

WHO'S YOUR TIGER?

The Four Greatest Detroit Tiger Hitters of All Time,

And a Diamond Gallery of Second-String Superstars

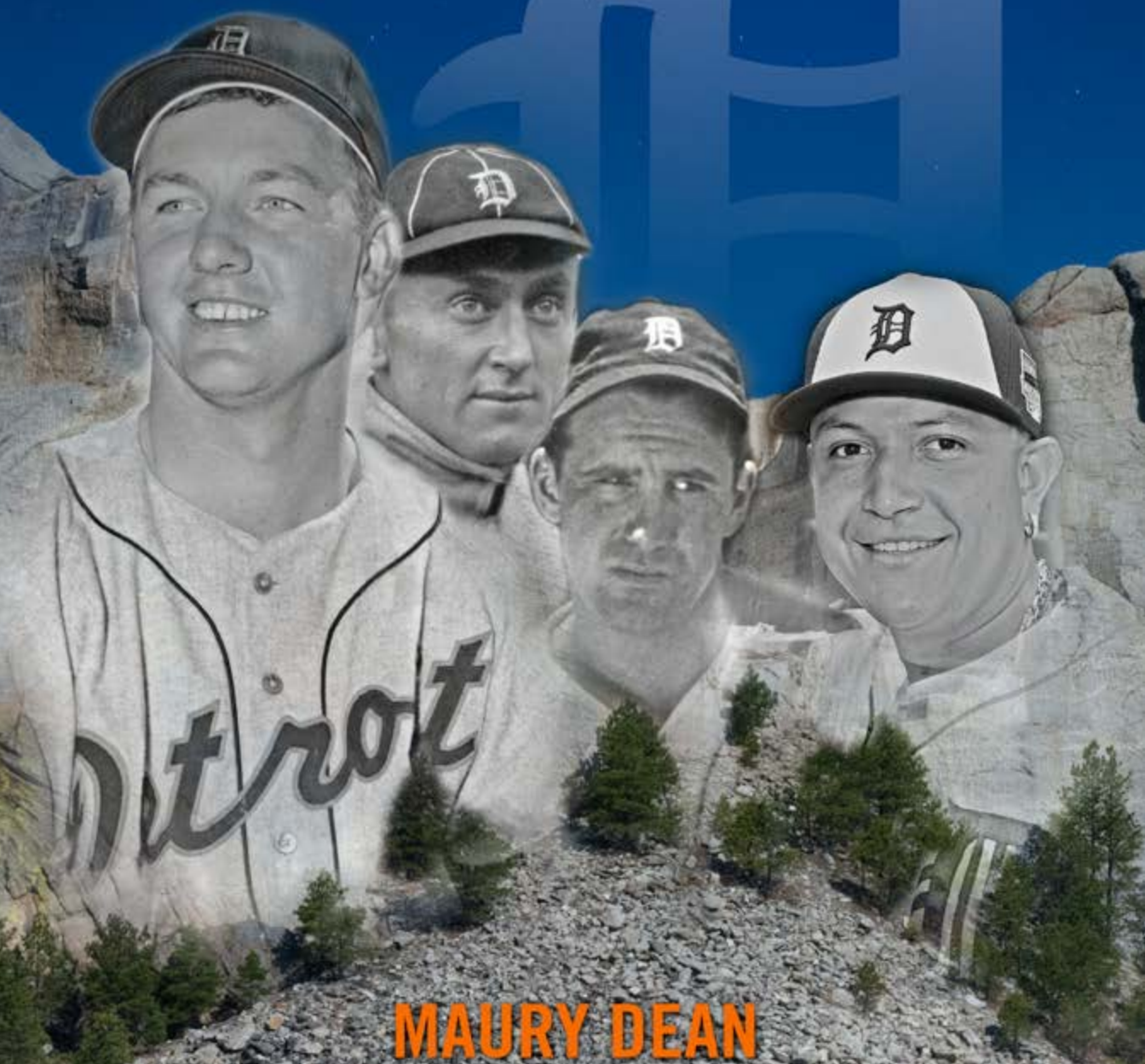


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DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Dave Gorden Photos

Comerica Park, +9 degrees, January 2014



Mark Cunningham

Victor 'V-Mart' Martinez, 2014 Best MLB DH--
-.335, 32 HR, 105 RBI



Tim O'Neill Photos

Manager Jim Leyland, pleading the Tigers' excellent case to an umpire quartet



Mark Cunningham

2014-2015+ Tiger manager Brad Ausmus, 45--Dartmouth grad, surfer, Tiger catcher & 3x #1 Fielding Av.



Randy McGill Photos

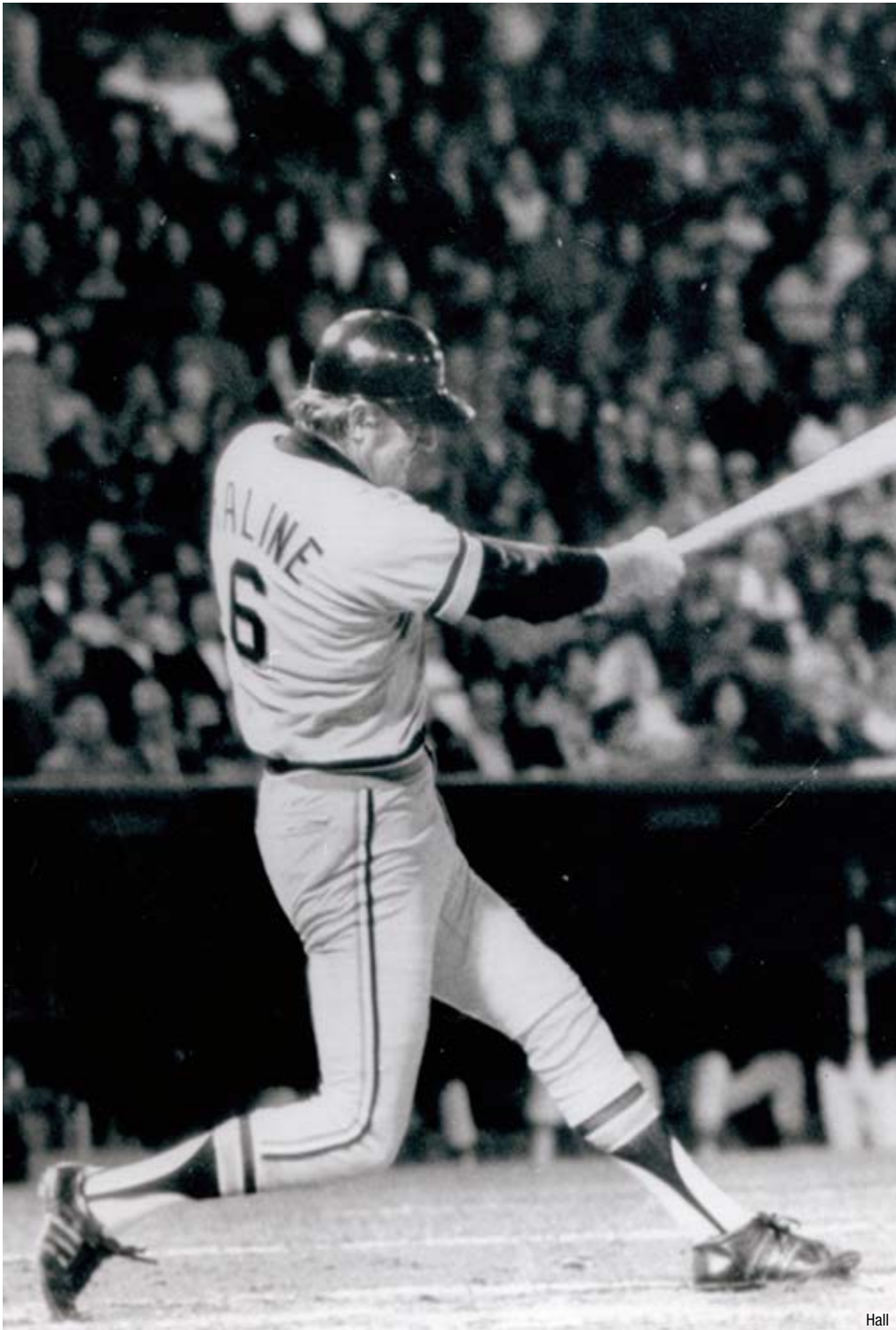
Friend Randy McGill (right) and I went to at least one Tiger game per year for 40 + years.



Tim O'Neill Photos

Miguel Cabrera--doing what he does best.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Hall

Al Kaline--#1 Most Popular Tiger of All Time.

CHAPTER 4

MIGUEL CABRERA, KNOTHOLE KIDS & WORLD'S PRETTIEST GIRLS

***“Bullies seek out weakness, but
the strong smiley home-run-bashing
kid had no weakness at all.”***

Miguel wasn't born in a log cabin, didn't freeze on cold 62-degree Venezuelan winter nights, and never had a rotten childhood, badgered by bands of bullies. Miguel grew up big and happy and talented and brave, with a hint of swagger. Baseball was always as close to him as his tropical back yard, and eternal summertime.

Miguel spent time in the tropical 80s peering through wooden fences, as a 'knot-hole kid' at the local Venezuelan 'Winter League' ballpark in Maracay, where he was born and raised. Cabrera grew up strong, with powerful shoulders, and a slugging savvy for a fastball or curve that terrified pitchers. Baseball was his family business, hobby, joy, and amusement. Who knew he'd end up a near-lifesize poster on our grandson Cal's bedroom wall, or Cal's brother Jesse Lee Dean would be born (April 18, 2008) on 4-18-83 Miggy's 25th birthday? Unlike capital Caracas, Venezuela's Maracay (pop 394,000) is inland, but perched on a huge gorgeous southern lake with very few piranhas. Intense tropical heat of the muggy North Caribbean Coast is tempered by their 1500-ft. altitude. Skies are sunny to partly cloudy most of the time, with a side of gushy downpours. Tourism buffs tout Maracay's 'prettiest girls in the world.' Neon nightlife rides on barbeques and *cerveza*, and unwimpy *salsa* atmosphere just a few shades safer than Detroit. That fact may not send zillions of partygoers to revel in Maracay's *jaguar* nightlife, profound with *caliente* *Carnival* hi-jinx and pandemonium. Miguel Cabrera grew up a big, friendly kid, the kind of kid rather immune to bullying. Bullies seek out weakness, of which the strong smiley home-run bashing kid seemed to have none at all.

down the course. [The voice said] ‘Get the hell out of my way, I’m coming through! . . . Do you hear me? Get out of my way!’ So I stepped aside to let *Ty Cobb* play through. I guess nobody but Cobb” would dare drive “through the President of the United States.” Needless to say, you can see how hyping Cobb’s virtues, beyond his gaudy numbers, is my uphill climb on an unsympathetic Everest. Cobb’s story must wait in line for Cabrera’s and Kaline’s.

McCallum cites Cobb’s patrician bloodlines. Cobb’s Georgian ancestors arrived from England in 1611. One Cobb lived to be 111, surrounded by his great-great-great grandchildren at his side. But this chapter is a fearless foursome. Hank time.

The First Hammerin’ Hank—NY’s Hank Greenberg

Hank Greenberg was, like Cabrera, **‘Abe Lincoln’s 6’4”**, which was bizarrely taller than now. A rangy basketball kid from New York, Greenberg became our first Jewish-American sports star. This was before the time New York Jewish gym buffs who cultivated hardwood hoop savvy began the fledgling NBA. Six-foot [only] Ossie Schectman died in 2013 at 94. Schechtman scored the 1st NBA point ever in 1946, on a starting New York Knickerbockers’ five that was 80% Jewish. Greenberg, by that time, had honored baseball with his 1930-46 Tiger superstardom, and helped psychologically his New York Jewish neighbors to launch America’s most internationally popular game, the later NBA’s basketball. Unlike baseball and big stadium football, basketball is grassless, indoor *or* outdoor, and thrives in winter. The process of adding great African-American basketball stars to the 50s NBA was molasses-slow, before exploding with talent in the Bill Russell & Wilt the Stilt Chamberlain civil rights 60s, after the cool hi-jinx of the Afro-American Harlem Globetrotters and Washington Generals thrilled hoop fans everywhere.

Young Hank Greenberg, basketball star of New York’s James Monroe High School, was no stranger to math. Like millions of other boys, Hank aspired to play first base for his Bronx hometown New York Yankees. One minor problem. Yanks already had a first baseman so good the ‘Sultan of Swat’ Babe Ruth had a big number 3 on his back for his own place in the Yankee batting order. Yanks’ first baseman **Lou Gehrig** was their #4 clean-up hitter (1903-41, 37, Lou Gehrig’s Disease, ALS—see Mitch Albom’s *Tuesdays with Morrie*). Numbers first represented rosters’ batting order. Among Tigers, 2B star Lou Whitaker wore Number One. Into the 1980s low numbers meant prestige and often leadoff capabilities. Ty Cobb’s number was never retired at old Tiger Stadium. Why not? Ty Cobb and ‘Dead Ball Era’ players wore NO uniform numbers. In Ted Williams’s book, Babe Ruth was the greatest batter ever, with Gehrig his silver medalist.

The great **‘Hammerin’ Hank Aaron** preferred to be called Henry among his friends (see Howard Bryant’s great bio *The Last Hero: Life of Henry Aaron*). ‘Hank’ Aaron was respectfully named for super-Tiger Hank Greenberg. Hank Greenberg was born Hyman Greenberg of Romanian-Jewish parents. He enjoyed his Americanized

Baseball & Heightism

Every team wants to be the absolute best. Most fall short. These four Tiger guys stood *tall*—6'4" for both Cabrera and Greenberg, and Kaline and Cobb a more regular-guy 6'1". Wilt the Stilt Chamberlain was a 7'2" Philadelphia Warriors' superstar who scored 100 points in an NBA game, a feat as likely to 're-happen' as someone breaking Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hit streak. The tallest Tigers ever are Doug Fister at 6'8", tied with equally-slim (#205) 1B All-Star Tony Clark of the 90s. Clark had 251 HR, but mysteriously shrank to 6'7" later in his Tiger & Diamondback career, rising to MLBBA President ('14). Baseball players are bigger than average, but smaller than NBA and NFL stars. Like soccer, baseball doesn't require gargantuan girth. Wilt the Stilt mentioned the tough ribbing that big 'OVERDOG' players get among fans.

Chamberlain laments—"Nobody roots for Goliath." Good point. To prove a point, among my favorite shorter sluggers we have Tigers' '68 hero Willie Horton (listed as 5'9" and 200, but maybe 5'8") and Chicago Cubs gonzo slugger **Hack Wilson**, at 5'6" and 190 pounds. Wilson seemingly had no neck. Hack was a one-season superstar, due to cheap Prohibition booze. Wilson in 1930 hammered 56 home runs and a record for RBI's that still stands—**190**, or 191, according to newer statisticians, with better cred than the Cobb BA-hackers. Can you imagine Wilson wielding his war club, wearing his tiny pair of size **5½** shoes? Hack was an inspiration for Yankee Hall of Famers Phil 'Scooter' Rizzuto at 5'6" and Yogi Berra at 5'7". Hall of Famer Wee Willie Keeler (b. O'Kelleher), 5'4½", gave Ty Cobb a career. Wee Willie's sterling batting-average advice to Ty, Rogers Hornsby, and Ted Williams, was "Hit 'em where they ain't." Willie hit **.341**, though half his career was pre-1900. The good news? As in soccer or running, you can become a major-leaguer if you're regular-sized. Recently, Red Sox sparkplug 5'8" Dustin Pedroia scares me, as he tackled taller Tigers in the Sox's big comeback year. In 2014, Houston's 5'5" Jose Altuve won the AL batting title with a Ruthian .345-zone performance, over Tiger hero Victor Martinez's super .335. Big size isn't mandatory, and **NO ONE OVER 5'7" has ever hit over 191 RBIs in one year**. Way ta hack, Hack!

One Amazing Baseball Record That Will Never Be Broken

It's unlikely anyone will ever break Hack Wilson's 'Live-Ball Year' 191 (or 190) RBIs ever, but it's possible. Once in a blue moon, or moo balloon, somebody just might crunch it to 192. So what baseball record will NEVER be broken? It's a lifetime thing, and it's Ty time.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Hall

Hank Aaron--All-time legit HR champ (755)



Marc Cunningham

The Cabrera Tiger crouch, prior to pouncing



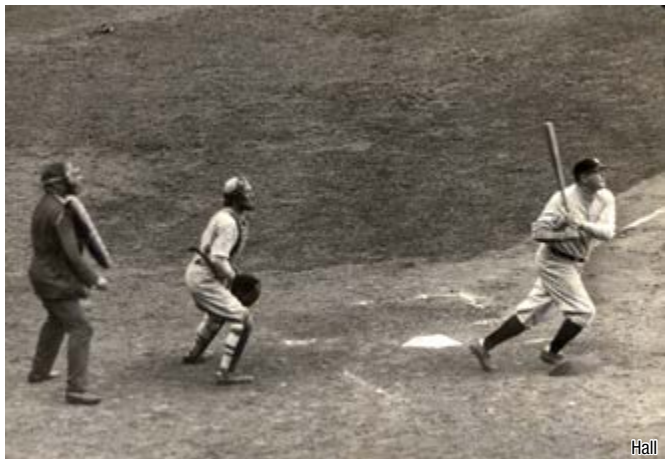
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Albert Von Tilzer's 1908 nickelodeon waltz "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" was #1 for two months



Modcan Pix

Tiger 2B Ian Kinsler, Detroit Auto Show Cobo Arena Indoor Parade, 2015



Hall

Babe Ruth--All-time 154-game season HR champ (60)

CHAPTER 8

THE RISE OF MIGUEL CABRERA IN HIS MAJOR-LEAGUE QUEST

*“There was too much talent there to spend life
obsessing about algebra or microeconomics,
so why not go straight to the gold?”*

Why do I love watching Miguel Cabrera loom at the plate, as pitchers sweat quarts of anxiety? Because every kid needs a hero, and every baseball fan is a semi-retired kid. You can take the kid out of the Detroit Tigers' turf, but the kid takes Tiger Stadium and Comerica along for the thrill ride.

Miguel Cabrera at the plate is the 21st-century equivalent of watching Babe Ruth or Ty Cobb in action. You just don't have to sweat subway rides, admission-price hijacking, or the gaspy plume of fansmoke that girdled sub-1950 sports arenas in a pall of migraine gloom and fuzzy viewing, with a side of surprise snowflakes. We can watch Miggy now loom on TV screens larger than Smartcars, in the 72-degree solitude of our jammies and popcorn, or strewn about with our kids having a blast, and copying Miggy's every move as they move out to their Little League fields of semi-glory.

Now we have globalization. Thanks to cable and Direct TV, this old kid can see his beloved Tigers from all corners of the American realm, or wherever, for \$200 measly bucks a year, or so. You just subscribe to Extra Innings. Your Tigers—or Padres or Orioles or Mariners or Rays or Mets--can follow you all over the USA, and bring you back to your home ballpark. Extra Innings features maybe 90% of all games showing at any given time, with other games on ESPN or the Baseball Channel or Fox. If anyone has time, he or she or it can watch almost all Tiger games, no matter where in the USA they reside, plus parts of Canada and Mexico. At our Michigan home we get Rod Allen & Mario Impemba on cable. On Long Island, we watch Extra Innings. If you're

(pre-steroid HR years of 54 and 51) put it, after being mentored by his hero **Hank Greenberg**—“**Singles hitters drive Fords; home run hitters drive Cadillacs.**”

That was before Detroit's “Pink Cadillac” [Bruce Springsteen '84] was attacked by a fleet of gray little dependable Asian cars in Tiger World Champ year 1984. Profits poofed onto Aretha Franklin's #3, '85 “Freeway of Love,” and deflated into stories of longlost “Glory Days” (#5, 1985). Detroit hit the Rustbelt skids, via the Big Three (Ford, General Motors, Chrysler), who busted UAW union strength by moving factories to no-tax Tennessee. Japanese encroachment gobbled American car dollars. “Motown [moved] from Tokyo to Texas” [Lansing hit song by Jeff Baldori, writer M. Dean]. Today Toyota advertises alongside Belle Tire on Fox TV, in the land of the Tiger. Could we ever regain our perch as industrial capital of the world? Maybe a 1984 World Series win was the next best thing.

Meanwhile, back at the Latino ballplayer pioneering era, 1955, later U.S. Marine Roberto Clemente had the courage to announce “**I don't believe in color!**” Strong stuff. It echoes timeless words of Dr. Martin Luther King, which themselves echo Hindu guru Mahatma Gandhi—“An eye for an eye leaves everybody blind”—and for that matter, sometimes a little bit dead.

So how revered and respected was Roberto Clemente? Let the Baseball Hall of Fame speak. My words pale. The Hall waived the 5-year waiting rule before his '73 Induction, as they did for doomed Lou Gehrig. Cooperstown voted Clemente in right away. Great as he was, it didn't hurt his chances (92.7% on the 1st ballot in 1973) that his last act was a mission of charity, flying supplies to homeless hurricane victims in Central America. Other baseball writers have told Clemente's remarkable life story, and Cooperstown's plaque adds Anglo WALKER to his name. Actually Roberto was more a RUNNER than ‘Walker.’

The name ‘Clemente,’ as in clement, or *pleasant* weather, isn't even totally Latin-American. My old friend, well-known poet Vince Clemente, taught in our English Department at Suffolk College on Long Island. Vince is totally ITALIAN-American. My Sicilian friend Guy Cuccarese, who retired from his wildly successful Guy's Pizzeria days, says almost 25% of Italian words are nearly the same as Spanish words. However, why aren't Italians, the ORIGINAL ‘Latinos,’ included in the ‘Hispanic’ category, or most ironically, the ‘LATINO’ category? After all, Italian sprang most directly from Latin, before spinoffs Spanish, Portuguese, French, or Hank Greenberg's Romanian. Linguists might differ, but even languages like Portuguese (Brazil) and Romanian are Latin-based languages, and, *mon frere*, even French is close to ‘Latino.’ They all derive from Julius Caesar's basic tongue, while Jesus was speaking Aramaic with touches of Hebrew. [I taught English at the college level for over 40 years]. So how we got a color barrier out of the iffy terms Latino or Hispanic, no one knows. Sometimes it seems like the ‘Emperor's New Clothes’ story, remember? The deluded & denuded emperor's outfit *was what?* His ‘birthday suit.’ No one had the nerve to tell him he forgot his real clothes. Some folks feel like shouting “It's a language, you blockheads! It's not a RACE*. Hispanic is not a race! A marathon or 5K run is a *race*.”

Now, let's check out money problems, via Clemente up to Cabrera, for those ball-

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS

Detroit Lions. You can call the next chapter my “Paper Tiger” adventure, but it’s really for the birds. One Tiger Bird, anyhow . . .

When I was 33, and professing English and Rock and Roll History at the college level, I figured it was time to try out for the Tigers. I had nothing to lose, except respect, money, and glory. Like the one-year electric superstar **Mark ‘The Bird’ Fidrych**, you might say I winged it. Here goes the story of what happens to most of us who dream. In 1973, Country star Tim McGraw’s dad Tug McGraw (1944-2004, 59, 19 MLB years, **3.14** ERA) came up with a 1973 Mets World Series mantra—“You gotta believe!”

It’s the Reality Sandwich chapter. Miggy will return soon, a qualified star. Our horde of diamond dazzlers and duffers is on deck. Cheers.



Ivan ‘Pudge’ Rodriguez, Tigers’ star millennial catcher



Mark Cunningham

Tigers’ best-ever defensive catcher-- Pudge Rodriguez with powerful .300+bat attached



Marge Smith (right) of Bohemia TC, a teenager in Miggy’s Maracay, Venezuela



Mark Cunningham

2014 Tiger All-Star Miguel Cabrera--powerful #24 in the Tiger line-up, batting third

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Mark Cunningham

HR blast for JD [Julio Daniel] Martinez, 2014 Tiger phenom and #5 hitter after Miggy and 'V-Mart'

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Liz Wagner Photos

Tiger miracle relief pitcher John Hiller (b. 4-8-43, Toronto, Ontario), low-key complement to 'The Bird.'

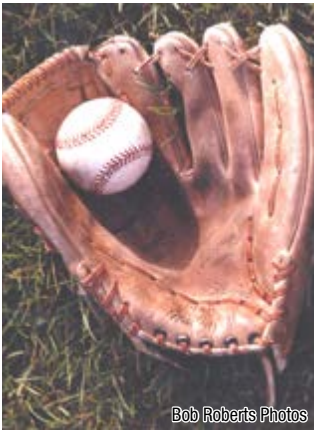


Liz Wagner Photos

The Bird celebrates life. His smoothing the mound and talking to the ball brought Tiger pilgrims from afar



Liz Wagner Photos



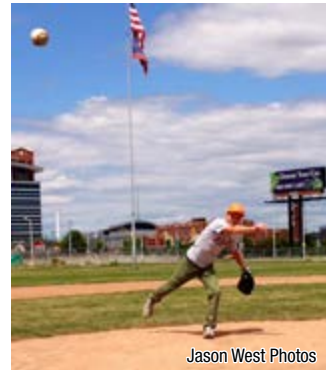
Bob Roberts Photos

Glove, ball, grass, and destiny



Hall

The Bird-- Massachusetts farm-kid of destiny



Jason West Photos

Ernie Harwell Field wild pitch menaces flutffy clouds, above millions of Tiger Stadium memories, 2014



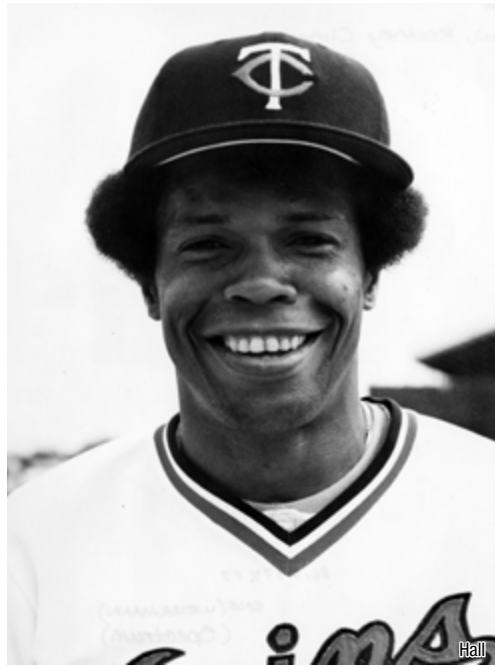
Liz Wagner Photos

Mark warming up at legendary Tiger Stadium, 1976

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



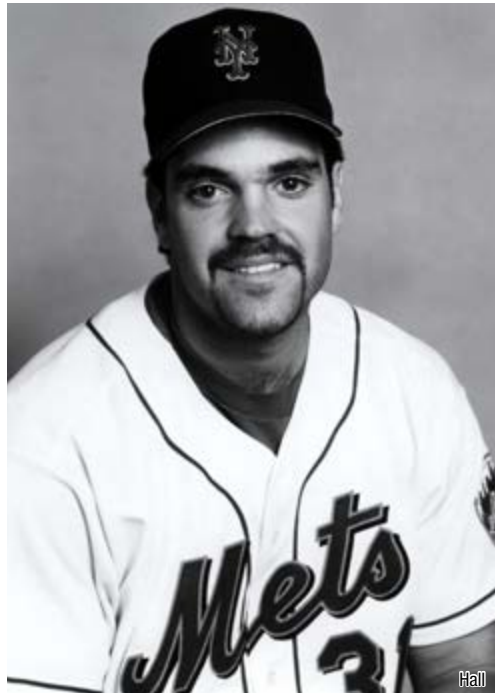
NY & San Francisco Giants' greatest hitter Willie Mays--.302, Pre-steroid 660HR [3rd to Aaron & Ruth]



Twin/Angel .328 hitter Rod Carew, along with Yankee/Red Sox/Tampa Bay Ray Wade Boggs, .328, among greatest AL hitters after 1950



San Diego Padres' hitting hero, & all-around nice guy like Stan the Man



Mike Piazza Mets' 2016 Hall of Fame superstar, over 400 HR--most ever for a catcher

- a year, but totaled 569* (12th ever), with 1835* RBIs (16th ever), and an OK .288 BA. Palmiero's quibbly quest to quell suspicions of his good name was totally and righteously embarrassed days later. The movie-star suave, debonair first-baseman flunked his steroid* pee-in-a-bottle test, and naturally the Hall of Fame.
- #69 TY COBB .512** Cobb would be feistier than 'Raffy' Palmiero above, if they'd invented an SLG 'Slugging Average' during his life & times, because he always wanted to be 1st at EVERYTHING.
- #74 Harmon Killbrew .509** Great H.O.F. Twins slugger, low BA. Super guy.
- #79 Hanley Ramirez .506** Florida's .298 Miggy teammate, w/ NL '09 .342 batting crown.
- #83 Robinson 'Robbie' Cano .504** To Mariners '14 for 7 yrs, \$200,000,000+.
- #84 Alfonso Soriano .504** SS & OF slugger from San Pedro, DR, for Yankees, Cubs. With .271, 389 HR (Kaline 399 territory).
- #85 MAGGLIO ORDONEZ .502** See Miggy's Venezuelan friends. Magglio's 1236 RBIs (137th ever) rank just behind **MIGUEL CABRERA's 11-year total of 1260** (129th, and zooming upwards). HRs & RBIs are cumulative, and favor career longevity, unlike BA & SLG.
- #88 Jim Rice .502** Red Sox taciturn slugger, w/ .298 Kalinish-Mantle-ish BA, **382 HR**, and a Cabrera-tying 139 RBIs in '78 (MC in 2012).
- #89 Adrian Gonzalez .501.** San Diegoan & Red Sock, .294 BA.
- #90 Aramis Ramirez .501** Hispanic stars, like Miguel Cabrera.
- #95 GOOSE GOSLIN .500** Leon Allen Goslin, Tigers '34-37, lifetime BA .316, 248 HR, H.O.F. '68. Goose is #2 Tiger RBI-man behind Cobb (1937—7th, to Goose's 1609—32nd ever). Goslin split his career with other teams more than Ty. Goose section is filed into Greenberg G-Men section toward back of book.
- #102 Andres 'Big Cat' Galarraga .499** BA .288, Kaline's 399 HR, overcame serious 'long illness' back to majors. B. '61 Caracas, Venezuela—Miggy influence. Miggy tied Galarraga and Al Kaline's 399 in a 5-14-15 Twins 13-1 rout.
- #111 Carlos Beltran .496** BA .283+, 358 HR, 1327 RBIs, Mets' star OF.
- #113 Al Rosen .495** Cleveland 3B .285 star, Jewish-American like Greenberg.
- #134 NORM CASH .488** Tiger .271 star, 377 HR, & mega-year '61 batting **champ .361**, 41 HR, & .662 slugging average. Jolly Texan Tiger's cottage was on Lower Straits Lake, Commerce Township near us. Norm tragically drowned at 51, falling off a dock after a party. Norm drove a Lincoln Continental, and said his life was saved, in one terrible accident, by having the BIG car. I listen to Tigers' advice, so we have a 3-van Ford Windstar/Chrysler Town & Country/Dodge Caravan 'Van Man Fleet,' with a classic '85 Olds and '79 Chevy Malibu. For some reason, my beautiful wife thinks I have too many cars, but two of them are actually from this millennium.
- #135 ROCKY COLAVITO .488** Perhaps the only baseball name even cooler than 'Prince Fielder.' Rocky socked 45 HR in Cash's big '61 year—Tigers '60-63 & Indians—6'3", 190# New York-born '33 handsome girl magnet, even-Elvisish 'Italian Stallion,' 374 HR, .266 BA. Both Norm and Rocky's reps glide into

Hall afterglow, almost making numbers grade for induction, like Bill Freehan and Willie Horton. Or Rudy York, below.

- #150 TONY CLARK .485** Dec. 4, 2013: “Tony the Tiger” named Executive Director of the Major League Baseball Players Association. Earlier players’ union heads include Marvin Miller, Don Fehr, and late Robert Weiner, 51, stricken with a recent long illness. Kansas-born Californian Clark is also first BALLPLAYER to head the union, plus first Afro-American. Greatest Tiger switch-hitting slugger (**251 HR**), & **tallest- ever Tiger at 6’8”** (with Doug Fister), though *Baseball Encyclopedia* claims Tony ‘shrank’ to 6’7”. **Tony the Tiger** is also first 1B switch-hitting Kansan union Prez to get nicknamed after nature’s most nearly perfect sweet breakfast-cereal character. Obviously, Tony hypes Battle Creek, Michigan’s **Kellogg’s** Sugar Frosted Flakes. Tony’s impressive resume features 824 RBIs, lifetime .262 BA. Tony broke 6’10” redheaded CA vegetarian **Bill Walton’s** HS *basketball* scoring record, with Michael Jordan-ish **43.7** pts. per game. Dapper Clark also whistle-stopped at Mets, Yankees, Red Sox, and quartet of years at Arizona. He hit 30+ homers four times, inc. Tigers’ 32 & 117 RBIs ’87 and 34 & 103 ’98. Chosen to lead union, Tony said— “Humbled, yes. Excited to carry on the vision that Michael put into place.” In 2008, Clark’s free-agency negotiations almost got him to the once-magic million mark at \$900,000, following in tough negotiating footsteps of super-Tigers **Ty Cobb & Hank Greenberg**. Hank was the 1st \$100,000 player, 1947, and supported Player’s Union free agency in ’67 in the controversial Curt Flood controversy .
- #151 FRED LYNN .484** Two years a Tiger with sliding results, Lynn hit **.331** as ’75 rookie, and won batting title with **.333** in 1979.
- #153 RUDY YORK .483** Tigers 1934-’45, 277 HR, .275, won HR & RBI Crowns—34 & 118, plus SLG at wispy **.527**, wartorn ’43. Rudy held record for HR in a month--18.
- #156 Yogi Berra .482** Everybody loves Yankee catcher/philosopher H.O.F. **legend** Yogi, even if they hate the Yankees—As a Michigander/Long Islander, I love the poor Mets, and like the Yanks. Cryptic Yogi-ism? But of course— “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” (See Piazza).
- #157 CECIL FIELDER .482**, plus 51 HR, 1990 & multi-mammoth RBIs Called ‘Wild Bear’ for Hanshin Tigers for 6’3”, 280# size. Tiger great CECIL FIELDER also clocks in with .482 SLG tally (Ch. 75).
- #166 CHARLIE GEHRINGER .480** **There’s a great argument for C.G. as the 4th, maybe even 3rd, best Tiger of all time. With a lifetime .320 average, 574 doubles (17th-best ever, and 60 in ’36, 6th-best ever), & 184 HR, the 2B star cinched the thrilling threesome Tiger ‘G-Men,’ of Gehringer, Goose Goslin, and our #3 Super-Tiger here Hank Greenberg.**
- #169 AL KALINE! .480** Yep, ‘Mechanical Man’ Gehringer above eked out slugging kudos, beyond our mutual hero Al Kaline’s best efforts. I’m a bit biased in Al’s favor. Behind Cobb & Goose Goslin, the great Al has more total ribbies than any other Tiger—1583, and more as a Tiger than anyone but Cobb. The

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS

Happy computing, and, ulp, long division.

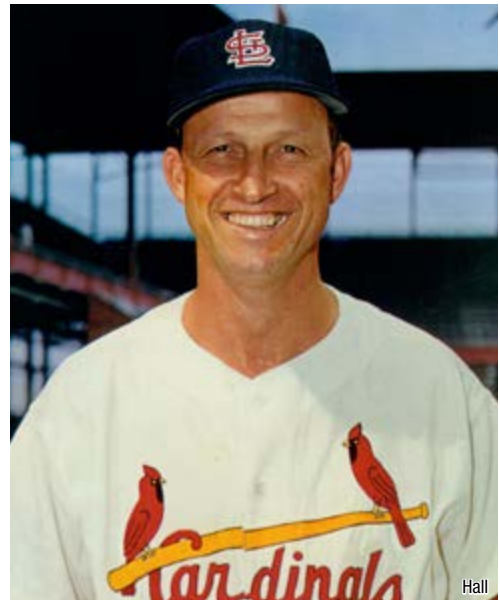
Oh, by the way, in case anyone asks, **EARNED-RUN AVERAGE** is basically the number of runs a pitcher gives up per 9 innings. How simple. Until you get to errors and stuff.



Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx, Babe Ruth--The Gold Standard for 'Sluggitude.'



San Diego Padres' hitting hero, & all-around nice guy like Stan the Man



.331 St. Louis Cardinals' superstar Stan Musial, of Orchard Lake, MI, Polish Sports Hall of Fame. Like Mr. Tiger Al Kaline, and like Tony Gwynn, Stan was an even better MAN than he was a hitter

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Photofest

Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio, whose semi-happily-after endured from 1-4-54 to 10-27-54



Modean Pix

Unforgettable Rev. Ed McCoy's (1937-2015) New Harmony Baptist Church, Vernor/Mt. Elliott, Detroit,



Dave Gorden Photos

Heidelberg Hopscotch, Detroit, bleak November 2012 Where kids still dream of Tigers



Todean Pix

Detroit's famed Rev. Ed McCoy, plus Maury 2013



Dave Gorden Photos

House of Soul, shrine to Final Vinyl, Heidelberg Project, Detroit, 5-13



Dave Gorden Photos

A bedraggled tree guards the polka-dot house at Tyree Guyton's revered Heidelberg Project, Detroit



Modean Pix

Jos. Campau's storied Polish Yacht Club, Est. 1902, of Mikie & Patty & Tina fame



Modean Pix

"Da Boyz" @ PYV Pope's Table (Pope John Paul visited as Cardinal)--Dave, Doug, me, Huck

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Mark Cunningham

Three centuries of sluggers (well, anyhow, Jeter played in two, and Miggy one, so it all adds up)

the invention of Relief Pitchers, like Mariano— Washington Senators' Johnson went **36-7, .837**, with 346 Innings Pitched and 243 strikeouts, and a hyperhuman **1.14 ERA**. Zowie.

#11 Mariano Rivera 2.21 Though *Baseball-Reference.com* calls Mariano only **13th** of all time in ERA, *Baseball Almanac* grants the 6'2", 185# Panamanian the 11th position ever, despite the fact that Low ERA floats along as a hangover from the 1900-20 Dead Ball and Spitball Era. No one doubts two of the greatest Latino *stars ever* were Panamanian (see Rod Carew, Ch. 15) . My **Miguel Cabrera** for #2 Latino ballplayer position, however, depends on our concept of Relief Pitchers as total players. Compare Mariano's journeyman 1250+ Innings Pitched expertly, to Walter Johnson's amazing arm-busting 417 victories and **5914** Innings Pitched, or even 6'10", unrelated RANDY 'Big Unit' Johnson's 303-166, .646, with a 3.29 ERA and 4135 strikeouts. Mariano Rivera's excellent work calls for a different standard of production or inning-output. It is truly an apples and oranges case. As a reliever, the great and noble Yankee Mariano Rivera is flawless and unapproachable. He's also kind and modest. After SMITH, JOHNSON (as in RANDY Johnson) is the USA's silver-medal surname. JONES gets bronze. Miguel Cabrera is a nine-inning everyday player. Mariano Rivera is the best as a limited-time Relief Pitcher, without a doubt the Greatest Closer of All Time. Unchallenged. Favorite too, of Logan and Christine Cristoforo. In the old days, though, pitchers had to pitch the whole game. Until Ed Walsh's arm nearly fell off. The Pitch-Count concept would be laughable to Dead-Ball Marathon Pitchers. Mariano played his part-time high-pressure role magnificently. But can his candidacy be considered quite as seriously as that of an everyday, 9- inning player like Miguel Cabrera, who averages 159-160 games per year? Each one is the best at what he does, and one plays on the field and works at bat almost ten times as much as the other. Case closed?

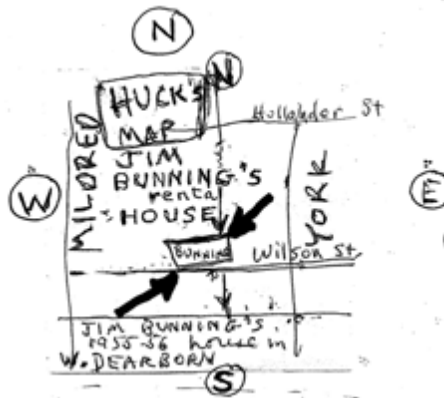
#16 Babe Ruth 2.28 Lefty Babe Ruth was a superstar Red Sox *pitcher*. The age-old Baseball Question arrives with a Zen answer—**"If the greatest hitter in baseball, ever, could hit against the greatest pitcher, who would they be?"** The Zen answer—**"BABE RUTH!"** Babe did both hitting and pitching as a dual-dazzling champion. George Herman Ruth (1895-1948) pitched three World Series shutouts for Boston, and no one called him 'HERMAN.' Three World Series [or playoff] victories for the Red Sox would not arrive again until 2013, with hard-luck pitcher John Lester, who also dashed Tigers' 2013 chances, when his luck zoomed. Babe Ruth was so good a pitcher he could have made the Hall of Fame early if he'd never even HIT the ball. The complete package, Babe. He was first to "swing for the fences," with his hands way down on the bat—unlike Cobb's hands-apart, choke-up-on-the-bat pragmatic style.

Now here's the news you don't hear everyday. Ruth had the 2nd-highest vote percentage of the Baseball Writers of America in the very first class of the new Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown with **95.13%**, and therefore was voted in **Second. First, with 98.23% of votes, was TY COBB, Tiger**

guaranteed hyper-annoying “CRAW, CRAW, CRAW!” The “CRAW-CRAW-CRAW” era coincided with our frustration, as our Tigers spiraled down ingloriously to the cellar. We waited for deliverance from some ‘76 Bird of Paradise bringing us pennants. In a year or so, our “CRAW-CRAW-CRAW” cacaphonic crowing call would be bundled up in wide wonder, for the Tigers were blessed with the most colorful character they ever had—19-9 ERA ’77 champ Mark “The Bird” Fidrych (see semi-lucky Ch. 13) already covered, up there, somewhere.

#281 [Senator] **JIM BUNNING 3.27** How many **U.S. Senators** [KY] do you get out of the whole panorama of 12,345+ major league ballplayers in the 1901-Now Modern Era? Very, very few. Dizzy Trout ran for Republican Wayne County Sheriff, but lost. The 6’3”, #195 conservative Republican Senator Bunning from Southgate, Kentucky, is one of the finest Tiger pitchers of all time. Jim anchored Congressional committees, and propped up the magic Tiger double-whammy Frank Lary & Jim Bunning 1-2 punch during my 1955 adolescence. In 1964 Detroit gained the Beatles, but lost Jim Bunning to his 1964-71 Pennsylvanian perambulations (Philly, Pittsburgh, and an LA California interlude). By 1969 I gained a wife, daughter (Lauri Lia), a son on the way by ’72, and a Handyman’s Special 900-sq.-ft. cottage on a gorgeous Oakland County lake, with a do-it-yourself leaky roof, and 12,345+ leftover mourning fleas from the five former dog residents of the cottage. We were blessed with no flea shortage for months for our poor Lab/Beagle Snarfi Sue (1966-84). We circumscribe our fandom by key events in our lives. We never forget great Tiger pitchers who flung their own magic far and wide, even unto the Halls of Congress (which, sadly, has a 9% approval rating, literally lower than cockroaches, due to World-Class squabbling today). A 1955-63 Tiger, Bunning also starred for both Pennsylvania teams, and the LA Dodgers, before pasturing into political stardom. His enviable numbers and H.O.F ticket? 17 years, 224-184, **2855** SO in 3061 IP (17th ever). Jim also tagged seven home runs, taking after Dizzy Trout.

Here’s a very credible Jim Bunning rumor from my sister Blair, corroborated by my lifetime Greasytones pal Gary ‘Huck’ Hildebrandt. Huck furnished a map to Tigers’ 1955-63 ace Bunning’s Dearborn domicile on Jan. 29, 2014, when Da Boyz visited the Heidelberg Project (early Ch. 15) and Joseph Campau’s famous Polish Yacht Club.



Gary 'Huck' Hildebrandt's handy map to Tiger star
P Jim Bunning's '56 rental home

Bunning went 20-8 in 1957, and copped two twin SO titles with 201 K's, both 1959-60, before defecting to Philly Phillies 1964-71. The landlocked Polish Yacht Club, in Detroit south of Hamtramck, has walls shimmering with captain-capped commodores. Its nifty neon bar wafts aromas of kielbasa, latkes, sauerkraut, and heady dark brewskis. Huck is the spiritual advisor and 'Maharishi' of The Legendary Greasytones, a white Motown-recording '62 band I jammed with. Their picture adorns the hip fading wall, with Detroit/national noteworthies like Mayor Jerry Cavanagh, Henry Ford, Walter Reuther, and Sonny Eliot. Here's Huck's map to Bunning's Wilson Ave. rental house in Dearborn, a chunky half-mile from our 1807 N. Elizabeth boyhood home (ages 9 to 19). My sister's friend Cheryl Dittman, who dwelt on my wife's 2nd floor at Michigan State's McDonel Hall, where wife Toni was an RA (Resident Assistant), babysat for Bunning's kids somewhere in "Peggy Sue's" lost dream-cape '57 Chevy world. Did Cheryl realize the Kentucky sensation would become a Tiger Hall of Fame pitcher? Righty Jim (b. 1931) went on to become Senator Jim Bunning of Kentucky, a principled conservative Republican, who seems to rate Steroid* enhancement for MLB stars slightly lower than eel poop at the bottom of the Dead Sea.

Bunning's lifetime **3.27** ERA is the stuff of dreams. Not many ballplayers get a SECOND distinguished career as important as their first, eh? Oh, and the RUMOR I promised? Seems Jim Bunning was invested with some of my own Scottishitude, and was not known as a big babysitter tipper, like I am. Of course, like many McDonalds' assistant managers today, Bunning had to squeak by on about \$50,000 a year. With tips, while Greatest Hitter Ty Cobb had to plead and wheedle a paltry \$12,000 out of tightwad owner Frank Navin in 1913.

#284 Ron 'Louisiana Lightning' Guidry 3.29 Lean, lithe 5'11", 159# French-American fireballer from Lafayette, LA, Ron scorched Yankees' stats with his suave Elvis looks, and lights-out delivery. Guidry's ace year '78 resem-

bles Max Scherzer's outstanding 2013 year's work—1978, **25-3, .893**, 248 SO, and thrifty Scottish **1.74** ERA. Hot Yankee squad saw Guidry's W-L 170-91, **.651** 1975-88 career flourish, like 22-6, .786 in 1985. "Louisiana Lightnin'" compiled a nice 1778 strikeouts. This chapter title includes a bit of Ron Guidry's Cajun CRAWFISH PIE New Orleans' dish. It's from down-on-the-bayou Hank Williams and Jo Stafford's 1952 monster hit "Jambalaya," about eating huge insects in pieroghs, in an alligator serenade. This filet gumbo with okra feast makes for a tasty firemouth treat, if one has sufficient cold beer, and very scarce alligators.

#296 Luis Tiant 3.30 Cuban (b. '40) Tiant toiled for Cleveland, Boston, and Yankees, Pirates, and Angels, reeling off a 229-172 record, 2416 SO, and two skimpy ERA blockbuster years--21-9 1968, his 1.60 ERA besting 31-6 Denny McLain (1.96), and 1972's 15-6 and 1.91. Tough turf.

Tens of thousands of myriad batters and pitchers attained the Major Leagues in over a century; therefore, just MAKING the HOT 1000 of either category is ALREADY a potential Hall of Fame resume. This pitching Top 1000 got too interesting, and too long, to be corralled in one chapter. Fighting chapter obesity, we carve this one deliciously in two, slouching toward Chapter 17, also on ERA champs who stifle our favorite superstar hitters. We move on.



Photofest

Tigers' 1940-53 quartet P Fred Hutchinson, Virgil 'No-Hit' Trucks, Dizzy Trout, Hal Newhouser

centage, 75.4% to Al Simmons' 75.38%.

- 13) Pedro Martinez** 2861
Terrific Met ace.
- 14) Bob Gibson** 3117
Tiger '68 Series nemesis, and first Afro-American.
- 15) Curt Schilling** 2832
- 16) Jon Smoltz** 3084
- 17) JIM BUNNING** 2855
HOF Senator Jim of Kentucky.
- 18) MICKEY LOLICH** 2832
Mick's on deck here.
- 19) Mike Mussina** 2813
- 20) Cy Young** 2803
- 21) FRANK TANANA** 2773
'87 Tiger & Angel ace Tanana was 8-1 by June '87, and led in ERA in 2.09 range. He was a double whammy with Nolan Ryan early on. On Feb. 11, 2014, Thomas Edison's birthday, Yankees' WonderWallet lit up. They gave \$155,000,000 to add Japanese ace **Masahiro Tanaka** [NOT TANANA], richest contract ever for a pitcher. And one with no American MLB experience. Decent first month.
- 32) JACK MORRIS** 2478
- 54) DAVID WELLS** 2201
Tiger 1993-95, 'Boomer' went 10-3 in '95.
- 88) HIDEO NOMO** 1918
Pitched 8-12 in 2000 as Tiger.
- 81) HAL NEWHOUSER** 1796
Only Comerica PITCHER statue.
- 85) KENNY ROGERS** 1751
World Series Tiger 2006.

Out of the Top 100 in strikeouts, these MLB stars shine brightly. Notice that strikeouts are a function of the Modern Era, whereas only Walter Johnson of the dead-ball era hits the top ten, with Grover Cleveland 'Pete' Alexander at 49th with 2198. How good is Nolan Ryan's semi-immortal tally of 5714 K's? Well, if you added Hall of Famers Hal Newhouser's 1796, Grover 'Pete' Alexander's 2198, and Carl Hubbell's 1977, their 5971 just edges Ryan's peak. Now, back to the ERA Hit Parade, or No-Hit Parade.

- #348 Hireki Kuroda 3.40** Don't look now, but Asian pitchers are making their move, as they lights-out once bombastic Tiger bats.
- #354 JUSTIN VERLANDER 3.43 (2013 Stat)** Verlander is possibly the greatest Tiger **PITCHER of all time**, but this book favors hitters, frankly. The Dutch- German-American from Virginia at 6'5", 219# is Chad Orzel's favorite. **Orzel says there've been over 20,000 major-leaguers since**

last half century asked to be in the 2013 Home Run Derby, because he hit a few bombs in batting practice. [JV kids about keeping his 'perfect' .000 Batting Average; he celebrates a near-double fly ball to right field as his greatest hitting feat, until his Apr. '14 two- hitter as a BATTER]. Justin's consistent eight years of Tiger superstardom nabbed him three strikeout titles—**269** ('09), **250** ('11), **239** ('12). Justin 'No-Nickname' Verlander is noted for 'dialing up' the heat—fastballs at a comfy 95-mph at first, but cranking near 100-mph to finish off a game. Most pitchers' velocity piddles out late in games, but Verlander's marathon endurance sets him apart. In his rearview mirror, Justin roots for his kid brother Ben, tearing up the minors as a HITTER in April 2014—and invited to Tiger Spring Training. Notice JV's proximity to Tiger unheralded superstar Mickey Lolich:

#370 MICKEY LOLICH 3.42 Knock, knock—what's going on with the Old-Timers' crew on Vets' voting with Lolich? Steadiest Tiger hurler over my lifetime, Mickey's main vice was, good grief Charlie Brown, demon DONUTS. Lolich had a 60s Lake Orion {pron. OR-ee-un} donut shop. **Thrice** an All-Star, '68 World Series MVP and Croatian-American Mickey Lolich sampled other dangers, like riding his motorcycle to work, or flying in Denny McLain's airplane. Politically-incorrect song "Roly Poly Mickey Lolich" celebrates '68 hero Mickey. With snappy snare and rhythm guitar attached, a soulful girls' chorus warbles how the Tigers won the Series, because 6'0", 225# lefty Lolich bested Cardinals' untamable batting-average assassin **Bob Gibson**. In so many words. Mickey won the rubber game of a Tiger comeback from 3-1 down. Lolich is the last pitcher to win three *complete* games in a World Series—1968. Thanks to Mickey, our bomb-blasting Bengals are only the 3rd team since 1901 to crest to victory after climbing out of a W-L 3-1 opponent's-lead fox-hole. Lolich symbolizes Detroit's rich complement of Catholic or Orthodox Eastern and Southern Europeans who became skilled manufacturing tradesmen and executives—Poles, Czechs, Yugoslavians (now Bosnians, Serbians, Croatians, Herzogovinans), Romanians, Bulgarians, Lithuanians, and especially Italians and Greeks.

Here is why you could ar-



Mark Cunningham

Tiger 1963-75 strikeout king (2832) lefty Mickey Lolich (NY Mets '76)

meetings with MLB players, and iconic announcer Ernie Harwell. Wickersham was not into any shenanigans at all. Dave represents the bedrock of MLB tradition. Wickersham's 4-5, .274 '67 season somehow sent him packing to Pittsburgh and KC. Bruce Springsteen's later "Glory Days" passed Wickersham by. No problem. Wickersham was prepared, thanks to Jesus and Dave's own steady and selfless lifestyle.

#559 MAX SCHERZER 3.68--Talk about upcoming superstars, or guys with **one** great Denny McLain-style year (31-6, **.838**, '68, to Maxwell's 21-3, **.875**, 2013)? Blond Max Scherzer is the best full-season starting pitcher the Tigers ever had for winning percentage!

Tigers' hottest all-time World Series rivalry (1934-35, 1968, 2006)? The St. Louis Cardinals. Naturally Max Scherzer had to be born there, on July 27th of the Tigers' LAST World Series victory—1984. He's 6'3" and 222# now, but started out a lot smaller. Under eye color, Max lists one deep brown, and the other eye very light blue. Max tore up University of Missouri pitching records. His future-Tiger fastball pounced upon Ft. Worth (0.56 ERA, 16 IP, in '07) and Visalia (CA, 0.53 in 17 IP with 30 Strikeouts). Scouts wowed to his strikeout prowess, so he was upgraded. At tougher Southern League's Henry Aaron Ballpark, Mobile, Alabama, 'Hammerin' Hank's' hometown, Maxwell's's reality-check arrived with 73 IP and a 4-4, 3.91 reckoning. His strikeout prowess began to shine again, chili-pepper hot. Max fanned 79 in 53 innings in roasting '08 Tucson, Arizona, home of Mexican-German-American gorgeous songstress Linda Ronstadt. Max posted a 2.72, and shifted to the big Arizona Diamondbacks club, which '84 Tiger home-run hero Kirk Gibson recently managed.

Scherzer's '08 major-league Arizona debut was just inauspicious enough for Tigers to hack out a decent deal for the 0-4 rookie, with 66 SO in 56 IP, and a sterling 3.05 ERA. After a sophomore bounceback in '09 Visalia, California, the Missouri native hammered out his 9-11 season as a Diamondback starter, with 170 IP, **174** SO, but 63 bases-on-balls (BB). Then it came the Tigers' turn to pounce. Scherzer's journeyman test was the Fifth Third Park bailiwick of the storied and bizarrely-named Toledo **Mud Hens**. Scherzer showed a nice so-long minors 2-0, 0.60 performance, launching him into Tigerspace toward the Great Northland [50-miles north], Comerica Park.

Our fourth Tiger ever is Jewish-American slugger and ethnic MLB pioneer **Hank Greenberg**. As of 2014, with the super Koufaxian year Scherzer enjoyed and a hot 13-4 run into August 2014, Maxwell Scherzer has a good chance at Tiger Jewish-American-Stars' silver medal--in the 120-year-old history of the Detroit Tiger franchise. We are long past the trying days of Greenberg taunts at opposing ball parks. Our multicultural integration progressed a long way—witness the funeral for Nelson Mandela, 95, on Dec. 10, 2013, celebrating the life of a man who integrated South Africa—with an elegy by multicultural American President, Barack Obama, who is half-African (Kenya), half Islander (Ireland). Scherzer's lower career progressed with a fat \$15-Million

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Dave Gorden Photos

Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg Project, Jan. 2014, a mile or so from Comerica Park



Dave Gorden Photos

Detroit Eastern Market, c/o the Graffiti Groovers of Gratiot Ave.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Huck & Maury @ 'Hamtramck Disneyland' alleyway, surrounded by Detroit



Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg Project's 'final vinyl;' House of Soul, Lower East Side, Detroit



House of Soul II, Heidelberg Project, Lower East Side, Detroit--A Resurrection of Hope



Detroit connect-the-dots Saab Story, A Heidelberg Project Odyssey



Eerie eels rear their ugly heads, and here comes the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, stoned on steroids, thanks to peer pressure for big MLB buck\$, mostly in the 1995-2005 Steroid Era.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Bob Roberts Photos

"K Guys' Kaline and Kuenn's Tiger Stadium and I-75 in drabbish daytime



Modcan

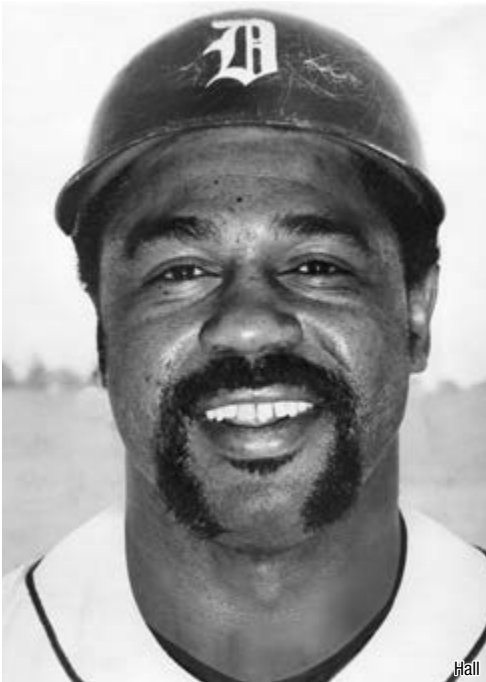
Ty Cobb, Harvey Kuenn, & Al Kaline, & smaller photo with Cobb's 1908 teammates Davy Jones & Wahoo Sam Crawford (photos 1950s). Cobb got Wahoo elected to Hall of Fame through unwavering lobbying, a selfless act.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Liz Wagner Photos

OF Willie Horton autographing for kids, 1976 hoops benefit



Hall

Slugger Willie smashed 36 HR in Tiger World Champ 1968.



Hall

Horton, Kaline, Northrup-- '68 Tigers' triple threat.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Bob Roberts Photos

Dusk Tiger Stadium, ancient gothic church,
and humungous full moon sneaking up on us 'bleacher bums.'

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



John Hiller, Tigers' '68 5th starter, and later relief-pitcher legend



Legendary hero Al Kaline tosses out a swift 1st pitch for the Tigers' 2012 World Series

CHAPTER 40

TY COBB'S DO-IT
YOURSELF TONSILLECTOMY?

*“We can’t say for Ty Cobb ‘It’s all good,’
but it’s not as bad as you might think.
Two words? Ty tried. Al Kaline and Ty Cobb
gave everything they had to the Detroit Tigers.”*

They say Ty Cobb was the toughest, orneriest ballplayer of all time. Let’s dispel the toughest part, and figure just who this Ty guy was. Rogers Hornsby he wasn’t, nor *Misterogers*, nor Kermit the Frog. Cobb was up and down. He played hard. Despite a hard-bitten life, one ghastly trauma, and a botched tonsil operation, the Georgia Peach became the Greatest Hitter of All Time. Ty did his best to be a family man, like Al Kaline. Al will never have Ty’s **.367** lifetime average, and Ty will never have Al’s role-model respect and charisma. It is what it is. We can’t say for Ty “It’s all good,” but it’s not as bad as you might think. Two words? Ty tried. Al and Ty gave everything they had to baseball and to the Detroit Tigers.

When I was a kid in the 50s, everybody and his brother were down at the local hospital, getting their tonsils yanked out. That is, if they weren’t down at the Appendectomy Wing of the local hospital, getting their appendixes out. Somebody, in that religious-as-all-get-out horde of Mid-Century Americana, must have suggested that the Lord somehow goofed; people didn’t really need tonsils, or appendixes. All the pain their removal caused may have been a signal from On High, that questioning the Lord’s Anatomical Creation of Man might not be a prudent idea to share vocally. A whole lot of doctors were happy to take these multitudinously-slaughtered organs out, though. Back before ‘drive-by’ births of today’s mysterious pharmaceutical/hospital du-opoly, folks lolled around the hospital for maybe four days, or weeks (similar to Sinclair’s Lewis’s 1922 Mrs. *Babbitt* operation), mourning their lost, long-gone tonsils

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Public Domain (LOC)

Cobb's skimpy and bedraggled glove, which vacationed on centerfield turf while Cobb batted.



Public Domain (LOC)

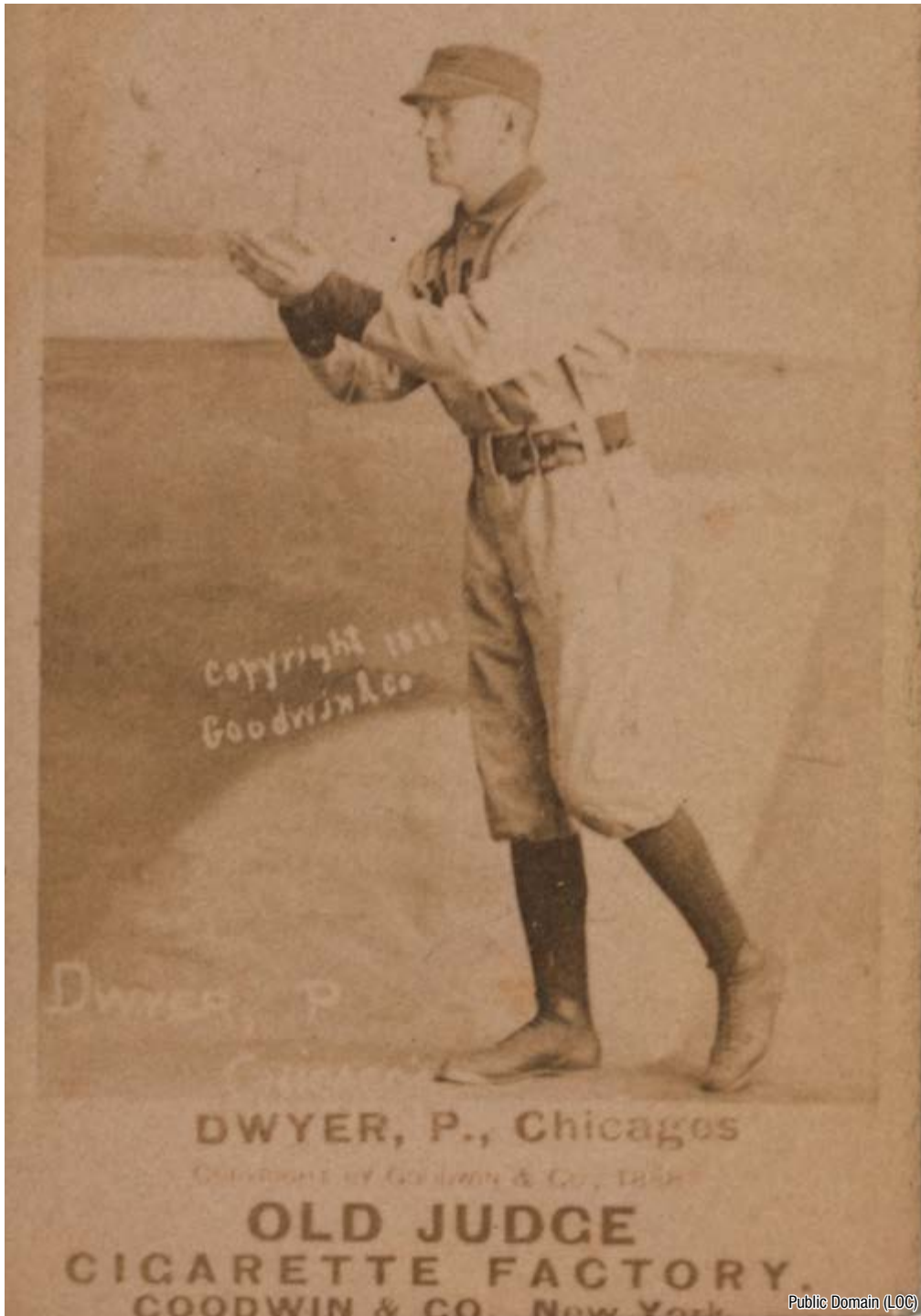
Cobb zooming around base,
in pursuit of safety at home plate



Public Domain (LOC)

Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, and guys in suits who
WISH they were Ty Cobb or Babe Ruth.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



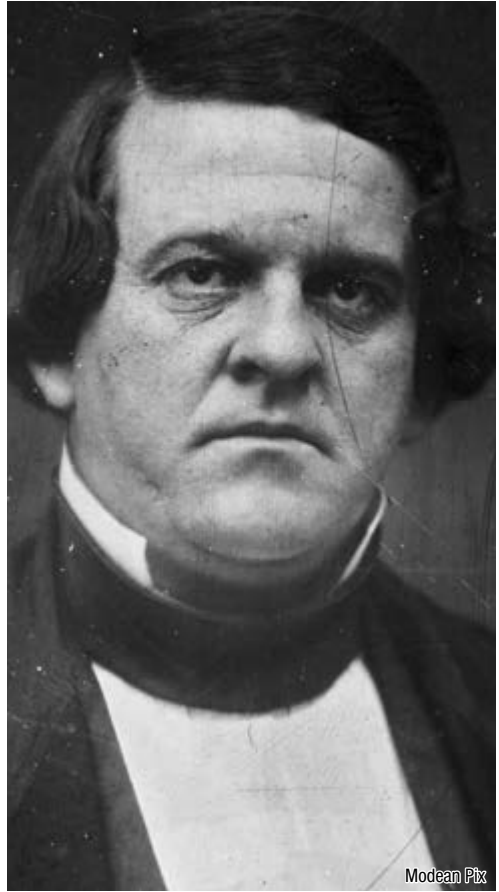
1st baseball card, 1888 P. Dwyer, from Old Judge cigarette factory. Honus Wagner refused to endorse cigarettes for kids, so his card was pulled from circulation, and today commands millions to well-off collectors.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Public Domain (LOC)

1904 minor-leaguer Ty Cobb
w/ Augusta Tourists



Modean Pix

Ty's distinguished ancestor, Hon. Howell Cobb, erected on 1790's Montauk Lighthouse, Long Island, and commissioned by George Washington.



Modean Pix, c/o Cobb Museum, Royston, GA

Ty Cobb, aged one, 1887--Royston, Georgia



Modean Pix, c/o Cobb Museum, Royston, GA

Cobb's relative Howeell Cobb's name sits atop the 1860 Lincoln-Era Lighthouse list in 2013

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Public Domain (LOC)

Shoeless Joe Jackson (L) and Ty Cobb, the #3 (.356) and #1 (.367) hitters of all time, swap lumber tips for batting-average superstardom

Nov. 11th, 1918. It's also my wife's birthday. When she was a little dairy-farming Fountain, Michigan kid, Nov. 11th changed to Veterans' Day, unlikely a subtle tribute to Cobb's warrior spirit. Though Ty's sister Florence Cobb's life is rarely fiery sports copy, Ty must have loved her enough to name his daughter after her. Unlike Professor Cobb, whose life was chopped in half by gun violence as American as apple pie, his mother Amanda made it from 1871 to 1936 (65), just about the time they created the Hall of Fame for Ty and Babe—so Amanda, too, didn't realize the peril and passion along Ty's gravelly highway of base-flying and hitting accomplishments. Did she realize Ty's batting genius? Or that her older boy became the greatest hitter who ever lived?

Ty's boondoggles abounded, as he sought the idyllic *Leave It to Beaver* life that wouldn't actually coalesce until B&W 50s TV scenarios of family bliss. So what was Ty's ultimate family disaster that bashed his Huck Finn carefree boyhood back to a Stone Age of dog-eat-dog basepath battlefields? I was afraid you'd ask.

Play ball, next two chapters full steam ahead. The first chronicles Cobb's lowdown image, and the second tells the grisly story of how he got to be that way. First, the grizzly. Later the Teddy bear. Ty Cobb was a bit of each.



Mark Cunningham

Cobb running



Mark Cunningham

Kid Cobb and his spooky flashbulb halo

in their hard-fought race awards ceremony, you're wasting your time. Bloated egos pop popularity balloons.

Reed City Michigander song sculptor George Bennard (1872-1956) wrote #1 favorite hymn "The Old Rugged Cross," about how time can bend your knee [Eric Clapton, #2, '92 "Tears in Heaven"]. Someday your trophies at last you lay down. Ty Cobb was never an inherently vicious man. And when you get old and slightly poor, can you eat your trophies? Ty Cobb simply suffered from the curse of every tragic hero from Caesar to Macbeth, or tragic villain from Judas to Al Capone—the sin of Pride (plus a penchant for PEACH ice cream, and a late-in-life craving for a little Jack Daniels).

Cobb Praises Babe Ruth

Reporters gathered in the early 20s to get Cobb's viewpoints on new Yankee superstar slugger Babe Ruth, who stole Ty's thunder as #1 batter in baseball history. Cobb blabbed about cheap-shot aspects of home runs, huge Yankee Stadium crowds, the new doctored bouncier baseball, and Ruth's awkward fielding efforts. Ty failed to say something nice about the big guy everybody *thinks* was the greatest hitter of all time.

Exasperated with Cobb's refusal to say anything complimentary about his arch-rival Babe Ruth, one sneaky reporter asked politely—

"Please, Ty, would you mind just saying one nice thing about the efforts of Babe Ruth? Surely there's *something* he's doing right."

Cobb thought and thought, wallowing in the horrors of being the fading incumbent champ, and trying desperately to keep himself at the top of the heap. Ty's doughboy face burst into a weird smirk. Ty offered the following 'compliment' to the batting efforts of his arch-rival the Big Bam, the Sultan of Swat, the Bambino, and the bombastic ballplayer everybody loved as much as they hated Cobb—

"OK, OK, men, I'll tell ya somethin' good about Babe Ruth that I actually admire He runs pretty good for a *fat* guy!"

Are we beginning to see the real Ty Cobb? Are we beginning to see the scared Georgia orphan who screamed at his good-time teammates "Don't you understand? I've *got* to be first at everything"?

Can the American Dream go running amok?

Can we get back to Joe Falls's "Demon' chapter?

Yes, to all of the above.

P.S. Asked to think of one way to praise Steroid Poster-Dude Barry Bonds**, one critic said "He has very interesting earrings."

Falls leads off with an oldtimers 1946 Yankee Stadium game featuring Cobb, 60. Cobb warns the catcher to stand back, because his batting skills have dimmed; "I'm afraid the bat might slip and hurt you." Catcher backpedals and squats. Kaboom.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Babe Ruth, stargazing

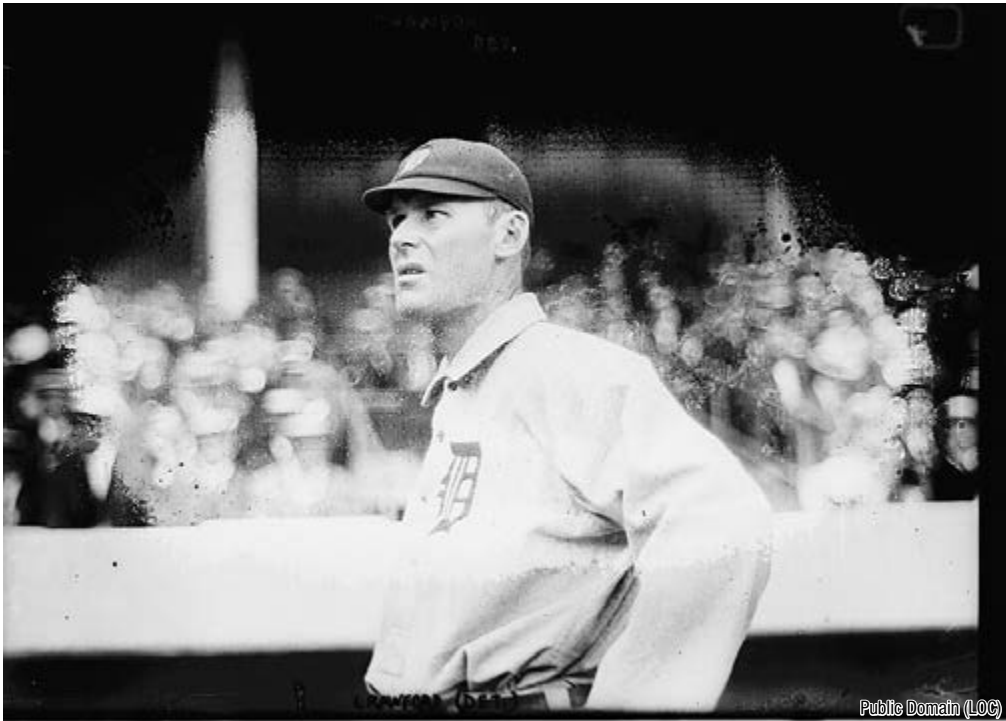


Smiling Ty Cobb-you'd be smiling too if you were batting .420



Ruth and Philadelphia Athletic Ty Cobb, 1927-28

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Public Domain (LOC)

OF star, and FIRST AL Home Run Champ (16 HR--1901)--Wahoo Sam Crawford



Public Domain (LOC)

Ty, with macho glare and safety-pin collar, 1913

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Dave Gorden & Modean Pix

Toothy Tiger graffito, Mich. Ave @ 17th St., or so--via "Da Boyz' Detroit Tour Escapade

If the hazing incidents sound nasty, it'll pale to a summer breeze in the wake of the REAL problem bugging young Ty Cobb, on the eve of his becoming the Greatest Hitter in the History of Baseball. So what *happened* in devastating Summer 1905 to bust his will, his heart, and his soul—before his 1907 comeback from the doldrums of depression to the summit of success?

Here goes.

Details of Cobb's family-tragedy shooting incident are sketchy to say the least. Cobb's initiation to major-league baseball, days after his father's shocking death, makes the so-called 'Bullying Scandal' of Miami's football Dolphins pale in comparison. *SNL's* comic Tim Meadows slyly stated—"If you're 6'5" and your weight begins with the '3' number, bullying cannot BE your problem." Every sport or fraternity with a varsity squad features some kind of hazing. Some of us take it better than others. The current Richie Incognito vs. Jonathan Martin Miami Dolphins brutality and verbal-abuse case was more typical of Ty's scrappy era. Indeed, the crux of the name-calling included calling Martin a 'Half-N-----,' the selfsame racist epithet, reflecting on Ty's mother's virtue, that a NY heckler called Ty Cobb. Cobb ran up in the stands and pulverized the guy (not knowing the badmouthing opponent had a mangled hand). Cobb was very sensitive about his mother's image and honor, as this chapter will finally demonstrate.

Though days of blackface and watermelon jokes have faded far into the distant past, even today rookie ballplayers often must face embarrassing fiascos. On sound-barrier-busting jet flights, they are dolled up in drag and mascara and fishnet stockings, to the tune of yoks and guffaws from seedy sophomore ballpayers. It's a ritual, a gauntlet of macho sadistic 'fun,' just to see if you can take it. If you can take a joke. After the upcoming ultimate tragedy in young Ty's life, he could *not* take it, so the vulnerable young orphan was ostracized by tough baseball bangers as a spoiled Southern sorehead with the sense of humor of a grave. Before Cobb's bats were sawn in half by his own sadistic Tiger teammates, Ty Cobb experienced one of the most vicious personal twists of fate to happen to any human with the heart of a Tiger. 'Bout time somebody explained his personal catastrophe.

Here's the place where sensationalists claim Cobb turns from Auntie Norah's sandy-haired little Sally Leaguer into a basepath monster. Ty twists from a nice Georgia kid with a dream to a pugilistic defender of dusty diamond turf, spending his life punching out the nightmare that blocked his [base]path instead. It's a lesson in random horror.

Cobb's father Professor William Herschel Cobb left the small Cobb plantation house on a sultry, ultra-muggy Aug. 6, 1905 evening. He told his vivacious, pretty wife Amanda he'd be down by their farm for maybe a couple days, or tending to business in town. Commuting was a lot slower back then, with a 7-mph horse rather than a 40-mph Ford Model T. Cobb's mother, eight years the elder Cobb's junior, stayed alone on the home front. Ty's siblings Paul and Flo were on 'sleepovers' elsewhere. Whatever crime was about to happen featured just one witness, and one witness only—Ty's mother, Mrs. Amanda Chitwood Cobb. Ty, smitten with pro baseball, was nowhere near

and “found Amanda ghostly white, twitching and chattering.” Cliff--“Mrs. Cobb, Mrs. Cobb,” Cliff cried after examining the body out the window, “It’s Mr. Cobb. He’s not breathing. I think he’s dead.” Young and pretty **Mrs. Amanda Cobb** was taken into custody.

Charles Alexander’s ’83 *Ty Cobb* cites neighbor Joe Cunningham: “It was the worst thing I ever saw” (p.21). Cunningham’s horror tale concerns mortally-wounded Professor Cobb’s *continuous breathing*, after the gaping wound in his abdomen and grossly fatal head wound. Dr. H.F. McCreary declared William Cobb dead at 1:30 a.m. “The coroner’s jury had ordered Amanda Cobb’s arrest on a charge of voluntary manslaughter” (21). The funeral was held Aug. 11, 1905 at Cobb’s house (common practice then), and Cunningham’s father built the coffin for Prof. Cobb’s Masonic funeral. The footprint of Cobb’s ex-home, by Cunningham’s Royston store, is today a funeral home.

Cobb spent four days with his widowed mother, and his brother Paul and sister Flo. A grand jury a month later indicted Amanda Cobb, five lawyers were hired, likely with oldest-son Ty’s assent, and within nine months she was acquitted of the manslaughter charge. The testimony of her future-Tiger son Ty probably had to do with her exoneration and acquittal, though skimpy research in bleak on the issue.

A badly scarred and broken 18-year-old Ty Cobb returned to baseball, bearing his father’s admonition—“Don’t come home a failure.” Alexander cites Ty’s zeal and courage to erase the stain on his family’s honor. He shows Ty’s wish to follow the stone-engraved Commandment: “Honor thy father,” while focusing upon honoring his mother, too, to the point of exonerating her. The crime was horrific, and it scarred Ty’s soul with a simmering scandal that faded WAY too slowly in the healing years beyond. The best way to wage a Cobb Family Comeback, Ty believed, was to make something grand of himself. Alexander (22): The best way to save Ty’s family’s reputation was “to achieve such great success as a ballplayer that people would have to respect the Cobb name and his father’s memory.” [See Jose Canseco’s pledge at his mother’s deathbed to become baseball’s best slugger in his steroid*-selling book *Juiced*, that JUMP-START-ED the Steroid* Stink back in 1995].

Five days later on August 16th, Ty rejoined the Augusta Tourist crew, after the local newspaper his father toiled for “tactfully reported his father’s death.” By mid-August, the Detroit Tigers were down to three outfielders, with Duff Cooley hopping about on his good leg. Cobb won the Sally League Batting Championship with his **.326**. His last game produced a friendly and sympathetic bouquet and gold watch at home plate, and a bonanza call to glory.

The Detroit Tigers picked up Ty’s contract for **\$700**, with a \$200 bonus. I know that the Manhattan Island sale from the Native Americans for \$24 was supposedly the greatest deal in history—but can we deny Ty’s thrifty Tigers the silver medal? August 26, 1905, Ty Cobb took the Saturday ‘Midnight Train [from] Georgia’ [#1, ’73, Gladys Knight/Pips] north to the Motor City. In his moment of impending major-league success, Ty brooded “I only thought, Father won’t know it!” (Cobb, *My Life in Baseball*, p. 52). After a harrowing ride to the industrial Heartland and the World’s Greatest Great Lakes, teenage Ty arrived at Michigan Central Station at 14th and Michigan, in the shadow of Bennett/Navin/Briggs/Tiger Stadium, and eventual Comerica Park. Greeting the

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Dave Gorden Photos

Ty's 800 Atkinson, Detroit, home for his burgeoning five-children family. Marcia Piliciotti lives at Tiger broadcaster Ty Tyson's ex-house across the street (hmm--Ty & Ty next door). Cobb booster Marcia found us a small slab of Cobb's own marble windowsill, for a cool souvenir.



Dave Gorden Photos



Dave Gorden Photos

Cobb's Longfellow home, by 100-foot, 100-year-old Dawn Redwood (for Cobb, a shrub next door)

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Dave Gorden Photos

I was coincidentally born at 1155 Atkinson, Detroit, less than two blocks (& now one freeway) from Ty's home at 800 Atkinson, now owned since 2004 by gracious lady Barbara Perkins



Modcan Pix

Champ Red Wing goalie Terry Sawchuk's house NEAR the lake in 2015, selling in 2013 for \$180,000. How much house ON a posh Oakland County lake could the NFL's top goalie afford today?

ragtime-piano cartoons, were in zombie Black and White, a grim, groaning world of smoke and steel and stained gray snow. Comedian Charlie Chaplin mocked Adolf Hitler's stubby moustache, and Henry Ford's full-speed assembly line in silent-but-hilarious black and white. Ugly scenario, compared to Disney's later color cartoon riot.

Tiger Voices

Imagine Tiger 2013 color commentator **Rod Allen** and main announcer **Mario Impemba** calling Ty Cobb's or Hank Greenberg's game, with Rod's suave baritone and Mario's fraternity-brother boyish charm explaining Ty Cobb barreling around the bases and stealing home. Or Wahoo Sam Crawford smacking a torrid triple. Or Wild Bill Donovan firing a whiffish one-hitter. Or 1930-40s 'Hammerin' Hank' Greenberg matching Babe Ruth's 60-HR record deep into September with bleacher blasts at old Briggs Stadium. The time machine would see some strange contrasts, wouldn't it?

Rod[erick] **Allen** was a 1984 bench Tiger slugger, with a **.296** average in only 27 AB, and a minors slugger. Why Sparky Anderson didn't play him more is a cosmic mystery. San Diego's Rod's superstardom awaited his ultracool easygoing broadcasting voice. Just when you think Rod is always suave and polite, somebody busts out the YouTube video of Rod in Japan, chasing a Japanese pitcher to centerfield. Like Cecil Fielder, Allen first starred in the Japanese League, once hitting four home runs in a row for the Hiroshima Toyo Carp, and two against the Seibu Lions (not Tigers) in 1991's Japan Series. Normally mild-mannered, Rod was plunked in the back by Kazuhiko Daimon of the Yokohama Taiyo Whales [great team names, these]. Allen chased him off the mound and around the entire field, both benches streaming along in his warpath wake. The sound track is vintage Brit *Benny Hill* or *Monty Python* or slapstick American *Keystone Kops* vaudeville comedy.

Allen was a Florida Marlin hitting instructor 1992-95, speaking of Cabrera. Rod launched his broadcasting career with Fox Sports with 1996-2001's Arizona Diamondbacks, now enjoying the leadership of one-sixth of a dozen terrific 80s Tigers, Manager Kirk Gibson and Coach Alan Trammell.

Rod Allen joined the Tigers in 2002 with **Mario Impemba** (b. '63), forensic champ from Stevenson High in Sterling Heights and Michigan State. Like ballplayers, Mario shuffled upwards through announcing in the minors—Peoria Chiefs, Quad City Iowa Angels, Tucson Toros, then radio KLAA and fill-in TV guy for the Anaheim [now Los Angeles] Angels 1995-2001. In 2002, Mario became Tigers' most recognized voice this side of Ernie Harwell and Al Kaline. Hall of Famer George Kell, '68 Tiger back-up catcher Jim Price, and Dan Dickerson are also close in recognition popularity. Amiable Mario's

'06 Emmy attests to his sympatico skills. What's so cool about Mario? People just basically like him. He reminds you of your nice-guy brother, even if you don't have one. Family man Mario Impemba and wife Kathy have two sons—Brett (19 in '14) and Daniel (16). Brett was drafted by Tigers in 49th round, playing ball at Oakland University. Mario 'moonlights' at OU as voice of Oakland University Golden Grizzlies' Basketball on 1130 AM WDFN. Allen's family's baseball skills earn equal front-office interest, with son Rod Jr.(now 25) selected 12th by the Yankees in 2004, and Andrew (now 18) in the 43rd Round in '07 by the hometown Diamondbacks. Daughters Rhonda (31) and Rachel (16) might have played too, had they had a League of Their Own.

The Tigers are in good hands with these two guys, *who both* have Emmys (Allen in '06, '07). They belong to the Detroit Sports Broadcasters Association founded in 1948 by the first Tiger voice I ever heard—Yankee **.280** OF on Babe Ruth's team Ty Tyson (1892-1953, 61). Tyson lived next door to Ty's 800 Atkinson house, and was followed by Hall of Fame Tiger Harry Heilmann in 1951.

If you grew up in the 50s, your Tigers were usually just a bunch of B&W newsprint. The radio occasionally barked at you with the first McDonald's ad I recall from 1949-51—"McDonald for coal, McDonald for coal, Oh, Oh McDonald for Coal." McDonald's was a non-hamburger Highland Park coal company up on Hamilton Ave. by Sears-Roebuck and the Ford Plant. Chicago's Maurice McDonald and his brother had to wait three more years from 1951, while Dad and I hauled out coal clinker ash to Tyson's mellow tones on Atkinson in Detroit. WWJ 950 AM, America's 1st radio station (1920), began broadcasts with Tyson in 1927-42 and Heilmann in 1934. The whole Cobb Era had NO live transcription other than telegraphed newspaper box scores. President Ronald Reagan's early radio career was amplified, by broadcasting, supposedly LIVE, ball games he merely conjectured from telegrams of scores and highlights. Rival stations broadcast simultaneously from 1947. **TV** arrived for Saturday games, with all of the following **radio** stations chiming in, sometimes with two separate broadcasts at a time, both in English—WXYZ 1934-1950, WWDT 1947-52, WJBK 1953-74, WKMH 1952-63, WJR 1964-2000, WXYT 2001-2014, WWJ again 1975-78, WDIV 1979-94, WKBD 1996-2003, & Cable Guys ON-TV 1981-83, and FOX Sports Net 1998-Present (which carries Mario and Rod). Amazingly, in Detroit which was recently 90% Afro-American but now nudging 85%, Rod Allen is among the first Afro-American broadcasters. Latino ball-player announcers are still a future possibility, as Spanish ramps up its USA silver-medal status.

Other remarkable Tiger broadcasters include Van Patrick 1949-59 intermittently, pitcher Dizzy Trout 1953-55, Paul Williams 1947-52,

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Photofest

Among most popular Sultan of Swing photos, so I figured you'd better not miss it

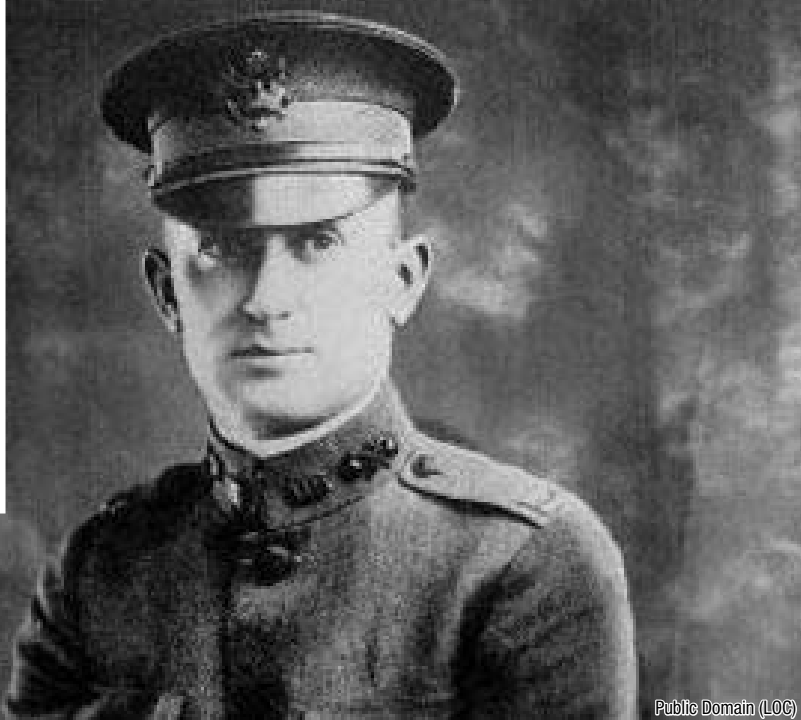


Public Domain (LOC)

Cobb in his Fall 1918 military-service cap



Public Domain (LOC)



Public Domain (LOC)

And here it is again in full black and white.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



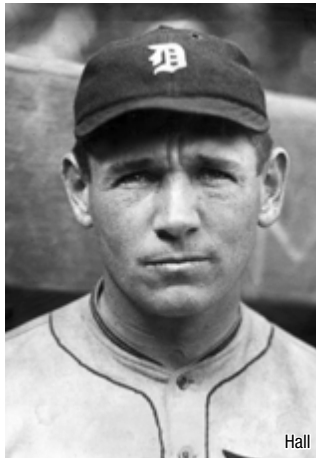
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October 1918--Cobb 'retires' to serve his country

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Tiger OF Harry Heilmann, among last .400 hitters, and precious few .342+ BA lifetime RIGHT-handers



Tigers' .342 BA Harry Heilmann (Babe Ruth, .342, too)



One 1920s drug more fatal than steroids was nicotine, the ultimate Performance-Zapping-Drug [PZD]

PITCHING record. Had the Babe (714 HR) been an original OUTFIELDER, with a modest 45 home runs per year, he would have hit 180 more home runs than Hank Aaron, beating both Aaron (755) and Steroid*-Spangled* Barry Bonds** (762*) by over 100 home runs--and topping 900. Add two more years, and you're into quadruple figures, with 1000+ home runs. Simply, wow. For the rest of the story, let's check out Harvard's Sowell again, on a newer book, his *Perseus* 2011 *Thomas Sowell Reader*, pp.62-63:

Prior to Babe Ruth's spectacular emergence as a home run hitter, batting styles were quite different Most hitters did not grip the bat down at the end, the way Babe Ruth did, and did not swing for the fences, since that often led to the disgrace of striking out. The Chicago Black Sox of 1919 took bribes to throw the World Series, leading to Shoeless Joe Jackson and Eddie Cicotte's downfall. The game needed Babe Ruth's newfound power as a moral pick-me-up.

Established outfielders and infielders had a variety of batting grips to bash, pop, bunt, or nudge the ball so they could chug to first, and steal second. Cobb threw everybody into consternation on hitting etiquette when he loftily gripped the bat with each hand 5 inches from the other (sometimes). Ty's 'choking up' on his heavy bat made slugging coaches want to strangle the nearest ash tree [that the Emerald Ash Borer has pretty well murdered today]. Since Ruth was a pitcher, hitting colleagues gave him the benefit of the doubt, and let him experiment with wild looping swings, aiming at the harvest moon. Weird it was, they thought, but harmless. How could it change the game? A question of bombshell dramatic irony.

Oops, wrong rhetorical question. After 29 'dingers' in 1919, Ruth turned full bore to the almighty **Slugging Average (SLG)**, and **conquered the known and unknown universe**, plus a couple spare galaxies in the Milky Way junkyard. Into 1920, Babe Ruth stole baseball. It didn't hurt that he had a short porch (295 ft, RF Yankee Stadium line) to counter Cobb's cavernous 370 ft. Navin Field RF line. Apples vs. oranges. Level Playing Field, harrumph.

Babe snatched revolutionary glory out from under the hustlers, the base swipers, the Punch & Judy hitters who bopped the ball over somebody's head to die as a double in the tall grass. Babe simply bombarded Yankee Stadium—the House That Ruth Built—with an artillery array of flying firebombs. If his fine **.376** batting average (which didn't win the title then) wasn't enough to clout the establishment over the head with a big kielbasa, let them feast their beady peepers on his truly gigundo numbers—Babe heralded a new decade in 1920 with a world-record-by-25 **54 Home Runs**, plus **137 RBIs**, **158 Runs** scored., **150 BB** (mostly Intentional Walks), a **.532 On-Base Percentage**, and an **astronomical Slugging Average** of **.847**.

The Live Ball Era opened flyaway floodgates for gullywasher sluggers. The game has never been the same since. The following year, Babe went **.378** (losing to a **.394** Tiger onslaught by Harry Heilmann), with **177 Runs scored—the modern-day record**, and 10 over teammate Lou Gehrig's silver-medal **167** in 1936. Burly Babe could *run*. But wait. Nothin' yet. **Babe Ruth hit 59 home runs, breaking his own record, which he whopped again with 1927's 60. It's STILL the 154-game record, so Babe is the Winner & Still Champ** (regardless of nonsense from the Steroid-Shooter* Squad when two Millennia collided with a bang). Ruth also knocked 171 RBIs with 145 Walks, and a much worse Slugging Average than in 1920—sliding down disgracefully all the way from **.847 to .846**.

Ty Cobb, Tris Speaker, Shoeless Joe Jackson, Eddie Collins, and other 'Teens superstars never caught the Babe's wave length on coaxing 90-mph fastballs way out beyond the fence. There were, however, two Tiger exceptions. **Harry Heilmann** celebrated one mammoth clout, after ranking among the AL leaders 11 times. The *New York Herald Tribune* of July 8, 1921 reports how Heilmann smashed a monster shot roughly estimated at **610** feet, closest thing to orbiting a space shuttle this side of the John Glenn 1960s. The Babe often pushed 600 feet. Mickey Mantle's legendary 565-footer is often cited, too. We'll save Cobb's HR binge for later, in his final chapters.

From 1921-25 Cobb beat out the Babe as a Detroit Tiger MLB player/manager (no one would hire the Babe to run a team). For that matter, Cobb exceeded his **.367** BA as a manager, sort of, with a big **.519** average for 933 games, and W-L 479-444 [but Ty was no Hughie 'Ee-Yah' Jennings, Mayo Smith, Sparky Anderson, or Jim Leyland]. Ty's mediocre Standings tallies as Tiger Player/Manager? But, of course: 1921-- W-L 71-82, .464, 6th; 1922---79-75, .513, 3rd; 1923---83-71, .539, **2nd**; 1924---**86-68**, .558, 3rd; 1925---81-73, .526, 4th; **1926 (last Tiger year)---79-75 .513, 6th** in AL. That's five in a row winning seasons, and one superstar protégé Harry Heilmann to root for the teacher, his manager Ty Cobb. Meanwhile, back in Al Capone's Prohibition Chicago, something was brewing that stank like steroids*, and wallowed MLB in its **FIRST** catastrophic disaster to shake its foundations:

The 1919 Black Sox Gamblers' Lament

Babe Ruth and Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis changed baseball together, despite being as much alike as a cat and a giraffe. Everybody knew and most fans loved the big, bombastic basher of baseballs Babe who called everybody "Kid" and who called the King "Hiya King." Wrestler Gorgeous George, who put his hair up in curlers in the ring, and admired his bleached-blond beauty with a hand mirror, showed up on early TV with a huge guy called Man Mountain

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Photofest

Babe Ruth puffs stogie, part of his hot-dog & beer regimen

times. Cobb was thrown out a lot more times (178), but stole [’06 stats] **897** bases. When you check the percentages, Cobb leads Ruth at over 80%, or over **.800** by around 300 points for not getting caught stealing. Ruth’s percentage of successful steals is barely over 50%. Cobb leads by 25 in lifetime batting average (**.367** of **.342**). [**Rickey Henderson** is all-time SB leader, with 1406 stolen bases and getting caught 335 times. Plus one supersonic year with **130 steals** (’82, with Oakland A’s, once Connie Mack’s Philly A’s). Rickey and Ty’s caught-stealing ratios are very close). Welcome to Tiger Stadium, Babe. And Rickey.

Cobb also had the best average above his league’s average ever registered, according to batting expert Ted Williams’s *Hit List* (’96). The ‘Splendid Splinter’ lists himself as third, and compares the best ever to their *League’s Composite Batting Average*. Like so.

Player	Personal Average	League Average	Differential
Ty Cobb	.367	.264	+.102
Joe Jackson	.356	.255	+.101
Ted Williams	.344	.260	+.084
Rogers Hornsby	.358	.276	+.082
Tris Speaker	.345	.259	+.079
Stan Musial	.331	.259	+.072

I give Cobb one extra point from Williams, who only granted Cobb the faddish **“.366”** claimed by a few stat faddists in the 1990s, before Cobb’s .367 once again reigned Supreme. Our 2011 **Average Batting Average is .255, almost exactly mirroring Shoeless Joe Jackson’s era’s composite BA.** Speaker called Williams the greatest hitter of all time. What does Williams, who placed third here, feel about Cobb’s legacy?

Williams grants Cobb a **.945** in Production or OPS, personal stat combining On-Base Percentage and Slugging Average. Ted chooses NOT to factor in park dimensions and other rules. Here he grants Ruth 1.165, himself a 1.116, and a couple others in between him and his #7-ever Cobb. But again, what would Cobb have done if the gloppy ball of unraveling fluff had actually GONE anywhere, when it was cranked in 1909? Cobb was only anticipating golfer guru **Bobby Jones’s** famous upcoming comment—**“Play the ball from where it lays.”**

Williams again, on Cobb—“Cobb was possessed of keen intelligence, blazing speed, and unsurpassed batting skills.” Williams mentions Ty’s three years at the mark Ted was last to accomplish—batting over **.400**. Then he says Ty captured 10 American League batting crowns (Williams was at life’s early- 80s crossroads, and easily pardoned for his understatement, forgetting Cobb actually captured **12 [twelve!] batting crowns**). When .303 hitter Pete Rose [‘Charlie Hustle’] passed Cobb’s 4191 hit record in 1985,

Ted said it's just a longevity thing, not a "serious challenge to Cobb's pre-eminence as the **most productive hitter of all time.**" "Cobb was a smart guy, and I liked him," said practical Ted, a late-life believer in immortal Cryonics [freezing bodies, to preserve them until futuristic medical revival to life].

Cobb ribbed Ted about the "Williams Shift," where fearful fielders would coagulate to the batter's right of 2nd base, and clump up--a major 'new' 2014-15 managerial strategy. "Boy, Ted, if they'd pulled that shift stuff on me I'd have shown them something." Cobb could place the tricky ball virturally "*anywhere* I damned well please." Ted said Ty was always helping him to bat even better, and punch the ball to left field. Ty hit to all fields, almost anywhere he chose, his bat wizardry unchallenged.

One of **Miguel Cabrera's** great strengths is that he has massive power to all fields, too, and can lash a line drive over the deep right-center notch at Comerica ['National'] Park into no-man's land in half a jiffy.

Pitchers are usually noted for strikeouts, not batters. **Babe Ruth** was far and away a better striker-outer at bat than Ty Cobb, with 1330 strikeouts over a 21-year career and 8399 At-Bats.. Ty's total for 24 years and 11,434 AB? Just 357 (though a few in the first five years weren't officially counted). In 1987 Milwaukee, later Tiger feast-or-famine slugger Rob Deer struck out 186 times in just one year, half of Cobb's lifetime total. Deer registered the lowest regular outfielder batter in ML history with his .179 for the '91 Tigers till OF/1B Adam Dunn's .159 in 2011—but Rob hit 25 home runs, Dunn only 11! [see Strikeout Sidebar nearby]. Ty never hit 25, but I hope no blundering logician of the hammerball ilk calls Rob or Adam a better ballplayer than Ty. The weirditude of the illogical world has no boundaries.

Early years 1905-12 yielded no accurate SO or K's stats for Ty, so it helped his lowdown strikeout record scrunch lower—averaging just **14 per year. Indeed, as a Tiger in his last season 1926, playing about half time, Ty Cobb only struck out TWICE (2 times) the entire YEAR!** **Kaline** figured too few K's meant less than aggressive power swings.

My dad told me Ty Cobb was the World's Greatest Hitter when I was about five. With all these convincing numbers, it's hard not to believe it.

Mitch Albom's 2013 blockbuster *The First Phone Call from Heaven* contains this little chunk of orphic wisdom, nestled on p. 165, that furnished our chapter's title about Two Different Stories. Thanks, Mitch. Cobb's numbers shine. The Life of Cobb as told by others is often a Morality Tale telling people to be less selfish, more team-oriented. Yet Cobb's whole life was dedicated to helping our Detroit Tigers [Ty-gers?] win! . . . and teaching hitting to create superstars out of Heilmann, Fothergill, and Manush.

Vet sportswriter George Cantor says Cobb "Swept through baseball like a typhoon." It's the great **Ernie Harwell**, however, who distinguishes Cobb from Ruth. Tom Stanton (*Ty & the Babe*, '07, p. xi) asked Ernie, who knew both Cobb and Babe, which one he'd rather talk to. Ernie held forth—"Cobb. Most people would probably like Ruth better. He was a party-goer, a hail-fellow sort of guy. I know all the ballplayers loved Ruth. He was a blustery kind of man, profane, a loudmouth. Cobb was a little

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS

more cerebral. A little more dignified, at least to me.” Ernie & Ty were also both Georgians.

Stanton waxes prophetic himself—**“Cobb and Ruth towered over their peers as the most famous players of the century.”**



Public Domain (LOC)

Sisler, Ruth & Cobb



Public Domain (LOC)

Same 2 mega-stars, Ruth & Cobb, and guys in suits who wish they were Ruth or Cobb

determined eyes, and Pepsi's 'more bounce to the ounce' in Ty's coiled-spring step. Funny, I figure, Hersch never checked Ty's Glory Days out while younger. Obviously, his incarcerating parents did a lot of intellectual screening for a guy destined to become a successful scientist and fine memoir writer.

It seems Ty has a little cottage-industry of selfless charity going there in his Office, sending free request baseballs to little boys, perhaps underprivileged, who hear about him from *their* fathers and still idolize the 'Georgia Peach.' Then Hersch reads his Hall Plaque info—'12X AL Batting Champ, Batted over **.400** three times, 23 years over **.300.**' Was Cobb making up for the blaze of lost time that cascaded by him at the peak of his superstardom—maybe brushing past long-lost kids and fans at autograph time, obsessed with his quest to be the best? Could he atone now for his past sins? Crotchety Al Stumpf never writes about *this* Ty Cobb, just his toxic perception of Ty the Curmudgeon.

Hersch can't believe Ty hadn't bragged about these superhuman numbers beforehand, for Little Leaguers learn key averages and other stats. [You have to ask where his Greatest Batters Ever info went; most Little League kids in Al Kaline's 1955 intuitively KNEW *something* about Ruths and Cobbs, Foxxes and Gehrigs, Kiners and DiMaggios] For kids who sent him requests from the poorest or most embarrassing circumstances, Ty would take on a Santa Claus flair and sign: "To James, From Your Good Friend, Ty Cobb." All the while, Cobb **never speaks about his other 90 records.** Hersch can see he'd calculated it that way.

Sister Susan figures out the mystery of why he didn't own up to being Ty Cobb back at the Sky Meadow water pump on Tahoe—"He doesn't want us bothered by who he is and what he's done. He saw what happened to his children, and he didn't want what he accomplished to affect us" (181). Yes, the profound wisdom of children.*

*TEXTNOTE— Our son Jeremy does the same thing. When his band Nine Days hit #6 on the national *Billboard* charts in Summer 2000 with "Absolutely (Story of a Girl)," Jeremy spent 7 years on the road in tour buses. When he met the lovely girl of his dreams Kristen, he settled down and finally got the substantial day job he wanted. When asked about his Teen Idol days, he sloughs it off by saying he just played keyboards in some rock band, so I brag mercilessly about his success, like now, here.

So grandson Hersch learns to separate the real Ty Cobb, baseball superstar, from the even 'REAL-er' Granddaddy Cobb, a very fragile and vulnerable aging man who lost two sons to early fatal disease and miscommunication. It all goes back to "Me & Me Against the World." Then Ty's two personae, Ty and Gramps, meld together.

Ty asks Hersch to get out a bunch of bats and balls, then three kids and Ty go out to play baseball. I'm still astounded he hadn't had a catch or flipped an early-stage Wiffle Ball to eager grandkids armed with enormous blue Wiffle bats. Ty mentions his ex-wife Charlie by saying 'Grandma won't want to deal with the grass stains.' Kaboom, it's the first time Hersch ever heard Granddaddy mention *her*, for the two had separated in the late 40s. Young Hersch muses—"His voice was so even, like he had spoken from a different part of his life, long ago when he was the head of a family" (183). Ouch—poignant. Ty Cobb guides his three grandchildren in the proper way to swing, bunt, or place the ball into any desired field. He urges righty Hersch to learn to bat left-handed, to gain two steps toward first base. Strange, I figure, that Grandpa Cobb had never done that before; Wiffle

Ball has been one great Dean grandparenting joy, since all the kids were about TWO. Ty stubbornly refuses a mitt, saying his gnarled hands didn't need one. Hersch does what Granddaddy orders. He smacks a ferocious line into Ty's left *hand*. Ouch.

Just before Ty is about to show them how to slide, helper Louise runs out the door, and yells to Ty at his age and infirmity he shouldn't be running amok. Or especially *sliding*.

Afterwards, Aunt Shirley puffs on a cig, and listens to Billie Holiday sing the depth of bluesy Jazz sadness, in some smoky nevermore bar by some nighthawk East Village pub. Then she turns to Louis 'Satchmo' Armstrong, long before his ANTHEM "What a Wonderful World," a song that inspired Robin Williams' magic movie "Good Morning Vietnam" and hit #32 in 1988--long after Southerners Satchmo and Ty were history.

Then Grandpappy arrives again, and teaches Hersch lessons in competing, and how to take razzing from both opposing teams and teammates. When Ty went through his Tiger teammates' vicious hazing stage in 1905, no one was there to befriend the recent orphan. Ty was alone. Ty knew maybe it wouldn't be so bad for his grandson Hirsch and sister Susan and brother Kit, with him there to block out.

"Work on not listening. Don't pay attention to it," Granddaddy Ty tells him. He tells him to steer his own rudder, and depend upon himself, to make it in life. Far from pompous platitudes, proffered plitudinally, this NEW 'Professor Cobb' now shows his grandson the tools he'd need to make it. SOCIAL tools—that took a long time for Ol' Ty to discover.

It's like **Johnny Cash's** great #2, '69 pseudo-**RAP** song by award-winning children's author Shel Silverstein, "**A Boy Named Sue.**" The Song-Guy is a pilgrim who seeks every bar in the South to discover and destroy his estranged father who walked out when he was an infant, after branding him with his 'awful name,' **Sue**. When he finally nails the culprit—a grizzled, wiry, sinewy bar-scrapper, and the two fight like TIGERS, the kid gets the best of his old man. The old man acquiesces, and tells the kid he's got a right to be mad at him for naming his boy SUE. Then dear old disappeared dad tells the kid something to make them reconcile—basically, I knew I wouldn't be there to help you along, Son, so I named you something to make you Ultra-Tough and self-reliant on your own—SUE! So father and son reconcile, giving peace a chance.

Though Ty Cobb missed Johnny's hit by eight years, I'm sure he'd enjoy it, despite his super-sensitive sense of humor. So Granddaddy Cobb steels his talented grandson about how to take care of yourself, as Johnny's Song-Guy SUE did. In 2013, the poor pussycat **Detroit Lions** were actually in first place into December in their Green Bay-Minnesota-Chicago Bears conference, thanks to quarterback-sacking efforts of a 6'6", 310# defensive lineman with a tongue-twister 1st name, and a last name that CASH-es in on Johnny's get-tough theme—**Ndamakong SUH!** You can't make this stuff up!

Late in the story, Young Hersch and family get a bigger two-story home at Santa Maria. Ayako goes home to Seattle, and 'Mommy Dearest' kicks Hersch out, again."I don't want to take care of you anymore. I don't want you to live here. You'll have to live somewhere else" (195). It is not recorded whether Marjorie was nominated for Mother



Public Domain (LOC)

The Babe and Ty (when Cobb played his last years for Connie Mack's Philly Athletics, with a bizarre elephant logo)



Hall

Postwar Babe Ruth--a half century was about all the roaring life Ruth could wring out

bases, in the same commanding way. Prospecting for the gold medal, Cobb arose an eternal winner.

* * * * *

In 2014, grandson Herschel Cobb's autobiographical book *Heart of a Tiger* won the *Spitball* magazine "Casey Award." It also miraculously somehow captured 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. After bad vibes from the mid-90s Tommy Lee Jones *Cobb* movie about a dying Ty, the new **Ty Cobb Museum** sprang up in Royston, Georgia 1998 to dispel rumors of Cobb's bad-guy image. Its chief full-time museum director is Julie Ridgway, with help in 2014 from buoyant and sprightly Sharri Hobbs. You can call (706) 245-1825 anytime for information on their daily regular hours or Saturday 10-4 schedule, and all the Cobb memorabilia and career treasures and photos and films available. "We didn't like the movie here in Royston," Sharri matter-of-factly. "[Ty] was a really good guy, we think." She highlights a giant picture there of legendary old TY COBB with boyish young AL KALINE that crosses generations and aspirations and legends. The historically welcome and insightful Ty Cobb Museum offers a whole lot of fan-friendly helpful info on the myth and the man Ty Cobb, baseball's greatest hitter in the history of the entire world.

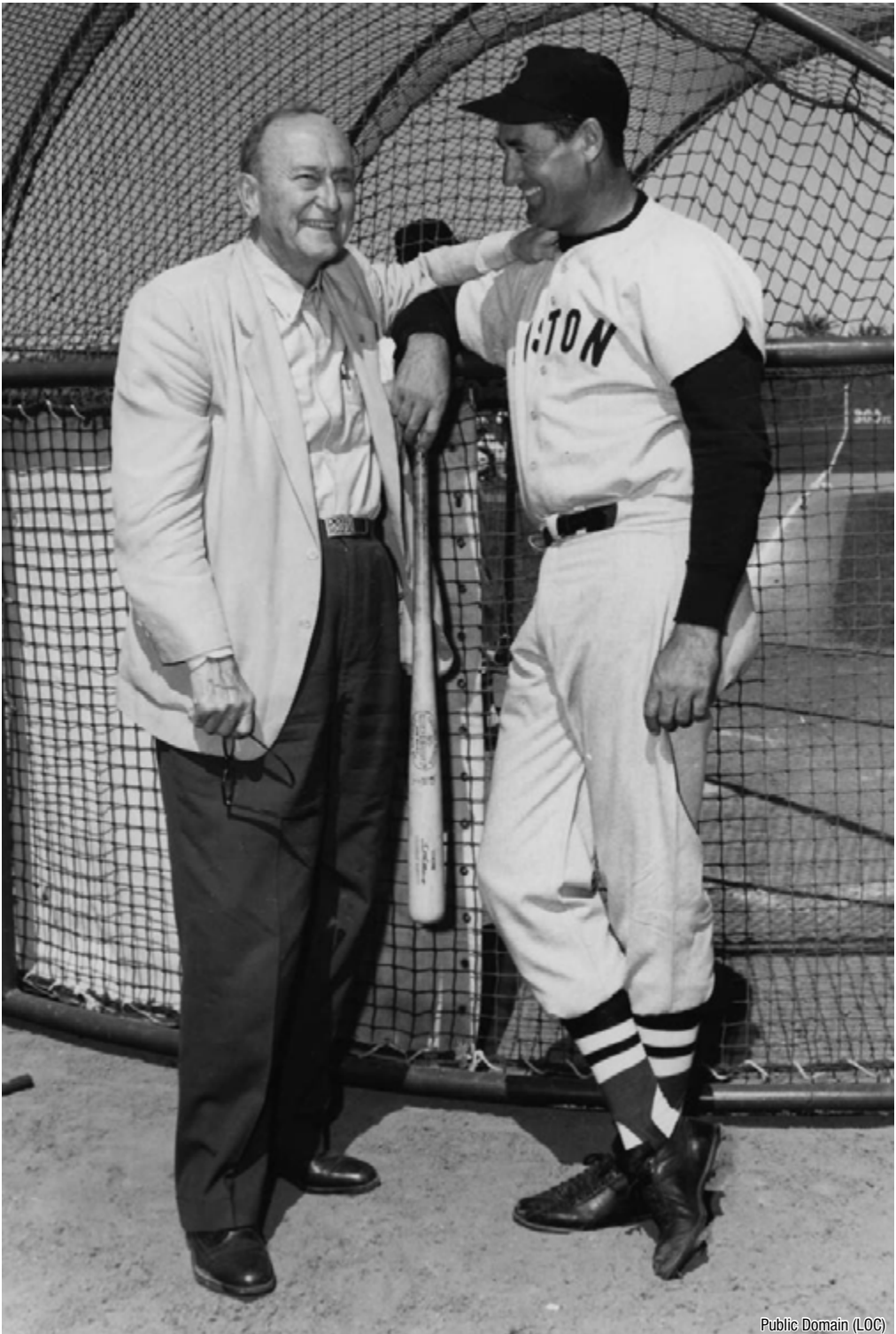
Cobb's Royston Hospital dream faded in 2012 into a new regional medical center 12 miles away—though the 1952 edifice donated by Ty Cobb was certainly a state-of-the-art hospital for over 60 years, serving his Royston friends and neighbors. A planned shrine in the 60s to Ty kind of lumbered along like a camel accidentally designed by a horse-designing committee, to finally end up as Royston City Hall—a fact Ty's father would be proud to know. TY's friend JT Cunningham's house and store still stands at Royston's main corner, but Cobb's boyhood home burned down long ago. Everyone is surprised at how small-town urban his house was. It wasn't way out in the country as everyone perceived. Morosely, its old footprint now 'houses' the parking lot for the Pruitt Funeral Home at the main-corner intersection of Georgia Highways 17 and 29.

Wherever baseball fans and players gather, the spirit of Ty Cobb will prevail, even thrive, and bless their dazzling diamonds with his courageous mastery and teaching of America's game.



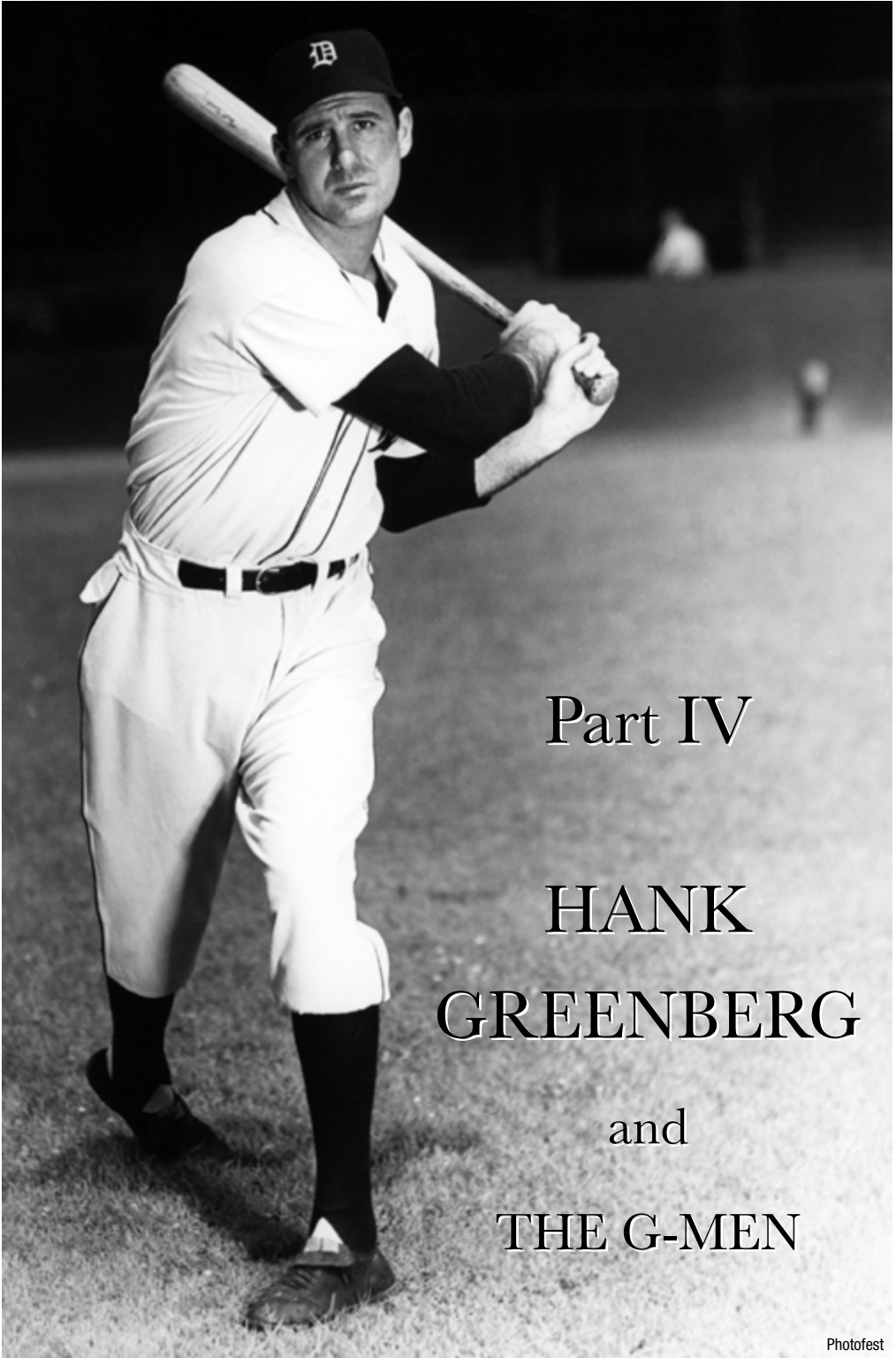
Vet Ty greets upcoming 50s stars Harvey Kuenn and Al Kaline. Kaline, by one DAY, broke Cobb's youngest batting champ mark.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



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Ted Williams, with hitting mentor Ty Cobb.



Part IV

HANK
GREENBERG

and

THE G-MEN

Photofest

CHAPTER 64

“OI! YOU... YOU ...YOU
BASEBALL PLAYER!”
LUCKY #1-1-11

*“For protection in baseball, Hank Greenberg brought a bat.
It was also the weapon of choice for Ty, and Al, and now Miguel.
Greenberg was a slugger and a gentleman.”*

Quick—other than Ty Cobb, who was the best consistent Tiger player in the 20th century? And which non-steroid* right-handed hitter still holds the all-time single-season Home Run Record with **58** (in a 154-game schedule)? And who knocked in more runs in one glorious year than anyone in MLB history, except in the Hyper-Ball 1930-31 Era [Cubs’ OF Hack Wilson (191, 1930) or Yankee 1B Lou Gehrig (184, 1931)]? It’s no surprise it was one terrific Tiger. He took the tornado of the American 1930-39 Depression, and wrung it out into a Tiger baseball bonanza. This burly Tiger and his big bat knocked the stuffing out of a downer decade. He helped create the Detroit Tigers’ very best 10-year swoop to overwhelming victory. Though he was very good, don’t bet the ranch on ‘Fats’ Fothergill, refugee from the last chapter. Al Kaline’s a good answer, but Al stormed out of the 30s decade at the ripe age of five. And no, it was not zany and lovable eternal Rookie of the Year, Mark ‘The Bird’ Fidrych, whose be-bop ball fluttered away to the South Detroit moon, in a strobe-light mirrorball 70s Discomania era.

Hint, he’s from the spot Letterman calls the “the greatest city in the world” in the very shadow of immortal Yankee Stadium.

Hank Greenberg was embarrassed in his sophomore Tiger year—1934. The *Detroit Jewish Chronicle* called him the “Jewish Babe Ruth” when he hit just 26 home runs. The big slugger was born Hyman ‘Hank’ Greenberg on Manhattan’s Lower

East Side, only 75 minutes into the New Year—**Jan. 1, 1911, or #1-1-11**—Hank dawned the new decade that Ty Cobb owned. No one realized for another double-decade the shimmering promise of this *first* ‘Hammerin’ Hank.’ Hank would someday almost avenge the achievements of the larger-than-life ‘Sultan of Swat’ who stole Cobb’s thunder as #1 ballplayer ever—a reform-school German-American pitching sensation out of Baltimore by way of Boston. The Swatter was that scrappy kid so obstreperous and street-tough his own saloonkeeper father and absentee mother gave up, shuffling him off to Father Matthias’s reform school. Later his *pitching* chalked up World Series wins galore for the blazing Bosox. Then he went to bat. He singlehandedly created a legendary New York Yankee dynasty to change Ty Cobb’s hit-slapping world. Naturally, his name was Babe Ruth (see Ch. 52). Hank’s was not, but Hank almost topped Ruth’s 60 HR record, when his 59th was rained out in 1938. Disappointingly, wild St. Louis Browns pitchers and others walked Greenberg intentionally (119 times that year) in 20% of his September at-bats. Though #1 Detroit Tiger all-time slugger Hank Greenberg’s whole sandlot season bloomed under Yankee Stadium’s shadow, and the mighty Yankees wooed him (with LOU GEHRIG firmly planted at Wally Pipp’s ex-home first base), Hank Greenberg followed NY publisher Horace Greeley’s American success mantra religiously—“Go West, young man!”

January 1, 1911. A big newborn 2nd-generation Romanian-Jewish-American kid commanded the dawn of a decade. The great Cobb batted his all-time high pinnacle in 1911--**.420**, with **47 doubles, 24 triples, 127 RBI**, and 8 home runs. The Greenberg baby, and everybody else in baseball history, never accomplished anything like that, but someday he’d grow up to smash the 2nd-highest total one-season RBIs (**183**) in the American League ever. Also, Hank crunched the **Most Home Runs** [in brief 154-game schedule] **Ever Hit by a Right-Hander—58**—until deep into the ‘Juiced’ Steroid* Era of musclebound Mark McGwire* at the Millennium’s gong. Only lefty Babe Ruth (60) would slug more, and do it unaided by post-modern *enhancements.*

Hank’s dad David Greenberg met lovely future bride Sarah Schwartz at the *landsmanshaft*, one of thousands of social clubs for newly-arrived Eastern European Jews who spoke Yiddish (a German dialect) and gravitated to places like New York’s Lower East Side. At the time Hank Greenberg was born, New York City was one-third Jewish, and Detroit nearly one-sixth. New York Giants’ famous manager, **John J. McGraw**, believed it’d be a great quick draw for McGraw to outpace nearby Bronx rivals the Yankees (once the New York Highlanders). Giants just had to sign a great player who just happened to be Jewish. Then McGraw turned down the best one. Bio writer Mark Kurlansky explains how self-explanatory Yiddish *landsmanshaft* today means a fellow Jewish person; a century ago it signified a Jewish person from the same foreign region. [My gentile Scottish relatives did the same globetrotting thing while sponsoring one another into Detroit’s nearest international neighbor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Then to Detroit—probably the same way many of YOUR relatives arrived here].

As Roberto Clemente said, “I don’t believe in color.” In Greenberg’s case *color* was never an issue. Today, the language group ‘Hispanic’ has somehow wiggled its way into being called a ‘race,’ just as ‘Jewish’ was often referred to in 1911, despite great Afro-American Jewish Minnesota Twins star Rod Carew, and Sinatra’s friend Af-

gallop for the gold [Alliteration Monster strikes again]. It was Tiger Time.

Charlie Gehringer was voted 3rd greatest athlete from Michigan in history (1999 *Sports Illustrated*). **Charlie** warrants very serious consideration in piercing the Quadruple Crown of Big Four All-Time Tiger superstars. Now you're wondering *which* two other Michiganders, or Michigeese, topped Gehringer. Silver medalist is Michigan State's #1 1979 6'9" basketball legend and Los Angeles Laker colossus of hoops, **Magic Johnson**.

The #1 sports figure from Michigan is a boxer. He is also the man that **Nelson Mandela** (1918-2013), South Africa's iconic President, and defeater of segregationist *apartheid* [Dutch—'apart-ness], counted on when *he* was a young boxer long before Muhammad Ali. Look out--we're in for a gigundo Boxing tale to perk up Judge Larry Glazer and poet Freddy Byrnes, and the rest of us multisport fans.

Nelson Mandela, like Lincoln and Gandhi and Dr. King, symbolized interracial freedom and harmony in the free world. Young impressionable Mandela looked to a Detroiter whose mighty fists freed his people from segregation and financial bondage. Who? Detroit's own Heavyweight Champ of the World for about 12 lucky years, defeating Hitler's Max Schmeling in a 1st-round 1938 knockout, to show major sports could be integrated successfully long before 1947 Dodgers' Jackie Robinson.

The man who changed Mandela's mind-set was **Joe Louis** [Barrow]. Joe is the Motor City boxer whose sculpted fist guards Michigan Consolidated Gas and the City-County Building near the foot of Woodward {where I worked over a year as a Tech. Aid, fingerprinting way too many *whites-only* cop recruits, while in grad school}. Joe Louis is MISTAKENLY called the #1 Michigan-born athlete, a mistake in geography--not Joe's bombastic boxing talents. Hank Greenberg, of course, was part of Joe Louis's similar promise of freedom, for people of all races and creeds, from the standpoint of *religion*.

But wait. Joe Louis [Barrow] was actually born in Alabama, just 10K (6 miles) north of Lafayette. And Detroiter Willie Horton in Arno, Virginia. Ty Cobb, too, was born in rural Georgia, but Joe was the one with the ramshackle shack. Seventh of eight kids, 11# newborn Joe was grandson of former slaves, with ¼ Cherokee blood, and son of partially-white Munroe Barrow. Joe's father was committed to a mental institution when Little Joe was two. At the time, the term 'multiracial' didn't exist. Joe Louis was considered simply the 'Brown Bomber,' ostensibly the very first major international sports hero who was African-American, throughout the USA [Ghanian-American 'Galveston Giant' Jack Johnson is another story, Champ 1908-15, and can be Googled]. Hawkeye Pierce, hero of ubiquitous 80s sitcom M*A*S*H* [who had asterisks long before rampant steroids* did], spoke of FDR and Joe Louis's 30s decade, now brimming with Tiger 'G-Men.'—"You knew where you stood in those days. Roosevelt was always the President and Joe Louis was always the champ." So doesn't Louis's Alabaman nativity make **Charlie Gehringer the #2 Michigan athlete ever?** This rhetorical question answers itself.

**The Joe Louis, John Dean,
Larry Glazer, and Denny Jagers Ring**

Even after Louis's boxing champ years ran down in 1952, he

'Fats' Fothergill, Mickey Cochrane, Charlie Gehringer, Goose Goslin, Schoolboy Rowe, Tommy Bridges, Hal Newhouser and Dizzy Trout. One by one, no pennant, no glory. When the TEAM congealed and rocked out, however, the Tigers hit their peak performance against juggernauts from the Yankees to the Cardinals. Together these Tigers flanked their 'Superest' Tiger of them all in their most glorious heyday season ever, 1934-46—premier slugger **Hank Greenberg.**

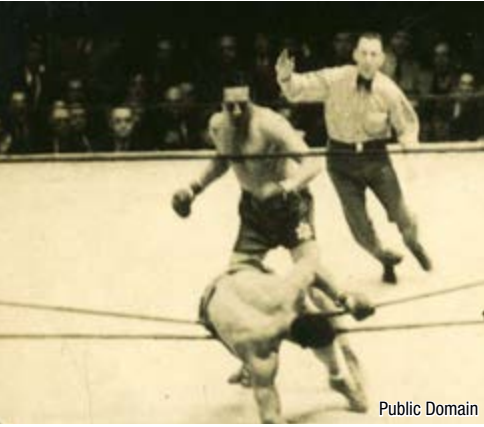
If 1934's pennant action was a prelude to destiny for upcoming Tiger onslaughts, 1935 was a magic year that truly caused our upward-spiraling metropolis, Michigan's own Motor City, to take on the hallowed title of City of Champions.* This 1934-40 Tiger dynasty is challenged only by the hot 2011-14 Tiger teams with Miguel Cabrera, Victor Martinez, David Price, Victor Martinez, Max Scherzer, and a cast of dozens of dream-dazzled Championship seekers.

Fans ask--"When was the Detroit Tigers' Greatest Heyday? What decade did they hit their absolute peak? Great news. We've arrived, but it's a wartorn and stretched fiscal decade 1934-45. We're revving up the fireworks fusillade that highlights T.G.I. F. Friday Nites at Coemerica Park--but we're 'bopping on back'" to the thrilling thirties and bombastic firework forties, when the whole world was agonizing to put its sad self back together, or kiss civilization goodbye.



Tiger quartet the 'Battalion of Death'--
1B Greenberg, 2B Gehringer, SS Billy Rogell, 3B Marv Owen

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Public Domain

Jewish-American Heavyweight Champ Max Baer defeats Hitler's favorite Max Schmeling



Public Domain

Heavyweight boxing champ Max Baer, pre-Greenberg Jewish-American macho sports star.



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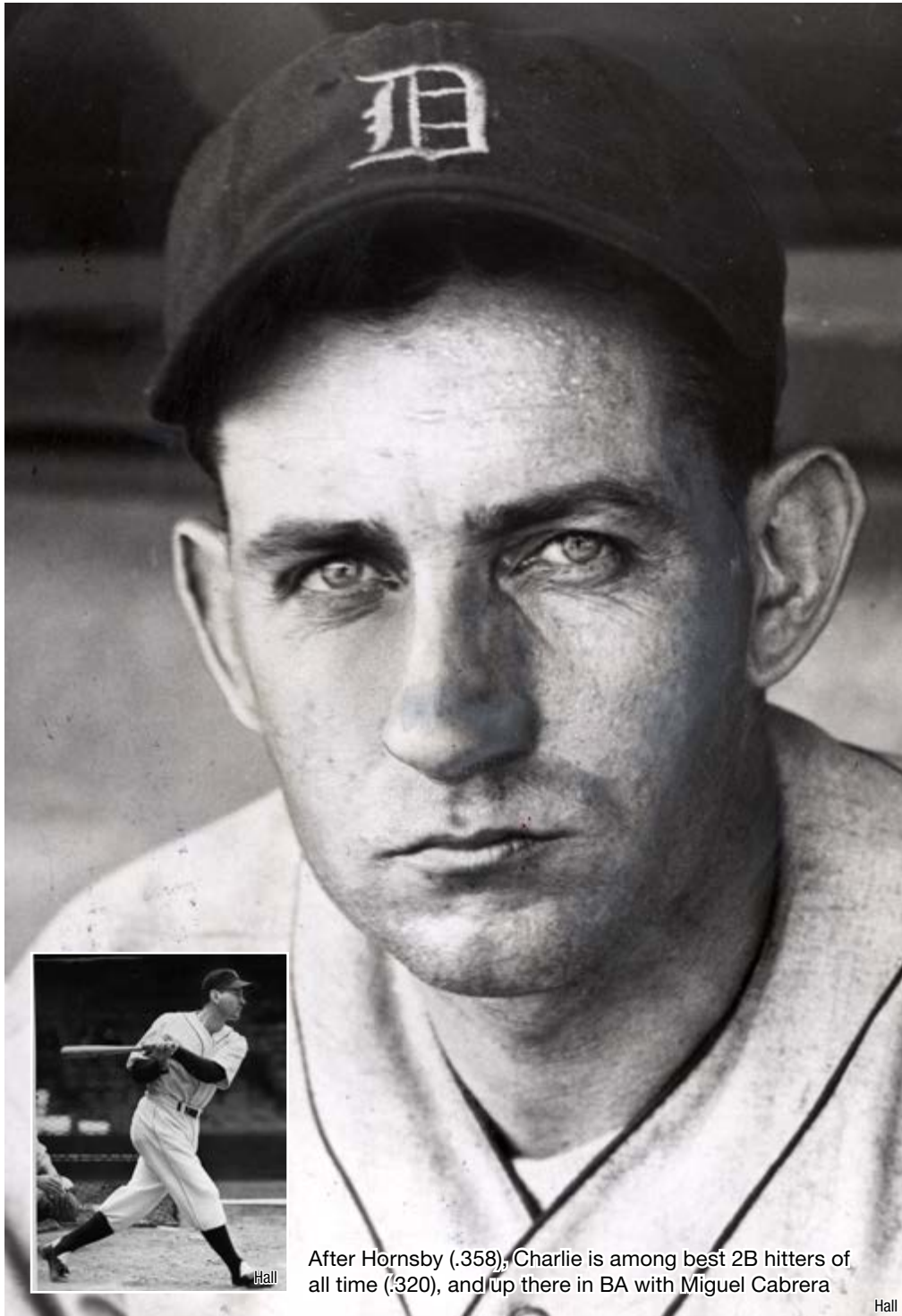
Joe Louis statue, Cobo Hall, downtown Detroit



Modcan Pix

DHS diamond star 2B Denny Jagers, impromptu boxer, when trouble made the mistake of arriving

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



After Hornsby (.358), Charlie is among best 2B hitters of all time (.320), and up there in BA with Miguel Cabrera

Charlie Gehringer, who wore and retired #2 for Tigers long before Kalamazoo, Michigan's superstar Yankee SS Derek Jeter

reward, until now, and you can start the Eddie Ainsmith Fan Club. First Tiger hurlers are **Glenn Abbott** (b. '51, Tigers W-L 5-5, 1983-84) & **Al Aber** (1927-93, Tigers W-L 22-24, 1953-57).

Greenberg's 41 HR handily won 1940's HR title, besting fellow slugger Jimmie 'Beast' Foxx of the Sox (Red), with 36, plus York at 33 and DiMag at 31. Hank's **Home Run Percentage of 7.2% also led AL.** Ted Williams lists Greenberg 8th ever in corollary stat—at-bats per HR, or 15.69, behind Ruth, Ted himself, Jimmie Foxx, **Mickey Mantle**, and relative newcomers Kiner, Killibrew, and Phillie third baseman Mike Schmidt.

Williams' 1996 *Hit List* barely predates the Steroid* Onslaught. These ugly drugs made a mockery of everybody's hard-earned records. Hank's **50** doubles also clobbered 1940 competition. Tiger Barney McCosky's speedy feet granted him the triples crown (19), not the Triple Crown (see Ch. 43, Cobb vs. Crawford). Last but certainly not least, Greenberg's '40 Slugging Average of **.670** whopped DiMaggio's **.626, Williams's .594, [new] York's .583, and Foxx's .581.** Indeed, *Hit List* lists Greenberg **5th SLG** ever, so it's worth jumping off the paragraph—

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--|
| 1) | Babe Ruth | .690 |
| 2) | Ted Williams | .634 |
| 3) | Lou Gehrig | .632 |
| 4) | Jimmie Foxx | .609 |
| 5) | HANK GREENBERG | .605, just 4 pts. from Copper medal for 4th place, zowie. |

Hank was a slugger, not a cure-all. PITCHING was key, with a fine staff nucleus. World War II growled over the European horizon. Our friends and my relatives in Canada were already invited into war by Hitler's '39 invasion of Poland. Uncle Murray Amelin served in the Canadian Navy on a 'Corvette,' which transformed from a moderate-sized fighting ship to a Chevy sports car somehow in 1953's Detroit. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was unwilling to conciliate Hitler's demands, as former PM Neville Chamberlain had done, so Hitler's fierce *Wehrmacht* crushed Czechoslovakia in 1937. Soon we'd all be at war, thanks to an overhanging invitation by Japanese Emperor Hirohito, and his flying Zeroes and bombers over Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941. But 1940 still gave us time to pitch a Tiger winner.

Tiger pitching staff's stats mirrored Greenberg's. **Al Kaline's** 1st manager **Fred Hutchinson** was a '40 rookie Tiger ace (1919-64, long illness, 3.73 ERA lifetime, and 18-10 in '47). I fondly remember 'Hutch' from pretty Miss Goldstein's 1st-grade class at now-defunct Caroline Crosman School at Clairmount and Hamilton. A bold brick edifice built in 1908, Crosman roared in Greenberg's 1940. Crosman is a ramshackle ghost school today, astride massive Herman Kiefer Tuberculosis Sanatorium at John Lodge Expressway, between Hazelwood and Gladstone. You see the whole necropolitan double-hulk, crumbling by degree, from the Get-Outa-Detroit-Fast John Lodge Expressway. This first ditch freeway bisected my neighborhood, which in 1906 was North Detroit. The big concrete ditch speedway helped launch my refugee folks to Dearborn

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



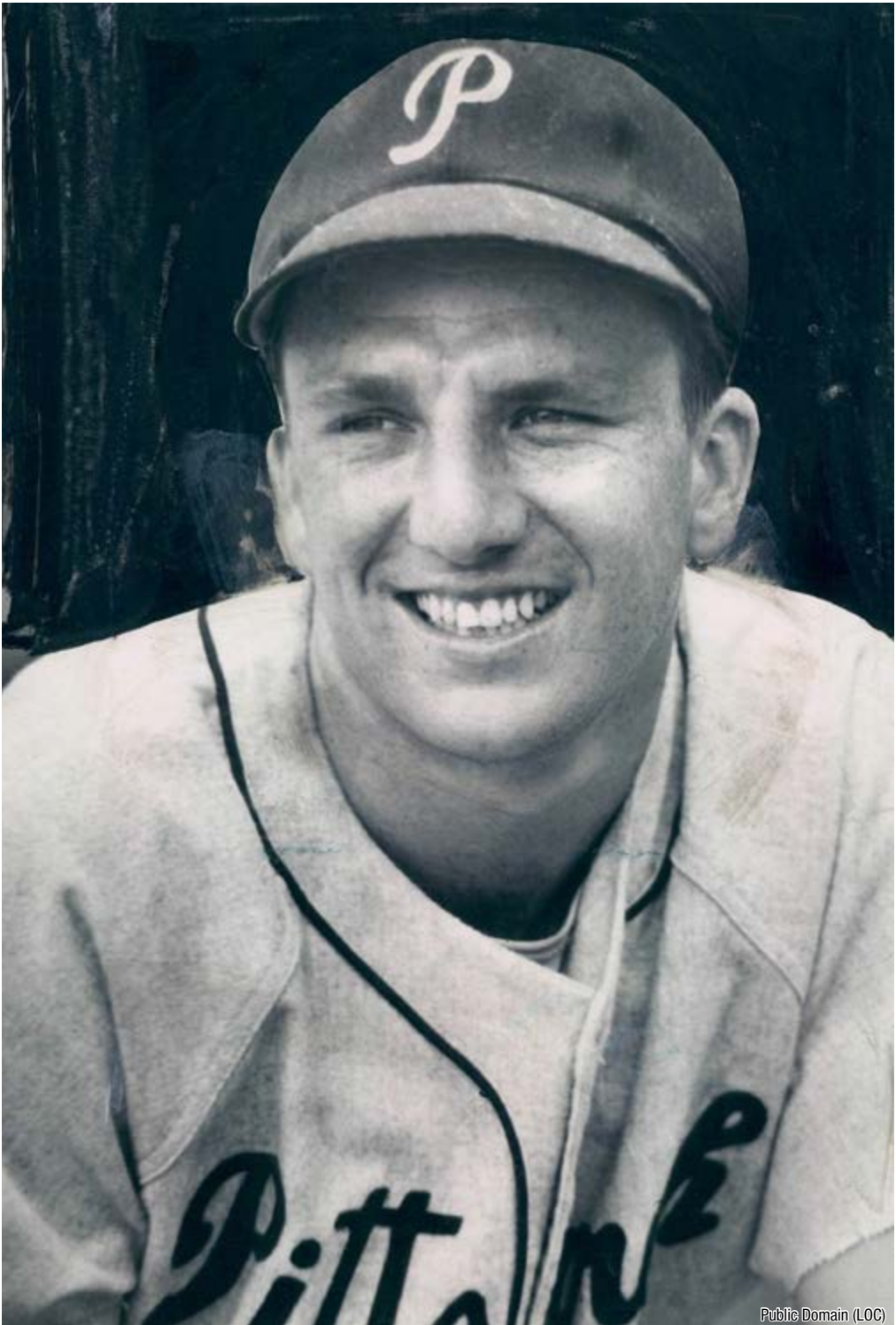
Liou Gehrig & Hank Greenberg--Hank got twice as many years, 75 to 37, but they still seemed way too short.



Photofest

Greenberg helped Jackie Robinson feel at home in the major leagues

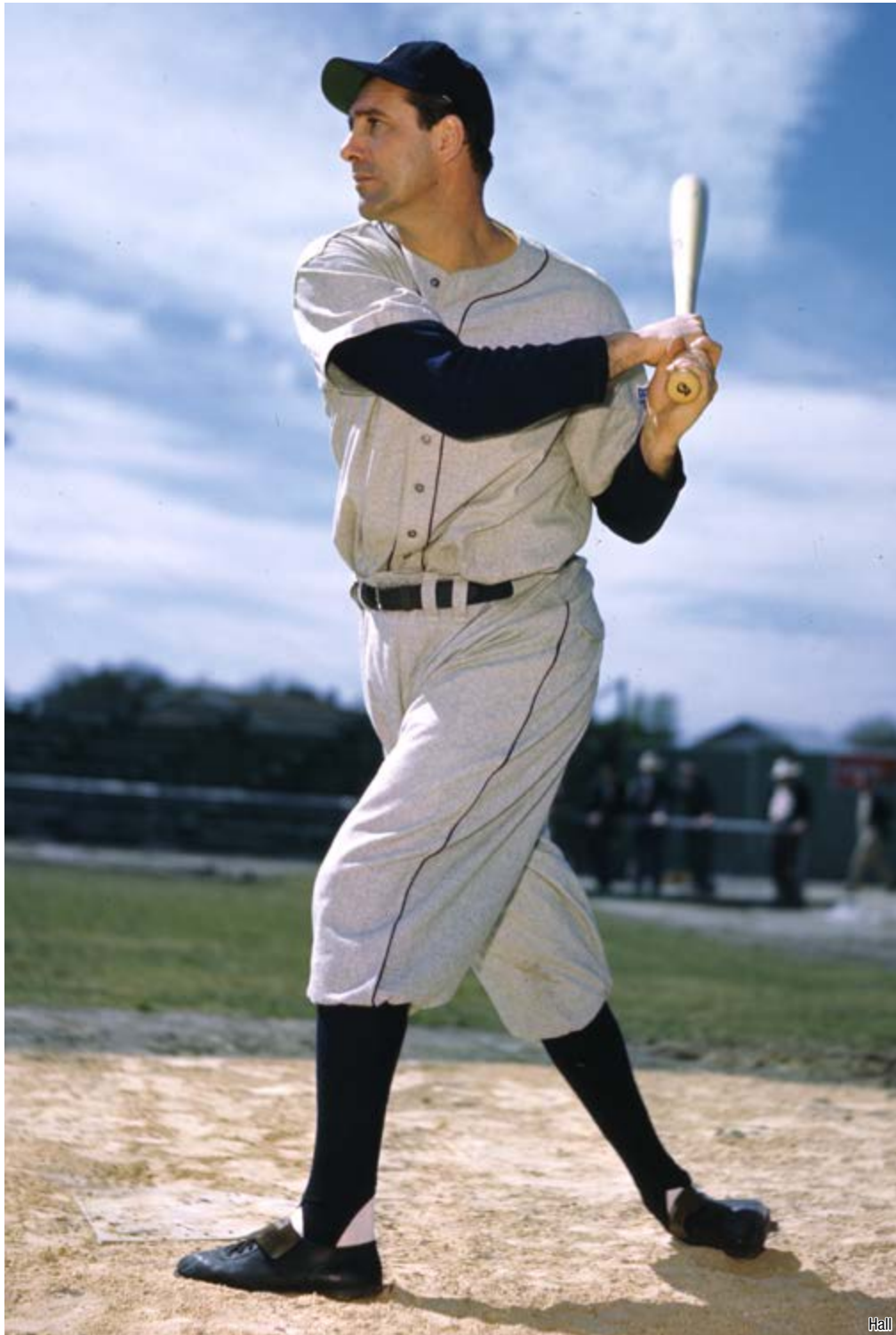
DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



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Pirate slugger Ralph Kiner, who won NL HR race 1946-52 (7 years). A great Mets broadcaster, too.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Hank Greenberg, sundown [maybe sun-up].

tucky Colonel bore the closest likeness to Caucasian Randy Bass, and this story is not fishy, even if we add Dizzy, Rainbow, Steve, and MIKE TROUT for verification. Until 2003, Hanshin Tigers never won a pennant again, considering it a curse for absconding with the poor **KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) Chicken Baron**. In 2009, after Hanshin Tigers stalked two titles, creepy mangled statue torso parts were found by the Dotonbori Canal, missing a hand. Meanwhile, Hanshin's Tigers gave Cecil Fielder good cause, via 38 quick HR in their 144-game season, to catch the DETROIT Tigers' everlasting attention.

Cecil went right to work. Detroit's Tigers snagged him for 1B, and the Tigers landed their 'Wild Bear.' Cecil was a much bigger package at 6'3", 280# than lefty son Prince. Prince arrived at a lithe and semi-svelte 6'0" and 260, but by his Tiger-time 2012-13, he zoomed up to 299#--fastest 300-pounder I ever saw.

Randall Simon's Curse of the Sausage

Randall Simon, Tiger 1st baseman, was fined \$432 for disorderly conduct for whacking a RUNNING SAUSAGE lightly with a bat. The sausages were mascots of the Milwaukee Brewers. As a Piratical Pittsburgh Pirate, the Curacao, Netherlands Antilles slugger whupped the tall cardboard head of a racing Brewer costumed SAUSAGE--college student Mary Block. The sausage was unhurt, except for a scraped strawberry knee. She crashed into another of four racing sausages. Randall Simon (b. '75) meant it as a gentle tap, maybe a roughhousing joke. The joke backfired. Besides getting docked \$432 by the magistrate, MLB nailed Randall for \$2000 and a 3-day suspension. You can YouTube this abortive prank. The cute kid with the strawberry knee won an autographed Simon bat, and a free trip to Simon's tropical island Curacao--so Mandy Block was the ultimate Big Winner.

Randall Simon batted .302 as Tiger first-sacker (and Sausage Bopper), with 19 HR and 82 RBIs in Steroidland* 2002. Simon somehow fails to dislodge Hank Greenberg or Miguel Cabrera in our Greatest Tiger First-baseman Sweepstakes, now and forevermore.

OK, what we really want to know is how did **Cecil Fielder** challenge **Hank Greenberg's 'Greatest Tiger Slugger' image**, at least for one golden four-year span? Two, actually—Hank's is 1937-40, and Cecil's 1990-93. Though's Cecil's totals tapered, he blasted a monster home run collection, until American pitchers figured him out—**50, 44** (Miguel Cabrera's top total by 2012-13), **35 & 30**, to average **40** Home Runs per year (on the noggin) for **four years**. And Hammerin' Hank Greenberg's totals from 1937-40, when WWII slashed his stride? **40, 58, 33** [injuries], **& 41**. Hank's average was **43 HR/year**, on the other noggin. So Hank beats ex-Hanshin Tiger 'Wild Bear' Cecil Fielder by only three HR per year, meaning here comes that obnoxious **bold again—Cecil Fielder, if only for a key and crucial four-year**

span, in the early 90s, which tailspun into the Steroid Abyss of '95, but no one ever accused Fielder of anything stronger than a double banana-split, **is the debatable 2nd-greatest slugging Tiger of all time.** Yep—silver-medal Tiger slugger, ever. Miggy is 3rd Tiger here, earning the bronze, 2010-13, with 156 HR [38, 30, 44, & 44], for an average of 39 HR/year over a 4-year span.

Some readers perhaps mention Babe Ruth's 4-year streaks. OK, Babe's bat bops both Tigers' records handily with a **52 HR/year** average for 1926-29, and 47 for 1920-23. But check the rest of the four-year streakers—this'll astound baseball aficionados: **Lou "Iron Horse" Gehrig** (1903-41, age 37) tied **Cecil Fielder**, not Hank, with Lou's 1934-37's **49, 30, 49, 37**, equaling **40 HR/year**, but Lou never hit 50+ HR in any year. NY & SF Giant, 5'11", 180# **Willie** 'Say Hey' **Mays** (b. '31, Hank Aaron's Alabama) had a competition-crushing streak 1962-65, however, with a **49—38—47—52** to average **46.5 HR/year**, nearly catching Babe's 2nd-best run. The great **Henry Aaron** never hit over 50 in a year, either, as Hank Greenberg and Cecil Fielder did, but edged Cecil (not namesake Henry 'Hank' Greenberg) with a 1969-72 run of **44—38—47—34** for a **40.75 HR/year average.** Today's crop? Remember we cited strikeout king **Adam Dunn's** fine **40 HR** for four years, when his 2005-08 HR binge won the Most Boring 40+ HR Streak in the history of the drudgingly consistent world—**40, 40, 40**, and (surprisingly) **40!**

Therefore, Prince's Pop Cecil matched within a digit of the greatest legit home run hitter of all time Aaron, unenhanced by miracles of chemistry. No 1997-04 steroid-era sluggers' numbers will appear here, except Dunn's because we've already 'Dunn' it, and Big Adam seems currently unaccused of chemical tomfoolery. Randy McGill's favorite Minnesota Twins' slugger **Harmon Killibrew's** 1961-64 **46—48—45—49** ties Ruth's 2nd-string run at 47/year. Yanks' **Mickey Mantle** (1931-95) bested Cecil twice with 42 HR/year in overlapping streaks in 1955-58 and 1958-61, numbers gnawing at Greenberg's 43 but not quite catching him. Just for this paragraph to pound the point home that Cecil's streak is superstar stuff, for only the highest sluggitude echelons, compare him to hitters' hitter **Ted Williams.** How about Ted's best presidential-term 4-year-streak—it was severed by 'Teddy Ballgame's' 1943-45 WWII service? During 1941-42 and 1946-47, Williams hammered homers at a chunky rate of 37-36-38-32 for a 4-year interrupted average of just **36**/year. Teddy Ballgame also averaged **.344** lifetime. Cecil and Kirk and Lance and John Wockenfuss did not.

Tallying up CECIL Fielder's totals, only Hank Greenberg hit more in a four-year span among our Tiger Tournament of Champions. In the elder Fielder's era, comparable stats arrived by '14 HOF Inductee **Frank** 'The Big Hurt' **Thomas**, with a similar string 1993-96 string of 41—38—40—40, or **39.5** homers per year for four years. Cobb's Dead Ball Era precluded Ty's clobbering the nerfy 1909 ball over Bennett Park's clattering wooden fence. Al Kaline's highest HR total was 29 in a season, though Al beat Greenberg and Fielder in final HR tallies with 399. Kaline's total accrued much like ageless Henry Aaron's, rolling steadily on past aging Babe Ruth, for the biggest honest tally-Aaron's 755 to Babe Ruth's 714 [factoring in Ruth's 17 full-time-hitting 154-game seasons with Aaron's hybrid seven 154-game seasons and 16 162-game seasons]. Cecil's four fabulous years will not be forgotten.

So in outlining some of the greatest Tigers not quite making our Quadruple Crown cut, and falling a bit behind Cobb, Greenberg, Cabrera, and Kaline, we raise up the Honorable Mention Excellence Honor Roll (& Mr. Congeniality Award), for the following 1975-2007 Tigers. These stars, semi-superstars, and true superstars include Cecil Fielder, Kirk Gibson, Jack Morris, Lou Whitaker, and upcoming Alan Trammell. Among Tigers of the entire scattershot 1901-1994 past who also earn Honorable Mention as coming close to the Top Four (not necessarily in order), we feature Harry Heilmann, Charlie Gehringer, Heinie Manush, Wild Bill Donovan, Goose Goslin, Hooks Dauss, Tommy Bridges, Dizzy Trout, 'Fats' Fothergill, George Kell, Vic Wertz, Mickey Lolich, George Mullin, Harvey Kuenn, Magglio Ordonez, Carlos Guillen, possibly Pudge Rodriguez, Rocky Colavito, Willie Horton, Jim Northrup, and Hal Newhouser. We can't forget Denny McLain, Bill Freehan, Willie Hernandez (1984-89 closer, 3.38 ERA lifetime), hearty comebacker 1965-80 John Hiller (2.83), Wahoo Sam Crawford, Davy Jones (140 SB w/o getting thrown out 1906-12, thanks David Green, p.15), Steve Kemp, Rusty Staub, Fred Lynn, Jason 'Rooftop' Thompson, Victor Martinez [.335, 32 HR, 2014 MVP runner-up], Torii Hunter, David Price, Prince Fielder, and MARK 'The BIRD' FIDRYCH.

The Tigers' fancy Olde English "D" is the Oldest Logo in the History of Professional Sports (Green 12). They wore it in the old Western League. All four World Series champ teams wore it. If the '27 Yankees' Gehrig-Ruth crew was "Murderers' Row," why couldn't Motown's beloved Bengals boost their so-called 'Battalion of Death' infield with **462 RBIs** in 1934—1B Greenberg, 2B Gehringer, SS Billy Rogell, and 3B Marv Owen? And who but the Tiges could have such a zany cornucopia of nifty nicknames? Skeeter Barnes, Lu Blue, Hoot Evers, Purnal Goldy, Steve 'Blaster' Bilko, Rusty Kuntz, Stubby Overmire, Schoolboy Rowe, Champ Summers (Green 35), Baby Doll Jacobson, V-Mart, and Batbarf Snoggerlink—all of them actual Tiger-roster players except the last absurd one, which I made up [nobody's mom would do *that* to the specious Snoggerlink lad].

The Tigers have been with us a long time (1896) at **THE CORNER**, famed Michigan Avenue and Trumbull—even longer than that 'founded in 1901' concept. You see, the American League grew out of the old Western League, a minor-league that reorganized after bankruptcy. **Ban Johnson** became AL President. When the ancient 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings and later the other 11-team National League downsized from twelve to eight to somehow fit into a new century, Johnson's Western League morphed into the new American League, declaring itself a "MAJOR League" in 1901. It worked. Then the new 'Federal League' attempted to 'majorize' itself in 1913-15 with stars (like early Jewish-American star **Benny Kauff** [.311 in real majors, but **.370 & .342** for Brooklyn & Indianapolis in the Federal League]). As the world wended its weary way into World War I, the whole Federal League kit & caboodle collapsed in a heap—It's been the BIG TWO and only two major leagues since.

Whether you call it 5,000-capacity Bennett Park, 15,000+ Navin Field, Briggs or 50,000+-capacity Tiger Stadium, **THE CORNER** held down our motor city's Pen-

412 doubles (5th), and 729 extra base hits win #6 Tiger ever, and he's up against Cobb, Cabrera, Kaline, and Greenberg. Do the numbers. Who'll it be, the Crab or the Tiger?

Alan Trammell is the one I would vote into the Hall of Fame in an instant if I could. Alan's actually already in Stan Musial's Polish-American Hall of Fame. I didn't know till today, researching your book here, that Alan even IS Polish. Trammell sounds English enough. As if the 1984 World Series isn't enough, 'Tram' represented shortstops everywhere in AL All-Star game six times in his twenty exclusive Tiger years—1980, 1984-85, 1987-88, and 1990. The **MVP** award was 6'0", 175# Alan's **twice**, in 1984, and 1987-88. Alan earned **FOUR** Gold Gloves for his vacuum-cleaner pick-ups, torque and twirl Insta-Tosses to Lou, and speedy coverage of 2nd base. The **Alan & Lou** combo has an AL record for games together, with the #1 double-play tally in MLB history. Three Silver Slugger Awards in 1987-88 & 1990 pad Tram's amazing Hall resume. He's also in San Diego's Hall of Fame—nearby the sunny land of his and Ted Williams' boyhood—Southern California.

Johnny Lipon (1922-98) played short 1942-52 for the Tigers, hit 10 HR only, but batted a fine-for-shortstop **.266**. I'm including Johnny here so the poor competent SS doesn't end up with the obscurity of **Archibald Wright 'Moonlight' Graham**, whose one lone ghost at-bat story, starring aging silver-screen idol Burt Lancaster in the movie, was spun by W.P. Kinsella as *Shoeless Joe*. It became Hall of Fame movie **Field of Dreams**, with Kevin Costner. Real MLB player Archie 'Moonlight' Graham actually has **ZERO** plate appearances, and appeared in just **ONE** 1906 New York Giants game. Modern day Graham buffs and graham-cracker fans might also check out the equally-obscure **Lee Graham**, whose 1983 career as a Boston Red Sock involved a **.000** batting average—zero hits for six at-bats. Lee, mysteriously, got one RBI (Sac fly? Passed ball? 3B runner steals home, when rhinoceros stampede diverts pitchers' attention?). Moonlight Graham, however, **NEVER** got even one at-bat, so that's why Dr. Moonlight Graham, not Lee and the rhinoceroses, has America's #1-ever Baseball Movie Ever made about *him*.

They pay managers to worry, not fans. For 2014, I worry about the Prince Fielder trade to Texas for Ian Kinsler, a lighter bat but a good sub for '13 movin'-on 2B Omar Infante. And I worry about lost 6'8" excellent starter Doug Fister, traded for No Apparent star. Is it a money thing? It's not our wallets. So now I and you have the privilege of World-Class Fielder & Fister Worries. Is there a smiling or Smyly answer? **Drew Smyly**, crafty lefty with a **2.39** ERA in 2013 joined the rotation, despite the graphic handicap that his last name contains **NO** full-time vowel. And 'Y' not? But we said so-long to Drew (Tampa Bay) and Austin Jackson (Seattle) for ace David Price (W-L 71-39, 876 K's in 973 IP, 3.19 ERA) at July 31st, 2014 Trade Deadline), so we Tiger fans worry a lot and cross our fingers. Into June 2015, our upbeat worries once again drift Tigerward: fine new catcher James McCann pinch-hitting for Alex Avila's DL stint; .356 AL-leading SS Jose Iglesias's fragile shins; ballhawk CF Anthony Gose's gorgeously inflated .350 BA; hurler Alfredo Simon's 55-mph-speed-limit **EEPHUS** lob pitch; Kyle Lobstein's lefty, crafty 89-mph fastball; V-Mart's busted ankle convalescence; or Verlander's **FIRST** and lengthy bicep rehab. Diamond dreams never come with guarantees.

For every Moonlight Graham, there are a hundred fine Johnny Lipons, with mul-

tiple non-trumpeted at-bats, lining major league rosters. Names and careers of these toilers and scrappers pine away into obscurity. As we tout the totally terrific Trammells, we forget fine ballplayers like Lipon, back in the Nike or Saucony 'pack' as we call it in road racing. Fans like us are the gatekeepers of glory, aren't we?

Alan Trammell's lofty numbers won't overwhelm Babe Ruth or Lou Gehrig, but as a *shortstop* between the no-hit shortstops era and the beefy bashers, Trammell wiped up the field with all his contemporary competition except Orioles' Cal Ripken Jr. **Trammell** batted **.285**, to Joe Tinker's decent .262, with 31 HR. In 1987's Tiger division win, Trammell's 28 HR nearly caught Tinker's lifetime collection, while Trammell also celebrates a **185 HR, 412 doubles, 1003 RBI, slugging % SLG of .415**, and a partridge in a pear tree. Tram's managerial career with Kirk Gibson as Tiger coach in down-in-the-dumps 2003 is a booby prize to recommend him. Always patient and kind and knowledgeable (Kalinian, even), Trammell & Crew sadly shepherded the hapless Tigers to the worst record in AL history, with 43-119 for a **.265** average.. Headed for the all-time MLB loss record, '03 Tigers even screwed up the last week, by popping KC for a few victories. The '03 Tigers failed to catch my other beloved team, the Mets' 40-120 sub-awful league NL debut in 1962. Their ancient-mariner manager Casey Stengel mumbled frazzledly, "Can't anybody here play this game?" Out of the fire flies the Phoenix. Alan and Kirk Gibson flew to Arizona's Diamondbacks and Phoenix, Arizona, and switched jobs. In 2010, the cellar-expected team rallied as bench coach Kirk Gibson replaced fired ex-Tiger catcher A.J. Hinch (whose name sounded like sometime-catcher Brandon INGE) as manager. By 2011, Gibby's guys clinched the NL West, and **Kirk Gibson** was voted **NL Manager of the Year**. Backing him all the way as coach was steady, polite, class-act Alan Trammell, whose heart and soul were given to his Tigers. In 2014, Alan Trammell returned to the Tigers at home in Comerica Park, with a new amorphous position like Al Kaline and Willie Horton: Superstar Emeritus, or Beloved Tiger--with a speed-lane to become a statue in centerfield with Cobb, Greenberg, Kaline, and maybe one day Cabrera. A fine tribute to the Tigers' best infield acrobat ever.

Bill James is back, after calling Whitaker the 13th-best 2B guy of all time, and Evers nowhere. Tinker is a nonentity on the Moneyball man's list, but James ranks Alan Trammell as the **9th-best shortstop of all time**. Bill and I may be a little different on plethoras of mysterious statistics, but he really shows he knows his stuff here. Basically, his book and mine are related to numbers that make up the best ballplayers' resumes.

Whether Alan ever makes the Hall of Fame, he's a Hall of Famer in my book. For what it's worth, he's just here been granted the first #1 honors of January 2014, for my just-invented Classiest Tiger in the Style of Al Kaline Award. Here's the Modean Antidote Poem to Adams's classic verse, "Tinker to Evers to Chance":

"Over a Barrel—Or 'Trammell to Lou to Darrell'"

by Maury Dean, 1-31-2014, 4:44 a.m.

These are the saddest of possible words,
'Alan to Lou to Evans,'

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS

Trio of stars, with bomb-bats unfurled,
Locked out of Cooperstown's heavens.

With Bill James's blessing of ninth and twelfth place,
Alan Trammell and Sweet Lou,
Now is the time for tough critics to face,
Their honest Hall candidacy true.

Tram and Lou must win their mighty awards,
By Cooperstown's judges on merit,
Their numbers and homers too long ignored,
How long must they grin and bear it?

At the grand green vale, by Otsego's shores,
Alan and Lou are knocking,
So elect them now, they deserve Tiger roars,
Let's keep fair Hall justice rocking.

If you winnow it down, and select just two,
Big winners must be Trammell and Lou.

It's sort of a pregnant semi-sonnet. Its *octet* (8 lines) and *sestet* (6 lines) get an additional *quatrain* (4 lines), for English majors' semi-delight. The ABAB *rhyme scheme* rocks into AA at the end, but not Triple AAA Toledo Mud Hans. "Over a Barrel—Or 'Trammell to Lou to Darrell'" may not become the #1 poem this week in the Universe, but then again it may

Alan Trammell's Polish Hall of Fame (c. 2002-03 banquet-chicken season) award was sponsored by his Panczak maternal grandparents. They once lived in Poland, and their famous grandson's classiness is defined in the way he portrays that Tiger spirit (Buck Jerzy's article):

"Throughout my career, I never really thought a whole lot about individual awards. I always figured that if I just went out every day and did my job, then good things would happen for the team and me." [Notice how **Miguel Cabrera's** own team-spirit rhetoric mirrors Trammell's, and by the way, I have no idea what Alan said for his Michigan Sports Hall of Fame induction earlier.]

In a Jan. 24th, 2014 *Detroit Free Press* story (p. 5B), Miguel Cabrera reflects almost Existential philosophical views, like "It is what it is—I accept it" [That wasn't a quote, just an example of existentialism, as registered by Albert Camus's novel *The Stranger* (which all Michigan State freshman had to read in 1964 ATL, American Thought and Language)]. **Cabrera** muses, "I was happy at third [base]. It doesn't matter where they put me. I want to play baseball [Sp., *beisbol*]. I want to win some games, and I want to play every day." Cabrera's fearless quintessential optimism is not only the spirit of **Alan Trammell**, but the spirit of three other great ballplayers who sparked the Tigers in their **Four-Star**** Century**. The rest of this Quadruple Crown of dynamic Detroit destiny is hopefully obvious by now: **Hank Greenberg, Ty Cobb, and Al Kaline**. As the

Tigers grounded to the finish, Cabrera explained candidly his 2014 power outage [8-17-14 interview], which ended up .309, 25 HR, 109 RBIs, league-leading 52 doubles, 191 hits, and one fearless stolen base: Amazingly, Ty Cobb and Miguel Cabrera both started big-time baseball in '03—major leagues for Miguel in 2003, and Ty tearing up the minors in 1903, waiting for his 1905 Tiger call-up.

Sparky Anderson always kidded Alan Trammell by calling him “Huckleberry Finn,” for his “boyish smile and the exemplary way [he’s] conducted himself throughout a major league career that may one day lead to Baseball’s Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.” Amen, Buck Jerzy of Michigan agrees. The only guys to play more games as Tigers were Cobb, Kaline, Charlie Gehringer, and DP partner Lou Whitaker.

In my book, don’t Tinker with Trammell, because Tinker and Evers wouldn’t have a Chance. I dedicate my poem a page or so back to Franklin Pierce Adams, and to Tinker and Evers and Chance, and to Cooperstown’s regularly fair and just Hall of Fame. And to you. You care about our beloved Detroit Tigers as much or more than I do, or you wouldn’t have read this far.

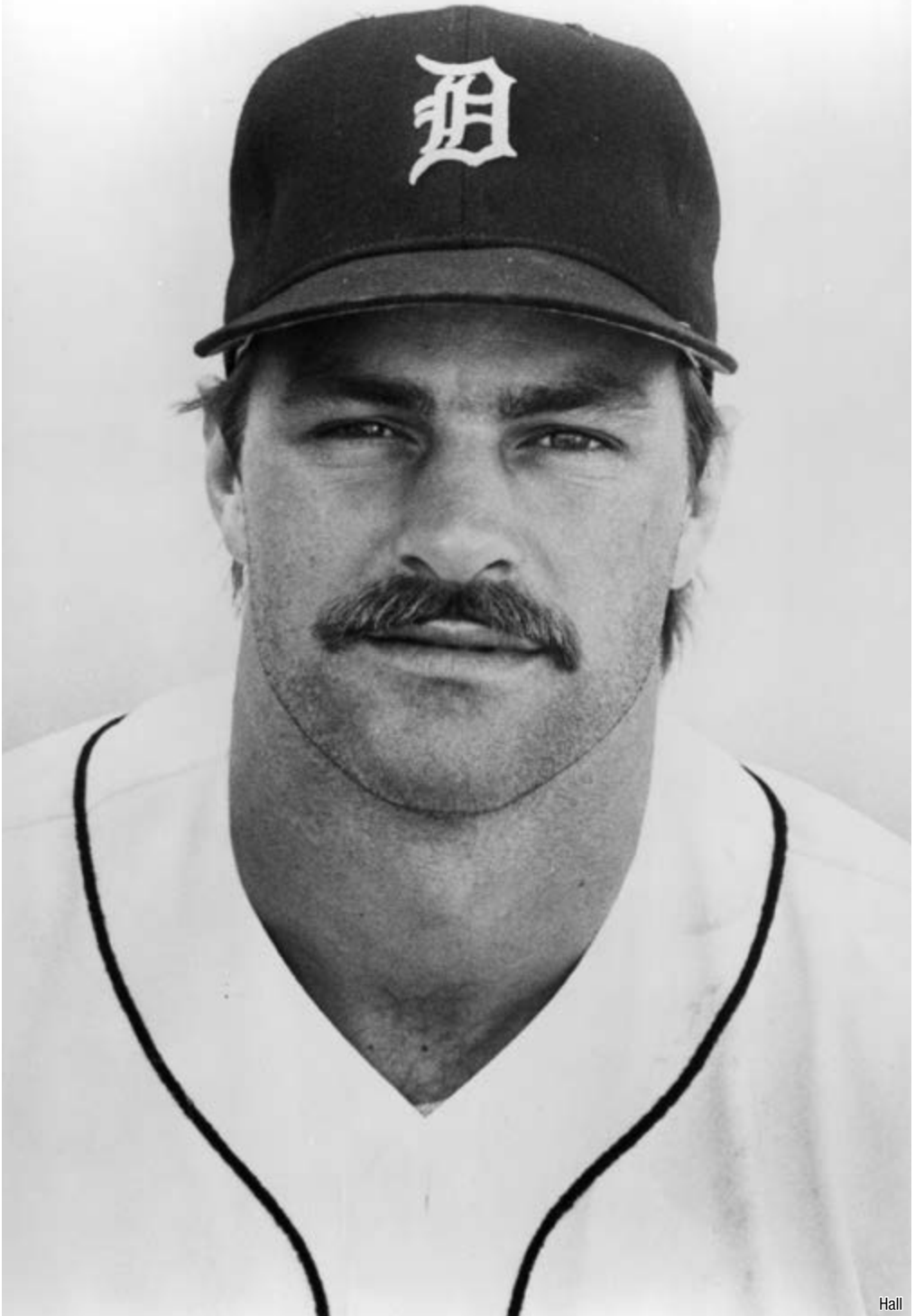
Trammell’s universal charisma and ‘class-itude’ merge when you realize his quiet charities like CATCH, Sparky’s hospital-visitation for Children’s and Henry Ford Hospital (where my mother Liz’s Dean heart operation at 71 granted her another 17 years, thank God). After the forgettable '03 season, Trammell went back toward his California roots, to bring his family nearer to his mother in San Diego, close to his home in Del Mar. Again—the family thing that defines baseball, from the beginning of this Grand-Slam Four-Star**** Century. Alan named his oldest son Lance, after another teammate deserving of a Hall look—muscular 6’3”, 220# catcher **Lance Parrish**, whose .252 BA belies prodigious power—324 HR in 19 years, 10 with the Tigers 1977-86, and 1070 RBIs, 305 doubles, and a catcherly rare 33 triples, with a fine **.440** slugging average.

We Detroit Lion masochist fans keep hoping someone of a football-Trammell-type guy will show up for a someday Lions’ Super Bowl, but too many times *Peanuts*’ Lucy has pulled the accursed football away, and Charlie Brown’s vertebrae sing sad songs every dismal year. At least 2013 Michigan State beat Ohio State for Rose Bowl honors, and their 10th-straight Big Ten victory was the longest streak since 1965-67. Toni and I went to MSU, to the 1966 Rose Bowl, and drove 6000 miles to watch our team lose. Somebody should teach Grief Counseling for Lions Fans. At least, sigh, we have Tigers on deck. And great college football teams in Michigan.

Alan Trammell married Barbara Leverett, and in 2003 their following kids were these ages around a decade back. We can all do the likely math—Lance, 16, Kyle, 14, and Jade, 10. Alan Trammell’s family situation seems more mono-coastal than Hank Greenberg’s, for Hank and his wife split up and the kids had many geographical issues. Anyhow, we’re all blessed to have so many great Tigers like Alan Trammell and family, marching around in the Top Ten and *Tiger* family, below the Quadruple Crowners, in this survey of top Tiger talent of all time.

So it’s time for a Reckoning. You know now who *I* think is best, and I hope it’ll help you stratify your own Tiger Hit Parade. My four top Bengal boppers, in order of relative skill levels to **2013 only**, not personality, are Ty Cobb, Miguel Cabrera,

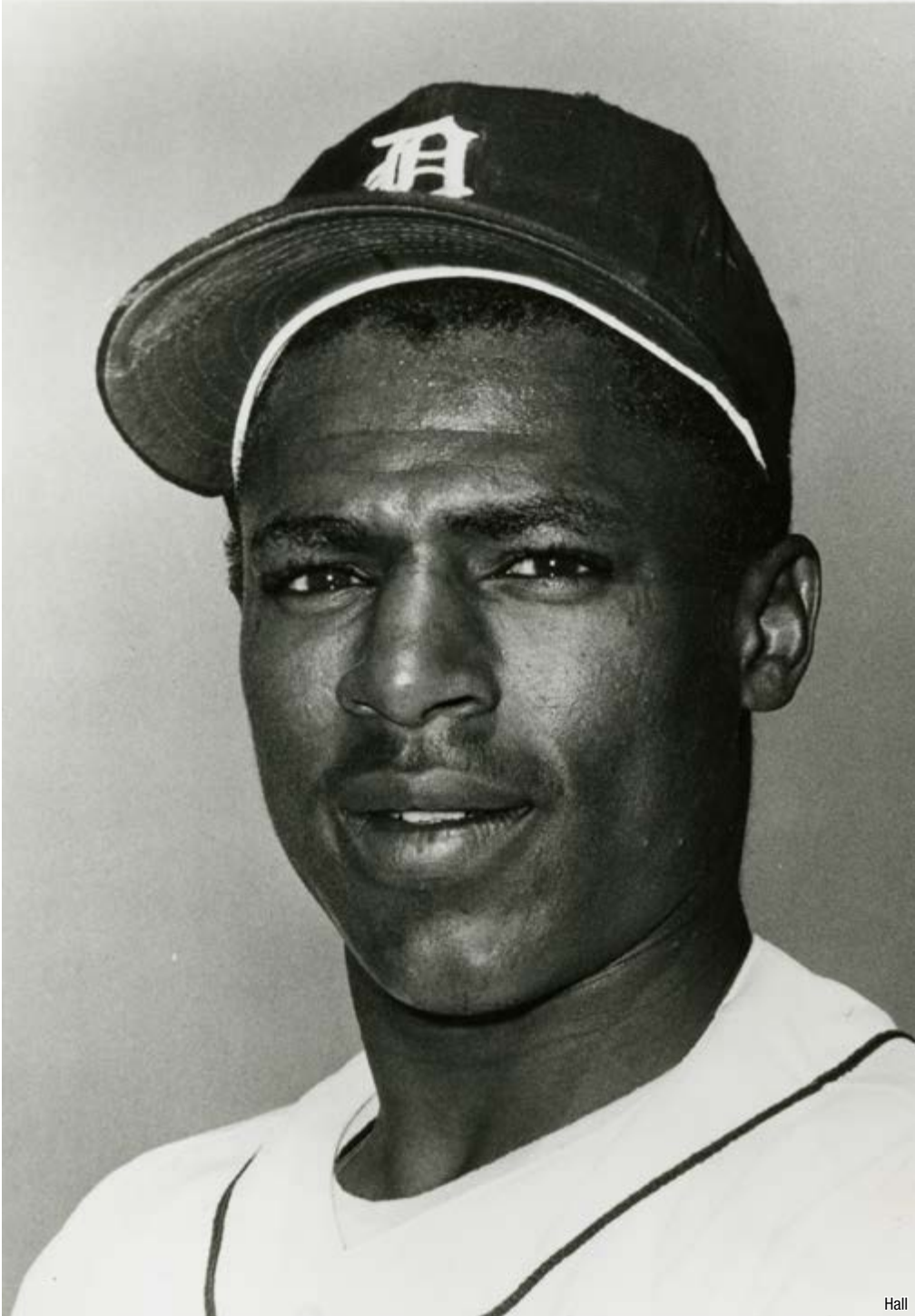
DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Hall

Orchard Lake, Michigan Spartan gridiron star and Tiger OF Kirk Gibson, blaster of World Series unforgettable cannon shots off Goose Gossage

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Hall

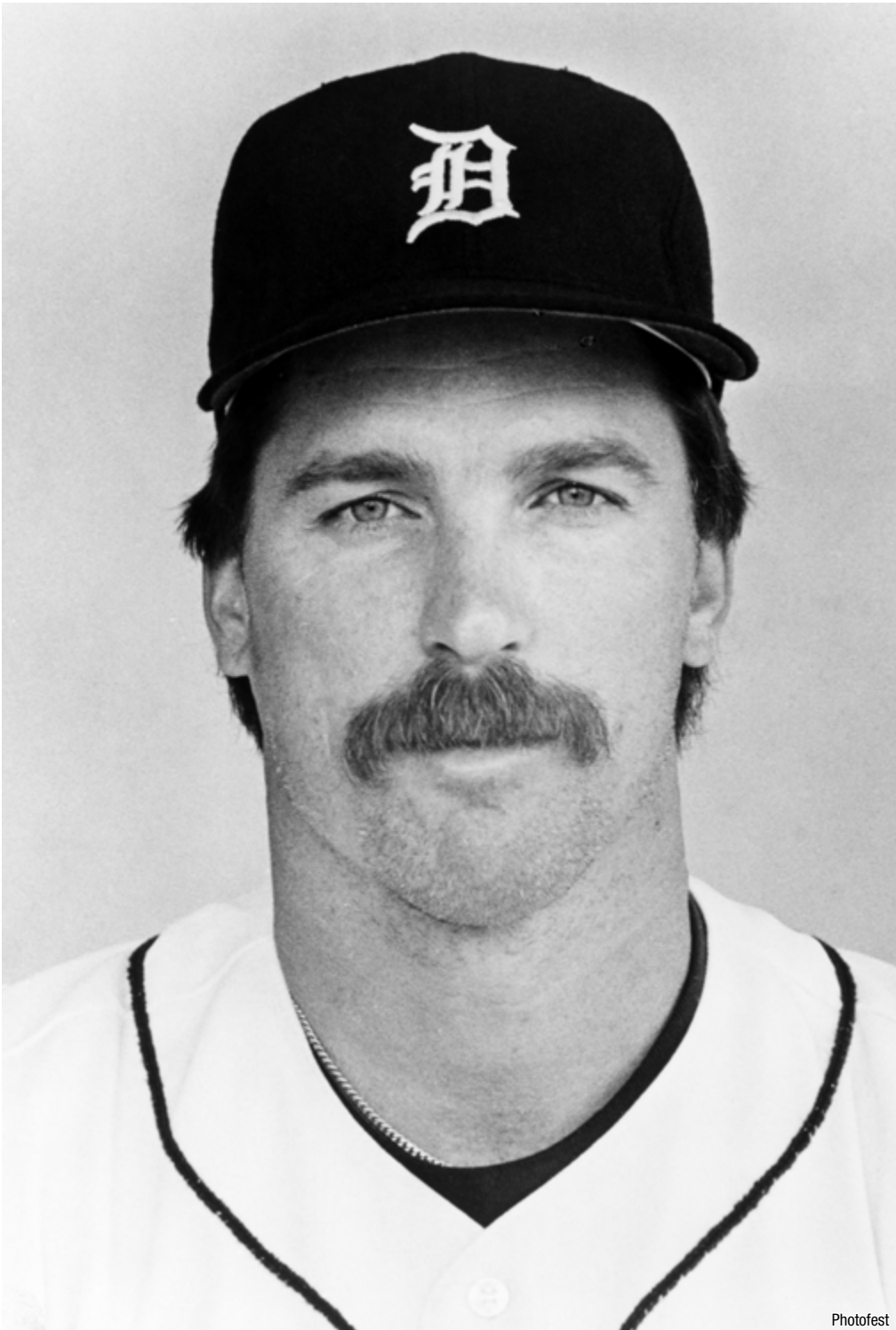
Lou Whitaker, Brooklyn born 170#, 5'11"
hitting hero for '84 Tiger champs

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



SS Alan Trammell, Tiger sparkplug and aerial whiz--5th in Stolen Bases ever as a Tiger: Cobb 869 (as Tiger), Donie Bush 402, Wahoo Sam Crawford 318, Ron LeFlore 295, Trammell 236.

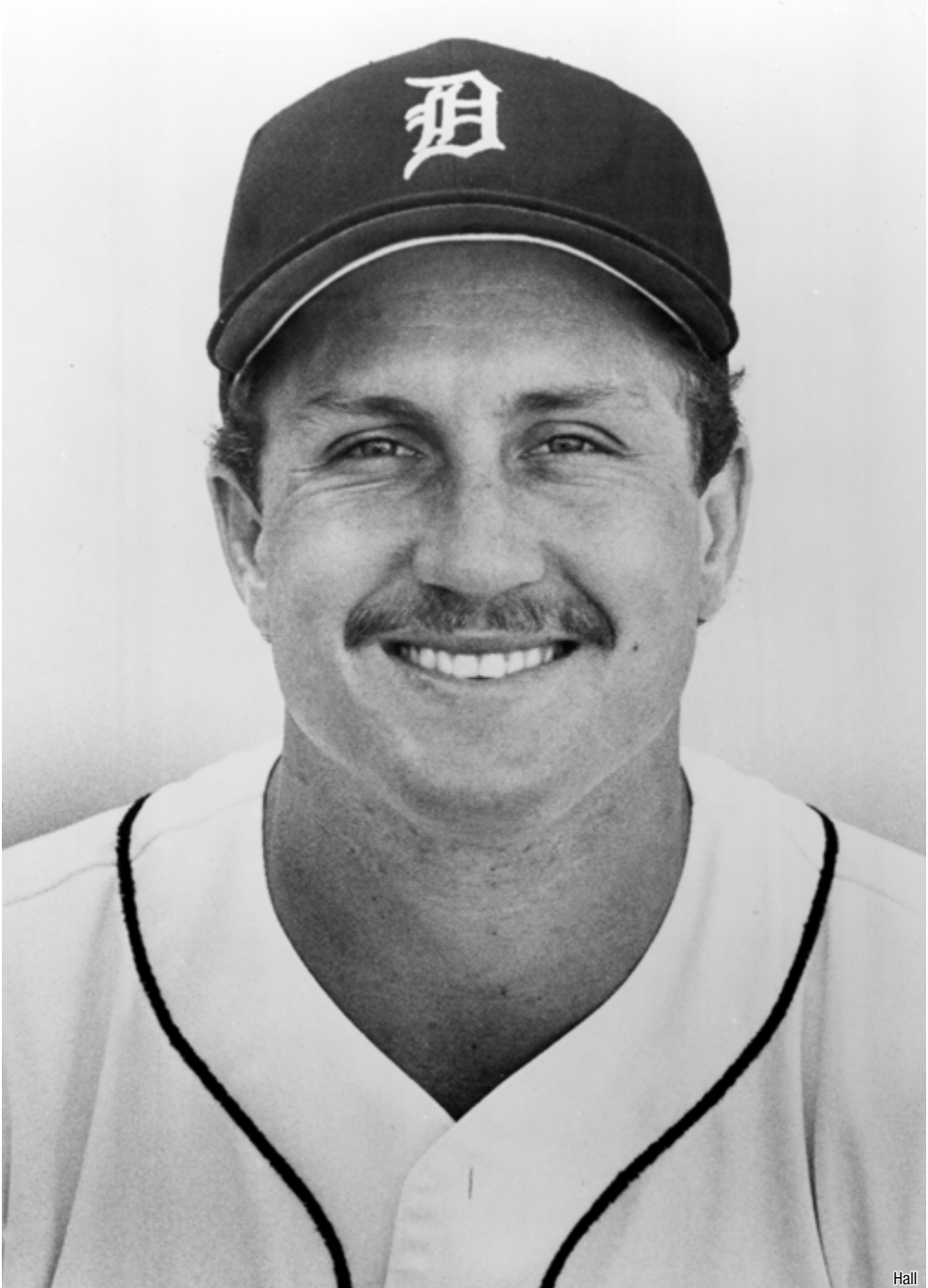
DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Photofest

Tiger 80s-90s ace Jack Morris, Opening Day pitcher 14 years

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



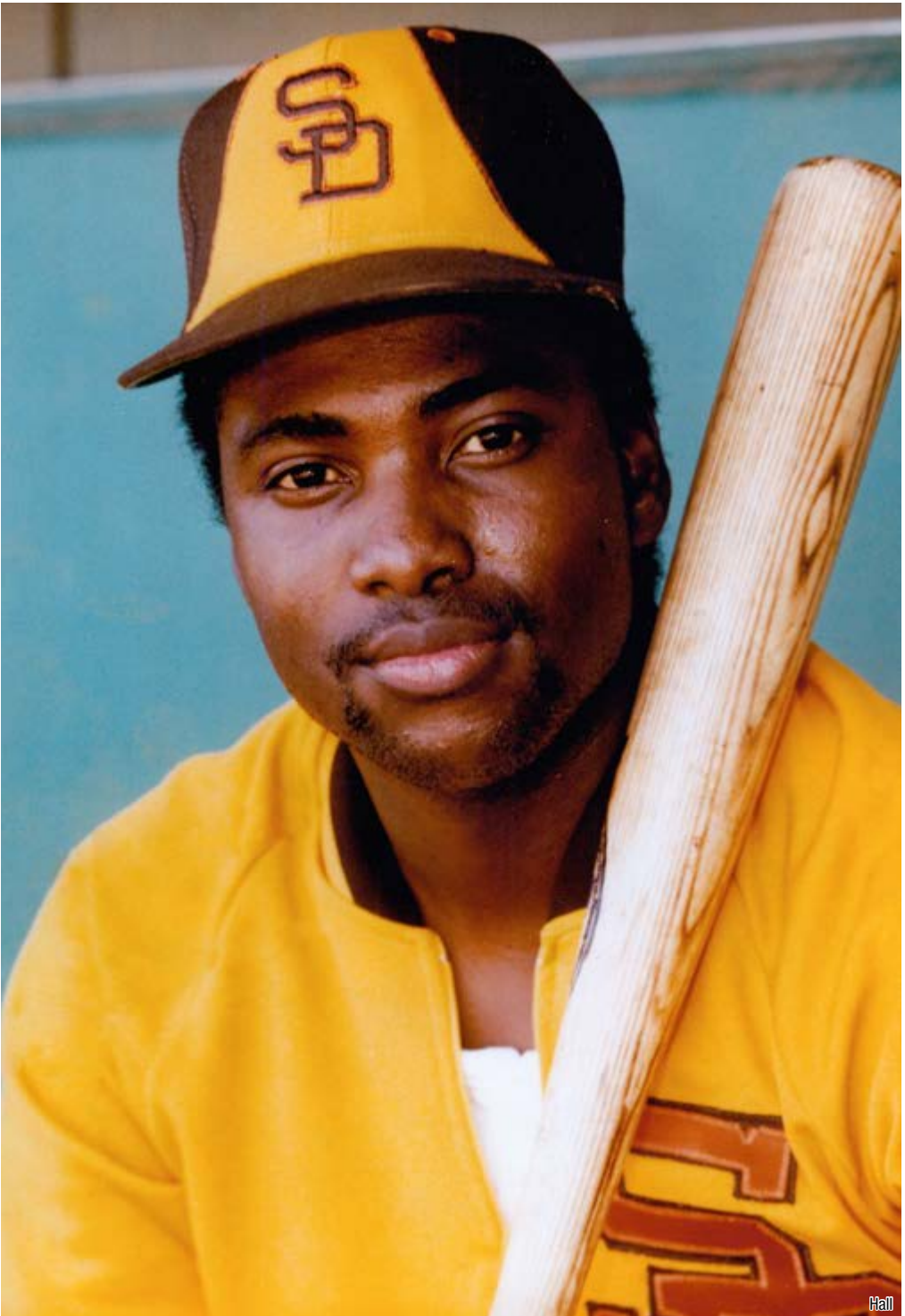
84 World Series champ Tigers' burly anchor at home plate, with the macho cowboy-style name--Lance Parrish. Lance was an early muscular pioneer clean weightlifting Tiger, LONG before anabolic steroids brought cheaper muscles to 1995-2005 juiced* hammering hulks, in terms of grueling workouts.

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



John Wockenfuss, Marc Lancaster's favorite Tiger catcher (.262 BA., .432 SLG)

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Tony Gwynn--Greatest Hitter (.338) born after WWII,
and San Diego Padres' '84 World Series hero

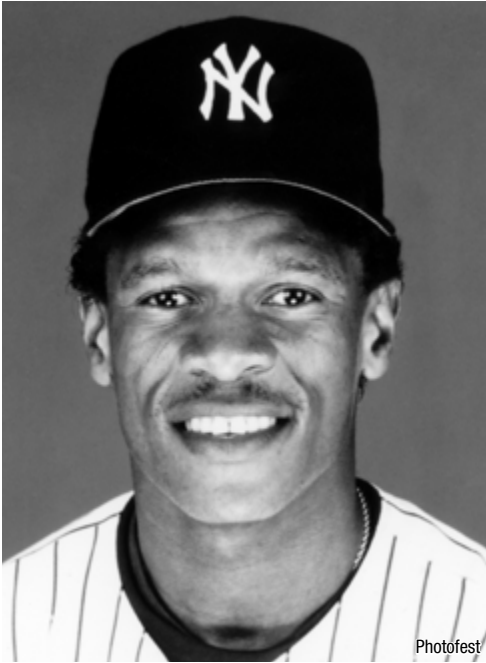
DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Hall

Alan Trammell, 80s and 90s Tiger hero and among all-time greatest shortstops (.285)

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Photofest

Yankees' Rickey Henderson (1406) is all-time base-stealing leader, but his .279 BA gets edged out by Ty's .367, a mere 88 points



Photofest

Among newest Hall members, White Sock 1B/DH anti-steroid crusader Frank Thomas



Hall

Derek Jeter--from Kalamazoo Kid to Yankee superstar icon



Modenan Pix

Texan Gary Busey, Academy Award Nominee for 1978 'The Buddy Holly Story,' and co-star of 2002 baseball classic 'Rookie of the Year,' with author, who penned Holly bio 'This'll be the Day'

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Mark Cunningham

Miguel Cabrera, contented.



Mark Cunningham

Nick Castellanos, '14 Tiger Rookie of the Year, and boyhood Little League friend of JD Martinez--Miami

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Commissioner Bud Selig (2012) presents Cabrera the first Triple Crown since 1966



Justin Verlander and Al Kaline bring titanic Tiger skills to their 2012 Mark Cunningham photo-op

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Mark Cunningham

60s CF star Chet Lemon and 2013-14 RF Torii Hunter



Public Domain (LOC)

Joe Tinker, Cubs 1907, of "Tinker to Evers to Chance" fame



Modean Pix

Ty Cobb--Baseball's Greatest Hitter Ever for Batting Average--.367



Modean Pix

"Mile Run--2 Miles"--Pennant Fever and ancient marthoner's lament. It SEEMS like two miles, eh?

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS

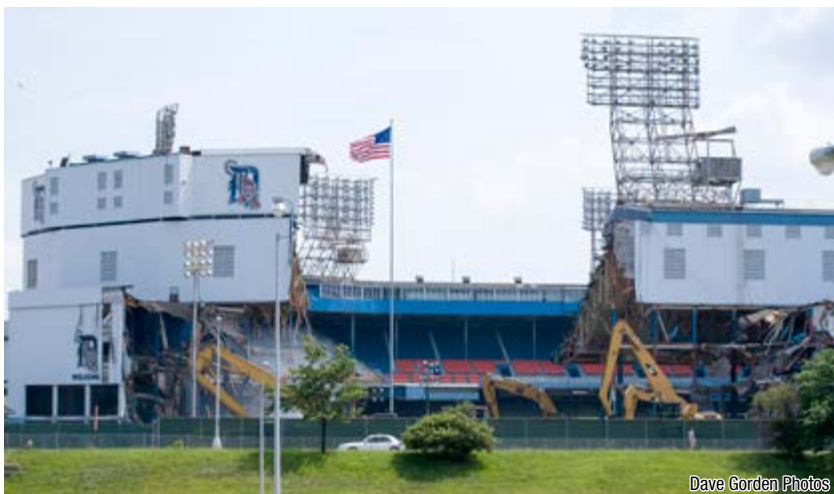


Ernie Harwell's Farewell to Fans 2009 Speech. Ernie's #1 best-known broadcasting partner, Paul Carey, joined Ernie in passing April 13, 2016 [fans religiously called bass-baritone Carey "The Voice of God"]

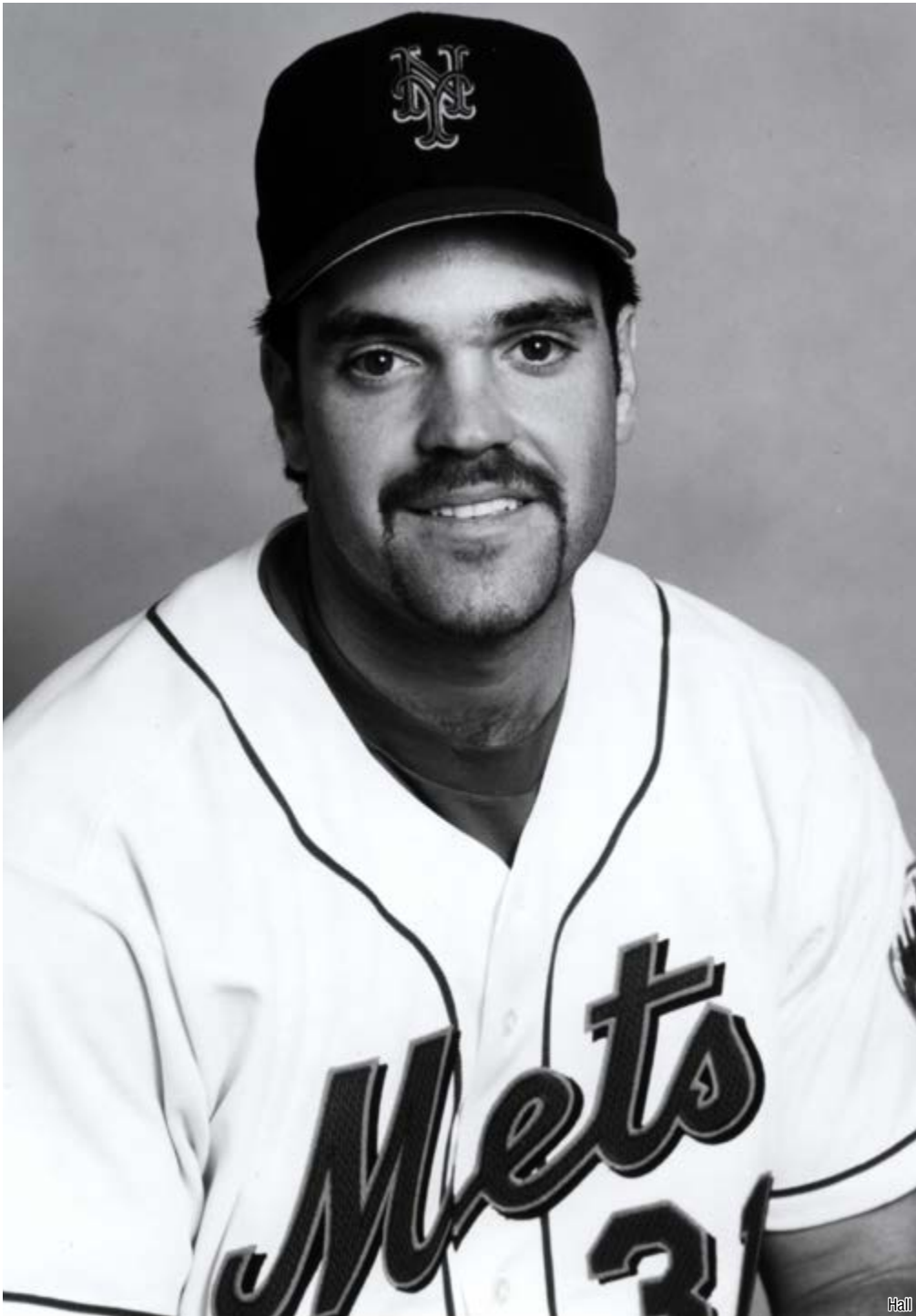
Mark Cunningham

Tiger Stadium demolished

A day that shall live in infamy



Dave Gorden Photos



Mike Piazza, Mets/Dodgers' leading HR catcher ever (Tigers' Mickey Cochrane at .320 & Twins' current Joe Mauer [c. 320] batting average catcher-leaders). Piazza was welcomed into the Hall of Fame in 2016

Ty Cobb's Batting Statistics

YEAR	AGE	TEAM	LG	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS+	TB	GDP	HBP	SH	SF	IBB	Pos	Awards	
1905	18	DET	AL	41	164	150	19	36	6	0	1	15	2	10	23	240	.288	.300	.358	86	45	0	4			0			
1906	19	DET	AL	98	394	358	45	113	15	5	1	34	23	19	40	316	.355	.394	.749	132	141	3	14			0			
1907	20	DET	AL	150	642	605	97	212	28	14	5	119	53	24	55	.350	.380	.468	848	167	283	5	8			*0			
1908	21	DET	AL	150	635	581	88	188	36	20	4	108	39	34	42	324	.367	.475	.842	169	276	6	14			*0			
1909	22	DET	AL	156	651	573	116	216	33	10	9	107	76	48	45	.377	.431	.517	.947	193	296	6	24			*0			
1910	23	DET	AL	140	590	506	106	194	35	13	8	91	65	64	46	383	.456	.551	1,008	206	279	4	16			*0			
1911	24	DET	AL	146	654	591	147	248	47	24	8	127	83	44	43	.420	.467	.621	1,088	196	367	8	11			*0	MVP-1		
1912	25	DET	AL	140	609	563	120	226	30	23	7	83	61	34	43	30	.409	.456	.584	1,040	200	323	5	8			*0	MVP-7	
1913	26	DET	AL	122	501	428	70	167	18	16	4	67	51	58	31	.390	.467	.535	1,002	196	229	4	11			*0/4	MVP-20		
1914	27	DET	AL	98	415	345	69	127	22	11	2	57	35	17	57	22	368	.466	.513	979	190	177	6	6		80	MVP-14		
1915	28	DET	AL	156	701	563	144	208	31	13	3	99	96	38	118	43	.369	.486	.487	.973	185	274	10	9			*80		
1916	29	DET	AL	145	637	542	113	201	31	10	5	68	68	24	78	39	371	.452	.493	944	179	267	2	14			*80/37		
1917	30	DET	AL	152	672	588	107	225	44	24	6	102	55	61	34	.383	.444	.570	1,014	209	335	4	16			*089			
1918	31	DET	AL	111	474	421	83	161	19	14	3	64	34	41	21	.382	.440	.515	955	194	217	2	9			*083/1459			
1919	32	DET	AL	124	548	497	92	191	36	13	1	70	28	38	22	.384	.429	.515	944	166	256	1	9			*80			
1920	33	DET	AL	112	495	428	86	143	28	8	2	63	15	10	58	28	334	.416	.451	.867	132	193	2	7			*80		
1921	34	DET	AL	128	582	507	124	197	37	16	12	101	22	15	56	19	389	.452	.596	1,048	166	302	3	15			*80		
1922	35	DET	AL	137	613	526	99	211	42	16	4	99	9	13	55	24	401	.462	.565	1,026	169	297	4	27			*80		
1923	36	DET	AL	145	648	556	103	189	40	7	6	88	9	10	66	14	340	.413	.469	882	134	261	3	22			*80		
1924	37	DET	AL	155	727	625	115	211	38	10	4	79	23	14	85	18	338	.418	.450	867	125	281	1	15			*80		
1925	38	DET	AL	121	492	415	97	157	31	12	12	102	13	9	65	12	378	.468	.598	1,066	171	248	5	5			*08/91		
1926	39	DET	AL	79	273	233	48	79	18	5	4	62	9	4	26	2	339	.408	.511	918	137	119	1	13			087/9		
1927	40	PHA	AL	133	574	490	104	175	32	7	5	93	22	16	67	12	357	.440	.482	921	134	236	5	12			*098		
1928	41	PHA	AL	95	393	353	54	114	27	4	1	40	6	8	34	16	323	.389	.431	819	112	152	4	2			09		
24 Yrs				3034	13084	11434	2246	4189	724	295	117	1938	897	212	1249	681	.366	.433	.512	.945	166	5854	94	291					
162 Game Avg.				162	689	611	120	224	39	16	6	103	48	67	36	.366	.433	.512	.945	168	313	5	16						
DET (22 yrs)				2806	12117	10591	2088	3900	665	284	111	1805	869	188	1148	653	.368	0.434	0.516	0.950	171	5466	85	277					
PHA (2 yrs)				228	967	843	158	289	59	11	6	133	28	24	101	28	.343	0.419	0.46	0.879	125	388	9	14					

*Above: in 24 years, Cobb had 13,084 Plate Appearances (PA), 12,117 with the Tigers, and Ty had 11,434 At-Bats (AB), 10,591 with the Tigers (5-figure numbers are restricted in above chart).

DETROIT TIGERS' 4 GREATEST HITTERS



Mark Cunningham

J.D. Martinez,
loping his home run trot



Mark Cunningham

Rajai 'Grand-Slam' Davis, marveling at his
walk-off, jog-off "4-run-homer.'

APPENDIX I

MIKE ILITCH



Sadly, Tigers owner Mike Ilitch passed away in 2017 at 87 years young.
He's shown here with Victor Martinez.

When Tiger owner **Mike Ilitch** (b. July 20, 1929) was six and living in the Chalfonte (Puritan/Livernois), his Detroit became the City of Champions—the Tigers, LIONS, and Red Wings ALL won their equivalent World Series, pre-Super Bowl, or Stanley Cup. Graduating Cooley High School as baseball team shortstop, and running track, he looked forward to a career as Detroit Tiger. With four solid years in the minors, young Ilitch got an offer of \$5000 to play for the Tigers (whose first LAST-place finish was 1952)—but the budding billionaire held out for ten grand. When they turned him down, he joined the U.S. Marines for four years. One source says it was a Tiger \$3000 offer, but Ilitch played mostly 2nd base for the Tigers, Yankees, and Washington Senators' minor-league organizations. Detroit's beloved Little Caesar's pizza mogul, Mike Ilitch, was much more than just the ultimate Macedonian-American “Pizza-Pizza Baron,”—“Mr. I” was an actual pro ballplayer who might have made

WHO'S YOUR TIGER?

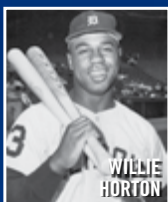
The Four Greatest Detroit Tiger Hitters of All Time,
And a Diamond Gallery of Second-String Superstars

WHO'S YOUR TIGER* is for baseball fans ages 1 to 111 who've fallen for the mystique and glory of our beloved Detroit Tigers. It also champions rival MLB stars sharing Maury Dean's tribute memoir pages. Dean's jumbo pamphlet answers (and causes) debates on the best-EVER Tigers. Dean's Mt. Rushmore is Ty Cobb, Hank Greenberg, Al Kaline, and Miguel Cabrera, plus hundreds of Bengal bombers who almost made the cut.

WHO'S YOUR TIGER* tells timeless Tigers' bittersweet struggles to glom Yankee World Series gold. Born and raised in South Detroit, Long Island sports lit professor Dean also showcases his second favorite team, the New York Mets, plus every other MLB team linked to elusive World Series dreams. In all our green 'hope springs eternal' camaraderie seasons, we join John Fogerty in "Centerfield" on his *Field of Dreams*, and sing in unison "Put me in, Coach, I'm ready to play"—

or we realistically ride the bench, or cuddle in bygone Tiger Stadium bleachers with popcorn, brew, and good friends and relatives. Or on today's dynamic diamonds. Ty Cobb's lifetime batting average was a best-ever .367, so enjoy a few other nifty numbers, and hundreds of colorful pix in here--to prove who belongs in *Who's Your Tiger?* Some selections are sentimental champs, too.

HUNDREDS OF PHOTOS, INCLUDING...



...and so
many more
amazing
players!

