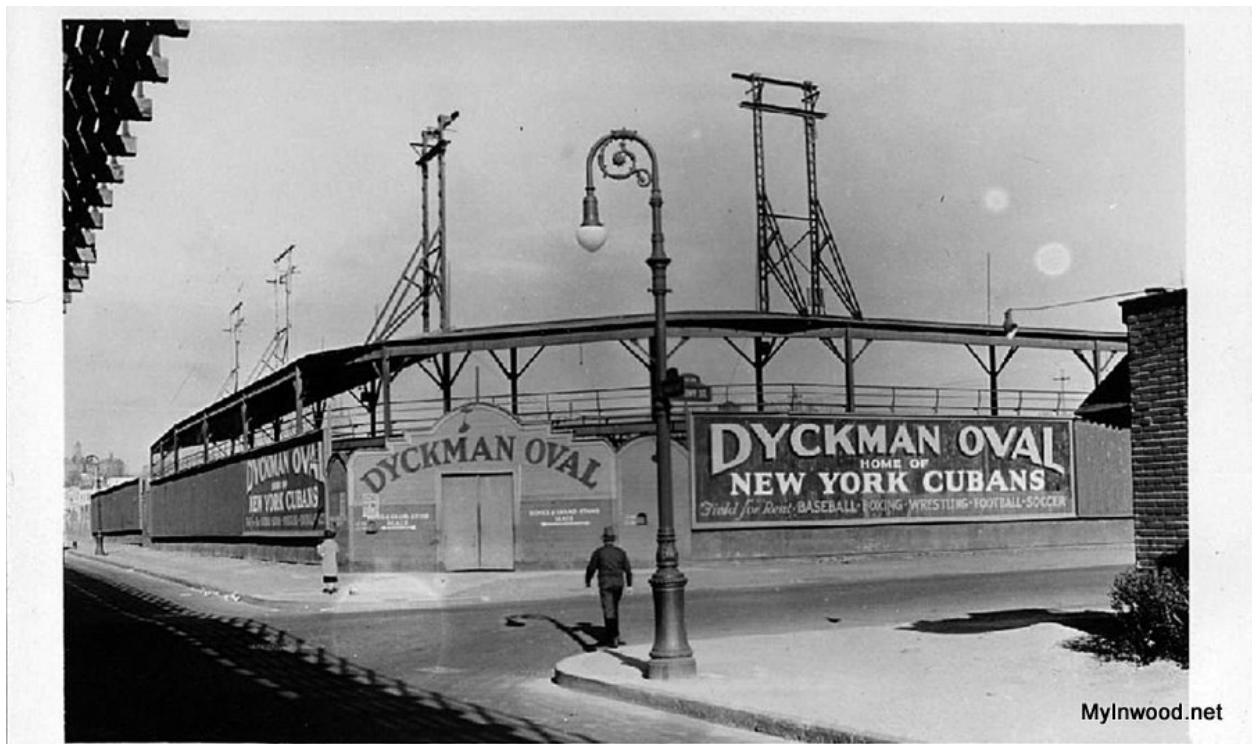
Watch) fighting the Continental Army there in 1776 – gave the Yankees their original name of “Highlanders,” which they dropped when the team’s lease at Hilltop Park expired and they moved to the Polo Grounds, becoming tenants of the Giants until 1922. The stadium was demolished in 1914, but in 1993, with the cooperation of SABR, the Yankees, and Columbia-Presbyterian, a plaque was dedicated to honor Hilltop Park.



Hilltop Park’s home plate, on Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital’s grounds.

6. **Dyckman Oval** (204th Street and 10th Avenue, 1 train to Dyckman Street)
Opened in 1920 and home to a variety of Negro League teams, the Dyckman Oval was the second major league stadium in New York to have lights. Babe

Ruth played exhibition games there after his major league career ended, smacking his last home runs in competition. The New York Cubans (in several guises) played their home games there, under their colorful owner, the morally questionable but community-concerned Alejandro (Alex) Pompez, who made his fortune as a numbers king, earning an incredible \$8,000 per day in the 1920s. Forced to sell his racket to Dutch Schultz in 1931, Pompez turned to baseball, but he and the stadium were brought down by the “Racket-Busting DA,” Tom Dewey – the stadium falling in 1938, Pompez pleading guilty to conspiracy in 1939. Pompez died in 1974, and was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2006. The New York Cubans moved to the Polo Grounds in 1943 and folded in 1950. Dyckman Oval became the Dyckman Homes Housing Project in 1951.



The Dyckman Oval in the 1930s. For readers who care, the lamppost is an early cast-iron Type 24, with a small crossbar, which helps repairmen to climb up to address issues with the lamp and filigree. While a number of Type 24 lampposts have survived as historic landmarks, many of the copies of these seen on New York’s streets are fiberglass replicas, placed at the request of neighborhood groups to enhance the appearance of streets. Taller versions of these lampposts can be seen in New Orleans’ French Quarter.

7. **Ebbets Field** (McKeever Place and Sullivan Place, B, Q, S trains to Prospect Park) Known throughout baseball for its unusual angles, rotunda entrance, unique features, and legendary fans, Ebbets Field was opened in 1913 and served as the home of the Brooklyn Dodgers until their departure for Los Angeles in 1957. Only one man ever won that “free suit” from Abe Stark, when Woody English hit the sign on June 6, 1937. When Braves hitter Bama Rowell hit a blast off Dodgers pitcher Hank Behrman in the second inning of a doubleheader nightcap on May 30, 1946, everybody knew it was 4:25 p.m. because Rowell’s shot smashed the scoreboard’s Bulova clock, covering Dodger right fielder Dixie Walker in shattered glass. However, the clock “kept ticking” for another hour. The Bulova Company promised a free watch to anyone who hit the clock, but Rowell did not receive his timepiece until 41 years later, on Bama Rowell Day in his hometown of Citronelle, Alabama. This event inspired the legendary clock-smashing scene in the novel and movie “**The Natural**.” When the ballpark was opened in 1913, management discovered it lacked a flag, keys to the bleachers, and a press box. While the first two problems were solved easily, the press box was not installed until 1929. Demolition of the stadium began in 1960. The same wrecking ball was used four years later on the Polo Grounds. The cornerstone and other pieces of the park went to Cooperstown, while eight light towers went to Downing Stadium on Randall’s Island, and many other souvenirs were auctioned off on April 20, 1960. The flagpole now stands before the Barclay Center at Atlantic Avenue. Interestingly, the Dodgers have now played more games in Los Angeles than at Ebbets Field, while the Mets played the same length of time at Shea Stadium as the Dodgers at Ebbets Field, with two World Championships to the Dodgers’ one. The site is now occupied by the Jackie Robinson Apartments (originally the Ebbets Field Apartments) which are opposite Jackie Robinson Intermediate School. In 2014, a die-hard Dodgers fan purchased the street sign that stood at the corner of McKeever Place and Montgomery Street for decades, paying \$58,852.08.



Ebbets Field in the good old days.



Ebbets Field Apartments in 2008.

8. **Washington Park** (Third Avenue and Third Street, Brooklyn, D, N, R, W trains to 9th Street, F, G trains to 4th Avenue). In its four incarnations, this stadium was the home of the Brooklyn Atlantics, Brooklyn Bridegrooms, The Federal League Brooklyn Tip-Tops, and even the 1887 New York Mets. The original stadium's original baseball clubhouse was George Washington's headquarters during the Battle of Long Island during the American Revolution, where 400 Maryland troops stood off 2,000 Hessian troops. The blue-uniformed Hessians never won a battle unless actual British troops were present, and as there weren't any British troops present, the Hessians maintained their losing streak until the Redcoats showed up to kill 259 and wound 100 Americans. The historic building was reduced to rubble in the 20th century, then rebuilt, and still stands. The third park was the site of a famous literary baseball appearance: Archibald "Moonlight" Graham's actual one inning in the outfield for the World Champion 1905 New York Giants, depicted accurately in the book "Shoeless Joe" and moved temporally to 1922 in the movie "Field of Dreams." Watching games at the third and fourth stadium was an olfactory experience because of nearby factories. The left-centerfield wall of the third park survives as the edge of a Con Edison storage yard.



A hefty crowd watches a game at Washington Park.

9. **Dexter Park** (Elderts Lane/Dexter Court and 75th Jamaica Avenue, J, Z trains to 75th Street). Home of the Eastern Colored League Brooklyn Royal Giants from 1923 to 1927, the Negro National League New York Cubans and New York Black Yankees in the 1930s and 1940s. Legend had it that the park replaced a racetrack and the stadium's name honored a horse named "Dexter" buried on the site. In fact, it was named for Charles Dexter, who operated the horse shed. The stadium was the first in New York to host a night game, doing so on July 23, 1930. Josh Gibson himself smacked a mammoth home over the 30-foot high wall behind the left-center bleachers at the 418-foot sign. The stadium bore perhaps the most creative billboard ever, from an optometrist, which read: "Don't Kill the Umpire – Maybe It's Your Own Eyes." While numerous Negro League titans like Gibson, Smokey Joe Williams starred there, so did Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Phil Rizzuto, Hank Greenberg, and even future Yankee announcing legend Bob Sheppard, in his role as St. John's University quarterback. The stadium was adapted for stock car racing in 1951 and used for that until 1956. The last baseball game there was on May 18, 1957, between St. John's University and City College of New York. The park was torn down in June 1957.



A crowd takes in the action at Dexter Park.



The plaque honoring Dexter Park, giving its history.

10. **Shea Stadium** (Roosevelt Avenue and Grand Central Parkway, 7 train to Willets Point-Mets) The second home of the New York Mets was also used as the home of the New York Yankees in 1974 and 1975 while the original Yankee Stadium was being renovated. The stadium was christened on April 16, 1964, with Dodger holy water from the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn and Giant holy water from the exact location the Harlem River passes the Polo Grounds. On April 15, 1998, a fallen beam at the old Yankee Stadium resulted in the Yankees playing a day game against the Los Angeles Angels at Shea – and triumphing, 6-3, on a Darryl Strawberry home run – followed by the Mets winning their scheduled game against the Chicago Cubs that evening. Met pitcher Rick Reed pitched seven four-hit shutout innings and homered for the 2-1 win, and John Franco saved the game. This was the first time in the 20th century that one ballpark housed two games for four different American and National League teams in the same day. At the time of its construction in 1964, Shea Stadium offered many new features – the field sections on movable rollers to accommodate differing needs for football and baseball games, and a light ring around the roof instead of light towers. The foul lines were marked at 330 feet in 1964, but when measured in 1965, discovered to actually be 341. The red Big Apple that rose out of a hat when a Met hits a home run was installed

in 1981 and moved to the Citifield in 2009, and now stands outside of the new stadium. A new Apple performs the same function. When the stadium was closed in 2008, the company with the rights to sell memorabilia was given two weeks to do. Seats were sold at \$869 per pair, plus tax, a combination of the Mets' two World Championship seasons, 1969 and 1986. Demolition began on October 14, 2008. As the stadium was City property, much of the stadium's equipment, including bathroom fixtures, were re-used in municipal facilities across New York. The sites of home plate, the pitcher's mound, and the bases are immortalized in the Citifield parking lot that now occupies the site of Shea Stadium.



Shea Stadium, on a perfect summer afternoon. Credit: (AmazingAvenue.com)



The site of Shea Stadium’s Home Plate is now in Citifield’s parking lot.

11. **Citi Field** (Roosevelt Avenue and Grand Central Parkway, Queens, 7 train to Willets Point-Mets) Opened in 2009, the stadium’s design is intended as homage to Ebbets Field with the exterior façade and rotunda honoring Jackie Robinson. Internally, there are features that honor the Polo Grounds – visible steel beams and all seats being green, as well as a right-field overhang. The outfield section also offers a pedestrian bridge named Shea Bridge, designed to resemble the Hell Gate Bridge and be a symbolic bridge to the City’s past National League teams. In 2012, the Mets added the City Party Deck in left field, along with the original top of their main Shea Stadium scoreboard. While the stadium drew rave reviews from architecture and food critics, Met fans were less impressed in how it honored the Brooklyn Dodgers’ legacy while ignoring the achievements of the Mets. Met owner Fred Wilpon, admitting that error in judgment, moved to install photographic images of famous Mets and historic moments, display team championship banners, and open a Mets Hall of Fame and Museum, while adding new members to the Hall. Another issue with the new park is that for its first three years, it was a “pitcher’s park,” which seriously decreased the home run production of Met sluggers David Wright and Jason Bay. The Mets did not have a no-hitter in the team’s history

until June 1, 2012, when Johan Santana ended the 50-year drought at the expense of the St. Louis Cardinals, 8-0.



Citifield and its signature apple. A statue of Tom Seaver is to be added in 2019. Note the entrance’s resemblance to Ebbets Field. The entrance lobby honors Jackie Robinson. (Photocredit: Wikimedia Commons)

Additional Stadiums

MANHATTAN

Polo Grounds (I)

Home to the Metropolitans (Mets), and the Giants

110th Street (south, right field for Mets, third base for Giants); Fifth Avenue (east, first base for Giants); Sixth (now Lenox) Avenue (west, third base for Mets); 112th Street (north, left field for Mets, right field for Giants) Nearest subway station: 110th Street, B, C trains.

Metropolitan Park

Home to Metropolitans

109th Street (north); East River (east); 107th Street (south); First Avenue (west)

BROOKLYN

Atlantic Ground

Marcy Avenue between Putnam and Gates Avenues.

Home to the Atlantic Club (before the club moved to the Capitoline Grounds), and the Enterprise Club, among others.

Capitoline Grounds

Marcy Avenue (east); Halsey Street (south); Putnam Avenue (north); Nostrand Avenue (west) in Bedford-Stuyvesant

Home to the Atlantics, the Enterprise, and the Excelsior Clubs.

Carroll Park Grounds

First field, bounded by Smith, Hoyt, Degraw, and Sackett Streets.

Second field, bounded by Smith, Hoyt, Carroll, and President Streets.

Modern park, between President and Carroll Streets east of Court Street.

Home to the Excelsior, Star, Marion, Waverly, Alert, Esculapian, Typographical, Independent, and Charter Oak Clubs. Center fielder Henry Chadwick played here.

Continental Grounds

Lee and Bedford Avenues, Ross and Hewes Streets.

Also known as the Wheat Hill Grounds, and the Putnam Grounds (I).

Home to the Continental, the Putnam, the Resolute and the Sylvia Clubs.

Eastern Park

Eastern Parkway (segment later renamed Pitkin Avenue when Eastern was diverted) (north, home plate); Long Island Railroad and Vesta Avenue (later renamed Van Sinderen Street) (east, left field); Sutter Avenue (south, center field); Powell Street (west, right field)

Home to Brooklyn Ward's Wonders, and the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Excelsior grounds (I)

Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn

Home to the Excelsior Club.

Excelsior grounds (II)

Red Hook, Brooklyn – south end of Court Street, on the waterfront (Gowanus Canal)

Home to the Star and the Excelsior Clubs.

Long Island Cricket Club Grounds

Terminus of the Fulton Avenue Railroad, Bedford, corner of Nostrand Avenue and Fulton Avenue.
very first home of the Atlantic Club, obviously sharing with the Long Island Cricket

Club. The Long Island Club hosted and handily won a cricket match with the Brooklyn Club, Later, the ground was occupied by the Pastime Club.

The Manor House Grounds

Nassau and Driggs Avenues, and Russell and Monitor Streets, or very near there.

Also known as the Eckford Grounds and the Greenpoint Grounds.

Home to the Eckford and the Wayne Clubs, as well as the Satellite Cricket Club.

MCU Park (formerly KeySpan Park)

Coney Island, Brooklyn – 1904 Surf Avenue – Surf Avenue (north, third base); Kensington Walk (east, left field); Boardwalk (south, right field); West 19th Street (west, first base)

Home to the Cyclones. Nearest subway station: Coney Island. N, D, F, Q trains.

Putnam Grounds (II)

Broadway between Lafayette and Gates Avenues.

Home to the Putnam, Constellation, Harmony, and the Oriental Clubs of Bedford.

Satellite Ground

Broadway, Harrison Avenue, Rutledge and Lynch Streets. This enclosed ground stood directly across Harrison Avenue from the Union Grounds.

Home to the Fulton and Resolute Clubs.

Union Grounds

Williamsburg, Brooklyn – Marcy Avenue (southwest); Rutledge Street (northwest); Harrison Avenue (northeast); Lynch Street (southeast)

Home to the Eckfords, Mutuels, Atlantics, and “Hartford of Brooklyn.”

Union Star Cricket Club Grounds

Fort Greene - corner of Myrtle and Portland Avenues.

The Union Star Cricket Club was formed in 1844 by Henry and William Russell, formerly of the St. George Cricket Club of Staten Island. The club was largely Jewish, and in later years switched games to baseball. the Brooklyn and New York Clubs on October 10, 1845 This field formed part of Fort Greene Park (originally called Washington Park) from its establishment in 1847.

Wawayanda Club Grounds

Duck Hill, Coney Island (southeast of Ocean Parkway and Neptune Avenue).

Home of the Wawayanda Club of Gravesend.

York Street Park

York Street – approach ramps for Brooklyn Bridge
Home to the Atlantics.

Yukatan Ground

Bedford. Better known as the Yukatan Pond, this was a public venue for skating every winter in the early 1860s.

Burial Sites

Please note that all these cemeteries are active and in use – avoid disturbing graves and funerals.

Jackie Robinson: Cypress Hills Cemetery, Brooklyn. Nearest subway station, Elderts Lane, J and Z trains Plot: Section 6, Lot: West Half Of P, Grave 8
GPS (lat/lon): [40.69615, -73.87257](#) The stone is marked with his great quote: “A life is not important, except in the impact it has on other lives.” Nearby lies his son, Jackie Jr., who died in a 1971 car crash.



Jackie Robinson’s gravestone. From left, his mother-in-law, Effie Isum, (1894-1973) Jackie himself, and Jackie Robinson, Jr. (1946-1971) (Photo credit: The Chronicleer and FindaGrave.Com)

Giants player **Ray Noble** is also buried in Cypress Hills Cemetery.

Charles H. Ebbets: Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn. Nearest subway station, 25 Street, R train. Plot: Lot 36731 Section C. The final resting place of the man who constructed Ebbets Field is also the highest point in the Borough of Brooklyn.

Henry Chadwick: Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn. Nearest subway station, 25 Street, R train. Plot: Section 31, Lot 32004 GPS (lat/lon) 40.65748, -73.98634. The inventor of baseball's scoring system is buried under a unique tombstone – it is topped by a granite baseball. The stone itself also has a bronze glove, crossed bats, and a catcher's mask. Granite bases mark the four corners of the Chadwick plot. The monument was created by a committee headed by Charles Ebbets, who is buried nearby. Chadwick bequeathed to baseball the box score and scoring systems we use to this day, and such permanent phrases as “assist,” “base hit,” “base on balls,” “cut off,” “chin music,” “fungo,” “whitewash,” “double play,” “error,” “single,” “left on base,” and “goose egg.”



Henry Chadwick's grave, complete with bases, bronze bats, mitt, and stone baseball. Clearly, visitors have left baseballs behind in his honor.

Green-Wood Cemetery is one of Brooklyn's legendary such facilities, and is the last resting place of many famous and infamous people, including F.A.O. Schwarz, Leonard Bernstein, De Witt Clinton, William Marcy Tweed, Johnny Torrio, Nathaniel Currier, Elias Howe, James Gordon Bennett, Albert Anastasia, Charles and Louis Tiffany, Horace Greeley, Samuel Morse, William Colgate, Bill "the Butcher" Poole, Leonard Jerome (Winston Churchill's father-in-law), and many others.

Frankie Frisch: Woodlawn Cemetery, The Bronx. Nearest subway station, Woodlawn, 4 train. The "Fordham Flash" enjoyed a Hall of Fame career as a star with the New York Giants and the St. Louis Cardinals, playing on four pennant winners, winning four World Series rings, retiring in 1937 with 2,880 hits, the record for switch-hitters until Pete Rose came along. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1947 and served on the Veterans' Committee for many years. In that role, he drew criticism for getting many of his teammates inducted into the Hall, despite their questionable statistics. He died in a 1973 car accident and is buried in his native borough. Plot: Section 90/91, Birch Hill Plot, Lot 12092 GPS: (lat/lon): 40.89438, -73.87341.



Frankie Frisch's grave

Henry "Heinie" Zimmerman: Woodlawn Cemetery, The Bronx. Nearest subway station, Woodlawn, 4 train. Section 207, Dahlia Plot, Lot 14069 NE. He starred for the New York Giants and Chicago Cubs at third base, winning the Triple Crown in 1912. However, his gambling habits, questionable play in the 1917 World

Series, and offers to throw games resulted in him being banned for life in 1921. He was a Manhattan native.

New York Yankee 1930s relief ace and New York Met General Manager **Johnny Murphy**, the “Fordham Fireman,” is also buried in Woodlawn.



Johnny Murphy's grave

“Smiling” Mickey Welch: Calvary Cemetery, Queens. Nearest subway station, 7 train, 40th Street/Lowery Street, five-block walk to cemetery. Plot: Section 4, Range 17, Plot S, Grave 6. One of the stars of the 19th century, Welch stands sixth in complete games (525), with a 307-210 won-loss record, virtually all of it for the New York Giants. He was not only one of the first pinch-hitters, he was a founder of the Brotherhood of Professional Baseball Players, the first union for athletes. He was posthumously elected to the Hall of Fame in 1973.



Smiling Mickey Welch grave. Note his original name.

(Photo credit: Stew Thornley)

“Wee Willie” Keeler: Calvary Cemetery, Queens. Calvary Cemetery, Queens. Nearest subway station, 7 train, 40th Street/Lowery Street, five-block walk to cemetery. Plot: Section 1W, Range 15 Plot B, Grave 5. Keeler “hit ‘em where they

ain't" for 19 seasons, resulting in a 44-game hitting streak, 2,932 hits for only 36 strikeouts, and a lifetime .341 batting average. He was elected into the Hall of Fame in 1939.



Wee Willie Keeler's grave (photo credit: Sean McKim)

New York Giants pitcher **Hugh McQuillan**, who starred on the 1922, 1923, and 1924 pennant winners, is also buried in the same cemetery.

With 3 million burials, Calvary Cemetery is the largest in the United States. Its most famous burial is fictional – the cemetery was used for the iconic funeral scene for Don Vito Corleone in “The Godfather.”

Gil Hodges: Holy Cross Cemetery, Brooklyn. Nearest subway station, Beverley Road, 2, 5 trains, and seven-block walk east. Plot: St. Catherine Section, Range B, Lot 191/193. One of the most beloved figures in Brooklyn Dodger history, the core of the “Boys of Summer” offense of the 1950s, Hodges married Brooklyn girl Joan Lombardi and put down deep roots in the borough, which were further strengthened by his brilliant and calm leadership of the 1969 “Miracle” New York Mets to their first World Championship.



Gil Hodges' grave – note the Met and Dodger caps.

Hilda Chester: Mount Richmond Cemetery, 420 Clarke Avenue, Staten Island. Section 15, Row 19, Grave 7. One of New York's greatest baseball assets has always been its unique fans: the Yankees had the late Freddy Schumann and his tin pan and today's "Bleacher Creatures." The Mets had fans who turned bedsheets into banners and signmaker Karl Ehrhardt. The Giants have a Preservation Society that honors the team's memory by cleaning up the area around the Polo Grounds. And the Brooklyn Dodgers, most memorably, had the "Sym-Phoney Band" and the legendary Hilda Chester, who brandished her cowbell at Ebbets Field, giving flowers, advice, cheers, and apocryphally, orders to Dodgers managers.

Hilda deliberately kept her background vague, refusing to tell where she was born or grew up, or why she moved to Brooklyn, merely saying, "I liked da climate!" Supposedly, she played outfield for the New York Bloomer Girls. The media recognized her colorful style and gave her publicity, and when not cheering on "Dem Bums," she appeared on radio and later, TV game and interview shows.

The Dodgers recognized her loyalty, color, and value in 1950 by giving her reserved seats near the visitors' dugout. Asked if such was the case, Hilda retorted: "Free tickets! I never accepted free tickets! They always gave me complementaries!"

Hilda cheered her team on to their legendary 1955 World Series victory, but did not follow them to Los Angeles after 1957. She was honored in 1961 as "America's Number One Baseball Fan" during the opening of the National Baseball Congress tournament in 1961, but after that faded from view, not giving interviews, living in the Park Nursing Home in Rockaway Park, Queens, where she died in December 1978.

Incredibly, she died indigent and no surviving family member surfaced to bury her, so the Hebrew Free Burial Association handled the burial for the Dodgers' most legendary fan.



Hilda Chester grave.

Restaurants, Hotels, and Offices

Toots Shor's Restaurant: 51 West 51st Street, Manhattan. Nearest subway station, 47th-50th Street, Rockefeller Center M, B, D, F trains. This legendary restaurant served “nutt’n fancy” food to celebrities of all types through the 1940s and 1950s, and was a favorite post-game restaurant for New York Yankees, New York Giants, and Brooklyn Dodgers, who could eat there and mingle with other celebrities, without harassment by media or fans. Joe DiMaggio and Jackie Gleason did not pay – reputedly it is the site where Yogi Berra met Ernest Hemingway, and was told Hemingway was a “writer.” Berra reputedly retorted, “Yeah? What paper?”

Shor sold the restaurant in 1959 and opened a new one on 52nd Street, which was padlocked in 1971 when Shor owed more than \$269,000 in back taxes. He died indigent in 1973.

The 51st Street restaurant is marked by a plaque.



Toots Shor Restaurant plaque



Toots Shor and his restaurant when Toots was the boss. Yes, that's a real Type 24 pole behind the canopy.

Brooklyn Dodgers' offices: 215 Montague Street, Brooklyn. Nearest subway station, Borough Hall, 2, 3, 4, 5 trains, or Court Street, R train. Now an undistinguished TD Bank, the Brooklyn Dodgers' offices were here, and this was where Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to his major league contract on April 10, 1947. Baseball's first African-American player earned the major league minimum of \$5,000 for his epochal season.

A plaque marks the site.



Brooklyn Dodgers Offices plaque

Photo credit: Untapped Cities by Larissa Zimmeroff

New York Giants’ Offices: 100 West 42nd Street. Nearest subway station, 42nd Street, D, F, M, B trains; 5th Avenue, 7 train. The building has been replaced by the Verizon building.

The “National Exhibition Company,” which was the corporation name of the Giants, had their offices here. Once a month, Mrs. Coogan came personally to collect her rent for the Polo Grounds, distrusting the US Postal Service. Willie Mays and many other brand-new Giants reported here on arrival in New York, before assuming their duties.

Even after the Giants left New York, the team kept its offices there, as they still held the Polo Grounds as a rented property, and indeed rented it out for football games, soccer games, religious revivals, and even a rodeo. The City took the Polo Grounds over under eminent domain in 1960.

There is no plaque or marker on the site.

Hotel McAlpin: Broadway and 34th Street, Manhattan. Nearest subway station, 34th Street-Herald Square, N, Q, R, W, B, D, M, F trains. When opened in 1912, it was

the largest hotel in the world. Jackie Robinson and his family were staying in Room 1169 here when he received the call on April 10, 1947, to report to Brooklyn to become a Dodger and break baseball's color line.

The building today is a luxury rental apartment complex.



Hotel McAlpin about 90 years ago.

Post card credit: Old Picture Post Cards, UK



Hotel McAlpin today.

Broadway Central (Grand Central) **Hotel**: 673 Broadway, at Bleecker Street, Manhattan. Nearest subway stations, Bleecker Street, 6 train; 8th Street, R train, Broadway-Lafayette Streets, B, D, M, F trains. When opened in 1870, it was one of America's grandest such structures at eight stories. In 1872, it saw the murder of financier Jim Fisk, but its true claim to fame came on February 2, 1876, when Chicago White Stockings owner William Hulbert united with seven other baseball team owners at the hotel to band their clubs into the National League. The original teams were Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Hartford, New York, Philadelphia, and Louisville. Players were forbidden to drink, on the field or off; no beer was to be served at ballparks, gambling was barred; ticket prices were set at 50 cents; and no games were to be played on Sundays.

By 1973, the hotel was a facility to house welfare recipients and a theater, and the aging structure collapsed just hours before a live performance. Four people were

killed, and the hotel was demolished. The site is now occupied by a 22-story New York University Law School dormitory. However, there is no plaque or marker.



The Broadway Central Hotel, seen during the 19th century.

Concourse Plaza Hotel: 900 Grand Concourse, at 161st Street, The Bronx. Nearest subway station: 161st Street-River Avenue, 4, B, D trains. The hotel was opened in 1923 by Governor Alfred E. Smith himself, who said, “After seeing this new structure, I am convinced that anything can go in The Bronx.” The hotel was the borough’s leading location for business, social, and fraternal events. Democratic presidential candidates, including John F. Kennedy, made regular stops there for rallies, usually at the behest of Bronx Democratic Party boss Ed Flynn. The hotel had two kitchens, one kosher, a grand ballroom, and four smaller ballrooms. Latino music legend Tito Puente played the grand ballroom every New Year’s Eve.

The hotel's baseball connections were firmed up very quickly, as Yankee ballplayers from Babe Ruth to Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris – and their families – would live there for the entire season, in a group of apartments the Yankees rented for the duration of the season. Visiting teams often stayed there as well, for convenience.

In the 1960s, The Bronx's economic difficulties also caused a downward spiral for the hotel, and it became accommodation for welfare recipients. However, Yankee second baseman Horace Clarke, who would unintentionally stamp his name on an era of team incompetence, also lived there through the hotel's decline, citing its inexpensiveness and proximity to Yankee Stadium.

In the early 1970s, an irate resident shot and killed a hotel manager, and in 1974, the city turned the hotel in to a senior citizens' residence. There is probably no link between the shooting and the fact that the hotel contained a private basement rifle range.

In 1980, film director John Cassavetes used the hotel as a location for the movie “**Gloria.**”



Concourse Plaza Hotel, as seen from the old Yankee Stadium.

Doral Inn: 541 Lexington Avenue, Manhattan. Nearest subway station: 51st Street, 6 train, Lexington Avenue, E, M trains. This hotel was the scene of negotiations for the 1981 baseball strike. Talks were held on the 17th floor, and the Crystal Room on the Second Floor was the press room, used by the media to await announcements at the close of each day's negotiations. Both the beginning and end of the strike were announced there.

Ansonia Hotel: 2109 Broadway, Manhattan. Nearest subway station: 72nd Street, 1, 2, 3 trains. Erected between 1899 and 1904, this legendary hotel was the home to many equally legendary people, including Florenz Ziegfeld, Angelina Jolie, Natalie Portman, Jack Dempsey, and, of course, Babe Ruth.

In addition, it was the site where Chicago White Sox first baseman Chick Gandil, who had an apartment in the hotel, met with his teammates – Happy Felsch, Lefty Williams, Ed Cicotte, Shoeless Joe Jackson, Fred McMullin, and Buck Weaver – to discuss the plot to “throw” the 1919 World Series, at the behest of fellow Ansonia tenant, “the Big Bankroll,” Arnold Rothstein.

Today the hotel, lavishly restored, is an apartment building. It was one of the first hotels in New York to have air conditioning.



Ansonia Hotel, viewed in its early days.

Post card credit: Museum of the City of New York.



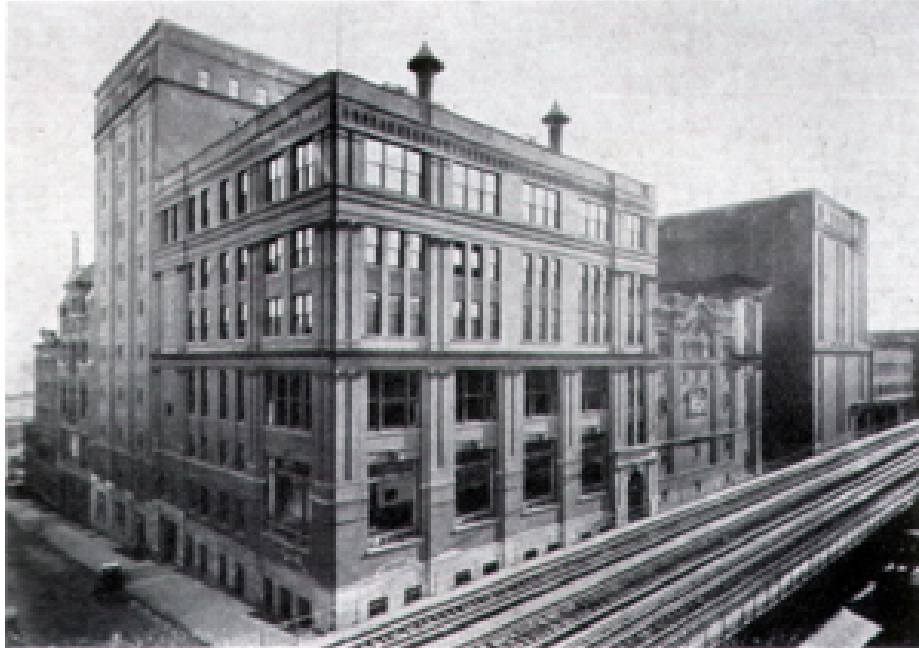
Ansonia Hotel, as seen today. Photo credit: Street Easy

Additional sites

Ruppert Brewery, 90th to 94th Streets, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, Manhattan. Nearest subway station: 86th Street, Q train (Second Avenue) or 86th Street, 4, 5, 6 train (Lexington Avenue). Once the nation's largest and most successful brewery, the fortress-like 35-building complex was the basis of Col. Jacob Ruppert's ability to purchase the Yankees with Col. Tillinghast L'hommedieu Huston and then buy out Huston. With a Prohibition pause to produce bubble gum and near-beer that was sold at Yankee games, the brewery churned out beer until 1965, when it was torn down and replaced by the present-day public housing towers. The Colonel's Knickerbocker label was sold to Rheingold that year.

Col. Ruppert also ran his Yankee dynasty from his offices in the brewery, and it was here that a chastised Babe Ruth promised to obey his manager, Miller Huggins, after the Babe's 1925 suspension.

A park and playground in the area honors Col. Ruppert.

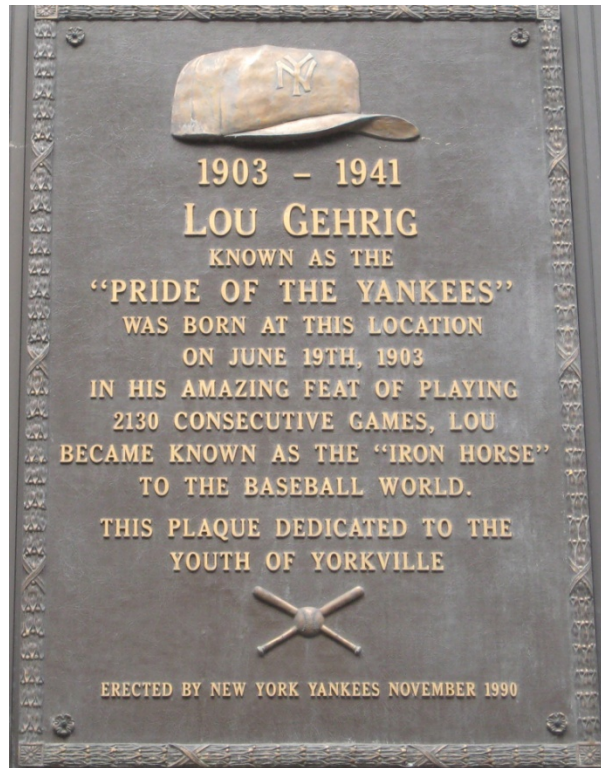


The Ruppert Brewery, when it was operational.

Lou Gehrig birthplaces, 309 East 94th Street, or 1994 Second Avenue (at 102nd Street). The former site can be reached by subway at 96th Street, 6 Train. The latter site is accessed by subway at 103rd Street, 6 Train, both on Lexington Avenue.

Biographies of Lou Gehrig say he was born in a house at 1994 Second Avenue, which ultimately became Dmitri's Garden Center, and was marked by a plaque, until the garden store vacated the premises. No plaque remains.

However, in 1990, the Yankees placed a plaque at 309 East 94th Street, which is now part of the Mt. Sinai Medical Center complex, declaring that the Iron Horse's birthplace. Sometime after that, his family moved to Washington Heights, and there is no question that he graduated from Commerce High School and attended Columbia University before making his Yankee debut.



The plaque honoring Lou Gehrig’s birthplace, maybe.

Parade Grounds: Coney Island Avenue and Parkside Avenue, Brooklyn.
Nearest subway station, Fort Hamilton Parkway, F and G trains, at Prospect Avenue and Fort Hamilton Parkway. This legendary ballfield was first established in 1869 as a parade area, but decades of peace turned it into a baseball field where generations of Brooklyn natives began baseball careers.

The earliest recorded Parade Ground star was **“Wee Willie” Keeler**, who was born in 1872 on Pulaski Street and died nearby in 1922. He was followed by **Joe Judge**, and **Waite “Schoolboy” Hoyt**, the star of Erasmus Hall High School and the New York Yankees of the 1920s. His 22-win, .739 winning percentage season with the 1927 Yankees and lifetime 237 wins propelled him to a lengthy broadcasting career and the Hall of Fame in 1969.

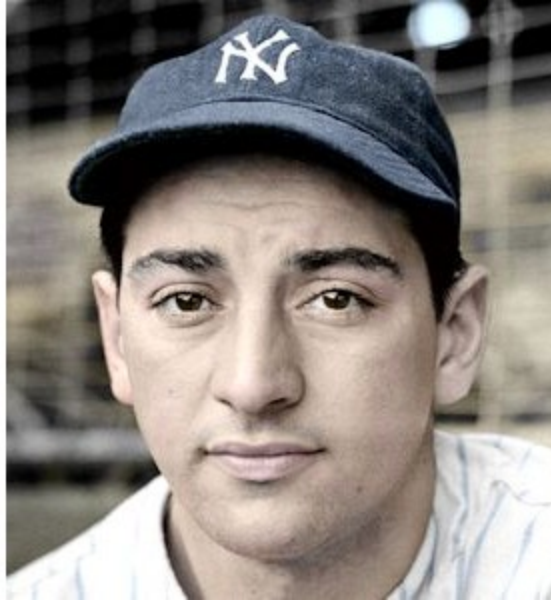


Waite Hoyt, with autograph. (Credit: Baseball Almanac)

Hoyt was followed on the field by **Tommy Holmes**, who grew up in Bay Ridge on 57th Street off of Fort Hamilton Parkway, playing with the Overtons, a neighborhood team. In 1945, as a Boston Brave, Holmes entered the record books with a 37-game hitting streak, which remained the National League record until Pete Rose in 1978. He also led the circuit with 224 hits and 28 home runs, finishing second in RBIs with 117 and in batting with .352 to the Cubs' Phil Cavaretta.

Another Parade Grounds star was Brownsville's **Sid Gordon**, who went from Samuel J. Tilden High School to Long Island University. Making his major league debut with the New York Giants on September 11, 1941, Gordon enjoyed a 13-year career, batting .283 with 202 home runs, a two-time All-Star. Despite wearing the Giants orange and black, he was popular in Brooklyn for his native roots and Jewish heritage.

Marius Ugo Russo was born in Bay Ridge in 1914 and grew up in Ozone Park, Queens, graduating from Richmond Hill High School. His skill as a baseball player on the Parade Grounds and basketball player in various gyms earned him a scholarship to Long Island University, where Yankee scout Paul Krichell spotted him pitching and playing first base. Krichell signed Russo for \$750 and the pitcher-first baseman reported to the Yankees' farm team, the Newark Bears, in 1937, one of the greatest minor league teams ever assembled. Two years later, Russo was starting on one of the greatest Yankee teams ever assembled, the 1939 Yankees, which won the American League pennant by 17 games and swept the hapless Cincinnati Reds in four straight World Series games.



Marius Russo (Credit: Baseball Birthdays)

Russo went on to star with the legendary 1941 World Champion Yankees, and played on two more pennant winners, 1942 and 1943. A bad arm ended Russo's career prematurely in 1946, but he bore witness to or participated in such historic moments as Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak and Mickey Owen's dropped third strike.

The next great star to emerge from the Parade Grounds was another Jewish legend, **Sandy Koufax**, whose best years as a Dodger were not in his native borough of Brooklyn but 3,000 miles away in Los Angeles. Koufax played alongside his friend, another Jewish Brooklyn kid, **Fred Wilpon**, a Lafayette High School pitching star, who would go on to own the Mets.



Sandy Koufax celebrates his fourth no-hitter in 1965. It was a perfect game, to boot.

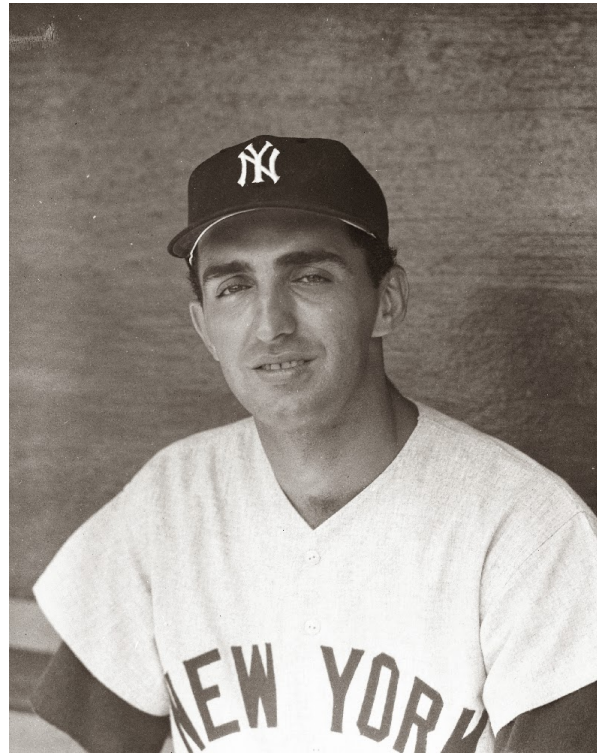
(Photo credit: Associated Press)

Another future Dodger star and Brooklyn native also began his career soon after Koufax went up to the majors, **Tommy Davis**. He won a batting title for the Dodgers in 1962, but a horrific ankle injury reduced his effectiveness after that. Davis was traded back to New York in 1967, and led the Mets in virtually every offensive category, despite wobbly ankles and exhaustion. At season's end, the Mets decided they could finish last without him, and shipped him to the White Sox for Tommie Agee.

Koufax, Davis, and Wilpon would share another view of the Parade Grounds – the lack of racism and anti-Semitism there, as opposed to the majors of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Neither issue affected a pair of young Italian-American Brooklynites named **Joe Pepitone** and **Rico Petrocelli**, both of whom starred on the Parade Grounds. Pepitone cut a colorful figure on and off the field for the Yankees, with his power bat, powerful hair dryer, and army of girlfriends, which included the daughter of his manager, Johnny Keane. Even Pepitone would later admit that his endless off-field

distractions caused his failure to achieve his potential, despite hitting 219 home runs in 12 major league seasons.



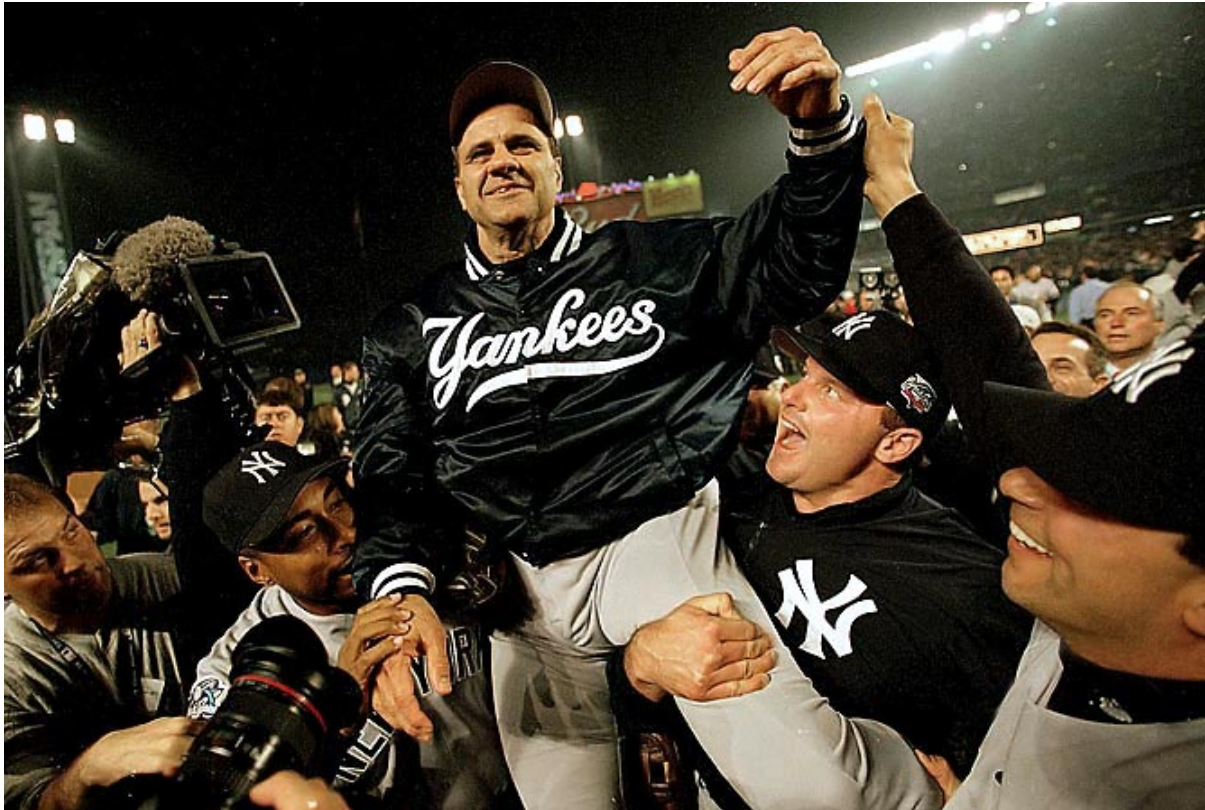
Joe Pepitone when he had it all in front of him.
(Photo credit: Scratch Hit Sports)

By comparison, Petrocelli did better, becoming a beloved shortstop and third baseman with the Boston Red Sox, smacking 50 home runs in a single season and helping two miraculous teams – the 1967 and 1975 versions – go to the World Series.

Two sets of brothers also starred on the Parade Ground in this era: the **Aspromontes, Ken and Bob**. Both became trivia question answers: Ken managed the Cleveland Indians before Frank Robinson took over, and Bob was the last Brooklyn Dodger to play in the majors, doing so with the Mets at the end of his playing career.

The second set of brothers has better major league credentials: **Frank and Joe Torre**, who starred for the Braves. Frank had seven years in the majors, batting .273 and smacked two home runs to help the Milwaukee Braves defeat the Yankees in the 1957 World Series in seven games. Joe Torre struggled all his life to make it to the World Series as a player and a manager, earning an MVP in 1971 with his .363 batting average, 230 hits, and 137 RBIs, all league-leading numbers.

But he achieved his dream and gained his Hall of Fame plaque as manager of the Yankees from 1996 to 2007, going from “Clueless Joe” to becoming one of the most beloved figures in Yankee history and the Hall of Fame.



“Clueless” Joe Torre at his supreme moment of glory: winning his third straight World Series, in 2000. Bearing the skipper aloft at left is Bernie Williams and at right is Roger Clemens.

Torre was followed on the field by more Brooklyn natives: **Frank Tepedino**, who spent eight years in the major leagues, including time with the Yankees, then joined the New York Fire Department. He responded to the attacks on the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Other Parade Ground stars through the 1960s and 1970s included **John Franco**, whose father was a sanitation worker. Franco pitched for Lafayette High School and attended St. John’s University, where he hurled two no-hitters in his freshman year. He would say later, “I have a lot of fond memories of the (Parade Grounds). But to be honest, the conditions weren’t that great.”

Becoming one of the most popular Mets, the relief ace wore an orange Sanitation Department under his Mets pinstripes to honor his dad. A four-time All-

Star, he finished his career with 424 saves. He is still active with the Mets' community service efforts.



John Franco, wearing his father's New York Sanitation Department T-shirt under his Mets jersey, hard at work. (Photo credit: St. John's University)

John Candelaria won 177 games in the majors, pitching a no-hitter in 1976 against the Dodgers , and gained a World Series ring with the “We Are Family” 1979 Pittsburgh Pirates. He was born in Brooklyn in 1953, played baseball at LaSalle High School and the Parade Grounds. At his first game in Shea Stadium on June 20, 1975, 47,867 people saw the “Candy Man” earn his first major-league win, downing the Mets, 5-1. He lived close enough to the Parade Grounds for his mother to call him for dinner from their window. When the author shared his New York roots with Candelaria, the pitcher shrugged and said “We all have our faults.”



John Candelaria does his stuff for the Pirates.

(Photo credit: Society for American Baseball Research. That's us.)

Like Candelaria, **Lee Mazzilli** played for both the Mets and the Yankees, born in Brooklyn in 1955, the son of an Italian immigrant. He lived in a second floor apartment on East 12th Street between Avenue Y and Avenue Z in Sheepshead Bay, near Coney Island. He starred as a baseball player and an ice skater, winning youth titles. He debuted as a Met in 1976 as a defensive replacement for John Milner, then earned his first at-bat, pinch-hitting for Bud Harrelson. As the Mets disintegrated in the late 1970s, he was advertised as their top star, benefiting from the mentoring of his manager, Joe Torre, his John Travolta-style good looks at the height of the “Saturday Night Fever” disco wave, and smacking a game-tying pinch-hit home run off the Texas Rangers’ Jim Kern in the 1979 All-Star Game in Seattle. He followed that up with a two-out bases-loaded walk off of the Yankees’ Ron Guidry to win the game.



Lee Mazzilli's "Italian Stallion" features gazed at New Yorkers from these advertisements throughout the subway, and while a generation of teenage girls was enthralled, several generations of fans (and media and opponents) snickered. Advertising king Jerry Della Femina admitted later that his 1980 campaign was selling the past, promising the future, and praying nobody would remember the present. But the player and the campaign yielded two things: Mazzilli was traded to Texas for Ron Darling and the giant apple that emerged from a top hat when a Met hit a home run has remained part of the Met atmosphere in two stadiums. The ads, however, are gone. (Photo credit: Ideal Properties Group)



But Lee Mazzilli returned to the Mets in late 1986, just in time to provide bench strength and pinch-hits down the stretch and in the post-season, most notably the legendary World Series Game 6 comeback. (Photo credit: ESPN)

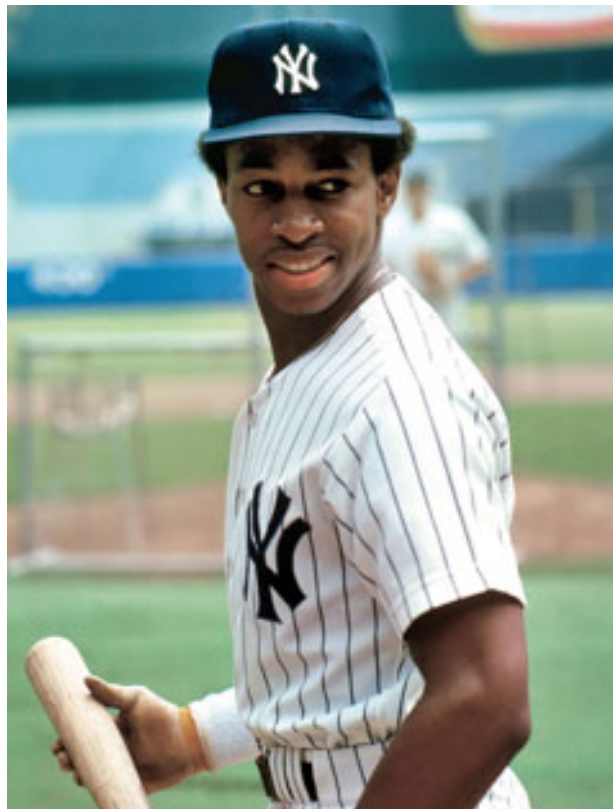
Mazzilli did more for the Mets when he was traded to Texas before the 1982 season – the Mets received in return pitchers Ron Darling and Walt Terrell. The former became one of their pitching stalwarts for years, while the second proved a useful part until he was traded for Howard Johnson, who became one of the Mets’ better bats.

But Mazzilli wound up back in New York twice – first in 1982 in a mid-season trade for shortstop Bucky Dent, playing 37 games before going on to Pittsburgh. His second tour was as a pinch-hitter and reserve with the 1986 Mets, playing a key bench role in the team’s legendary World Series drive. He went on to serve as a coach for his old boss, Joe Torre, with the Yankees, and managed in their farm system, and the Baltimore Orioles as well.

At the same time that Mazzilli starred at the Parade Grounds, a slick-fielding infielder from housing projects in East New York and Samuel J. Tilden High School was also playing well there – South Carolina-born **Willie Randolph**. Drafted in the seventh round by the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1972, Randolph debuted with the Bucs in 1976, but gained fame as the Yankees’ second baseman from 1976 to 1988, earning two World Series rings and being named team co-captain from 1986 to 1988. He

finished his active career as a Met in 1992, and then coached for 11 seasons for the Yankees, until he was named the Mets' – and New York's – first African-American manager in 2005. The following year, his Mets tied with the Yankees for the best record in baseball, 97-65, and came within one inning of going to the World Series. But a late-season collapse in 2007 and a slow start in 2008 resulted in his firing.

The Parade Ground is a large facility, with 13 diamonds during most of its history, hosting as many as 60 games on weekends in its heyday, involving a variety of local leagues. The park's main feature was its 1905-built "Clubhouse," which contained the usual locker rooms, showers, storage, and Parks Department Offices, all behind Roman pillars. However, the neglected structure was demolished in the 1960s and replaced with a more modern building. A 2004 renovation addressed much of the facility's disrepair but cut the baseball fields down to five, while adding tennis courts and soccer fields.



Willie Randolph at the start, the kid from East New York, freshly traded to the Yankees. (Photo credit: Society for American Baseball Research)



Four decades later, Willie Randolph and his family receive the thanks of a grateful city and team he inspired to 10 American League Pennants and six World Championships, by having a plaque in his honor placed in Monument Park. (Photo credit: New York Daily News)



That same day, in the same ceremony, as a surprise gesture, the Yankees honored a player who wore Number 30 with great honor before Randolph, during times of defeat and trial for the Yankees...Mel Stottlemyre. The great pitcher and pitching coach, battling cancer, was overwhelmed. The Yankees know how to honor their past. (Photo credit: New York Daily News)

Elysian Fields, 11th Street and Washington Street, Hoboken, New Jersey. Reached by PATH train to Hoboken and No. 163 NJ Transit Bus or No. 163 NJ Transit bus from Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

The highly organized New York Knickerbockers played their first official match under the new rules for baseball devised by their manager, Alexander Joy Cartwright, on this spot, and endured baseball's first upset, falling 23-1 to the New York Base Ball Club. For years, New York and New Jersey teams used the site for baseball games. A marker placed here in 1986 by the city and unveiled by Yankee Hall of Famer and Brooklyn native Phil Rizzuto and Met community affairs representative and former Boston Braves star Tommy Holmes honors this landmark event in baseball history.



The birthplace of baseball as we know it – Hoboken, New Jersey.

Yogi Berra Museum and Learning Center, 8 Yogi Berra Drive, Little Falls, New Jersey, 07424 P: 973.655.2378.

Located on the campus of Montclair State University, this unique museum and educational center honors the life and legacy of one of America's most beloved athletes and wits and his four values: excellence, perseverance, respect, and sportsmanship. Permanent exhibits display artifacts from his Hall of Fame baseball career, World War II US Navy combat service, and his role as a cultural icon. The museum is open Noon to 5 p.m., Wednesdays through Sundays. Admission: \$6 for adults, \$4 for youth under 18, and \$5 for seniors.

Bookstores

Austin Book Shop, 104-29 Jamaica Avenue, Queens. Nearest subway station, 104th Street, J, Z trains. Open Saturdays only, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Opened in 1954, this store developed a specialty on books on baseball, and has the largest collection of out-of-print baseball books in the nation.

The Strand Bookstore, 828 Broadway (northeast corner of East 12th Street. Nearest subway station, 14th Street-Union Square, 4, 5, 6, N, R, Q, V, L trains. Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Sundays. This legendary bookstore offers 18 miles of books on nearly every conceivable subject, with outdoor shelves of \$1 and \$2 books. Baseball books are downstairs. The store also offers unique buttons and t-shirts.

There are a great many more historic baseball sites in the New York area: Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Billy Martin, and Jacob Ruppert are all buried in cemeteries just north of the city. Alex Rodriguez, Richie Scheinblum, John Candelaria, Manny Ramirez, Ed Kranepool, Whitey Ford, and Phil Rizzuto are just some of the major league stars who were born in the city. SABR members who have studied these subjects can explore these sites for themselves. Enjoy!

Anniversaries related to the 47th National Convention

The 47th National Convention took place in New York 2017, and it's worth looking back through the "sands of time" at major New York baseball events in years that are the "fifth" or "10th" in 2017, since 1907.

1907

Giants' catcher Roger Bresnahan dons shin guards on Opening Day on April 11, becoming the first catcher to do so. Later that year, after suffering a beaning, he becomes the first major leaguer to wear a pneumatic protector while batting.

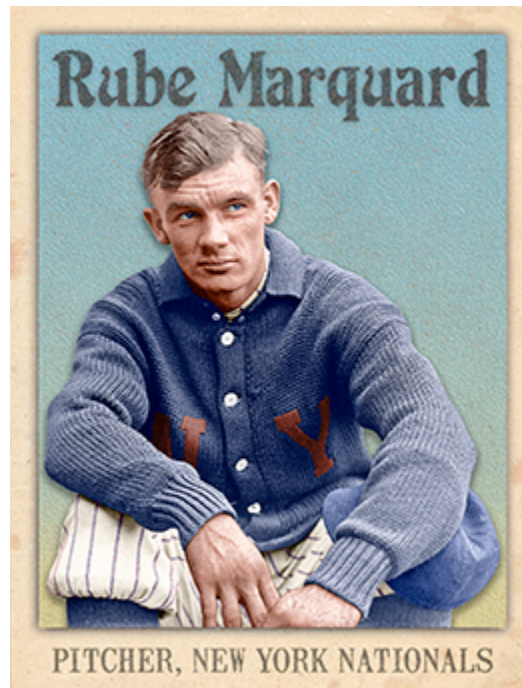
On May 18, the Giants win their 17th straight game to create a 24-3 record. The streak ends two days later.

On July 12, a fan catches a foul ball at the Polo Grounds and refuses to return it to the game, defying the standard practice of the time. Giant team secretary Fred Knowles decides not to prosecute the fan, but warns: "In the future I will not be so

lenient and any person deliberately trying to steal a ball will be arrested and the complaint pushed.”

1912

The Giants field one of the greatest teams in their history, with Christy Mathewson, Rube Marquard, and Jeff Tesreau anchoring the pitching rotation. Marquard posts a record 19-game winning streak, while Tesreau’s 1.96 ERA leads the National League. He also fires a 3-0 no-hitter against the Phillies on September 6.

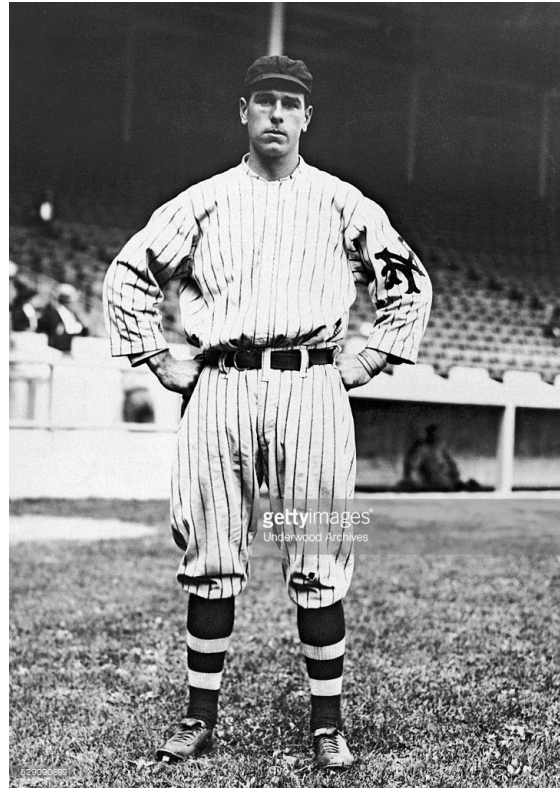


**Rube Marquard: 201 wins lifetime, 19 straight in 1912.
Why isn't this man smiling? He's in Cooperstown.**

Artwork credit: arslongaarts.com

The World Series against the Boston Red Sox is less glorious, however, as the Sox’ Hugh Bedient stands off Mathewson twice, and the Giants lose the seventh game to the Sox on a series of physical miscues by center fielder Fred Snodgrass, who drops a celebrated fly ball for the “\$30,000 muff,” and mental miscue by Mathewson, who calls off first baseman Fred Merkle on a critical Tris Speaker pop foul in favor of slow-moving catcher Chief Meyers, so that nobody catches it, and Speaker then wins the series. Giant fans in attendance, ranging from ordinary New Yorkers, including the author’s grandfather, to Broadway stars like George M. Cohan, weep in their seats.

Snodgrass is a graduate of St. Vincent's College in Los Angeles. After his baseball career ends, he is a successful banker in Oxnard, California, and then a council member and mayor. However, his 1974 New York Times obituary, a masterpiece of brevity, refers primarily to his "\$30,000 muff," so named because of its connection to the winners' share of the World Series attendance. However, Giants Manager John J. McGraw reacts to Snodgrass's blunder by giving him a \$1,000 raise, an astronomical figure for its time.



Fred Snodgrass, looking suitably grim. He went on to become Mayor of Oxnard, California. (Getty Images)

The same year, the New York Highlanders open Boston's Fenway Park, losing 7-6, on April 20. The opening of Fenway Park is overshadowed by the arrival of the liner **RMS Carpathia** in New York, carrying the 705 survivors of **RMS Titanic**, sunk on April 15.

A highlight of the season is that the Highlanders start wearing the interlocking "NY," which is based on a Tiffany jewelry design from the 1880s. The symbol will become iconic.

A lowlight of the Yankees' season takes place on May 12, when Ty Cobb hears some insults from a fan named Claude Lueker, a pressman at a New York newspaper,

who has lost one hand and two fingers to his machinery. Goaded by teammate Sam Crawford, a fellow future Hall of Famer, Cobb charges into the stands to beat the man. American League President Ban Johnson, present at the game, suspends Cobb.

Three days later, in Philadelphia, the Tigers go on strike in sympathy, and Tiger management fields a team of amateurs recruited from Philly sandlots to face the reigning World Champion Athletics, and lose 24-2. Cobb somehow persuades his teammates to end the strike, presumably all hands fearing greater retribution from baseball's magnates. The Highlanders don't do much better: they finish the season 50-102, some 55 games out of first place. Only 242,294 masochists attend their games.

At season's end, Highlander management takes firm measures to change their team's sorry condition: they fire manager Harry Wolverton, move out of Hilltop Park to the Polo Grounds, and change the team's name to the more-commonly used "Yankees." The following year, the author's grandfather attends his first Yankees game at the Polo Grounds. He has already been a Giants fan since 1908, so now he and his descendants root for two teams throughout history, giving them enormous difficulties at six World Series and when interleague play begins.

In Brooklyn, Dodgers owner Charles Hercules Ebbets decides that his team needs a new ballpark, one the equal of Boston's Fenway Park. "I've made more money than I ever expected to," he says, "but I am putting all of it, and more, too, into the new plant for the Brooklyn fans. Of course it's one thing to have a fine ball club and win a pennant, but to my mind there is something more important than that about a ball club. I believe that the fan should be taken care of. A club should provide a suitable home for its patrons. This home should be in a location that is healthy, it should be safe, and it should be convenient."

Ebbets picks a garbage dump in Flatbush called "Pigtown," and pays \$750,000 to do so – half of his interest in the team to pay the debts – and starts work on what will become Ebbets Field, which opens a year later.

1917

Giants Manager John J. McGraw signs a three-year \$40,000-per-year contract (plus bonuses) to lead the team, making him the highest-paid figure in baseball. He rewards his bosses with the team's sixth pennant, but loses the World Series to the Chicago White Sox in six games when third baseman Heinie Zimmerman opens the fourth inning of Game Six with a wild throw that puts Eddie Collins on first base. Right fielder Dave Robertson's error on a Shoeless Joe Jackson pop fly puts runners on second and third. Next up, Happy Felsch smacks a one-hopper to the mound,

which pitcher Rube Benton fields, throws to Zimmerman, trapping “Columbia Eddie” Collins off third base.

Zimmerman and catcher Bill Rariden have Collins in a rundown, but Zimmerman chases Collins across the plate, rather than throwing home, in a highly controversial (and poorly described) play. Zimmerman claims he had no one to throw to, but umpire Bill Klem. “I was afraid he would,” Klem says. Rariden claims that Zimmerman yelled, “Get out of the way, I’ll get this monkey myself.” Reporter Sid Mercer gleefully writes that Collins said, “I’m a faster man than you are, Heinie Zim,” riffing off of Kipling.

Zimmerman becomes bitter after the fiasco. When the Giants acquire Hal Chase in 1919, the two become drinking pals, hanging out with gamblers. The result is that on September 10, 1919, in the first inning of a game with the Cubs, Zimmerman tells Giant pitcher Fred Toney it would be worth his while not to bear down against Chicago. Toney ponders that for an inning, and then reports it to McGraw, asking to remove him from the game, fearing he might be suspected of not giving his best effort, no matter what.

McGraw yanks Toney from the game and kicks Zimmerman off the team. The result of this incident is suspicion that Zimmerman “dumped” the key plays in the 1917 World Series finale.



Henry “Heinie” Zimmerman, when as a Chicago Cub, he led the 1912 National League in batting (.372), hits (207), doubles (41), home runs (14), and

total bases. Known as the “Great Houdini” or “The Great Zim,” he even received mail addressed that way.

The Yankees, still New York’s second (or maybe third) team, finish in sixth place, before 330, 294 die-hards. No pitcher wins more than 13 games, but one of the victories is on April 24 at Fenway Park, against Dutch Leonard and the reigning World Champions, before 3,219 fans.

All afternoon, according to the **New York Tribune**, Yankee starter George Mogridge has the Red Sox “swinging like barn doors in a gale,” getting runners on base in two innings on errors, who are left stranded. In the sixth, Leonard gives up a double to Cuban-born Angel Aragon, who is playing third base because future Hall-of-Famer Home Run Baker is sick. Aragon’s drive is one of three hits he will get all season. Lee Magee, another scrub, singles in Aragon, to put the Yankees up, 1-0.

In the bottom of the seventh, Mogridge issues his second walk of the day to Jack Barry, the Sox’ player-manager, to lead off the inning. Del Gainer hits a sure double-play ball to second, but Fritz Maisel’s relay to shortstop Roger Peckinpaugh drops out, putting two on first on the error. Duffy Lewis bunts the runners over for one out. Mogridge intentionally passes slugger Tilly Walker to set up the double play.

Jimmy Walsh comes in to pinch-hit for “the ancient and honorable Larry Gardner,” according to the **Tribune**. He hits a sacrifice fly to tie the game at 1-1. Yet the Sox have not a gained a single hit. Mogridge ends the inning with no further abuse, and the game goes to the ninth.

In that inning, Peck smacks a grounder to third baseman Mike McNally, who can’t get it out of his glove in time. Peck steals second, goes to third when catcher Hick Cady’s throw flies into center field, and scores on a ground out by Les Nunamaker. The Yankees now lead, 2-1.

Mogridge then goes out to the mound in the ninth, and disposes of the Red Sox, one-two-three, for the Yankees’ first no-hitter, a 2-1 score, one of seven pitchers in the 20th century to hurl a no-no, while giving up a run.

Mogridge finishes the year 9-11 on the year, and as of 2011 is one of only four visiting pitchers to fire a no-hitter there and the only southpaw to do so: the other three are Hall of Famers Walter Johnson, Ted Lyons, and Jim Bunning.



George Mogridge, wearing uniform of the day for the Washington Senators, for whom he pitched with some effectiveness (16-11, 3.76 ERA, 48 Ks) in their 1924 World Championship season.

1922

Under the leadership of owner Jacob Ruppert, general manager Ed Barrow, and field manager Miller Huggins, the once punchless New York Yankees win their second consecutive American League pennant, on the arms of Waite Hoyt, Sad Sam Jones, Joe Bush, and Herb Pennock. With star outfielder Babe Ruth often out from injuries and suspensions, Bob Meusel, Everett Scott, Joe Dugan, and Wally Pipp lead the team. More than 1 million fans crowd the Polo Grounds to see Ruth and his pals smack home runs and line drives, and Bush post 26 wins.

On May 6, Carl Mays make the point of the Yankees' excellence in a mere one hour and 11 minutes, disposing of the Philadelphia Athletics, 2-0, with a snappy two-hitter in Shibe Park, facing only 29 A's batters. Both hits are smacked by A's center fielder Ed Miller. 15,000 fans watch the game, and have plenty of time for dinner thereafter. The Yankee win, combined with the St. Louis Browns losing in Cleveland, put the Yankees in first place in the American League.

On July 3, the Yankees and Carl Mays humiliate Connie Mack's A's further on his soil, before 13,000 fans. This game is an easier victory for the Yankees, as Bob Meusel singles in the first inning to give the Yankees a 1-0 lead. He bashes a triple in the fifth to make it a 6-0 game. In the seventh, Babe Ruth belts a home run into the left field bleachers off of Charlie Eckert. Meusel then steps ups and cracks a solo home run. With two on in the eighth, Meusel becomes the first Yankee to hit for the

cycle twice in his career, giving the Yankees a 12-1. Mays goes the distance for the win.

Meusel goes on to have a third cycle game six years later. All three of such feats take place on the road.



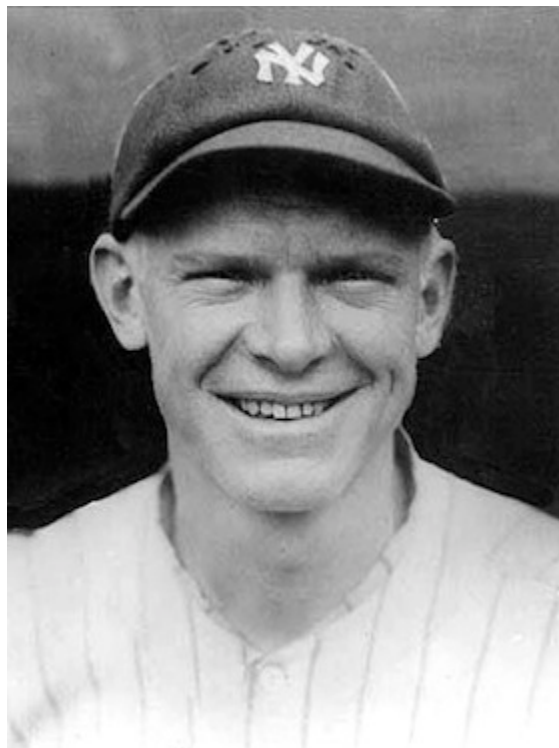
Bob Meusel: In 1925, he became the second Yankee, after Ruth, to lead the AL in the following offensive categories: [home runs](#) (33), [runs batted in](#) (138) and [extra base hits](#) (79). Nicknamed "Long Bob" because of his 6-foot, 3 inch (1.91 m) stature, Meusel [batted](#) .313 or better in seven of his first eight seasons, finishing with a .309 career average; his 1,005 RBI during the 1920s were the fourth most by any major leaguer, and trailed only [Harry Heilmann](#)'s total of 1,131 among AL right-handed hitters. Unfortunately, Harvey Frommer described Meusel as a heavy drinker and womanizer who did not get along with his teammates. His manager [Miller Huggins](#) called him "indifferent."^[27] He was quiet and reserved, rarely giving newspaper interviews until his career was winding down.^[28] He was also known for his lazy attitude, such as refusing to run out ground balls, which many said kept him from achieving greatness. (all links and footnotes to Meusel's Wikipedia page)

On September 16, the Yankees send “Sailor Bob” Shawkey to the Sportsman’s Park mound to face Urban Shocker and the tough St. Louis Browns, their chief rivals for the American League Pennant. Shawkey scatters seven hits over nine innings, one of them to future Hall of Famer George Sisler, who extends his hitting streak to 40 games, but Wally Pipp and Everett Scott drive in two runs to put the Yankees up 2-1.

Browns third baseman Eddie Foster leads off the bottom of the ninth with a fly to right center, and Bob Meusel waves off center fielder Whitey Witt to take it himself. At that moment, a Browns fan in the right field bleachers hurls a bottle that hits Witt in the face. The players jump apart as umpires and other Yankees dash to the scene.

So does the St. Louis Police Department on horseback, thundering out with nightsticks brandished. The sight of St. Louis’s finest cools down the fans, but the five-foot-seven Witt, unconscious, has to be carried out on the shoulders of his 5-foot-11 teammate, catcher Freddy Hoffman.

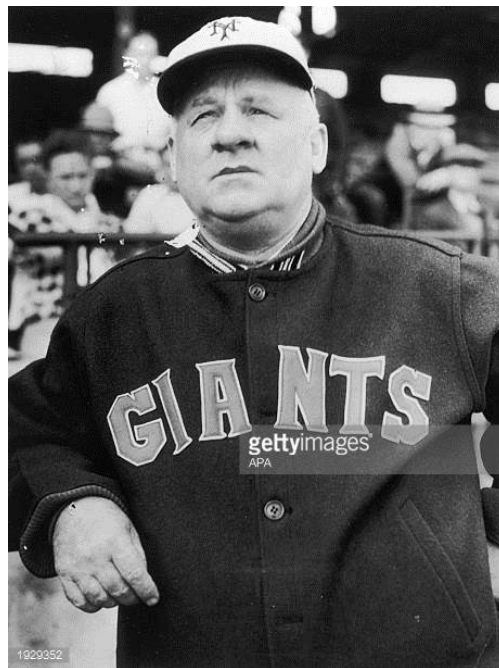
In the clubhouse, Witt is diagnosed as suffering a painful cut. The hit is so severe, the bottom of the bottle was knocked out by the painful cut. Witt makes a recovery, though, and plays four years with the Yankees. The Browns do not recover – they lose the game and the Yankees win the pennant, by one game.



Whitey Witt: When he died in Salem County, New Jersey, at age 92, he was the last surviving member of the 1923 World Champion Yankees – the first Yankee squad to bear that title. (Photo credit: SABR)

These glories annoy the Yankees' landlord, the Giants, the reigning World Champions, who only draw 945,809 all season, despite having Ross Youngs, Irish Meusel, Frankie Frisch, and Heinie Groh in the lineup. Pitchers Art Nehf, Jesse Barnes, and Phil Douglas define excellence on the mound.

The two rivals face off in the second straight all-New York World Series, and the Giants strangle Ruth's bat with slow curves, taking the series with four victories and no defeats, but there is some drama in Game Two, when the 3-3 game is called "on account of darkness" with the sun high in the sky. The 37,020 fans in attendance, which include Britain's Lord and Lady Mountbatten, vent their fury on the innocent Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who does not actually make the call – Umpire George Hildebrand does. Landis orders the game's \$120,000 receipts divided between New York City charities and groups caring for disabled Great War veterans.



John J. McGraw, manager of the 1922 World Champion New York Giants, the last Giants team to win a World Series at home.

1927

Few teams and seasons are more exciting or powerful than the one fielded in the Polo Grounds that year – except the one across the Harlem River by the Yankees in The Bronx.

The 1927 Giants, starring newly-acquired second baseman Rogers Hornsby, Edd Roush, Fred Lindstrom, Bill Terry, rookie Mel Ott, and pitchers Burleigh Grimes and Fred Fitzsimmons, makes a great run for the pennant, only to be stopped on a September 5 doubleheader with the Boston Braves. In the first game, Boston Brave right-hander Charlie Robertson outduels Virgil Barnes for a 6-1 Giant loss that snaps a 10-game Polo Grounders' win streak. But the Giants are eliminated on September 30, making manager John J. McGraw's Silver Anniversary year as Giants' manager a sorry one – even the July ceremony to honor the achievement takes place in a downpour.

The tragedies continue later that year as celebrated star Ross Youngs dies of Bright's Disease. At season's end, Hornsby's personality forces his trade to the Boston Braves for fat catcher Shanty Hogan, and McGraw himself faces civil suits over his failed Florida real estate bubble, "Pennant Park." McGraw spends years raising funds to pay off the investors.



Ross Youngs, seen in his prime. John J. McGraw thought he was one of the two best players he ever managed. The other one was Christy Mathewson.
(Photo credit: Cooperstown Expert)

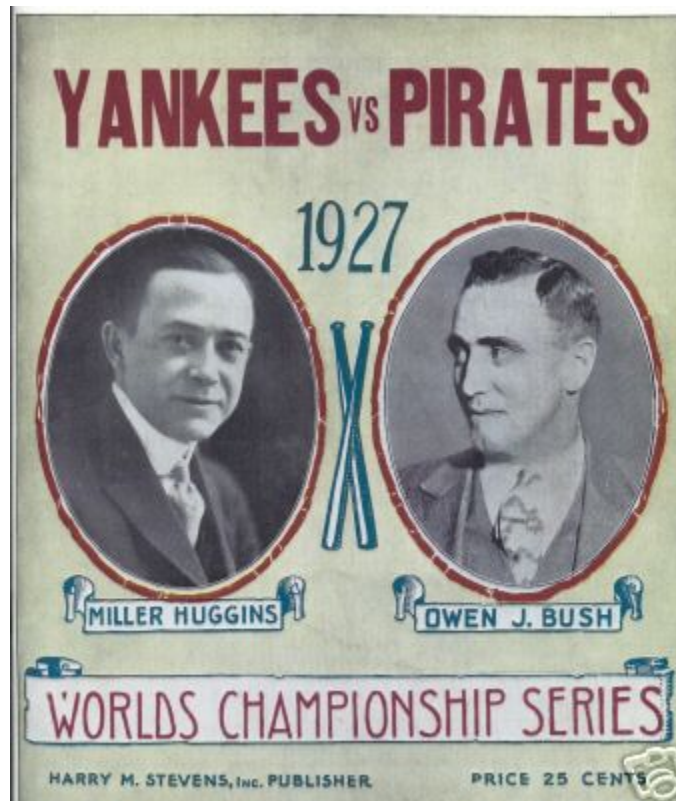


Ross Youngs, as drawn by artist Dick Perez. Attention, attention, should be paid to such a man.

But it's all cheers across the Harlem as the Yankees field what is often considered the greatest team in baseball history, headed by Babe Ruth and his record-setting 60 home runs, Lou Gehrig and his record-setting 175 RBIs, Earle Combs and his league-leading 231 hits, Waite Hoyt and his league-leading .759 pitching percentage, 2.63 ERA, and 22 wins, which enable the Yankees to win the pennant by 19 games.



This is about how the 1927 Yankees looked to opposing pitchers.



Get your scorecard, can't tell your managers without a scorecard.

The Yankees sweep the Pittsburgh Pirates in the World Series in four straight games, the first and fourth of which are one-run battles (5-4 and 4-3). Contrary to popular belief, the Pirates are not overwhelmed by the Yankees' batting practice prowess...both Lloyd and Paul Waner fulminate against that legend for the rest of their lives, to no avail.



Murderers' Row – the 1927 New York Yankees.

1932

With the Giants' June 3 doubleheader with the Phillies at the Polo Grounds rained out, sickly and exhausted Giant manager John J. McGraw summons first baseman Bill Terry to his office and, out of the blue, offers him the managing job. Terry and McGraw have been barely speaking for years. But Terry takes it almost immediately, even though the Giants are having a rotten season. The team finishes in a tie for sixth place in the National League with a 72-82 record, 18 games behind the Chicago Cubs.

Terry can't do much to improve the Giants' standings in the National League, but he improves the Polo Grounds atmosphere.

The first thing Terry does is fire McGraw's trainer and spy, "Doc" Knowles. His second move is to let ballplayers use the phone on his desk to make and receive calls instead of the pay phone in the clubhouse. In a short time, there is a huge trail of spikes in Terry's carpet as ballplayers take advantage of this largesse to call wives, set up dates and golf outings, or make dinner reservations. Third, Terry tells players they don't have to stand at attention with their backs to the door when they come in to see him.



John J. McGraw, at the end of the trail.

He stopped managing in uniform in the 1920s. He would likely have trouble managing today, but everything today's managers do started with him.

This shocking baseball event is leaked to the media when New York World-Telegram sportswriter Tom Meany visits the Polo Grounds to come up with a rainout story. A hot dog vendor asks Meany: “Did you know that McGraw is out and Terry is the new manager?” Meany gets confirmation from coach Tom Clarke and a statement on the clubhouse bulletin board.

Once public, Meany’s story is the biggest news in baseball, burying Lou Gehrig smashing four home runs the same day in Philadelphia, and narrowly missing a fifth, the only Yankee ever to blast four homers in a single game.



Bill Terry, the man of the hour, in 1934. He should look happier – his Giants were the reigning World Champions. Mears Auctions



Neither of these gentlemen requires any introduction, but the sight of them probably filled American League pitchers with nightmares. Credit: New York Daily News

Indeed, despite a .349, 34 HR, 151 RBI year, it's a tough one for Gehrig, playing in the shadows as usual on a team that wins the pennant as usual. A fading Babe Ruth bats .341, rips 41 HRs, and drives in 137 runs, Lefty Gomez starts 13-1 and finishes 24-7, and Joe McCarthy's Yankees storm into the World Series against the Chicago Cubs.

The 1932 regular season's highlight is likely a game in Washington's Griffith Stadium on August 13, when Charlie "Red" Ruffing against the increasingly tough (you read that right) Senators. Ruffing, who lacks four toes on his left foot due to a childhood accident while working in a coal mine, is noted for his ability to pitch and hit. As a member of the Boston Red Sox from 1924 to 1930, he has lost 20 games a year. As a Yankee since then, he has joined Lefty Gomez as the aces of the staff. The cost to the Yankees? Reserve outfielder Cedric Durst, in yet another one of the many Yankee-Red Sox deals that have left Boston fans banging their heads against the walls for decades.

There is bad blood between the Yankees and Senators beyond the tough pennant race: in July, Yankee catcher Bill Dickey got into a fight with Senators outfielder Carl Reynolds and broke his jaw, earning Dickey a \$1,000 fine and 30-day suspension.

Ruffing and Washington starter Tommy Thomas are both tough, matching strikeouts, and the game is scoreless in the ninth inning. Stalwarts like Ruth, Gehrig, Dickey, Heinie Manush, Buddy Myer, Joe Cronin, and Sam Rice are all having tough days.

In the bottom of the ninth, Sam Rice leads off with a single to center. Buddy Myer fouls out, and Manush drives a ball to the scoreboard in deep right, but Ruth hauls it in at the warning track. Yes, he can play defense. Cronin singles Rice to third, but Ruffing fans Senators first baseman Joe Kuhel for his 10th strikeout to end the inning and threat.

With that, the Yankees come up, Thomas goes back to work. Left Fielder Ben Chapman grounds out to third, and doubtless blames blacks and Jews for doing so. Shortstop Frankie Crosetti follows, and strikes out. That brings up Ruffing, who has thrown an unrecorded but certainly high number of pitches. Most managers then or now would yank the pitcher and send up a pinch-hitter, but Ruffing is batting .295.

Thomas pitches to Ruffing and regrets it – Ruffing blasts a home run to put the Yankees up 1-0. Shocked, Thomas walks the next hitter, Earle Combs, before inducing Joe Sewell to hit a fly ball to right to end the inning.

With the Yankees up, 1-0, one would expect Manager Joe McCarthy to summon his ace closer, out of the pen to nail down the win, but that year, McCarthy did not have one...his leader in saves is Wilcy Moore, with a whopping four.

Ruffing goes out to finish the job. He strikes out Center Fielder Sam West, and then faces pinch hitter Carl Reynolds. Ruffing gets him to line out to center. The last Washington bullet is another pinch-hitter, Dave Harris. Ruffing strikes him out for his 12th K of the game and the victory. Ruffing goes to 14-5, on his way to an 18-win and 3.09 ERA season, second to Lefty Grove. His unusual performance: a 1-0 win on his home run and 10 strikeouts, will only be matched by two other pitchers in baseball history: Early Wynn in 1957 and Yovanny Gallardo with the Brewers in 2009.

As for Ruffing, he starts and wins the first game of the 1932 World Series, and finishes his career with 273 wins, 225 losses, 1,987 strikeouts and a 3.80 ERA.^[4] He also has 16 saves.^[78] Ruffing compiles 335 complete games in his 536 games started.^[79] Ruffing hits 36 [home runs](#) and bats .269 in 1,937 career at-bats. He hits over .300 in eight different seasons, and is frequently used as a [pinch hitter](#) in games he does not pitch.^[4] He also plays in the outfield in emergency situations.^[80] Ruffing's home run total as a pitcher trails only Ferrell, [Warren Spahn](#), and [Bob Lemon](#).^[81] Ruffing holds the AL record for most runs and earned runs allowed.^[82]

Ruffing throws a [fastball](#), a "sharp" [curveball](#), and a [slider](#).^[78] According to AL [umpire Bill Summers](#), "[O]n account of Red Ruffing, the slider got to be the thing."^[4] [Joe Paparella](#), also an AL umpire, saysd "The first game I ever worked behind the plate in the major leagues was against the guy who invented the slider and had the best slider ever seen— Red Ruffing".^[78]

Incredibly, despite his injuries, when World War II breaks out, Ruffing is drafted into the US Army Air Force. He is elected into the Hall of Fame in 1967, where he is the last one honored. He gives his wife Pauline Mulholland credit for his success, saying that "she was such a demonstrative fan that when he pitched "no one would sit within 20 feet of her.

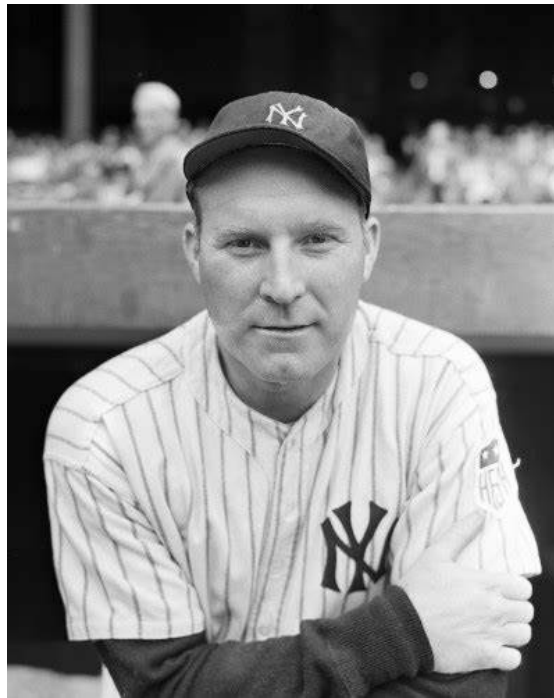
In point of fact, according to his SABR biography, when she criticized rookie third baseman [Red Rolfe](#) for making an error behind her husband, and Rolfe's wife overheard her, Ruffing told Pauline to apologize. He said, "Rolfe will help me win more games than he ever lost for me."¹¹

He adds, "This is one of the greatest moments in my life, just like the day I married my wife." Despite strokes and cancer, he keeps returning to Cooperstown for Induction Day, even in a wheelchair, until his death in 1986 at age 80.

On Old Timer's Day, July 10, 2004, the Yankees honor this ace by unveiling a plaque in Monument Park. At the ceremony, another Yankee Hall of Famer, record-holder, and World Series clutch performer, Reggie Jackson, does the honors. After the Old Timer's Game, Reggie joins the Yankee radio broadcast team up in the booth, and they discuss Ruffing.

Naturally, Jackson has never seen Ruffing play. But Jackson is a student of the game and its history, and he lets out a whistle on the air and registers his astonishment at Ruffing's achievements.

His SABR biography is here: <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/7111866b>



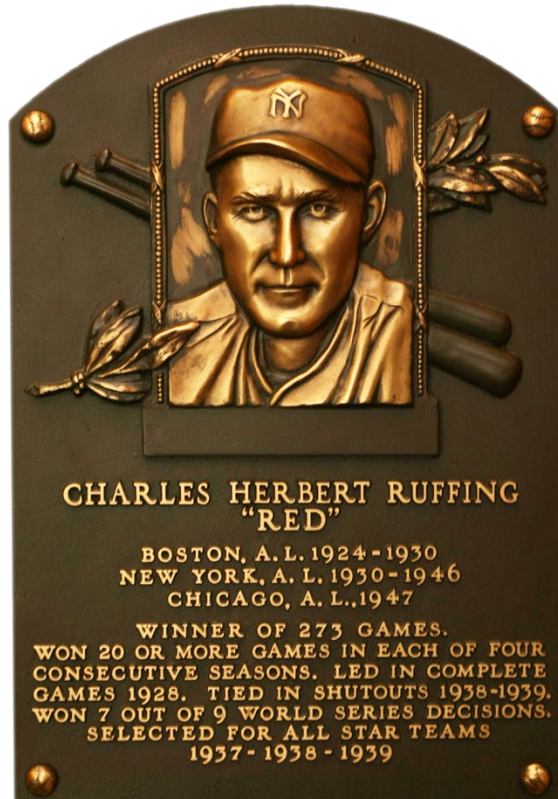
Red Ruffing faces the media during the good old days. His teammates called him “Charlie.”

His SABR Biography tells us: One writer called Ruffing “the Coolidge of baseball,” after the president who never spoke two words when one would do. McCarthy remarked, “If Ruffing has nothing to say he doesn’t bother to say it.”² Ruffing’s closest friends on the Yankees were his roommate, [Tony Lazzeri](#), Frank Crosetti, and Bill Dickey, men who fit the stereotype of the “strong, silent type.” His hometown, Nokomis, has put up a sign at the city limits welcoming visitors to the home of [Jim Bottomley](#), the onetime Cardinal first baseman. When the Chamber of Commerce

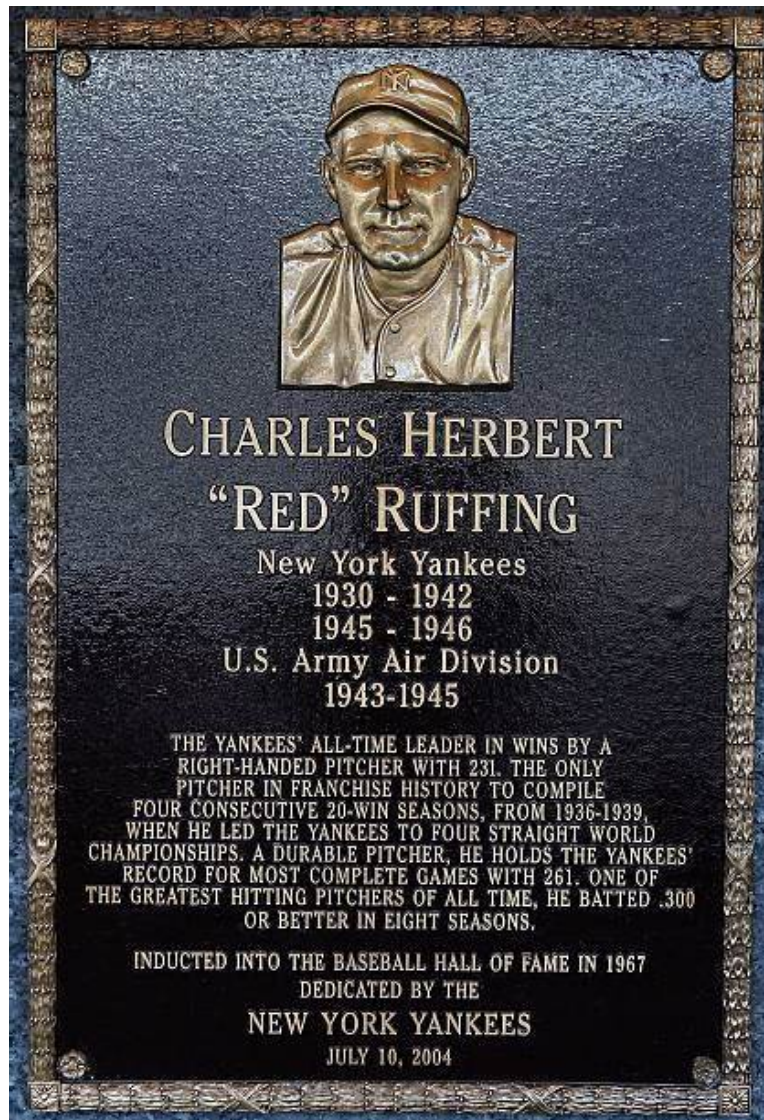
wants to add Ruffing's name to the sign, he told them not to do it because "I might move."¹⁰

Ruffing and Gomez give the Yankees a pair of aces for a decade. Gomez, three years younger, is the better pitcher when healthy. He leads the league in ERA twice and in strikeouts and shutouts three times, but suffers recurring bouts of arm trouble. Ruffing usually racks up more innings and complete games; he completes 62 percent of his career starts, while the average AL pitcher finishes less than half. Yankee outfielder [Tommy Henrich](#) says, "You know, there wasn't that much difference between [Gomez] and Ruffing, but Ruffing was always looked upon as the ace."⁶

Joe McCarthy agrees; he chooses Ruffing to start Game One of six World Series to Gomez's one. "Sure, he's the best pitcher around," the manager says.⁷ McCarthy schedules Ruffing's starts to match him against the Yankees' toughest challengers. He beats the Tigers 13 straight times from 1937 to 1939. Ruffing is the type of player McCarthy likes best: quiet, consistent, and durable. But the two are not close; Ruffing recalled, "Well, he said hello to me on the first day of spring camp and said good-by to me on the last day of the season. In between he just put the ball in my hand and that was all I wanted."⁸



Red's plaque at Cooperstown – he's pretty much in the Hall for being a clutch October performer.



Red's plaque in Yankee Stadium's Monument Park. He's pretty much there because his numbers impressed Reggie Jackson and made him whistle. And if they impressed Reggie Jackson, that's good enough for me.

The World Series is one-sided in action but filled with acrimony in life – the Cubs have signed former Yankee Mark Koenig to fill a hole at shortstop. His .353 average helped them win the pennant. But the Cubs have voted him only a half share in the World Series, and the Yankees think that is a harsh treatment of their old teammate from the 1927 squad, even though Koenig only played 30 games for the Cubs.

The Yankees make quick work of the Cubs in the first two games in The Bronx, winning 12-6 behind Red Ruffing in the opener and 5-2 behind Lefty Gomez in Game Two. George Pipgras gets the call for Game Three against Charlie Root.

Once again Gehrig is overshadowed in the series – his .529 batting average, three homers, nine runs scored, and eight RBIs would make him series MVP if such titles were presented back then, but the 1932 World Series is best remembered for the drama of the Babe’s “called shot” in the fifth inning of Game Three at Wrigley Field. Even less remembered is that after Ruth rounded the bases for that epochal and record-setting 15th World Series home run, Gehrig smacked the very next pitch to the same place, his second shot of the game, sending Root to the showers.

Whether or not Babe Ruth “called” his shot remains controversial, and other witnesses have interesting views of it. Catcher Gabby Hartnett claims Ruth just turned to the Chicago dugout and yelled, “It only takes one to hit it.” Yankee Manager Joe McCarthy denies he was looking at the plate at that moment. Frank Crosetti, a young shortstop on the Yankee team, insists that Ruth’s gesture is aimed at the Cubs’ bench.

But pitcher Charlie Root has the most interesting comment on it. While serving as a technical adviser on the horrific movie **The Babe Ruth Story**, Root is asked if the Babe “called” the shot. Root, a competitor to the end, snarls, “If he had, my next pitch would have knocked him on his ass.”



Is he or isn't he? Only the Babe knows for sure!



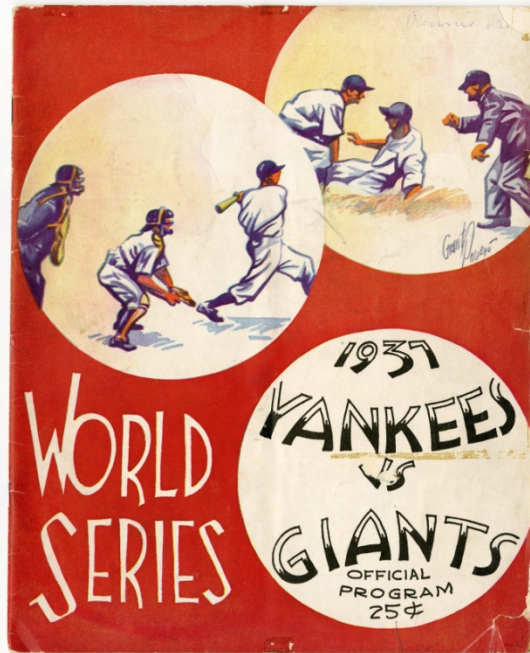
No question here, though...after Ruth came home on the shot, Lou Gehrig congratulated him. Then Gehrig smashed a homer of his own on the very next pitch to the exact same spot, and the Cubs collapsed, with the Yankees winning the World Series in four games. Looking on with justifiable irritation is Cubs catcher and future Hall of Famer Gabby Hartnett. For the record, Hartnett batted .313 and smacked a home run in the series.

1937

With Bill Terry at the helm, Mel Ott, Jo-Jo Moore, Harry Danning, Carl Hubbell, Hal Schumacher, and Dick Bartell in the lineup, the Giants win their second straight National League pennant. Hub's screwball is the key with 24 straight wins over two years.



Tickets, tickets, get your tickets...\$3.30 for a World Series bleacher seat?
That's highway robbery!



The players wear numbers now, but you still need that program.

But it's not enough against the Yankees, whose powerful pitching (Lefty Gomez, Red Ruffing, Monte Pearson) and even stronger hitting (Lou Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri, Joe DiMaggio, and rookie Tommy Henrich) handily demolishes the Giants in the World Series, 4-1. DiMaggio's 46 HRs is the team record for a right-handed hitter until Alex Rodriguez bashes 48 in 2005 and 54 in 2007.

Indeed, on August 1, the Yankees face the St. Louis Browns in Yankee Stadium before 18,924 fans, and the Brownies immediately run into disaster. In the first, Browns starter Lou Koupal walks DiMaggio and gives up a two-run dinger to Lou Gehrig. By the second, the Yankees have scored six runs. In comes Julio Bonetti for the Browns, who holds down the Yankees until the sixth, when Red Rolfe bashes a two-run homer, and DiMaggio rips his 31st of the season in the seventh, another two-run shot. The final score is 14-5. Koupal falls to 2-4 with the loss.

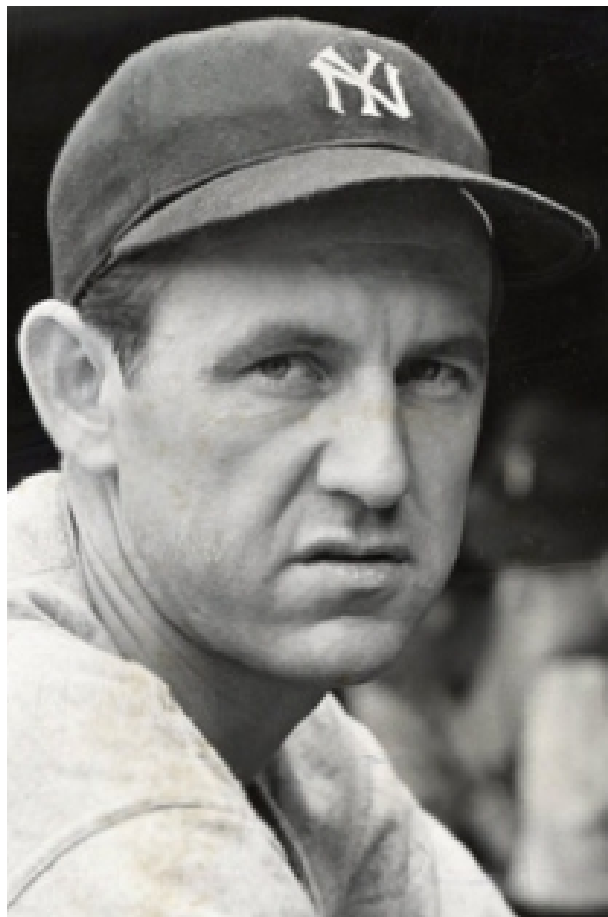
Spud Chandler, meanwhile, scatters 12 hits and five runs, with only one strikeout for the complete game victory, making him 6-3 on the year.

Media accounts laud DiMaggio's massive home run. Browns Manager and future Hall of Famer Sunny Jim Bottomley tells the **St. Louis Post-Dispatch**, "A pitcher can't afford to make a mistake when Joe (DiMaggio) is at bat. DiMaggio, Gehrig, and (Bill) Dickey comprise what is easily the best three-man run-making machine combination to be found. The Yankee musclemen wear pitchers out."

But what the media misses in the day is a feat by Gehrig of great importance: two-run home run in the first; run-scoring double in the second to chase starter Koupal; single in the fourth; triple in the seventh; a 4-for-5, 3 RBI performance, on top of hitting for the cycle.

In other words, a typical day for Lou Gehrig. Brilliance, and nobody notices.

In the World Series, Tony Lazzeri leads all hitters with a .400 batting average. The Yankees reward him after the series by releasing him – rookie Joe Gordon at Newark is ready to take over at second base. Lefty Gomez wins the first and last games with complete games, and even lashes a base hit.



Lefty Gomez as opposing hitters saw him. His teammates called him “Vernon.” Sportswriters called him “Lefty” and “Goofy,” capitalizing on his quick and self-deprecating wit, which likely delayed his entrance into the Hall of Fame. He said he owed his success to “clean living and a fast outfield.” Oddly, he rarely smiled for the photographer.

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DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

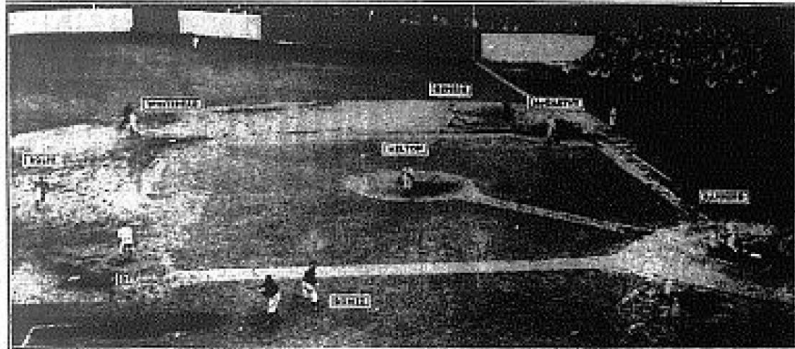
THE LARGEST
CIRCULATION
IN AMERICA

New York, Monday, October 31, 1933 8 Cents

YANKS WIN, 4-2

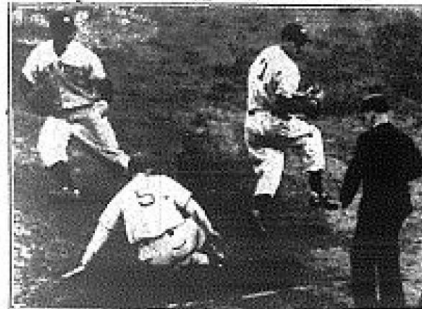
Gomez Bats in Winning Run

Story on Page 44



Sewing Up the Series

Vernon Gomez, star Yankee pitcher, scores home with final run of the game in the fifth inning. His single batted in Lazzeri who climbed up third and winning run. Yanks clinched series, 3-2. Gomez scores above on Gehrig's double as Rade takes third.



Too Much Lefty Gomez

Here's the play that clinched 1933 World Series. Gomez (No. 11) takes three from Gehrig (10) as Golsi moves slides into first—on late. After this play, Giants trooped gamely to their dressing room. Yanks went to their own quarters for celebration.

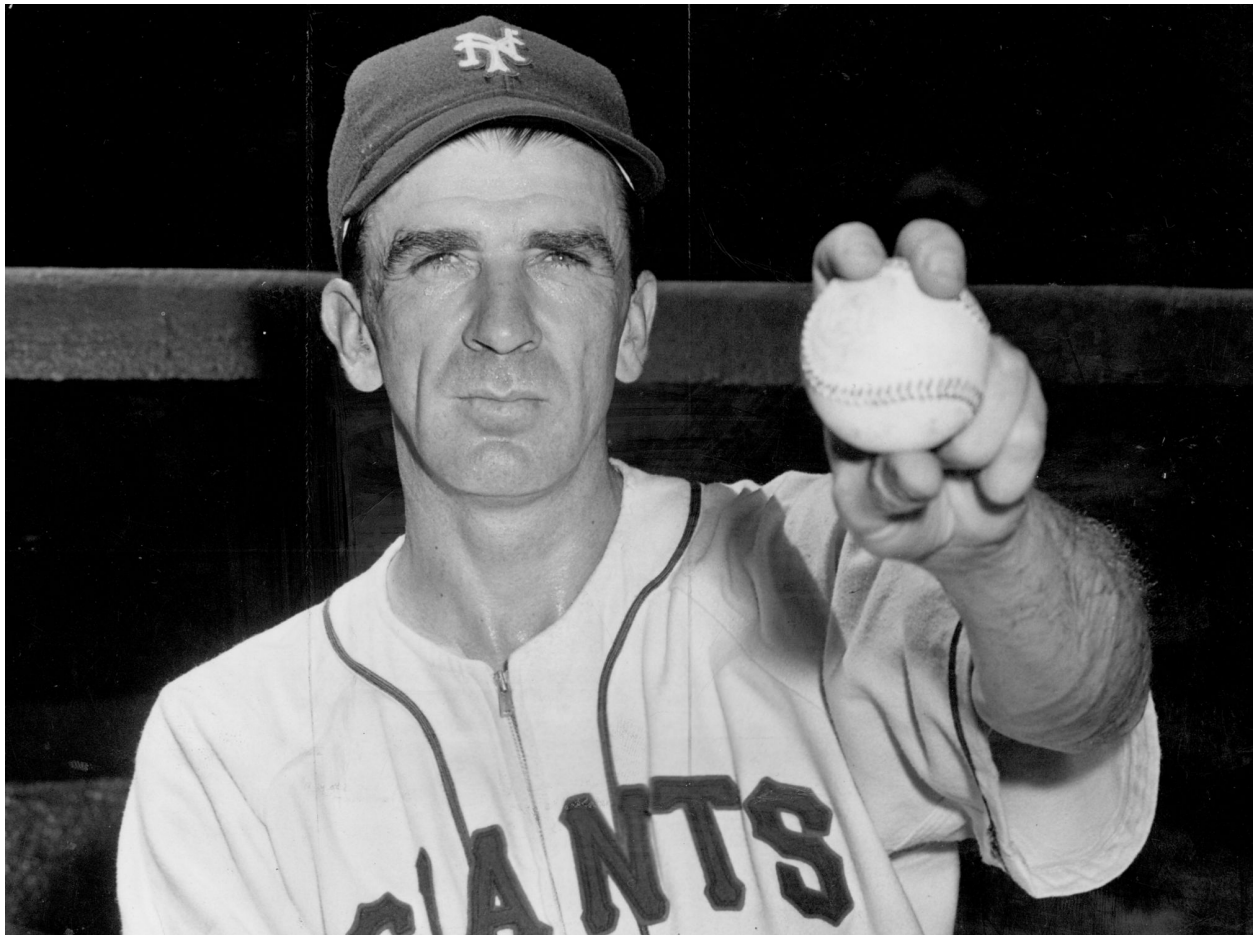


"I Kiss Your Face, Senior!"

Lefty Gomez, who batted first and last winning games of series for Yanks, received a hearty kiss from his team-mate, Pitcher Van Malone.

—Story on page 44; other photos on page 44.

How the Daily News covered Gomez's victory.



King Carl Hubbell demonstrates his distinctive screwball grip, which resulted in his left hand being twisted permanently. He remained a scout for the Giants until his death in 1989.

1942

For the only time in their history under Manager Joe McCarthy, the Yankees lose a World Series, falling in four straight games to the St. Louis Cardinals, after winning the opener. It is also the only time that Joe DiMaggio ever loses a World Series. The reasons are three: Cardinal rookies Whitey Kurowski and Johnny Beazley, and pitcher Ernie White.

In Game One, Red Ruffing is within a putout of a snappy two-hit shutout, but the Cards explode for four runs and load the bases in the last of the ninth. Ruffing keeps his cool and the 7-4, but after that the Cards blast the Yankees: Pitcher Beazley wins two games, Ernie White a third, and Kurowski blasts a two-run homer in the last of the ninth in the finale. Cardinal pitching shuts down such tremendous Yankee hitters as MVP Joe Gordon, who hits a bare .095. After that, the best Yankee players start

receiving draft notices. So does St. Louis Cardinals Manager Billy Southworth's son, Billy Jr.

Some of those drafted find themselves playing baseball for the Army, Navy, or Army Air Force, but others do not. Yogi Berra is the only major leaguer to serve at D-Day. While he is unscathed that day, he earns a Purple Heart in the invasion of Southern France. Jerry Coleman flies dive-bombers for the Marines in the Solomons. Bob Feller mans an anti-aircraft gun on the battleship **USS Alabama** in the Pacific, shooting at Kamikazes flying at his ship. Philadelphia Athletics pitcher Phil Marchildon, an RCAF bomber crewman, is shot down out of his Halifax over the North Sea, captured, and spends much of the war eating black bread, getting thinner, and pitching in Stalag Luft III, while many of his Canadian and British co-prisoners work on the "Great Escape." And Billy Southworth Jr. survives bomber missions over Berlin to crash a B-29 during training over Flushing Bay, and get killed.



Still can't tell the players without a scorecard, but this World Series had a very different theme from previous editions. Mine would be the suite from "Band of Brothers" as they fly into battle.

Across the Harlem River, the Giants are losing 7-4 in the bottom of the ninth on August 3 to the Dodgers in a wartime benefit game, when the game is called to enforce the World War II blackout. The lights of New York's skyscrapers are silhouetting merchant ships, enabling Nazi U-boats to torpedo them. Worse, the Giants have Billy Werber and Mel Ott on base with nobody out. Ironically, the 57,305 attendance is the largest crowd in Polo Grounds history.

During that year, Hollywood re-defines Lou Gehrig by releasing **Pride of the Yankees**, with Gary Cooper and his distinctive voice as "Old Biscuit Pants," in spite of Gehrig's Manhattan and German accent. The movie becomes a classic, earning 11 Oscar nominations. When Cooper goes overseas to entertain the troops, they demand that he deliver Gehrig's speech, and he memorizes it to do so.

On August 21, 47-year-old Babe Ruth pulls on a Yankee jersey – for the first time with the interlocking NY – and takes swings against 54-year-old Walter Johnson for a war bonds exhibition at Yankee Stadium. Ruth smashes a home run into the lower right field stands on Johnson's fifth pitch. On the 17th and final pitch, Ruth hits a ball that curves foul, but Ruth circles the bases anyway, waving his cap, saluting the crowd. It's his last "home run," and the two titans leave the field together to a thunderous ovation. The exhibition raises \$80,000 for Army-Navy relief.



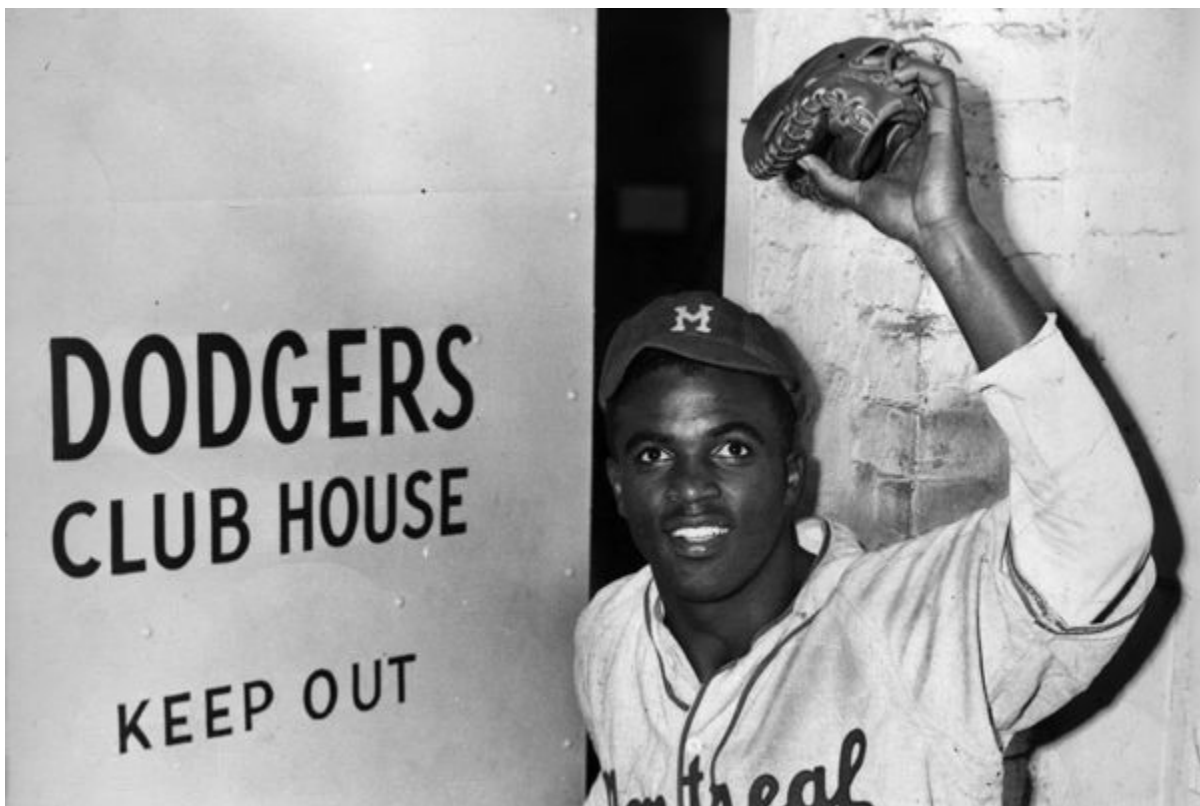
The real Babe Ruth greets the Hollywood Lou Gehrig, played by Gary Cooper, in the biggest scene from "Pride of the Yankees." Unlike Cooper, Gehrig delivered his legendary speech in his native Manhattan accent. At the insistence of the Gehrig family, Ruth only appears in scenes that involve other

Yankees, so that he cannot steal the scene from Gary Cooper's Gehrig. That's how high the tension remained between the Gehrig and Ruth family.

1947

The baseball events of this year go beyond legend – they are defining moments in the history of baseball and the United States.

On April 15, Jackie Robinson trots out to first base at Ebbets Field to become the first African-American to play in the major leagues in the 20th century, facing the Boston Braves. In his debut, Robinson goes 0-for-4, but reaches on an error and scores a run in the Dodgers' 5-3 victory.



Jackie Robinson enters major league baseball at the start of the 1947 season.

Robinson's season is the stuff of legend, books, articles, and two movies, the first of which Robinson plays himself, but he doesn't have much to say, being a better hitter than actor. Nonetheless, he is the inaugural Rookie of the Year, overcoming both the standard opposition of National League pitchers and the harsh racism of other teams. Even his own. During spring training, several Dodgers sign a petition demanding that Robinson be kept off the team. Manager Leo Durocher tells them that he doesn't care if Robinson has stripes like a zebra – if Robinson can help them

win, he'll play, and if they don't like it, they can find jobs in other industries. The Dodgers shut up. The St. Louis Cardinals threaten to strike. Or maybe they don't. Or maybe they do. It depends on who you talk to.

Better documented, the Philadelphia Phillies' General Manager, former Yankee pitcher and Hall-of-Famer Herb Pennock, the fox-hunting "Knight of Kennett Square," begs Brooklyn Dodger General Manager Branch Rickey not to bring Robinson to Philly. Rickey brings him anyway. Pennock tells Rickey that his team will not take the field if the Dodgers bring Jackie. Fine, answers Rickey. "And if we must claim the game, nine to nothing, we will do just that, I assure you." 9-0 is the score of a forfeited game.

Pennock gets the point and the Phillies take the field, spurred on by their nasty Alabama-born manager, Ben Chapman, who again – he has done so when the Phillies visited Brooklyn – hurls vicious insults at Robinson, who obeys Rickey's orders not to fight back. His insults backfire, as fans who hear the nasty cracks complain to Commissioner Happy Chandler, and sportswriters – and even radio broadcaster Walter Winchell – denounce Chapman for his abusive behavior.

Chandler warns Chapman to watch his mouth, and the chastened manager agrees to pose for a photograph with Robinson, the two of them holding a bat, looking uncomfortable.

The attacks have another impact – white Dodger second baseman Eddie Stanky yells back at the Phillies, urging them to take on someone who can fight back, and even Dixie Walker, who has opposed Robinson's signing, does the same. Walker later says his opposition to Robinson is based on fear that his hardware store in Alabama will suffer a loss of business, which is either a lame argument or shows the weak incomes of pre-free agency ballplayers.



Jackie Robinson (left) poses for the famous picture with Ben Chapman (right). Jackie is looking forward into the future. Ben is clearly putting up with it and wishing he could be somewhere else. Neither of them seems too happy about it.

As Robinson enters the stage, Babe Ruth leaves it, bidding farewell to the Yankee Stadium fans on April 27 (Ulysses S. Grant's birthday), at a ceremony for "Babe Ruth Day." Yankee radio announcer Mel Allen is master of ceremonies as 58,000 fans jam the House That Ruth Built to honor the ailing Sultan of Swat.

\$5,000 of the day's admission goes to Ruth, who turns it over to the Ford Foundation for a program sponsoring kids.

In his distinctive camel-hair coat, Ruth thanks the fans, in a hoarse, cancer-ridden voice. "You know this baseball game of ours comes up from the youth. That means the boys. And after you're a boy, and grow up to know how to play ball, then you come to the boys you see representing themselves today in your national pastime.

“The only real game, I think, in the world is baseball. As a rule, some people think if you give them a football or baseball or something like that, naturally, they’re athletes right away. But you can’t do that in baseball. You’ve gotta start from way down at the bottom, when you’re six or seven years of age.

“You can’t wait until you’re 15 or 16. You’ve gotta let it grow up with you, and if you’re successful and try hard enough, you’re bound to come out on top, just like these boys have come to the top now.” He points at the current Yankee team, kneeling on the field, watching the ceremony.

“There’s been so many lovely things said about me,” Ruth finishes, “I’m glad I had the opportunity to thank everybody.”



Babe Ruth delivers his farewell speech in Yankee Stadium, wearing his usual camel-hair coat. He is only 52 years old, but looks much older. Photo credit: Daily Mail

The seven-game World Series between the Yankees and Dodgers is the first one to be televised, and TV executives are doubtless endlessly grateful, as the Fall Classic “tears up the pea patch,” as broadcaster Red Barber often says. In seven wild battles, the Yankees gain another World Championship, beginning a new phase of their long dynasty, under manager Bucky Harris.

The Series becomes legendary on October 3, when Floyd “Bill” Bevens takes the mound in Ebbets Field to face the Dodgers. Bevens, a native of Hubbard, Oregon, is the only Yankee pitcher with a losing record that year (7-13), and is mostly on the World Series roster because Spud Chandler is injured.

From the start, Bevens is wild...he serves up a record 10 walks. But he doesn't give up a hit.

Bevens' opponent is journeyman Harry Taylor and the Yankees bash two quick singles off of him to open the game. Yogi Berra comes up and bounces a ground ball to first baseman Jackie Robinson, who fires it to Pee Wee Reese at shortstop for the double play, but Reese bobbles the pivot to load the bases. An unnerved Taylor issues a run-scoring walk to Joe DiMaggio.

Dodger Manager Burt Shotton, who has replaced the suspended Leo Durocher (Durocher has been suspended by Commissioner Happy Chandler for consorting with gamblers and adultery), replaces Taylor and brings on Hal Gregg, who stops the rally with a pop-up and a double play to end the inning.

The Yankees gain another run in the fourth inning off of Gregg through a Billy Johnson triple and Johnny Lindell double, but that's it – Dodger pitching holds them the rest of the way.

Bevens, however, defies belief. In the fifth inning, he walks Spider Jorgensen, and then walks Gregg. Stanky bunts the men over, and Jorgensen scores on a ground out, doing so without a base hit, making the score 2-1, Yankees.

In the eighth inning, Bevens sets down the Dodgers one-two-three, knocking off Red Ruffing's previous record of 7.2 consecutive World Series hitless innings.

In the top of the ninth, the Yankees try to score a run...Lindell singles, but is forced out at second on a Phil Rizzuto grounder. With the Scooter on first, Bevens comes up and bunts. Dodger catcher Bruce Edwards fires to second, but the speedy Rizzuto beats the throw. Runners on first and third. Stirnweiss delivers a single to center, loading the bases.

Shotton makes a move with echoes of the past – he summons Hugh Casey to pitch, facing Tommy Henrich. Everyone in the stands and pressbox is aware of the 1941 triumph or fiasco (depending on your allegiances) when Casey struck out Henrich, only to see Mickey Owen drop the third strike and lose them the game.

This time, Casey gets his revenge, but nobody really remembers it. He throws a low curve on his first pitch and Henrich smashes it back to the box on the ground. Casey jumps on the ball, and fires it home to Edwards for the force out, and Edwards hurls the ball to Robinson for the inning-ending double play.

Bevens take the ball in the ninth, and as broadcasters like to say in baseball, the key man in the inning-ending out leads off the inning. He rips a long fly to left, but Lindell catches it for the first out. Carl Furillo is next, and he draws Bevens' ninth walk of the game. Jorgensen pops a ball foul to first, and Bevens finds himself one out away from the first no-hitter ever pitched in a World Series game, no matter how ugly.

Shotton orders Al Gionfriddo to run for the slower Furillo, and sends up Pistol Pete Reiser, ankle to swollen to run, to bat for Casey. Bevens works the count to 2-1 and Gionfriddo breaks for second. Berra fires a throw to Rizzuto, who slaps the tag on Al's head. Umpire Bill McGowan calls him safe. With the count 3-1, Yankee manager Bucky Harris signals Bevens to walk Reiser, putting the winning run on.

Reiser hobbles down to first and is promptly replaced by pinch-runner Eddie Miksis.

Then Shotton calls back second baseman Eddie Stanky and sends up Cookie Lavagetto. Both are right-handed veteran pull hitters, so why the switch is made seems odd. Lavagetto swings and misses at Bevens' first pitch for strike one.

Bevens then fires his 137th pitch of the game, high and away, and Lavagetto inside-outs the ball to right field, where Henrich, playing him to pull, is shaded toward center. Henrich races off in pursuit of the ball while “two of the most obscure pinch-runners in World Series history” (per **The New York Times**) race around the bases.

Henrich reaches the wall, leaps, trying to snare the ball over his head, but can't make the grab. The ball bounces off the wall, off Henrich's chest, and by the time “Old Reliable” can field it, Gionfriddo and Miksis have scored, and the Dodgers have won, 3-2, on one single game-ending hit.

“Cold print cannot do justice to what went on,” writes Al Laney in his **New York Herald-Tribune** story. “It will be preserved in the memories of all who were there...they will be telling others less fortunate about it as long as they live.”

Arthur Daley has a good take in **The New York Times**: “A demented Hollywood scenarist...wouldn't have dared produce a script as utterly fantastic before the eyes of the Flatbush faithful at Ebbets Field yesterday.” He adds that a fellow

reporter said to Daley, “Don’t bother writing about it, because no one will believe you anyway.”

After the game, winners and losers face reporters. Reese remarks about Bevens: “You know, I feel sorry for that guy.”

Bevens faces reporters after a 20-minute clubhouse lockout and says, “I wasn’t even thinking of the no-hitter. I knew it was riding but never mind about that. I’m trying to win. Those bases on balls will surely kill you,” he says.

The best comment on the game comes from Red Smith in the **Herald-Tribune**: “The unhappiest man in Brooklyn is sitting up here now in the far end of the press box. The ‘V’ on his typewriter is broken. He can’t write either Lavagetto or Bevens.”



Bill Bevens (left) after the game. Not a happy man. Joe DiMaggio at right. He’s not impressed, either. Rough way for Bevens to end his major league career, too.

Other highlights include Al Gionfriddo's catch of Joe DiMaggio's drive to left, preventing a Yankee victory – it's Gionfriddo's last game, too – and DiMaggio shows rare emotion on the ballfield, when he kicks the turf.



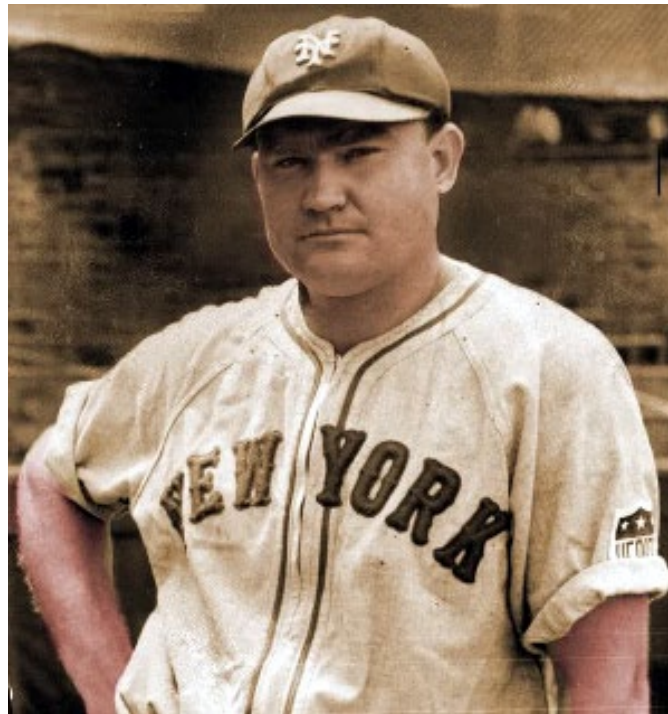
Al Gionfriddo, making his famous catch. While 1947 was a big year for African-American progress in Major League Baseball, the World Series was a bigger one for Italian-Americans: Berra, Branca, Lavagetto, DiMaggio, and Gionfriddo.

Not as well noticed is young Yankee catcher Yogi Berra belting the first pinch-hit home run in World Series history, a slow curve from Ralph Branca.

So the World Series is a big one for another tormented ethnic group in America – Italians, as DiMaggio, Gionfriddo, Lavagetto, Berra, and Branca all make bids for the history books.

When the World Series ends, the Yankees' flamboyant general manager, the hard-drinking Larry MacPhail, resigns his position on the spot, stunning everyone in the post-game pressroom celebration.

While the Yankees and Dodgers fight their way to their respective pennants, the New York Giants endure a bizarre season. They smash a record 221 home runs, a mark that stands until the 1961 Yankees, on the bats of Willard Marshall, Sid Gordon, Bobby Thomson, Walker Cooper, and Johnny Mize, of Demorest, Georgia. They blast homers in 16 straight games in July, erase the National League home run record of 171 set by the 1930 Cubs that same month. They knock off the major league record of 182, set by the 1936 Yankees, in September. Mize himself ties for league leadership with Ralph Kiner, with 51 HRs.



Johnny Mize as pitchers saw him. Photo credit: Johnny Mize Museum

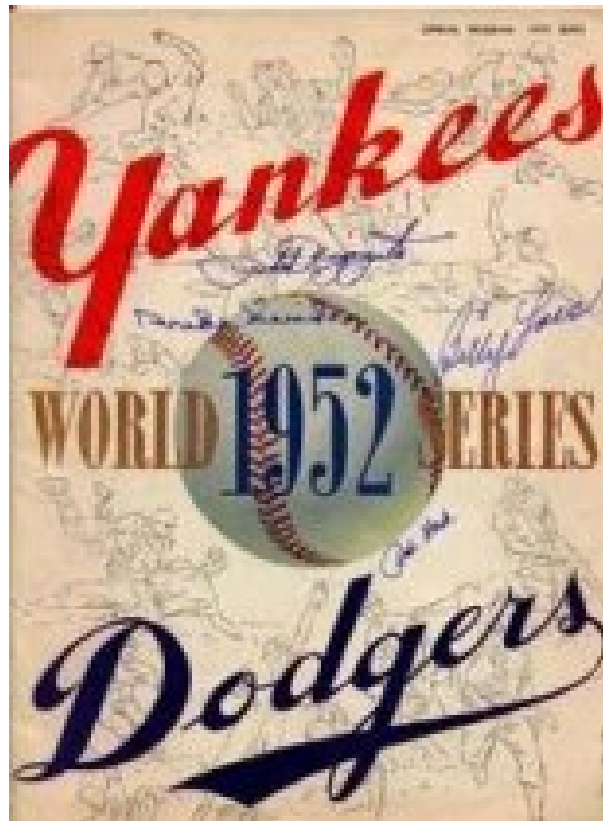
However, while rookie pitcher Larry Jansen is 21-5, the rest of the staff is mediocre: Dave Koslo is 15-10, Monte Kennedy is 9-1, outfielder-pitcher Clint Hartung is 9-7 as a pitcher.

Giant Manager Mel Ott trades pitcher Bill Voiselle to the Boston Braves for pitcher Mort Cooper, reuniting the crack Cardinal battery, but the pitching Cooper is past his prime, hurt by an arm operation.

Another weakness for the Giants – the sluggers have no speed. The whole team steals 29 bases. That's as many as Jackie Robinson – by himself. The Giants finish in fourth place.

1952

New York is still the “Capital of Baseball,” and new stars are on the rise. With Joe DiMaggio retired, the Yankees turn center field over to another legend, Mickey Charles Mantle, of Commerce, Oklahoma, (or Spavinaw) who spends his entire career hobbling on knees injured in the 1951 World Series, burning his time and talent on high times and women, and smashing 536 career home runs, winning the Triple Crown and three MVP Awards.



Get your scorecards...still can't tell the players without a scorecard...

His second year is a big one for the Yankees, as they face their Brooklyn rivals in the World Series for the third time, and high drama ensues:

Game One, Ebbets Field: The teams are tied until the fifth inning, when Gil McDougald leads off with a walk. Billy Martin singles, but Andy Pafko throws out McDougald at third. With two out, Pafko makes a diving catch, and the Yankees do not score. The Dodgers do, however, scoring two in the sixth, and win, 4-2.

Game Two, Ebbets Field: In the sixth inning, Gil Hodges drops a double-play ball and the Yankees explode to win, 7-1.

Game Three, Yankee Stadium: The Yankees load the bases in the fourth, but don't score. They put two on in the fifth, and don't score. The Yankees get two

solo home runs, but the Dodgers score two in the top of the ninth on a double steal by Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson and a passed ball charged to Yogi Berra. Dodgers win, 5-3.

Game Four, Yankee Stadium: With one out and one on the first, Billy Martin stumbles while fielding a ground ball and throws it away, putting runners on first and third. Allie Reynolds strikes out Robinson and Roy Campanella to get out of it.

In the third inning, Reese singles, but is caught stealing.

In the fifth inning, Pafko leads off with a single, Hodges walks, Furillo sacrifices, and the Yankees have two men are in scoring position with one out. But that brings the pitcher, Joe Black, to the plate, and he misses the bunt, nailing the runner at the plate. The Yankees win behind Allie Reynolds, 2-0.

Game Five, Yankee Stadium: One of the most dramatic World Series games ever sees two sensational leaping catches by two different Dodger right fielders, Pafko in the second and Furillo in the 11th.

In the second inning, with Robinson on second, Campanella fakes a bunt. McDougald breaks in to field it and Robinson is able to steal third. Later in the inning, the bases are loaded. Pitcher Carl Erskine bunts and Yankee moundsman Ewell Blackwell fields it and fires home to Berra for the force.

In the fifth, Blackwell tries to field a bunt by nailing the runner at second, and fails, setting off a three-run explosion. The Dodgers win it all in the 11th when Billy Cox lines a single off Gil McDougald's glove to start the rally. Final score: 6-5.

Game Six, Ebbets Field: Duke Snider hits two home runs, Billy Cox leads off the first with a double, but Reese pops out trying to bunt. Despite this power show, the Dodgers fail to score (other than the Snider shots), and the Yankees win, 3-2.

Game Seven, Ebbets Field: Author Cecilia Tan rates this as one of the top 50 games in Yankee history, and The New York Times baseball writer Arthur Daley calls it “another of those taut...thrillers that had emotions twanging like guitar strings.”

The Yankees load up their team bus at Yankee Stadium to head for Brooklyn, with police escort. As the bus trundles along, a red sports car jumps into the caravan. A motorcycle cop, figuring it's a hot-rodder trying to make it to Ebbets Field the easy way, slows back to tell him to flee or be ticketed. To the police officer's astonishment,

the driver is Phil Rizzuto himself, who decided to drive directly to Ebbets Field from his New Jersey home, knowing that his equipment will be in the bus.

Carmen Berra will later tell the author at a SABR event that such habits are very common with Yankee, Dodger, and Giant ballplayers when called upon to go to one of the three New York stadiums for a regular season, exhibition, All-Star, or World Series game – to drive there directly when possible.

The Dodgers' Charlie Dressen starts African-American Joe Black, a native of Plainfield, New Jersey, and former Negro Leaguer, to start. Black has spent most of the year in the pen, but Dressen wants him to start in the Series. So far, in Games 1 and 4, Black had rewarded Dressen by scattering three runs and nine hits with eight strikeouts in 16 innings pitched. Stengel starts Eddie Lopat, the legendary junkballer, who has posted a career-low 2.53 on the season.

The first three innings are pretty quick, but in the fourth, Rizzuto leads off with a double, moving to third on a Mantle ground out to right. He scores on a Johnny Mize single, but Yogi Berra's ground ball catches the slow-footed Mize in a double play to end the rally.

The Dodgers don't take this insult lying down. Instead of swinging hard against Lopat, Duke Snider taps a single. Jackie Robinson bunts down the third base line, and beats the throw (of course), putting two on with nobody out. Roy Campanella bunts again, loading the bases.

That's all for Stengel and Lopat, as the former summons the hard-throwing Native American, Allie Reynolds, from the pen, to address the situation. Reynolds has been both a starter (20 wins, 29 complete games) and ace reliever this year (six saves in six opportunities) this season, but he has pitched a complete game in Game 4 and saved Game 6, so he is hardly fresh.

Reynolds faces Gil Hodges, and he hits a screeching line drive to left that Gene Woodling runs down, but Snider scores, and Robinson advances to third on the throw to the plate. Reynolds bears down to strike out George "Shotgun" Shuba and end the inning when Furillo grounds out to third.

In the fifth, Woodling breaks the tie with a home run. "My cure spun but it didn't move," Black explains later. But in the bottom of the fifth, with one out, Billy Cos doubles off the wall in right center. Reese singles him home.

Next inning, Mickey Mantle blasts another weak curve off of Black for a home run. Johnny Mize follows with a single, and Dressen follows that by pulling Black in

favor of Preacher Roe. Roe strikes out Berra, but Woodling singles, putting runners on first and second with one out. Stengel, employing his brilliant platoon system, inserts Hank Bauer for Irv Noren. He pulls the ball to Billy Cox at third, who can't get a grip on it, loading the bases.

That brings up Billy Martin. As he often says, he may not be the greatest player in Yankees history, but he is the proudest, and certainly the most ferocious. "He would do anything to beat you," Berra says of him.

He rips a Roe pitch to center, and Snider hauls it in to end the inning. The Yankees now have a one-run lead.

In the bottom of the sixth, Campanella singles, but Reynolds ends the threat by inducing Hodges to ground into a double play, Rizzuto to Martin to Mize.

With Reynolds nearly done, Stengel sends up backup catcher Ralph Houk to pinch hit for Reynolds and lead off the seventh. He grounds out. Gil McDougald singles, and Rizzuto bunts him over to second in trademark fashion, bringing up Mickey Mantle. He drives McDougald home with a RBI single, and now the Yankees lead, 4-2.

Vic Raschi comes on to pitch in his first relief appearance of the year – indeed, he's only had one in three years – but in Game Seven of the World Series, nobody will sit in the pen.

Raschi's unfamiliarity with the relief role shows immediately. He walks Carl Furillo on five pitches. With a two-run deficit, Dressen cannot afford to send up Roe to bunt – he pulls Roe for pinch-hitter Rocky Nelson, who pops up. Raschi gets behind 3-0 to Cox, who singles and puts Furillo on second. Raschi then walks Pee Wee Reese to load the bases.

Stengel realizes that a starter is often not a good reliever, and pulls him, bringing on a lefty reliever and spot starter named Bob Kuzava.. He has a live fastball and good control, and saved the final game of the 1951 World Series against the Giants. Stengel believes he can do it in two straight Fall Classics.

Arthur Daley writes later, "The Brooks are certain death to left-handed pitchers. That's what the book says. The records verify it. (Yet) the shrewd Ol' Perfesser comes through in the clutch with the lefthander."

Kuzava delivers a heater with some hop to Snider, who pops up to McDougald for the first out. “The pitch was right down the middle,” Kuzava says later. “The type that Snider could powder a mile.”

Next up is Jackie Robinson. Kuzava doesn’t want to risk the heater to as skilled a hitter as Robinson, so to his curve ball, and jams Robinson, who pops up dead over the infield. “Nobody told me he could break it off that good,” Jackie says later.

“It was the Yankee first baseman’s catch,” Red Smith writes in the **Herald-Tribune**. “But with the sun slanting into (Joe Collins’) face across the grandstand roof, he couldn’t see where he was. He stood gazing curiously aloft, wondering about life. Billy Martin stood curiously at Collins, wondering about him.”

With two runners already across the plate, Martin realizes that if the ball touches the infield grass, Brooklyn will have tied the game. Instead, Martin “ran from out under his hat and snared the ball in the tip off his glove a few inches from the ground,” as Arthur Daley writes in **The New York Times**. He plucks the ball off his shoe top and nearly falls into foul territory, ending the inning, and silencing the Brooklyn fans.



Billy Martin (center) makes his legendary catch. At bottom is Jackie Robinson, watching the play.

“Just as the ball started to come down I could see nobody was going for it,” Martin says later.

“The Brooklyn crowd, which had been shouting with every pitch, was silent. After that, no one doubted that the Yankees would win again,” Roger Kahn writes in the **Herald Tribune**, and such is the case: Kuzava shuts the Dodgers down for the next two innings. Yankees: 4-2.

The Yankee victory ties them for consecutive World Series wins with Joe McCarthy’s 1936-1939 crew, and is one of the hardest-fought such triumphs in the team’s annals.

“Never before has a Yankee team managed by Stengel been forced to scramble so hard to win,” Kahn writes.

There are plenty of other stars: the Yankees' Johnny Mize with three home runs, Duke Snider with four, Vic Raschi and Reynolds each with two victories, and Dodger rookie Joe Black becoming the first African-American to win a World Series game.

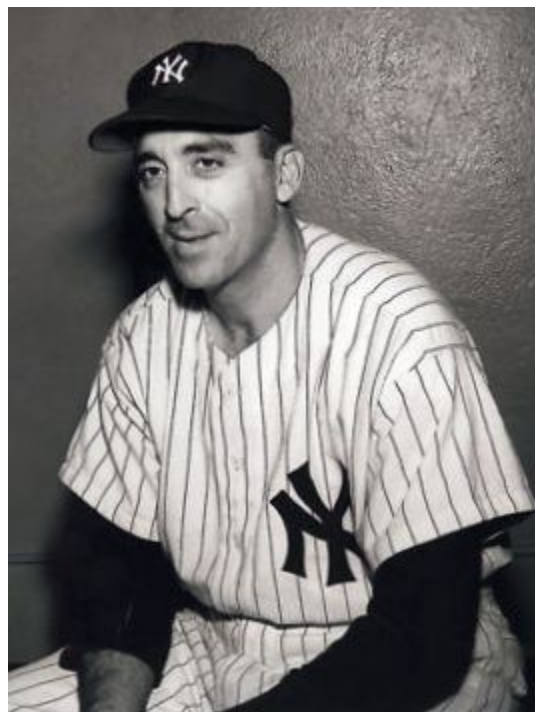


The victorious New York Yankees celebrate the 1952 World Series victory. At top, Billy Martin and Mickey Mantle, who are doubtless planning a more entertaining party. In the lower level, Gil McDougald at left, but I'm not sure of the other two – I think at center is Allie Reynolds.

Across the Harlem, the defending National League Champion New York Giants suffer heavily, first when the US Army drafts center fielder Willie Mays, because of the Korean War, Monte Irvin breaks his ankle in April, and Manager Leo Durocher endures three separate suspensions.

1957

One of the harshest years in New York baseball history begins with the absolutely unthinkable horror to Dodger and Giant fans alike: the trade of Jackie Robinson to the Giants for pitcher Dick Littlefield. The fans of both teams are now faced with the unpalatable spectacle of Robinson in a Giants' uniform, batting against Sal Maglie, now in a Dodger uniform (oddly enough, Maglie will spend some of 1957 with the Yankees).



Sal Maglie, in all his New York incarnations. You don't need a scorecard to tell who Sal Maglie is...just go to bat against him.

However, Robinson prevents this from happening, by announcing in a **Look** magazine exclusive article that he is retiring from baseball to accept an executive position at Chock Full O'Nuts coffee, taking his drive for civil rights from the ballpark to the boardroom.

The article perfectly bookends Robinson's career with a single photograph. It shows him leaving the Dodger clubhouse in a suit, waving, bat over his shoulder, personal kit hanging from the bat, like a kid running away from home. There's only one question about the photograph – it shows the clubhouse cat looking quizzically at the situation. The question is: What's the story on the cat? Who got him after the Dodgers left Brooklyn? Did he have a name?



Jackie Robinson moves onward, to the bemusement of the clubhouse cat. The great mystery is what became of the cat, and if his or her descendants are still living in the Ebbets Field Housing Project, hopefully as pets.

Once the season starts, things don't go much better for the Giants or the Dodgers. Giants owner Horace Stoneham, playing in a stadium that lacks good parking and better players (except Willie Mays), reacts to the thousands of empty seats by declaring that the Giants will move, initially planning to do so in Minneapolis, where the Giants have their top minor league franchise. Asked how the kids will feel about losing their team, Stoneham says, "Well, I feel bad for the kids, but I haven't seen their fathers at the Polo Grounds very much lately." In 1956, the Giants draw 650,000. Two years before, their World Championship team had drawn 1.4 million.

However, the Brooklyn Dodgers are having their own problems with the outdated Ebbets Field structure and their own lack of parking. Their owner, Walter O'Malley, wants to flee. When he can't get a new stadium in downtown Brooklyn out of Mayor Robert Wagner and "Commissioner of Everything" Robert Moses, he makes up his mind – to move to Los Angeles, and suggests to Stoneham that the legendary Giant-Dodger rivalry would do better if both teams were on the West Coast and not separated by two time zones.

On May 28, 1957, the National League gives both teams unanimous approval to move the Giants to San Francisco and the Dodgers to Los Angeles. The Giants board votes 8-1 to do so on August 19. The only dissenting vote comes from M. Donald Grant, representing minority stockholder Joan Whitney Payson.

The Dodgers have already made their point about the problems of Ebbets Field by playing several games in Jersey City's Roosevelt Stadium in 1956, and do so again in 1957. During the off-season, Dodger owner Walter O'Malley trades his Fort Worth minor league rights to the Chicago Cubs for theirs at Wrigley Field in Los Angeles.

The final Dodger game at Ebbets Field takes place on September 24, 1957. Pee Wee Reese, playing third base that day, as team captain, leads the Dodgers onto the field, and they shut out Branch Rickey's Pittsburgh Pirates, 2-0, behind Denny McDevitt, before 6,702 mourners. Organist Gladys Gooding plays, in order: "Am I Blue?" "What Can I say, Dear, After I've Said I'm Sorry?" "Thanks for the Memory," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," "When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day," and finally, "Auld Lang Syne." As the Dodgers' fate is uncertain, the fans make no mad dash onto the field to rip up souvenirs. The groundskeepers routinely

cover the mound and rake the infield to prepare for the next game. The Dodgers finish the season on the road.

However, the team does not make the move official until a unanimous vote of stockholders and directors on October 9.

While the Dodgers head for Los Angeles, Ebbets Field, of course, goes nowhere, used for the next two years for wrestling, soccer, and other events, until it is demolished in 1960 to make way for the largest yet of New York's housing projects, a \$22 million complex built by the Kratter Corporation, called "Ebbets Field Houses."

Demolition begins with a ceremony on February 23, 1960, with the flag raised upside down, a wrecking ball painted like a baseball, and longtime Dodgers National Anthem singer Lucy Munroe doing the honors.

Present at the event – besides devastated Dodger fans – are Roy Campanella, Carl Erskine, Tommy Holmes, and Otto Miller, who caught the first game at the park on April 9, 1913. Public Address announcer Tex Rickard reprises his role, saying, "Ladies, and Gentlemen, now coming in to pitch for the Dodgers, number 13, Ralph Branca."

In camel's-hair coat, now an insurance salesman, trying to smile, the haunted Branca emerges from the crowd. Branca has more trouble with wisecracks who torture him about the home run pitch he served to Bobby Thomson than the home run itself – he knows from harsh experience that pitchers give up game-winning home runs. In addition, the decline of his career is from a 1952 injury, not the home run. They forget that he is a two-time 20-game winner and All-Star.

Wrecking Corporation of America President Harvey Avirom, who has the contract to demolish the stadium, offers almost everything to the fan at auction: flagpoles, railings, stadium seats, dugout phones and benches, lockers, signs, bases and autographed balls and bats. Attendees receive flower pots full of infield dirt. Campanella gets his locker and a pot full of Ebbets Field dirt.

Destroying the stadium takes 10 weeks. 2,200 seats and some of the lights go to the Hart's Island prison facility. The 1,000-pound cornerstone is broken open on April 24, 1960, before 600 sentimental spectators.

Inside is found a time capsule, containing dampened newspapers and baseball periodicals from the day of placement, July 6, 1912, with news about President William Howard Taft and Mayor William J. Gaynor. Also inside are coins and personal memorabilia.

The cornerstone may have gone forgotten had not a 63-year-old building inspector, Edward A. Duval, who was present at the stone being placed, recalled that Ebbets swore he would never leave the place until the Dodgers won a World Championship. Once open, the stone goes off to the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

Dodgers Defeat Pirates in Ebbets Field Finale

**McDEVITT VICTOR
ON 5-HITTER, 2-0**

**Gains Seventh Triumph as
Only 6,702 Watch Brooks
End Ebbets Field Play**

By ROSCOE MCGOWEN
Dusky McDevitt pitched his second quintet of the season as a farewell to Ebbets Field last night and the Dodgers beat the Pirates, 2-0. It was the eighth-most entertaining job achieved by the Brooklyn mound staff this season.

Everybody, including the 6,702 cash customers, assumed that the Dodgers were playing their final game in the old ball yard that was opened forty-five years ago.

Between innings Gladys Gooding, who started playing the pipe organ at Ebbets Field after Larry MacFalls became the head man there nineteen years ago, played numerous tunes with the farewell motif.

After the Brooks had scored their first run in the opening inning on a pass to Jim Gilliam, a throwing error by the Blue pitcher, Dennis Daniels, and Elmer Valo's double off the right-field wall, she played, "Am I Blue?" and "After You're Gone."

"Don't Ask Me Why I'm Leaving" accompanied the scoring of the second run in the third inning. That tally came on singles by Gino Cimoli and Gil Hodges, plus an intervening infield out.

Daniels Effective for Blues
Young Daniels, a right-handed rookie from the Hollywood club, pitched well otherwise, giving only five hits in the seven innings he worked.

But McDevitt was better. He, too, allowed five hits, not one of which escaped being touched by an infielder. Two double plays helped Larry en route to his seventh triumph. He walked only one man and struck out nine—four in a row in the sixth and seventh innings.

As the game neared the end, Miss Gooding grew more and more nostalgic. "Que Sera Sera" was an inevitable choice of the organist. There were others, such as "Thanks for the Memories," "How Can You Say We're Through," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," and Bing Crosby's old theme song, "When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day."

There was no change in the usual announcement made by Tex Richards, who has been telling the fans for years: "Please do not go on the playing field at the end of the game. Use any exit that leads to the street."

It had been suggested that Tex vary this by saying, "Use any exit that leads to Chavez Ravine"—an allusion to the Dodgers' prospective move to Los Angeles. But Tex remained an orthodox announcer to the end.

Miss Gooding, at the end of the game, started playing, "May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You," but somebody turned on the record always played after Brooklyn games, "Fullo' o' Dodgers." This was eventually silenced and the organist was able to close out her program by playing "Auld Lang Syne."

The one note of optimism—perhaps it was merely a matter of habit—was the fact that the ground crew performed its usual duties after the fans had gone. The crew raised the infield, smoothed, put the covers over the mound and home plate and did all the other chores done in preparation for a game the next day.

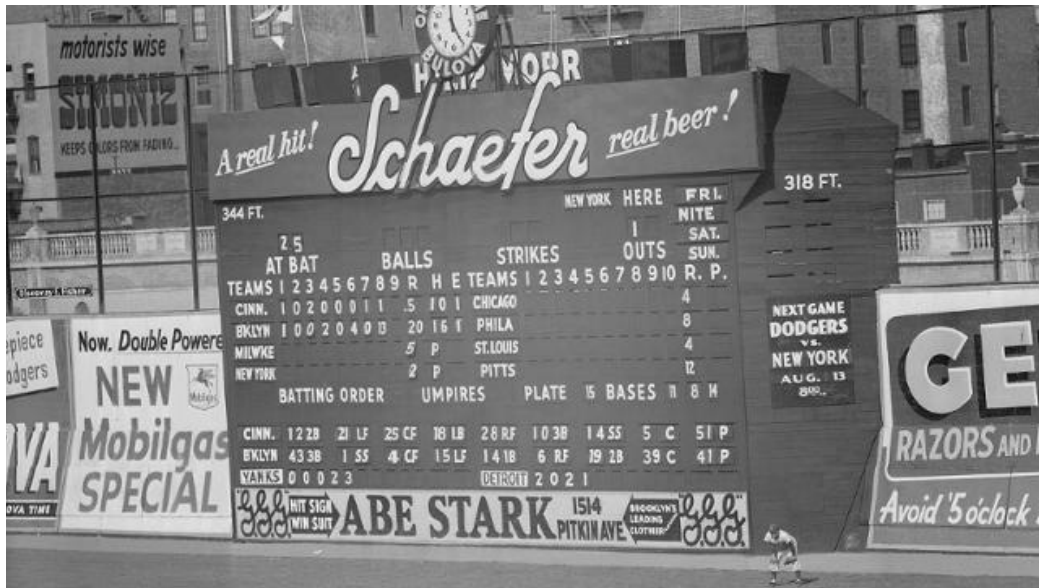
But the Dodgers play their remaining three games in Philadelphia over the week-end—as there'll be no tomorrow at Ebbets Field. And perhaps there never will be another one there.



HAIL AND FAREWELL: Rosemarin Keegan, left, and Agnes Telle, loyal Brooklyn fans, placing an epitaph at cornerstone plaque in the rotunda at Ebbets Field. Dodgers played what was probably final game there last night.

The New York Times
Published September 23, 1957
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The New York Times describes the final game at Ebbets Field.



The favorite sight for all Brooklyn Dodger fans: that legendary scoreboard, with the Dodgers leading, along with the Abe Stark sign. AP



The most horrific sight for all Brooklyn Dodger fans: the stadium being demolished in 1960.

The Giants end their life at the Polo Grounds on the season's final day, September 27, 1957, before a bare 11,606 fans, which is more than the Dodgers draw for their closer. However, some of the greatest Giants are in attendance, including Dirty Jack Doyle, Laughing Larry Doyle, Rube Marquard, Hooks Wiltse, Hans Lobert, Frankie Frisch, George Burns, Moose McCormick, Carl Hubbell, Hal Schumacher, Blondy Ryan, Billy Jurgens, Buddy Kerr, Willard Marshall, Sid Gordon, Sal Maglie, Monte Irvin, Bobby Thomson and Willie Mays. They are all introduced, and most importantly, Mrs. John McGraw, who is given a bouquet of American Beauty Roses by Giant Manager Bill Rigney.

Dusty Rhodes, Johnny Antonelli, Bobby Thomson, and Willie Mays all play in the finale, but the Giants lose, 9-1, to the Pittsburgh Pirates and Bob Friend. When the game ends, the remaining fans who can do so charge onto the field, brandishing signs and demanding Stoneham's head. They tear up pieces of sod and other souvenirs.



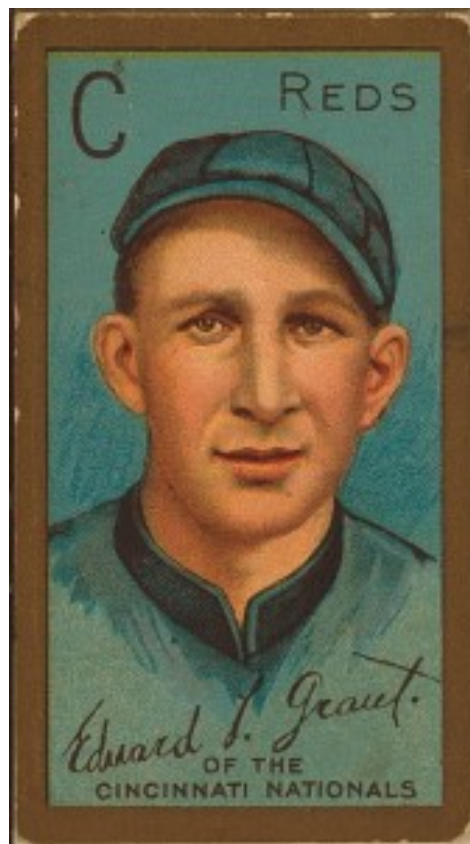
Having lost their final game, 9-1, the New York Giants players head for their clubhouse for the very last time. The sign stayed. The team left.

A New York police officer (of all people) named Gaetano Bucca removes the plaque honoring "Harvard" Eddie Grant, a Giant who was killed in action with the

77th Infantry Division (the New York outfit) by German machine-gun fire on October 5, 1918.

It is believed that Bucca intended to bring the plaque to the American Legion Eddie Grant Post 1225 in The Bronx, but it never gets there. Instead it vanishes – until July 1999, when it is discovered in their attic in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. The new home owners, Brian and Deborah Lamb, find the plaque carefully wrapped in a blanket and hidden under a trap door in the attic.

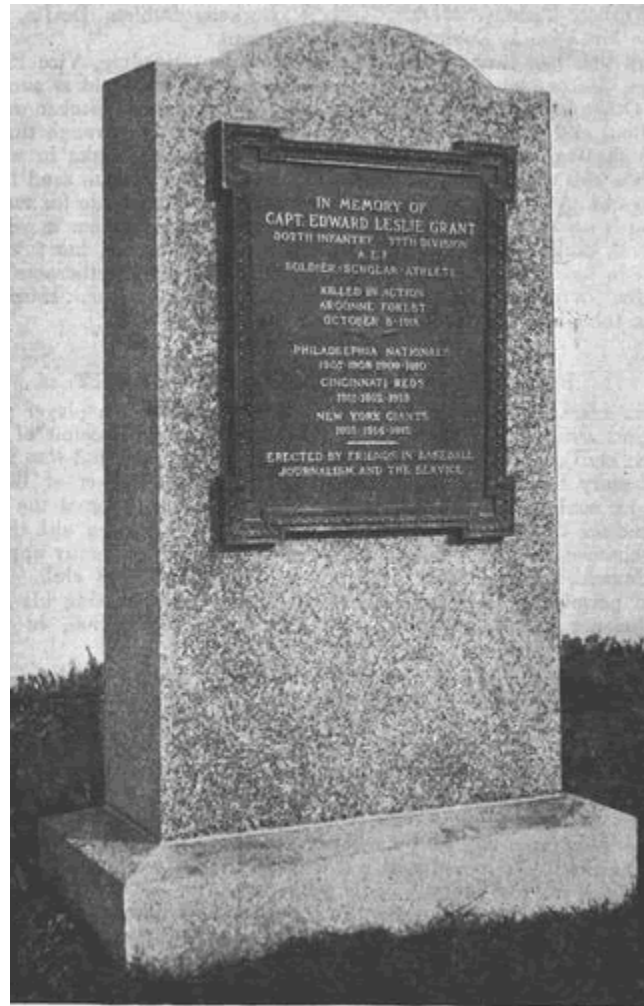
The Lambs had purchased the home from the Bucca family after the death of Gaetano's wife, Lena, in 1998.



Eddie Grant, while in the service of the Cincinnati Reds. (Baseball Reliquary)

Lena and Gaetano's only surviving son and a well-respected probate attorney, had no knowledge at all of the 100-pound plaque situated just above his head in his former bedroom. "You know, I never felt comfortable in that bedroom. Now I know why! That thing could've fallen on my head in the middle of the night and flattened me. My Pop was always a bit of a mystery, but this...This is...What the hell was he thinking about?" he says.

The plaque winds up in the Baseball Reliquary, but the San Francisco Giants, aware of Grant's service and sacrifice for his country, build a replica of the plaque, which stands guard at AT&T Park. The Mets place one in their museum at Citifield as well.



**CAPTAIN EDWARD LESLIE GRANT MEMORIAL AT THE
POLO GROUNDS, NEW YORK.**

The original Eddie Grant marker.



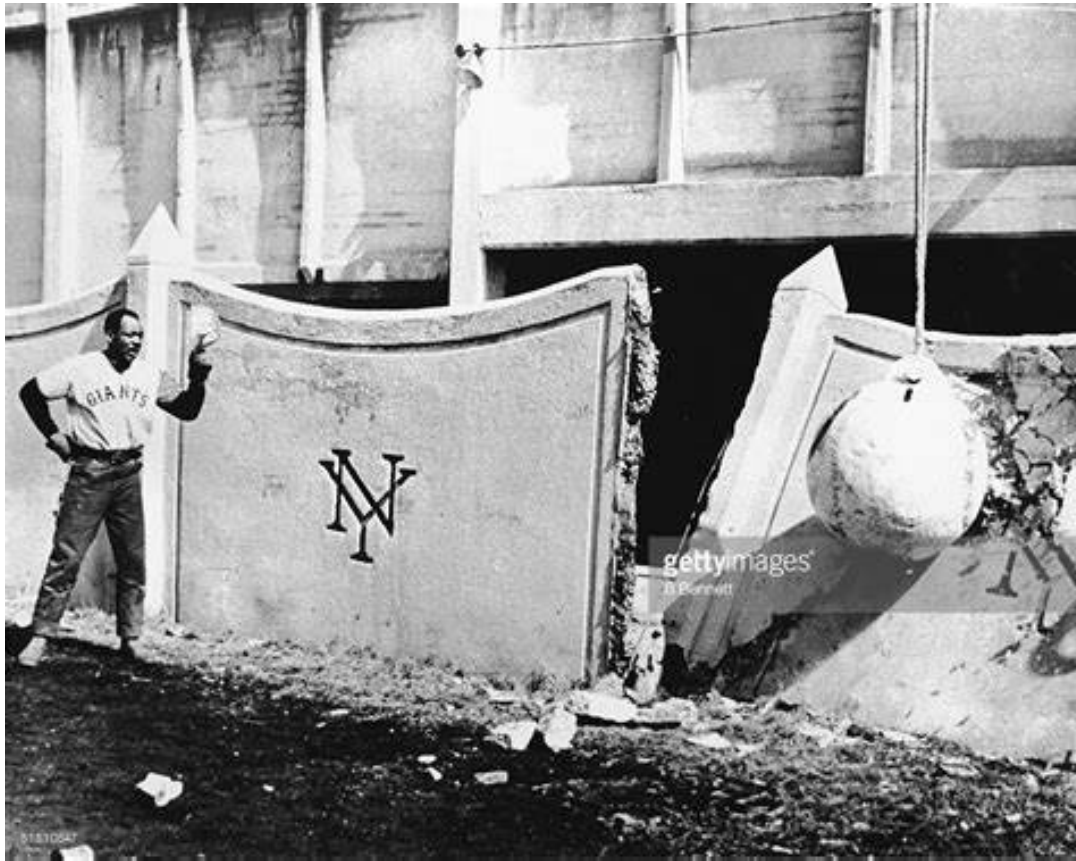
The replacement at Citifield.

After the game ends, the groundskeepers remove home plate to be shipped to San Francisco for the new ballpark. The New York Giants continue to exist in a small way – they maintain offices in New York, as they own the Polo Grounds until 1960, renting it out for NFL and college football, as well as religious revivals, and even rodeos, but the New York baseball team is history.

Nonetheless, while the Dodgers have now played more games in Los Angeles than in Brooklyn, the Giants still have played more games in New York than San Francisco. Furthermore, while the Dodgers have won five World Championships in their new home, they have never brought their trophies to Brooklyn for display, while the Giants have done so with their three triumphs in 2010, 2012, and 2014. Let that be a lesson to those who are still more nostalgic for the Dodgers than the Giants!

The Polo Grounds become the home for the Mets in 1962 and 1963, but on April 10, 1964, a crew of 60 men starts demolishing the ancient ballpark, tipping their

hardhats as the wrecking ball – the same one used at Ebbets Field – begins its work. It takes the crew four months to demolish the stadium.



The same wrecking ball that brought down Ebbets Field starts work on the Polo Grounds on April 10, 1964 – note the demolition worker at left, tipping his hardhat and wearing Giants shirt. The author’s grandfather watched this scene from the Brush Staircase. It was the last time a member of the author’s family would use the staircase until 2017.



The Polo Grounds under demolition – a tragic sight for fans of many teams.



Demolition is always a fairly efficient operation, whether it's a ballpark, a skyscraper, or the Maginot Line.



Another view of the demolition of the Polo Grounds. The Brush Staircase should be visible above the disintegrating stands.



Among the last things to be removed were the clubhouse and the seats. Some rows went to Shea Stadium, and were replaced by the plastic variety. Others went to the Fire Department Museum, to hold children watching films on fire safety.

Pieces of it go to odd places: some seats to Shea Stadium, other rows to the old New York Fire Department Museum on Spring Street, where generations of New York children endure official films on fire safety.

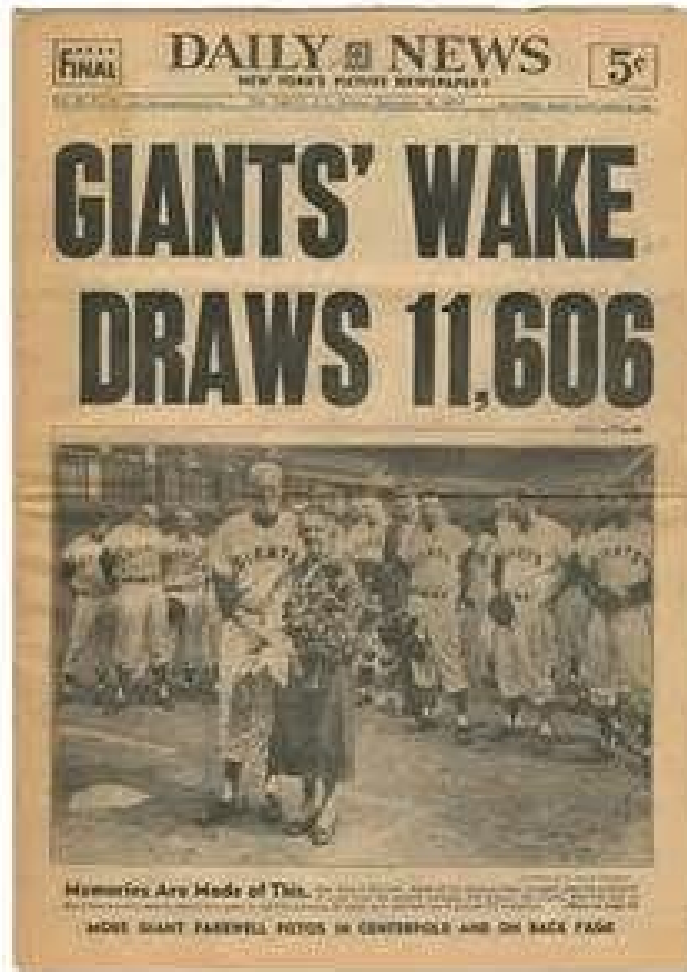
Other pieces go to the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

Among the more interesting remnants that get a new life are the Polo Grounds light towers – when the Polo Grounds comes down, Giants owner Horace Stoneham has them shipped to Phoenix, Arizona’s Municipal Stadium, where the Giants are doing spring training, and they are installed in Phoenix Municipal Stadium, where they have illuminated spring training games for the Giants, the Oakland Athletics, and now the Arizona State University baseball team.



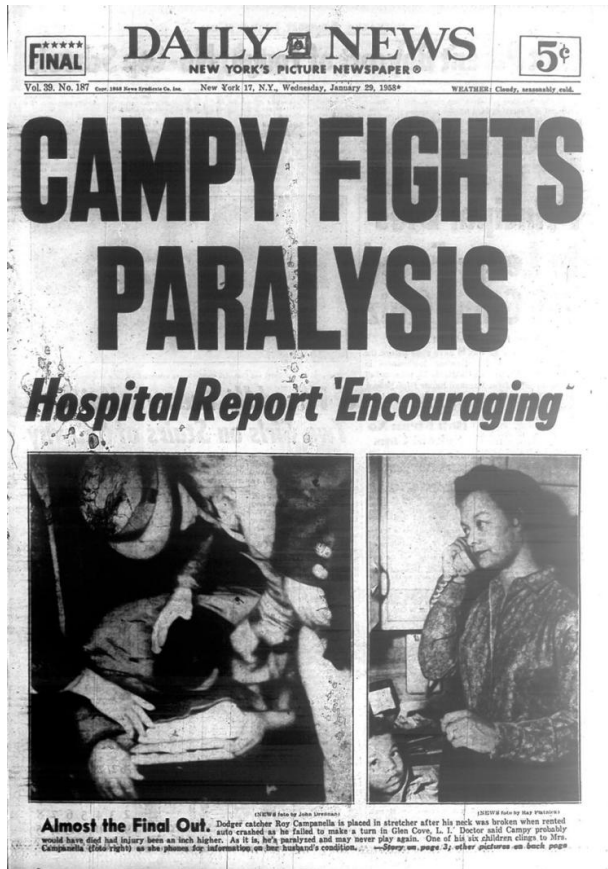
Arizona State University home games are now illuminated by Polo Grounds light towers. Recycling at its very finest.

And with that, the two New York National League teams, at season's end, flee their longtime homes, leaving their fans stunned, astonished, resentful, or any of the above, from 1957 until the ending of the world.



The Daily News covers the Giants' finale...Manager Bill Rigney, "The Cricket," presents Mrs. John J. McGraw with roses. She had a lifetime pass for the Polo Grounds, but was never required to show it. As Giant Manager Bill Rigney handed her the roses, she burst into tears and said, "It would have broken John's heart." She was the last official fan to leave the Polo Grounds.

After the season's end, the Dodgers suffer yet another disaster, when Roy Campanella, driving home from his liquor store, crashes on an icy road. The ghastly accident leaves him a paraplegic, ending his career. To add to his miseries, his wife subsequently divorces him.



The Daily News reports on the accident.

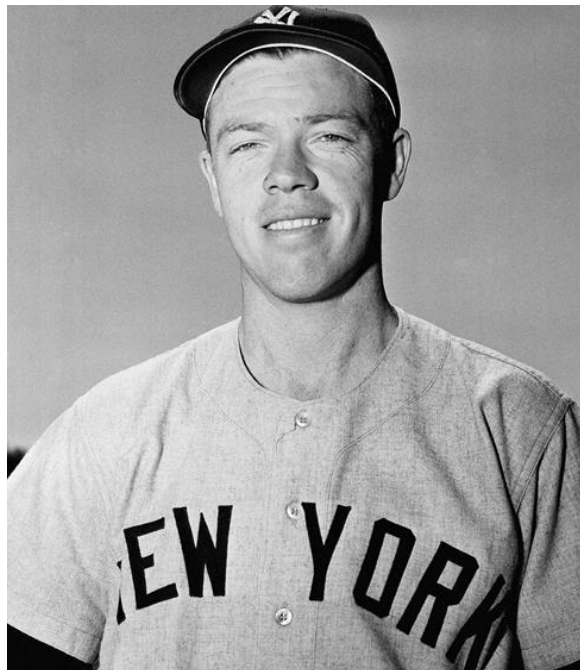


Roy Campanella as he should be remembered – a three-time MVP.

Meanwhile, the Yankees are oblivious to the turmoil in Harlem and Brooklyn, enduring turmoil of their own. On May 7th, in a Cleveland night game, Yankee shortstop Gil McDougald hits a line drive right back at the mound that hits Indian pitcher Herb Score in his right eye. Score collapses to the ground. Third baseman Hal Smith retrieves the ball and fires it to first for the out. Score's nose is shattered and his right eye is hemorrhaging. Yankee trainer Gus Mauch sprints to the mound with the Indian medical team as the public address announcer pleads, "If there is a doctor in the stands, will he please report to the playing field." Six doctors hop out of the stands.

Score keeps his consciousness as he is taken off the field on a stretcher, but his career as a brilliant fireballing pitcher is over.

The two teams play the game in a mental fog and the Indians win, 2-1. McDougald is devastated. He has Score's doctor call him every day to report on the pitcher's condition. McDougald himself, shattered by the incident, ends his career in 1960, three years later, and much too early. Score becomes a broadcaster. Ironically, McDougald, victimized by getting hit by a Bob Cerv batting practice line drive in 1955, later loses his hearing, forcing him to resign his later job as a baseball coach at Fordham. He regains his hearing with an operation in 1994.



Gil McDougald in happier days. (FindAGrave.com)

A week later, on May 16, Yankee ace Bob Turley defeats the Kansas City Athletics in Yankee Stadium, and a collection of Yankees and their wives go out on

the town to celebrate Billy Martin's 29th birthday in style. Former Yankees Irv Noren and Bob Cerv join Martin, Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Whitey Ford, Hank Bauer, Johnny Kucks, and their wives – the hard core of the Yankee lineup.

After Cerv and Noren depart, the crew goes to see Sammy Davis Jr. do his 2 a.m. show at the Copacabana, where the maitre d' plops them at a special table up front, as befitting Yankee royalty. They are unwittingly placed in front of a group of 19 members of a bowling league, who resent losing their view, and start heckling both the Yankees and Davis, the latter on racial grounds.

Berra, who opposes heckling in all its forms, tells the bowlers to shut up in firm terms, but the argument adjourns to the Copacabana's men's room, where bowler Edwin Jones is found unconscious on the floor. New York Post columnist Leonard Lyons leads the Yankees out of the club, but next day, Bauer is charged with felonious assault. The former World War II Marine insists that not only is he innocent, Berra and Kucks held him back. Yogi Berra is adamant: "Nobody did nothing to nobody."

The charges are dropped, but the Yankees fine each player \$1,000, except Kucks, who is only fined \$500. His salary is lower.

LATE **DAILY NEWS** **5¢**
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER ©
Vol. 56, No. 207 New York, N.Y., Friday, May 17, 1957

YANKS BENCH 2 IN COPA BRAWL

Story on Page 1

Beck Repays Another 100G

Story on Page 2

**It Was a Hit, Says Jones,
But Hank Calls It Error**

Daily News columnist Edwin Jones, 43, says his last-
year job as he sits at 402 W. 100th St. Jones says
he's still a Yankee fan, but he's going to see Jack
Beck for \$200,000, charging Hank slugged him at
the Copacabana, N.Y. (L.A.), holding a couple of
bats for last night's Stadium game, said he did not
strike Jones, Casey Stengel, lined at his players
nightclub, behind Miller Park, Yogi Berra.
Story on page 1

The Daily News covers the brawl.



The Copacabana defendants: from left, Mickey Mantle, Billy Martin, Hank Bauer, and Charlene Bauer. Why are these men smiling? Because they beat the courtroom rap. Charlene, however, looks less certain. One thing is certain: one should not mess with these fellas – Mickey and Billy are known tough guys, and Hank Bauer was a World War II Marine who fought in combat against the Japanese on Iwo Jima.

Needless to say, the brawl is huge news in New York, then a city with 14 daily papers. But more importantly, the Yankees regard the situation as an opportunity to get rid of Billy Martin and replace him with the other half of a new double play combination, Bobby Richardson. The first half, Tony Kubek, is already with the Yankees, rapidly earning Rookie of the Year honors.

On June 4th, Yankee chief scout Paul Krichell, who found Lou Gehrig, dies at his home in The Bronx at age 74. The same day, the Yankees finish a deal from February that saw the Kansas City Athletics gain pitcher Tom Morgan and Noren for pitchers Art Ditmar and Bobby Shantz. The additional acquisition for the Yankees is a third baseman, Clete Boyer.

Nine days later, Ditmar is facing the White Sox in Chicago, when he knocks down Larry Doby with a tight pitch. Batter and hitter exchange rhetoric and the benches empty. Martin yells at Doby and another fight breaks out, which requires the Chicago cops to break it up. Doby, Enos Slaughter, and Martin are all fined \$150, Ditmar \$100. Yankee owner Dan Topping says he will pay the Yankee fines. American League President Will Harridge warns Topping that if he does so, Topping will be hit with a \$5,000 fine of his own.

Next day, on June 14th, in Kansas City, Martin goes 1-for-4 as the Yankees demolish the Athletics, 10-1, with Tom Sturdivant going the distance for the Yankees, and Mantle belting his 19th home run of the year.

The 15th is the trading deadline. Billy inspects the batting order and sees Bobby Richardson playing second base. He sits in the bullpen, gloomy.

In the seventh inning, Casey Stengel walks over to the pen and says, “Billy, can I talk to you?”

Billy follows Stengel into the clubhouse. Moments later, Kansas City owner Arnold Johnson walks in. “Casey is talking to me and he’s having trouble getting the words out. He couldn’t even look me in the eye. But I knew what was coming,” Billy tells his biographer, Phil Pepe, years later.

“Billy, you’re going to Kansas City...I couldn’t...Mr. Johnson, let me tell you about this kid...he’s one of the best,” Casey says.

“You don’t have to say nothing,” Martin barks at Casey, cutting him off sharply. “I’ll play for you, Mr. Johnson. I won’t dog it on you.”

Martin is in tears. When the Yankees come into the clubhouse, Mantle and Ford do the same. When Billy gets on the team bus to go back to the hotel, he finds everyone silent. Billy sees Bobby Richardson sitting by himself, and “I slipped into the seat next to him and said, ‘You’re going to be the second baseman now, son. Carry on the tradition.’”

Next day, Billy plays for the Athletics against his old team. He goes 2-for-5 and scores three runs. Billy and Casey will not speak for years. Although he plays for six more teams, Billy never recovers...he is never the same player.

Despite this chaos, the Yankees perform normally.

For example, on May 27, 1957, the Yankees invade Fenway Park and send Hoboken native Johnny Kucks to face Tom Brewer before 29,865 fans. The Yankees

get on the board in the third inning when Bill Skowron belts his sixth home run of the year, scoring Mantle ahead of him. The Sox strike back that inning with an RBI single. They go ahead in the third when Jimmy Piersall belts a two-run homer and Jackie Jensen hits a sacrifice fly to score Gene Mauch (yes, that Gene Mauch).

The Yankees tie up the game in the top of the fifth with back-to-back doubles by Hank Bauer and Gil McDougald. But the Sox go ahead 6-4 in the bottom of the sixth when Brewer singles in a run (who needs the designated hitter?) and Mauch draws a bases-loaded walk.

However, in the seventh inning, the Yankees provide Boston fans with the reason New York is dominating the 1950s. Bauer doubles to lead off the inning. Gil McDougald walks. Billy Martin singles Bauer home and chases Brewer from the box. Bob Porterfield enters the game and walks Mickey Mantle. Skowron singles to left, scoring two runs. Porterfield then serves up a wild pitch that puts runners on second and third with nobody out.

Porterfield is dismissed in mid-batter in favor of Rudy Minarcin, who walks Howard to load the bases. Andy Carey then hits a sacrifice fly for the first out, but Mantle scores from third, while Skowron advances on the throw. Next up is Tony Kubek, on his way to Rookie of the Year honors, whose sacrifice fly brings in Skowron. Two out. The Yankees now lead, 8-6.

Stengel sends up Joe Collins to pinch-hit for Johnny Kucks, and he walks, putting Howard on second. The Yankees have batted around. They also lead, 9-6.

Hank Bauer comes up for the second time in the inning, and doubles for the second time in the inning, scoring Howard and moving Collins to third. 10-6. Gil McDougald hits a grounder to third baseman Frank Malzone, who throws it over first, and two runs score. 12-6. Billy Martin ends the slaughter with a grounder to second. The Yankees have scored eight runs on four hits and one error in the inning.

Bob Grim comes on to pitch, and he disposes of the shocked Sox. The Yankees lead off the eighth with Mickey Mantle, who walks. Skowron singles to left, but Mantle gets in to third under the throw anyway, and Skowron moves to second on the throw. Elston Howard singles to center, scoring Mantle. 13-6. Andy Carey doubles to left, scoring Skowron. 14-6. Kubek doubles to the same place, scoring Howard and Carey. 16-6.

The Sox replaced Minarcin with Bob Chakales, who faces pitcher Grim. Grim bunts (of course) and Chakales fields it (of course) and drops the ball (of course),

putting Grim on first, and scoring Kubek on the error. 17-6. Chakales then gets rid of the remaining Yankees, and their scoring is done.

The Sox try a mild counterattack in the bottom of the ninth, on three walks, a single, and a sacrifice fly, but then go down. The final score is 17-8, Yankees, with the odd note that 20 walks were yielded in the game.

On June 22, the Yankees entertain the Chicago White Sox at the Stadium, and both teams match hits, runs, pitchers, and wits, all game long. The Yankees jump out in front with Mantle's 20th home run, 2-0, in the first, but the Sox pile on three runs in the third and two more in the fifth, to make it 5-2. In the bottom of the sixth, Bill Skowron cracks his 12th home run to make it 5-4, and a Harry Simpson RBI single ties the game.

In the eighth inning, left fielder Elston Howard nearly breaks the tie with a line shot to center field. The Sox' Bubba Phillips misjudges it. Howard turns on the speed and tries for an inside-the-park home run, only to be cut down on a four-man relay.

The game pushes on into the 13th inning, and is in its fourth hour and 13th minute when Yogi Berra rips an 0-1 pitch from Paul LaPalme and blasts it into the right field seats for his ninth home run, sending the surviving members of the 33,130 in attendance home happy.

Bobby Shantz's 2.45 ERA wins him Comeback Player of the Year honors. Pitcher Tom Sturdivant is 16-6. Tony Kubek wins Rookie of the Year, and Mantle bats a career-high .365, but his home run total drops from 52 to 34 and RBI total from 130 to 94. Nonetheless, Mantle wins his second MVP award.

In the process of doing so, Mickey Mantle enjoys a memorable day at the plate on July 23, against the Chicago White Sox in Yankee Stadium. 42,422 people are in attendance as the Yankees send Don Larsen out to cope with Sox starter Bob Keegan, a former Yankee farmhand.

In the first inning, Mantle hits a soft fly ball to center field, and center fielder Larry Doby has trouble seeing the ball in the lights, and it falls in at his feet for a double. Mantle scores on a two-run home run into right center by Harry Simpson, and the Yankees go up 2-0.

Mantle himself tacks on a run in the third with a massive home run off of Keegan that goes 465 feet into the next-to-last row of the right center-field bleachers, according to Yankee Stadium superintendent Jim Thomson, checking his blueprints for the **Herald-Tribune**.

In the top of the fifth, Larsen comes unglued, giving up a run on two walks, two singles, and a wild pitch, and gives way to Tommy Byrne, who gives up another run on a groundball, and the Yankee lead is down to 3-2.

In the top of the sixth, the White Sox coming trudging back, scoring four runs on five walks and two singles, chasing Byrne. Art Ditmar restores order, but the Sox now lead 6-3. Tony Kubek singles in Coleman in the fifth to make it 6-4.

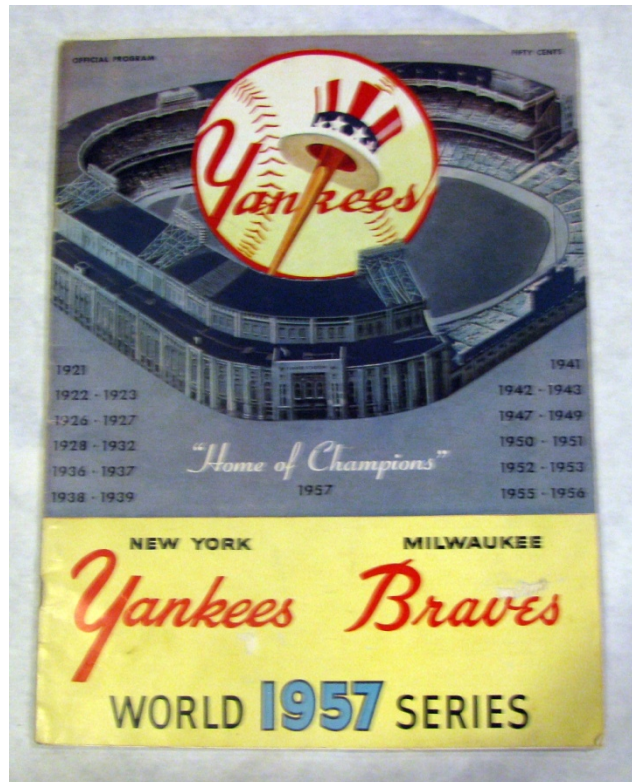
In the bottom of the sixth, Mantle leads off with a single, is moved to second on Simpson single, steals third, and is nailed there when Hank Bauer hits into a line drive double play to third to end the inning.

In the bottom of the seventh, with the Sox still up, 6-4, Ellie Howard leads off with a triple. He scores on a Dixie Howell wild pitch with Jerry Coleman batting. 6-4. In comes Jack Harshman to face Coleman and he walks both the former Marine and the next hitter, Enos Slaughter, which puts runners on first and third for Tony Kubek. He hits a bunt single third, which loads the bases for Gil McDougald. He draws a walk to score a run. 6-6. The bases remain loaded for Mantle.

The Mick rips a shot to the left field corner that nobody can handle. “The ball eluded Minne Minoso’s leaping grasp in the left-field corner,” writes Joseph P. Sheehan in **The New York Times**. As the ball rattles around, the runners all score, and Mantle winds up on third with a triple, the eighth Yankee to date to have hit for the cycle. It is the only time he ever does so, and the Yankees now lead 9-6. Kubek singles in Coleman (again) in the eighth to ice the 10-6 victory.

Yankee ownership reacts after the season by sending Mantle a contract for 1958 with a \$5,000 pay cut. Mantle is outraged and says so to General Manager George M. Weiss. Take it or be traded to Cleveland for Bronx native Rocky Colavito, Weiss says. Mantle stands firm. He gets a raise to \$75,000.

However, the Yankees win yet another American League Pennant, and face the Milwaukee Braves in the World Series, who have their own MVP, Hank Aaron.



Can't tell your World Championships without a scorecard, get your scorecard...

Whitey Ford beats Braves ace Warren Spahn 3-1 in **Game One** in Yankee Stadium.

In **Game Two**, former Yankee Lew Burdette (he pitched two games for them in 1950) faces Bobby Shantz, and Burdette evens the series with a 4-2 win.

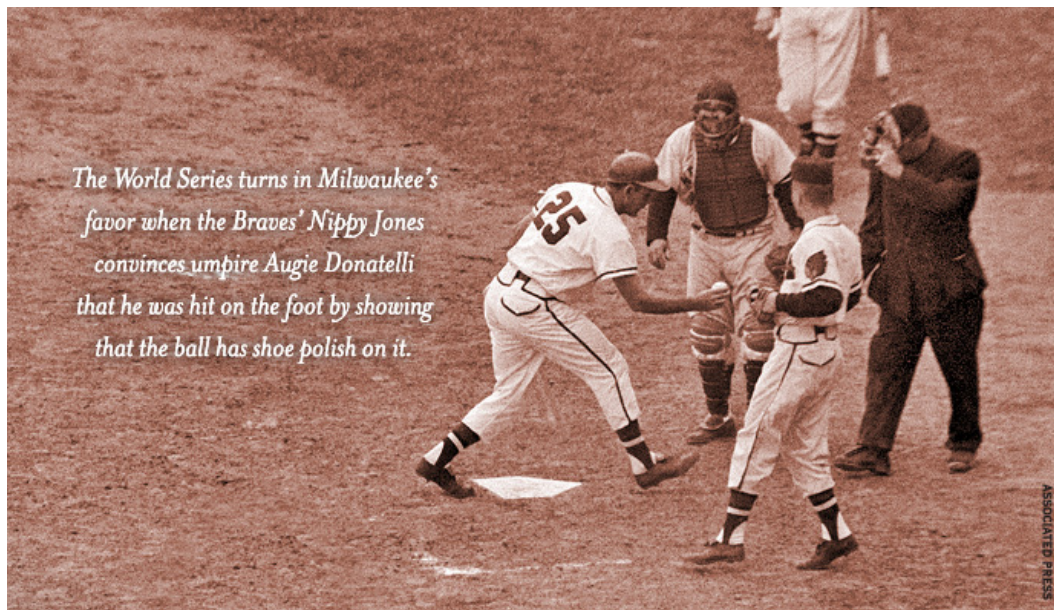
Game Three is in Milwaukee, and Kubek, a graduate of the city's Bay View High School, gets a fine welcome from his friends and relatives. He returns the applause with two home runs, a single, and four RBIs as the Yankees win 12-3.

In **Game Four**, Spahn goes the distance in a 10-inning, 7-5 battle, In the bottom of the 10th, Spahn is due up first for the Braves, with the Braves trailing 5-4, and the Braves pinch hit with Nippy Jones, who has played in just 30 games that year. In what turns out to be his final appearance, a wild Tommy Byrne curve ball two inches off the plate bounces near Jones. The pinch-hitter skips out of the way, and umpire Augie Donatelli initially calls it a ball. Jones contends the ball nicked his shoe. He retrieves the ball himself and shows it to and the shoe polish on the ball to Donatelli.

Catcher Yogi Berra, unaware that the ball has trickled to the screen behind him, loses an opportunity to hurl it back to Byrne, who has seen the pitch nick Jones's shoe. "I yelled to him, 'Get the ball!' but he never saw it. If Yogi had gotten the ball and thrown it back to me, I'd have put some more marks on it so nobody could tell the shoe polish. I told Donatelli that the ball had shoe polish on it before I threw it, but he didn't believe me," Byrne tells interviewer Bill Madden decades later.

Instead, Donatelli believes his own eyes and Jones's argument, and awards Jones first base for being hit by a pitch. An irritated Casey Stengel yanks "The Wild Man of Wake Forest," as Byrne is known, replacing him with Bob Grim. Meanwhile, Braves Manager Fred Haney pulls Jones and sends future original Met Felix Mantilla in to run for him. Next up is future Hall of Famer Red Schoendienst, who bunts Mantilla to second. Mantilla promptly scores the tying run on a Johnny Logan double. Future Hall of Famer Eddie Mathews comes up next and smashes a game-ending walk-off two-run home run off of Grim.

"If we'd have gotten out of that inning, we'd have won the Series," Byrne tells Madden. "It was just one of those things that happened. I don't blame myself for that loss. I made the pitch and it was the right pitch to make," years after serving as Mayor of Wake Forest, from 1973 to 1987.



The turning point of the 1957 World Series. Credit: The Great Game **Game Five** sees Burdette pitch a snappy 1-0 shutout over Whitey Ford, sending the Series back to New York.

In **Game Six**, Bob Turley evens the series with a 3-2 victory, punctuated by home runs by Yogi Berra, Hank Bauer, Frank Torre, and Henry Aaron.

This sets up a dramatic **Game Seven** between Burdette and the erratic Don Larsen. Kubek, playing third base, makes an error on a sure double play ball, which enables the Braves to run up a 4-0 score in the third inning, and Burdette fires a 5-0 shutout to become the third pitcher to win three games in a single World Series. The Milwaukee Braves are World Champions for the first time ever, and confetti and streamers cover the Wisconsin city – people weep openly, and hug each other in the streets. For the first time since 1949, the World Championship banner does NOT fly in the City of New York.

It is also the only time the Braves defeat the Yankees in the World Series, and the latest occasion that the Yankees have hosted Game Seven of a World Series.

On October 12, one of the most legendary musicals in the history of Broadway closes its two-year run, having moved from the 46th Street Theater to the Adelphi that year.

Written by Richard Adler, Jerry Ross, George Abbott, and Douglas Wallop, “**Damn Yankees**” has earned national acclaim, whopping sales, and a best-selling cast album. The play is based on Wallop’s well-received novel “**The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant**” and is a comedic romp in which a middle-aged Washington Senators fan sell his soul to the devil to become “Shoeless” Joe Hardy, leading his (and the author’s) beloved Senators to the pennant as a 20-year-old slugger. Stephen Douglass plays Joe Hardy, Gwen Verdon as his inamorata, Lola, Russ Brown as Senators manager Benny Van Buren, and Ray Walston (known to later audiences as “**My Favorite Martian**” and Mr. Hand in “**Fast Times at Ridgemont High**”), as Mr. Applegate (the Devil).

Turned into a musical, it offers audiences classic songs like “You Gotta Have Heart” and “Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets.”

“**Damn Yankees**” wins seven Tonys: Best Musical, Best Actress in a Musical for Gwen Verdon, Best Actor for Ray Walston, Best Supporting Actor for Russ Brown, Best Conducting and Musical Direction for Hal Hastings and stage technician Harry Green, and Best Choreography for a rising figure in the industry – Bob Fosse.

The play then becomes a movie, shot at Wrigley Field in Los Angeles, like many other baseball movies of the 1940s and 1950s, with Tab Hunter as Joe Hardy, complete with in-game footage of the Yankees at Washington’s Griffith Stadium. Yogi Berra catches a foul pop in the picture, and Tab Hunter hauls in a Mickey Mantle drive to save the game.

The play returns to Broadway in 1994 with Bebe Neuwirth as Lola and Victor Garber as Applegate, and yet again at the New York City Center, with Jason Alexander directing it, in 2007. This time Alexander (nominally a Yankee employee in “**Seinfeld**”), directs the play and the story is updated to 1981, with the Los Angeles Dodgers as the Washington Senators for fans who are unaware of the vanished team’s existence. Sean Hayes stars as Applegate and Jane Krakowski as Lola.

Meanwhile, the real 1957 Senators post a 55-99 season and finish dead last, as usual, under the hapless leadership of Chuck Dressen, who is replaced mid-season by Cookie Lavagetto. Chuck Stobbs loses 16 straight games before winning a game, and finishes 8-20.

Needless to say, the real Senators are assailed by reporters about their inability to match their Broadway version. Lavagetto tells reporters: “Believe me, brother, you gotta have a sense of humor.”

Sportswriter Bob Addie kids slugger Harmon Killebrew about a slump, writing, “What happened to Joe Hardy? Now, you’re starting to hit like Andy Hardy.”

The Senators are also dead last in attendance, drawing a mere 457,079 masochists to disintegrating Griffith Park.

That same year, Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis star in “**The Sweet Smell of Success**,” a hard film-noir in which Lancaster, a newspaper columnist, works with publicist Tony Curtis to wreck the relationship between his sister (Susan Harrison) and a musician “below her station,” played by Martin Milner, of “**Adam 12**” fame.

At one point in the movie, Curtis tells Lancaster’s secretary, “Don’t try to sell me the Brooklyn Bridge. I happen to know it belongs to the Dodgers.”

1962

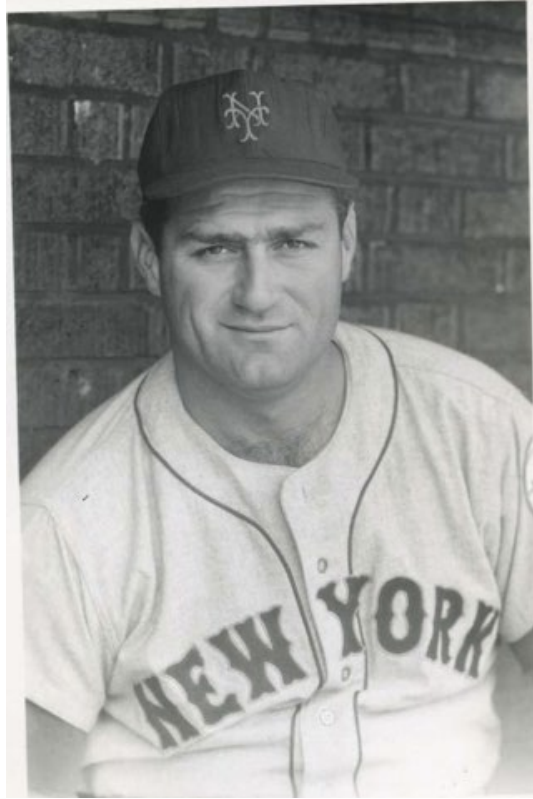
Probably more words have been written about the original New York Mets than any last-place team in the history of baseball. The seminal work was Jimmy Breslin’s “**Can’t Anybody Here Play This Game?**” but it when the team won its 1969 World Championship, there was a wave of book about the Mets’ rise to success, all of which focused on the two teams as bookends. More books have appeared on this legendary and ill-fated team in the intervening decades, with the result that the stories of their misadventures and misfortunes have become too well-known to repeat.

The facts are pretty simple: forced to choose players from a limited draft base, the original Mets and their fellow expansion team, the less-remembered Houston Colt .45s, open the season with a talent pool of what were described as “has-beens and never-weres.” The Mets choose to stock their team with former Dodgers and Giants, hoping to capitalize on nostalgia in lieu of competitive ability. Oddly enough, they miss opportunities to sign useful talent like Paul Blair.



The symbol of the 1962 Mets’ ineptitude. Curiously, Marv Throneberry was not one of the original Mets. He was acquired from the Baltimore Orioles on May 9, 1962, for an original Met, Hobie Landrith.

The result is that the 1962 Mets lose a staggering 120 games, and field a then-record 28 position players and 17 pitchers. Many of them were stars before coming to the Mets, like Richie Ashburn and Gil Hodges, and others become anti-hero legends as Mets, like Marv Throneberry and Choo Choo Coleman. Perhaps the most emblematic Met is catcher Harry Chiti, acquired in a trade from Cleveland for a “player to be named later.” Chiti proves so inept by the Mets’ parlous standards that he becomes that “player to be named later,” thus being traded for himself.



Harry Chiti ponders his fate between trades.

The most legendary figure among the Mets is their leader, Manager Casey Stengel, whose biting wit and hilarious stories make up for and deflected from the team's on-field ineptitude. Oddly, as Marty Appel points out in his new biography of the "Old Perfesser," Casey does very little "Perfessering" that season, leaving on-field team management to coaches Solly Hemus and Cookie Lavagetto, both baseball lifers, and center fielder Richie Ashburn, who maneuvers the defense, such as it is, from his post in center field.



The “Ol’ Perfesser” explains it all.

In these efforts, Casey is aided by a press corps headed by Dick Young, Jack Lang, and the so-called “chipmunks.” They cover the team as lovable losers who keep trying in the face of disaster. They make the Mets hip urban counter-culture anti-establishment figures for the onrushing 1960s, which may amuse Ashburn, who is a Young Republican from Nebraska. They do more positive public relations for the Mets than their crotchety PR chief, Tom Meany, a longtime New York sportswriter, who does not keep track of the team’s many negative statistics – that is left to Jack Lang, then with the Long Island Press.

Perhaps the most “Amazin’” thing about the 1962 Mets is that despite or because of their appalling level of play, they draw nearly a million loyal rooters, brandishing air horns and spreading bedsheets with slogans on the Polo Grounds overhangs, gaining more attendance and ink than their rivals across the Macombs Dam Bridge, the Yankees.

Under the leadership of Ralph Houk, the Yankees are reigning World Champions, and waging yet another victorious battle in the struggle for the American League Pennant.

Most of the heroes of the legendary 1961 squad are back, except for Tony Kubek, who is activated by the Army from reserve status. That leaves a gaping hole at shortstop, and the Yankees have two tools to fill it: rookies Tom Tresh and Phil Linz. The former is an outfielder by trade and the latter a utility infielder. As matters develop, it is Tresh who takes over the position in 1962, smacking 20 home runs, winning Rookie of the Year honors, and making overheated fans and media alike believe that he is the next Mickey Mantle, with his power and switch-hitting.

Linz and Tresh are not the only new kids on the Yankee block in 1962: Jim Bouton and Joe Pepitone emerge as budding stars. Relief ace Luis Arroyo declines, but Marshall Bridges wins eight games and saves 18 in relief.



Tom Tresh on his Topps baseball card. He was a star, but was not the next Mickey Mantle.

The veterans do well, too: Whitey Ford is 17-8, with the league's third-best ERA at 2.90, at age 33. Ralph Terry posts a brilliant 23-12 season. Roger Maris, facing boos from fans and hostile reporting from the media angry at him for breaking Babe Ruth's home run record, smashes 33 HRs, and leads the team with 100 RBIs. However, reporters blast him for his lack of color, temerity to have broken Ruth's record, and failing to follow up the record-setting season with an even bigger one. Despite being an outstanding player, Maris can't win.

His centerfielder, Mickey Mantle, however, can. Despite missing six weeks from injuries, Mantle smacks 33 HRs, drives in 89 runs, and bats .321, second in the league to Pete Runnels' .326. For these numbers and his exemplary on-field leadership, the Mick wins his third Most Valuable Player Award.

On Sunday, June 24, the Yankees play the Tigers in Detroit before 35,368 fans. It's unlikely that the final crowd is close to that number. Bob Turley starts for the Yankees against the "Yankee-killer," Frank Lary.

In the first inning, the Yankees show their dislike of and disrespect for Lary by scoring six runs, three of them alone on a Clete Boyer homer. The Tigers strike back in their half of the first with a three-run shot by Purnal Goldy. Turley is gone in short order. Mickey Mantle's run-scoring grounder in the second makes it a 7-6 ballgame, and the Tigers pinch-hit for Lary in the bottom of the second, both sides turning the game over to their bullpens, such as they are.

In the sixth inning, Bronx native Rocky Colavito singles in a run to tie the game at seven. And then that's it. Nobody can score, including Mantle, who is playing right field due to injuries that limit his mobility, but he has to come out in the seventh in favor of Brooklyn native Joe Pepitone.

Bizarre numbers ensue as the game goes scoreless into the 22nd inning. Both teams use seven pitchers each. The Yankees' Tex Clevenger pitches 6.1 scoreless innings. Bobby Richardson goes 3-for-11. Yogi Berra is 3-for-10, while catching every inning. Roger Maris is 2-for-9, with 10 putouts. Colavito does better, 7-for-10.

In the 11th, the Tigers threaten to take the lead. Colavito opens the inning with a triple. The Yankees walk the next two hitters to load the bases and set up the force. Chico Fernandez hits a liner to Johnny Blanchard in left field, but it's not deep enough to score Colavito. Dick Brown tries a squeeze bunt with one out, but the ball goes up in the air. Yogi Berra catches it and doubles up Colavito, who is dashing for the plage.

In the top of the 22nd, Phil "The Vulture" Regan comes on to pitch for the Tigers, working in relief of Don Mossi, and he nails Bobby Richardson on a lineout to second. Up next is Roger Maris, who walks. That brings up Jack Reed, the third Yankee right fielder of the day, a Mississippi native and former college football star, one of four major league baseball players to also play in a major college football game, the 1953 Sugar Bowl. It is the only major league home run Reed will ever hit in his 250-game career.

Now Reed trudges to the plate, and bashes a Regan pitch into the left field stands to put the Yankees up, 9-7. Regan gets two more outs to end the bleeding, and Jim Bouton comes out in the bottom of the 22nd. He strikes out Bill Bruton looking, makes Goldy fly out to right, Colavito single to center, and Norm Cash fly out to left, to ice the Yankee win. The game has taken exactly seven hours.



Jack Reed, the Man of the Hour on June 24, 1962. He picked a good day to hit his only major league home run. (Photo credit: Topps)

On August 19, the Yankees take the field at Kansas City's Municipal Stadium against the Athletics, before 29,274 fans, who brave 103-degree heat to catch some hot action. Ralph Terry starts for the Yankees against Dan Pfister.

The Yankees waste no time on offense. Tom Tresh leads off the game with a single, Bobby Richardson goes out on a pop fly, and Roger Maris singles to put Tresh on third. Mickey Mantle singles to score Tresh, and put Maris on third. That brings up Elston Howard, who smashes a three-run home run to put the Yankees up 4-0, his 23rd HR of the season.

The A's strike back for a run on a sacrifice fly in the second, and the Yankees answer that in the third with a run on a ground out. The score is now 5-1.

In the top of the fourth, Jerry Walker comes on to pitch for the A's, facing the bottom third of the Yankee order. He gets Moose Skowron on a pop fly, but yields as double to third baseman Clete Boyer, who steals third, and walks pitcher Ralph Terry, presumably to put the double play in order.

Tresh singles to right, scoring Boyer, making it a 6-1 game. After another pop fly by Bobby Richardson, Roger Maris walks to load the bases, which brings up

Mantle. He blasts a pitch out of the ball park for a grand slam, his 24th home run of the year. The Yankees now lead, 10-1.

The Yankees pile on more runs in the sixth when Mantle doubles in Tresh and puts Maris on third, and Howard cranks his second home run of the game (24 on the year) putting the Yankees up 14-1.

But the A's make it interesting: Norm Siebern hits a solo homer off of Terry in the sixth, his 17th. In the seventh, the first three Athletics hit back-to-back-to-back home runs: Gino Cimoli, 8; Wayne Causey, 4; and Billy Bryan, his first. 14-6.

The Yankees answer this barrage with four more runs in the top of the eighth: one double, three singles, a wild pitch, and a hit batter bring home four more runs. 18-6. The A's make a comeback on a Norm Siebern triple in the bottom of the eighth, who scores on a ground out, to make it 18-7.

But the Yankees finish off the A's in the ninth, with both teams having pulled some of their starters in admission of a blowout: Jack Reed, in the game to spell Mantle, singles and scores on an Ellie Howard triple. 19-7. Moose Skowron belts a two-run home run (his 19th) to ice the final score, 21-7.

Incredibly, in this slugfest, while the Athletics go through four pitchers, Yankee starter Ralph Terry goes the route scattering 11 hits, seven runs, six earned, with only two strikeouts, but no walks. Despite the high scoring and 31 hits, the game takes only 2:27 to play.

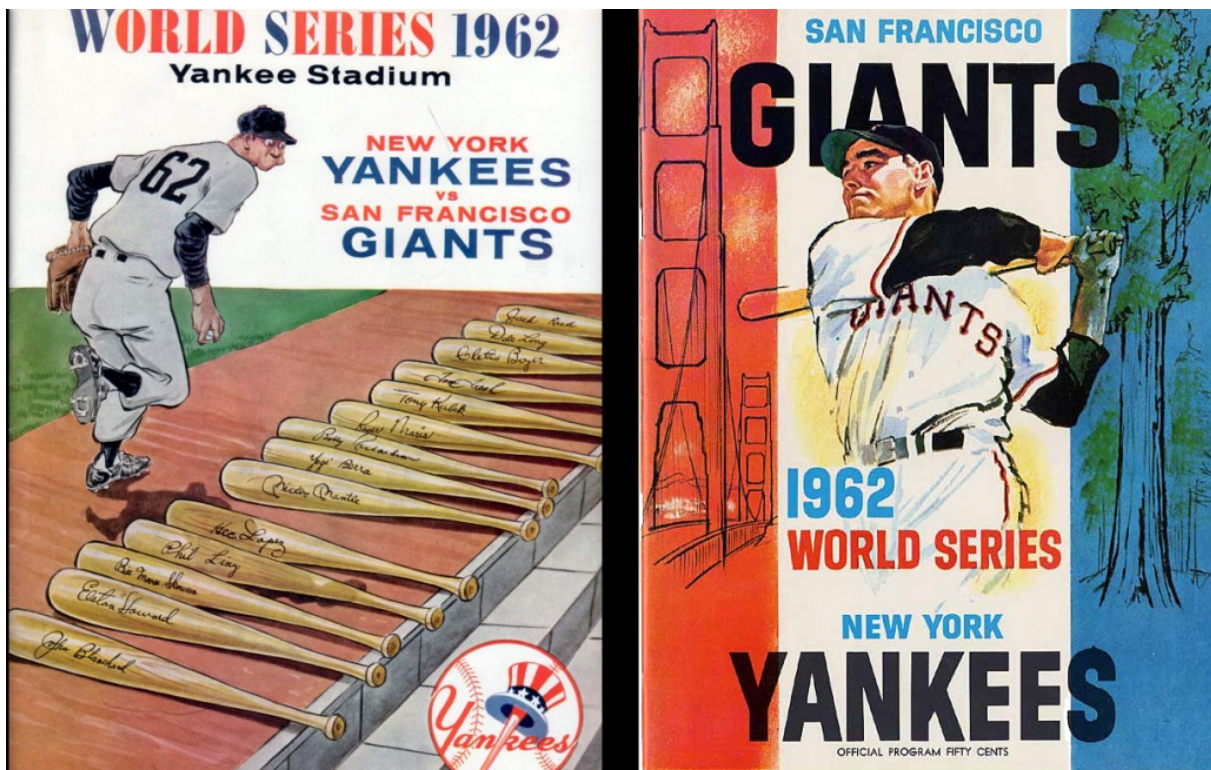
The Yankees will face one of two old opponents in the World Series, both of them former New York teams. The Los Angeles Dodgers drop a four-game lead over their rival San Francisco Giants and both teams finish 101-61, forcing a three-game playoff for the National League Pennant.

With the great New York rivalry now moved to the West Coast, but just as intense, the 1962 playoffs provide considerable drama. The Giants take the first game with ease, 8-0, and have a 5-0 lead in the second game, when the Dodgers explode to win, 8-7.

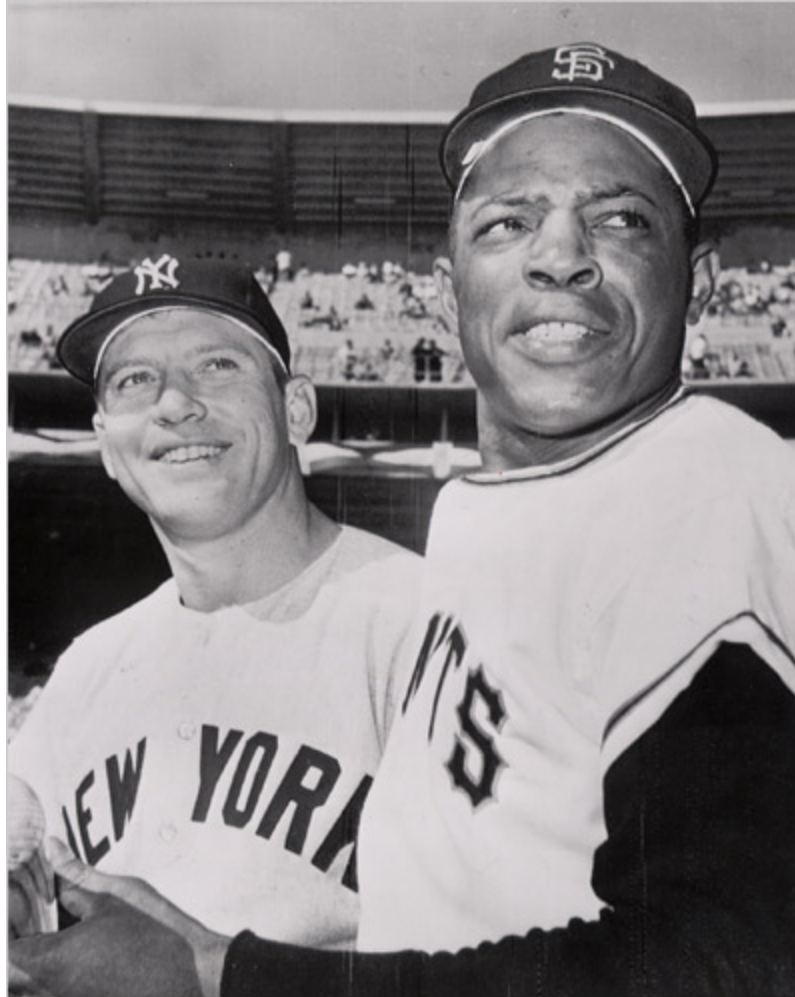
In the finale, in Los Angeles, the Dodgers are ahead 4-2 in the ninth inning, when Matty Alou leads off with a pinch single, but is erased on a Harvey Kuenn grounder. Dodger reliever Ed Roebuck walks the next batters, and sportswriters, players, and fans alike realize that a repeat of the 1951 playoff is coming. Reporters en route to the Dodger clubhouse for the champagne party turn around.

Sure enough, Willie Mays belts a line single that nearly tears off Roebuck's glove, and Dodger Manager Walter Alston refuses pleas to bring on his ace starter Don Drysdale, to slam the door, instead going to the erratic Stan Williams. He delivers the tying run with a fly ball. With runners on second and third, Williams walks a batter intentionally, and then Jim Davenport unintentionally, putting the Giants up 3-2. An error scores the final run, and the Giants are back in the World Series after a dramatic playoff victory over the Dodgers, albeit without the shock and trauma of a Bobby Thomson-style home run.

As the Yankees fly across the country for the Series opener, they set up a betting pool on "wheels-down" for their plane. Winner will get free use of a rental car for three days. "There's no use even guessing," Whitey Ford quips. "Yogi, the lucky bastard, will win it." Berra guesses the plane will land at 6:15 p.m. The plane lands at 6:15.



Pledge your allegiance and pick a scorecard...



The hype was not matched by their face-to-face performance: Mickey Mantle and Willie Mays face the photographers before World Series Game One. In the 1962 Fall Classic, Mantle batted .120 with no home runs, and Mays hit .250 with no home runs. But in their careers, they were, as Tina Turner sings: “Simply the best...”

The Series is a battle between the Yankees M&M boys, Mantle and Maris, and the Giants’ M&M boys, Mays and Willie McCovey. The Giants are exhausted from the playoffs, the Yankees fresh. But the dominating factor turns out to be the shoddy engineering and horrible winds of San Francisco’s Candlestick Park.

Billy O’Dell starts **Game One** for the Giants against Whitey Ford in San Francisco, and O’Dell is soon in trouble. Ford’s World Series consecutive-inning scoreless streak ends at 33.2, but those are the only runs he allows. Backed by a Clete Boyer home run, the Yankees win, 6-2.

Next day, in **Game Two**, Jack Sanford matches his 24-7 record against Terry's 23-12, and Sanford is victorious, even though Terry only serves up two hits. One of them is a massive solo home run by Willie McCovey, and Sanford pitches a three-hit, 2-0 shutout.

In New York, the Yankees' Bill Stafford duels Billy Pierce for seven scoreless innings in **Game Three**. In the bottom of the seventh, Tresh and Mantle single. Maris singles to McCovey in right, and Willie Mac bobbles the ball, enabling both runners to score and Maris reach second. Ellie Howard hits a deep fly ball to Mays, which sends Maris to third, and he scores on a ground out, putting the Yankees up 3-0.

In the eighth, Felipe Alou hits a fastball through the box that smashes against Stafford's shinbone, causing a lump the size of a grapefruit. Stafford struggles through the last two innings, allowing a double by Mays in the ninth and a two-run shot by Ed Bailey, but the Yankees hold on for a 3-2 win. Stafford limps off the mound, through for the Series.

In **Game Four**, starters Whitey Ford and Juan Marichal play no part in the decision. In the seventh inning, with the score tied at 2-2, Yankee reliever Jim Coates walks Jim Davenport, gives up a double to Matty Alou, and Yankee manager Ralph Houk pulls Coates, bringing on ace reliever Marshall Bridges. First he issues an intentional walk to pinch-hitter Bob Nieman, and then retires Harvey Kuenn.

That brings up low-average slap-hitting Chuck Hiller, who has only hit three home runs all year. He pulls a fly ball to the Yankee Stadium right field porch. Maris runs back to field it, but the ball flies just over his reach for the first National League Grand Slam in World Series history, and the Giants lead, 7-3. Veteran pitcher and former Yankee World Series hero Don Larsen earns the win for the Giants, and the series is now tied at two games apiece.



Chuck Hiller watches his grand slam leave Yankee Stadium as Elston Howard looks on. Doubtless Howard and pitcher Marshall Bridges regretted their pitch choice. Hiller later played for the Mets from 1965 to 1967. In the 1962 World Series, he turned seven double plays. Calling balls and strikes is Jim Honochick, who went on to star in humorous Miller Lite beer commercials with Boog Powell. More importantly, he umpired 42 World Series games, four All-Star Games, and was behind the plate for three no-hitters. Credit: [New York Times](#)

Rain delays **Game Five**, and Ralph Terry faces Jack Sanford again. With the score tied at 2-2 in the eighth, Sanford allows singles to Kubek (back from Army service) and second baseman Bobby Richardson. With two on, Tresh rips a Sanford fastball into the stands for a three-run homer, the margin in the 5-3 victory. Yankee publicity director Bob Fishel asks Tresh after the game if the rookie likes Corvettes – they are the prize for the Series' MVP.

Typhoon Frieda postpones the final two games of the World Series for four days, and the Giants bring in helicopters to dry Candlestick Park's infield. Meanwhile Yankee players sit around their hotel, playing poker. The delay gives pitchers an opportunity to get fresh.

In **Game Six**, Billy Pierce three-hits the Yankees to win 5-2. Whitey Ford loses the game in the fourth when, with Mays on first and Felipe Alou on second, he tries to pick Alou off. He fires the ball 20 feet to the right of second base, and it rolls dead in the wet grass. Before Maris can retrieve the ball, Alou scores the first of three runs that inning. It is Ford's first World Series loss after five straight wins.

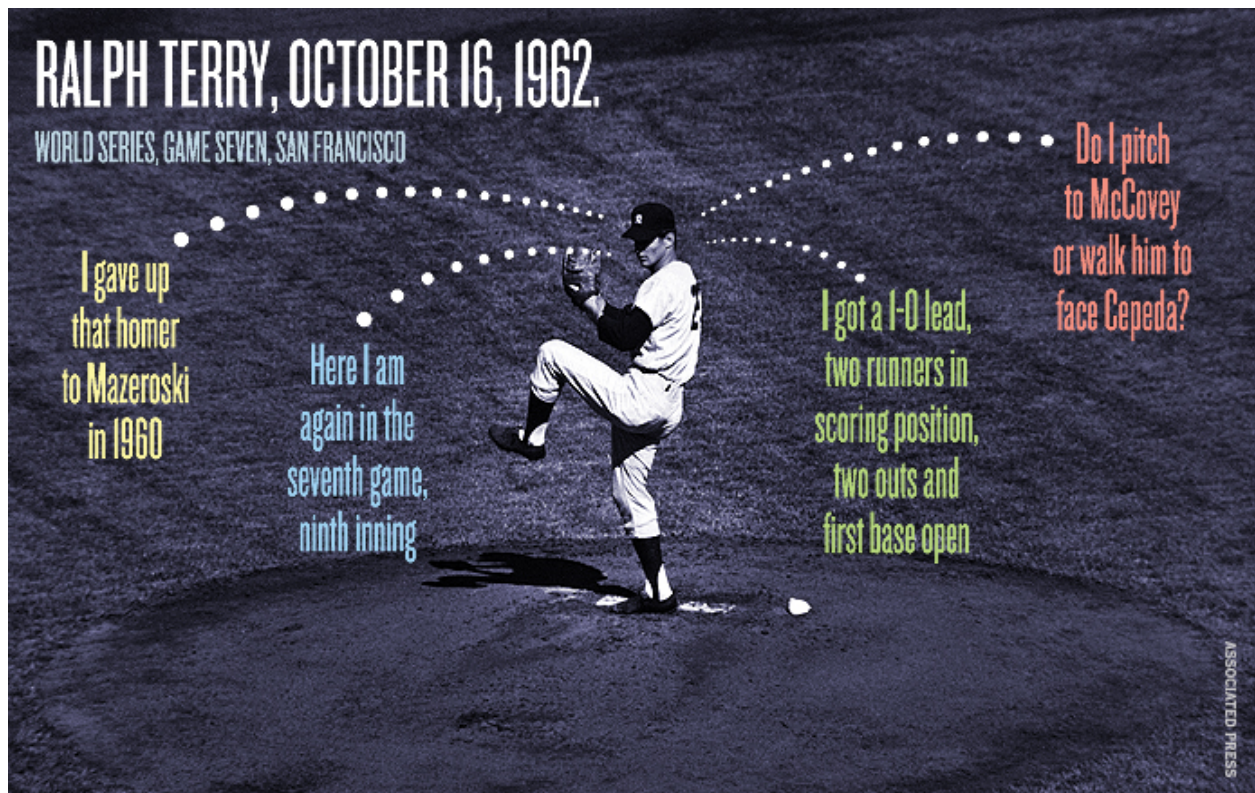
The Yankees are restless and tired as **Game Seven** rolls around – they are ready for the end of a long season. The night before the game, Terry plays poker with Ford, Yogi Berra, Mantle, and Boyer. Amazingly, Terry defeats the normally victorious and imperturbable Berra, raking in \$300 on king-high spades flush. “I beat Yogi. I beat Yogi. It's an omen,” Terry says.

Maybe it is. Terry is the next day's scheduled starter, facing Jack Sanford. The game moves quickly, with no score until the fifth, when the Yankees load the bases with nobody out. Giant Manager Al Dark pulls his infield back for the double play and got it, but Moose Skowron scores.

But while Terry cannot pitch two balls in a row through the first eight innings, the Giants only gain one hit – a Sanford single. Both pitchers are aided by a 40-mile-an-hour gale from left field, which leads to 16 fly outs, some of them spectacular catches.

The Yankee lead holds to the bottom of the ninth inning, when Matty Alou leads off by bunting for a base hit. The next two, Chuck Hiller, and Felipe Alou, try the same, but Terry strikes them out. With a man on first, and two out, Willie Mays steps into the box.

Terry tries to jam Mays with two inside heaters, but both are called balls. The next pitch is low and away, but Mays opens his stance and hits the ball into the right field corner. Despite a dead throwing arm, Maris fires the ball to Richardson, who makes a perfect peg home to keep Alou on third. Willie McCovey is due up next.



Ralph Terry faces a tough decision in the bottom of the ninth in 1962 World Series Game Seven. Credit: The Great Game

With runners on second and third and two out, Ralph Houk shuffles to the mound to discuss the situation with Terry. The big issue is whether or not to walk McCovey to face Cepeda.

“I really don’t know what the hell I’m doing out here,” Houk says to Terry, grinning, “What I’m getting at is, do you want to pitch to this guy or walk him?”

“I’d rather pitch to him in good spots than walk him,” Terry answers. “If I walk him I’d be losing my advantage, because I’d have to be much more careful pitching with the bases loaded. Let’s give McCovey good stuff just outside the strike zone and hope he’ll fish for it.”

Houk agrees with the strategy and heads back to the dugout.

At second, Richardson and Kubek discuss the situation. Kubek says to his second baseman, “I hope McCovey doesn’t hit the ball to you.”

Richardson asks why.

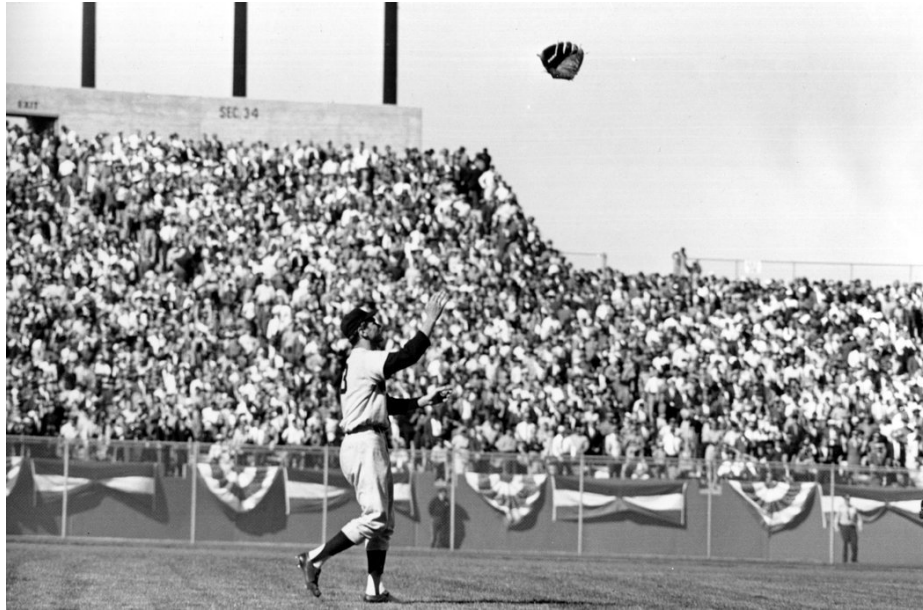
“Because you’ve already made a couple of errors, and if you blow this one, we’re in real trouble.” Kubek smiles, and Mays, standing on second, privy to this conversation, joins in the general laughter.

The second-base umpire, Al Barlick, asks Richardson, “Can I have your cap if this guy makes out? I have a little nephew who would like to have it.” Richardson agrees.

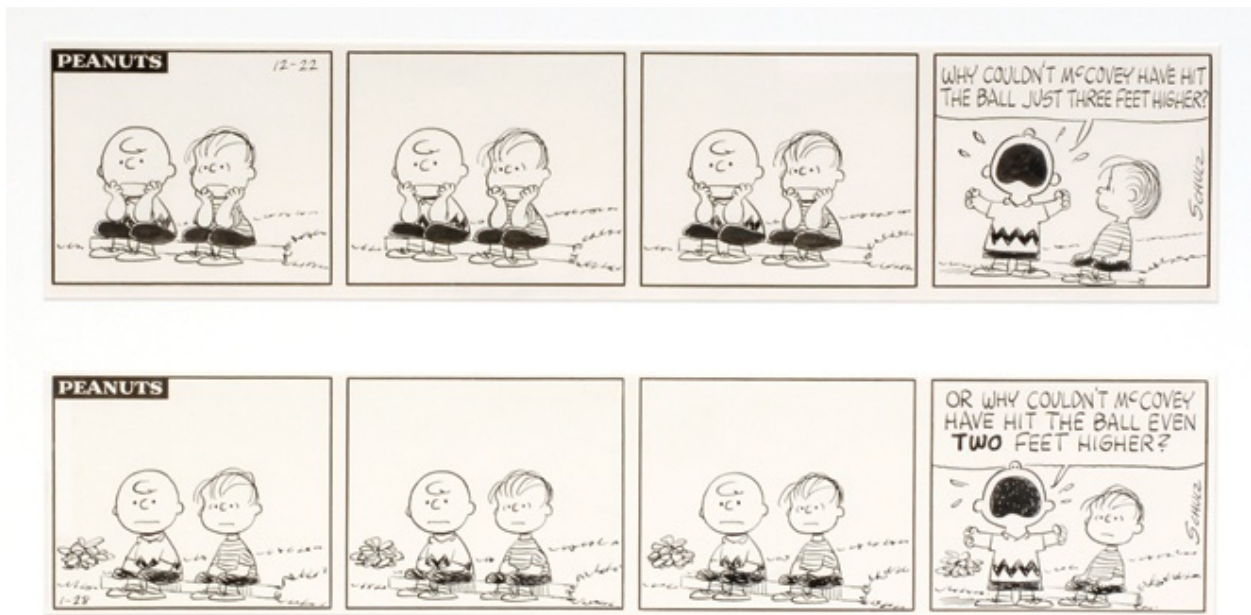
With 40,000 in attendance and 40 million watching on TV, Terry, covered with sweat, faces future Hall of Famer Willie McCovey, standing in at 6 foot 6 and 200 pounds. Kubek mutters to himself that it’s a good thing Willie Mac is left-handed and a pull hitter. Tresh in left tells himself he’s glad he’s ceded shortstop back to the original owner, Kubek. Richardson stands grimly at second, and then notices some dirt interfering with his vision. He moves slightly to scrape it down with his cleats. Terry tries not to think about how he was the pitcher in the final inning of the 1960 World Series and gave up the series-winning home run to Pittsburgh’s Bill Mazeroski.

Terry’s first pitch to Stretch is a curve, low and outside. McCovey hits it off the end of his bat down the right field line, and it goes in the seats. Terry then fires an inside fastball, and McCovey hits a powerful line drive – directly to Richardson at second, who is still scraping the ground to remove that visually annoying pebble, putting him in perfect position for the catch. The Yankee second baseman catches the ball chest-high for the final out, going down on one knee to make sure the ball doesn’t go past him.

Richardson flips his hat to Barlick, Terry leaps into the air, flinging glove and cap as he does so. A decade later, McCovey will tell Richardson that’s the hardest ball he ever hit. Studies of the tape show that had the ball been hit two feet left, right, or over Richardson, it would have won the game and the series for the Giants. However, it does not take a tape to say that – “Peanuts” cartoonist and Giants fan Charles Schulz draws two comic strips that show a disconsolate Charlie Brown and Linus sitting on steps, with Charlie Brown yelling first, “Why couldn’t McCovey have hit the ball three feet higher?” and then “Why couldn’t McCovey have hit the ball two feet higher?”



Ralph Terry exults in victory after getting that redemptive final out in the 1962 World Series. New York Times.



Die-hard San Francisco Giants fan and iconic cartoonist Charles Schulz offers his own take on the Yankee victory.

In the clubhouse, Terry tells reporters: “I want to thank God for a second opportunity. You don’t often get a second chance to prove yourself, in baseball or in life.”

Another highlight for New York fans in 1962 comes when the Baseball Writers' Association of America votes Jackie Robinson into the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility, the first African-American to enter Cooperstown.

Needless to say, his election is as controversial as the rest of his life. Despite his great numbers and pioneering role, he only gets 77.5 percent of the vote, at a time when 75 percent is needed to win election. Doubtless his harsh public views on the slow progress of civil rights in America as well as baseball cut down on the vote totals.

Robinson has cut an important figure outside of baseball...staunch civil rights advocate...newspaper columnist...first African-American vice president of Chock Full O' Nuts...aide to Governor Nelson Rockefeller. However, he has also been a staunch Republican, backing Richard Nixon's 1960 presidential bid. Later in life, he will regret falling for Nixon's rhetoric.

In his induction speech, Robinson pays tribute to Branch Rickey and his mother, both present, and issues a call to the future, "I really hope I'll be able to live up to this tremendously fine honor. It's something that I think those of us who are fortunate...must use in order to help others."

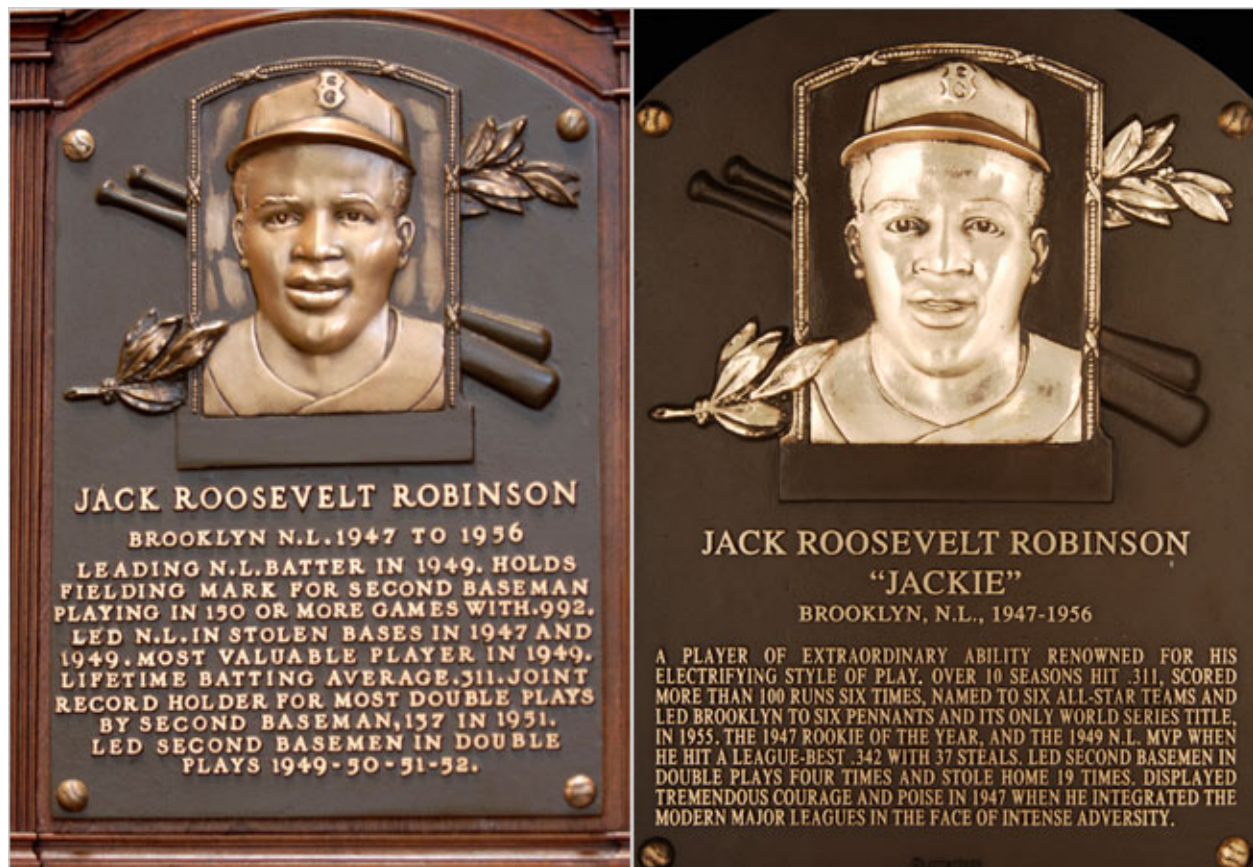
Later, Robinson remarks how racist 1890s baseball star "Cap Anson...would turn handsprings in his grave if he knew that I share a niche with him in baseball's Hall of Fame." Anson is known for being the first man to belt 3,000 hits, doing so in 27 seasons. He is also known for having ordered teams with black players to leave the field rather than play against his squad.

At Robinson's request, the Hall of Fame plaque does not mention his pioneering role in the game, merely saying, "Leading N.L. batter in 1949. Holds fielding mark for second basemen playing in 150 or more games with .992. Led N.L. in stolen bases in 1947 and 1949. Most Valuable Player in 1949. Lifetime batting average .311. Joint record holder for most double plays by second baseman, 137 in 1951. Led second basemen in double plays 1949-50-51-52."

In 2008, Robinson's family asks for and gets a new plaque to honor Jackie, which reflects what Hall of Fame Board Chairman Jane Forbes Clark describes as "no person more central and more important to the history of baseball, for his pioneering ways, than Jackie Robinson. Today, his impact is not fully defined without mention of his extreme courage in crossing baseball's color line."

Rachel Robinson says, “As young people view Jack’s new Hall of Fame plaque, they will look beyond statistics and embrace all that Jack has meant and all that they can be. We want it to be an inspiration, not something to take pictures of. We wanted to give them a sense of direction.”

The new plaque reads: “A player of extraordinary ability renowned for his electrifying style of play. Over 10 seasons hit .311, scored more than 100 runs six times, named to six All-Star teams and led Brooklyn to six pennants and its only World Series title, in 1955. The 1947 Rookie of the Year, and the 1949 NL MVP when he hit a league-best .342 with 37 steals. Led second basemen in double plays four times and stole home 19 times. Displayed tremendous courage and poise in 1947 when he integrated the modern major leagues in the face of intense adversity.”



And there you have it: It’s déjà-vu all over again at the Hall of Fame.

Credit: The [New York Times](#).

1967

In the top of the 15th inning of the All-Star Game in Anaheim, California, the Cincinnati Reds’ Tony Perez blasts a home run to break a 1-1 tie and put the National

League up 2-1. As Perez has batted for Don Drysdale, the National League needs a new pitcher to hold the lead in the bottom of the inning.

To the astonishment of the 43,000 fans in attendance and 60 million more watching the game on TV, Los Angeles Dodgers Manager Walter Alton, heading the NL team, summons a rookie pitcher from the New York Mets, named George Thomas Seaver. Many of the fans are quite upset – they assume that Seaver is merely on the squad only because every team is required to have a representative.

As the brown-haired Californian strolls past second baseman Pete Rose, he asks Rose: “Hey, Pete, why don’t you pitch and I’ll play second base.”

“Naw, you do it,” Rose replies.

Seaver arrives on the mound, and faces Tony Conigliaro. He flies out to right. Next is Carl Yastrzemski, on his way to a Triple Crown year. Seaver pitches him carefully and walks him. Bill Freehan follows with a fly out to center, bringing up Ken Berry. Seaver fires his patented fastballs at Berry and strikes him out to end the game.



Tom Seaver, 1967. Who is this kid? He has it all before him. Wordpress.Com

As the victorious National Leaguers congregate on the field after the victory, Drysdale offers Seaver the game ball. Seaver gives it back. “You won the game, you get the ball. I’ve got the memories.”

In his rookie season, Tom Seaver is becoming a household word in New York and starting an incredible legend in baseball, for many reasons, the biggest of which being his dazzling pitching ability and remarkable professionalism, sorely needed on a Met team that has distinguished itself so far for being an amusing collection of castoffs.

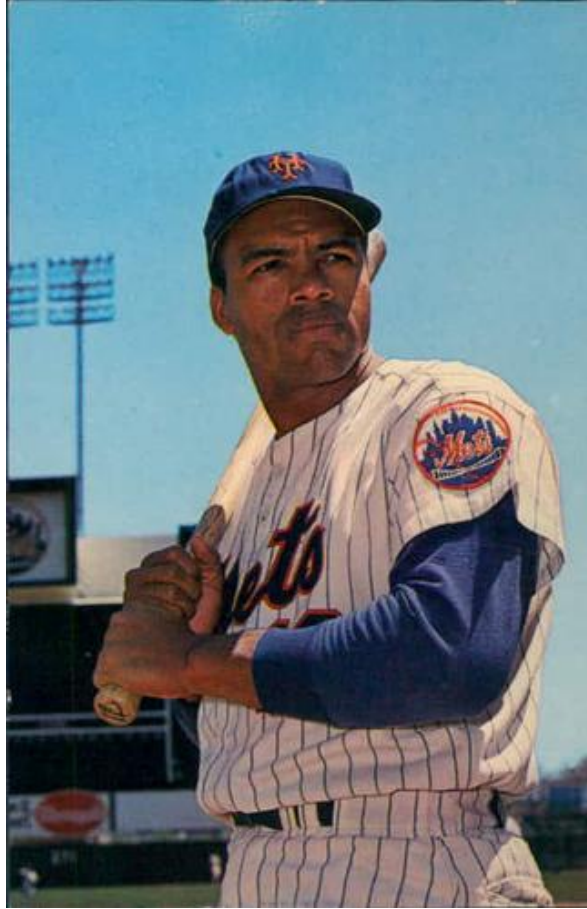
Seaver, however, does not find losing funny. “There was an aura of defeatism and I refused to accept it,” Seaver says later. “Maybe some of the others started to feel how I felt because I noticed that the team started to play better behind me than it did for any other pitcher.” A college-educated man, a former Marine, he posts a 16-13 record with a 2.76 ERA in 1967, miles ahead of the rest of the Mets.

He also impresses the media – a University of Southern California public relations major, he can discuss thick books, current events, and pitching, with equal authority.

There are other players on this Met club that will provide their fans with foreshadowing – shortstop Bud Harrelson...catcher Jerry Grote...outfielder Cleon Jones.

But for the most part, the Met season is yet another disaster, with manager Wes Westrum being fired 11 games before the team finishes with a 61-101 record, their second-best in the team’s history. Westrum has trouble communicating with players and press alike, disconnecting with the talent and annoying them, while amusing the reporters with malapropisms like “That game was a real cliff-dweller.”

Other Mets are pretty dismal: third baseman Ken Boyer is finished, as is pitcher Bob Shaw. The Mets acquire Brooklyn native and former NL batting champion Tommy Davis at season’s start. He leads the team in hitting with a .302 batting average, as well as home runs (16), runs scored, and RBIs. He sets team records with 174 hits and 32 doubles. But he is exhausted by mid-season, belting his last home run on August 11, driving in just 31 RBIs after the All-Star break, and sits out the final game of the season to protect his .300 batting average.



Tommy Davis. Yes, the Brooklyn native was a New York Met. For one whole year. He led the team in every offensive category, despite late-season burnout. Next season, he was traded to the Chicago White Sox for Tommie Agee.

The season's symbolic moment comes on July 27 in Los Angeles, when catcher Jerry Grote gets into an argument with plate umpire Bill Jackowski over balls and strikes. After the inning, Grote hurls a towel from the Met dugout and is ejected. Having used the other two catchers, Westrum needs someone to catch. First base coach Yogi Berra offers to do so, but that requires league permission, which will take more time than is available.

Outfielder Tommy Reynolds is one of several volunteers, and Westrum gives him the assignment, as he warms up pitchers in the bullpen.

The Mets are leading the game when Reynolds comes on in the eighth. The Dodgers' Dick Schofield reaches first and tries to steal second. Reynolds' throw bounces in the dirt, and Schofield scores immediately afterward, tying the game.

In the 11th, the Dodgers put Nate Oliver on third. Bob “Beetle” Bailey swings at pitch, Reynolds thinks it’s a foul tip, makes no effort to retrieve it, and Oliver races home, as the pitch is ruled a swinging strike. The Dodgers win.

Westrum is furious – over the call, the loss, the game, and Grote for getting thrown out. After the game, Westrum lectures Grote in front of the whole team and fines him \$100. Westrum and Met General Manager Bing Devine warn Grote to stop picking fights with umpires.



Jerry Grote. He made Wes Westrum angry. But he was a great catcher. He realized that his angry behavior was costing him friends in the media, and started warming up to them near the end of his career. Reporters asked each other, “Why is he saying hello when it’s time to say goodbye?”



Wes Westrum. The 1967 Mets found many ways to drive him crazy. But he was a solid baseball man and good catcher with the Giants in the 1950s.

But the real problem is offense: the Mets are last in the majors in runs scored and first in losing shutouts. Their 83 home runs are just one more than the Dodgers, who are last in the majors. “In six years,” Jack Lang writes, “The Mets haven’t been able to come up with anyone who could match the top slugger on the worst team that ever played in the major leagues.”

On June 27, 1967, Pittsburgh Pirates second baseman and future Hall of Famer Bill Mazeroski comes to bat in the top of the ninth against the Mets, with the bases loaded, the Mets ahead, 1-0, and nobody out. Covering the game is sportswriter Oscar Madison. The situation appears hopeless for the Mets, but Madison points out to a colleague, played in a cameo by writer Heywood Hale “Woody” Broun, son of the legendary Heywood Broun, “Ain’t you ever heard of the triple play?”

At that moment, Madison has to take a call from his roommate, Felix Unger, who tells Oscar not to eat any frankfurters in the pressbox, as he will be cooking franks and beans for dinner. During the phone call, Oscar misses Mazeroski hitting into a Ken Boyer (third base) to Jerry Buchek (second base) to Ed Kranepool (first base) triple play to end the game and preserve the win for the Mets.



Bill Mazerowski at the Polo Grounds: “Ain’t you ever heard of the triple play?”

There is only one problem with the scenario just depicted – it is fiction. It is a scene from the original movie “**The Odd Couple**,” with Walter Matthau playing Oscar Madison and Jack Lemmon as Felix Unger.

The triple play scene is shot before the game, in a 35-minute window, which provides the production team with a ballpark full of real fans and the services of real New York Mets and Pittsburgh Pirates. Supposedly the original plan called for Roberto Clemente to hit into the triple play, but the Great One had difficulty meeting the demands of Hollywood, for reasons that are still debated – anger over the small fee, annoyance over the patronizing attitude of the movie makers, or simply Clemente’s refusal to play baseball – even a movie scene – at anything less than flat-out.

After the scene is shot and the cameras are removed, the real teams take the field, and the Pirates’ Woodie Fryman faces the Mets’ Dennis Bennett. Neither pitcher is on their game, as Fryman gives up four runs in the first inning, three of them on a home run by Ron Swoboda. After giving up two singles in the second, Fryman is gone.

Meanwhile, Bennett fares little better. He gives up two runs in two innings and is gone in the third. However, Dick Selma comes on in relief and pitches 5.2 strong innings to earn his first win (and decision) of the year, while Fryman falls to 0-3.

The Mets win, 5-2, on the strength of Swoboda's three-run dinger in the first inning.

Oscar Madison, of course, will be best played (and remembered) by Jack Klugman, regularly wearing a Mets cap, while Felix Unger will be defined (to an Emmy) by Tony Randall.



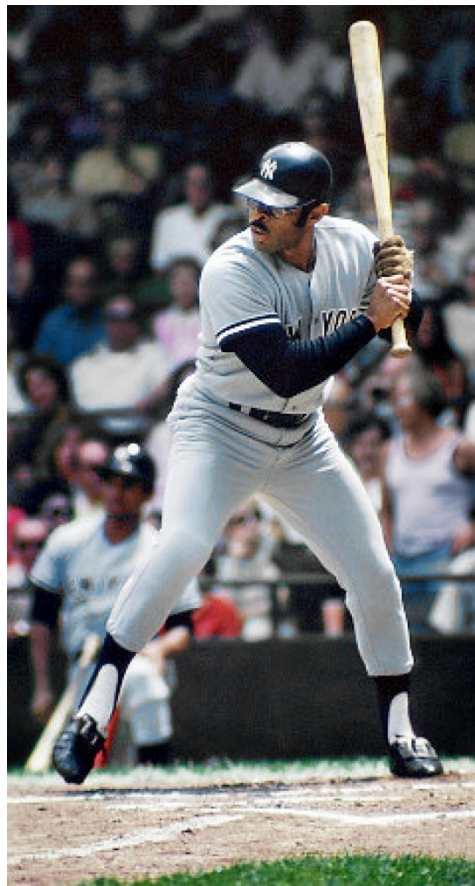
The original Odd Couple – Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau.



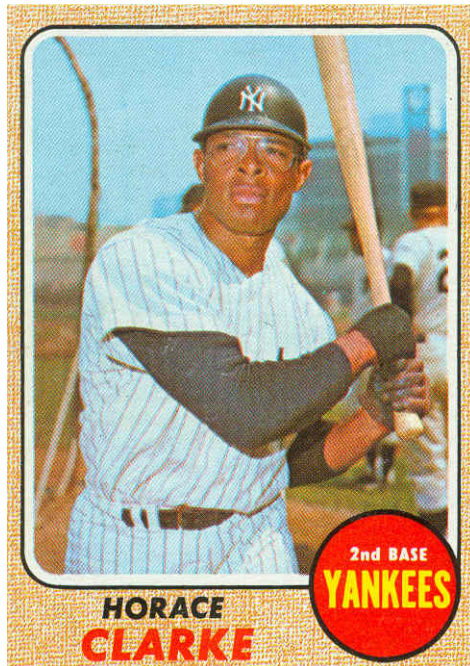
The Odd Couple we all remember – Jack Klugman and Tony Randall.

Klugman, of course, is wearing a Mets cap. Unlike Felix Unger, Tony Randall was a huge baseball fan, often attending games, where he would be pointed out by the public address announcer to the tune of “The Odd Couple” theme, and shown on the instant replay screen.

Across the East River – the Mets are now playing in Shea Stadium – the Yankees are also enduring a miserable season. Having finished dead last in 1966, the team has undergone a major transformation. At third base, Charley Smith; at shortstop, John Kennedy; at first base, Mickey Mantle, saving his battered legs; and at second base, the symbol of the era, the US Virgin Islands’ Horace Clarke.



Horace Clarke, busily putting his name on an era in Yankee baseball. The Virgin Islands native led American League second basemen in assists for six consecutive seasons, setting a league record. After his baseball career ended, he went back home to St. Croix to play calypso music.



Horace Clark, immortalized by Topps in 1968.

The Yankees trounce the Washington Senators on Opening Day, 8-0, before President Lyndon Johnson, but disintegrate in the second game, 10-4, on Kennedy's errors.

On April 14, the Boston Red Sox spoil the Yankees' home opener, when rookie Bill Rohr no-hits the Bombers through 8.2 innings. With one out from history, Yankee catcher Ellie Howard freezes on a 1-2 pitch, but umpire Cal Drummond calls it a ball. Then Howard rifles a 3-2 curve ball to center to break up the no-hit bid, and fans hoping for a no-hitter barrage Yankee Stadium with boos.

A week later, at Fenway Park, it's déjà-vu all over again with Rohr one out away from a shutout in the ninth, and Howard tears a single to center to end the bid. Howard's reward for his team play and heroics are sacks of hate mail from angry Red Sox fans.



Billy Rohr – history repeated itself, both times as farce.

Photo credit: Baseball Wikia

Failure on the field leads to failure at the gate for the Yankees – when Whitey Ford fires a 3-0 shutout against the White Sox, only 3,040 people show up. The 1966 attendance of 1,124,648 is the teams' lowest attendance in more than 20 years.

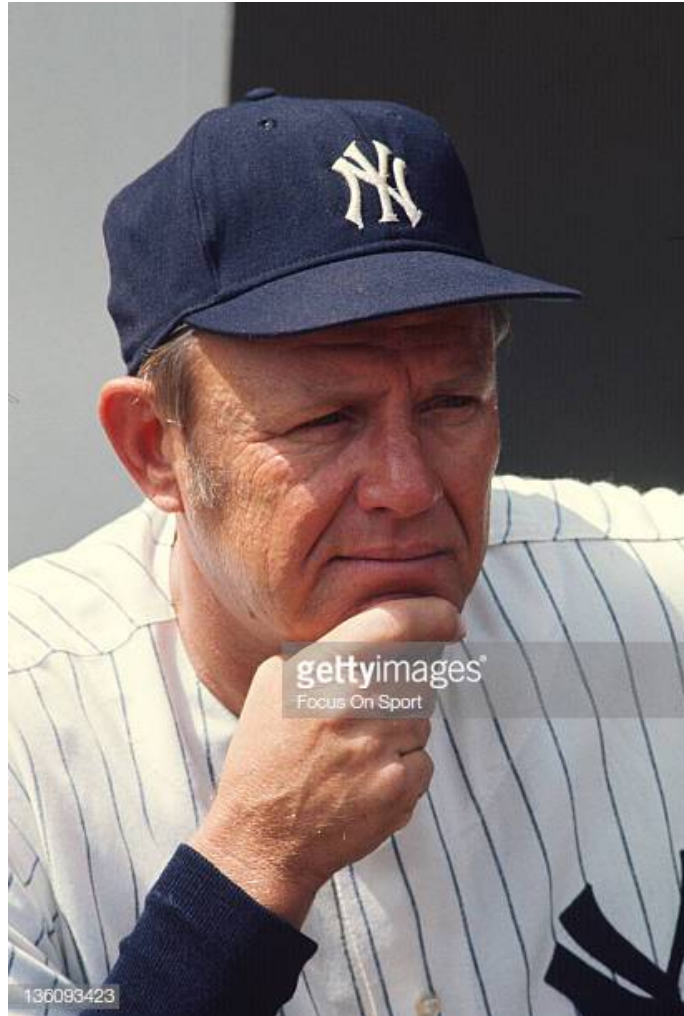
Reversing this course is the responsibility of team president Michael Burke, appointed by owner CBS. Burke, a long-haired prep school grad and World War II Office of Special Services spy and saboteur in the Balkans, combines the right mix of upper-crust background and personal warmth to lead the now-struggling franchise. Burke wanders the stands, talking with fans, even flashing the “peace” sign to hippies.



Michael Burke, at left, with the man who ousted him, George M. Steinbrenner III. The shaggy-haired Burke could operate as a brilliant spy in occupied Europe in World War II, renovate Yankee Stadium, teach ushers good manners, make millions, but couldn't find a decent second baseman. Getty Images.

His first move is to give the aging Yankee Stadium a face-lift, painting the seats royal blue, installing fiberglass bleachers, adding lighting for safety, and hostesses in miniskirts. He orders ushers to stop chasing kids out of empty box seats in the late innings and allows fans to hang banners in the stands.

Burke also imposes a more open attitude on players and manager Ralph Houk. Once a harsh man who would intimidate reporters with insults and spit on their shoes, Houk now sits between veteran sportswriters Vic Ziegel and George Vecsey before games, pleasantly sharing baseball wisdom.



Ralph Houk tries to figure out what's wrong with the 1967 Yankees.

Despite this, the Yankees flounder on the field. The first disaster comes on May 11, when the Tigers blast the Yankees 14-0, and fans yell in disgust, “Let’s Go Mets.”

Next, on May 30, Whitey Ford announces his retirement, his Hall of Fame career ended by a recurring bone spur in his left elbow. He leaves the field after a retirement ceremony in a tight smile, with a 236-106, .690, won-loss record, the best won-loss percentage in modern annals.



The Chairman of the Board in his prime. He knew he could beat anybody. Yes, he still wears that legendary ring.

An injured and hobbling Mantle doesn't do well, either...with four homers to the magic 500 mark, it takes him until April 29 to smash his first round-tripper of the season. He finally belts 500 off Stu Miller on May 15, and knocks off Mel Ott's 511 with two shots in Metropolitan Stadium on July 4.

Mantle is the team's complete offense: the whole team hits .225, the lowest in team history. Injuries account for some of that – Tom Tresh suffers a major knee injury in the second game of spring training that wrecks his career at age 30. In 1967, he bats .219, 14 HRs, and 53 RBIs. Also hobbling are catcher Elston Howard and pitcher Steve Barber.

Joe Pepitone has a different problem. Suffering from psychological problems that will lead him to several marriages, nervous breakdowns, drug abuse, financial problems, and even jail time, the Brooklyn native wastes his immense talents, and bats a mere .251, 13 HRs, and 64 RBIs.

The Yankees stagger through the season, 2.5 games out of the cellar at the All-Star break, in eighth place. John Kennedy can't handle shortstop, so Ruben Amaro gets it back when he recovers from his injuries and moves to third base when Charley

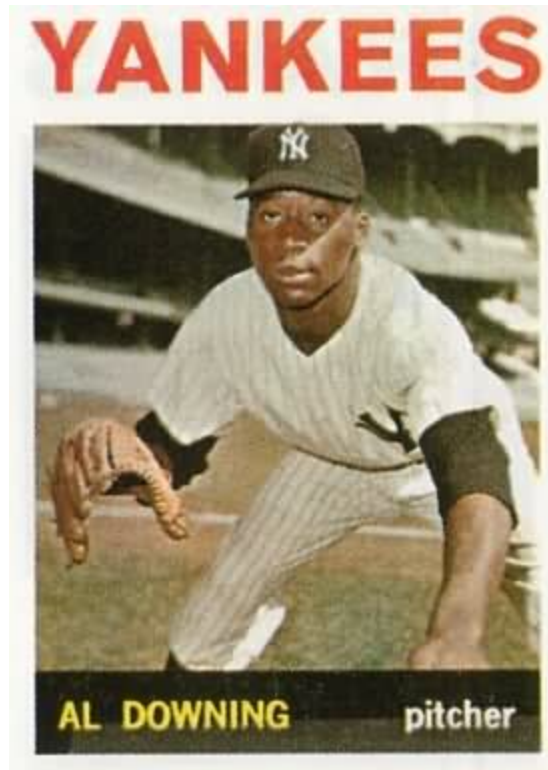
Smith fails there and Dick Howser breaks his hand. The Yankees commit a league-high 154 errors.

The major hope for the Yankees is an overmatched and quiet outfielder named Bill Robinson, who bats .101 by June. He eventually gets hot – batting .353 over a 10-game span – but pulls a hamstring muscle in late June. He finishes the year with a .196, 7 HR, and 29 RBI line.

The Yankees also find themselves amid another national disaster, when they fly out of Detroit amid a full-scale riot. The players see fires and smoke from the windows of their bus as they go to the airport. The violence causes 40 deaths, 1,000 injuries and \$200 million in property damage in one of the worst violence in American history. Detroit Tiger players who serve as National Guardsmen to avoid Vietnam's horrors find themselves in their city's streets trying to end the domestic bloodshed.

There is also violence nearer home – two weeks before Detroit explodes, so does Newark. The administration of Mayor Hugh Addonizio – who will later go to prison for grandiose corruption by even New Jersey's standards – has to summon the National Guard, who open fire almost at random 26 people die at their hands in four days of urban battles that leave some portions of the city's Central Ward looking like London's East End during the Blitz. In East Harlem, Latino mobs smash store windows and clash with police.

Affected by this as a proud, intelligent, human being, is African-American Yankee pitcher Al Downing, a Trenton native, who “pitches mad” that season, angry over the violence in black neighborhoods across the country and the vast amount of Americans – particularly African-Americans – dying in Vietnam. His anger sends him to the All-Star Game and gives him an outstanding 15-10, 2.63 record on an otherwise sorry club.



Al Downing learned his baseball in the Police Athletic League of his native Trenton, New Jersey, and went on to be Comeback Player of the Year in 1971 with the Los Angeles Dodgers, based on his 20 wins and league-leading five shutouts. He is best remembered for serving up HR 715 to Henry Aaron, but Los Angeles fans probably like him for his work as a TV color analyst and service on the team’s Speakers’ Bureau. And yes, he still appears regularly at Yankees’ Old-Timers’ Games. Credit: Topps baseball card

Another proud African-American affected by the disasters is Elston Howard, the team’s first African-American player, who is shipped on August 3 to the Boston Red Sox, after 12 years of service with the Yankees, which include an MVP year and being the first African-American on the team’s roster. His veteran presence in Fenway Park helps the Red Sox win the American League pennant.

Back at Yankee Stadium, the Bombers continue to stumble. Dooley Womack’s 6-6, 2.41, 18-save season is a bright spot in the bullpen, but Mantle is fading: he finishes at .245, 22 HRs, and 55 RBIs.

“We placed ninth in a 10-team league,” pitcher Steve Barber says. “With our talent, we should have been 11th.”

1972

The season starts with two utter disasters for the New York Mets – one of their own creation, the other beyond their control.

The created disaster comes from their endless search for a third baseman, which will never really end until David Wright takes over the position in the 21st century. Desperate to fill this continuous chasm, Met Chairman of the Board M. Donald Grant accedes to sportswriter Jack Lang's continuous request for a trade to fill his newshole at the **Long Island Press**, by shipping hard-throwing pitcher Nolan Ryan and four other players to the California Angels for shortstop Jim Fregosi, who will be their ninth season-starting third baseman in as many years.

At the time, Whitey Herzog is the Mets' Minor League Director. When Scheffing tells Herzog of the trade, Herzog snarls, "What? I would never make that deal." Stunned, Scheffing hangs up the phone. "I wouldn't have traded Ryan for Fregosi even up," Herzog says later.

The Mets theorize that Fregosi can be moved to third base and are convinced that Ryan cannot find the plate.

When Fregosi arrives at Met spring training in St. Petersburg, he is out of shape, overweight, and suffering a drinking problem. Ground balls rocket by him at third base.

Met Manager Gil Hodges, a stickler for discipline, fundamentals, and professionalism at all times, personally oversees Fregosi's training, hitting him hundreds of ground balls.

March 5 is a rainy and wet morning. After the clouds break, Fregosi and Hodges return to their practice. Hodges swings his fungo bat and hits a hard shot that skips off the wet grass, bounces up, and hits Fregosi in the right thumb, breaking it. He spends the rest of spring training in a cast.

Fregosi goes on to play 101 games that year. He bats .232 with five home runs and 32 RBIs. In mid-July, the Mets sell him to the Texas Rangers. Oddly enough, he will later manage the man he is traded for, Nolan Ryan, in Ryan's last year with the Angels, their first post-season appearance in 1979.



A horrific memory for Mets fans – Jim Fregosi in 1972 spring training.

But in 1972, Ryan posts an American League-leading 329 strikeouts with a 2.28 ERA, and goes on to set a variety of all-time pitching records, including seven no-hitters, to the fury and chagrin of Met fans forever more.

Sometime later, Mets General Manager M. Donald Grant spots Jack Lang in a doorway near the TV booth, and the start discussing the trade. The chat turns into an argument that goes out over the air.

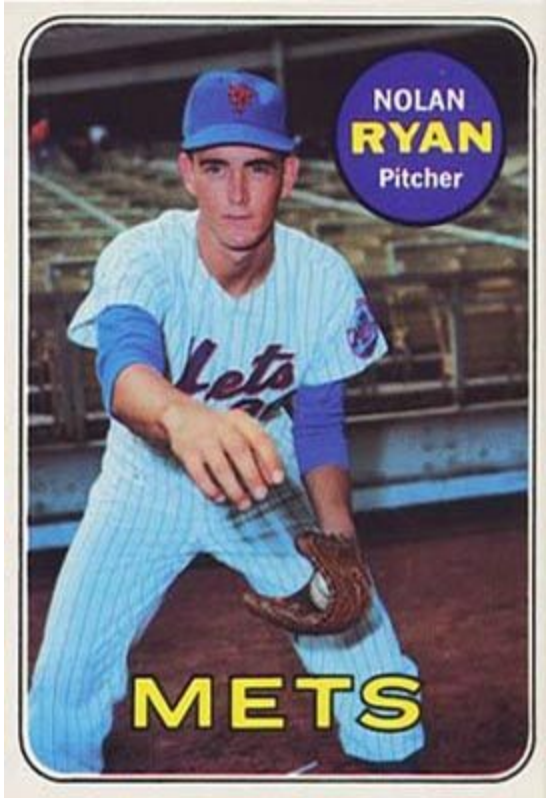
“You’ve been blaming us for the Fregosi deal, and you’re the one who made us make that deal,” Grant says.

“What are you talking about?” Lang demands.

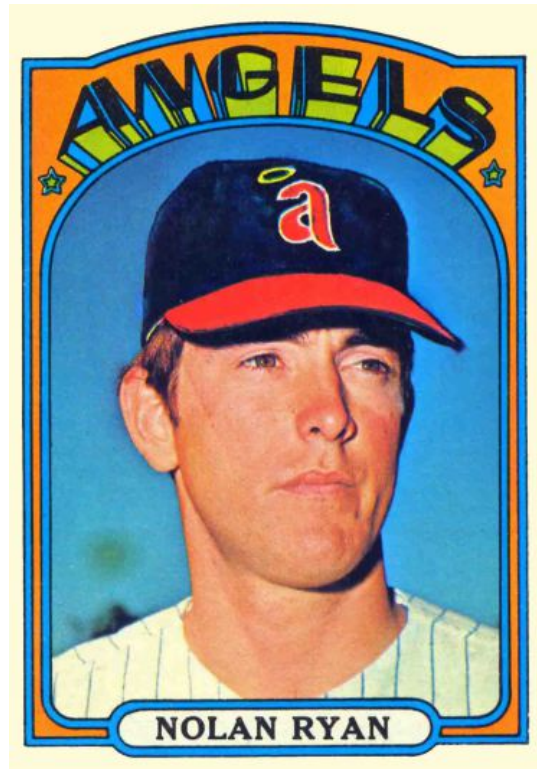
“When we were in Phoenix (the baseball winter meetings), you told me we had to make a deal. So we made a deal and now all you’ve done is knock it.”

“I told you that you had to make a deal, but I didn’t tell you to make that deal,” Lang answers.

Grant stumps off, and Met broadcaster Ralph Kiner takes advantage of a commercial break to say to Lang, “I should treat you with more respect. I didn’t know you had the power to make trades.”



Nolan Ryan – before.



Nolan Ryan – after. Topps.

The second disaster to befall the Mets takes place on the late afternoon of April 2, 1972, when Manager Gil Hodges and three of his coaches – Rube Walker, Eddie Yost, and Joe Pignatano – take a day off from spring training in West Palm Beach for a round of golf at a nearby club where former Giant pitcher Jack Sanford is the resident pro. As they walk back to the hotel, Pignatano asks Hodges about dinner plans, “Hey, Gilly, what time are we going to meet in the lobby?”

Hodges turns around and crumples to the pavement. The arriving paramedics say that the 47-year-old Hodges died of a massive heart attack before he hit the ground. Hodges has ignored his doctor’s orders and resumed smoking. In fact, his Brooklyn-born wife Joan’s last words to him, before he flew to Florida were, “Watch the cigarettes.”



Gil Hodges managing the Mets, possibly in a tight situation. He died at age 47. Photo Credit: New York Daily News.

The funeral on April 6 is a Who's Who of New York baseball royalty, with former Dodgers, Yankees, and Giants all together. Mets pitcher Jerry Koosman and his wife ride in a funeral car with Rube Walker, Pee Wee Reese, Joe Black, and Carl Erskine, for example.

The Mets have to move forward, and find a new manager quickly. The best choice is one of them right on hand, Yogi Berra, who negotiates his deal in one hour, eager to help out in the dire situation. He insists that all of Hodges' coaches come back with him.

Right after announcing the managerial move, the Mets make another one: trading three of their best young players to the Montreal Expos for "Le Grand Orange," Rusty Staub, coming off a .311 year and 97 RBIs. Traded for Staub are outfielder Ken Singleton, a Bronx native who will go on to a great career with the Baltimore Orioles and another good one as a Yankee broadcaster, fiery shortstop Tim Foli, and outfielder/first baseman Mike Jorgensen. The latter two will return to the Mets, and Foli will actually join the "Noble and Holy Order of the D Train" by playing for the Yankees later in his career.

While the trade puts a well-known and powerful bat in Mets blue-and-orange, Met farm director Whitey Herzog is angered by this trade – it empties the weakening farm system further. The following year, he flees to the Texas Rangers to manage that appalling team to 105 defeats.

The only good news is that a young pitcher named Jonathan Trumbour Matlack , who has pitched well in Puerto Rican winter league, comes north with the big club. He proves a valuable asset – pitching a 15-10 record and 2.32 ERA, he is named National League Rookie of the Year.



Jon Matlack faces the camera in spring training. Photo credit: MLB Photos

With Matlack pitching well, and Staub in the lineup, behind Tom Seaver, Jerry Koosman, Tug McGraw, Gary Gentry, Jerry Grote, Tommie Agee, and Cleon Jones, the Mets are expected to contend.

They get some help on May 2, when J. Edgar Hoover dies and a confidential source tells Jack Lang, still with the Long Island Press, that the Mets have traded journeyman pitcher Charlie Williams and \$50,000 to the San Francisco Giants for Willie Mays.

The trade is for a simple reason: Giants management can no longer afford to pay Mays any more, and after his .271, 18 HR, 23 stolen-base 1971 season, his skills have eroded. Horace Stoneham can no longer give his franchise's greatest player a long-term contract, so he does the next-best thing, which is get New York's favorite baseball player back home. The relatively financially flush Mets give Mays a 10-year \$175,000-a-year contract, with \$50,000 for life after he retires.

Poet and Met-lover Joel Oppenheimer writes "All I can say is that losing mr. hoover and gaining mr. mays are two of the best reasons for doing without opiates."

Met fan Ken Samuelson is equally ecstatic, ignoring the fact that Mays is in decline, but excited when he hits a home run against his old Giant teammates in his Mother's Day Mets debut.

Most of the Mets agree. Jerry Koosman regards Mays as his hero, despite Willie's age and decline. "To turn around and see him out there, he was like God, like having three extra players behind you."

After Mays hits his Mother's Day home run, one of the city's greatest journalists, the legendary Pete Hamill, writes, "Willie Mays ran the bases, carrying all those summers on his 41-year-old shoulders, jogging in silence, while people in the stands pumped their arms at the skies and hugged each other and even, here and there, cried. It was a glittering moment of repair in a city that has starved too long for joy. Don't tell me New York isn't going to make it. Willie Mays is home."



Willie Mays comes home in 1972. His last year and a half would be a tough time, as he fought with Manager Yogi Berra about when he would play.

But it's not enough. The Mets finish May 21-7, and then are 30-11, five games in front, on June 3, 1972, when Atlanta Braves' pitcher George Stone uncorks a pitch that hits Rusty Staub on the right hand, breaking his thumb. The break isn't diagnosed for weeks. He goes on the operating table on July 20 and isn't back until September 18, season ruined.

Injuries whack other players: Ken Boswell, Tommie Agee, Cleon Jones, and even Mays, who pulls a hamstring muscle. When John Milner goes down, Berra has to play the fragile Mays every day, which starts friction between manager and superstar – the aging Mays has enjoyed the privilege on the Giants of being able to tell his manager when he could play. Now Mays defies Berra by taking himself out of the lineup anyway, and even disappears from the team. Berra has difficulty disciplining the titan, and Mays complains openly about being used too often and that his play is suffering from overuse.

The Mets finish third in National League East. At season's end, management trades away Agee for Rich Chiles and Buddy Harris, who are promptly forgotten, and send oft-injured pitchers Gary Gentry and Danny Frisella to Atlanta for second

baseman Felix Millan and pitcher George Stone, who become key components of the 1973 pennant drive. In 1973, Millan goes to bat 338 times and only strikes out 22 times.

Across the East River, the Yankees are having their share of bizarre trades in a difficult season. The bad trade comes first – shipping pitching ace and 1968 American League Rookie of the Year Stan Bahnsen to the Chicago White Sox for second baseman Rich McKinney. The Yankees have the curious idea that McKinney can be moved over to third base. In 1971, McKinney bats .271 with eight home runs as a second baseman for the forgettable Chicago White Sox, with 28 games at third.

However, when McKinney arrives, Yankee assistant public relations chieftain Marty Appel takes McKinney on the winter bus caravan, to spread the Yankee gospel and sell tickets in places like Wilkes-Barre, Albany, and Connecticut, with the new Yankee as the major attraction, along with manager Ralph Houk and other front-office bigshots.

McKinney hops on the bus in Yankee Stadium's lot, and promptly asks Appel, "So, Marty, where can I get some (marijuana)?" McKinney uses a barnyard epithet for cannabis that this author would prefer not to reproduce.

Appel regards McKinney with disbelief.

McKinney apparently does not believe that Appel has misunderstood his request. "You know, some weed," McKinney repeats.

Appel is now in one of the most difficult positions of his interesting and often difficult career. Aside from the fact that Appel doesn't know where to buy marijuana, he doesn't know what his moral, ethical, and professional responsibility is – to protect the player he has just met? Protect the organization? Potentially allow this bizarre indiscretion to become media fodder?

Appel keeps his mouth shut, until he writes his memoir on his baseball and PR career decades later, presumably to use the statute of limitations to protect McKinney.

Nothing, however, can protect McKinney from the harsh reality of Yankee Stadium and his new position. Having failed to acquire cannabis from Marty Appel, McKinney's next misfortune comes in spring training, when he is unable to throw from third to first, the most important part of playing the position. X-rays reveal a bone chip in McKinney's right shoulder, dating back to an altercation with a Baltimore outfield fence in 1971.

As the White Sox did not mention this mishap to the Yankees, the Bronx Bombers could have used this to either return the merchandise to the seller or at least get compensation. The Yankees do not do so. They're desperate for a third baseman.

The Yankees decide to postpone Rick McKinney's surgery until after the season, saying that utility infielder and future Houston Astros manager Hal Lanier can serve as backup.

When the season starts, McKinney answers the bell, and makes Yankee and American League history on April 22, at Fenway Park, when he makes four errors in a single game, becoming the 18th player in baseball history to do so. The disasters enable the Red Sox to score nine earned runs and win the game, 11-7.

After the fiasco, the curly-haired McKinney faces the media in the crowded Fenway visitors' locker room. The reporters' tone is that of talking to the survivor of a car crash. McKinney finally admits, "After a while, I was hoping that no one would hit the ball to me."

Lost in the defensive debacle is that McKinney enjoys his best hitting day as a Yankee, going three for four with two singles and a home run.

That game is the depth of McKinney's defensive woes, but also the height of his offense – he stops hitting. At least he doesn't make another error for 20 straight games, when he makes key mistakes that cost the Yankees some contests. Yankee fans, who understand the game and have expected excellence since Babe Ruth, leap to their feet and boo the hapless McKinney.

To be accurate, the Yankee fans are not booing McKinney – they are enraged by a trade that has sent an ace pitcher to the White Sox in return for nothing. Bahnsen will grate Yankee fans further in 1972: he'll win 21 games for Chicago.

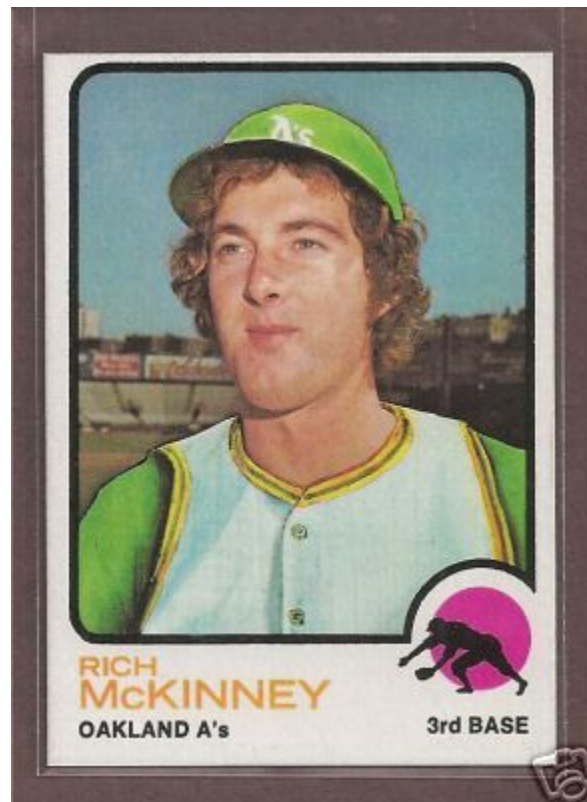
Utility infielder Bernie Allen observes the stress on McKinney, saying later, "Every game you could see him losing more and more confidence, to where he was afraid to do anything."

Lanier tries working with McKinney on his defense. "But Rich just didn't want the ball hit to him," Lanier says later. "He wanted out of there in the late innings, when an error might lose the game for us."

After 121 at-bats and 26 hits in 37 games, McKinney earns a one-way ticket to Syracuse, to protect Yankee pitchers from his fielding and McKinney from further booing. At the time, the Yankees are 14-19, a .424 record. At season's end, the

Yankees ship him to Oakland along with pitcher Rob Gardner. “He was glad to get out of New York and made no bones about it,” Gardner says.

Yankee General Manager Lee MacPhail says later, “We should have gotten more information about McKinney. He’d played second base for the White Sox, and we thought he wouldn’t have too much trouble making the shift to third. But he certainly did.”



Rich McKinney, in happier times, with the Oakland Athletics. Topps

McKinney’s replacement at third is a colorful Mexican named Celerino Sanchez who speaks no English, but he fields ground balls in a unique manner – off his chest.

While Sanchez fills the gap defensively, the Yankees stumble, 11-14 in June. The Yankee leadership, tiring of Ralph Houk, ponders finding a way to hire Billy Martin as manager, with one problem – he’s currently managing the Detroit Tigers to conquest of the American League East.

On June 15, Houk holds a closed-door meeting to remind his players that he’s the boss, and to prove the point, he warns that any whining in public will lead to an immediate \$1,000 fine. That’s a lot of money in the days before free agency, so the players shut up, and reach the .500 mark on July 21.

But the real cause of Yankee success is the trade that does work – first baseman Danny Cater and then-minor league shortstop Mario Guerrero to the arch-rival Boston Red Sox for left-handed pitcher Albert “Sparky” Lyle, on March 22, who replaces the ineffective Lindy McDaniel and other questionable characters with his ebullient personality, large moustache, and hard, biting slider.

The trade is a move that enters “**Rob Neyer’s Big Book of Baseball Blunders.**” Why the Red Sox trade a highly capable young relief pitcher to their Bronx rivals for a washed-up first baseman baffles many.

Sparky gives a big reason in his book “**The Bronx Zoo**” in 1979, saying that on March 18, Red Sox Manager Eddie Kasko tells his players that “if you have anything to say to me, come to my office and say it to my face. Don’t talk to me behind my back.”

On the 21st, a clubhouse boy with drinking problems emerges from his booze-addled haze to deliver a message from manager to Lyle that the pitcher has been fined for being overweight. Sparky is enraged, and storms into Kasko’s office, denouncing him, saying, “You don’t have enough respect for me to tell me about this fine to my face? I have to find out for the clubhouse boy?”

The following day, Lyle is traded. The results are unforgettable. That year, Lyle pitches 108 innings, saves 35 games, with a 9-3 record and 1.92 ERA. Cater bats .237, with eight home runs and 39 RBIs. He only does that well with a hot streak in mid-July and early August...on May 7, he is batting .130, and in late August, he loses his job, and doesn’t even play after September 4.

Sparky continues to be one of baseball’s top relievers through 1979. If the Red Sox had his services in their bullpen in 1972, 1975, 1977, or 1978, their in-season and post-season fortunes may have been very different. Cater hits .313, one HR, with 24 RBIs as a part-timer in 1973, but falls off to .246, five HRs, and 20 RBIs the following year, so the Red Sox trade him to St. Louis for the immortal Danny Goddard, and Cater retires after 22 games with a .229 average.

Lyle’s appearances from the bullpen in the team’s pinstripe-painted Datsun are memorable, then and now. The stadium organ plays British composer Edward Elgar’s “Land of Hope and Glory,” a theme song for Londoners during ceremonies. It is better known to American audiences as “Pomp and Circumstance,” played at high school graduation ceremonies. This author prefers the British name.

Lyle then tosses his warm-up jacket to the batboy, strides theatrically to the mound, tobacco chaw in his mouth, and serves up his devastating slider, which he learned how to pitch one night in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, when he gripped a baseball in bed with his wife. Realizing the significance of the slider grip, he trotted out of the apartment, and hurled the baseball against the wall of a bar under a lamppost's sodium glow.

“Sparky was absolutely fearless,” says teammate Ron Swoboda. “One time we were playing in Milwaukee, when the lights weren’t the best. It was the bottom of the ninth, and the tying and winning runs were on base with two outs.

“The batter smokes one to right center, and the ball practically disappears out there while Bobby Murcer is chasing it. And here comes Sparky strolling off the mound like the game has ended. Jim Turner the pitching coach asked him, ‘Where the hell are you going?’

“Well,’ said Sparky, ‘one way or the other, it’s all over.’ If Murcer caught it, it was over. And if it landed out there, it was over. Either way his job was done.” Lyle finishes the season with a 9-5, 35 Save, 1.92 ERA record.

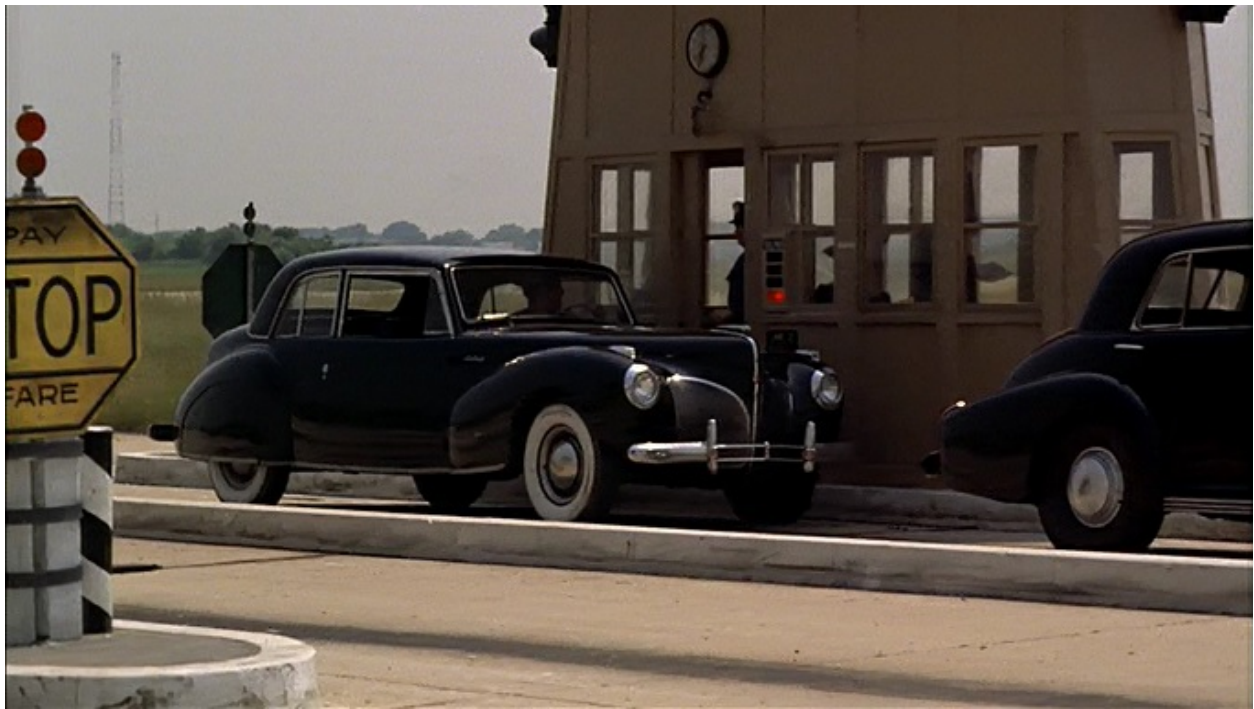


Sparky Lyle, after a victory. Credit: Associated Press

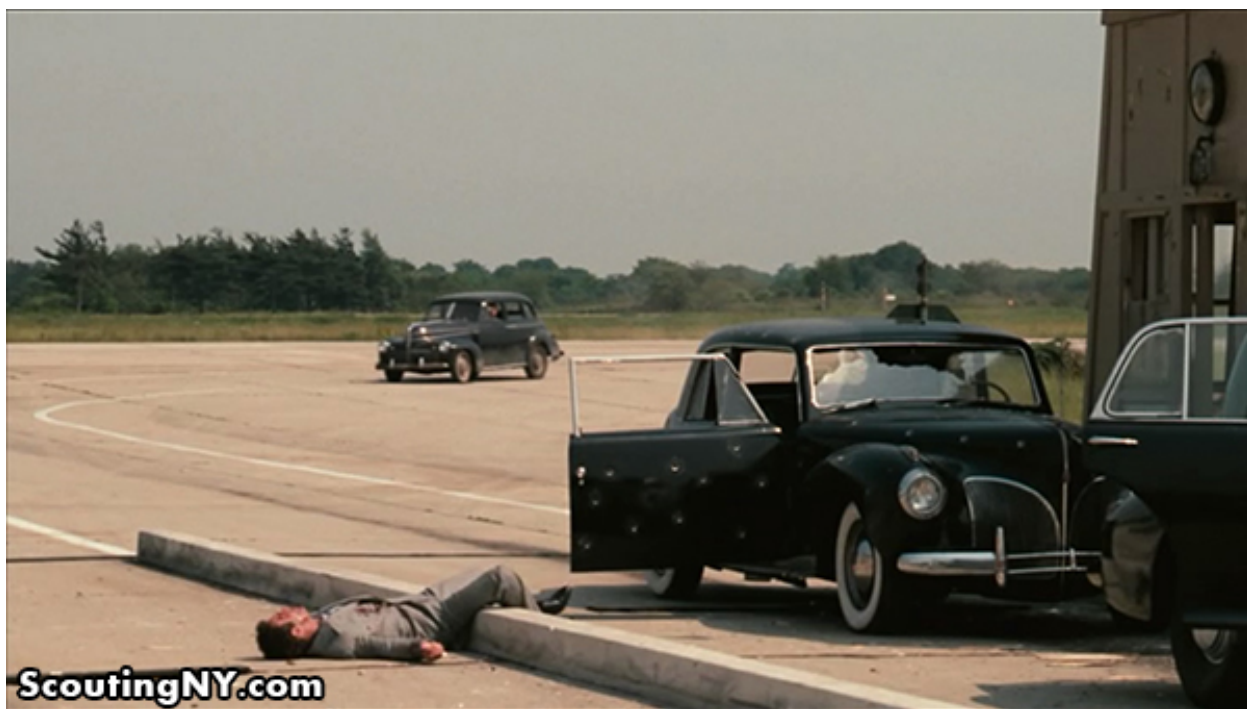
On June 22nd, James Caan drives a 1941 Lincoln Continental onto a runway at Mitchel Field in Mineola, Long Island, a mostly-disused US Army Air Force base from two world wars. Two 1940s-era tollgates have been built, along with guard rails and billboards of the period, and Caan pulls up at one to pay the toll. The toll keeper accepts Caan’s change. Playing on the radio is Russ Hodges’ legendary broadcast of the moments before Bobby Thomson’s “Shot Heard ‘Round the World.” The toll keeper drops Caan’s proffered nickel, another car jams in front of Caan’s, and a group

of men in suits and George Raft hats emerge from their cover in the opposite tollbooth. They open fire on Caan, joined by buddies in the car. In seconds, the vintage Lincoln is filled with bullets, while squibs explode in correct timing with the bullets, covering Caan with stage blood. The actor collapses to the concrete. His “assassins” drive off.

Shooting the scene requires three days, but what has just happened is one of the iconic moments of American cinema – the execution of Santino “Sonny” Corleone as he drives to the rescue of his sister Connie, who has been beaten (again) by her dissolute, adulterous, and traitorous husband, Carlo. The radio broadcast of the October 3, 1951, playoff game enables baseball fans at the time and forevermore to know exactly when the scene is set.



James Caan (“Sonny Corleone”) arrives at the toll gate to pay his toll. Ahead of him is the car that will block his escape. Note that the Stop signs are in yellow, which was standard practice at the time.



After the blaze of gunfire, Sonny Corleone lies on the pavement, having met his well-cinematographed fate. Movie continuity fans repeatedly point out that the car that was shot full of bullet holes through the windshield during the assault now has a pristine windshield. Driving up too late to assist the Don are some his pals from the Corleone compound sent by Tom Hagen.



However, reports of James Caan's demise were greatly exaggerated, as he emerges from the scene, with the only damage done to his jacket. The technicians who attached the squibs to Caan's body told him he had never attached that many squibs to anyone before. Caan replied "You didn't have to tell me that right now." He was named "Italian of the Year" in New York twice, for accepting the role of Sonny Corleone, which baffled him, being a Jew from The Bronx, but he said, "They wouldn't let me turn them down." To prepare for the role, Caan hung out with "disreputable characters," to understand their lifestyle, and based it to some degree on comedian Don Rickles' routine.



Rumors of the car's destruction were also greatly exaggerated.

The Yankees catch fire in July, backed by Sanchez and a collection of part-timers, including Johnny Callison, Allen, Johnny Ellis, Felipe Alou, and two full-timers, Bobby Murcer (.292, 33 HR, 96 RBI, and a league-leading 102 runs scored) and Thurman Munson (.280, 7 HR, 46 RBIs).

On July 21, the Yankees host the California Angels for a twi-night doubleheader at Yankee Stadium, on a hot 88-degree late afternoon. Lloyd Allen faces Fritz Peterson in the opener. Bobby Murcer bashes a home run in the second to put the Yankees up, 1-0. The Yankees get another run in the fourth when Peterson hits a fly ball to right that Leroy Stanton drops to let an unearned run score.

The Yankees blast three more home runs in the fifth: Bobby Murcer (13) opening the barrage with a two-run shot that scores Thurman Munson, Ron Blomberg (8) follows with a solo shot that chases Allen from the box in favor of Mel Queen, and Johnny Callison (3) treats him with a third HR.

Meanwhile, Peterson does not walk a batter and scatters only four hits for the shutout, improving his record to 9-11.

The second game gets underway at 8:33 p.m., with future Yankee Rudy May facing Yankee stalwart Mel Stottlemyre, before 10,679 fans under a cooler 79-degree evening.

Both pitchers are tough, but in the second inning, Gene Michael singles in Felipe Alou to put the Yankees up 1-0. In the seventh, John Ellis blasts a two-run home run (3) to score Bobby Murcer. Stottlemyre scatters four hits and benefits from four double plays, while not allowing a walk, raising his record to 10-11, while May falls to 3-8. Ellis enjoys a 2-for-3 day at the plate.

The Yankees fight hard to stay in the AL East race, and on August 10, the division-leading Detroit Tigers come to the Stadium, under their manager, prideful Billy Martin. 45,145 fans jam the old stadium for what is the biggest game of the year to date, and Joe Coleman of the Tigers faces the Yankees' Steve Kline. The game brings up vast walk-up crowds at the stadium ticket booths. Fans buy tickets as late as the seventh inning. Traffic is so congested that some get out of their cars on the Major Deegan Expressway and walk the rest of the way to the ballpark, which makes the author wonder what happened to the cars after the game.

The game becomes one of those death struggles that drive managers crazy. The Tiger lineup includes such sluggers as Gates Brown, Norm Cash, Willie Horton, and Jim Northrup. The Yankees send to the plate Thurman Munson, Bobby Murcer, Roy White, and Ron Blomberg. They combine for 10 hits and one run.

That sole run comes in the fourth, when Murcer leads off with a double, and scores on a two-out infield single by Johnny Callison.

In the top of the eighth, the Tigers put two on and two out and Aurelio Rodriguez works a full count. The runners take off, in accordance with "Inside Baseball Strategy," by all major league managers since 1903. Rodriguez hits a grounder to shortstop Gene Michael, who flips it to second baseman Horace Clarke to end the inning. But pinch-runner John Knox beats the flip. Clarke alertly fires the ball to Ron Blomberg at first, beating the slow-footed Rodriguez by a step for the final out.

Facing the postgame media, Clarke says, "When the ball was hit, I was going over to second, not even expecting the ball to be thrown in my direction, but when he did throw it, I just reacted as quickly as possible."

Having pitched eight innings and scattered three hits, three strikeouts, and given up no walks, Yankee Manager Ralph Houk summons relief ace Sparky Lyle to nail down the save. He arrives to the strains of "Land of Hope and Glory" or "Pomp

and Circumstance,” depending on the ethnicity of the fan, and promptly gets into trouble.

First Lyle gives up a double to Gates Brown. The slow-footed Brown – most 1972 Tigers are pretty leaden by this point in their careers – gives way to a quicker veteran, Tony Taylor, at second base. Lyle strikes out Norm Cash, which freezes Taylor, for one out. Billy Martin sends up veteran (and slow-footed) catcher Bill Freehan to pinch-hit for the game’s catcher, Duke Sims. Freehan fools everyone with an infield single to shortstop that puts himself on first, but does not advance the runner.

With runners on first and second, Jim Northrup grounds to Ron Blomberg at first, who flips the ball to Lyle covering the bag for two out. The runners advance.

Now Billy Martin sends up Ike Brown to bat for light-hitting and future Yankee Ed Brinkman. Brown takes ball one. Lyle then fires a strike. Sparky then makes Brown swing and miss for strike two. As this is the day before Ron Guidry’s patented “Two-strike claps,” the author has no idea what the fans were doing, but they were doubtless on the edge of their seats.

Lyle then fires a slider and Brown swings through it for strike three and to end the 1-0 shutout. The fans roar in celebration for Kline going to a 13-4 record and Lyle’s 26th save.

On August 12, Callison celebrates Bat Day by ripping three hits to drive in six runners in a 10-6 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers.

Hearing fans cheering behind him, former “Miracle Met” Ron Swoboda is reminded of the 1969 Shea Stadium crowd, and in the August 13 5-4 comeback victory, pitcher Fred Beene and catcher Munson have to shout at each other to be heard over the crowd.

By August 29, the Yankees are 79-76, struggling to stay afloat, when a team provably worse than them comes to town for a four-game series – the Texas Rangers, in their second year in the Lone Star State, led by Ted Williams himself.

One of the greatest ironies of baseball history is that one of the greatest hitters in the game’s annals leads “The Team That Couldn’t Hit,” according to the Society for American Baseball Research. In 1972, the Rangers are on their way to a 100-loss season before 662,974 fans who brave 100-degree temperatures to sweat through agonizing defeats.

15,987 people attend this game, the top end of a two-night doubleheader, which sees the Rangers' Mike Paul face the Yankees' Steve Kline. Paul will finish the year with a respectable 8-9 record and 2.17 ERA.

Beene's chief nemesis this evening is Bobby Murcer, enjoying the best year of his career. However, Beene disposes of Murcer in the first with a strikeout.

The Rangers earn an unearned run off of Kline in the third, when future Yankee Jim Mason singles in future Yankee Elliott Maddox.

Down 1-0 in the fourth, Murcer comes up with one out and lashes a triple to deep left center field. He scores moments later on a Roy White ground ball single to center. That sets the Yankees off: Celerino Sanchez singles and White scores on a single by Ron Swoboda. The Yankees now lead, 2-1.

But the worst-hitting team in baseball comes back in force in the sixth when Ted Ford blasts a three-run homer to put the Rangers up, 4-2. They make it worse in the top of the seventh on a double and three singles to make it a 6-2 ballgame.

But in the bottom of the sixth, the Yankees decide they have suffered enough indignities. Hal Lanier bats for pitcher Steve Kline. His double chases Mike Paul from the game. Future Oakland Athletic and Yankee Paul Lindblad comes on to face Horace Clarke, who doubles to left to score, Lanier. 6-3. Thurman Munson singles to center, scoring Clarke. 6-4. Murcer follows with a single to left, putting Munson on second.

Having failed to get a single out, Lindblad yields to Casey Cox, who walks Roy White to load the bases. The Yankees are only able to gain one from this situation, when Bernie Allen hits into a run-scoring ground out. 6-5.

In the top of the ninth, Ted Williams demonstrates an interesting idea about "Inside Baseball Strategy" by having his pitcher, Casey Cox, lead off the inning, instead of sending up a pinch-hitter. Cox walks, and Williams has speedy Dave Nelson run for him. However, the strategy fails – after Maddox strikes out on a foul bunt, Nelson is erased on an inning-ending double play. Doubtless Williams was furious.

Forced to call upon a new pitcher from a mediocre bullpen, Williams sends left-handed rookie Steve Lawson out to cope with the Yankees in the bottom of the ninth. The first batter Lawson faces is Murcer, who has a triple, double, and single on the day so far. With a one-run (6-5) lead, Lawson fires a 2-2 pitch to Murcer, who

drills it into the stands, electrifying the incredulous crowd, to paraphrase Murray Chass, covering the game for **The New York Times**. The game is now tied at 6-6.

Murray Chass further writes in his New York Times summary of the game, “Ted Williams, the Texas manager who appears to maneuver pitchers with less success than he hit them, had a hand in the Yankees’ tying run. He did it with an off move involving Casey Cox, his third pitcher. Williams let Cox bat in the top of the ninth, but when he walked, the manager sent in a runner for him. That required a new pitcher in the last of the ninth, and the first man Steve Lawson faced was Murcer.”

Bobby Murcer has also hit for the cycle, the first man to do so since Mickey Mantle.

In the 10th, the Rangers recognize Murcer’s bat by walking him intentionally. The game struggles on into the 11th, when Horacio Pina walks Ron Blomberg and Bernie Allen to start the inning, and Johnny Callison wins the game, 7-6, with a single.

The second half of the twin bill is less triumphant: the Yankees fall 7-4 on errors. But Murcer raps two more hits, one of them a home run, raises his average to .294, and the Yankees take the third game of the series, 3-1, defeating Jim Panther (that’s his name), and the fourth game, 7-0, in a Fritz Peterson complete game shutout. At season’s end, Ted Williams decides he’s had enough of presiding over catastrophe, and resigns as Rangers’ manager, heading for Florida and the tarpon, leaving the whole untidy mess in the hands of Whitey Herzog.

On September 15, the Red Sox have a 74-62 record, and a one-game lead over Detroit’s 74-64 mark. The Orioles and Yankees are tied for third with identical 74-65 records, 1½ games back.

But the Yankees stall at that point. Jim Palmer downs Mel Stottlemyre in the opening of a series, 3-1, that sees the Yankees reel over the next two weeks, posting a 5-11 record that lands the team in fourth place, 6½ games out.

In Detroit with one week left, the Yankees have a 5-1 lead in the eighth inning, when Willie Horton, Al Kaline, and Duke Sims chase Yankee starter Steve Kline with three singles. Lyle comes on and gives up a single and sacrifice fly to make it a 5-4 game.

In the ninth, Ed Brinkman and Horton single. Pinch-hitting, Tony Taylor drops a bunt that catches third baseman Hal Lanier flat-footed. The bases are loaded for Al Kaline.

Lyle fires an 0-1 fastball to Kaline, certain it's a strike, but umpire Don Denkinger (who will gain later undeserved infamy in the 1985 World Series) calls the pitch a ball, enraging the easily enraged Munson and upsetting Lyle. He falls to 3-2, and then Kaline hits a sacrifice fly to tie the game and put the winning run on third.

Houk moves in his outfielders, as a long fly is as good as a hit. Sims takes a strike and then lines a single to left center for a 6-5 victory. Murcer catches up with the ball and hurls it in frustration into Tiger Stadium's upper deck. This is as close as he has yet come to playing in the post-season. "We never had the club," he says later. "We were always short. We were getting much closer, gaining ground each year, but we were still short."

Devastated, the Yankees return to The Bronx and lose their last five games. Sportswriter George Vecsey watches Yankee owner Mike Burke sitting all alone in left field, "just melancholy, because the Yankees had crumbled again." Their final record in a strike-shortened year is 79-76.

After the final game, a reporter asks Houk what the Yankees need to win the AL East. Chomping on his cigar and sipping his beer, Houk says, "A guy who can hit 25 home runs in the middle of the lineup."

On November 25, Houk gets his wish: Cleveland Indians third baseman Graig Nettles, in return for John Ellis, Jerry Kenney, Rusty Torres, and Charlie Spikes, all key members of the Yankee farm system.

"We traded our tomorrow for today," MacPhail explains. "Our fans have waited long enough. Now we feel we have as good a club as anybody in baseball."

While the Mets and Yankees deal with today and tomorrow, the Hall of Fame, as usual, honors baseball's past. This year, Lefty Gomez, Yogi Berra, and Ross Youngs, three of New York's baseball titans, are inducted, the last one posthumously. Youngs, of course, is one of the two greatest players John McGraw claimed to have managed.

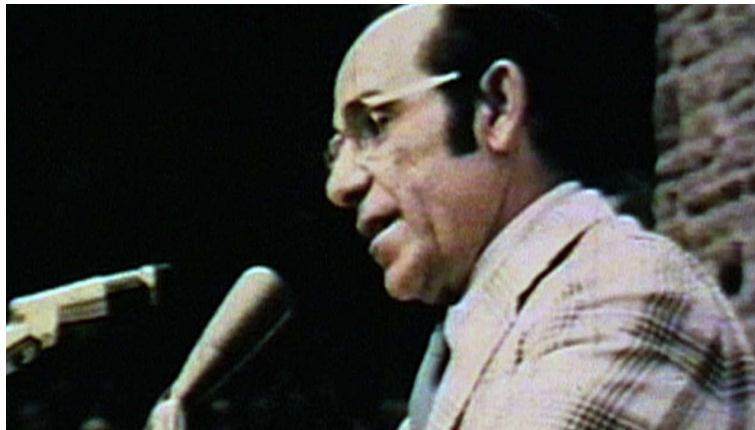
Gomez learns of his induction while on an airliner. When the Hall calls the Gomez family, they call Western Airlines, who send a message to the captain, who gives him a note and then broadcasts the news on the in-flight public address system. Lefty says later, "We were 30,000 feet in the air on a flight from San Francisco to Honolulu when the flight attendant handed me the note. It was a thrilling moment. It's unusual for me to be at a loss for words. As a rule, I can talk underwater."

The Veterans' Committee puts Lefty in, but Yogi is voted in by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Astonishingly, he's not a first-ballot inductee. It's his second try.

Nonetheless, at the August 7 ceremony, Gomez and Berra put on their game faces for the audience. Lefty's speech is a serious address, calling the induction "The greatest pleasure I have had in my life," but adds "I want to thank Joe DiMaggio for running down all of my mistakes."

Yogi gives a brief speech, opening with "I guess the first thing I should do is thank everybody who made this day necessary." He pays tribute to Bill Dickey, Casey Stengel, George Weiss, and "the perfect baseball wife," his beloved Carmen. Yogi thanks the fans for their support and baseball because "it has given me more than I could ever hope for. I hope when I am through with this game I will put something back."

Yogi continues to attend inductions until his death, saying, "I love coming up and if I'm still living, I'll be coming up," serving on the Veterans' Committee from 1994 through 2001.



Yogi Berra thanks everyone for "making this day necessary." YouTube

On October 15, the Oakland Athletics and their moustaches face the Cincinnati Reds in the second game of the World Series in Cincinnati. To honor Jackie Robinson on the 25th anniversary of his breaking into major league baseball, the old lion is invited to throw out the first pitch.

It has been a rough few years for Jackie. He has broken with the Republican Party as it goes more conservative and the nation divides over Vietnam and a backlash over the Civil Rights movement emerges. He splits with old friend and mentor Nelson Rockefeller, supports Curt Flood's drive to gain rights for baseball players,

seen towering friends like Dr. Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy gunned down, the deaths of Branch Rickey and his mother Mallie, and even battles with fellow Hall of Famer Bob Feller at the Baseball Centennial press conference in 1969, over front office hiring practices.

At one point, Robinson is asked if a black man will ever become president. Robinson retorts that the way things are going, it is more likely that the extreme racist George Wallace will go the White House.

Robinson has also suffered personally. His finances are difficult. He is prematurely aged from his stress-filled life and suffers diabetes and heart trouble. His hair has turned white and his vision is poor. He is on President Richard M. Nixon's "enemies list," with the FBI reporting on him. His son Jackie Jr., returns from serving in the Army in Vietnam wounded in battle and in spirit – a heroin addict and is arrested for attempting to sell the drug, and enters Daytop Village, a rehab center, where he winds up working as a counselor. The program is so successful for Jackie Jr. and others that the ballplayer's son testifies to its effectiveness before Congress on October 30, 1970.

Jackie Jr. is driving home from the center on June 17, 1971, when his small sports car slams into a bridge abutment on the Merritt Parkway, killing him.

As 1972 rolls on, the year gets worse for Jackie. Barely able to see or walk, he is appalled by white and black militancy – old Dodger teammate Carl Erskine describes Jackie's rage over being viewed as a "period piece" by modern black militants like Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown. "When I hear that, I feel sorry for them," Erskine says. "Carmichael and Brown can never understand what Robinson did. How hard it was. What a great victory. But he can understand them. He was a young black man once, and man and hurt. He knows their feeling, and their ignorance must hurt him more."

The proud Robinson, invited to attend a ceremony at Dodger Stadium to retire his number, initially refuses to come until Dodger teammate and now community relations coordinator Don Newcombe invites him, saying, "Robbie, will you come for me?"

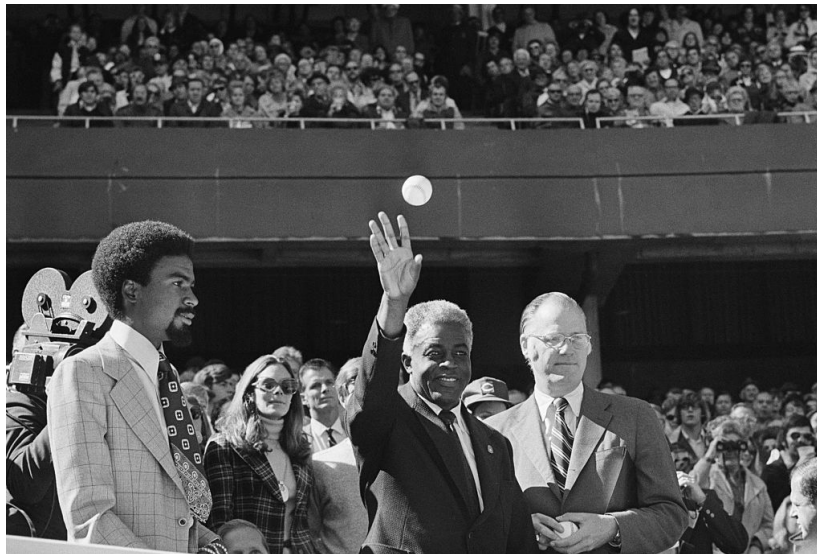
Even so, in his "as-told-to" autobiography, "**I Never Had It Made,**" Robinson makes the point that he was mostly a pawn in Branch Rickey's drama... that he was a "black man in a white man's world."

Now, in an ashtray stadium like others built in the 1970s, Robinson stands alongside teammates Pee Wee Reese and Joe Black, contemporary Larry Doby, and broadcaster Red Barber, accepting congratulatory speeches and gifts for Daytop Village. Greyhound provides a double-deck bus and Chrysler a station wagon. These are all in the name of Jackie Robinson, Jr.

Commissioner Bowie Kuhn has asked Robinson in advance to throw out the first pitch. Despite his infirmities, Robinson does so. Then he delivers his remarks, in his distinctive, high-pitched voice, and says, “I am extremely proud and pleased to be here this afternoon but must admit I’m going to be tremendously more pleased and more proud when I look at that third base coaching line one day and see a black face managing in baseball.”

Kuhn manages to keep his composure. He promises that baseball is “working on it.”

Henry Aaron, also in attendance, later writes, “He said baseball will always have its head buried in the sand until it can find the strength and the vision to have a black man coaching at third base...It was the last time I heard him speak.”



Jackie Robinson makes his final public appearance at the 1972 World Series, throwing out the first pitch. At right, Commissioner Bowie Kuhn looks impassive, as usual. Credit: History.com

At 6:26 a.m., Tuesday, October 24, 1972 – a mere nine days later – Jackie Robinson collapses in his home in Stamford, Connecticut, from a heart attack. His wife Rachel, a nurse, rushes in to help him. It’s too late. Robinson’s final words to his

wife of 26 years are “I love you.” He is 53 years old – the same age Babe Ruth was when he died.

The funeral, on October 29, 1972, is held at Riverside Church in Manhattan, and all of baseball, sports, and politics are present, along with more than a dozen childhood friends of Jackie Robinson. In the church are Joe Louis, Dick Gregory, Henry Aaron, Vida Blue, Elston Howard, Willie Mays, Bill Russell, Monte Irvin, Jim Gilliam, Don Newcombe, Ralph Branca, Pee Wee Reese, Nelson Rockefeller, Willie Stargell, Roy Campanella, Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Bowie Kuhn. Thousands more listen to the funeral on loudspeakers on Riverside Drive and on the steps of Grant’s Tomb outside.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson conducts the service and tells attendees: “Today we must balance the tears of sorrow with tears of joy. Mix the bitter with the sweet in death and life. Jackie as a figure in history was a rock in the water, creating concentric circles and ripples of new possibility...Jackie, as a co-partner with God...didn’t integrate baseball for himself. He infiltrated baseball for all of us, seeking and looking for more oxygen for black survival...This mind, this mission, could not be held down by a grave...No grave could hold this body down. It belongs to the ages, and all of us are better off because the temple of God, the man with convictions, the man with a mission passed this way.”

Jackie is buried a short distance from the site of Ebbets Field in Cypress Hills Cemetery in Brooklyn. Thousands of mourners line the funeral route, waving from rooftops, leaning out windows, trying to touch the hearse, yelling “Good-bye, Jackie.”

Unable to withstand the graveside service, Rachel Robinson remains in the car. Jackie Robinson is buried alongside his son, Jackie Jr. A tombstone built later bears his great quote, “A life is not important, except in the impact it has on other lives.”



Jackie Robinson leaves Riverside Church, surrounded or carried by his teammates, supporters, and titans of American sports. Credit: Associated Press

On January 3, 1973, Yankee President Mike Burke faces an army of reporters at the Yankee Stadium Club to announce that he and a Cleveland shipbuilder named George M. Steinbrenner III have pooled \$10 million to purchase the Yankees from their present owner, the Columbia Broadcasting System. Steinbrenner is one of several owners of the Yankees – they include theater impresario James Nederlander, Nelson Bunker Hunt of Texas oil power, and a shaggy-haired General Motors executive named John DeLorean.

However, Steinbrenner is the major moneymen in the purchase. Asked about his future involvement with the team, Steinbrenner is casual, saying, “We plan absentee ownership as far as running the Yankees. We’re not going to pretend we’re something we aren’t. I’ll stick to building ships.”

1977

It is appropriate that one of the most tumultuous seasons in the history of the New York Yankees and New York Mets takes place in one of the most tumultuous years in the history of the City of New York.

In 1977, the city faces major crises: the collapse of the Abraham Beame mayoral administration, as the proud but diminutive City College alumnus loses his re-election bid in the primaries to upstart Edward I. Koch, who faces a young Mario M.

Cuomo in the general election. Also flattened in the primary are Percy Sutton, Herman Badillo, and Bella Abzug.

This political upheaval reflects the chaos reigning in the city. During the year, Rupert Murdoch purchases the **New York Post** from the Schiff family, turning the afternoon and pro-labor newspaper into a rabidly right-wing morning tabloid that snarls at liberals and feasts on sex and mayhem. It will hit a new high in low with a definitive headline: “Headless body in topless bar” in 1983.

During the year, New York endures other crises: record-setting high temperatures, as high as 118 degrees; terrorist bombings by FALN; a group seeking Puerto Rican independence; continuing economic stagnation and disaster; immense crime; 1975 bankruptcy that leaves the police shorthanded and subway trains covered in graffiti and darkened; and violence in the battered South Bronx, where arson is the order of the day. Fire Department veterans call that time the “war years.”

However, nothing compares to the two catastrophes inflicted in that summer. The first is created by a psychotic young man named David Berkowitz, who spends his evenings shooting random strangers in parked cars and on the streets of Queens and Brooklyn, taunting police with bizarre letters to Jimmy Breslin, the top columnist at the **Daily News**, calling himself the “Son of Sam.” The letters set off a circulation war between the **News** and the **Post**, both sides seeking the ultimate exclusives. The **Post**’s Steve Dunleavy, an Australian import like Murdoch, wins part of the battle by posing as a doctor to interview the relatives of Sam’s victims.

This serial killer inflicts terror on New Yorkers and infuriates Mayor Beame and police leadership, who form a special task force to catch him, “Operation Omega,” headed by a literate Deputy Chief Inspector with a flair for good literature and an insistence on proper writing named Timothy Dowd.

In a sense, good detective work catches Berkowitz – continual canvassing results in a resident reporting a parking ticket on an unusual car. The ticket traces the car is traced to Yonkers, where their police report that the owner, Berkowitz, is a local nutball with a habit of threatening neighbors. With that, Dowd and his crew make the arrest, with Detective Steve Zigo doing the honors.

After Berkowitz is arrested, the **Post** publishes his seized writings and a photograph of him in police lockup, with the headline: “SAM SLEEPS.” Berkowitz is still in prison today, doing several life terms. Like previous celebrity prisoners (such as Adolf Hitler, Robert Stroud, and Al Capone), Berkowitz today claims he is a changed man who will not cause any more harm.

The other disaster that befalls New York strikes at 9:27 p.m. on July 13, when hopelessly overloaded electrical feeder cables to New York's north, some of them knocked out by lightning, fail, and all five boroughs and most of Westchester County lose power, on one of the hottest nights of the year.

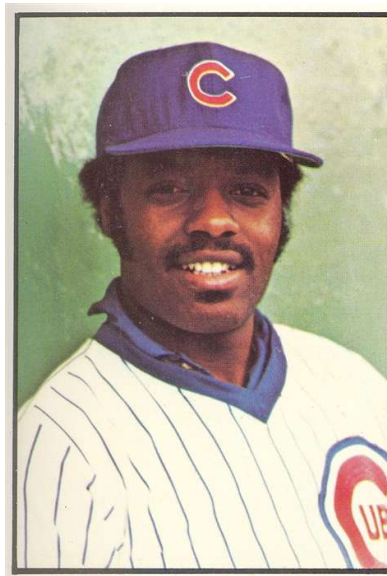


Manhattan's Financial District during the 1977 blackout, illuminated only by emergency lights in Brooklyn. Con Ed Chairman Charles Luce said in a TV interview on July 10, three days before the blackout, the following: "The Con Ed system is in the best shape in 15 years, and there's no problem about the summer." Photo credit: New York Daily News

At that moment, the Mets' third baseman Lenny Randle is batting against Ray Burris of the Chicago Cubs at Shea Stadium. When the stadium goes black, Randle's first thought is that Burris has hit him on the head, and he's dead. But when emergency lights come on, Randle realizes that Burris is still standing on the mound, clutching the ball, just as perplexed as he is. Oddly enough, pitcher Burris will face Randle again in 1980, with their uniforms reversed.



Lenny Randle: He was at bat, and thought he was dead.



Ray Burris: He was on the mound, and was still holding onto the ball.

Some of the Mets, including Craig Swan and Bud Harrelson, drive their cars onto the field, and use their headlights to play a pantomime baseball game to entertain the fans in attendance, who don't know how to get home. For some reason, the stadium organ works, so the organist leads the fans who stay – most start dribbling away – in singing such songs as “White Christmas.” The concessionaires give away the otherwise doomed ice cream.



With only emergency lights to power the stadium, Met fans sing along with the organist, belting out “White Christmas.” Credit: WNEW TV

Some of the Mets troop into their dark locker room, waiting for any word. After 45 minutes of dark and heat, they are told the game is postponed. Catcher John Stearns takes off his gear and puts on his street clothes. Out in the parking lot, he meets up with a newlywed couple that doesn’t know how to get back to their hotel in Manhattan. Stearns, who is living on the Upper East Side, offers them a lift back to their hotel, and the couple is grateful.

Then he heads to his apartment at 77th Street and Second Avenue. Lucky for him, the apartment is on the second floor. He conks out in bed and waits for the power to come on. A few blocks away, people are breaking into and looting the nearby Brooks Brothers outlet.

Ultimately, the fans and players head home, some players doing so in their uniforms. Met ticketing chief Bob Mandt and his staff balance the receipts by candlelight.

Next day, despite perfect sunshine, the game is cancelled, because of a health issue. The stadium's toilets operate on an electric ejector system and they won't work.

Six years later, Mandt's secretary says to her boss: "There's a man outside and he's got an old ticket, a full ticket, and he wants a refund or another game." Mandt has the man come in, and it's a senior citizen with a full ticket for the blackout game that was called off.

The man shows the ticket – it's a 50-cent senior citizen ticket. "I found this in my drawer. I was supposed to go to a game in 1977, and they called the game off. They had a problem at Shea Stadium. I've been holding it all these years. Is it worth anything?"

Mandt responds: "My friend, you're going to sit in a box seat today."

The senior's great seats six years later are the only piece of good news that comes out of the 1977 blackout. Within minutes of the power going out, residents of the city's poorest neighborhoods, primarily Brooklyn's Bushwick and the South Bronx, pour into the darkened streets, start breaking into stores and businesses, looting them of everything from expensive electronics to bags of Wonder Bread.

The Police Department calls up all of its reserves, but botches the response – cops are told to go to their nearest precincts, not where they are stationed. The result that officers living in New Jersey and Long Island drive to station houses nearest them. Soon precincts in Staten Island and Laurelton are full of cops – and nothing happening – while precincts in Bushwick are besieged and lack manpower. Officers are sent into the streets in jeans, wearing 1960s Civil Defense helmets or motorcycle helmets, clutching baseball bats, and are often unable to do anything – there are simply too many looters to arrest.

They do try, and those hauled back to the precincts simply fill up overheated lockups. The cops cannot process the prisoners in the dark, and most are simply held in temporary facilities in the parking lots, where cops either toss them cold Burger King Whoppers to feed them, or ridicule them. Some officers, standing in the third-floor windows of their darkened precincts, urinate on their prisoners.

In areas where there is power, news shows try to send messages to those without. One such report begins: "For those of you whose power has not yet been restored, here's what to do."

As dawn rises over the battered neighborhoods, so does smoke from torched stores and buildings, as the blackout continues all day long

So does the looting. Once the stores are emptied, some looters simply sell their stolen wares. \$500 stereo sets go for \$100 in impromptu bazaars. To the cops' astonishment, the looters are people of all ages, reflecting the desperate poverty of the time.

Finally, 25 hours after the lights went out, they go back on again, and the final tallies are disastrous: 1,037 fires, 14 of them multiple-alarmers; 1,616 damaged and/or looted stores; 3,776 people arrested, the largest mass arrest in city history. The various District Attorneys' Offices can't even start arraigning prisoners, setting bail, or starting plea negotiations until the power comes back on, and telexes can start spitting out prisoners' criminal records (known as "yellow sheets" to New York cops) from Albany. As the temperature jumps up to 104 degrees, looters fester in cells. Brooklyn's criminal court building, built to house 510 detainees, holds five times that number, with two dozen men in an eight-by-12 cell for several days, amid puddles of their own urine and vomit. One prisoner dies while awaiting arraignment.



By the next afternoon, looters had destroyed the shops on Broadway in Bushwick's neighborhood, beneath the BMT Broadway-Jamaica Avenue elevated. Credit: New York Daily News.

It takes four days to do so – emergency arraignment courts work around the clock and judges, at first reading complaints by candlelight, heed Mayor Beame's request to prosecute looters to the fullest extent of the law, passing out stiff bails and

refusing to accept plea-bargain agreements on anyone whose yellow sheet shows prior felony arrests.

Meanwhile, the streets of Bushwick and the South Bronx look to reporters and observers like scenes from old war movies – blasted stores, skeletal buildings, and merchandise scattered all over sidewalks. Many business owners are utterly ruined.

Blame-throwing is the order of the day, with liberals claiming that the looting was caused by poverty and conservatives blaming it on lack of self-control. On one subject both sides agree: the fault is that of Con Ed Chairman Charles Luce, who said in a TV interview on July 10, three days before the blackout, the following: “The Con Ed system is in the best shape in 15 years, and there’s no problem about the summer.”

The rage and turmoil that these non-baseball events are immense manifestations of an unbelievably difficult and chaotic year for both New York baseball teams. Pain and fury are the rule for much of the season. Only one team, however, finds redemption at the very end.

The Mets are the team that does not gain redemption. As the early season grinds along, The Mets are in poor shape. Their General Manager is M. Donald Grant, the sole New York Giants board member who opposed the team moving to San Francisco. Twenty years later, he is as old-line and hard-line as ever, unable to adjust to the new world created by free agency and the Messersmith-McNally reserve clause decision.

The Mets face a grave crisis during the season. Their most lustrous figure and team symbol, Tom Seaver, is coming to the end of his contract. Seaver wants to stay in New York, but also wants to be paid what a three-time Cy Young Award-winner is worth, which should be more than a paltry (by the standards of the time) \$225,000 a year. Grant will not grant such demands to mere players. Also demanding more money in his free agent year is tall slugger Dave Kingman, who makes up in long home runs what he lacks in attitude and defensive abilities.

On the field, the Mets, led by Joseph Fillmore Frazier, a former minor league manager, stumble badly. After being swept by Montreal in a Memorial Day doubleheader, Frazier gets the axe and is replaced by Brooklyn native Joe Torre, making his managerial debut, as a player-manager. In his first game, Torre earns a 6-2 win behind pitcher Craig Swan and a grand slam by catcher John Stearns. The Mets improve under Torre’s genial and warm leadership, winning seven of eight games.



Joe Torre contemplates the harsh realities of managing the Mets in the late 1970s.

But the tension between Seaver's contract demands and Grant's coldness worsens. Seaver earns \$225,000 a year while Reggie Jackson, across town, earns \$2.7 million per year. Seaver demands more money from Grant. The General Manager calls Seaver an "ingrate," infuriating the proud pitcher.

Adding to the anger is the Daily News' legendary columnist Dick Young, whose son-in-law Thornton Geary is a senior Met employee. Young, who has become increasingly conservative, bitter, and shrill, uses his widely-read columns "Clubhouse Confidential" and "Young Ideas" to hammer Seaver on a daily basis. It is clear that Young is acting as Met management's hatchet man.

However, the Daily News's beat Met writer, Jack Lang, a more perceptive man than his colleague, realizes the disaster that would befall the Mets if Seaver leaves New York. He suggests on June 14, 1977, to Seaver that the pitcher work out an extension of his contract with Met owner Lorinda de Roulet, daughter of original Met owner Joan Payson. Seaver does so – an agreement for \$300,000 for 1978 and \$400,000 in 1979. Mrs. De Roulet agrees.

But on June 15, 1977, the next day and the day of the trading deadline, Young produces a column in his paper that attacks Seaver and his beloved wife Nancy. Young accuses Nancy Seaver of being jealous of Nolan Ryan's wife, Ruth Ryan, for Ryan making more money than Seaver. Young claims the information has come directly from Grant.

Seaver is enraged. While he can take a certain amount of personal abuse from the media, his family is sacrosanct. He calls the deal off and phones Met PR director Arthur Richman, and says, "Get me out of here."

Seaver then sends a written message to Mrs. De Roulet, which says, "Everything I said last night is forgotten. I want out. The attack on my family is something I just can't take."

He tells sportswriter Phil Pepe of his fury at the personal attacks on his wife, and how Grant has created a "plantation mentality," going so far as to declare Seaver, a former Marine, as a "Communist."

Seaver then goes to his home in Greenwich, Connecticut, skipping that night's game with the Atlanta Braves. By midnight, the Mets announce they have traded "The Franchise" to the Cincinnati Reds for four players: pitcher Pat Zachry, outfielder Steve Henderson, infielder Doug Flynn, and outfielder Dan Norman.

The Mets also announce the trade of slugger Dave Kingman to the San Diego Padres for outfielder Bobby Valentine and pitcher Paul Siebert, as well as sending utilityman Mike Phillips to the Cardinals for outfielder/infielder Joel Youngblood, completing "The Midnight Massacre." Kingman will set an odd record in 1977 – as nobody can sign him for 1978, he gets shipped to the California Angels and then the Yankees, making him the first player to perform for all four divisions in one season. And by playing for the Yankees as well as the Mets, he joins the "Noble and Holy Order of the D Train," players who have performed for the Mets and Yankees.

The next morning, Dick Young gleefully endorses the trade in his column. Seaver sits in his Shea Stadium locker, cleaning it out, weeping before sympathetic press.

Met players show their displeasure in the cautious manner of employees bound to a tyrannical overlord. Pitcher Jerry Koosman says, "What it will take is to win, win and keep winning, to make us forget the loss of Seaver." Ed Kranepool: "I just hope that our scouts did their homework in who we got for Seaver. Tom Seaver forced the Mets to rebuild." Jon Matlack: "I don't want to get in trouble, so I want to be careful

of what I say. But I don't think this deal was made, per se, to help this ball club. It was a deal that had to be made." Bud Harrelson, however, is harsh: "I'm selfish. Who we got for Tom is trivia as far as I'm concerned. I lost my friend." He cries, unable to bear the pain.

The only optimist in the bunch is Torre: "I hope the fans won't overreact. I hope they'll wait and see. We made a hell of a lot better deal than we had last week with Cincinnati. (The Reds originally refused to part with Henderson) We've added speed and we've added youth. We've got a deeper ball club and we don't strike out as much."

The fans do not "wait and see." Only 9,000 attend the first Met game at Shea Stadium since 1967 without Seaver on the roster. The Mets defeat the Astros, 4-3, improving Torre's record to 12-1. After that, the wheels fall off. By mid-July, the punchless and pitcher-less Mets are in the National League East's cellar, slammed there by the Chicago Cubs sweeping them in a three-game series at Wrigley Field. The Mets then lose four of five in Montreal, and four straight in Philadelphia

The team disintegrates, going on a nine-game losing streak, which ends when Lenny Randle hits a home run in the bottom of the 17th inning to break a 5-5 tie with the Expos. Torre takes himself off the playing roster, as the Mets continue to stumble before thousands of empty seats.

The seats fill up again when Tom Seaver and the Cincinnati Reds come to town, with "The Franchise" pitching at Shea Stadium for the first time as a visitor. 46,000 masochists watch their hero pitch against Jerry Koosman, who has asked to face his old teammate, out of rotation turn. The Mets' organist plays songs like "Candy Girl" to honor the lost hero, who received a tumultuous ovation when he takes the mound. Seaver tips his cap to the Met fans. Met defense crumbles behind Koosman, gives up three unearned runs, and Seaver wins 5-1, for his 14th win of the year.

When coming off the mound between innings, Seaver heads for the Met dugout from force of habit, before remembering that he is no longer a Met.

At season's end, Seaver moves past Don Drysdale into 11th place on the all-time strikeout list and wins 20 games, split between his two teams. Meanwhile, Koosman, having won 20 games in 1976, and just missed the Cy Young Award, suffers the indignity of losing 20 games, only the fourth pitcher to have such back-to-back seasons, the other three being Mel Stottlemyre, Steve Carlton, and Wilbur Wood.

Meanwhile, the Mets finish more than 30 games behind the division champion Phillies, playing before thousands of empty seats. Fan banners hanging from the stadium's overhangs that survive security men denounce management: one reads "Welcome to Grant's Tomb."

As for the poison-pen villain of the piece, Dick Young, his reputation for objectivity and honesty takes a pounding from fans and colleagues alike. Once one of the most revered writers in the game, he is now one of the most reviled. To top it off, some years later, Young moves from the Daily News to the Post, breaking his contract when the News won't give him a substantial raise and the Post offers him a huge one. Fans and colleagues attack Young for his act of hypocrisy, but Young claims that his move and Seaver's demands are not the same. In his later years, Young becomes even more right-wing.

When Pete Rose makes a quip that given the superiority of Japanese mitts, bats, and equipment, they should not have lost World War II, Young dedicates an entire column to a ringing defense of America's World War II war effort.



The New York Daily News gives its version of the darkest hour in Mets history, on the front page...

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Vol. 116, No. 119 THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 1977 25 CENTS © 1977 The New York Post Corporation DAILY PAID CIRCULATION 608,768 POST RATE 608,768

PROTEST SWELLS ON SEAVER DEAL

Mets beef up security guard

By JOE NICHOLSON and LEO STANDORA
Security forces will be beefed up at Shea Stadium for tonight's game as the Mets face a revolt by fans angered at the trading away of pitching superstar Tom Seaver in one of the biggest shakeups in baseball history.

The torrent of protest continued to swell throughout the day and could reach a peak tonight when the Mets return from a road trip to play the Houston Astros.

At Shea Stadium and security forces would be "alerted and increased" for the game.

The sweep of Seaver, who pitched for the Mets since they became a quality team eight years ago, led to an immediate outcry from fans, thousands of whom had protested the planned deal even before it was made.

Besides sending Seaver to the Cincinnati Reds, the last-place Mets traded slugger outfielder Dave Capman to the San Diego Padres and reserve shortstop Mike Phillips to the St. Louis Cardinals. But the fans' entry focused on the loss of the ace pitcher.

WHAT THEY GET
The key players they got in return were Cincinnati pitcher Pat Zachry, co-mvp of the year in the National League last season, and top outstanding minor league outfield prospects, all of whom came from the Reds in the Seaver swap.

The switchboard at Shea Stadium lit up with
Continued on Page 48

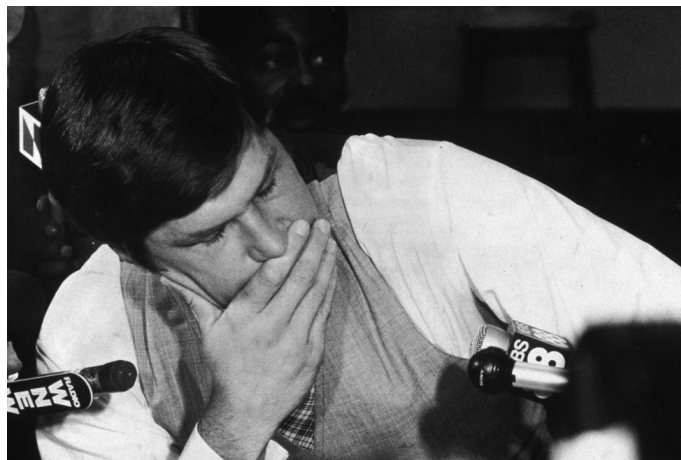
Tom and Nancy say goodby

Tom Seaver, at the point of tears, interjects press conference at Shea Stadium as he made his farewells today. Meanwhile, his wife Nancy weeps as she speaks to reporters in another room at the stadium. The story of Seaver's farewell is on Page 48.

PHOTO BY GUY W. LORENZ

Zenith Father's Day gift section • Pages 41 to 48

...As does the New York Post, which suggests that mayhem and violence will result, a philosophy it began that year under Rupert Murdoch and has continued to this day.



Meanwhile, an anguished Seaver, at his locker in Shea Stadium, faces the press. Photo credit: [New York Post](#)

While the Mets disintegrate in Queens, the Yankees endure a season of incredible turmoil and bickering that ends with one of the most dramatic scenes in the history of major league baseball.

A great deal of ink has been spilled on the 1977 Yankee season. Steve Jacobson's diary "**The Best Team Money Could Buy**" is an entertaining account of a season he has said he would "not want to live through again." Ed Linn also produced "**Inside the Yankees: The Championship Year.**" Later books, like "**Ladies and Gentlemen, The Bronx Is Burning,**" autobiographies by Billy Martin, Ron Guidry, Lou Piniella, Reggie Jackson, Ed Figueroa, Willie Randolph, Graig Nettles, Roy White, Ron Blomberg (on the disabled list all year, but present in the clubhouse), Thurman Munson, Sparky Lyle, Yogi Berra, Mickey Rivers, Bill Lee, Carl Yastrzemski, and even Don Zimmer have covered this season from various angles, along with memoirs by reporters like Phil Pepe, Peter Gammons, Roger Kahn, Marty Appel, Bill Madden, Ira Berkow, and Maury Allen, and biographies of Martin, Munson, Jackson, Berra, and George M. Steinbrenner III (there are three), and even oral history, by Dick Lally.

The bizarre Yankee 1977 season properly begins with their quick four-game dismissal in the 1976 World Series at the hands of the omnipotent Cincinnati Reds. Only Game 2 is remotely close, and the only Yankee home run is smacked by Jim Mason in the finale, his last at-bat as a Yankee. Mason has spent the year in Martin's doghouse – after the game, free agency sends him to Texas, along with pitcher Doyle Alexander, who started the first game, another victim of Martin's hatred.

To avenge the humiliation, Yankee leadership is determined to take dramatic action with the newly-hatched free agents, signing the best available. Martin wants to sign left-handed pitching, right-handed outfielder Joe Rudi, a man of considerable discipline and talent, and second baseman Bobby Grich, with the idea of moving him back to his original position of shortstop. Steinbrenner provides the left-handed pitching in Cincinnati Reds pitcher Don Gullett, but instead of a right-handed slugger, signs Baltimore Orioles right fielder Reginald Martinez Jackson, Jr., the latter to Martin's dismay. Jackson is paid a then-whopping \$2.39 million five-year contract and given a Rolls-Royce Corniche. Other Yankees, including Martin, wonder why their achievement of bringing the 1976 Yankees to their first pennant since 1964, leading the American League East from wire to wire, does not merit similar reward.

Jackson's opening press conference in New York doesn't go too well – he and his girlfriend are put up at the Americana Hotel, and his room has two twin beds. He threatens to leave town and not play for the Yankees, doing so through the hotel's night manager, who calls Yankee PR chieftain Marty Appel. Working close to midnight, Appel re-books Jackson and his lady to a suite at the Plaza hotel.

When Jackson reaches Yankee Stadium for the signing, he finds that the team's in-house counsel, Joe Garagiola Jr., son of the baseball catcher and broadcaster, has changed some clauses. Jackson won't sign. Steinbrenner, irritated, orders the clauses restored, blames the mess on Garagiola, and the latter realizes he should soon find another employer.

At the press conference, Reggie tells the assembled media that "I didn't come here to become a star. I brought my star with me." He's certainly true, but the assembled and absent Yankee legends might wonder about that.

When Reggie arrives in Fort Lauderdale for spring training, his high-handed demeanor and high salary irritates other Yankees, most notably team captain and reigning American League MVP Thurman Munson, who is annoyed at being upstaged and out-paid by the newcomer. Thurman has bled through the years of Yankee failure since 1969 and become a beloved figure for his gritty style and play. By comparison, Reggie is a high-maintenance and arrogant rock star from Charlie Finley's Oakland Athletics, whose magnificent achievements are magnified by being surrounded by a team of elite players.

The Yankees are a team that won the 1976 American League Pennant without him, and resent him coming in to apparently take over. Munson is particularly annoyed that Reggie is making more money than him, and the Yankees have promised that he would always be the highest-paid member of the team.

Reggie gets into trouble right away, misreading the situation, by granting an interview to **Sport** magazine's free-lance writer Robert Ward, entitled "Reggie Jackson in No-Man's Land," which does not appear until the end of May. In the interview, Jackson utters a paragraph that will provide sports journalists with fodder and haunt him for the rest of his days: "This team...it all flows from me. I've got to keep it all going. I'm the straw that stirs the drink. It all comes back to me. Maybe I should say me and Munson...but really he doesn't enter into it. He's being so damned insecure about the whole thing. I've overheard him talking about me."

Reggie insists later that he did not intend his words to come out that way, nor be printed. Ward insists that Reggie smacked his hand on the bar for emphasis and said, "I want to see that in print."

Next problem comes on March 26, when Billy defies George's orders to travel with the team to a spring training game against the Mets. The Mets demolish the Yankees in a televised affair that features three Met home runs.

The Boss storms into the Yankee clubhouse and berates the manager in front of his players and the media for not taking the team bus, being shown up by the Mets, and not playing the regulars for the whole game.

Billy defends his position as manager, saying, “Get the (expletive) out of here, George! I won’t have you yelling at me in front of my players.”

Steinbrenner bellows back, “Oh, no? Do you want to be fired right here, right now?”

“If that’s what you want to do, George, then go ahead. Fire me!” Martin screams, moving toward Steinbrenner. The owner backs away until both are up against a wall in the trainer’s room, and General Manager Gabe Paul steps between them. Martin, still enraged, slams his fist into a tub of ice water, splattering ice all over Paul, aged 67.

Martin storms out of the trainer’s room and leaves with Mickey Mantle.

Steinbrenner emerges next and tells Yogi Berra that he is the new Yankee manager. Berra shakes his head. “This is Billy’s club, George.”

“We’ll see about that,” Steinbrenner yells. He points at Travelling Secretary Killer Kane, and orders. “You get Billy to my apartment in Tampa at 9 o’clock tomorrow, and don’t be late.”

Kane follows orders, and have to wait in Billy’s room for the manager to return from his evening of partying until 3 a.m. Martin is annoyed at having to fly the dawn patrol and face the Red Baron the next day, but he dutifully meets with his employer.

Billy explains to George that he travels with his coaches separately from the players in spring training to discuss confidential personnel decisions – roster cuts, for example – that should not be heard by players. Billy also notes that as spring training moves closer to Opening Day and cuts are made, he will perforce be playing his regulars longer.

George explains that televised TV defeats in spring training will affect ticket sales for the regular season, which is why he is concerned.

Both see each other’s point, and disaster is averted for the moment.

The season begins with the Yankees winning the opener on April 7, in a Yankee Stadium battle with the Milwaukee Brewers.

Catfish Hunter starts for the Yankees, and is as effective as ever, giving up three hits, striking out five, and not walking a hitter. Jackson makes his Yankee debut with authority, going 2-4 and scoring two runs. The 43,000 fans in attendance chant “Reg-gie, Reg-gie, Reg-gie” when he comes up in the eighth. Jackson claims after the game that he has never heard anything like that in his 10 years in the big leagues.

Overlooked in the Yankee victory is Jimmy Wynn’s 450-foot home run for the Yankees, but noted is that Sparky Lyle pitches a two-inning save.

, and then playing mediocre ball after that. Reggie reports a hurt arm. Billy and George take potshots at each other through the media. Munson bats .189. Pitcher Don Gullett gets hurt when he slips on a wet mound. Catfish Hunter goes on the disabled list and is sent home to North Carolina to rest. Ed Figueroa is hit on the right instep by a line drive. He stays in the game. Then he’s hit by a line drive on his pitching arm.

Yankee pitching is such a mess that Gil Patterson comes up from Syracuse to take Hunter’s spot in the rotation on April 18. In his first start, he loses 8-3, on a wild pitch and hit batter. His disaster is worsened by two errors and a passed ball by Munson. After four innings and three runs, Patterson is replaced by a skinny Louisiana lefthander named Ron Guidry, who fares worse: five runs in four innings. The Bronx fans cheer for former Yankee Otto Velez, who is the hitting star for the Blue Jays. At the game’s end, Gabe Paul suffers a cerebral spasm and has to be taken to Lenox Hill Hospital.

On April 20, Billy Martin summons Reggie to his office and has the slugger pick the Yankee starting lineup out of a hat, and the Yankees belt 14 hits in a 7-5 victory over Toronto. Next day, the Yankees use the same lineup, and bash 13 hits to down the Blue Jays, 8-6. Don Gullett earns his first win of the season, but looks shaky. Martin uses the same lineup blast 13 hits, and pound Toronto, 8-6, next day. The lineup works again in Cleveland, 9-3. The lineup-out-of-the hat wins six straight games. After that, the Yankees struggle again.

The Yankees trade irritated pitcher Dock Ellis to Oakland for capable innings-eater Mike Torrez. Sparky Lyle marries Mary Massey on May 2.

Meanwhile, Reggie, feeling alone and unwanted, even by old A’s teammates Hunter and Holtzman, goes to see Gabe Paul, who has recovered from his cerebral spasm. Reggie wants to be traded, claiming that George agreed that if Jackson disliked being a Yankee, he could be traded.

Paul denies such a clause exists, and tells Reggie: “Don’t look at the hole in the doughnut. Look at the doughnut as a whole.”

Jackson is baffled. He says, “I guess I’m just an overpaid, mediocre ballplayer like everybody says I am.”

Billy tells reporters just that, saying, “Reggie’s not a team player.”

To add to the chaos, Steinbrenner tells Munson, “You better get along with Reggie or Billy will be in a lot of trouble.”

Munson, through his biographer Appel, writes later, “Imagine that! I was suddenly put in the middle and made responsible for Billy’s job!”

Disaster continues to reign. On May 16, an injury-riddled Yankees face the Oakland Athletics at their Coliseum, on Billy’s 49th birthday. Hunter has a sore arm, Randolph has a battered knee, Munson just fouled a ball of his foot the day before, and was also hit by two foul tips. It’s Family Night at the Oakland Coliseum, and 32,409 fans come out for the action and to boo Reggie Jackson.

Ken Holtzman starts the game against the A’s, whose only survivor of the 1970s dynasty playing today (and left, besides Vida Blue) is center fielder Billy North.

North demonstrates that he has not lost his desire or speed, by walking in the first inning, and attempting a steal. Backup catcher Fran Healy fires the ball into center field and North winds up on third. A’s designated hitter Manny Sanguillen singles in North. Mitchell Paige, the team’s rising star, singles Sanguillen to second. Dick Allen singles, and Sanguillen scores, putting runners on first and second with nobody out. Jim Tyrone gets a ground out that puts runners on first and third.

Earl Williams singles to right, scoring Paige, and Jackson boots the ball, putting Tyrone on third. Wayne Gross hits a tapper to first, and Chris Chambliss mishandles it, enabling Tyrone to score, Williams to reach second, and Gross to reach first.

With the Athletics up 4-0, Billy has seen enough. He dismisses Holtzman and summons Dick Tidrow to stanch the wounds. Tidrow fails to do so: He gives up a single to center, and the A’s lead, 5-0. He serves up a home run to Gross in the third, to make it 5-2, A’s.

A’s starter Doc Medich struggles against his former team, and departs in the fourth in favor of rookie reliever Bob Lacey, who gets the win with 3.2 innings of shutout relief. The A’s pile on Tidrow and his replacement, Lyle, for an 8-4 win.

Disgusted, Martin gives Rivers the last three innings off, as the center fielder seems uninterested in playing properly. Reggie strikes out three times. The Red Sox and Orioles both win, and the Yankees drop into third place. It's a miserable birthday for the Yankee manager.

Next day, things go better as Ron Guidry and Sparky Lyle take care of the A's, 5-2, in a bizarre 15-inning game. The Yankees go up 2-0 in the first on four hits, but the A's come back in the bottom of the ninth for two runs on solo shots by Sanguillen and Allen. Lyle then pitches the next six innings, and the Yankees get three more runs on a series of walks, bunts, and singles. The reliever holds the A's off in the bottom of the 15th, earns the win, and drops to his knees on the mound when he does so. He begins to crawl toward his teammates.

"How do you feel?" Berra asks the pitcher.

"The same as when I went in," Lyle answers, followed by an expletive for "awful."

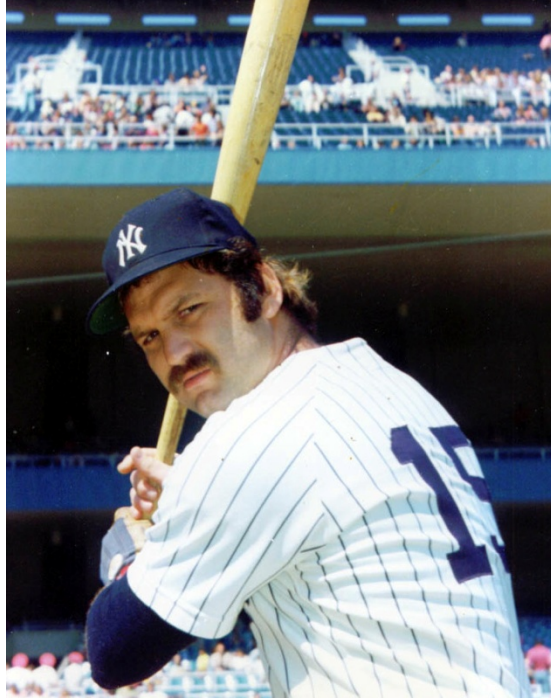
The critical issue of **Sport** magazine and the critical issue in the magazine explode on May 23, just before the Yankees play the Red Sox at Yankee Stadium. The magazine is delivered to the Yankee clubhouse, and among the first readers is Munson, who shows the article to backup catcher Fran Healy, an erudite character who makes up in wit and a graduate degree in American Studies what he lacks in baseball ability. Healy will go on to become a first-rate broadcaster, but today he is a second-string catcher and a friend to both players.

Healy, who has spent the night at Reggie's apartment to avoid a three-hour drive home to Massachusetts after last night's game, enters the clubhouse to find Munson jabbing his battered fingers at the magazine. Thurman points out all the places where Jackson has trashed the Yankee captain.

"Gee, Thurm," Healy says at last, "Maybe it was taken out of context."

Munson has a quick retort. "For four pages?"

"I just go out every day and play," Munson tells teammate Ron Blomberg, who spends the season the disabled list, "I helped the Yankees win the pennant. What's so bad about that?"



Thurman Munson, refusing to smile even for the publicity shot. His gruff demeanor endeared him to millions of equally gruff New Yorkers who saw him as a working-class ballplayer.

Credit: Society for American Baseball Research.

When Reggie emerges for batting practice an hour later, all the other Yankees standing by the cage clear out, and leave him alone.

That evening, Jackson bats sixth. He doubles in a run in his first at-bat against the colorful Bill Lee, back from a separated shoulder. But the Sox lead, 2-1, in the bottom of the seventh, when Reggie comes up, and blasts a sinker deep to right to tie the game at 2-2.

Jackson watches the ball fly into the seats, and then trots briskly around the bases. The Yankees all emerge from the dugout steps to congratulate their slugger on a vital game-tying home run. Jackson steps on the plate, ignores the proffered hands, and jogs directly to the water cooler beyond them on the first base side of the dugout, a massive public breach of baseball etiquette. He commits this before 30,000 fans (a season high) and a vast crowd of media. He explains later in his book, “**Becoming Mr. October,**” that his reaction was because his teammates regarded him as an outcast, so he will ignore them.

Jackson worsens the situation in the eighth inning, when he overruns a bloop Butch Hobson single down the right field line, turning it into a double. The Boston runner scores. In the ninth, Reggie is up with two out. He can tie the game with a single swing. Instead he flies out. The Red Sox win, Reggie is the reason, and his behavior only inflames his role in the defeat.

After the game, the media swarm on the three major parties involved – Jackson, Munson, and Martin, to get their analysis of the psychodrama. Jackson tells reporters he had a “bad hand.” He then assails the **Post**’s Henry Hecht for that newspaper’s gossip page printing his New York address that day. Munson reacts by calling Jackson “a liar.” Munson further asks why George Steinbrenner hasn’t bought him a Corniche.

Munson also offers a more pointed quote: “For a man to think that Thurman Munson is jealous of anybody in the world, he has to be ignorant or an imbecile. I’ve got three of the cutest kids and a lovely wife and everything I need. I could go home tomorrow, and I don’t need material things to make me jealous of someone.” He adds that he has done more than anybody to make Reggie feel welcome.

Munson is right on his counts: thanks to his real estate investments back home in Ohio, he has provided well for his beloved family at a time when ballplayers did not receive astronomical salaries. He has overcome a dysfunctional youth – he still endures the perpetual dislike of his truck-driving father – and been embraced by his in-laws, and is now head of a loving family, whom he visits on every possible off-day, reading bedtime stories to his toddlers, and even writing them poetry. To stay closer to his family, he is learning how to fly his own jet plane.

Martin says he hasn’t read the article but suggests the reporters ask Jackson if he remembers the ball that got away from him in the eighth.

The following day is one for Yankee staff meetings, emotional responses, and media recriminations, which peak when Jackson comes to bat in the evening’s game, receiving jeers. Reggie goes hitless. Munson drives in the winning run in the seventh. The **Times**’ Dave Anderson describes Munson’s RBI hit as follows: “That’s leadership.”

Before the game, Jackson tries to apologize to Munson. The proud catcher refuses to hear it and walks away. Two Yankees, Carlos May and Mickey Rivers, move their lockers away from Reggie’s.

After the game, Reggie ignores the first press questions hurled at him, and then answers the rest in Spanish. Fran Healy tries again to be peacemaker, suggesting to Munson that Jackson's comments to **Sport** were off the record.

"So what?" Munson retorts. "He still said them, didn't he?"

On May 25, the Yankee leadership, Steinbrenner and General Manager Gabe Paul, discuss the mess the team is in, with Steinbrenner raising the possibility of firing Martin. Supposedly, Paul talks Steinbrenner out of it.

Jackson enters the clubhouse with venerated baseball writer Roger Kahn to find a fresh uniform presented by a clubbie, but the pants are not on the hanger. Instead, there's a piece of tape, with an anonymous three-word note telling Jackson to commit a form of sodomy. Reggie shows the tape to Kahn, and says, "This is what I have to put up with."

Jackson asks the nearby Willie Randolph, sitting on a stool, "What time do we hit?"

Randolph ignores the question, staring straight ahead, leaning on his chin. Normally, Randolph gets along with Jackson, but he is also loyal to his captain and the reigning MVP.

Jackson asks the question three or four more times. Randolph stares straight ahead, giving no indication that he has heard the question.

Reggie doesn't know what to do. "Did you ever see anything like this. Thank God I'm a Christian. This stuff doesn't bother me." Then he asks Kahn, "Do you think I ought to call a team meeting to apologize to these guys?"

"Why not, it can't hurt," says the astonished Kahn.

"Do you think I ought to do it right now?" Reggie asks.

"Yeah, get it over with."

Jackson steps toward Martin's office and says, "You know, I don't have to do this. I'm going to make \$1.3 million this year."

Reggie makes the request for the meeting. Martin refuses. Martin says Jackson should do it man-to-man, one at a time.

Steinbrenner says he believes that Jackson has shown "a lot of class and humility" in asking for the meeting. But George agrees with Billy – it would certainly be easier for Reggie to apologize en masse, but "I didn't want to have a meeting. I

explained my reasons to him, that everybody understands what he's going through and his emotions, and everyone respects him. I told him if you want to say anything on a man-to-man basis, do it, but you don't have to have a meeting to do it."

Jackson does so, going from locker to locker. Pitchers who were in the bullpen are slightly astonished – one says, "I wasn't there."

But Munson and many other players listen to Jackson, and say nothing.

One voice is heard from: White Sox Manager Bob Lemon, himself a relaxed character before and after heavy drinking, who observes, "I can't wait to pick up the paper every morning to see what's happening. It's like '**Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman.**'"

The following day, a mountain-climber from Queens named George Willig tackles one of the toughest heights in the world...he climbs the northeast corner of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, starting at 6:30 a.m. The police deploy a team in a cleaner's bucket to convince Willig to abandon the ascent, fearing that it's a suicide attempt. However, Willig has spent a year preparing for this climb and is fully-equipped. It takes Willig 3½ hours to climb the building. When Willig gets to the 110th story, the cops help Willig enter the building and arrest him. Willig says later he could hear the cheers on the street from the amazed public. He signs his name on a piece of the observation deck, which remains there until the buildings fall on September 11, 2001.

City officials, irritated at yet another stunt that embarrasses the city, order that he be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and hit with a \$250,000 fine. But Mayor Beame, aware of the positive publicity side of this feat, orders the fine cut to one cent per floor: a grand total of \$1.10.



George Willig on his way to the top, accompanied by the New York Police Department.



Willig near his moment of triumph...



...Quickly followed by arrest and 15 minutes of fame.

On the 27th, Reggie smashes a home run and the Yankees beat the White Sox, 8-6, with 15 hits, but Jackson focuses on a ball he didn't catch. "I should have caught the ball," he says, of a Richie Zisk line drive to right center that was a legitimate double. More importantly, Catfish Hunter comes out in the second, the earliest he has left a game since 1970.

On May 29, Reggie strikes out three times in a Yankee 5-2 victory over the White Sox. Chris Chambliss belts a home run with Munson on base in the sixth to ice the game. Jackson emerges from the dugout to take his place on deck as both cross the plate. Reggie extends his hand to Chambliss and the courtly son of a US Navy chaplain slaps it. Reggie keeps his hand out for Munson, following Chambliss in obedience to baseball etiquette, and the catcher ignores it.

Asked later, Reggie tells reporters, "I don't think he saw it."

"I saw it," Munson answers. The handshake issue now gains more media intensity (in the days before the Internet) than President Jimmy Carter's Mid-East diplomacy.

Jackson responds: "I'm just trying to be a good Christian."

But on May 30, the Yankees go to Fenway Park, where Reggie Jackson's home run ties the score at 1-1 in the top of the second. When Reggie returns to the dugout, Thurman waits with the group to shake Jackson's hand, and Reggie accepts the handshakes. The Yankees win, 5-4.

The Yankees also make key moves: they dispense with the services of aging designated hitter Jimmy Wynn and acquire a fresher one, Cliff Johnson, from Houston. They increasingly entrust the game ball to an overlooked skinny kid from Louisiana named Ron Guidry, and he delivers. The Yankees head for Boston in the middle of June in first place.

On Saturday, June 18, the Yankees play the Red Sox again in Fenway Park, on NBC's "Game of the Week," before 34,603 Red Sox fans and a national audience. The Sox are in first place, the Yankees in second, separated by one game in the loss column.

Before the game, a gloomy Yankee shortstop Bucky Dent sits in the dugout. He is in a funk over having missed a bunt the night before on an early-inning squeeze play and Reggie, riding a 13-game hitting streak, sits next to Dent to show the shortstop some support.

Billy Martin comes over and says to Dent, "Forget the busted squeeze." Dent nods. Martin looks at Jackson. "I thought I made a good call. What do you think?"

Jackson is not diplomatic. "If you really want my opinion, I think he feels that when you make him bunt that early in the game you take the bat out of his hand." Billy walks off annoyed at being second-guessed by a player he dislikes in the first place.

The Red Sox gain a 3-2 lead in the bottom of the first on a three-run Carl Yastrzemski home run to center field, add three more in the fourth on home runs by Bernie Carbo and George Scott. Reggie Jackson hits a double and a single and scores a run. The score stands at 7-4 in the bottom of the sixth. Mike Torrez is still pitching, despite giving up 12 hits and seven earned runs.

It is the 13th hit that causes chaos. With one out and Fred Lynn on first, Red Sox designated hitter Jim Rice checks his swing on an outside fastball and bloop a base hit to short right field. Reggie, in right, moves in on the ball slowly, and Rice alertly turns the single into a double. There is no question that Rice had a sure base hit...but great question that Jackson could have held Rice to a single.

Billy Martin is enraged by Reggie's lack of hustle on the play. He's not the only one. Ron Guidry, sitting in the dugout, writes later that "The problem wasn't the hit. It was Reggie's reaction to it. He dogged it. He leisurely moseyed over to it as if he was strolling across the front lawn to pick up the morning paper." Guidry, a young man in his first full season, regards Jackson's failure to run as "sheer laziness. Lack of

effort. It straight up disrespected the 24 other guys who were busting their asses, scratching and clawing, to win every ball game.”

Martin strides angrily to the mound to summon his ace closer, Sparky Lyle, to relieve Torrez. The idea of an ace closer coming on to pitch in the sixth inning when the team is behind is a baseball strategy that has disappeared, of course.

In the Yankee broadcast booth, Frank Messer, a veteran sportscaster who is aware of the rule, “death before dead air,” fills the broadcasting void by saying, “The Boston Red Sox are leading 7-4, and Sparky Lyle will be coming in. Sparky is tied for the American League lead in saves with 13. Before the game, Billy was saying...”

At that moment, Phil Rizzuto, also in the booth, cuts in, saying, “I’m sorry, Frank, but I think Billy’s calling Paul Blair to replace Jackson, and Jackson doesn’t know it yet. We’re liable to see a little display of temper here...it’s Reggie’s own fault really. On that ball he did not hustle.” Rizzuto, a walking exemplar of Yankee history and tradition, can only recall one other occasion for a defensive substitution in the middle of an inning – Casey Stengel sending in Cliff Mapes to replace Joe DiMaggio. The Yankee Clipper refused to leave the field. And Rizzuto recalls that event for radio listeners.

As Martin and Munson stand on the mound, awaiting Lyle, Martin says to Munson, “I’m going to pull that son of a bitch for not hustling.”

Munson nods in agreement. Torrez, a teammate of Reggie from Baltimore in 1976, says, “Billy, don’t do it.”

Martin gives a terse order to backup outfielder Paul Blair, who is equipped with fine defensive skills, a nickname of “Motormouth” for his wit, and an eroding bat due to injuries and age, to “go to right.” Blair grabs his mitt and jogs out to right, where Reggie is leaning against the Yankee bullpen fence, killing time by idly chatting with Fran Healy. Healy tells Jackson that Blair is jogging towards them.

Reggie turns around and points at his own chest, saying, “You coming in for me?”

“Yeah,” Blair says, adding one of his standard quips, “I’m coming in for you, darling.” Blair often calls people “darling.”

“What the hell is going on?” Reggie asks.

“Motormouth” turns laconic. “You got to ask Billy that.” Later Blair says that he was relieved to be in the outfield, so that he would not have to directly deal with what happened next.

Jaw set, Jackson runs toward the dugout with a purposeful stride, followed by the eyes of Boston fans and NBC cameras. Martin awaits his player, coiling with fury.

What happens next has many variations, like “**Rashomon.**” However, the version in Bill Pennington’s biography of Billy Martin and Jackson’s own “**Becoming Mr. October**” seem the best sources on the incident, as they represent the two opposing sides of this historic battle.

Jackson strides to the dugout, removing his glasses from the heat and force of habit. Martin, regarding that as a sign that Jackson wants to fight, awaits Reggie on the top step of the dugout. Jackson is confused and humiliated.

“What did I do?” Reggie asks, palms skyward.

“You showed me up by not hustling so I’m going to show your ass up,” Billy yells.

“What the (obscenity) are you talking about?” Reggie retorts.

“You know what I’m talking about. You loafed after that ball. Anybody who doesn’t hustle isn’t going to play for me.”

“You’re not a man,” Reggie snarls.

“I ought to kick your ass,” Billy snarls back.

“Who do you think you’re talking to, old man?” Reggie yells. “You showed me up on national TV!”

National TV is indeed watching this...NBC’s Game of the Week cameras are now focusing on the Yankee dugout and not on Sparky Lyle’s warmup tosses, nor going to a commercial break. Yankee batboy Ray Negrón tosses a towel over the dugout TV camera, but it’s pointless and too late...the argument is being taken by the centerfield camera, on maximum zoom.

“They’re going to confront each other right there in the dugout,” NBC’s Joe Garagiola, veteran of many a baseball fight – even once with Jackie Robinson in 1947 – tells America.

In the radio booth, Phil Rizzuto recognizes his old teammate’s behavior. “Oh, Billy’s really hot now. Watch out,” he says.

Billy charges at Reggie, and finds Yogi Berra, another old teammate, between him and the right fielder. Elston Howard, another old Billy teammate and now coach, comes up behind Reggie. Berra and Howard, despite their age, start pulling and pushing manager and right fielder apart. Oddly enough, neither coach has much love for Jackson. Howard, in particular, when asked where Jackson would stand among the great Yankee outfielders of the 50s and 60s, will say, "Fifth outfielder." Yogi will repeat that quip often.

Watching all this silently on the dugout bench is Guidry. He sees the two coaches in action, and notes quietly that the arguing and fighting he is witnessing in the dugout he has seen in his clubhouses past and present, Yankee and minor league, and has a thought...Yankees do not conduct themselves that way in public. That epiphany will help define his classy career.

The 52-year-old Berra grabs Martin by the belt and crotch, with vise-like hands. Howard, equally powerful, pulls Reggie back.

As the brawlers are pulled back, Mike Torrez, off the mound, yells at Reggie in Spanish to head for the clubhouse and cool off. Teammate Jimmy Wynn (not traded yet) pushes Reggie down the ramp and into the locker room. Jackson screams as he goes out, "You never liked me!"

The entire fight has taken 12 seconds, but the whole nation has seen it and is utterly stunned. It makes the final score secondary, or even tertiary. It is a scene that holds American baseball fans in rapt attention: one of the greatest managers in baseball history battling his own superstar right fielder in the dugout.



Billy vs. Reggie: Bill Madden and Moss Klein rated this bout a “draw” in their book, “Damned Yankees.”

But after Jackson departs, the Yankees in the dugout resume their places and continue the game, as if nothing had happened at all, a testament to their professionalism and their team’s heritage. The players stare straight ahead and watch Lyle dispose of Yastrzemski with a ground ball and Fred Lynn with a fly out. The Red Sox go on to win, 10-4, but nobody notices.

Watching the NBC telecast at his horse farm in Ocala, Florida, is Steinbrenner himself, who explodes on the phone to his General Manager, Gabe Paul. George roars: “We’ve been embarrassed on national TV. Billy’s out of control. I want you to set up a meeting, straighten them both out and get this under control. I can’t have this!” Steinbrenner then makes arrangements to fly to Detroit, the Yankees’ next destination, to speak to Martin in person.

Meanwhile, in the Yankee clubhouse, Jackson sends a clubhouse boy to the bench to summon Lou Piniella, who is not playing. He goes into the clubhouse and finds Jackson standing in t-shirt and uniform pants.

Watching the spectacle is Bucky Dent, pulled from the game for other reasons. He realizes his problems are smaller than those of others, and calls his wife to tell her not to come to the airport – he’s not jumping the team.

Reggie tells Piniella that he has kept his spikes on so that he'll have good footing during the fistfight he plans to have with Billy after the game is over.

Piniella, displaying the savvy that will make him a successful manager, tells Reggie to get a beer, shower, and go back to the hotel. "You can't have a fight with the manager. That's no good for you, no good for Billy or for the ball club," Piniella says.

Reggie reminds Piniella that Martin has humiliated him on national TV.

By now, Jackson's pal, Fran Healy, arrives in the clubhouse, and he joins Piniella in urging Reggie to leave the ballpark. Faced with that, Reggie yields to logic and common sense...he dresses and Red Sox vice president Gene Kirby leads Jackson to an exit in center field on Lansdowne Street. Jackson walks to the Boston Sheraton a few blocks away.

Once there, Reggie takes a call from another Jackson – civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson, then 35. The activist tells the slugger, "Reggie, the difference between popping the ball up and popping it out of the park is an eyelash of concentration. You need to drop some of your distractions and focus on the ball."

After Chris Chambliss flies out to center field off of Bill Campbell to end the 10-4 loss and the on-field trauma, Billy sits behind the visiting manager's desk, likely aware that in 1952, Casey Stengel himself sat behind that very same desk, defending Martin for getting into an on-field fight with Red Sox outfielder Jimmy Piersall.

Now Billy says, "You can't let any player think he's bigger than the team and his teammates deserve maximum effort. When a player shows up the team, I show up the player."

The reporters, pencils poised, fire away. "Did you think twice about pulling Reggie in a close game?" One asks.

"We won last year without him, didn't we?" Billy retorts.

"Did you consider a more conventional means of discipline?" asks another reporter.

"How do you fine a superstar, take away his Rolls-Royce?" is Billy's answer.

"Was the incident bad for baseball since the game was on national television?"

"What's television got to do with the game? Did that help us win? I don't care if it went out to the whole world," Martin says.

The reporters then seek out the opinions of Jackson's teammates. Roy White uses a phrase from his upbringing in Compton in Los Angeles: "My name is Wes. I'm not in this mess."

To get the other side of this debate takes reporters several hours. Reggie finally admits a few favorites to his suite at the Sheraton, where he shares a bottle of white wine with Torrez. A blonde is in the shower. Jackson walks around the suite shirtless, gold chains dangling from his neck, and holding a Bible. Entering the suite are Steve Jacobson of **Newsday**, Phil Pepe of the **Daily News**, Henry Hecht of the **Post**, and Paul Montgomery of the **Times**. Jackson regards Jacobson as being on his side, Pepe on Martin's side, Hecht as just interested in a story, and Montgomery as a reporter who doesn't care about either side. Perhaps it's because Montgomery has covered greater horrors: revolutions in Latin America and the killing of students before the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.

Torrez is there mostly to act as a chaperone, but Reggie is stoic now, having chatted with Rev. Jackson and read some Scripture. "Thank God I'm a Christian," Jackson says. "Christ got my mind right. I won't fight the man. I'll do whatever they tell me."

But his emotions break through. "It makes me cry, the way they treat me on this team. I'm a good ballplayer and a good Christian and I've got an IQ of 160, but I'm a (unpleasant word for a black man) and I won't be subservient. The Yankee pinstripes are Ruth and Gehrig and DiMaggio and Mantle. They've never had a (same word) like me before."

One exception: Steinbrenner. "I love that man. He treats me like somebody. The rest of them treat me like dirt." Jackson drops to his knees and starts talking about "how everybody was coming after him and how nobody understood him," Pepe says later.

"I'm going to play the best that I can for the rest of the year, help this team win, then get my ass out of here," Reggie finishes, sliding into tears. Torrez rises and tells the writers, "I think you'd better leave."

One reporter finds Billy in his usual place – a bar. Moss Klein of the **Star-Ledger**, a Billy favorite, meets up with Martin at Daisy Buchanan's, one of Boston's top watering holes, and interviews the manager. It isn't a good one. All Billy says, over and over again, is: "They're going to say this was my fault."

Yankee PR head Mickey Morabito takes Billy back to the hotel.

The following morning, Paul summons the two combatants to breakfast. A hung-over Martin insists he pulled Reggie for loafing. Jackson insists he did not loaf on the ball. Reggie's defenses only infuriate Billy, who leaps up and yells: "What my eyes tell me and what you say are two different things! You're a liar! Get up, boy, I'm gonna kick your ass right here!"

Jackson, stunned by this threat and phrase, whirls on Paul, and says, "You're a Jew, Gabe. How do you think I should feel after being called that name?"

Paul sternly tells Martin to sit down. He and Jackson are aware that Billy is a more than a child of the 30s and 40s – he has had a history of spouting anti-Semitic and racist comments, sometimes directed at his players, including Elliott Maddox, who has three strikes against him in Billy's narrowly-defined world: Maddox is a college-educated black man who converted to Judaism.

Now, Martin says, "Boy' is just an expression."

"Just everyone calm down here," Paul sighs. He tells them that he will report everything to Steinbrenner for the larger meeting in Detroit. Paul urges Reggie to work to get along with Billy. Reggie asks to be traded. Paul refuses.

Meanwhile, Steinbrenner tells UPI sportswriter Milton Richman that the purpose of the trip to Detroit is to axe Billy Martin in favor of Yogi Berra or Dick Howser. Richman's story goes nationwide, of course.

A haggard Martin and grim Jackson make their way to Fenway Park for the third game of the series, and an irritated Ed Figueroa takes the mound for the Yankees against Ferguson Jenkins. Figueroa is gone in the fifth inning, having given up six runs, all earned, five walks, and seven hits, including a three-run home run to light-hitting Denny Doyle, who has not smacked a dinger since 1975. Rice, Yaz, and George Scott all hit solo home runs in the bottom of the eighth off of Dick Tidrow to add injury to injury. Reggie, despite hitting three hard line drives, goes 0-for-4 to snap a 14-game hitting streak. The Yankees lose, 11-1.

In the series, the Yankees yield 30 runs, 44 hits, and 16 home runs, a record at the time for a three-game series. The Sox now lead the Yankees by two-and-a-half games. Neither Jackson nor Martin has much to say about the debacle, but Figueroa does, noting that the Yankees don't seem to care about winning or losing. "If you lose three games in Boston, you should be quiet. Now they're going to Detroit and drink and play cards on the plane. In Detroit they will drink and play cards again," he says.

Next morning, Phil Rizzuto takes Billy for a round of golf, but Martin is distracted the whole time, and not by his old teammate's wit. Every third hole, Billy asks Rizzuto to call the hotel and see if he's been fired.

Meanwhile, Reggie breakfasts with Fran Healy at the Pontchartrain Hotel in Detroit, and the backup catcher, son of a major league catcher, and American Studies degree holder points out to Jackson that the two have to work together to keep Steinbrenner from firing Billy. One, the season will be lost, and secondly, such a firing will make Jackson a perpetual villain to Yankee fans. Reggie agrees.

When Steinbrenner arrives at Detroit's Pontchartrain Hotel that afternoon, Jackson meets him in the lobby, to rehearse Healy's points. Reggie cannot be seen to be running the club. Gabe Paul, in private, repeats the same argument to Steinbrenner, adding that the new manager would have no authority at all.

Steinbrenner, for once, listens to his "baseball people." He agrees to keep Martin in his job if he and Reggie call a truce. When Billy arrives at the hotel, Healy explains what has happened, and a shaken Martin realizes he has to call Steinbrenner.

At 5 p.m., with a game set for that night on ABC's Monday Night Baseball (with Howard Cosell), the three Yankee leaders meet in Steinbrenner's suite. The principal owner orders his manager to be civil to Jackson at all times. Then he has Martin and Jackson go to the ballpark together, Billy driving the rental car, in a show of unity, arriving at the ancient Tiger Stadium, with their arms around each other's shoulders. "We are allies," Jackson tells awaiting reporters.

Inside a ballpark that – like Fenway Park – was opened the week **RMS Titanic** was sunk, 47,855 seats are jammed with fans eager to see colorful Tiger starter Mark "The Bird" Fidrych face the Yankees. Many more are eager to see Howard Cosell trash the Yankees in particular and baseball in general on Monday Night Baseball.

Steinbrenner sends his team president, Gabe Paul, up to the broadcast booth to face Cosell's nasal interview, and Paul has climb the stairs, as the elevator is out of order. Paul has suffered a mild stroke in the spring, and he arrives red-faced and exhausted. He tells Cosell and other reporters that Billy will remain manager.

When Martin faces the media, he tells them in a trembling voice and gray face that "I've taken a lot. Yes, it's the Yankees. I couldn't let the New York fans down. They depend on me to pull the team through. I've got an obligation." He adds that he is not made at Reggie.

“A manager can’t let personal feelings enter into it. I wonder how Truman felt when he dropped that bomb? Nothing is easy if you lead. Either you’re a leader or a follower,” Martin adds.

After that, Steinbrenner and Paul meet with the team in private, and tell them that they don’t want to hear anything more about race. “Do you know how close your manager came to being fired?” Steinbrenner says. “Everybody in every city is trying to pull us apart. If you guys are pulling against each other, we don’t have a chance to win.”

With that, Martin takes his lineup cards out to home plate for the game, and the Tiger fans, who remember Billy managing an aging Detroit team to the 1972 American League playoffs, give him a standing ovation. He doffs his cap to the crowd. “That must have really burned George’s ass,” Martin says later.

More burning to Steinbrenner is the game’s result. Yankee starter Don Gullett is tough, but so is Fidrych. The score is tied at 1-1 in the seventh when the Tigers get a leadoff walk and Mickey Stanley hits a line drive to right. Reggie reaches up with the glove for the ball and ducks away at the last moment, having lost the ball in what the Tigers say are the brightest lights in the American League. The ball races by Reggie’s right shoulder, for a double, putting runners on second and third. Aurelio Rodriguez then singles home the winning run.

Jackson is devastated by yet another defensive miscue and goes straight to the clubhouse after the inning. Yankee pitcher Dick Tidrow and Billy himself follow to console the shocked slugger. “He felt so bad,” Martin says. “We told him not to fault himself,” Billy tells reporters.

Jackson adds, with some insight, “If it had to happen to somebody, I’m glad it happened to me. People expect it of me.”

Meanwhile, Steinbrenner takes Munson aside and tells the catcher he is shirking his duties as captain. Munson replies: “I thought Jackson was the captain.”

“You’re the captain,” Steinbrenner barks. “When I want Jackson to be my captain, I’ll tell him, and you too. You’re the captain. Now be the captain.”

With all that done, Fran Healy convinces Munson and Jackson to join him at a late supper, to clear the air. Over one of the courses, Munson snarls at Jackson, “Tell me one thing you have that I’d want. I have three beautiful children and a lovely wife. What do you have? You have nothing.”

Jackson has no answer.

The Yankees lose the next game, 5-2, but break the five-game losing streak, and go home for a rematch with the Red Sox on June 24. The Sox have won seven in a row and 13 of 14, with a five-game lead over the Yankees, scoring 30 home runs in their last nine games.

On this night, Catfish Hunter takes the mound, and the Sox blast three homers in the first four innings. But Hunter bears down into the ninth, when Yastrzemski and Butch Hobson get two more. The score is 5-3 in the bottom of the ninth, as the Yankees face Sox relief ace Bill Campbell. Mickey Rivers and Jackson both ground out, but Willie Randolph extends the inning with a line drive to left center that sails behind Yaz's frantic grab. Randolph ends up on third. Roy White belts the next pitch for a home run.

Needless to say, the oddity of Jackson batting behind Rivers requires explanation and controversy. The Yankees, worried about his inability to find the ball in Detroit's lights, ordered an eye exam. The following day, Billy takes Reggie's name out of the batting order, claiming before the biggest game of the year that Jackson's eyes are still dilated. An irritated Paul and Steinbrenner send the club doctor down to the clubhouse to see if this is still the case. It is not. Paul tells Billy explicitly that Reggie is available. Jackson thus pinch-hits for Bucky Dent in the ninth, putting him behind Rivers.

With the score tied at 5-5, Reggie stays in the game in right, Fred Stanley goes to short, and Campbell comes out in the 11th, having pitched since the sixth, something not seen any more.

In the 11th, Ramon Hernandez comes on to pitch for the Red Sox. He walks Graig Nettles and balks Nettles to second. Sox manager Don Zimmer orders an intentional walk to Mickey Rivers, to put the double play in order. Jackson erases that move as a possible chapter for any book by Zimmer on baseball strategy by pounding a ball down the right field line for a game-winning single.

As Jackson reaches first, numerous Yankees race onto the field to congratulate him on the victory over the hated rivals. Facing the press, Reggie keeps his quotes low-key.

The following day, Mike Torrez takes the mound for the Yankees, and scatters seven hits and allows one run in a 5-1 complete game over the Sox. Mickey Rivers

opens the Yankee offense in the first with a leadoff home run off of Luis Tiant. Graig Nettles smashes a three-run homer in the fourth to put the game away. Torrez gets 15 outs on ground balls, two of them sparkling plays by Nettles.



Mike Torrez at work, in Yankee uniform. His departure from The Bronx to Boston was likely a debacle for both teams. (Credit: Getty Images)

The finale on June 26 is a nail-biter between the Sox' Reggie Cleveland and the Yankees' Don Gullett, before 55,039 vocal fans, the largest regular-season crowd yet at the new Yankee Stadium. Boston loads the bases against Gullett in the first and only scores one run. The Yankees promptly tie the score on a Chris Chambliss single in their half of the first.

In the bottom of the third, Munson and Chambliss drive in two runs, and Jackson's double chases Cleveland. The score remains at 3-1 until the bottom of the seventh, when Munson drives in another run, making it 4-1. But the Yankee lead and Don Gullett both collapse in the top of the ninth and two out, when the Yankee pitcher gives up a two-run single to Tommy Helms and his successor, Tidrow, a run-scoring groundout to Rick Burleson. Sparky Lyle comes on to get that third out with a Fred Lynn fly ball to center.

With the score tied at 4-4 in the bottom of the ninth, Bill Campbell comes on for the Sox, and he induces Mickey Rivers to ground out. Then he disintegrates, issuing a walk to Roy White, and a single to Munson, putting White on third. To put the double play in order, Zimmer orders an intentional walk to Chambliss, which

again proves a failure when Paul Blair bounces a game-winning single over third base, and the Yankees win, 5-4.

With the Yankees having swept the Sox and earned some measure of revenge for the previous disaster in Boston, the Bronx Bombers keep going through their bizarre season.

On June 30th, the Yankees go to Toronto's Exhibition Stadium to face the Blue Jays and the ballpark seagulls, who usually line up in formation in deep left field and beyond to mooch for snacks and fly balls.

Catfish Hunter faces Jerry Garvin, and the Yankee veteran goes the distance for the win, scattering seven hits and five runs, three earned, with two walks and two strikeouts, going 4-3.

The victory is based on the power of new acquisition Cliff Johnson. In the fourth inning, he belts a home run into the left-center-field stands, putting the Yankees up 1-0.

In the eighth inning, with Jerry Garvin still pitching for the Blue Jays, Cliff Johnson smashes a home run off of reliever Jerry Johnson to lead off the inning. One out later, Lou Piniella belts a homer. Garvin comes out in favor of Jerry Johnson

Graig Nettles singles, followed by a fly out. But Willie Randolph singles, Mickey Rivers single, scoring Nettles, and Thurman Munson homers, scoring three runs. The Yankees now lead, 8-1.

There are two out when Chambliss reaches second on a pop fly that should have been caught, and Cliff Johnson strolls up to the plate. An annoyed Jerry Johnson fires some chin music at Cliff Johnson, knocking the larger man off the plate. Cliff regains his position and poise, waits out three pitches, and hits the fourth 450 feet for his third homer of the game and second of the inning.

"Don't ever knock me down like that," Cliff Johnson tells Jays catcher Alan Ashby as he crosses the plate, "because I like it like that." History does not record Ashby's reaction.

At the All-Star break, the Yankees are in third place in the American League East, behind Boston and Baltimore, in that order. Incredibly, the Chicago White Sox and Cubs are both in first place in their respective divisions.

Bad health is yet another problem in Yankee Stadium. Gullett and Ed Figueroa have arm trouble. Munson, like all catchers, is banged up from endless foul tips,

leaving him with stitches in his right pinkie, massive headaches, and a loose pipe dangling from a batting cage created a hole in his forehead. Adding annoyance to the proud catcher and reigning MVP's psyche is that Carlton Fisk is ahead of him in the All-Star balloting total. And Billy Martin is having trouble supporting two ex-wives and children from both marriages.

On July 11, Yankee beat writers Steve Jacobson and Murray Chass enter the Pikesville Hilton in Baltimore after a game of tennis to find Munson waiting for them. As a "prominent unidentified Yankee," Thurman describes the mess the Yankees are in. The cause, of course, is Steinbrenner. "George doesn't want competition, he wants a slaughter. To win, you need nine good players, plus some capable utility players and a pitching staff. George wants 25 superstars. George doesn't care about anybody's feelings," says the prominent unidentified reigning MVP. "To him, we're not professionals, we're all employees. He treats everybody like that. Everybody on the club has experienced it. He's done the same thing to everybody. He's destroyed Billy. He's made him nothing."

Munson has more: Steinbrenner tells Martin who to play. Nobody on the team is happy except second-year player Willie Randolph. Munson notes that new acquisition Cliff Johnson, a slow-footed journeyman catcher-first baseman, should not be playing regularly. He assails Steinbrenner for having Roy White and Mickey Rivers sitting, and takes another shot at Jackson: Reggie is benched with a groin pull while Munson is playing with seven stitches in his finger.

Munson's purpose in this leak is to strengthen Billy Martin, to defend his manager, since Martin can't issue such a broadside without being fired.

The two reporters report the charges to Steinbrenner for reaction, and he's enraged. "It's a lie," says the boss.

Martin's answer is "George sends a lot of notes and statistics but I don't pay attention to them. The players know George isn't making the lineups – but I think our whole club is changed since we got Reggie, as far as the lineup."

The Orioles then beat the Yankees for the third time in a row, 4-3, behind Mike Flanagan, who goes the route. The Yankees take an early 3-1 lead on Nettles' two home runs, but Yankee starter Mike Torrez gives up two runs in the seventh to tie the game. In the top of the ninth, he issues a leadoff triple to speedy Al Bumbry. Sparky Lyle comes on and makes Rich Dauer line out to second, deflecting the ball with his hand. That deflection forces the relief ace out of the game.

Dick Tidrow and a 9.60 ERA accumulated over his last 10 appearances is next, and he intentionally walks Pat Kelly to set up the double play. This theory fails when Kelly steals second (a rarity by Earl Weaver's Orioles) and Tidrow has to intentionally walk Bronx native Ken Singleton to load the bases, to maintain the double play.

With that, Eddie Murray comes up, with the infield halfway in and the outfield shallow, singles deeply to left, and the Orioles win, 4-3.

An impressed Steinbrenner calls Weaver a "magician" and says that if Baltimore's skipper can keep up these miracles, he should be Manager of the Year. That's a slight to Martin, because if Weaver is Manager of the Year, Martin cannot gain that title.

Defeated, the Yankees fly to Milwaukee, where Martin fumes to the writers: "Number one, managing this team is tough enough without picking up the papers and seeing the manager against the owner, the owner against the players.

"I listen to the owners. I listen to the general manager. I still do my own managing. The day I let an owner or general manager tell me how to manage, I will quit. And that has not happened, he fumes." There is no "Number Two." The Yankees defeat Milwaukee, 5-2. Don Gullett picks up the win, Tidrow redeems himself with a save, and Willie Randolph hits a two-run homer.



Don Gullett. Yes, he actually pitched for the Yankees, but not often, which is probably why he looks embarrassed. Credit: Pinterest

The following evening, July 13, Billy warns the beat reporters that while he cannot bar all of them from the clubhouse and team plane, he will ban “certain writers” if they continue to use “off-the-cuff comments” to destroy his team.

The Yankees send Catfish Hunter to the mound to cope with the Brewers, and he lasts five innings, having given up six runs to Don Money, Sixto Lezcano, and Cecil Cooper. The Yankees make it interesting with two home runs by Mickey Rivers and one by substitute Dell Alston, but lose, 9-8.

After the bloody battle, almost precisely as New York City sinks into the horrors of its blackout, two very prominent Yankee ballplayers, Munson and Lou Piniella, go out for dinner in Milwaukee and discuss the state of the team.

One of the most important issues to the two hitters is Billy’s refusal to bat Reggie fourth in the order, as befitting his stature. After a few drinks, they decide to take the issues to the very top – Steinbrenner himself, who is in Milwaukee, with the team.

“Lou, George likes you,” Munson says. “If you come with me,” he’ll listen. “We can help the ball club. Everyone is pissed off. Let’s go talk to George.”

After midnight, while Bushwick is exploding in looting and arson, the two Yankees tap on their volcanic owner’s Pfister Hotel suite door, and the Principal Owner, in pajamas, invites them in, donning a bathrobe.

Munson tells Steinbrenner to support Martin or fire him: “Nobody can live with the kind of pressure you’re putting on him.” Piniella does the same, pointing out that Billy has to live with certain clauses in his contract.

Over additional drinks – Steinbrenner always insists that his suite have a well-stocked bar – the three Yankees discuss the situation. Steinbrenner rolls in a blackboard, an item he always insists on in his suites. The Principal Owner writes down a possible batting order: Rivers, Randolph, Piniella, and Jackson.

The players say they will support the move if Steinbrenner stays off Billy’s back and talks to Reggie about keeping his mouth shut. Piniella and Munson also volunteer to talk to their manager about the wisdom of batting Reggie fourth, as well.

By now it is 2 a.m., Milwaukee time, and 3 a.m., New York time. In Bushwick, the South Bronx, and even Manhattan’s tony Upper East Side, city residents are

smashing open store windows and carrying off everything from frozen TV dinners to complete stereo systems.

At this time, the manager of the New York Yankees, having returned from his late dinner at a German restaurant, and fueled by bratwurst and brandies, returns to his hotel room adjacent to Steinbrenner's suite. Martin hears familiar voices talking through the thin hotel walls and sprints out of the room, to start banging his fist on George's suite.

Steinbrenner orders his two players to hide in the bathroom, keep quiet, and lets his manager into the suite. "Take your job and shove it," Martin snarls at the owner.

"Billy, just calm down," Steinbrenner says.

"Who's in here, George? Where are they?" Billy screeches.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Billy," George says lamely, but Martin storms over to the bathroom, flings open the door, and sees the players.

Piniella and Munson are two of Martin's favorites, so the seeming betrayal infuriates the paranoid manager even more. "Two traitors," Billy screams.

"Come on, Billy, we're just trying to help," Munson says.

"I don't need any of your help," Billy says, before returning to the suite's sitting area and crumpling into a couch.

Piniella and Munson sit next to their manager, and start talking about the team and why Reggie should bat fourth. Billy insists that he should not be told what to do.

"What's wrong with at least trying Reggie at fourth?" Piniella asks. "We need to do something. We're the best team in baseball and not playing like it."

Nor is Piniella happy about the behavior clauses in Billy's contract. "If we have a lame-duck manager worrying about his future, we're going to have a manager who can't do his job," he says. "Straighten out his contract and remove the clauses. If not, fire him."

After an hour of woozy palaver about that issue and George's tampering, the four Yankees agree that Reggie will bat fourth, George will stop interfering, and Reggie will be told to muzzle his mouth. After handshakes, everyone heads for bed.

Next day, Steinbrenner tells the beat writers that Billy is manager for the year no matter what the team's record. Unfortunately for all concerned, nobody – not even

the reporters – are particularly interested. Back in New York, despite daylight, the impoverished neighborhoods of the city are still aflame from both combustible materials and pent-up fury, as looting and destruction amid the blacked-out city are the order of the day and its lead story.

At County Stadium, shocked Yankee players watch the unfolding disaster on the clubhouse's TV sets. Most of the players live in New Jersey, so they have no immediate worries, but they are shaken nonetheless. The Yankees send Ed Figueroa out to face Jerry Augustine, and Jackson bats sixth in the order.

Nevertheless, Reggie is the star, with two home runs and three RBIs, to ice a 6-3 win.

Another shocked man is Gabe Paul, who is astounded that Steinbrenner let players dictate to him and the manager what the batting order should be.

From there the Yankees go to Kansas City, where the Principal Owner addresses his troops. Sparky Lyle sleeps through the meeting. Figueroa comes in late. Dick Tidrow misses it – he's staying with his family in town – and Roy White picks up his wife at the airport.

However, Steinbrenner does not explode at the sleepers and absentees. He talks about "Yankee pride" and says the team must "make a great comeback or it will be known forever as 'the team that choked.'" After that, he passes out \$300 checks to all the players to have some fun during the All-Star break. But he docks Lyle and Figueroa \$100 each for sleeping and lateness.

After that, the Yankees go out and lose, 7-4 to the Royals. Reggie bats sixth. Next day, the Yankees lose again, 5-1, and Reggie bats fourth.

Unfortunately, Jackson goes 0-for-4, and makes an error in the top of the seventh on a Hal McRae triple that allows a run. A furious Sparky Lyle yells at Jackson: "Get your head out of your ass."

Next day, the Yankees lose again, 8-4, with Jackson batting sixth. He smacks his 16th home run. Enraged by the situation, Billy Martin tosses the reporters from the clubhouse. The cause of his latest rage is that the press has learned that Steinbrenner provided Jackson with \$30,000 to buy a Rolls-Royce Corniche as part of the signing, and Commissioner Bowie Kuhn is investigating this situation as a possible violation of contract ethics. Billy is also angered by Lyle popping off at Reggie, on the principle of teammates lashing out at each other.

With that, the Yankees head home to host the All-Star Game, for the first time since 1960. In all, Yankee Stadium will host four All-Star Games: 1939, 1960, 1977, and 2008, its final season. In 2008, the final living All-Stars from the 1939 game will be a journeyman and a titan of the sport. The journeyman is second baseman Linus “Lonnie” Frey. The titan is Bob Feller.

The 1977 All-Star Game sees the National League All-Stars defeat the American League, 7-5. The token New York Met is John Stearns, who catches an inning. Willie Randolph, on the other hand, plays every inning. Reggie Jackson starts the game, Thurman Munson appears as a pinch-hitter, and Sparky Lyle pitches two innings, and gives up two runs.

One of the most overlooked features of the game is that it marks the only time that Hall-of-Famer Mike Schmidt plays in a game in Yankee Stadium, pinch-running for pinch-hitter Reggie Smith, who has pinch-hit for Tom Seaver, and singled off of Lyle in the top of the eighth inning.

Sitting out the game is Oakland’s token representative, third baseman Wayne Gross, who has been picked by Billy Martin as a reward for his skills, but told he will ride the bench for the duration. Still, he gets to participate in the festivities.

When the season resumes, the Yankees drop two of three at home to the Brewers and rumors swirl again that Martin is on the edge of dismissal in favor of third base coach Dick Howser.

Even Gabe Paul thinks that Martin should go, telling George “If you ask me, Billy is a mirage as a tactician. He’s not resourceful or planned enough. We’re the only club in the American League that doesn’t have pitching charts.”

Steinbrenner asks, “What about the players and how they feel about him?”

“I don’t know or care what the players think of him,” Paul says. “They’re selfish and only out for themselves. I just think Billy is too emotionally unsound and I don’t think we can win with him. If we had made the change in June, it would’ve looked like Reggie is calling the shots and he’d never have recovered from it, but now it’s not so much about Billy and Reggie as it is about the team not performing to its capability.”

Gabe recommends Dick Howser as the replacement on a two-year contract. On July 23, Paul offers the job to Howser. He turns it down. The same day, Martin delivers a “last words” speech to his players, believing he will be fired, and goes to his office, to weep.

Martin's loudest defender is Jackson, calling Billy a "fine man. We don't have to like the guy. You don't have to be his friend or wash his car, but we should stand by him for nine innings a day." Nonetheless, the Yankees pull out a 3-1 victory over Milwaukee.

That night, Martin is unable to sleep and drives to Yankee Stadium, feeling he is driving to his own execution. He sits in his street clothes in his office, sipping coffee and smoking a cigar, telling reporters that he believes Dick Williams will take the job, even though he's running the Montreal Expos. "What all this is doing is making a martyr out of me," Billy says.

Instead, Billy keeps his job. Under the crisis atmosphere, nobody's willing to take the position, not even the newly-retired former Dodger manager, Walter Alston. George makes some other suggestions, most of them utterly unviable, like Steinbrenner's executive assistant, Jack Butterfield, who has never managed a major or minor league team. Gabe and George agree that Billy will keep his job.

When the manager arrives at the ballpark, Gabe goes to the clubhouse and gives Billy his latest reprieve: "You're the manager."

"For the rest of the season?" asks Billy.

"In baseball, things change from day to day, Billy. No promises. Just go out and manage your way," Gabe says.

When Billy takes the lineup card out to home plate for the game against the Royals, the fans give him a standing ovation. Then the Yankees, with Reggie batting sixth, give him a 3-1 victory behind Don Gullett.

On Monday, July 25, Steinbrenner faces the media in his office at his polished wood table, and lays down his seven qualifications for a manager, which the irreverent newspapermen call the "Seven Commandments."

Two of them are "Is he emotionally equipped to lead the men under him?" and "Is he honorable?" Given that Steinbrenner has displayed neither of these talents in his term as Yankee owner, the reporters are amused.

Steinbrenner notes that the Yankee fans, players, and writers support Billy, who is: "the little man and the people can identify with him. But...New York's a pretty sophisticated, astute place, and there comes a time when even the fans wake up."

However, the fans hate Steinbrenner – even **New York** magazine offers an article headlined "George Steinbrenner, Go Home!" by Jeff Greenfield. The author

writes that “Billy Martin was helping the Yankees win titles when Steinbrenner was dreaming of his first leisure suit.”

Pouring rain wipes out the game that evening, but the following day, the first-place Baltimore Orioles come into town for a three-game set, and it is clear to all that Billy must kill two birds with his stones or fly home.

Once again, when Billy brings out the lineup card, 32,097 fans leap to their feet in support of the battered manager.

The Orioles send Ross “Scuzz” Grimsley to face Ed Figueroa and the Orioles jump off to a quick lead in the first when Elliott Maddox singles and scores. Bronx native Ken Singleton adds a three-run dinger in the third to make it 4-0, but the Yankees claw back when Jackson singles in Chambliss in the fourth and Bucky Dent homers in the bottom of the seventh.

In the bottom of the ninth, the Orioles up 4-2, Roy White leads off the inning with a walk, and Earl Weaver summons Tippy Martinez. He gets Graig Nettles out on a pop fly, and then Cliff Johnson pinch-hits for Dent. He smashes the second pitch he sees into the seats to tie the game.

In the 10th, Reggie seals the win with a 420-foot home run that lands in the 15th row of the bleachers.

Next evening, while Steinbrenner sits in his office an hour before the game, talking with a **Newsweek** reporter, when he hears cheering from the stands. George looks out to see Martin playing pre-game pepper.

“He hasn’t had a bat in his hand on the field in six weeks,” Steinbrenner says, “but after he got an ovation last night, he needs to milk the fans for more. The sad thing is that it means so much to him, and he has no idea how shallow it really is.”

That night, the Orioles take Game 2 of the series, 6-4, with Jim Palmer pitching better than Catfish Hunter. The Orioles set the tone in the top of the first when Billy Smith leads off the game with a home run. Eddie Murray and Lee May also have back-to-back homers, leading off the eighth, chasing Hunter from the box.

40,918 fans come out to see the afternoon matinee finale, and Reggie has to sit it out with a hyper-extended left elbow suffered in a collision with Mickey Rivers.

Mike Torrez faces Rudy May, and the Yankees fall behind early, yielding a run in the first. After that, it is all Yankees, as they pound out 15 hits and 14 runs, including home runs by Thurman Munson, Graig Nettles, and Roy White, battering

the Birds, 14-2. Billy's job is saved – at least for the moment. Munson's home run is his 100th career shot – Steinbrenner sends him a magnum of champagne.

With that, the Yankees go to the West Coast, where they take three straight from the Athletics, lose two of three to the Angels, two more of three to the Mariners, see that rookie pitcher Ron Guidry is emerging as a tough, steady, starter, and Thurman Munson defies Yankee regulations and tradition by growing a beard. Reporters speculate that he is trying to attract any kind of attention from Steinbrenner, to either gain more money or a trade to Cleveland, closer to his family in Canton, Ohio.

After the second Seattle trouncing, Lou Piniella explodes in the clubhouse at his teammates for their continual whining: Mickey Rivers needing advances on his pay, Munson wanting more pay, Ed Figueroa about being skipped in the rotation, Jackson about life in general.

“Okay, all you complainers,” shouts Piniella: “The writers are all here now, so tell them all how unhappy you are. Go on! Get it out all in the open! This is your opportunity. We just got beat 9-2 by a (barnyard epithet) expansion team and nobody seems to care about that!”

The room turns quiet. Some players later regard it as a turning point in the season. The Yankees then win the next game, 7-1, and proceed to win 27 of their next 30.

The speculation ends on August 8, when the Yankees play their Triple-A team in the annual exhibition game in Syracuse, and Munson shaves off the 11-day growth before the farm-hands crunch the regulars, 14-5, averting a showdown with the front office.

The front office is busy, however. While the Yankees won five of nine in their West Coast swing, the Red Sox took all nine of their games against the same teams. The Yankees are six games back in the loss column. The Yankees are five games back with 53 to play. Two key Yankee pitchers, Ed Figueroa and Don Gullett, face appointments with legendary surgeon Dr. Frank Jobe. Steinbrenner and Paul are fuming. “I apologize to the City of New York,” Steinbrenner says.

After the game in Syracuse, Gabe Paul takes Billy aside and drops his standard geniality. “Why don't you cut out the (barnyard epithet) now, right now, and start batting Reggie clean-up?” Paul squawks.

“His strikeouts will mess up my running game,” Martin answers.

“Your running game? That was last year until you came up against Johnny Bench. This year your running game is already messed up. You aren’t playing running baseball. I told you, Martin, cut the (barnyard epithet). I’m too damn old to be (another curse word) around.

Paul has a point: The 1977 Yankees will steal only 93 bases. Six other American League teams will steal more than 100.

Martin realizes he has to backpedal to save his job. He is not dealing with an arrogant amateur like Steinbrenner, but a hardened baseball lifer, who knows the game as well, if not better, than Billy. “As a matter of fact, I been thinking of putting Jackson in clean-up myself. He’s swinging good,” Billy says. Actually Jackson is batting .243.

“I don’t mean for one day,” Paul continues. “I’m talking about the rest of the year.”

“That could work,” Billy says, trying to sound eager. He realizes that his job is truly on the line, and this firing will be his fourth in eight years. The rest of his baseball life will be scouting in the low minors or even high school level, a miserable existence for a man of his experience and pride.

Paul has one more order for Billy: “You’re five games out and you keep platooning Lou Piniella. He’s hitting .330. You need Piniella in your lineup every day.”

“I was thinking the same thing myself,” Billy says, close to tears. “One thing. You gotta help me here. I need Art Fowler to be my pitching coach.”

That’s an easy one for Paul. “You should have asked before. I don’t have a problem hiring your buddy.”

On August 10, Vida Blue takes the mound for the Athletics against Ron Guidry in Yankee Stadium, and Reggie bats fourth, and in the bottom of the first, Jackson lashes a run-scoring single up the middle against his old teammate, bringing home Graig Nettles, and touching off a five-run barrage. Behind Ron Guidry, the Yankees win, 6-3. Reggie will now bat cleanup for the rest of the season. He drives in 49 runs and 13 homers in the last 53 games, 41 of which the Yankees win.

The following night, someone named Pablo Torrealba pitches for Oakland against Mike Torrez, and Torrez fires a two-hit 3-0 shutout at his old A’s teammates. Reggie singles home Willie Randolph in the bottom of the first to start the Yankee scoring.

Having disposed of the woeful Oakland Athletics, the Yankees face the more talented California Angels on August 13 for a doubleheader on a hot, sticky day. The Angels send Ken Brett to the mound to cope with Catfish Hunter, and the Bronx Bombers batter the Angels, 10-1, with Reggie contributing a double, a triple, and three RBIs. Chris Chambliss and Roy White both smash home runs.

Between games, the Yankees hold Old Timer's day, and roll out the oldest living Yankee (at the time), Jack Martin, who was a rookie shortstop for the New York Highlanders in 1912, born in 1887. He tells reporters of watching opponent Ty Cobb storming into the stands to attack the heckler who lacked a hand and fingers. (The event described earlier in this account)

Jackson listens to Martin with fascination. "I know about heckling," Jackson says.

"Let it roll off your back," Martin says. The two Yankees pose together for a picture, and Jackson asks Martin for a signed and personally inscribed photograph. The 1912 Highlander shortstop and New Jersey native (.225, 0 HR, 17 RBIs) signs the photograph and asks who he should make it out to.

"Reggie Jackson," says Reggie.

"Reggie Jackson?" Martin says. "You look like him. I didn't know who you were. Listen, you keep on doing what the hell you're doing now and we'll win it."

Both players are thrilled. Jack Martin will die in 1980, having witnessed two more Yankee World Championships.



Jack Martin in uniform for the Highlanders in 1912.

Credit: Wikipedia

Oldest Yankee Jack Martin dies

BRICK (AP) — Jack Martin, the oldest living former New York Yankee and Philadelphia Phillies baseball player, died Friday at the age of 93.

Martin had suffered a heart attack just after being introduced at the 34th annual Yankee oldtimers' game June 21.

He had another attack July 2 at Montefiore Hospital where he died Friday.

He was born April 19, 1887, in Plainfield. He played shortstop for the Yank-

ees when they were known as the Highlanders in 1912. He moved to the National League where he played for the Boston Braves and then ended his career with the Phillies in 1914.

His career batting average was .237.

On July 25, 1978, Martin was honored by the Brick Township council for being an inspiration to youth.

Martin said he had managed Jim Thorpe when Thorpe played for the Milwaukee Brewers in the American

Association.

Martin had lived in Brick since 1954. His address was Pinecroft Drive.

Paul Larson Sr. of Sea Girt, said of his friend Martin, "He had been very active and only last summer attended an oldtimes' reunion in Richmond, Va."

He said, "Even in the hospital, he was giving out autographed pictures of himself to nurses and doctors."

He often said, "I was a mediocre player, never a star."

The New York Times provides the last word on Jack Martin on July 5, 1980.

In the nightcap, Ed Figueroa faces Hawaiian-born Fred Kuhaulua, whose major league career will consist of eight games: three for the Angels in 1977 and five for the Padres in 1981.

Reggie provides some drama: in the sixth inning, with the score tied at 3-3, by belting a leadoff home run into the upper deck. Next inning, he strikes again with a two-out homer into the right-center field bleachers. The Yankees win, 9-3, their offense aided by two RBIs by third baseman Mickey Klutts – surely one of the most unfortunate names for a baseball player in history – who is in while Graig Nettles recovers from a sprain.

When Jackson hits his second home run, he again enjoys the supportive chant that will define him at Yankee Stadium: "Reggie, Reggie, Reggie."

The Yankees lose the next day, 6-5, in 12 innings, but Jackson shows his complete athleticism by nailing the speedy Bobby Bonds at the plate from right field in the top of the ninth.

With that, the Yankees start playing better. They flatten the Angels 15-3 on August 14. The White Sox arrive on August 15 for two games, with a collection of colorful free swingers.

On the 14th, Elvis Presley dies and Mike Torrez mows down the Sox in a 6-2 complete game.

Required to offer reaction on the icon's death, Yankee players look at it through their various prisms.

Fred Stanley: “For a superstar I heard he had a very poor diet. How can a guy of that status not take care for himself?”

Reggie Jackson: “I remember two things. One time he said, ‘All black people can do for me is shine my shoes and buy my records.’ And once an old woman was admiring his car in Lake Tahoe and he just gave it to her.”

Dick Tidrow: “He had all kinds of money and he still had problems. It sounds like some ball players, doesn’t it?”

Mickey Rivers has the best quote of all: “It goes to show you. I don’t know what, but it goes to show you.”

The August 15th game offers more interest, this time high drama. Behind Ron Guidry, the Yankees are up, 9-4, in the ninth inning, but Gator disintegrates...he gives up a single, a home run, and a single. Martin summons Lyle from the bullpen. He nails Ralph Garr on a pop foul behind the plate. Alan Bannister then doubles, putting men on second and third. Jorge Orta hits a short single, scoring one run. With the score 9-5, Richie Zisk rifles a sure three-run home run that Piniella catches above the top of the fence. Bannister scores from third. Martin pulls Lyle and sends rookie Ken Clay in to restore order, with two out and the Yankees leading, 9-8.

This is the moment White Sox manager Bob Lemon has been waiting for. He pulls right-handed center fielder Chet Lemon and sends up former Yankee and left-hander Oscar Gamble and his massive Afro to hit. He drills a two-run single that puts the Sox on top, 10-9. Clay issues an intentional walk to Spencer and finally ends the horror when Brian Downing pops up to center.

The Yankees come up in the bottom of the ninth with Thurman Munson leading off with a walk. Piniella moves him to second. Chris Chambliss comes to the plate, thinking, “Base hit.” He thinks about the pitcher – who he presumes is lefthander Dave Hamilton, who Chambliss has faced. But it isn’t. It’s Randy Wiles, whose major league career is an incredible 1.1 innings to date.

Unaware that Wiles is pitching, Chambliss, saying later “I face all lefthanders the same way,” simply hits the second strike 40 feet beyond the 340-foot sign in right field. The Yankees have won eight of their last nine. But the Red Sox have won 16 of their last 17.

Drama continues on August 17, as the Yankees fly to Detroit. The Yankees slash 15 hits and down the Tigers, 7-5 in the first game. The centerpiece of this contest is when Sparky Lyle comes on in a 7-4 situation in the ninth, one out, and

runners on second and third. Lyle is having a tough second half (as usual), but induces Jason Thompson to ground out, scoring Ron LeFlore. That brings up the formidable Ben Oglivie. Sparky gets ahead, 0-2, but Oglivie fights back, taking two balls and fouling off three hanging sliders. Sparky rubs his ball, and uncorks on last slider. It stays down. Oglivie thrashes helpless for a game-ending strike three.

On August 18, the Tigers go up 2-0 in the fifth with a two-run homer, but the Yankees get three runs in the seventh to go up, 5-4, and Lyle hurls two scoreless innings to seal the win.

Off to Texas go the Yankees, and Don Gullett to the disabled list. The heavy pitching lifting is carried by Mike Torrez and Ron Guidry, but the hitting carries the pitching. On August 19, Jackson's and Roy White's homers and Torrez's complete game crushes the Rangers, 8-1. Next day, Dick Tidrow and Sparky Lyle hold up Bucky Dent's and Graig Nettles' home runs in a 6-2 win. Ron Guidry fans eight, Lyle gets his 20th save, and Graig Nettles homers to finish the three-game sweep, 2-1.

In Chicago, the winning streak ends at the hands of Francisco Barrios, 5-3, but on the 23rd, Mike Torrez and Graig Nettles pound the Sox, 8-3. Nettles' three-run dinger in wind puts the Yankees one-half game over the Red Sox.

The Yankees come home to entertain the Minnesota Twins, and bash them, 11-1, with four home runs and a complete game from Catfish Hunter. The Yankees are quite rude to the Twins next day, by a 6-4 score and Jackson's 80th RBI.

The Rangers come in next, and two triples, one by Willie Randolph, one by Graig Nettles, overcome a 5-1 deficit, and the Yankees win, 6-5.

In the second game of the series, two Yankee misplays contribute to a Ranger 8-2 victory. Both come in the seventh. Toby Harrah smacks a drive to right that Lou Piniella leaps for on the right field wall. He hits the wall and collapses on the ground. Harrah chases the two runners round the bases and scores to make the game a 7-2 affair. After everyone recovers, Bump Wills belts a line drive to center field, and Mickey Rivers turns the wrong way. Wills, however, turns the right way, and scores on the second pair of back-to-back inside-the-park home runs since 1946. Because of the situation's rarity, Martin is not overly furious about the disaster in his post-game analysis.

The series finale is a better demonstration of baseball skill as Guidry pitches a 1-0 two-hitter against the Rangers, striking out eight men. When he, Lou Piniella, and Mike Torrez return to the clubhouse after the game, they find jeroboams of

champagne in their lockers from George Steinbrenner, to honor their birthdays. The Yankees get their one and only run on a Jackson single. The Yankees have clawed their way to two games in front of the Red Sox.

Next into town is the Yankees' old nemesis, the Kansas City Royals, for a makeup game that was postponed on July 25 due to "wet grounds and a bad weather forecast." The Royals left town in bright sunshine at the time the game would have started. In July, the Yankees were gasping for air. Now they are a juggernaut again.

Their irritated manager, Whitey Herzog, says the Yankee organization is full of (obscenity). I don't mean the secretaries, so don't include them."

To show his fury over the game, and aware that his first-place team is rolling toward its second-straight divisional title, Herzog's lineup puts pitcher Dennis Leonard batting second as designated hitter, pitcher Jim Colborn batting fourth, in right field, and pitcher Andy Hassler, batting fifth, at first base. Yankee public address announcer refuses to give the names of this starting lineup. Instead, Sheppard will write a poem.

Herzog promises to send his regular hitters in as "pinch-hitters" in the first inning: Hal McRae to DH, Al Cowens in right field, and John Mayberry at first base, in that order.

Having made his point, Herzog makes his moves. When Jim Colborn is called back from batting, he tosses away his bat and batting helmet in simulated disgust. "That was part of the act," Herzog says later.

The Royals get a 3-1 until the last of the eighth inning, when Chris Chambliss, sitting out an 0-for-10 slump (Cliff Johnson's on first), is called to pinch-hit with two on and two out in the bottom of the eighth. He promptly rises to the occasion with a three-run homer to put the game away, 5-3, with Sparky Lyle picking up the win in relief of Catfish Hunter.

After the game, Chambliss is laconic about his triumph: "People may tend to look at that (the 1976 pennant-winning) home run as the peak of my career and what I do after that is not important. I don't listen to people who talk like that."

More importantly, though, Steinbrenner calls Martin to congratulate him on the win and Sheppard reads his poem to the media:

"In bush managerial pique,
He submitted a lineup unique

But the tactic confusing
Couldn't keep him from losing
Though the game was a bit of a squeak.”

Home run hero on August 30 is Mickey Rivers, who smashes a solo shot to lead off the 11th inning to win the game against the Seattle Mariners and rescue Sparky Lyle, who blew the save in the eighth inning by giving up three runs to the expansion ballclub.

The following night's walk-off bottom of the ninth home run king is Graig Nettles in a 5-4 comeback, once again rescuing Sparky Lyle.

The Yankees then hit the road: Ron Guidry shuts out the Twins on September 2, by a 4-0 score, holding Rod Carew (on his way to a .388 season) hitless. Backup catcher Cliff Johnson makes Carew's life miserable, too, throwing him out at first in the first as he tries to steal second. (Carew reached on a fielder's choice) Johnson then nails Larry Hise trying to steal second in the second.

Next, day the Yankees are leading 3-2 in the sixth when Lou Piniella smacks a two-run homer to put the Yankees up for good, 5-2. Some 15 minutes later, General Manager Gabe Paul phones the press box from New York to announce that Piniella has been signed for a two-year contract for 1978 and 1979 at a nice price – \$105,000 for next year and \$120,000 for 1979. With eight straight wins, the Yankees have won 20 out of 23.

On September 4, Don Gullett, back from the disabled list, completes the sweep with another 4-0 shutout of the three-hit variety, with all four runs coming on Cliff Johnson's first-inning grand slam. It goes 393 feet into the seats.

But the Yankee lead falls to two-and-a-half games on September 5, when the Bombers drop both ends of a doubleheader to the Indians in Cleveland, 4-3 and 5-4. The Yankees show their lack of stress by shrugging it off. Even Billy Martin does, joking about the “I Hate the Yankees Night” handkerchiefs the Indians gave out.

“Don't people here know that's unsanitary, waving all those germs around?” Martin asks. “One year, they brought a black cat and let it run on the field on a day game that Eddie Lopat was pitching.”

“Did Lopat lose?” a reporter asks.

“Yeah, but we won the pennant just the same. Like always,” Martin retorts.

Meanwhile, the Red Sox show signs of their traditional collapse. George Scott is removed from the game when tells manager Don Zimmer, “I’m not mentally prepared.” The preparation may come from Scott finding out he’s batting seventh.

On September 6, the Yankees get back on track, despite Thurman Munson’s slump and talk of leaving New York, when he breaks the slump with a single that breaks a 2-2 tie in the top of the seventh. Next up is Reggie Jackson, who belts a three-run homer off of Dennis Eckersley. The Yankees win, 8-3.

In Boston, Scott is still not “mentally prepared,” so he sits down again.

The series finale on September 7 sees Cleveland’s \$215,000-per-annum bust, the angry Wayne Garland, face Ron Guidry. Garland is 10-17, Guidry is 12-6.

The two pitchers match each other into the top of the ninth, but the Indians hack out a 3-0 lead early.

In the ninth, Chris Chambliss singles on a bunt to open the inning. Garland makes a wild throw to field the bunt and that sends Chambliss to second. Roy White beats out a dribbler. Randolph belts a single through the infield and scores Chambliss.

Next up is pinch-hitter Dell Alston, whose ground ball puts runners on second and third. They score on a single by Mickey Rivers. The tied game goes into the 10th inning, and both pitchers still on the mound.

Munson singles to lead off the 10th and Jim Kern comes on in relief of Garland. Jackson fights off an inside pitch and blooms a single to left center. The throw hits Munson on the back and rolls into the dugout...he scores the winning run.

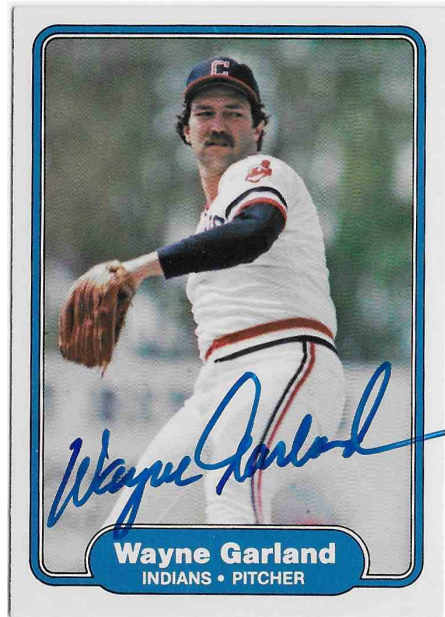
The comeback is memorable to Munson. “You’re playing and losing and doing nothing. You lose the game and your lead could be down to one. And then Boston loses and you come back and win like that. You remember that game,” he says.

Guidry goes out in the 10th and disposes of the Indians on three fly balls and a walk, going the distance, raising his record to 13-6. Garland takes the loss and falls to 10-18. He will lose one more game this season to lead the American League in defeats with 19, but avoid massive boos and embarrassment by winning his last three starts, one of them against the Yankees, thus not going from 20-game winner in 1976 to 20-game loser in 1977.

Unfortunately, his determination will result in massive surgery for his torn rotator cuff, and fury from Cleveland fans for his inability to pitch – despite massive efforts – and his massive contract. Their ire grows when they learn that the grouchy

Garland has purchased a \$775,000 mansion in the exclusive Cleveland suburbs of Gates Mills.

The Garland mansion is a 15-room stone home on 22 acres. It has a tennis court, swimming pool, riding stables, and two smaller homes for maids. His record with the Indians after the surgery over four years is 15-29. Sounds like Cleveland's version of Carl Pavano. Come to think of it, he pitched for them at the end of his career, too....



Two menaces to their teams' pitching staffs and bank accounts:

Wayne Garland and Carl Pavano

The Yankees wrap up their destruction of the Cleveland Indians on September 8, when Mickey Rivers raps his second drag bunt of the season to lead off a rally that sparks a 4-3 victory. The Yankees head home to The Bronx with a 3½ game lead.

On September 9, Mike Torrez fires a 2-0, three-hit shutout at the hapless Toronto Blue Jays, backed by a Cliff Johnson home run. Next day, Jim Clancy gives up three runs and eight hits...but the Yankees surrender 19 runs, including three home runs. Catfish Hunter, followed by a parade of Yankee second-raters, including Kenny Clay, Larry McCall, and Ken Holtzman, are battered before 20, 296 paying sufferers.

Aware that the game is a debacle, Billy Martin pulls his veterans once the game is decided, letting Dave Bergman, Mickey Klutts, Elrod Hendricks, George Zeber,

Carlos May, and Fred Stanley finish up the slaughter. The Yankee lead is now down to two games.

The Bronx Bombers bounce back in the first half of a doubleheader on September 11, behind Dick Tidrow, who goes 10-4, and Sparky Lyle's 23rd save, on Reggie Jackson's 25th home run, a two-run dinger off of loser Jeff Byrd (2-10).

The Jays earn a doubleheader and series split in the nightcap, beating Don Gullett, 6-4.

The Red Sox come to town on September 12, and the Sox face the usual media crowd on the off-day. Yaz, already graying at age 38, admits that he has been watching the scoreboard, and says, "I haven't been able to understand either team. When we were behind, we played like hell. When we got in front we played lousy. It seems both teams have reacted to falling behind. We'll see how long it lasts."

The series opener sees the Sox send rookie Mike Paxton to the mound to cope with Ron Guidry – equally young, but a much better pitcher. The **Boston Globe** calls the games: "The conclusion of some 1,000-page novel, some epic paperback potboiler that has been carried around for an entire summer... Was there ever any doubt where the plot lines were leading?" Total attendance for the three games is 164,852. The first game's attendance is 55,269, a record for the rebuilt Yankee Stadium. Indeed, that season the Yankees will draw 2 million fans, for the first time since the legendary 1949 pennant race with Boston.

Gator mows down the first three Sox batters on 10 pitches, but the Sox gain two runs on two hits, a walk, and a wild pitch. But that's it for Boston. In the fourth, Lou Piniella singles in Chris Chambliss. Mickey Rivers puts the Yankees on top with a two-run homer in the fifth, followed by a Chambliss double to score Jackson. Ordered to stick to his heater in the ninth to avoid hanging a slider, Guidry goes the distance for the 4-2 win. The Yankees now lead 2½ games with 17 to go.

After the game, Reggie meets up with George in P.J. Clarke's and Steinbrenner tells his slugger that he will win the next game with a home run.

In game two on September 14, Reggie Cleveland and Ed Figueroa match zeroes on the scoreboard for eight innings, backed by amazing defense by Butch Hobson (of all people), Mickey Rivers with three catches of 410-foot drives, and Figueroa himself, who spears Fred Lynn's hard hopper to the mound with the bases loaded and nobody out, and fires it home for a 1-2-3 double play, snuffing out the rally.

In the bottom of the ninth, Thurman Munson stands in the on-deck circle to lead off, and reportedly tells Jackson, batting behind him, that he as Sox shortstop Rick Burleson has left a hole up the middle, Munson will hit a single. “Pick me up, Jack,” Munson says.

Thurman promptly singles to center, putting the winning run on first. Amid the usual applause and organ music, Jackson stands in against Cleveland. To his astonishment, third base coach Dick Howser orders Reggie to bunt.

Howser, following Martin’s orders, trots down the third base line and verbally relays the direction to the slugger. “When did you last bunt?” Howser asks.

“1971,” Jackson says.

“What side do you bunt to?” Howser asks.

“Third base, I guess,” Jackson says.

“Watch me every pitch,” Howser responds. A baffled Jackson goes back in the box. Reggie can’t get his bat on the first pitch and it’s ball one. He looks down to Howser and the bunt is now off. Reggie fouls off a fastball for strike one. Jackson looks back down – the bunt is on again – and Cleveland throws another ball in, to make it a 2-1 count. Howser takes off the bunt sign, and Jackson takes a called strike, and Cleveland misses with the next pitch.

With the count full, Cleveland fires a slider so low that most hitters would take it for ball four. Not Reginald Martinez Jackson, Jr. “It should have been ball four,” Cleveland says later. “Low and outside, where I wanted it to be, looking for a ground ball.”

“I crouch at the plate,” Jackson says. “So to me it was the perfect pitch.” He rips the ball 430 feet into the right center field bleachers to win the game, 2-0 for the Yankees.

“I’ve never played in a game that exciting in my life,” Bucky Dent says.

“Steinbrenner sold his pancreas to the devil,” Red Sox pitcher and iconoclast Bill Lee says.

Reggie writes in his memoir, “**Becoming Mr. October**” that Billy apologized for asking him to bunt, and Reggie said, “I understood the situation well.”

Actually, there is some method in Billy’s madness...it’s a no-out situation in a 0-0 game in the ninth inning, with the winning run on third. With the formidable bats

in the Yankee lineup, they have opportunities to score one run from second. Billy also suggests at his reasoning in his book “**Billy Ball**,” written with Phil Pepe years later, on another and more infamous bunting situation with Reggie Jackson the following year, that the purpose of having Jackson bunt is to bring the opposing infielders a few steps, so that the hard-swinging Reggie can rifle a line drive past them for a run-scoring and game-winning single or double.

Nonetheless, batboy Ray Negron and other players push Reggie out of the dugout to give a curtain call to the wildly cheering 54,365 fans. Jackson later says, “I’m not Joe DiMaggio, I’m not Mickey Mantle, I’m not Lou Gehrig. I never will be. The thing that stands out in my mind is that I went for the most money and I got the money and landed here in New York. So I have to perform and I’m glad the people got something back.”

The Sox avoid total disaster and calumny in the series finale, winning 7-3 behind Luis Tiant, but the season is pretty much over...the Yankees add Dave Kingman that day as an additional DH for the stretch.

The Yankees go on the road and take three straight from the Tigers. Don Gullett goes the route in the first game, for a 5-4 win, buoyed by a Paul Blair two-run homer. In game two, the Yankees win, 9-4, with four home runs, one by Munson, one by Kingman, and two by Jackson, Dick Tidrow gaining the win. Ron Guidry and Sparky Lyle take care of business in the finale, 6-5, with home runs by Jackson and Kingman.

Next stop is Boston, where the Yankees fall in the opener, 6-3, as Reggie Cleveland avenges himself upon Ed Figueroa, with help from homer by Yaz and Fisk. Jim Willoughby blows the save for Luis Tiant next night, but the Sox win again, on George Scott’s 33rd home run.

Embarrassed but still in the lead, the Yankees go to Toronto, where Don Gullett and Graig Nettles take care of business, 5-3.

On September 25, the Yankees win their 95th game of the season and make it a three-game lead when Ron Guidry hurls a 15-0, 10-K crusher at Exhibition Stadium. Reggie Jackson smashes a three-run home run, his 31st, in the top of the first and Jays’ starter Jerry Garvin is chased in the second by Cliff Johnson’s 21st home run. Cliff Johnson adds another homer later, as do Piniella and Kingman.

The Yankees complete the sweep in less harsh fashion with a 2-0 shutout behind Figueroa and Lyle, who earns his 200th career save. Unaware of the number,

he throws the ball away. The Yankees send him champagne anyway. The Yankee magic number is five.

By now the interpersonal struggles of the season are fading and overcome by a more unified team storming its way to another division title. Even Munson, one of Reggie's harshest early-season critics, says, off the record, "How could I ever like that (guy) after what he pulled? But we need him to win. We need him to win."

The season trickles down to its conclusion...on the 26th, the Yankees entertain the Cleveland Indians. With the 4-2 win and the save, Sparky Lyle becomes the all-time leader in saves since the statistic was created in 1969.

On the 27th, Lyle blows the save in the seventh when he gives up a run-scoring single to Ron Pruitt. But in the bottom of the ninth, Munson leads off with a single, and is wild-pitched to second. Jim Bibby intentionally walks Jackson, and Lou Piniella ignores the order not to bunt any more, does so anyhow, and puts runners on second and third. Bibby then uncorks a wild pitch and Munson scores the winning run. Final score, 2-1. Magic number: two.

September 28th sees the end of the exhausting pennant race, and the game lacks any drama. Don Gullett earns his 14th win, but the story is the Yankee offense: Reggie opens fire with a grand slam in the first. One out later, Graig Nettles blasts another home run, to make it 5-0. Bucky Dent and Munson add two more home runs, and the final score is 10-0.

The Yankees have clinched the American League East and will face the Kansas City Royals in the ALCS.

After the final game of the season, fans line up outside the bleacher gates on River Avenue, purchasing advance \$1.50 bleacher seats for the American League Championship Series. In his office, Civil War history books and a portrait photograph of Casey Stengel behind him, Martin puffs his pipe, and turns philosophical. "I might have been almost fired three or four times this year. But who cares? We're here now. But we're only one third of the way. Part two is with Kansas City and then part three is the World Series. When you're a Yankee, you're always looking at the big picture," he says. "The Yankees haven't won a World Series since 1962. That's too long."

With that, Martin heads for a favorite bar, the Bottom of the Barrel, in New Jersey, where he says to his friend, Judge Eddie Sapir, "I have to get these guys a World Series Championship. There aren't any excuses left. I've got to win one as a Yankee manager or what's all this been worth? What's it mean?"

Sapir responds: “Ah, come on, Billy, you’ve done much.”

Martin won’t hear it. He repeats himself. “If we don’t win now, then what’s all this worth? What have I been doing? I’ll have failed.”

The two teams that face off in this ALCS are bitter enemies, quite evenly matched. The big difference is that the Royals are a fairly unified team behind Manager Whitey Herzog, the “White Rat.”

The Yankees begin the playoffs with Billy demanding an extension and raise on his three-year, \$300,000 contract. If that is not forthcoming, Billy will seek permission to sign with other clubs. He does so 24 hours before the first game. Martin adds, “If he buys \$50 million worth of players, I’ll beat him with another club and he knows it...I’ll make him cry.”

Predictably, The Boss answers back, “He’s crazy if he tries to take credit for our success. He is just trying to work up public support.” Steinbrenner points out that the season’s turning point was his August 10 order to bat Reggie cleanup.

Game One is on October 4, and 55,000 Yankee fans react to Billy’s outburst by giving him a massive standing ovation during pre-game introductions. Martin lifts his cap and smiles. Yankee players join in the ovation. Despite the cheery mood, red-white-and-blue banners, and snappy October weather, Martin does not look good, appearing shriveled in his uniform.

Yankee starter Don Gullett has trouble getting loose, due to a rotator cuff damaged while fielding a bunt earlier in the season. He does not tell anyone the tightness in his shoulder is back. Everyone figures it out by the second inning, when he gives up four runs on four hits and two walks, including a two-run Hal McRae home run in the first inning

Dick Tidrow comes on in relief in the third and does no better, yielding a two-run homer to John Mayberry. In the clubhouse, Gullett tells trainer Gene Monahan that he isn’t feeling right, and the Yankees fall, 7-2. They score one run on a Munson homer. Reggie is hitless. Catfish Hunter and Gullett are out for the entire ALCS.

On October 5, President Jimmy Carter drives through the blitzed streets of the South Bronx behind the usual motorcade and covered by helicopters, touring the wreckage of a neighborhood atrophied by neglect and shattered by arson. The visit is part of his trip to address the United Nations General Assembly.

Residents appear in front of burned-out and abandoned tenements, yelling at Carter's motorcade, demanding jobs and money. Carter emerges from his limousine at Charlotte Street, a two-block stretch of rubble that finishes in a dead-end, whose buildings have all fallen to arson, walking through wreckage that looks more like the remains of defeated and occupied Berlin or Hamburg in 1945, after the Royal Air Force Bomber Command's Lancasters finished their work, than the economic center of the most powerful and prosperous nation on Earth.

Carter promises to provide affordable housing and economic investment for the neighborhood. It will actually happen...30 years later, Charlotte Street and its immediate neighboring roads in the South Bronx will be an oasis of split-level suburban-style housing, surrounded by brooding old- and new-law tenements.

That evening, Ron Guidry faces one of the Royals' subalterns, Andy Hassler. The Yankees are still not hitting, but Cliff Johnson ties the game in the fifth inning with a solo home run at 11, and Bucky Dent singles in Willie Randolph later that inning to put the Yankees up, 2-1.

But in the sixth inning, Hal McRae barrels into Willie Randolph on a ground ball to second, knocking the ball out of Randolph's hands and sending the skinny Brooklynite flying into the edge of the outfield grass. The play results in a force out at second, but Freddie Patek scores from third to tie the game. The Yankees are infuriated. So is Billy.

After his arguments are rejected, the Yankee offense goes to work, battering three runs in the bottom of the inning to put the game away, with a 6-2 final score.

In the postgame interview, McRae says, "Maybe I'm playing in the wrong era, but there's more of that to come."

Martin has a tough response: "You tell him that the Royals have a second baseman they like, too. His name is Frank White and he'll have to catch a double-play ball at second base on of these games."

Herzog, however, has achieved his goal: He has split the two games in New York and can now head home to Kansas City, his home field and its artificial turf, with his best pitchers, Dennis Leonard, Larry Gura, and Paul Splittorff, lined up, in order.

Sure enough, Game Three is completely one-sided: Leonard dominates the Yankees, going the distance against Mike Torrez, 6-2. The Royals are now one win from the World Series, and fans hold up banners that read "Bye, Bye, Billy."

Torrez is also personally embarrassed. For the first time he has pitched a post-season game close to his home town of Wichita, and his family, including his mother, Mary, siblings, and nephews, are all in attendance. All, wearing Yankee gear, take the usual insults from Royals fans, but his brother John Torrez says, “It is something to see your brother out there playing.”

Mary Torrez, who had her hair done at a beauty shop for the occasion, is philosophical: “How many mothers get to watch their son pitch in the playoffs? I think I was probably more excited than he was.” But they still expect him home after the season to go pheasant hunting.

“Everyone is rooting for us,” Herzog says. “Nobody likes the Yankees.”

Billy fires back, “He ought to keep his mouth shut or somebody will shut it for him.”

Herzog’s answer: “I’m ready when he is. Let me know where.”

Martin, enraged as ever, faces elimination and one of his least favorite pitchers in Game Four, Larry Gura, a former Yankee that Martin had shipped out for showing up in the clubhouse having come straight from playing a tennis match, complete in tennis shorts and shirt. To the ultra-macho Martin, tennis is a game for weaklings.

“I’m so anxious to face Gura I might send a bodyguard to his house tomorrow to make sure he gets to the ballpark safely,” Billy says. “I don’t want him getting in an accident. I need him on the mound for Game Four.”

With their backs against the wall, the Yankees batter Gura for four runs in the first two innings, with Billy mercilessly taunting Gura from the Yankee dugout. The taunting works.

“I don’t know what Gura was doing out there,” Herzog says after the game. “He was throwing all fastballs and sliders. He wins when he uses his change and curve.”

But when Gura fires a breaking pitch, Martin hollers, “Candy ass! You’re afraid to throw us a fastball! We’re going to wait for the fastball, Larry!” The Yankees rip Gura’s replacement, veteran Marty Pattin, for two runs.

But the Royals chase starter Ed Figueroa in the fourth, having scored four runs. Martin makes one of the gutsier decisions of his managerial career, summoning relief ace Sparky Lyle to pitch an incredible five innings of two-hit shutout ball to ice the win and tie up the playoffs.

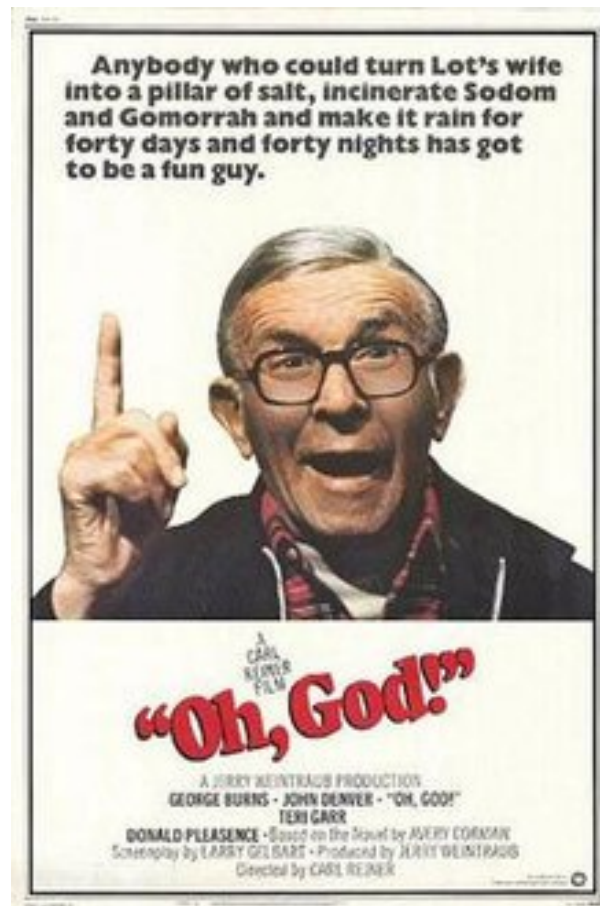
“Why save your closer for some other moment when that could be the do-or-die moment that decides a do-or-die game?” Billy says after the game.

Again, Jackson does not get a hit.

On October 7, 1977, the movie “**Oh, God,**” starring John Denver and George Burns (the latter in the title role) makes its premiere. The film also offers audiences Teri Garr, Donald Pleasance, Ralph Bellamy, William Daniels, Paul Sorvino, Dinah Shore (as herself), Carl Reiner, Jeff Corey, and David Ogden Stiers. The screenplay is written by “**M*A*S*H**” veteran Larry Gelbart.

Denver plays an assistant supermarket manager who is contacted by God to serve as His “messenger” to tell humanity to stop wrecking the world with pollution and wars. The comedy gains critical acclaim, high box office, and a less-successful sequel.

While explaining His philosophy to John Denver/Landers, Burns/God explains his views on miracles thusly: “The last miracle I did was the 1969 Mets. Before that, I think you have to go back to the Red Sea.”



George Burns, as the Almighty, explains it all. He wrote later that he had some difficulty figuring out how to handle the role. Burns asked Orson Welles, “How would you play God?” “Sitting down,” Welles said. Burns also tried Phyllis Diller. “Very motherly,” replied Diller.

Before the final game of the ALCS playoffs, Billy studies his statistics, which are harsh: Reggie has a 1-for-14 postseason, and no RBIs. Worse, Reggie is having defensive problems with Kansas City’s artificial turf.

Billy seeks out George and tells The Boss that he’s thinking about sitting Reggie down for Game Five. Steinbrenner is incredulous. As the two discuss this situation in the hotel lobby, Catfish Hunter walks by. Martin asks Catfish, “Can Reggie hit Paul Splitterff?”

“Not with a paddle,” replies the honest Hunter.

That’s that. George says, “It’s your call as the manager and you’ll get the credit if we win. But if we lose, you get the blame.”

The devoutly religious Martin then goes to a Catholic church four blocks from the hotel and prays in an empty pew for 20 minutes. Then he goes to the ball park, summons Fran Healy, and tells him, “I’m sitting Reggie tonight, and I want you to tell him.”

“I’m not telling him, you tell him. You’re the manager,” Healy says.

“I don’t want to tell him,” Billy retorts.

“Why don’t you have one of the coaches tell him?” Healy asks.

“They don’t want to tell him,” Billy says.

Healy, a quiet, intelligent New Englander that everyone calls “Kissinger” for his ability to make or keep the peace in the volatile clubhouse, accepts the burden.

Reggie, of course, is upset. His first desire is to confront Billy and demand to know why the manager is humiliating him on national TV. Healy gives Reggie the manager’s entire message and convinces him to do two things: first, be ready, because he may be needed at any moment in the game. Second, look like he’s into the game, cheer for his teammates, and don’t sulk.

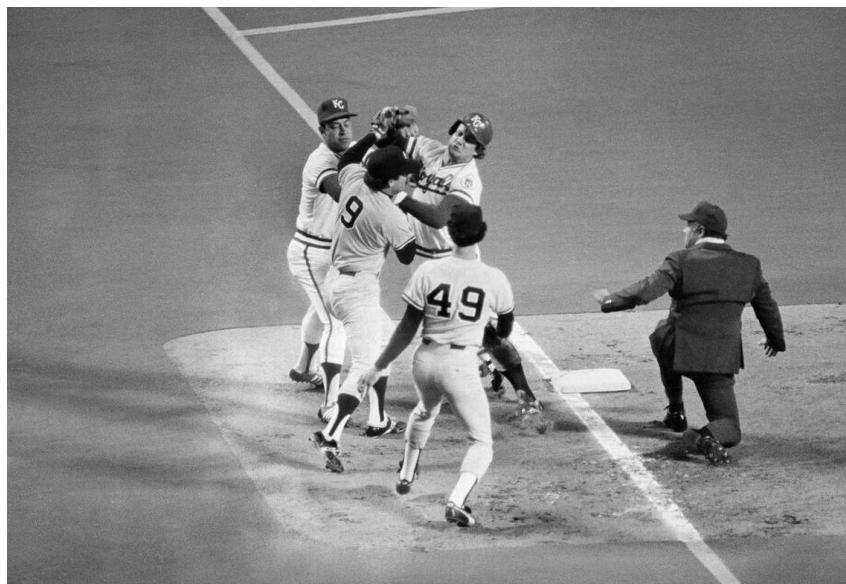
Sulking is what Reggie wants to do, but he understands the concept. Privately, he writes later that he is a “broken man.”

Billy tells the reporters that Reggie will take a seat because he isn't hitting for "spit" and is "butchering balls in the outfield. If I played him and he dropped a ball that cost us the game, I wouldn't forgive myself for the rest of my life. I don't like to do this bastard thing, but if I don't do what's best for the club, I shouldn't be manager."

The move is one of the great controversies of a controversial team. SABR research later suggests that Billy is wrong – Reggie does indeed hit Splitter well, but that year, Reggie has had just two hits in 15 at-bats against the junkballer. Reggie is still hitting poorly and not playing defense well.

Reggie faces ABC's Howard Cosell and his formidable toupee in a pre-game interview and admits what while being disappointed not to start, he accepts that it takes "guts" for Martin to sit him.

The game is a death struggle. In the first inning, Royals third baseman George Brett slides into third spikes high, spikes going into Nettles' cheek, and the two benches clear. Players start tussling each other on nationwide television. For some reason, Billy stands apart, watching the fight, ending up with his arm draped over Royals' shortstop Freddie Patek. Amazingly, nobody is ejected – probably due to the importance of the game and the umpires realizing that the players are under enormous stress.



George Brett vs. Graig Nettles in the first inning of ALCS Game 6. Marty Springstead is the third base umpire. Ron Guidry is behind Nettles (in front of him to the reader).

Yankee starter Ron Guidry does not have his best stuff, and he shows it, having pitched nine innings three days before. The score is 3-1 Royals when Martin summons Mike Torrez to replace him in the third, and there is no further scoring until the eighth inning.

In the top of the eighth, Randolph leads off with a single, and Herzog yanks Splitteroff in favor of his closer, Doug Bird.

“We will always be grateful,” Billy says of Herzog’s burst of over-managing.

Munson strikes out and Piniella rips a single, putting runners on first and third with one out.

This is the moment Billy and Reggie have been waiting for – Martin calls back designated hitter Cliff Johnson and sends Jackson to pinch-hit.

Reggie is convinced that Billy wants to humiliate the slugger more than win the pennant, and later writes that he is “kind of stuck between ‘Should I give it my all? Or should I just say to Martin: Dude, you think I stink? Let me just stand there. Take three strikes and go back to the dugout.’”

But while Reggie is a complicated person, he does not yield in pressure situations. And he is a proud professional. He takes ball one, and fouls off two fastballs. Bird tries to sneak a slow curve by Jackson. He chips the ball into center field for a run-scoring single. The Yankees now trail, 3-2. The single also chases Bird in favor of Steve Mingori.

The Yankees fail to score in the rest of the inning and Mike Torrez becomes exhausted in the eighth, serving up two walks. With two out, Billy brings on the weary Sparky Lyle to get the inning’s final out, and he cuts down Cookie Rojas with a swinging strikeout to end the frame.

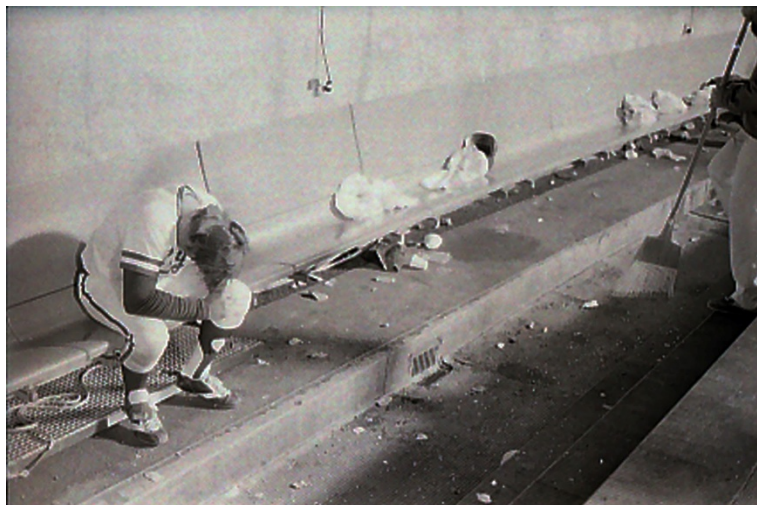
In the top of the ninth, Dennis Leonard comes on for the Royals to ice the win, but Paul Blair opens the frame with a single to center. Roy White pinch-hits for Bucky Dent, walking on eight pitches. Gura comes on, and fares no better...Mickey Rivers singles home the tying run. Herzog now brings in 1976’s legendary failure, Mark Littell, to face Willie Randolph. The Yankee second baseman hits a line-out to center, but White scores from third to put the Yankees up, 4-3.

Munson’s ground out is the second out of the inning, and Lou Piniella seems to end the bloodshed with a grounder to third, but Brett misplays it, allowing Piniella to

reach first and the fifth run to score. The Yankees now lead, 5-3. Reggie ends the inning with a ground out.

Fred Stanley goes out to short for the ninth, and Sparky Lyle comes out to face the Royals. He induces Darrell Porter to hit a pop fly, but yields a single to Frank White. That brings up shortstop Freddie Patek, the shortest man in major league baseball. He grounds to third, which turns into a 5-4-3 double play, to end the inning, the game, and the American League Championship Series. First baseman Chris Chambliss leaps from first base to the mound to join his teammates in celebration. The fans who had been screaming all game long are now dead silent.

While the Yankees rejoice, the photograph of the game is that of Patek, sitting alone in the dugout, head in hands, pants torn from a spiking, clearly in agony. Above him, in the box seats, stand baffled Royal fans, trying to comprehend the sudden nature of the disaster. A **Kansas City Times** columnist writes, “Truth doesn’t prevail. There is no justice.”



Freddie Patek in defeat.

In the Yankee locker room, the usual champagne festivities begin. Someone pours champagne on Steinbrenner, who gasps, “My new suit.”

Martin also pours a bottle on top of Steinbrenner, and says, “That’s for trying to fire me.”

Steinbrenner whips round and says, with a half-grin, “What do you mean, try? If I want to fire you, I will.”

Blair hugs Munson and thanks him for working with him to protect the outside part of the plate. Munson responds, “Yeah, the beachball (Munson) can’t stir the (obscenity) drink, but he can teach you to hit.”

Blair also has some words for the media: “That was the most pressure I ever had on me because Billy gave me a chance and I didn’t want to let him down. That took a lot of guts from Billy to start me and keep me in there. He probably gets fired if I make an out and we lose.”

Jackson abandons his stoicism, when he is asked to explain his key base hit. “I can’t explain it. I can’t explain it because I don’t understand the magnitude of Reggie Jackson.”

Billy then goes to his office and praises Reggie: “He really showed me some kind of class. A lot of other people would go off and sulk but he was just terrific about it. A real man.”

Jackson enters Billy’s office with a magnum of champagne in his hand. “Want some?” the slugger asks.

“I will if you will,” Billy says. The two adversaries sit on a couch in Martin’s office and toast each other. “I love you, big guy. You did great tonight.” The flashbulbs pop to celebrate this new alliance.

With that, the Yankees depart Kansas City and head home to New York to face the National League Champion Los Angeles Dodgers, who have just won a classic playoff with the Philadelphia Phillies, breaking that team’s and city’s spirit amid a critical inning in one game and pouring rain in the next one. Billy takes time to call Dodger Manager Tommy Lasorda, an old rival and great friend from the 1950s, a fellow baseball lifer.

Reggie sits alone in silence. Martin sits further up, listening to country music on his new Sony Walkman and pondering the irony of a manager who has won his second straight American League Pennant fighting for his job. Steinbrenner is in first row of coach, in a new suit, the players snoozing on their wives’ shoulders.

The Yankee charter plane lands at Newark International Airport in the predawn darkness of October 10. More than 5,000 loyal Yankee fans have awakened early or spent the night at the terminal to greet the DC-8. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey summons and receives 20 uniformed reinforcements from the Newark Police Department, but when the plane taxis to a halt at 4:19 a.m., the fans, many of them drunk, break through the police sawhorses to hail their heroes.

“Can you believe this?” Steinbrenner gasps.

“We believe it,” a fan answers. “But keep Billy, George.”

Fans start changing, “We want Billy, we want Billy.”

Next off the plane is Billy Martin, who revels in the cheering, even though he loses his shoulder bag and a chain around his neck to fans. Reggie peers out of the plane and hides back in. He is able to reach the team bus, despite spilling a drink on himself, relatively unharmed. The bus, bedecked in Yankee logo, is also covered in Yankee fans, and the roof nearly buckles. The police force the drunks off the bus and convey them to holding cells to face hangovers and arraignment, in that order.

At Yankee Stadium, another overflow crowd has already started lining up for World Series tickets.

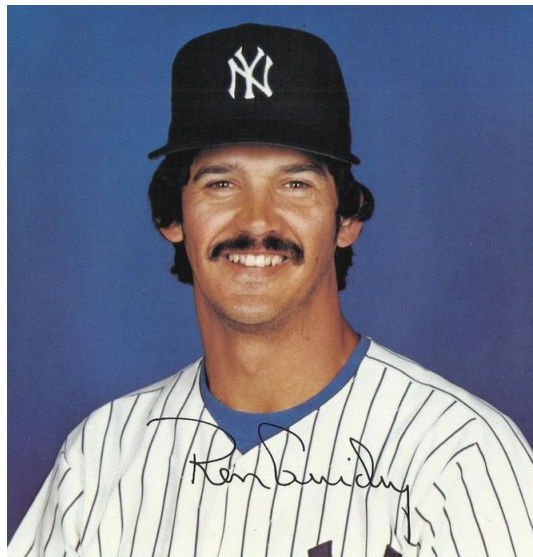


The 1977 World Series logo.

The 1977 World Series is a renewal of an ancient baseball rivalry that dates back to 1941, when Joe McCarthy’s Yankees defeated Leo Durocher’s Brooklyn Dodgers in five games that were punctuated by Mickey Owen’s legendary dropped third strike. The Yankee starter in that game was a young Louisiana pitcher named Atley Donald, who went on to become a Yankee scout. In that role, he found and signed another young Louisiana pitcher named Ron Guidry



Atley Donald, as a Yankee pitcher. In 1939, he set a record with 12 straight wins by a rookie pitcher. Lifetime, Donald was 65-33, in a career shortened by injuries, entirely with the Yankees. Nonetheless, the Louisiana native pitched the Yankees to two pennants and the 1941 World Series triumph.



The pitcher Atley Donald scouted and signed: fellow Louisianan Ron Guidry. In 1978, his first full season, Guidry broke Donald's record for consecutive wins by a rookie with 13. Today, with his plaque on the Monument Park Wall and his uniform number retired, Guidry is still one of the most popular and beloved Yankees – always greeted with a standing ovation at Old Timer's Day.

The last time these two teams have faced off in World Series play is 1963, when Sandy Koufax disposed of the mighty Yankees with 15 strikeouts in the first game, setting the tone for a pitching-dominated four-game sweep.

The two new versions of these combatants are different from previous ones – the Dodgers are now seen as a neat, classy, friendly, easy-going, well-heeled organization, defined by their clean-cut first baseman, Steve Garvey, and colorfully comic manager, Tommy Lasorda, who makes no secret of his Hollywood friends and connections, the image of Los Angeles. In comparison, the Yankees, defined by internal strife and blatant hatreds and violence, are representatives of a dysfunctional and dying city. It is no secret that the Academy Award-winning movie of the year, “**Annie Hall**,” makes that same statement about New York and Los Angeles.

Before Game One, the Yankees display both class and dysfunctionality when they invite Joe DiMaggio to throw out the first pitch. However, the Yankee official, Assistant Ticket Manager Jerry Waring, assigned to ensure that the press gate tickets for DiMaggio and his entourage fails in his duties – he is believed to have fallen asleep on a couch due to exhaustion with them in his suit pocket.

When the Greatest Living Baseball Player arrives at the press gate to pick up his tickets and various passes for himself and his entourage, the hapless low-level functionary at the gate cannot find them. DiMaggio does not wait for explanations. He wheels, steps back into his limousine, and heads downtown, enraged at the lack of respect being displayed by the only team he ever played for.

When Steinbrenner discovers that the Yankee Clipper has been unintentionally humiliated, he phones DiMaggio at Joltin’ Joe’s hotel. As The Boss identifies himself to The Clipper, DiMaggio hangs up. Steinbrenner learns one valuable lesson from this unintended nightmare: there are some Yankees greater than him.

George also faces another major catastrophe: he has no one to throw out the first pitch of the entire World Series. He asks Commissioner Kuhn if New York Governor Hugh Carey will do. Impossible, retorts the Commissioner. No political figures, save the President, can throw out the first pitch of a World Series game. It would smack too much of a political endorsement.

Luckily for Steinbrenner, he finds a handy alternative – Whitey Ford is in the ballpark, with his entourage, and is available to perform the duty, after Pearl Bailey renders the National Anthem.

With that done, Don Gullett, energized from a cortisone shot, takes the mound against future Hall of Famer Don Sutton, whose Dodger credentials date back to the 1966 World Series and being a rotation mate of Koufax and Don Drysdale.

Gullett gets in trouble quickly, giving up a walk, a triple, a walk, and a sacrifice fly to give the Dodgers a 2-0 lead in the first inning. In the bottom of the first, Munson, Jackson, and Chambliss hit three singles in a row, which makes the game 2-1.

After that, both pitchers are on their game until the sixth, when Willie Randolph bashes a home run to tie the game. In the eighth, Munson doubles in Randolph to tie give the Yankees a 3-2 lead.

In the top of the ninth, Billy puts Paul Blair in right for Jackson, for better defense. But Gullett comes unglued, with a single, a fly out, and a walk. With runners on first and second, Billy summons Sparky Lyle to save the game, to the tune of “Land of Hope and Glory.” (Or “Pomp and Circumstance,” as it is known in America)

Facing pinch-hitter Lee Lacy, Lyle gives up a single that scores the tying run, blowing the save. The game trundles on into the 10th, 11th, and 12th innings, still tied.

In the bottom of the 12th, future Yankee Rick Rhoden comes on in relief for the Dodgers, facing Willie Randolph. He promptly doubles to left. Rhoden intentionally walks Munson to set up the double play. Paul Blair comes to bat in Reggie’s spot – not an auspicious moment for a player on the team primarily for his defense.

Nonetheless, “Motormouth” Blair rips a single to left that scores the speedy Randolph from second, and the Yankees win the game, 4-3, and take a 1-0 lead in the World Series.

Next day, Billy starts Catfish Hunter for the first time in a month, and Steinbrenner comes up with an intriguing way to annoy Kuhn. While driving in his limousine through Manhattan, Steinbrenner spots four-year-old Jose Fernandez and his father walking along, the boy wearing a Yankee cap. The Boss rolls down the window and offers the youth (and his family) the opportunity throw out the first pitch of the second game, representing the young baseball fans of New York. It’s a deal. It’s probably a good thing the family was along.

Catfish Hunter and his opponent, Burt “Happy” Hooton, so-called for his sad demeanor, prepare for their start on a chilly night. From the start, it is clear that

Hunter is in trouble. He serves up a two-run home run to Ron Cey in the first, a solo shot to Steve Yeager in the second, departs after a two-run shot to Reggie Smith in the third, and the Dodgers lead, 5-0. Hunter is suffering from a shoulder strain and other ailments that will worsen in 1978 and bring his career to an early end.

While Dick Tidrow comes in to eat up the innings – Garvey blasts another home run in the ninth of Sparky Lyle to make it a 6-1 final score – a fire breaks out at Public School 3, an abandoned elementary school on nearby West 153rd Street in The Bronx. The blaze is seen by the cameras on the massive Goodyear Blimp, circling majestically over Yankee Stadium, prompting Howard Cosell to announce with typical grandiosity, “There you see, ladies and gentlemen...The Bronx is burning.”

Not quite. Among the responding firefighters is arson investigator Fire Marshal Arthur Hassett, who took up his duties on August 20, 1977. While new to arson investigation, he is a veteran firefighter, one of 56 marshals appointed in the wake of the destruction of Bushwick during the blackout.

While the Yankees disintegrate on the diamond this evening, Hassett races over to the school to find “one of the largest fires” he has ever seen. Fortunately, the building is both abandoned and empty. Unfortunately, the sheer size of the fire and the structure makes it a five-alarm blaze, and Hassett cannot begin his investigation.

While he waits, he goes over to a nearby firehouse for a break and watches the game on television. Probably to his amusement, he watches Cosell announce that the fire is “under control” at the third alarm. Cosell is not much of a baseball commentator, having had a long dislike of (and ignorance about) the sport. He’s clearly not a good police/fire reporter, either.

Hassett will spend two weeks investigating this fire. He later tells an interviewer that he and his partner, Jack Bowens, are sure from the start that it was done by three teenage boys with square five-gallon cans, based on information from local teenage girls. But they never arrest the suspects.

The fire in The Bronx public school is echoed figuratively in the Yankee stands during the game, as fans become annoyed at the Yankee defeat and its tedious nature. They toss rolls of toilet paper on the field, hurl whiskey bottles, and then firecrackers, which spew forth smoke. Other fans, fueled by alcohol, race onto the field, pursued by not-too-effective private security guards and better-trained New York Police officers. In the upper deck, more drunken fans pour beer on box seat fans. In future years, the Yankees will cut off beer sales after the seventh inning to prevent such rowdiness. Decades later, the private security guards in the stands will be replaced by

real New York Police Officers, who will display more skill at controlling crowds. (The author of this work can testify to that.)

The violence escalates – a security guard asks fans to lower a banner that obstructs the view of those behind it. The banner fans assault the security guard. Another fan pulls down his pants and moons the fans while hanging from the scoreboard. Another fan hurls a hard rubber ball that hits Dodger right fielder Reggie Smith in the head with a hard rubber ball. He needs immediate medical attention and has to leave New York in a neck brace.

The boorish fan behavior finds unusual counterparts in the Yankee clubhouse after the game when Reggie Jackson, hitless on the night and three for 22 in the post-season asks how Billy could have pitched an ailing Catfish Hunter in a World Series game. Hunter, ever the calm professional, simply says, “I’d rather pitch than ride the pine any time.”

Reggie is also convinced that he will be benched in Game Three, against the tough lefthander Tommy John. “I’m not swinging well and you know what happens then,” Reggie says, referring to his one hit in six World Series at-bats.

Predictably, Billy is furious. “Reggie has enough trouble playing right field. Why should I pay attention to him? His teammates don’t. He was told in Kansas City, the day of the last playoff game, he would be playing in every game of the World Series, but if he’s going to say things to hurt the ballclub and if he doesn’t hit (Tommy) John (the Dodgers’ game three starter), I may have to think about making a change.”

Martin adds, “I’m not taking Reggie out. Reggie’s in there. Splittorff isn’t pitching for them.”

Back go the reporters to Reggie, who says, “I don’t need to take that from anybody, especially him. I know what I can do. If he did, we might be a lot better off.”

The Yankee fury continues when the team leaves in its DC-8 from Newark for Los Angeles next morning. In the age before the Internet, the 24-hour news-cycle, and Twitter, Martin does not learn of the remarks until the afternoon, when the Yankees are working out at Dodger Stadium.

The off-day in a post-season series is nominally to provide teams with time to travel and work out, but the main purpose seems to be primarily to provide the media with opportunities to interview players and secondarily give them something to write about besides balls and strikes.

Inevitably, the New York media jumps on this story. The **Post**'s back-page headline is "Yanks are ready to explode – off the field."

Billy rages at the reporters: "Why do we have to have all this kind of talk – now when we're trying to win the World Series?" The manager flings his cap on the visiting manager's desk. "I told Reggie after the Kansas City series that he would play every game in the World Series. Where's his memory? What happened to that 180 IQ?"

As far as Reggie second-guessing Martin about pitching Hunter in Game Two, seen at a strategic ploy to rest Guidry and the battered pitching staff, Martin snickers. "Reggie is having enough trouble playing right field. I don't think he has time to manage the team, too. He should leave that to me."

Meanwhile, Reggie takes a taxi to Dodger Stadium. The cabbie asks Reggie if he is a Dodger or a Yankee. Presumably, the taxi driver is not familiar with baseball players on sight. Reggie identifies himself as a Yankee.

"I hope you win for Billy," says the cabbie. Jackson laughs and shakes his head.

"Everywhere I go," he says.

Another voice is heard from, of course, Thurman Munson, about the latest Reggie-Billy spat. Munson dismisses the latest spat. "It's just an overheated argument," he says. "Reggie's been struggling and he'd like to be doing better. Billy just doesn't realize that Reggie is Mr. October."

It's a casual remark, but decades later, Reggie will trademark it and it will be engraved on his Hall of Fame plaque.

During the pre-game workout, the two antagonists ignore each other. After that, the media grills both sides. "I'm done with that," Billy says.

Instead, the next complaint comes from Lou Piniella, who is upset that the Yankee family members have been given seats in Dodger Stadium's upper deck. Billy takes advantage of this opportunity to yell out of his office, "Say something crazy, Lou. Take the heat off Reggie and me."

Sparky Lyle reacts to the outburst of rhetoric with typical color, saying, "So what else is new?"

From there, Billy and Gretchen Martin head for dinner with Frank Sinatra and Tommy Lasorda, while son Billy Joe and the other Yankee kids stay in the team hotel, enjoying the run of the place, its room service, and swimming pool. Even so, Billy Joe

fails in his one task that evening, pushing through the crowds of dignitaries, Hollywood figures, reporters, and hangers-on in the Los Angeles Hilton to get Billy and Gretchen to Frank's car.

Game Three is held under Dodger Stadium's lights, and Tommy John and his surgically repaired arm face Mike Torrez, before 55,992 Dodger fans.

Before the game, Gabe Paul tells reporters that he does not mind the controversy surrounding his team. "Controversial ballplayers are many times better ballplayers they are not afraid of the consequences... What I do mind is a miser who's going to worry about what's going to happen. We have fellows who don't worry about what happens," he says.

Reggie, sounding like he's reading something written by a PR man, says, while eating a Popsicle, "In the emotion of wanting to win the World Series maybe I said something I shouldn't have said that was taken the wrong way. I have no desire to comment on anything Billy Martin does in handling the ball club because he has won the pennant two years in a row, and I'm pleased to be a member of this club. I've had a good year because of the way he's handled me."

The Yankees have endured enough insults from their old rivals and the media, and Munson, Jackson, and Piniella rip back-to-back-to-back base hits in the top of the first to put the Bombers up, 3-0. In the third, Torrez gives up a three-run homer to Dusty Baker, but that's all for Los Angeles.

"I was really upset because I hung a slider. When I came back to the bench, I told Billy, 'They're not going to get another run the rest of the game,'" Torrez says later. "I was really upset, because I knew I was throwing good. They did not get any runs the rest of the game. I shut them down."

Rivers breaks the tie in the top of the fourth with a run-scoring ground out, and Chris Chambliss singles home Jackson in the fifth. Torrez goes the distance for a 5-3 win.

Game Four is a day game, and Ron Guidry, now fully rested and prepared, takes on Doug Rau. Jackson leads off in the top of the second against Rau and doubles. Piniella singles Jackson home, and the Yankees lead, 1-0. Chambliss doubles, putting Yankees on second and third, and bringing Lasorda out to the mound to dispense with Rau's services for the duration of the afternoon.

The interchange between pitcher and manager is caught on microphone by ABC, and while less than historic, is interesting for the dynamic between a fiery manager and a competitive pitcher:

Rau: I feel good, Tommy.

Lasorda: I don't give a (expletive) you feel good – there's (expletive) hits up there.

Rau: They're all (expletive) hits the opposite way.

Lasorda: I don't give a (expletive).

Rau: I got a left-handed hitter (Nettles coming up). I can strike this (expletive) out.

Lasorda: I don't give a (expletive), Dougie.

Rau: I think you're wrong.

Lasorda: I may be wrong, but that's my (expletive) job. I –

Rau: (Cutting Lasorda off) I ain't (expletive) hurting.

Lasorda: I'll make the (expletive) decisions here. Okay?

Rau: You let three runs get up on the (expletive) board yesterday.

Lasorda: I don't give a (expletive).

Rau: Hey, Tommy –

Lasorda: DON'T GIVE ME ANY(expletive)! I'll make the (expletive) decisions. Keep your (expletive) mouth shut, I told ya.

Rau: If I didn't feel good, I wouldn't say anything.

Lasorda: I don't give a (expletive), Doug. I'm the (expletive) manager of the (expletive) team. I got to make the (expletive) decision, and I'll make them to the (expletive) best of my ability.

At this point, relief pitcher Rick Rhoden is announced and comes from the bullpen via golf cart and jaunty organ tune. While 55,900 fans and a national TV audience await Rhoden, Lasorda and Rau continue their discussion on baseball strategy.

Lasorda: It may be the wrong (expletive) decision, but I'll make it. Don't worry about it. I'll make the (expletive) decision. I gave you a (expletive) chance to walk out of here. I can't (expletive) around – we're down two games to one. If it was yesterday, that's a different (expletive) story.

Rau: There's a left-handed hitter coming up, what about that? (Rau is referring to the fact that Rhoden is a right-handed pitcher.)

Lasorda: I DON'T GIVE A (expletive). You got three, three left-handed hitters, and they all got (expletive) hits on ya. Whoever that is, Jackson and that (expletive) other guy. They all bat, they all hit, that guy that just hit the ball, (Chambliss) was a left-hander, wasn't he?

Rau: I jammed him. You know, the inside part of the plate –

Lasorda: I don't give a (expletive) if you jammed him or not, he didn't get out. I can't let you out there in a (expletive) game like this. I got a (expletive) job to do. What's the matter with you?

At this point, Rau sees Rhoden arrive (if not the logic of the situation) and departs.

Rhoden takes over, and issues a run-scoring ground out to Graig Nettles and a run-scoring single to Bucky Dent. The Yankees now lead, 3-0. While Guidry issues a two-run homer to Davey Lopes, Rhoden also yields a solo home run to Reggie Jackson, and Gator fires seven strikeouts to notch a relatively easy 4-2 victory. The Yankees are now one game away from winning the World Series.

Doubtless Lasorda's discussion and decision do not make it into his particular **"Inside Winning Baseball Strategy"** book.

The fifth game is another matinee, and is another rematch between two Dons, Gullett and Sutton. This time, Gullett displays the form that will shorten his career and Sutton the form that will earn him a plaque in Cooperstown. In addition, Cosell displays the ignorance that denies him a plaque in the broadcasters' wing at Cooperstown.

Gullett falls behind, 5-0 in the fourth, when he gives up a three-run homer to Steve Yeager, who has been hitting well this series, but is noted more for defensive ability and being nephew of aviation hero Chuck Yeager than offensive power.

Gullett's replacement, Ken Clay, pours gasoline on this particular fire when he comes on in the bottom of the fifth with two on and one out. He serves up two

singles and a sacrifice fly to put the Dodgers up, 8-0. In the sixth, Clay is followed by Dick Tidrow, who gives up a two-run homer to Reggie Smith, which puts the Dodger up, 10-0.

However, two notes remain in this otherwise increasingly fraudulent game. The first comes when ABC cameras observe Mike Torrez throwing in the Yankee bullpen. Well-versed students of the game know that Torrez is pitching for exercise – it's the second day after his start, so it's his day to throw, and Billy Martin is making sure he has a chance to do so, as the travel day will not.

However, Howard Cosell, observing this on the monitor that is transmitting this routine sight to his nationwide audience, expresses bafflement at this standard practice, and has to ask his colleagues in the broadcast booth what is going on. Keith Jackson, whose background is primarily football and goal-line stands, doesn't offer an explanation. Mostly likely he doesn't have one. Tom Seaver, the color commentator, does not condescend to explain to the all-knowing Cosell what is going on. Knowledgeable baseball fans chuckle at Cosell's ignorance.

The other note is that the Yankees fight back, scoring two runs in the seventh. Munson smashes a two-out home run off Sutton in the eighth, bringing up Jackson. He jumps on Sutton's first pitch and blasts his second home run in two days into the Dodger Stadium right field foul pole. It's a display of Jackson's immense home run power, and it's interesting that he belts the first pitch to him for the dinger, but the shot has little relevance beyond making the final score 10-4, Dodgers. The Yankees lead the series, 3-2, and the 1977 World Series will now go back to the House That Ruth Built to settle affairs.

After the game, sixth-game starter Ed Figueroa reports that his index finger is bothering him. Billy Martin summons Torrez to his office and asks, "How do you feel?"

"I feel good, why?" responds Torrez.

"You want to pitch Game Six?"

"Hell, yeah, I'm ready to pitch anytime, you know me, Billy," Torrez says.

"Okay, you got the ball," Martin says.

"I thought Figueroa was pitching," Torrez says.

"Aw, he gave Gene Monahan some kind of excuse that he had a little tenderness in his pitching finger. That's all I had to hear. I know you want the ball,

you'll give me the effort I'm looking for. You got the ball. Don't say anything, I'll mention it to Figueroa."

But someone beats Martin to the punch with the bad news, and the proud Puerto Rican asks the proud Mexican on the plane, "Hey, Mike, are you pitching the sixth game?"

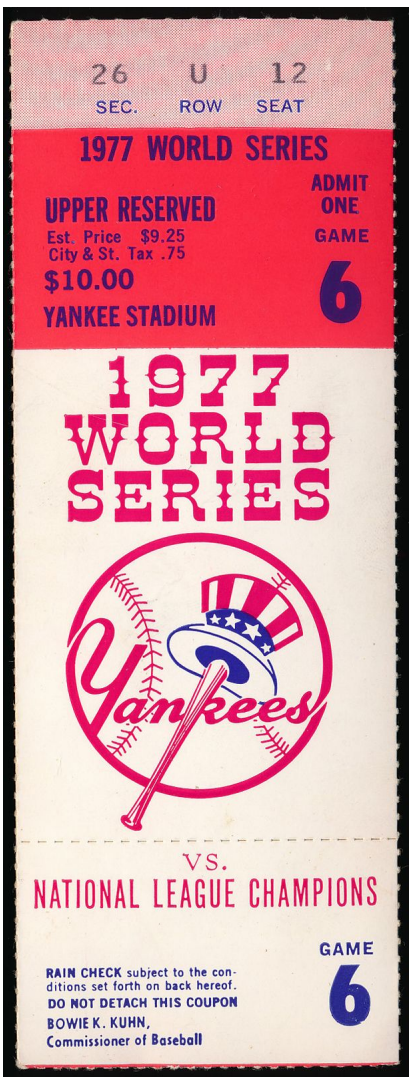
Torrez can only say, "Well, yeah..."

Figueroa is upset. He says he is going to quit the team and not go to the stadium. But he recovers, and in 1978, becomes the first Puerto Rican pitcher to win 20 games in a season, doing so for the Yankees.

During the cold-rainy, off-day, Monday, October 17, **Time** magazine offers its readers a story headlined as follows: "Nice guys always finish...?" The article's single page of text reports that players have begged Steinbrenner to fire Martin; Martin saying that if The Boss does so, he'd never live it down with the fans ("a little Dago like me fixed his ass"); and Reggie saying he will not play another year for Martin.

Needless to say, the Yankees – owner, manager, and star hitter – indignantly deny the veracity of this story, but the denials go ignored. The nation wants to see the end of this psychodrama, no matter how it comes out.

The Yankees respond to the article by announcing a new contract for Martin, a two-year deal with substantial (for the time) \$35,000 bonus, a Golden Jubilee Mark V Lincoln Continental with a \$22,000 value, and adjustments on his \$400-a-month apartment in New Jersey.



\$10.00 for a Game Six World Series ticket? That's highway robbery!

Some 56,407 people file into Yankee Stadium on Tuesday, October 18, 1977, to see Game Six, with the rain having departed, cool air not until dusk, when the temperature is in the mid-50s. In the pre-game ABC hyperbole, Howard Cosell congratulates play-by-play colleague Keith Jackson on his birthday.

At that time, the game's first-pitch celebrant arrives at Yankee Stadium. This time the Greatest Living Baseball Player has no trouble with officious myrmidons. His tickets are ready in the proper shelf at the press gate, and one of Joe DiMaggio's many assistants takes care of them. With that, Yankee staffers escort the immaculately-suited DiMaggio to the Yankee clubhouse, where Reggie Jackson is dressing for batting practice.

DiMaggio and Jackson are old acquaintances – Joltin’ Joe served as a hitting coach for the Oakland Athletics in 1968, providing his wisdom to a young Reggie. Jackson sees him as a regal man who signs balls for people – but keeps track of how many he has.

DiMaggio plants himself on a stool in the clubhouse and tells Jackson, “I know you’ve had some issues, but you’ve made the Yankees proud. Nice going.” Before heading on his royal progress, DiMaggio puts Jackson in the same category as the other great Yankees he played with.

To the emotionally needy Jackson, such praise is unbelievably powerful motive force. When he takes his turns in batting practice at 6:40 p.m., he smashes three balls into the third tier and a fourth off the back wall of the right field bleachers, nearly 500 feet from the plate.

Everyone on the field watches in awe at this demonstration of raw power. “He’s locked in,” Thurman Munson says.

Roger Director, an editor at **Sport** magazine, recalls, “Every ball flew like it was shot out of a cannon. It was an electrifying thing. People were completely buzzed and amazed.”

In left field, Fran Healy shags flies, and cynically remembers an old baseball tradition – a good bullpen or batting practice session will lead to a disastrous game, and vice versa. “Boy, is he gonna have a (expletive) game,” Healy thinks.

DiMaggio fires the ceremonial pitch from the mound before the usual standing ovation, an audience that includes New York native Geraldo Rivera, who has just made his journalistic credentials with his exposure of Willowbrook Hospital. Also present to root for the Dodgers are that city’s Mayor Tom Bradley, sitting alongside his team’s dugout, and Lillian Carter, President Carter’s mother.



Two Yankee titans chat on the field before Game Six of the 1977 World Series – one in a suit, the other in Pinstripes. Joe DiMaggio (left) blesses Thurman Munson (right).

Metropolitan Opera star and longtime Yankee fan Robert Merrill (also known as Merrill Miller and Moische Miller) sings the National Anthem from behind home plate – one of the few people who can render the song properly.

Burt “Happy” Hooton faces Mike Torrez in the finale. Hooton has held Jackson 0-for-4 in Game Two, with two strikeouts, on fastballs inside. Indeed, before the game, Jackson checks with Yankee superscout Gene Michael to ask, what will Hooton pitch me? Inside fastballs is the brilliant Michael’s response. Jackson decides to back off the plate six inches to avoid being nailed on inside pitches.

In the first inning, a Dent error, a Munson passed ball, and a Garvey triple lead to the Dodgers taking a 2-0 lead, the runs being unearned. That scoring fact does not help the proud Torrez’s morale, but he bears down to freeze Dusty Baker for a called third strike for the inning’s final out.

In the bottom of the second, Hooton, aware that Jackson’s offense is heating up, walks the slugger. Chris Chambliss smashes his only career World Series home run to tie the game at 2-2, scoring Jackson.

“The home run I hit in the second inning to tie the score was my only World Series home run. It was a big moment for me, but it happened to be the game Reggie hits three. I hit my only World Series home run, and nobody remembers it,” Chambliss says later.

But in the top of the third, Reggie Smith makes his failed bid for the World Series MVP Award by lashing his third home run of the series, to put the Dodgers up, 3-2.

There the score stays until the bottom of the fourth, when Munson leads off with a single to left, giving him a base hit in all of the 10 World Series games he has played in to date. Jackson strides to the plate, moves off of it six inches, as planned, and looks back to be sure Dodger catcher Yeager hasn't noticed.

Hooton comes inside with a fastball, and Jackson drives a low liner, 15 feet off the ground, flying deep. Jackson races out of the batter's box, unsure how far the drive will go. He doesn't have to run too quickly. The ball lands in the first row of the right field bleachers. The Yankees lead, 4-3.

Jackson circles the bases briskly, and slows down 10 feet from home, as the fans leap to their feet to cheer and applaud. The Yankees – including Munson and Billy – congratulate their teammate for this critical hit. Dodger manager Tommy Lasorda makes the lugubrious walk to the pen to remove Hooton in favor of Elias Sosa.

Sosa pours gasoline on the fire, yielding a double to Chambliss, who scores on a Lou Piniella sacrifice fly, to make the score 5-3.

Meanwhile, Torrez is determined, preventing further scoring in the top of the fifth, with help from an inning-ending 6-4-3 double play that erases Reggie Smith for the final out.

In the bottom of the fifth, Sosa gives up a leadoff single to Mickey Rivers, who is erased on a force out at second base, putting Randolph on first. Thurman Munson lines out to center, and Reggie goes the length of the dugout to pick up a 35-inch bat to face the hard-throwing right hander. He figures Sosa will come inside with a fastball on the first pitch again – the Dodgers apparently have not learned their lesson yet.

Brilliantly talented baseball writer Roger Angell, in the press box, believes the same. "He's going to hit it out of here on the first pitch," he announces to his colleagues. Reggie steps in, pulls his batting helmet low, legs spread wide.

"I'm saying to myself that (Sosa) hasn't had time to talk to Hooton. I was just praying he would throw me another pitch inside, and he did. When I hit it, I hooked it, and I wasn't sure it was going to go out until it did," Reggie says later.

Sosa fires an inside fastball at Jackson and he turns on it immediately, sending a line drive over the right field fence for another two-run home run, his third consecutive home run on three consecutive swings (counting the final shot in Los Angeles in Game Five). The Yankees now lead, 7-3.

“I hit it good but I was hoping that the ball would stay up. I hit it like a 3-iron and hoped it would hang on,” Reggie tells the **Post** later. In the dugout after the home run, an exuberant Jackson waves to the television cameras, flashes two fingers, and mouths “Hi Mom! Two!” He gives the camera a wide grin. “I was still in batting practice,” Reggie says after the game. “That’s how I felt.”

Willie Randolph is impressed, too. He recalls years later, “Once he hit the second home run, I knew he was going to hit another one, because he was in such a good groove.”

The fans roar, “REG-GIE, REG-GIE, REG-GIE,” from the stands, and Lasorda shuffles to the mound to summon his third pitcher of the night, Doug Rau, despite his failures and insubordination in Game Four.

Rau restores order, but the Dodgers need more than gritty pitching to get back in the game and series. They need hitting. They do not get it. Torrez disposes of the Dodgers in the sixth and seventh, including pinch-hitter Ed Goodson, sent to bat for Rau.

In the bottom of the seventh, Lasorda calls for knuckle-baller Charlie Hough. Hough gets through the seventh with only one blemish, a single that does not score. Torrez gives up a single to Davey Lopes to lead off the eighth inning. Bill Russell lines out, and Reggie Smith humiliates himself one last time by grounding into a 3-6-3 double play to end the inning.

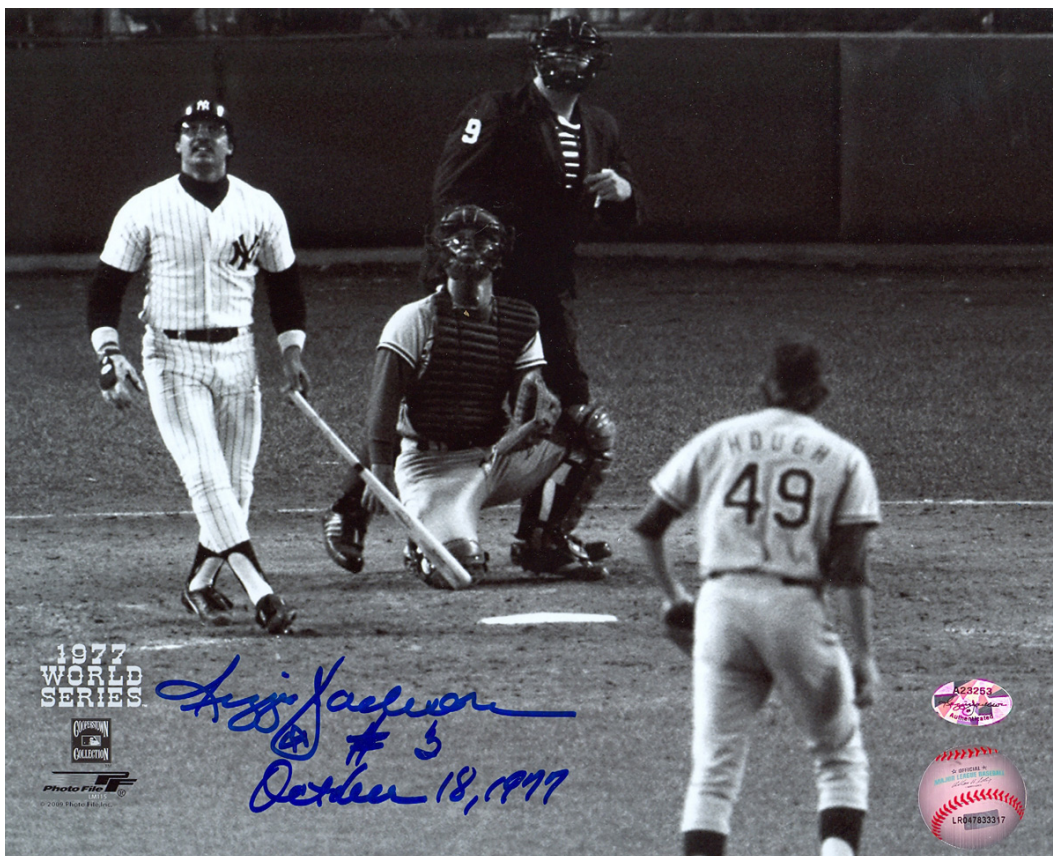
The other Reggie – Jackson – leads off the eighth, greeted by a massive standing ovation as he strides to the plate.

Hough is on the mound. Jackson cannot believe it. As he repeatedly points out the rest of his life, he hits knuckle-ball pitchers extremely well. Hough should know this.

“When they brought in Hough, I said, ‘Man, I got eight or nine homers off Wilbur Wood, Eddie Fisher, and Hoyt Wilhelm (all knuckleballers). They can’t be bringing this guy in. The first pitch he threw me looked like room service. I mean, the ball looked like a beach ball.’”

On the mound, however, Hough, a proud warrior, thinks otherwise. He says later, “I felt like I was going to strike him out. I mean, that was my goal...And, I threw what I thought was a really good knuckleball.”

Hough’s theories are immaterial to the situation. Jackson reaches down for the first diving knuckleball, and slams it towards dead center field. There is no doubt about this home run. The crowd falls silent in disbelief at the shock of a man hitting three home runs on three straight pitches off of three different pitchers and the incredible velocity and power of this final home run. It bounces halfway into the blacked-out bleacher section beyond center field that functions as a batter’s eye, about 475 feet from home plate.



The way every New York Yankees fan remembers Reggie Jackson: belting the last of three home runs in the sixth game of the 1977 World Series. The gloomy catcher is Steve Yeager, whose life was nearly taken by a bat splinter, and the observant umpire the veteran John McSherry. Copyright: Reggie Jackson This photograph is available, complete with autograph, for purchase on his website, located at <https://reggiejackson.com/>

At the plate, Reggie admires the force of his home run. Decades later, when the old stadium is torn down, Jackson will purchase the section of the bleachers where the ball landed, along with his locker, and the blue stadium lettering from behind home plate. Those he sells through a Sotheby's auction in 2015. Their estimated cost is between \$300,000 and \$600,000 when they go on the market.

But in 1977, as Reggie Jackson rounds the bases, fan acclaim raining down on him, the assembled elite of the world's sportswriters struggle to make sense out of what they have seen.

The print media do the better job, of course. Red Smith writes for **The New York Times**: "This one didn't take the shortest distance between two points. Straight out from the plate the ball streaked, not toward the neighborly stands in right but on a soaring arc toward the unoccupied bleachers in dead center, where the seats are blacked out to give batters a background. Up the white speck climbed, dwindling, diminishing, until it settled at last halfway up those empty stands, probably 450 feet away."

Howard Cosell, no friend of Jackson, shows both his awe and his incomprehension of the fundamental rules of baseball broadcasting enacted by Red Barber in the 1940s – Cosell insists on talking against the crowd. "What??!! Ooohh, what a blow! What a way to top it off! Forget about who the most valuable player is in the World Series! How this man has responded to pressure! Oh, what a beam on his face! How can you blame him? He's answered the whole world!" As Jackson's teammates mob him in the dugout, Cosell continues: "What are they all thinking now? After all the furor, after all the hassling, it came down to this!"

Meanwhile, Reggie Jackson rounds the bases, feeling as if he is running on clouds. At first base, Steve Garvey applauds into his glove.

"I must admit," Garvey says after the game, "when Reggie Jackson hit his third home run and I was sure nobody was listening, I applauded into my glove."

Hearing that later, Reggie reacts, "What a great player Steve Garvey is, what a great man."

Garvey's manager, Lasorda, is also amazed. "That was a helluva pitch," he admits later. "When I seen him hit that pitch that far I seen the greatest performance I ever seen in a World Series."

In his owner's box, surrounded by family and entourage, Steinbrenner has tears in his eyes.

When Jackson reaches the dugout, his teammates mob him in joy. Munson, up on his seat, wearing his catching gear for next inning, is unable to break through the crowd, but he gives his teammate and adversary a huge smile. Finally Reggie collapses onto the bench, faces the TV camera, and holds up three fingers for his home runs, and yells, “Hi, Mom!”

The fans roar “REG-GIE! REG-GIE! REG-GIE!” The man of the hour climbs out of the dugout and doffs his batting helmet to salute the crowd. This will become standard procedure for home team home run hitters for all time, regardless of the game situation.

Umpiring the final game of his 20-year career as a National League arbiter is Ed Sudol at second base, born in Passaic, New Jersey. Sudol has a perfect view for Reggie’s home runs. “Charlie Hough threw him a tremendous knuckleball; I don’t know how Reggie even got his bat on it, let alone hit it about 420 feet. The other pitches were also tough ones – good corner pitches. Deep inside, I got into the excitement of crowd,” he says later. “I marveled at those home runs; you have to admire the man’s fantastic ability.”

However, there is still a game to finish. Hough disposes of the Yankees in the eighth without further trouble, and Torrez, now tiring, comes out to pitch the ninth.

In today’s World Series strategy, such a move would be inconceivable – the team with the lead would summon its ace closer to slam the door, regardless of the score. But this is 1977, and Mike Torrez has always been a pitcher noted for determination and stamina. He freezes Ron Cey for the inning’s first out, but gives up two singles. A fly ball puts Garvey on third with two out.

Now the Yankee fans, pent-up with waiting since 1962 (the author’s lifetime at that point) for a World Championship, resume hurling toilet paper, cherry bombs, and firecrackers on the field.

The New York Police Department, facing the possibility of yet another ugly spectacle in a year filled with them, deploys 100 cops in riot gear, including helmets, in foul territory, trying to stay out of the game. Officers in the stands, break out their nightsticks to prevent fans from running onto the field. The venerated and venerable public address announcer, Bob Sheppard, reminds fans: “Ladies and gentlemen, no one is to go on the field at the end of the game.” And on the electronic scoreboard, the messages urging the Yankees to defeat the Dodgers are replaced with a new one, designed to reduce hostile behavior: “The Dodgers are our guests. Let us welcome them into our home.”

On the field, fans cheer Reggie, who blows kisses to them. But with two out and cherry bombs going off near him, he calls time, trots to the dugout, and re-emerges wearing his batting helmet after it is retrieved from the clubhouse (put there to protect it from souvenir-hunting fans).

The game resumes with veteran bunter Vic Davalillo batting for Yeager. He does just that – bunting a bloop towards Nettles that nobody can play. Garvey scores, Davalillo is on first, Baker is on second, two are out, the score is 8-4, and Yankee fans can't take the tension and stress much longer.

On the mound, Torrez is clearly running out of gas (this author can remember thinking that quite clearly). Lee Lacy, who has some power, pinch-hits for Charlie Hough. The Dodgers need to keep the line moving. The Yankees need to end the struggle.

Torrez fires a pitch. Lacy squares to bunt and the ball pops into the air. Torrez leaps off the mound and catches the ball himself – his last act in Yankee uniform – for the final out of the 1977 World Series and the Yankees are champions of baseball.

“What Reggie did was great,” Torrez says later, “because I was pitching that game and I needed all the runs I could get. I pitched a complete game, and I caught the last out of the World Series. Lee Lacy tried to bunt. Graig Nettles was playing back, so Lacy tried to bunt and he popped it up and I caught the last out of the 1977 World Series.”

As Torrez's face bursts into a weary and delighted smile, thousands of fans charge past the 350 security guards onto the field, even across the tables of auxiliary press boxes set up in the stands, overwhelming the massive police presence.

In right field, Jackson pulls off his helmet, shoves it under his arm, yanks off his glasses, stuffs them in a pocket, and weaves through the crowd like the college football player he once was, battling poor depth perception (without glasses) and the hordes of people. He actually tackles a blue-jeaned fan while racing to the dugout.

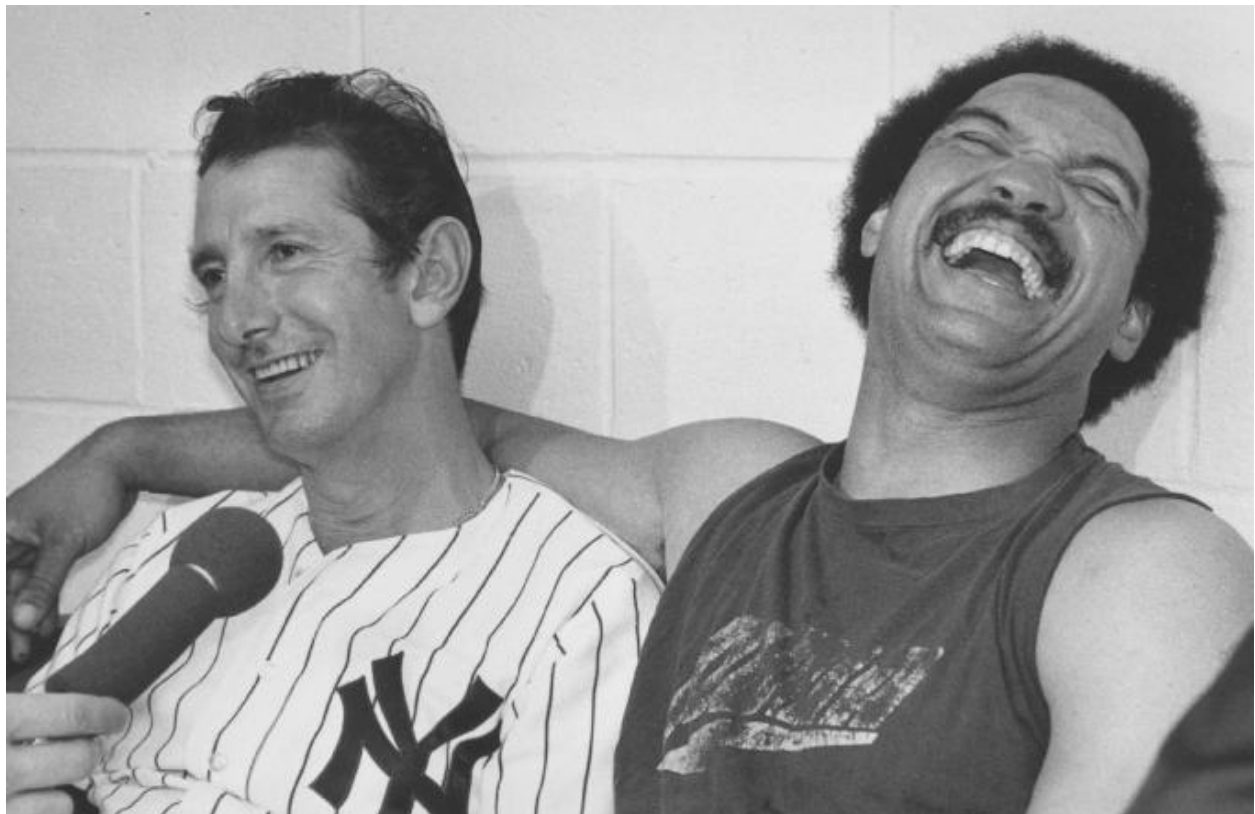
Another fleeing Yankee is Willie Randolph. A kid grabs his hat and some of his hair. Randolph spins, and the slender kid from East New York tackles the thief to retrieve his hat. Randolph recovers and heads for the dugout. There he finds his father being choked by the neck by two police officers. Randolph screams: “What's going on? That's my father!” The cops alertly let the old South Carolina sharecropper go and the Randolphs race for the clubhouse.

Also racing to the clubhouse is Umpire Sudol. “I was bumped by several spectators pouring out on the field from the stands looking for a souvenir – a base, a piece of turf, anything. I can’t describe the excitement. It was electrifying,” he says later.

The Dodgers are stunned. Reggie Smith speaks for his teammates when he says later, “The frustration of that Series was that I actually believed, and still believe to this day, that we had a better ball club. On those days, they played better baseball and they won the World Series, and you can never take that away from them. But if you went down the line, man, for man, we had a better ball club.

“I hit three home runs in that Series, but nobody remembers. (Jackson) hit three in one game and it will forever be remembered. It was a performance that will never be forgotten by anyone who had a chance to see it. Three different pitches, three swings, and three home runs.

“When they started chanting ‘Reggie...Reggie...Reggie...’ I never thought they were talking about me. In New York, I knew who they were talking about.”



Why are these men smiling? They just won their only World Series together. It was a happiness that would not last, but it was sweet for one brief shining

moment. 1977 World Champion Manager Billy Martin and World Series MVP Reggie Jackson greet the media after bringing home the Yankees' 21st World Championship.

After the game, media, management, and Commissioner Bowie Kuhn descend on the Yankee clubhouse for ceremonies and champagne.

Willie Randolph has his usual calm take on the game. He was not surprised by the home run barrage. "Surprised is not the word. I sat there thinking ho incredible this was. I couldn't believe that the man was coming out of his face the way he was. Bang! Bang! Bang! It was such a climactic game. You could see the confidence just beaming from the man every time he walked to the plate. And that typified what this team was all about. We all learned a lot from him about how to win and how the game is supposed to be played. He made us all a little bit better," Randolph says.

Munson hugs Jackson and calls him "Mr. October," originally an insult, but now a of affection that will go on Reggie's Hall of Fame plaque and that Jackson will ultimately register as a personal trademark for his businesses and charitable activities.

The triumph also breaks the down the barriers between proud catcher and proud outfielder – in the remaining two years they will play together, they will become friends to the point that Munson will fly Jackson on his own jet. When Munson dies while landing that plane in 1979, and the Yankees play their first game after the tragedy, Jackson will be seen standing in right field during the pre-game memorial ceremony, clearly anguished.

But now, in front of the media, Jackson walks into Martin's office and plops himself on a couch. "I hit three home runs tonight. Do you realize that? Three home runs," Reggie says.

"Yeah," Martin responds. "And you broke my record (for extra-base hits in a World Series), and that tees me off."

The two start laughing.

"Billy Martin," Reggie says. "I love that man. I love Billy Martin. The man did a hell of a job this year. There's nobody I'd rather play for.

"Next year is going to be super," Billy says.

"Weak is the man who cannot accept adversity," Reggie continues. "Next year, we're going to be tougher, aren't we, Skip?"

"You bet we will," Billy says. "We'll win it again next year."

“Yes, we will,” Reggie says. “We’ll win because we have a manager who’s feisty, and I’m feisty, and we’re going to be tougher next year. I’ll go to the wall for him and he’ll go to the wall for me, and if anybody clashes with us, they’re in trouble.”

Billy takes time to visit the Dodgers’ clubhouse and congratulate his old friend and rival, Tommy Lasorda, on their strong effort and season. In doing so, he misses Commissioner Kuhn presenting the World Championship Trophy to Principal Owner George M. Steinbrenner III, who is proud, delighted, and tearful to achieve his goal.

During this part of the revelry, Jackson teases George, saying, “You can’t do anything to me now – I’ve got a five-year contract.”

“You’re damn right,” Steinbrenner responds, “and you’re not going anywhere else.”



The rival managers face the World Championship hardware. Billy looks relieved. Tommy is clearly looking at “the one that got away.”

Reggie’s achievement in this game is more than providing the Yankees with their 21st World Championship – it is staggering baseball history. While Babe Ruth hit three home runs in a single World Series game (twice, 1926 and 1928), that feat has never been accomplished in three straight at-bats and three straight pitches. With the shot in Game Five, he has hit four home runs on four consecutive swings of the bat in World Series play.

Red Smith puts the accomplishment in perspective: Red Smith wrote: “In his last times at bat, this Hamlet in double-knits scored seven runs, made six hits and five home runs and batted in six runs for a batting average of .667 compiled by day and by night on two sea-coasts 3,000 miles and three time zones apart. Shakespeare wouldn’t attempt a curtain scene like that if he was plastered.”

The rest of the media also begin (at least briefly) a canonization of the slugger. Roger Angell, a Boston Red Sox fan to his bones, calls his deed “unique.”

The New York Amsterdam News, which has been harsh on Jackson, compares the Game Six feat to that of Joe Louis knocking out Max Schmeling and Jackie Robinson taking the field in 1947. “Black residents of New York City reacted with a special jubilation and sense of triumph to the sensational performance by Reggie Jackson,” the paper writes. “Much of the feeling appeared to be based on the widespread feeling among blacks interviewed by **The Amsterdam News** that the white-dominated media and whites in the crowds, as well as the Yankees’ white manager Billy Martin, had been especially hard on Jackson because he was Black, arrogant, and spoke his mind.”

Indeed, Reggie and the World Series re-energize and rejuvenate a battered and bleeding New York, which has endured one of its most difficult years in its long history – blackout, FALN terrorist attacks, debates over whether or not the Air France and British Airways supersonic Concorde airliner can fly to John F. Kennedy International Airport, budget cuts, a divisive mayoral race, and a deadly serial killer. It redeems the year.

The 1977 World Series offers an unusual parallel on a smaller scale to a similar late-year achievement in another horrific year, one for the entire world: 1968’s Apollo 8 lunar mission, the first manned flight to another celestial object. It came in December 1968, capping a year that had seen the Vietnam War’s bloody Tet Offensive; the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy; bloody rioting in the wake of both; the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; titanic generational divisions at home and abroad exemplified by the violence at the Democratic National Convention; and the election of the even more divisive Richard M. Nixon.

Yet when Apollo 8 flies to the Moon and back, providing human beings with their first (and incredibly spectacular) photographs of their native planet, along with a moving reading from the Book of Genesis, an unknown American sends NASA a telegram that is passed on to the Apollo astronauts: “Thanks. You saved 1968.”

But while the 1977 World Series may not have the grandiosity of saving a city, let alone a world, it is still a time for celebration. The victorious Yankees adjourn to the Hasbrouck Heights Sheraton for the post-game victory party.

Despite the cheery tone, Billy Martin's sorrowful life and undercurrents quickly appear. He is the guest of honor, but he has made the mistake of inviting both his wife of 18 years, Gretchen, and several of his girlfriends.

Gretchen, who has birthed and raised both of Billy's children, and endured his seemingly endless adultery, cannot tolerate the presence of Martin's paramours – particularly in front of their son, Billy Joe. Manager and wife start quarrelling loudly in front of guests who include families like those of Willie Randolph and Chris Chambliss, who are utterly devoted to their wives, and do not countenance adultery.

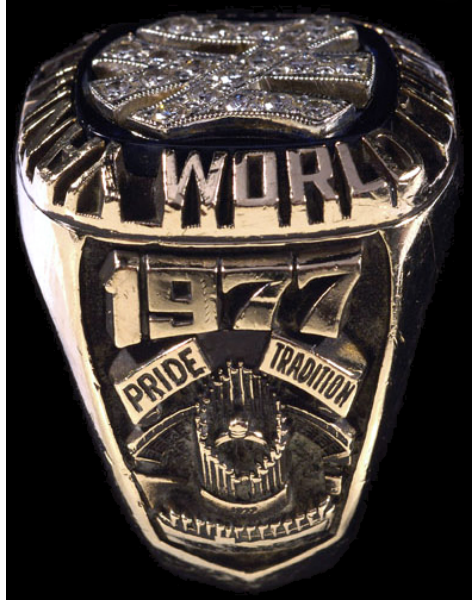
Finally, Gretchen says something to Billy that makes the manager hurl his drink to the ballroom floor and storm out of what should be his moment of triumph, and head for an anonymous bar.

The words that Gretchen uses on Billy – which lead to both contacting divorce lawyers next year – are “Play me or trade me.”

Reggie also leaves the party, but on a higher note, seeking to regroup with his family at McMullen's the posh sports bar where he has spent his evenings in the company of New York's hottest fashion models, including actor Ricardo Montalban's daughter Laura, who will move up from wearing haute couture clothing to designing it.

Jackson drives there in his blue Volkswagen (presumably to avoid unnecessary attention-getting delays) and is joined by Governor Hugh Carey and his entourage. The two sets of celebrities – one sporting, one political – join up to drink New York Taylor champagne and eat cheeseburgers into the night. Using his powers as Chief Executive of the State of New York, Carey suspends the rules that govern after-hours drinking for the duration of the night, and further orders two of his State Troopers to guard Reggie's car as well as his own.

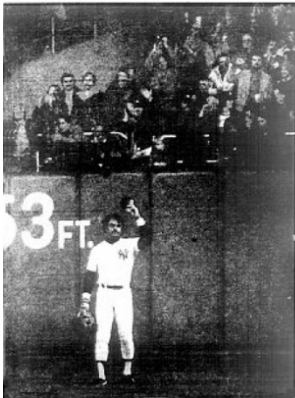
Nobody touches Reggie's car.



What it was all about: a 1977 World Series ring.

FINAL **DAILY NEWS** Change of address: upper 5th. Monthly news: 15000000. Entails page 100
Vol. 88, No. 99 New York, Wednesday, October 19, 1977 Price 20 cents

YANKEES ARE CHAMPS!



**Reg Belts
3 Homers
In 8-4 Win
Over Dodgers**

Mutual Admiration
Reggie Jackson, the Most Valuable Player of the 1977 World Series, dons his cap to leave across his a standing ovation during a super night at Yogi. Jackson hit three consecutive home runs. Polanco Daily Nation's Yankee beat the Dodgers, 8-4, and won the championship. Finally. And the total of five homers for the Series are a new record, joining Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and others. The 1977 World Series is a record. Today!

Stories Begin on Back Page
Other Pictures in the Centerfold

How the Daily News covered it the next day.

DICK UP HERE

1982

1987

On June 2, “The Untouchables,” a reboot of the legendary 1950s TV series about the federal investigators who brought down Al Capone, premieres in American theaters, with Kevin Costner, Charles Martin Smith, Andy Garcia, and Sean Connery as the federal agents. Screen titan Robert De Niro plays Capone.

While the film plays fast and loose with the historical facts, it is strong on action, writing, drama, music, and even costume – Giorgio Armani provides the suits.

De Niro does his usual meticulous job preparing for the role as the “bigshot of all bigshots” as Lowell Thomas called him, ordering and wearing copies of Capone’s underwear. In the opening scene, De Niro is seen being shaved by a barber in his hotel. The movie barber uses Capone’s actual shaving brushes and cups in the scene.

A major plot point in the movie is based on an actual historic incident. Costner, as Eliot Ness, raids one of Capone’s liquor warehouses in a US Post Office, seizing the entire stash. Capone reacts to this attack personally, summoning his staff for a formal dinner at his hotel.

There, he walks about the round table of his “knights,” and delivers the following speech.”

“A man becomes pre-eminent, he's expected to have enthusiasms. Enthusiasms, enthusiasms...What are mine? What draws my admiration? What is that which gives me joy? Baseball!”

Capone then holds up a bat, assumes the usual batter’s stance, and continues his lecture.

“A man stands alone at the plate. This is the time for what? For individual achievement. There he stands alone. But in the field, what? Part of a team. Teamwork...looks, throws, catches, hustles. Part of one big team. Bats himself the live-long day, Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, and so on. If his team don't field...what is he? You follow me? No one. Sunny day, the stands are full of fans. What does he have to say? I'm goin' out there for myself. But...I get nowhere unless the team wins.”

The hoods all agree, muttering, “Team!”

At that moment, Capone, without another word, swings his bat into the back of the head of the subordinate who was in charge of the raided liquor stash, breaking open his head and killing him at the table, to the horror of some, and the sullen uncaring reaction of chief aide Frank Nitti.

This event actually happened, and Capone did indeed use a baseball bat. It took place in 1930, and had nothing to do with Ness...it was done to rid himself of two individuals that Capone suspected were trying to overthrow him.

Therefore, Capone was doubtless playing a “doubleheader.”



Now batting...Number One...Al Capone...Number One.

1992

1997

2002

2007

2012

2017

