

SPORTS COLLECTORS DIGEST NAMES

'AMERICAN JEWS AND AMERICA'S GAME' by LARRY RUTTMAN

THE NUMBER ONE BASEBALL BOOK OF 2013

Dan Schlossberg's Annual Rankings

Bestows Honor on the Much Heralded Oral History

Sports Collectors Digest's annual year-end ranking of the best baseball books of the year has bestowed its number one ranking for 2013 to **American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball** by Larry Ruttman.

Presented by prolific author/reviewer Dan Schlossberg, the publication annually ranks the year's best non-fiction books.

"Well-researched and well-written," writes Schlossberg in his capsule review to lead off the feature in the January 10, 2014 edition.

<http://www.sportscollectorsdigest.com/featured/save-some-shelf-space-best-baseball-books-of-2013> is the online link to the story.

In being named #1, the oral history volume beat out biographies/autobiographies from 2013 by or about Ted Williams, Terry Francona, Mike Piazza, Reggie Jackson, Hank Greenberg, the DiMaggio brothers, and Mickey Mantle/Willie Mays, in addition to well received illustrated books from Sports Illustrated, the Baseball Hall of Fame, the works of cartoonist Willard Mullin, and vintage Cracker Jack baseball cards.

American Jews and America's Game (560 pages hardcover, 78 photographs, \$34.95), was published by University of Nebraska Press last spring, featuring a chapter on and a foreword by Commissioner of Baseball Bud Selig. Author Larry Ruttman, a Boston-based attorney, took digital voice recorder in hand and for over four years interviewed subjects including the late Marvin Miller, Brad Ausmus, Kevin Youkilis, Ian Kinsler, Ken Holtzman, Al Rosen, Art Shamsky, Gabe Kapler, Ron Blomberg, Ken Holtzman, Craig Breslow, Elliott Maddox, Thelma "Tiby" Eisen, club owners and executives Jerry Reinsdorf (Chicago White Sox), Stuart Sternberg (Tampa Bay Rays), Randy Levine (New York Yankees), Theo Epstein (Chicago Cubs), and Mark Shapiro (Cleveland Indians); sportswriters Murray Chass, Ira Berkow, Roger Kahn, Alan Schwarz, and Ross Newhan (along with his "Jews for Jesus" practicing son, former MLB player David Newhan), labor leader Donald Fehr, economist Andy Zimbalist, agent Ron Shapiro, author/publicist Marty Appel, umpire Al Clark, and fans like attorney Alan Dershowitz and former U.S. Congressman Barney Frank.

Using his own and his interviewees words, Mr. Ruttman has written forty-three stories in a conversational style which brings each person to life as the pages unfold before the reader.

Looming large over the stories are the first Jews inducted into the Hall of Fame who largely defined their own eras in terms of Jews on the field - Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax. To fashion the lead story on the late Hank Greenberg, Mr. Ruttman interviewed his son Steve, his daughter Alva, Hall of Famer and Hank's longtime friend, Ralph Kiner, honored film documentarian, Aviva Kempner, and Pulitzer Prize winner and biographer, Ira Berkow.

In conjunction with the book's publication and fine critical response, Mr. Ruttman has spoken at many venues around the country, in many joining with people in the book, retelling the stories of the book's participants, and explaining why the game has long had such a great "hold" on Jewish fans, and why it is now finding more Jewish participants at the highest levels of the game than ever before. The game today features 12-15 different Jewish players each season.

"I'm honored that Dan has selected this book number one among all the fine titles produced during the year," said Ruttman. "It's quite an honor, and also a tribute to the growing participation of Jews in the game, which recently included the hiring of Brad Ausmus to manage the Detroit Tigers. In fact, my chapter on Brad, written a few years ago, concluded with my prediction that he would one day become an MLB manager with no prior minor league experience. The Detroit Free Press reprinted that chapter in their Sunday edition of November 17, 2013, reaching 700,000 people, when Brad was engaged."

The life stories of the book's subjects have been compiled from fifty in-depth interviews and arranged by decade from the 1930's in this edifying and entertaining work of oral and cultural history. In ***American Jews and America's Game***, each person talks about growing up Jewish and dealing with anti-Semitism, assimilation, intermarriage, observance, viability, Israel and other hot-button Jewish issues. Each tells about being in the midst of the colorful pantheon of players who, over the past 75 years or more, have made baseball what it is. Their stories tell, as no previous book has, the history of the larger-than-life role of Jews in America's pastime. It is a book about baseball, American Jewish life over the last eighty years, America itself, and the personal stories of these fifty people.

Larry Ruttman, who began attending games in Braves Field and Fenway Park before World War II, is the author of *Voices of Brookline* (2005), a national finalist for the Award of Merit of the American Association of State and Local History. He has practiced law in Boston for more than 50 years and has produced a television interview show in his hometown of Brookline, MA.

Ruttman was recently elected a Fellow of the renowned Massachusetts Historical Society, founded in 1791 and having had such Fellows as John Adams, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and John F. Kennedy. Larry was elected at the same time as his mentor, Professor and Jewish historian Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University, and was sponsored by Fellow Daniel Coquillette, eminent historian, Harvard Law School professor, and former Boston College Law School Dean.

A wealth of material about the book can be read, heard, and seen at its website: <http://americanjewsandamericasgame.com/> and on Larry Ruttman's Wikipedia page.

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