

My Eighty-Two Year Love Affair with Fenway Park



Fenway Park at dusk under a dramatic sky reflecting over one hundred years of drama on this storied field of dreams.

From Teddy Ballgame to Mookie Betts

**My Eighty-Two Year
Love Affair with
Fenway Park**

**From Teddy Ballgame to
Mookie Betts**

**by
Larry Ruttman**

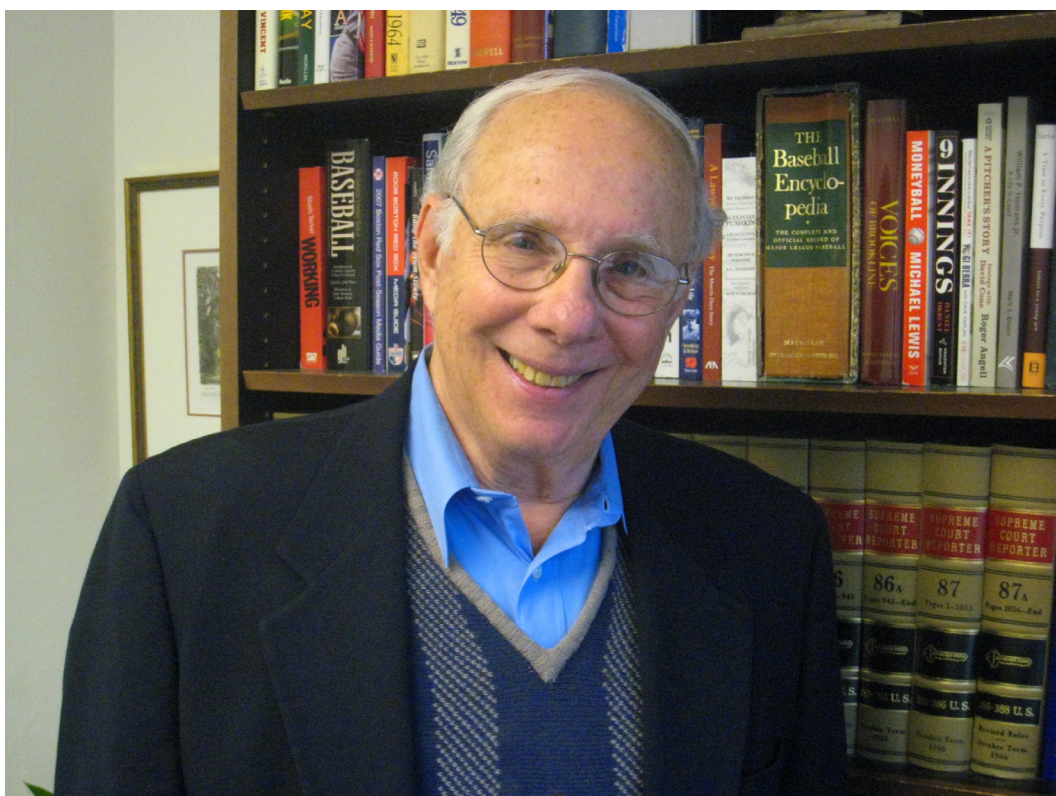


Ted Williams and his bat make a team not to be beat, especially when the mercurial and handsome star is smiling and shining.



Mookie Betts' direct gaze and big smile tell a lot about this centered and astounding young athlete.

About the Author



Larry Ruttman

Author, Historian, Attorney

Larry Ruttman, a longtime attorney and author, has won awards for biographical cultural histories about his famous hometown of Brookline, Massachusetts, *Voices of Brookline* (2005), and Jews on and off the field in Major League Baseball, *American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball* (2013), which was chosen the best baseball book in America for 2013 by *Sports Collectors Digest*. He is currently writing on his lifelong passion for classical music and its musicians, tentatively titled,

Voices of Virtuosi: Musicians Reveal Their Musical Minds. Educated at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Boston College Law School, he served as an intelligence officer in the United States Air Force in the Korean War. He was elected a Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society. His papers on his two books have been collected by the New England Genealogical Society in collaboration with the American Jewish Historical Society, and collated, digitized, formatted, indexed, and published online. Larry has lived in Brookline since the age of two and has been married to Lois for fifty-four years. He is going strong at eighty-seven. Larry is amazed that Providence has granted him the privilege to “live his life backwards” in this late-coming and deeply satisfying labor of love.

Dedication

This memoir is dedicated to Gordon Edes, the official historian of the Boston Red Sox, for his indispensable help in the wide dissemination of this memoir.

Acknowledgment

The author is grateful to Susan Worst for her assistance with the layout of this publication.

Copyright

Copyright © 2018 by Lawrence A. Ruttman
All rights reserved.

Photographs and Credits

Page 1: photograph of Fenway Park at sunset by Matthew Thomas/
Boston Red Sox. Copyright © 2017 Boston Red Sox. Used by permission.

Page 3: photograph of Ted Williams copyright © Boston Red Sox. Used by
permission.

Page 4: photograph of Mookie Betts by Billie Weiss/Boston Red Sox/
Getty Images; copyright © 2018 by Billie Weiss/Boston Red Sox. Used by
permission.

Page 5: photograph of Larry Ruttman by Greg Spiers. Used by permission.

Page 20: photograph of Ted Williams by Dennis Brearley/Boston Red Sox.
Copyright © Boston Red Sox - purchased from Brearley Collection, 2013.
Used by permission.

Page 55: photograph of Larry Ruttman and Alan Dershowitz.
Photographer unknown.

Page 63: photograph of Mookie Betts by Kathryn Riley/Boston Red Sox.
Copyright © 2017 Boston Red Sox. Used by permission.

My Eighty-Two Year Love Affair with Fenway Park

Many people would say that Harvard University, founded in 1636, is the premier university in Massachusetts, the United States of America, and maybe even the world. Most people would also say that the Boston Red Sox, founded in 1901, and now an independent nation within a commonwealth, are one of the most storied athletic enterprises in America. Few, if any, people would say these two institutions are linked in history. But they are. How? In 1912, the year Fenway Park, the home of the Boston Red Sox from then to now and going forward, was erected. There, on a cold, blustery and snow touched early April day, the Red Sox took on their first opponent. New York? No. Then who? *The Harvard Crimson*, that's who!¹

My God! The seats were still being riveted into place and the clubhouses not yet ready, when the appropriately named Harvard leadoff hitter and third baseman, Dana Joseph Paine Wingate stepped in against plainly named Sox pitcher, Casey Hageman, and promptly fanned. Arrayed in the field that day against the Harvard boys were such players as Hall of Famers Tris Speaker and Harry Hooper, excellent picket man, Duffy Lewis, manager and first sacker, Jake Stahl, and a keystone combination of Marty Krug at short and Steve Yerkes at second. Yerkes's first inning single was Fenway Park's first hit.

1. Please note that the memoir by Larry Ruttman you are about to read is a pre-publication version of the memoir which will appear in a substantially similar version in *NINE, A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*, volume 26, nos. 1 and 2 (Fall 2017-Spring 2018). *NINE* is published by the University of Nebraska Press.

The less elegantly named Robert Potter of the Harvards singled through the hole into left field in the fifth for his team's only hit that day, demonstrating not only Harvard's gamesmanship, but also the democracy starting to prevail in its ranks. Dusk, cold, snow, and the muddy ball forced the game to be called after the top of the seventh, the Red Sox winning by a modest 2-0 score, which hardly foreshadowed the World Championship they would win in the Fall of that year, but was prescient of Harvard's 1-0 victory over the Sox in an exhibition game at Fenway three years later in 1916, another Red Sox championship season.

The Boston Red Sox and Harvard University have been trading blows ever since to lay claim as world class Boston's most revered institution. The winner is still in doubt.

Some years ago I happened on a book published by the American Institute of Architects in which they listed the many notable buildings in Boston. I looked for Fenway Park and didn't find it. I thought it was an error because there can be no question that Fenway Park is one of the most revered structures in Boston. A lot of baseball history has been made there, millions of people have memories of what has taken place there, and that is important and significant considering the central place baseball occupies in the American psyche, including my own as a citizen of Red Sox nation.

In fact, shoehorned as it is into a relatively small and roughly parallelogram shaped plot of land in the center of Boston, architecturally significant for its celebrated plethora of eccentric on- and off- field nooks and crannies multiplied over its now 106-year history, and the site of many of my most thrilling moments, Fenway Park is as animate to me as any of the good friends I am lucky to have.

I was born in February, 1931. I first set eyes on Fenway Park in 1936, on a bright summer day when a sellout crowd overflowed onto the field of play as the Boston Red Sox squared off against the vaunted New York Yankees. My father Morris (Moe to everybody who knew this gentle man) took me by the hand to watch the game, beginning a now 80-year-old plus love affair with that evergreen arena. At that time there were no bullpens in right field, and that side of the field was a huge expanse which I can remember was roped off to accommodate the standing room crowd. That is where my dad and I stood. Of course, at five years old, I can't remember specifics of the game, but stuck in my mind's eye is the big number 4 on the back of the Yankee first baseman, Lou Gehrig, which my father must have pointed out to me. There were no restrooms in the outfield, and I kept pestering my dad all day long to go to the bathroom, and perhaps he took me once or twice back into the bleachers where I could relieve my anxiety.

It seems to me that it was a sunny day. For sure, the day sticks in my mind, as does the fact that it was my father who took me to the games. How many tens of thousands of children were taken to their first major league baseball game by their father? Baseball is the American game which binds the generations together.

My next Fenway Park memory involves my father as well. This was in 1940 when my dad took me to a Red Sox - White Sox double-header. We sat way back in the first base stands for the first game which the Sox lost by a wide margin. Between games, a man came grumpily marching up the stairs between the sections, spied my father and me sitting together, and stating that he was disgusted with the Sox (a not uncommon feeling among Boston fans over the decades), asked if we would like to have his box seats. Yes, we would, and we went down to the second or third row from the field

to watch the second game. I believe the score was 8 to 8 in the last of the 9th when the youthful Ted Williams, then in his sophomore season, lined one of his patented topspin sinking line drives into right field for a single. Up stepped the menacing Hall of Fame first baseman Jimmy Foxx, aptly called “The Beast” for his massive shoulders and tremendous power. On that occasion, Foxx was indeed beastly, smashing a long home run into the netting above the fence by the then existing flagpole at the 379 foot marker in deepest left center field, good for a 10 - 8 Red Sox walk-off victory.

When I arrived as a freshman some eight years later at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts, I recalled that day in 1940, but by that time I was wondering whether it all was a figment of my imagination. I had the opportunity to find out since in the stacks in the recesses of the university library, there were *New York Times* going back decades. I searched for the box score (perhaps my first experience with the pleasures of dusty library archives and antiquarian bookstores). Lo and behold, there it was, in the *New York Times* of June 10, 1940, on the sports page, reporting that the Red Sox and Chisox had split the doubleheader the day previously, winning the second game on a walk-off Foxx home run. Well, I don’t claim to have the greatest memory in the world, but that was a good test of memory, a facet which has held secure into my eighty-eighth year.

The following stanza is redolent of an earlier time in baseball, as well as the long Red Sox habit, since broken, of not winning the ultimate game.

“Take me out to the ball game,

Take me out with the crowd.

Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack,
I don't care if I never get back,
Let me root, root, root for the home team,
If they don't win it's a shame.
For it's one, two, three strikes, you're out,
At the old ball game."

"Peanuts and Cracker Jack" suggest hot dog stories at Fenway Park. I have a few. In my early years of attendance at Fenway Park I usually sat in the bleachers. Occasionally I would let my culinary instincts draw me to the hot dog stand underneath. One day, probably in 1952, my twin loves of baseball and food brought me close to an early demise. Having purchased my hot dog, I was walking up the exit ramp to return to my seat with it in hand when suddenly the people at the top of the ramp spread apart. In that fleeting instant there was the flash of a ball coming from the sky and striking the inclined ramp. The ball glanced hard off the left side of my forehead. A few inches to the right and I might never have seen Fenway Park again. I was shocked but unhurt, and, of course, curious. I soon learned that St. Louis Browns infielder Bobby Young had struck that blow, which had to have travelled well over 425 feet from home plate to its landing point, a blow more fit to come off the bat of Babe Ruth than Bobby Young, who managed only fifteen home runs in an eight year major league career. I'm willing to wager that was the longest hit of Bobby Young's career.

The hot dog I bought under the bleachers before Bobby Young's improbable home run was likely of a lesser quality than the one I bought at a recent game which led to another vivid Fenway hot

dog memory. Even so, as my experience of life increased, it became clear to me that culinary expertness was not to be found at Fenway Park. But that is hardly the point. You are at the ball park, you get a hot dog. It's as simple as that. So when I went down that day to get a hot dog, in my usual style, I tried to jazz it up to a higher level with a combination of onions, mustard and relish. I returned to my box seat precariously balancing dog and drink. Was it age, was it an exciting play on the field? I forget. Suddenly the top heavy dog fell forward to my consternation and embarrassment, landing upside down squarely on the back of the customer in front of me. What a technicolor mess! I apologized profusely. My fellow fan was nicer about my failure of balance and manners than many another would have been. Perhaps he wanted to pop me one, but he looked at me and must have thought to himself, 'Well, what can you do, he's an old guy?' Had I known he was thinking that, I would have objected since I entertain the fantasy in every one of my waking moments that I'm still young.

My first memory of Ted 'The Kid' Williams involved a newspaper.² That was in 1939 when Ted was a rookie who led the American League with an incredible 145 runs batted in. I was an 8-year old kid at that time. As my parents, their friends, and myself drove off on what I seem to recall as a late Sunday afternoon after going to the movies at the old Fenway Theater which now serves as the Berklee Performance Center at The Berklee College of Music, a gentleman hailed a newsboy to get a copy of the tabloid *Record American* (now

2. For more information on Ted Williams, see Wikipedia contributors, "Ted Williams," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ted_Williams&oldid=839790307 (accessed May 16, 2018).

defunct). The paper was noted for getting the baseball results on the street in 'record' time. Looking quickly, he exclaimed something like, "Wow, that skinny kid hit two more homers today!"

Just now, I thought I better fact check my memory of an event seventy-nine years ago. Indeed, I had reported it accurately in the previous paragraph, but discovered a few other most interesting facts which bound together two of the supreme diamond stars of all time. Ted Williams' home run list on the Internet revealed the date to be Sunday, September 3, 1939, the only time that season Ted hit two homers in a home game. It also revealed that the two dingers were hit off veteran Yankees right hander Irving "Bump" Hadley out of nearby Lynn, Massachusetts, who exactly eleven years previously, on September 3, 1928, had yielded the very last hit of Ty Cobb's incredible twenty-four year career. I'm with two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, historian, David McCullough, that the study of history is rewarding and edifying, more especially here when you also note that the Nazis had loosed their blitzkrieg on Poland to usher in WWII on September 1st, only two days before Ted's barrage, and four years before his own entry into that war. One needs to know where he or she has been to have any idea of where he or she is going.

I believe it was just prior to the start of the 1942 season when I went to a so-called City Series game between the old Boston Braves and the Red Sox, a yearly tradition then. Never one to be shy, always possessed with what I later came to understand to be chutzpah, very likely inherited from my unafraid and always decorative mother, Doris, I milled around the Red Sox dugout with a lot of other youngsters probably hoping for some sort of contact with Theodore Samuel Williams, by that time a .400 hitter. A reporter must

have had the idea to group all us young folks with our hero, then in his fourth year with the Red Sox. The result was a photo which appeared the next day in either the *Globe* or the *Herald* showing a smiling and affable “Splendid Splinter” with a group of twenty or so youthful admirers. (That encounter reminds me of the time when I followed in the footsteps of JFK on the last night of his campaign to become president. I was on the stairs at Faneuil Hall where he brushed by me on the way to the old Boston Garden to make his final speech to the country. A few minutes later I was in the front rows of a crowd of over thirteen thousand people in the Garden to wish him success in the election the next day. There Jack stood with all the Massachusetts politicians of the day before giving a rousing speech. A photographer thought to take a picture from the podium of the crowd. Right there is the youthful gatecrasher and by then lawyer, yours truly, plainly to be seen.)

Did Ted Williams and Babe Ruth ever play in the same game together? Well, close, but not quite. In 1943 Babe Ruth’s Service All-Stars appeared at Fenway Park featuring Ted Williams taking a sojourn from his preflight training in the Navy. Before the game there was a home run hitting contest between Ted and the Babe, who by then was 48. Babe took some swings, and, as I recall it, he hit a few long balls foul down the right field line. In the game itself Williams lined a drive directly into to the center field bleachers, demonstrating, not for the last time, that this genius of swat could come back and seemingly without practice or preparation pick up right where he left off. A famous photograph of Ted and Babe together reminds us of that day.

In mid-season 1945 Hank Greenberg returned from his two stints of WWII military service, covering four years or so, to lead the Detroit Tigers to the World Series, slugging a final day grand slam home

run to seal the deal. Earlier that season he appeared at Fenway Park. My friend, Yale Altman, and I went to catch my first glimpse of the Jewish hero. I recall we were sitting high up in the first base grandstand with a clear view of Hank in the right hand batter's box. At that early stage of my life my hearing was acute, and I could hear the conversation of the two older men sitting just below me in the next row. In my mind's ear I hear them talking with an Irish brogue. Hank Greenberg is at the plate, easily and confidently preparing for the pitch by moving his long bat back and forth.

One of the men said to the other words to this effect, "By God, the big Yid handles the bat like a toothpick." At fourteen, I did not derive much more from the comment than some amusement since by then I was already sure of my place as an American citizen without apology, and even then would have laughed off the comment as the other person's problem, not mine. Now, of course, I see the event in a more complex way. Perhaps it was a demonstration not only of the much higher level of anti-Semitism prevalent during those years, and also an expression of the unease with which gentile America viewed the supposedly cerebral only Jew as non-athletic, and having no place on the fields of athletic endeavor. I'm now content to think, however, that it was merely a non-hostile vernacular way of expressing admiration for the already three time American League MVP *Hebrew Hammer*.

In any event, America today is a different landscape, where religious differences are, in large part, treated less virulently, as demonstrated in my book *America's Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, in which the first story is about the iconic Hank Greenberg, as seen through the eyes of his

son Steve and his daughter Alva, and his longtime friend, the late Hall of Famer, Ralph Kiner.³

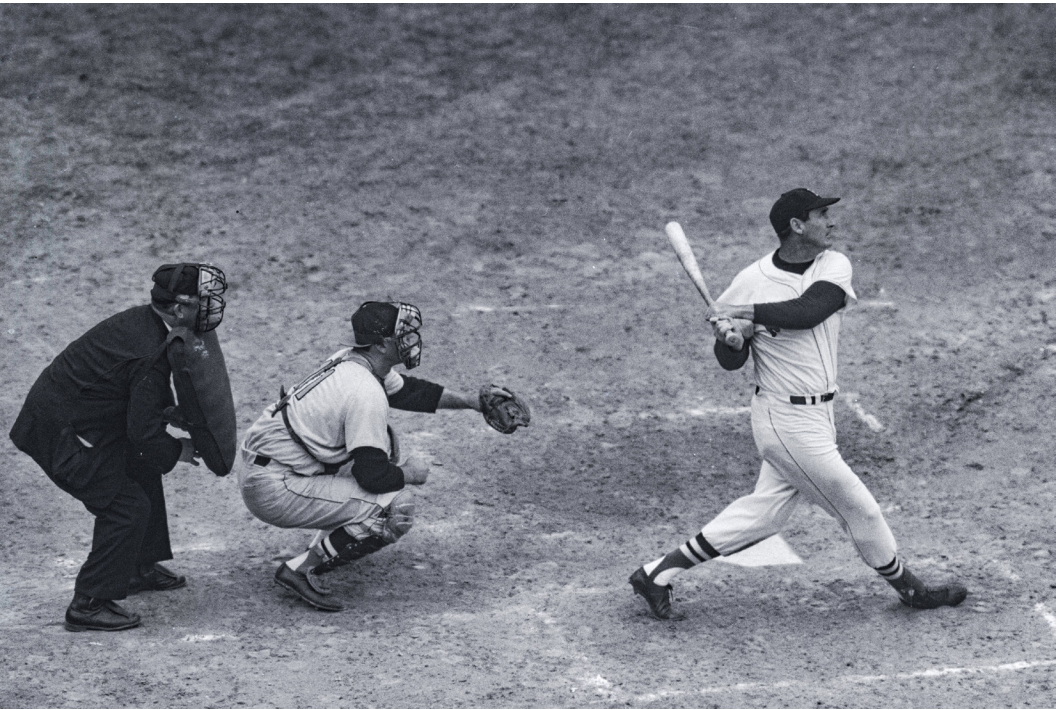
I believe too that Red Sox memories in old Braves Field, where the Braves played until they moved to Milwaukee in 1953, qualify as Fenway memories. In those times, as indicated above, the Red Sox and Braves not only played a City Series every year, but at times put on exhibitions of home run hitting to complement the game. One such contest took place in Braves Field in '46 or '47, not long after all the players returned from WWII. One of the bullpens was behind the short right field fence at Braves Field, and behind it stretched upward the right field bleachers, affectionately known as the "Jury Box", topped by a giant twenty-five foot or more high scoreboard as wide as the bleachers. No mere mortal could hit it over that scoreboard, and no one ever did. To even reach near the scoreboard took a blow of over 450 feet. In the contest that year Ted Williams stroked soaring, majestic, cloud brushing drives one after the other to the base of the scoreboard, amazing the assembled thousands with his focus, power, and consistency. By that time I was so hooked on "Teddy Ballgame" that I emulated his swing, and had visions of being able to accomplish similar feats, a fantasy shared by a myriad of his aficionados.

In 1946 the Boston Red Sox won the American League pennant in a romp. It might be said that Ted Williams's career rose to an

3. See "Henry 'Hank' Greenberg: Hall of Fame Infielder and Outfielder, Revealing the Survival of American Judaism Generation by Generation" in *American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, by Larry Ruttman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 9-32. The book is available by visiting www.americanjewsandamericasgame.com.

apogee and descended to its perigee that summer. Perhaps the apogee was on June 9, 1946, by which time the Sox were all alone in first place and Ted led the league in every major batting category. Accompanied again by my good friend then and now, Yale Altman, rifle armed all-city third baseman for English High School in Boston, I attended a doubleheader between the Sox and the Detroit Tigers. In the first game, Ted hit a soaring home run off the screen at the back of the Red Sox bullpen off ace Detroit curve ball specialist Tommy Bridges. But the best was yet to come in the nightcap on this beautiful June day when the west wind was briskly blowing from home plate out to right field.

Ted stepped in against Detroit's fine right hander (and later a respected manager) Freddy Hutchinson. I can see and hear it all clearly in my mind's eye and ear. The pitch was thrown hard and to the inside. Ted's quick bat flashed through the strike zone striking the ball so hard that a sharp crack was heard all over Fenway Park. Indeed, the ball rose high and fast describing a relatively flat arc in the sky, more like a gargantuan line drive than a big fly. The ball sailed and sailed, landing very high in the sixty or so row right field bleachers. From my position in the center field section of the bleachers I saw the ball come down and quickly bounce up to the very last rows of the bleachers, close to six hundred feet away from home plate and thirty-five or more feet off the ground. As reported in the newspapers the next day, what actually happened is that the ball went through a man's straw hat in the 42nd row, bouncing off his head to the position I just described. That man was 502 feet from home plate. Ted's drive is generally considered to be the longest home run in Fenway Park history. Some of the Detroit Tiger relief staff in their bullpen in deepest right field clambered up onto the screen at the back of the bullpen to excitedly view where the ball



Teddy Ballgame displays the classic form making that moniker accurate as he homers in the last at bat of his twenty-two year career in 1960.

had landed. No one who saw that blow would ever forget it. It is an unforgettable long hit. Later when I interviewed Theo Epstein for my book⁴, I told him I had been there, but the skeptical Theo had some doubts not only whether I had been there, but whether it was

4. See “Theo Epstein: The Youngest General Manager in Major League Baseball History” in *American Jews and America’s Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, by Larry Ruttman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 403-10. The book is available by visiting www.americanjewsandamericasgame.com.

possible to hit a ball that far. Theo told me that he had watched David Ortiz many times in batting practice hit balls in that direction that he thought were hit about as far as a ball could be hit, and that Ortiz's hits never came close to where Ted's ball was reputed to have gone. I reiterated my experience to Theo, assuring him that indeed I was there, and indeed it had happened. Perhaps he was convinced. As for Ian Kinsler, whom I later interviewed for my book and told about that drive, I am sure he was not, but my interest then was interviewing him, not convincing him.

The perigee of Ted Williams's career occurred during that 1946 World Series between the Red Sox and the St. Louis Cardinals, when Ted failed to distinguish himself, getting only five singles in twenty-five at-bats. Yale Altman and I attended one of those games, sitting in our usual perch in the center field bleachers. That game resulted in a 12 - 3 Cardinal victory, in which three Cards, Marty Marion, Enos Slaughter, and the young Joe Garagiola, each had four hits, as did the veteran Wally Moses for the Red Sox.

Playing hooky, how did Yale and I gain admittance to the bleachers that day? At the bleacher entrance, the Boston police mounted on horses were only allowing fans with tickets to pass through the outer gate. I noticed that the tickets that day were yellow, and that a few were still being sold in a line at the box office on the other side of the police phalanx. Remembering that I had similarly colored tickets for shirts I had left at a Chinese laundry, I said to Yale, "Follow me," and walking fast, flashing my "ticket," we walked right on through to the box office. I tell this story in the full knowledge gained through my legal education that the statute of limitations has passed on this "offense".

The Series ended with a Cardinal victory in the seventh game at old Sportsman's Park in St. Louis when Enos Slaughter raced around to score from first base on a single to left center by Harry "The Hat" Walker, on which it is claimed that the fine and now late beloved Sox shortstop, Johnny Pesky, held the relay too long before throwing home too late to catch the daring Slaughter. Ted's frustration was shown in the memorable photograph of him crying in the Sox clubhouse after that game.

Long home runs are exciting. So are long passes on the gridiron, and Fenway Park has hosted football almost from the time it opened. The hapless and hopeless old Boston Yanks played there from 1944 to 1948. Those five years drew to Boston some of the greatest footballers ever, including long passers Sammy Baugh (some say Baugh was the best player ever) of the Washington Redskins and Sid Luckman of the Chicago Bears. Yale Altman and I watched their arching aerials with baited breath. Sammy and Sid provided the fastest long-distance connections of the time!

I was at Fenway Park for a few other long home runs that stick in the memory. Mickey Mantle, batting left handed, hit one off the fine Sox hurler, Frank Sullivan, in the 50's during a game at which I was seated in the grandstand far down the left field line, thus having a side view of the arc of that tremendous blow. It traveled high against the rising brick wall that bounds the center field bleachers to the right of the 379 foot marker. The Mick's blast certainly rivaled Ted's long one, a metaphor for how those two stars dominated the 50's.

Another night, sitting in the right field bleachers, again having a sidewise view, I was lucky enough to see Cleveland strongman Rocky Colavito - well known for his good looks, personality, and long distance hitting and throwing - stroke a shot which disap-

peared into the night and into my dreams far above and beyond the netting then atop the left field “monster,” heading like a heat seeking missile towards Kenmore Square, a quarter mile or so away.

Maybe the best two man live home run hitting show was in ‘95 or ‘96 when Jose Canseco was playing for the Red Sox, and Mark McGwire, his former partner in swat, known then as the “Bash Brothers,” on the Oakland Athletics, came to town. A lot has been written and said about Canseco, McGwire, and steroids, and whether or not steroids were involved that night, the fact is that both Canseco and McGwire were giants who could hit the ball a mile. My wife, Lois, and I were together at that game, sitting in the first base grandstand. So this was not a sidewise view, but a view of the ball going directly away from us, hit by right handed batters towards the (in)famous left field wall. I said to Lois that if these guys hit a long home run or two, you will see that the ball will become smaller and smaller as it flies away from you becoming an almost indiscernible pea in the sky. Wow, were Lois and I rewarded that night! The famous sluggers traded home runs in that game, each (as I recall it) powering two, and at least three of them were peas in the sky. It seems Canseco was the one to “bash” the first pea, and we thought there could be no smaller pea in the sky. But McGwire bested Jose Canseco in their war of peas, challenging those there with 20/20 vision to keep track of his peas. My dear wife is not easily impressed by famous people or great diamond feats, and certainly not by me, but she did have an “Oh my God” look on her face that night.

The Red Sox were pretty bad during the last decade of Ted Williams’s career, although he was not, continuing to terrorize the league, leading it with an astounding .388 average in 1957 at age 38 when his legs could not buy him any more infield hits. That summer he homered thrice in a game twice. Ted won the batting

crown the next summer too. The year 1960 was to be Ted's last year in the major leagues at age forty-two. Even then he was still far and away the best hitter in the league, striking twenty-nine home runs in only 320 at-bats, an extremely high ratio, easily topping the league.

Two of those homers came when I was in attendance at a late August game between the Sox and the Baltimore Orioles, ensconced in the right field sky view seats. The Orioles' pitcher, Chuck Estrada, *The Sporting News* American League Pitcher of the Year that year, was well known for his fireball. Early in that game, Ted hit a prototypical towering fly which reached wind currents swirling high above the field and rode them to the distant back of the Red Sox bullpen for a three run homer. Later the game was on the line. Estrada was still pitching as Ted again came to the plate with two men on base. Estrada's body language sort of suggested that he was thinking something like, "You old coot, you are not going to be able to hit my best fastball again." He challenged "The Splendid Splinter" by throwing fastball after fastball which Ted kept fouling off. I told my companion that day, well-remembered Boston songstress Priscilla Howe, that there never was a fastball that Ted Williams couldn't hit, and that was still true at age forty-two. Sure enough Ted connected, and this time it was not a big fly aided by the wind but a piercing line drive directly at the 420 foot marker in deepest center field. The drive buzzed above that sign, over the twenty foot high fence, boring into the bleacher crowd, probably traveling at an "exit speed" of well over one hundred ten miles per hour, another three run home run, and a Sox victory. Indeed, a Fenway memory to cherish, especially since I missed Ted's storied home run a few weeks later in his last at-bat in the major leagues, memorialized in John Updike's memorable prose.

The next year, 1961, saw the advent of another Sox icon, Carl Yastrzemski, who was to thrill Red Sox fans with his stellar and spirited play at bat and in the field for twenty-three seasons. He was well touted in advance, and my legal compatriot at the time, Bruce Phillips, and I decided to play hooky from our job with well remembered Boston trial lawyer Morris Michelson, to see Carl's debut. Somehow we wangled our way into the field boxes on the third base side and witnessed Carl getting a single and a double in his first game. Typically for the young left-handed batting Carl Yastrzemski, the double was inside-outed off the left field fence.

Fast forward to 1967, the year of the "Impossible Dream," when the Red Sox came from nowhere to win the American League pennant which began the modern era of winning Red Sox teams down to the present. Again the Sox faced the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series. But to get there they had to defeat the Minnesota Twins to win the American League pennant. It was Carl Yastrzemski, who that season had transformed himself into a feared pull hitting home run slugger, who led the Sox to that promised land in the last two games of the season, going 7 for 8 with a homer and 6 runs batted in. Yastrzemski won the Triple Crown, leading the league in batting, home runs, and runs batted in, a feat not repeated until Miguel Cabrera did it for the Tigers in 2012. I was in the right field bleachers in the penultimate game when Yastrzemski's home run off ace Minnesota left hander, reliever Jim Merritt, was the key blow.

The next day I was in the first base grandstand when Carl's clutch line single to center off Minnesota 20 game winner, Dean Chance, again keyed the Red Sox victory. He also made an amazing retrieval and accurate and hard throw from the left field corner which cut down Minnesota slugger Bob Allison trying for a key double. The last out of that game was a pop fly to Boston's smooth fielding and

power hitting shortstop, Rico Petrocelli. As soon as Rico squeezed the ball, the fans swarmed by the thousands onto the field. Knowing that the celebration was liable to spread not only to the field but outside the ballpark down towards Kenmore Square, I turned in the opposite direction from most fans, made my way quickly out of the ballpark, and returned quickly and happily to the safer confines of nearby neighboring Brookline, my hometown.

I did manage to get to every game of the thrilling World Series which followed, won by the Cardinals four games to three. One memory that sticks in my mind is a home run by Hall of Famer Lou Brock off Boston reliever, John Wyatt, which unbelievably soared off the whippet-like outfielder's bat high over the 420 foot marker in center field and deep into the bleachers. I could not believe that a man as slim, light, and lithe as the base-stealing Brock could power a ball such a distance. More credible were Yaz' two homers in the second game, one a long low liner into the further reaches of the right field grandstand, the other a skyscraping swat into the distant right field bleachers. Carl Yaztrzemeski was a gamer every time he stepped onto the field!

Earlier I spoke of going to Fenway Park with my father. Of course, baseball has always been a family event, and on a few occasions I went with my late baseball loving, low handicap golfer, father-in-law, Jack Raverby. There we were comfortably ensconced in the box seats along the first base line on a beautiful early summer day in June 1969 when Bill "The Spaceman" Lee came on in relief to make what I recall as his major league debut with the Boston Red Sox. Of course, we had no way of knowing we were seeing history in the making, but we did know early on that day that Bill Lee was a thinking man's pitcher as he dazzled the opposing players with

his variety of well placed curves and slurves, impressing both of us that here indeed was a man of guile.

And so it was from that day to this. Bill Lee had a highly successful Red Sox career, at one point winning seventeen games back to back to back, which won him a place in the Boston Red Sox Hall of Fame. His career came full circle when “The Spaceman” pitched a win for the minor league Brockton Rox on Sunday, September 5, 2010, making him the oldest pitcher ever - at sixty-three - to win a professional baseball game. Attending that game, I can honestly say that he was as dazzling that day as he was back in 1969, continuously fooling his youthful opponents, holding them to a single run on a pop fly home run over 5.1 innings.

It has been said that the 1975 World Series between the Boston Red Sox and the “Big Red Machine,” the Cincinnati Reds, featuring Pete Rose, Joe Morgan, Johnny Bench, and Tony Perez, among others, was the best World Series of all time. It was thrilling for me, again being able to attend most of the games in Boston. There was a lot of rain that fall, and Game 6 was postponed three times.

That game, which I attended with Lois, sitting behind the home plate screen, may have been the best game ever. That unforgettable game provided multiple memories: Luis Tiant’s courageous pitching, Freddy Lynn’s majestic three run home run to give the Red Sox the early lead, and his death-defying attempt against the center field fence to catch Ken Griffey’s two run triple, Reds outfielder George Foster’s mid-game clutch double to deep center to give the Reds the lead, and his ninth inning throw from left field to cut down Denny Doyle at the plate, carrying the winning run, Bernie Carbo’s improbable pinch home run to tie the score in the eighth, Dwight Evans twisting, turning, and leaping catch of Joe Morgan’s homer

bound drive to the distant right field corner in the eleventh and his powerful throw to double Griffey off first, Pete Rose's hell-for-leather play, and, of course, what may be the most famous home run in baseball history, Carlton "Pudge" Fisk's 12th inning walk-off shot off the left field foul pole to win the game against Cincinnati reliever, Pat Darcy. I didn't get to see Carlton's body language as he willed the ball to stay fair, my eyes being glued on the hit. Don't let anybody ever tell you it was some sort of Bucky Dent type bloop home run over the short left field fence. No sir! It was a ringing high line drive which sliced through the cool late night atmosphere. The only question - as we have seen Fisk demonstrate on the replay a thousand times - was whether the ball would be fair or foul.

On the following day Boston's eccentric lefty, "Spaceman" Bill Lee, started the ultimate game against the Reds. At that point in his career Lee had developed a sort of "eephus" pitch similar to the one earlier used by Rip Sewell, which Ted Williams famously slammed for one of his two home runs in the 1946 All Star Game at Fenway Park. It is a pitch which is thrown on a high arc to the batter, theoretically making it very difficult to hit at all, and almost impossible to square up and hit for distance. Bill tried one too many on Hall of Fame Reds first baseman, Tony Perez, who promptly whacked it for a two run homer into the screen in left center field in the sixth inning to begin the Reds' comeback from a 3-0 deficit to win the World Series on Joe Morgan's blooper to center.

My other cherished memory of that game is connubial in nature. It sort of relates to when I went with my father to my first game in 1936 and kept begging him to take me to the boys room. Lois then and now is a great baseball fan. But sometimes she gets a little impatient when the boys don't perform up to her high (unreasonable?) standards. In the midst of this sixth game Lois requested - even came

close to insisting - that we leave the game. The Sox were goners. She needed relief. Naturally, I resisted that. I probably suggested that if she wanted to go, go, I would stay. Anyway Lois stayed, and her pessimism was thwarted to her pleasure when the stoical and earnest Carlton Fisk won the game.

In 1978 Lois and I had purchased a home which we still enjoy in Wellfleet, far out on Cape Cod. That was the year that the Yankees played the Red Sox in the memorable play-off game that resulted in a Yankee victory via the aforesaid Bucky Dent's infamous fly ball. I watched it all unfold on television in Wellfleet, cursing myself every moment for not remaining in Boston to attend, consistent with my own practice of being at practically every important Sox game. It was torturous to see Carl Yazstremski pop up to end the game when he had a chance to win the game. It is forgotten now that he heroically smashed an early home run to open the scoring and give the Sox a lead off the then practically invincible Yankee lefty Ron Guidry. That was the only home run Guidry allowed to a left handed batter that season in which his record was an unbelievable 25-3. That game now exists in my mind as faded images on a screen, perhaps qualifying among all these Fenway memories as a non-memory.

All of my 20th century Fenway Park World Series memories are of a similar pattern, whether it be 1946, 1967, 1975, or 1986. In each of those World Series, the Red Sox made it close, the series was exciting, and the result was a four game to three victory for the National League team. When you think about it those experiences are a metaphor for the franchise generally. Sure, there were some really lean years in the 1950's and early 1960's, but other than that, the Red Sox have always been contenders, have had a plethora of great players, many batting champions and pitching leaders, several

Hall of Famers, and have always provided thrills, excitement, and pleasure in ample quantity.

That pattern continued when the Red Sox took on the Mets in 1986, and Bill Buckner, a really steady player whose career image was forever scarred in this series, let a slow roller go through his legs, allowing the Mets to win the sixth game, when everybody on planet Baseball and in Red Sox Nation thought the Sox had a lock on that game and the series.

Where was I during those final two games in New York? Down at Wellfleet with Lois and our very good friends and next door neighbors in Brookline, John and Jo Ann Caulfield, and their three children, Kathleen, Elizabeth, and Patrick. John, a world-class research doctor and prototypical fun loving Irishman, provided the unforgettable memory of that unforgettable sixth World Series game. Earlier in the day all seven of us had hiked on Great Island, part of the National Seashore, on the bay side of Wellfleet. The hike was an adventure, traversing many miles of shore, woods, cliffs, and sand so wet as to take on the characteristics of quicksand. After that exhausting day we all arrived home safe, sound, and ready to savor a Red Sox victory. In fact, John - not known for being a teetotaler - was so sure the Red Sox were going to win as the final innings unfolded with what seemed to be a comfortable Sox lead, that he had already broken out the celebratory bottle of champagne we had on hand, and was gleefully dancing around the room with it as his partner. When Bill Buckner made his infamous gaffe, John had already popped the cork. All of us watched in dismay and relative silence as the Mets quickly capitalized to win the game. We were crestfallen, but did manage to quaff the champagne in a rather death like atmosphere. John, a Baltimore native, put the capper on the day by exclaiming

pointedly and accurately, “Now I know what it’s like to be a Red Sox fan.” Indeed.

You meet a lot of people attending Red Sox games. You never know who will be sitting next to you, and if you are prone to strike up conversations with strangers like I am, then it can be very interesting. For example, when Cecil Cooper was a rookie with the Red Sox, I happened to be at a game at Fenway Park one day sitting in the box seats either behind the home plate screen or quite near it. A very pretty caramel-colored young lady was sitting next to me, and not being averse to the opposite sex, I struck up a conversation with her. It turned out she was a very well-spoken young woman from deep in the heart of Texas who was Cecil Cooper’s bride, Octavia, and who spoke of Cecil with great pride. We exchanged pleasantries and information for a while. As I recall it, she and Cecil were childhood sweethearts in Texas. Then we got into baseball, centering on her husband. I suggested that it looked like he was going to be a fine player. Her reply was unforgettable, “Fine player. My Cecil is going to be a SUPERSTAR.” Well, she was not far from being correct. Cecil Cooper had a great seventeen year major league career, once batting as high as .352, unfortunately not for the Sox. He was well respected for his graciousness and professionalism, enjoying a stint as a major league manager for The Houston Astros, the first black manager in that club’s history.

Another such incident occurred when the good Dr. John Caulfield and I attended a Red Sox - Indians doubleheader around 1985. We were stationed in the box seats along the third base side, and once again there was a very beautiful lady sitting next to me, with whom I struck up a conversation. She turned out to be the wife of Cleveland speedster Otis Nixon, who later played a season with the Red Sox. So there I was with my good friend John on one side, Otis

Nixon's beautiful wife on the other, and Wade Boggs, then in his prime, smashing hits all over the field, especially fierce line drives at the pitcher which threatened decapitation. There is a myth that Boggs was a Punch and Judy hitter with no power. Wrong! If he had wanted to hit home runs he could have done so, just as Ichiro could have done. He preferred to hit for high average, and at 6' 2" tall, 200 pounds, he could hit the ball as hard as anybody who played the game.

But John is not a Wade Boggs lover. He thought he should try for home runs, and accused him of never hitting in the clutch. So when Wade was taken out of the second game towards the end, already having six or seven sharp hits to his credit for the day, everybody stood up and cheered enthusiastically. John asked me, "What are they cheering about?," an absurd question for such a brilliant guy. I felt constrained to answer, "Because he is such a great f---ing hitter, that's why."

My first experience viewing a game from the luxury boxes came in 1989 when my politico friend, the late "Bunny" Solomon, Northeastern University's biggest fund raiser ever and then an executive with the since subsumed Bank of Boston, invited me and friends of mine to see a game from the bank's luxury suite high atop the first base grandstand. With Wade Boggs leading the way with some long hits, the Sox prevailed to the delight of Lois, my father-in-law, Jack Raverby, my friend, Dr. Alan Ropper, a leading neurologist then and now, Alan's young son, and his friend, the son of respected longtime Boston television reporter, Jorge Quiroga. Afforded the luxury of limitless hot dogs, corned beef, assorted hot and cold drinks, a retreat from time to time into the enclosed warmer recesses of the box, and a Sox victory, we mostly ignored the chilly evening,

exchanging for this one time only our usual position among the *hoi polloi* for a seat at the corporate table.

As mentioned above, Red Sox history is a story of great players. Several of them gave me extreme enjoyment. Ted Williams was unquestionably the greatest batsman I ever saw, a colorful performer in his every movement. Luis “Looie” Tiant was about as entertaining a pitcher as one could imagine, combining his body twisting talent with a consummate showmanship, making all of his games theatrical performances. In latter years, no player has dominated my imagination as much as Pedro Martinez. It is hard for me to imagine that any pitcher ever was better than Pedro during his salad years in Boston, during which time he racked up a stratospheric winning percentage above .750, and an earned run average in the low two’s. Pedro was so colorful to watch pitch, his body language bespeaking confidence, courage, and individuality. Off the field too, Pedro demonstrated being sure of himself but not full of himself, a man of intelligence, humor, and love, combined with a deep Latin pride which sometimes put him at odds with people.

For several years every game that Pedro Martinez pitched was an event. Many, many times he held the opposing team to very few runs, striking out ten or more batters. He seemed to be in another league altogether. The opposing batters flailed away fruitlessly. His losses in those years were in the single numbers, and his wins triple or more that number. The more crucial the game, the better (if that is possible) he pitched. So his well remembered pride was hardly without point.

I would make haste to get to the ball park when Pedro was pitching whenever I could. One time it was a Saturday game early in his first season with the Sox. Parking is at a premium around Fenway

Park. I finally wound up parking on Huntington Avenue, close to a half mile from the park. I had no ticket, but managed to obtain one. I saw Pedro pitch a masterpiece to win. That day became even more imprinted on my mind when I returned to Huntington Avenue to discover my car had been towed away at the behest of the men in blue. I took the T home, reported the loss to my own police, namely Lois, called the real police, and found out that my car had been towed to a yard in the wilds of Jamaica Plain. I was advised that I needed a three figure sum to fetch it out. So Lois and I drove over to J.P., most of the time she castigating me for my carelessness and/or stupidity. Undoubtedly rattled by dear Lois' relentless attack on my good sense, I compounded my error-laden day by the error of errors. When we arrived at the yard in Jamaica Plain where my car sat waiting, I reached into my pocket for the keys. Not in that pocket, or that pocket, MY GOD, not in any pocket! Reluctantly reporting that to my homegrown police force almost resulted in my summary execution on the spot. Perhaps the presence of witnesses restrained Lois. Shrinking into an indistinct form in my seat, I sat silently as we retraced our steps to home, keys, and back again to the murky yard in JP. Finally, we did recover my car in good shape. Truth to tell, careless though I might have been, I was not chagrined to have spent something like \$200 that day to see Pedro pitch. Not that I don't value a dollar. It just shows how much satisfaction Pedro Martinez gave.

A great Red Sox memory involved two all-time Red Sox players, both still active: Tim Wakefield and David Ortiz. The occasion was a night game late in 2005 against the Los Angeles Angels. Of course, Tim Wakefield is beloved of Red Sox fans, pitching his perplexing knuckleball many years for the team in several roles, mostly as a successful starter, sometimes as a set-up man, for a while as a

closer, and at times sacrificing himself to keep other arms rested. In his stolid and workmanlike way, Tim Wakefield gave his all for the team, won 186 games for the Red Sox, gave his time to local charitable causes, and the fans appreciate it.

On the other hand, David Ortiz plays with a Latin flair which has resulted in the most famous basket of clutch hits in Boston Red Sox history. On this night Wakefield and “Big Papi” combined to give the Red Sox a thrilling walk-off 3-2 victory. Lois and I were seated in the third base grandstand as Tim Wakefield befuddled the Angels into the late innings. The game was even at two into the ninth inning. Ortiz came up in the bottom half against Scot Shields, the talented Angels reliever, who finally came in with a fastball. David Ortiz struck with such force that the sound of the bat hitting the ball resounded around the field as the ball zoomed away from Ortiz’s bat into the glare of the light from the tower atop the right field grandstand directly facing us so that I could no longer follow the flight of the ball. Despite that, the sight and sound of the connection assured me from long experience that this not only was a game winning home run, but a very long game winning homer. Angels right fielder, the esteemed Vladimir Guerrero, never turned to go after the ball. Indeed it was long, landing some twenty rows back in the right field bleachers beyond the 380 foot marker. All 35,000 fans went home that night in a state of delight, even Lois, who was sure the Sox were going to lose.

Snippets of memory of many Red Sox players remain in my head. Ted “The Thumper” Williams taking his stance in the batters box, his bat held vertically behind his head, poised to strike; Johnny Pesky, his bat glistening in the sun as he moved it back and forth, awaiting the pitch, and then stroking a line drive single to right field; Dom “The Little Professor” DiMaggio racing to the flagpole to snare a

long drive; Bobby Doerr flashing to his left to snare a ground ball, and then whirling counter-clockwise to gun the runner out at first; Maury McDermott in his major league debut looking more like fifteen than nineteen, throwing thunderbolts; Joe Dobson spinning his great curve up to the plate; soft fingered Rico Petrocelli elegantly fielding a ground ball whether at shortstop or third base, not to mention his short powerful swing which produced many a long hit; "Yaz"'s serious demeanor matched by his superior professional abilities; Kenny "The Hawk" Harrelson's fun-loving personality and long ball power; Dick "Dr. Strangelove" Stuart's singular ability to hit the ball over the fence while botching the simplest plays at first base; Jim Rice's quick, snappy, and powerful swing which earned him entry into the Hall of Fame; the elegance with which Freddy Lynn played the outfield and his matching smooth hitting stroke; the remarkable Dwight "Dewey" Evans, whose fielding and throwing were unmatched, and who made himself into a slugger to be reckoned with as his career progressed; the eccentric, loveable, irritating, and fantastically talented "Manny being Manny" Ramirez who thrilled and amused this fan despite his antics; Dustin "Pedey" Pedroia, whose small size, great hitting and fielding, and down and dirty play, are always inspirational; Kevin Youkilis whose hard work developed his moderate talent into a great one, and whose style of play was very much like Dustin Pedroia's, so that they formed one of the best infield combos ever; Jon Lester who stoically overcame cancer and applied that same quality to tame his talent and master American League batters, and later was key in the Cubs' winning a world championship after a drought of more than a hundred years; the hard-nosed future Hall of Famer, Adrian Beltre, whose dynamism flows from the field to the fans every time he stands in the batters box or fields a ball at third base; Nomar Garciaparra, whose thrilling play at bat and in the field seemingly

had him on the road to Cooperstown until his life took another turn; Walt “Moose” Dropo for his fantastic rookie season when it seemed like every game I went to he was whacking a home run into the net above the left field fence; shortstop Vern “Shoulders” Stephens who combined in the 1948 season with Ted Williams to be one of the most memorable hitting duos in baseball history, each driving in 159 runs that year; journeyman infielder Jerry Adair whose team spirit and inspired play was a key to the Impossible Dream team of 1967; Rick “Rooster” Burleson for his terrific fielding, timely hitting, and unforgettable intensity, and many others.

Of course, people from every city, town, and village in New England have stories about Fenway Park and the Red Sox. Stories from Brookline folks may be a bit more varied, as I have discovered interviewing them for my 2005 book, *Voices of Brookline*, like the late politico, Bunny Solomon, Governor Mike Dukakis, the late Boston Pops violinist and conductor, Harry Ellis Dickson, legendary and late Brookline Superintendent of Schools, Bob Sperber, Brookline Chief of Police, Dan O’Leary, and Brookline crime novelist, Linda Barnes, mostly because Fenway Park lies just over the border from Brookline. Even my late mother, the colorful Doris, had one centering on Ted Williams. It seems that all of these stories relate to what we think of as particularly American qualities and characteristics, reinforcing the notion of baseball’s centrality in the American and Red Sox Nation psyches.

American original Bernard “Bunny” Solomon’s memories bring the Brookline of his childhood and early years colorfully alive in the framework of warm family life and his passion for baseball. Bunny puts it this way: “Oh yes, I’m a tremendous baseball fan and I come by it honestly. My father came to America from Kiev around 1895, lived in the South End, and fell in love with baseball, starting to go

to games when he was around eleven. He saw the Red Sox at the old Huntington Avenue grounds.”

Mike Dukakis recalls the powerful influence of his mother, who wanted him to know things American at a very young age. As Mike tells it, “My mother, God love her, didn’t know a baseball bat from a broom handle, was nice enough to take my brother, Stelian, and me to Fenway Park in 1938 when my brother was eight and I was four and a half.” Mike recalls that Lefty Grove was pitching and Jimmy Foxx was playing first base. Foxx hit a ball “like a rifle shot — you could hear the *smack* as the ball hit against the left field wall.”

One of my own favorite Fenway Park memories involves my gorgeous late mother, Doris Ruttman, beautiful until her passing in 2001 at 96. She must have taken pity on me when my adulation of Ted Williams carried well into my late teens. One day she was having lunch with a woman friend at the old Meadows restaurant in Framingham when along came Ted and his business manager at that time, Fred Corcoran. Of course, my mother then was a real stunner, and Ted, either not noticing or not caring about the ten or so year difference in age between them, was bold enough to suggest that they all have lunch together. My mother declined the invitation (she did tell me and my father that she thought Ted was very handsome), but requested and obtained from him a “To Larry” autograph!

Mike Dukakis’s father-in-law, the late convivial Boston Pops legend, Maestro Harry Ellis Dickson, told of his friendship with famed comedian, actor, and former Seattle baseball owner, Danny Kaye, with whom he shared passions for music, baseball, and life. The two of them would attend Red Sox games in the press box for free and munch hot dogs, yet another hot dog story.

Considering the vast number of reforms and changes that Robert I. (Bob) Sperber made in the Brookline school system in his years as Superintendent of Schools, you might think he had no time for baseball. Wrong! Baseball always played a big part in Bob's life. He formed the first baseball team at the Bronx High School of Science, remarking now that he wasn't a very good player, although plainly his organizational abilities were in evidence even then. Arriving in Boston, he became an avid Red Sox fan, and his staff gave him a "Fifty is Nifty" surprise birthday party when he reached that milestone. Bob tells it this way. "The theme was that there were all these fun gifts associated with the Red Sox – a blown-up Boston Red Sox doll and a bat, and various songs. They did that because they knew that I'm a fanatic Red Sox fan. It was easy coming to Boston to become a Red Sox fan, because when I was in New York, I was a New York Giant fan, not a Yankee fan. I hated the Yankees, and I still do. It is so easy to be a Red Sox fan. You have to have faith." Bob spoke there for all of us.

"I had a real good time growing up in Brookline," Chief Dan O'Leary of the Brookline Police Department recalls: "Brookline is great for kids, and still is great! Sometimes I would bike around with my baseball glove hanging off the handle bars. You don't see that now. We were fortunate, too, in having Fenway Park so close. We used to hop on the trolley and go down to Fenway, and go in there and watch the night games. I remember one summer in particular. It's a story I liked to tell my son when he was younger. That summer, on the street right near the left field wall at Fenway, around the second inning of every night game you would have twenty or thirty kids just standing there, and there would always be a Boston police officer watching that gate. Without fail, around the second inning, he would say, 'Boys, I'm going to the bathroom,' and he'd

walk away. We would open the gate, and thirty kids would be running in to find seats. For one whole summer, that was a nightly occurrence. That was a lot of fun!”

Prize-winning crime novelist, Linda Barnes, grew up in the shadow of now extinct Tiger Stadium, then the Briggs Stadium of her youth. As she said, “I went to high school within walking distance of Briggs Stadium. I used to cut school and go see the Tigers. Hank Greenberg was the guy my dad talked about all the time. I grew up with Al Kaline. He was great. Baseball speaks to me. I’m married to someone who grew up as a Cubbies fan, which is just terrible, even more terrible since the ‘fan interference’ that might have cost the Cubs the pennant recently. I’m a little uncertain about my son with this heritage of the Cubs and the Red Sox together. We’re teaching our child how to lose at a very young age, which I’m not entirely comfortable with. Every once in a while he goes ‘Why, why do we do this? Can’t I just be a Yankee fan?’ I go, ‘No, no you’ll be a traitor, you cannot be a Yankee fan.’” Having interviewed Linda a few months before another Red Sox *el foldo*, and before their miraculous recovery and win in 2004, with repeats in 2007 and 2013 (not to mention the Cubs victory in 2016) I am sure that Linda’s uncertainty has been resolved in favor of her son joining Red Sox Nation for good.

Of course, even enemy players accomplished feats which stick in the mind. Well remembered to this day is the three game series in mid-season 1949 between the Red Sox and the Yankees in which Joe DiMaggio made his season debut following missing the first half of the season due to a bone spur in his foot. I saw the first of those games on a Friday night, sitting in the first base stands with my dad.

DiMaggio sparked the Yanks victory, smashing a home run off Mickey McDermott into the left field screen. “DiMag” inflicted home run damage in each of those three games, hitting four homers in the sweep. That memorable performance is foremost in my memories of *The Yankee Clipper*. One does not forget DiMaggio’s elegance and ability whether at bat or in the field.

In fact, remembering Joe DiMaggio reminds me of a facet of Fenway Park which has existed for all the years I have attended games there, recognized by DiMaggio himself in a statement after that series. It is Boston fandom’s consistently loud appreciation for the skills of opposing players. I have heard it many times. Perhaps it is something in the air that empowers New England fans to take this balanced and unusual approach while being among the most passionate fans in the country for the home team. Is Red Sox Nation a country which seeks to get along with its neighbors? Is it why Massachusetts is consistently a blue state? Do we in New England have the elixir to soothe the political wars? Will the next Democratic presidential candidate be from Massachusetts? Maybe the next Republican one too? Now that would be a great Subway Series!

While attending Boston College Law School in 1957, I and several of my classmates attended an afternoon Red Sox-Yankees game, obtaining cheap seats high in the right field bleachers. I entered into a discussion with one from New York (later a judge) about the relative merits of the Yankees and Red Sox and of Ted Williams and Mickey Mantle. I told him that from our distant vantage point, many a Ted Williams home run would look like a pop fly on the infield coming off his bat due to the fact that a typical Williams home run traveled in a much higher parabola than one hit by any other hitter. He looked at me doubtfully. In the bottom of the ninth with the Sox down by a run Ted led off the inning against capable Yankee right-

hander, Art Ditmar. Finding a pitch to his liking, Ted whipped this bat around in his characteristic wrist snapping stroke, but as it rose high in the air it seemed he had undercut the ball. To the unpracticed onlooker it certainly did resemble either an infield pop up or a fly to short right. But Ted's ball kept rising, kept coming, the right fielder kept backing, and finally gave up as the ball descended into the right field grandstand, a few rows beyond the 380 foot marker, a game tying home run. My classmate turned to me and showed his latent judicial temperament by acknowledging his admiration for Williams, advising me that he did think it was an infield pop up, and that he had never seen a home run like that one.

Not all of Ted Williams days were good days. One afternoon in 1958 I was sitting in the third base stands. The Detroit Tigers were the opponent, and the recently late Jim Bunning, their ace right hander, was the pitcher. That was the day that Bunning pitched his American league no hitter. He retired Ted Williams four times running, once or twice on foul pop ups to the first baseman. Bunning later went on to an equally successful National League career, pitching a perfect game for the Phillies in 1964, the first one in the National League since 1880, becoming one of the few pitchers to ever have a no hitter in each league. Bunning is one of only two pitchers to have ever struck out Ted Williams three times in a game. Bobo Newsom of the St. Louis Browns did so in 1939, Ted's rookie year. Bunning spent quality years in two hallowed venues. One is the Baseball Hall of Fame. The other is the United States Senate, where for several terms he represented his native Kentucky.

Another memory of the artful Rico Petrocelli involves baseball's last thirty game winner, Denny McLain, who won thirty-one games in 1968, and followed that with twenty-four wins the next season, before his life disintegrated into one of gambling and criminal

behavior. During those two years Denny McLain was practically unhittable. But Rico Petrocelli was a special batter, who seemingly could hit any fastball, proving it by hitting forty home runs in 1969, then the all-time record for a shortstop, which Rico held for many years until Alex Rodriguez came along. On this day in '68 or '69 I had a nice box seat along the third base line. Rico came to bat against McLain who tried to malevolently stare him down. From my vantage point, it seemed that Denny's pitches came in too fast to hit squarely, but on one of them Rico flicked the bat in his typically quick and understated style, driving the ball against the very top of the thirty-five foot high fence at the 379 foot marker in deep center field. I forget the result of that game, but Rico's long hit stays with me.

The power of Denny McLain reminds me of the power of Roger Clemens. Roger's career seemed to be spiraling downward with four sub-par seasons in a row. So Sox GM Dan Duquette traded him to the Toronto Blue Jays, famously wishing Roger good luck in "the twilight of his career." Naturally, it was a red letter day at Fenway Park early the following season when Roger returned in Jays garb for the first time to face the Sox. I had to see that one, managing to obtain a seat in the first row in the first base boxes where I could observe as close as you can get how close Roger was to the end. Not too close, thank you! Clemens struck out sixteen Red Sox in eight innings. I was chagrined when he didn't come out for the ninth, because, as a long time Roger fan, I was hoping that he would reach nineteen K's. From so close I had to wonder how the Red Sox batters could stand in against such a menacing and powerful opponent. Watching the speed of Roger Clemens's pitches as he hurled them towards home plate proved to be an enlightening and amazing experience, impressing upon me that although it is often said that we identify

with big leaguers because they are ordinary sized people, they indeed play in a different league from the rest of us.

Another mound magician was the relatively underappreciated Hall of Fame Dominican Juan Marichal, who spent his penultimate season in 1974 with the Sox, compiling a creditable 5 - 1 record. I was lucky enough to be in the box seats with Lois right behind home plate on the night when Marichal recaptured the power and style of his salad years to hurl seven scoreless innings. Pitching straight at me with his trademark high leg kick and blazing fastball left the indelible memory of a master at work.

Of course, the pitcher can't always throw the pitch where he wants to. Many a powerful fastball pitcher has expressed the fear of either maiming or killing an opposing batter with a blow to the head. In fact, the worst happened in 1920 when Cleveland infielder Ray Chapman was struck in the head by an errant pitch from feared Yankee right hander Carl Mays, resulting in Chapman's death. Similarly, I saw rising Sox star, Tony Conigliaro, hit in the head on a warm summer night in Fenway Park in 1967 while seated in the third base grandstand with Lois, the late Dr. Alan Rothstein, and his wife, Natalie, and a young woman from Germany they were hosting at the time. The high tight fast ball thrown by Los Angeles Angels right hander Jack Hamilton struck Tony in the area of the left eye with a truly sickening thud heard clearly all around Fenway Park. Conigliaro fell to the ground, and had to be carried from the field before the stunned and silent assemblage. At the time Conigliaro had already become the youngest player in American League history to reach the one-hundred home run plateau. Who can forget the pictures of Conigliaro shortly after the incident, his face swollen and black from the force of the impact? The sight in Conigliaro's left eye waned, waxed, and then waned again over the next few years.

During one of those years he returned to hit over thirty home runs, but he was never the same, never fulfilling his promise, his sight permanently damaged. That blow likely shortened Tony Conigliaro's life. He suffered a heart attack and then a stroke which put him into a vegetative state until his death at age 45.

Bobby Young didn't get me. The fan I negligently used for a garbage can didn't get me. Neither did the out-of-control crowd after Rico squeezed that pop-fly making "The Impossible Dream" a reality get me. The pugilistic Billy Martin came a lot closer to getting me. On that day in the mid-seventies I was in a front row box seat to the right of and with a view into the Rangers dugout in which Martin was usually performing his managerial magic. Not on this day though. The Sox were routing the Texans. Yaz topped it off with a gap double which banged against the bullpen wall in record time. Impulsively and incorrectly I leaned towards Billy, caught his eye, and said something like, "What did you think of that one, Billy?" His response was the most malevolent look I have ever seen directed at me. Billy Martin was ready to expand his already lengthy knockout record with yours truly as the victim. No thanks! I beat yet another hasty retreat "outta there." As I write these memories it is clear I qualify as an avid Red Sox fan, but fall a bit short as a brave one.

I count among my Fenway memories chance meetings with two of the present owners who have saved Fenway Park from the wrecker's ball and the ignominy of never again being the scene of a World Championship since the one in 1918.

When I spoke with John Henry on an October night in 2005 at Brookline High School, a black tie crowd was in attendance to witness native son, Theo Epstein, receive a high honor from his, my, and now John's hometown. That was during the first tense days

when Theo broke with the Sox for what turned out to be several months, mostly over differences with co-owner, Larry Lucchino. That imbroglio, which was ultimately ironed out, placed Henry in an uncomfortable position which was written on his face as we talked. Henry mentioned then his great admiration for Theo Epstein, which time has validated.

John Henry has combined with co-owners Larry Lucchino and Tom Werner to enhance the baseball experience in Boston, certainly as concerns their younger constituency, at the same time as they, Theo Epstein, and empathetic field manager, Terry Francona, have guided the team to success on and off the field, winning world championships in 2004 and 2007. Probably there is not that much down time for the owners in that endeavor. But Larry Lucchino, then a Brookline resident too, surely was relaxing when I serendipitously encountered him and his big dogs loping onto the path around the idyllic Brookline Reservoir off Boylston Street. Exchanging pleasantries, I mentioned his kindness in spontaneously meeting an emotional request a few days earlier for a coveted 2005 opening day ticket only an hour or so before the start of the game.

Lucchino was tearfully approached that day on Yawkey Way by my friend, Marion Redonnet, whose sister, Barbara “Bubsy” Gilbert, an avid Sox fan, was then terminally ill with cancer, but still able to get around, and lacking a ticket to the game. When Lucchino, himself a cancer survivor, heard Marion’s plea, he dialed the club office upstairs without hesitation, and arranged for a ticket to be brought to Marion *poste haste*. Barbara was quickly driven to Fenway Park by another sister, the late June “Junie Moon” Johnson Wolff, another of the five Deeb sisters of Norwood, whose Greek Orthodox grandparents escaped religiously troubled Syria to America many years ago. Thus “Bubsy” was able to witness the festivities

of that first opening day after the miraculous 2004 victories over the Yankees and Cardinals. Another Deeb sister, Marsha Shapiro, of Sharon, is a loyal Sox booster too. Obviously, the Deeb family is sort of a rainbow coalition which characterizes Red Sox nation. Surely Larry Lucchino's act that day symbolizes this ownership's many charitable acts.

It may not have been charity, but it surely was nice when Red Sox management, through team publicist, John Blake, granted me entree in the form of a press pass to the Sox clubhouse during spring training at Fort Myers in 2008 to interview Kevin Youkilis⁵ and Craig Breslow for my book, *American Jews and America's Game*. While I waited for "Youk" to finish his lunch, I spied my favorite, Manny Ramirez, a few feet away in a state of relative undress. Not knowing what might happen, I introduced myself to Manny. He pleasantly shook my hand. I told him I was not a reporter looking for a scoop, but an author writing a book. "What's the book about?," he inquired. "About Jews in baseball," I answered. "Whaaat?," said Manny incredulously.

I then interviewed Youkilis and Breslow, each speaking to me at length. Ironically both Kevin and Craig were thought to be marginal players as they toiled in the Sox system. The Sox brass caught onto Youk's promise soon enough. They missed on Breslow though, who was designated for assignment only days after that interview, in which he declared to me, "I consider myself a Major League pitcher." Indeed, he pitched fine ball for the Minnesota Twins that

5. See "Kevin Youkilis: Euclis, the Greek God of Walks" in *American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, by Larry Ruttman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 449-56. The book is available by visiting www.americanjewsandamericasgame.com.

very season. Ironically, years later, Breslow was reacquired by the Red Sox, and pitched very well for them for a few years, capped by being a member of the 2013 championship team. Presently, Craig is in the minors, aspiring to again pitch MLB ball.

Only minutes after interviewing Craig, my Fenway playbook was brought almost full circle in one day when I struck up a conversation with the then almost ninety year old Johnny Pesky about 2007 rookie sensation Jacoby Ellsbury. Johnny said Jacoby was strong enough to hit home runs, but he hoped he concentrated on getting on base to capitalize on his speed. In 2011 it appeared that the estimable Jacoby had found the secret of combining speed and power in a magical manner, having a remarkable bust out season for the Sox. But Pesky proved prescient as Ellsbury's career continued in Boston and then with the Yankees. His less than stellar ensuing years here and there suggest Johnny Pesky may have been right in his essay of the route Jacoby might have followed.

In 2011, the one-hundredth year of Fenway Park's life, the Sox, never a team of moderation, staged one of the biggest collapses in baseball history to shut themselves out of the playoffs. There was a hint of what was to follow when the Red Sox that Spring were billed as "the greatest team ever," but then proceeded to lose the first six games of the season, and the first ten of twelve. In true Red Sox style, they then played close to .700 ball for four months, only to grandly swoon in September, starting just around the time Ian Kinsler and the Rangers came to town, amid rumors of players drinking beer, eating fried chicken, and playing video games in the Red Sox clubhouse during ballgames.

I had a seemingly supernatural view of that historic Sox collapse. Here is how I told it in the last chapter in my baseball book.

History, intuition, and the unseen were all in play the day I met Ian Kinsler in the visitor's clubhouse at Fenway Park [to interview him for my almost completed book on baseball]. By the time I tripped the switch on my digital voice recorder less than five minutes after shaking Ian's hand, I had already taken a trip in a time capsule, intuited from Ian's demeanor that the interview would go well, and sensed the giant fly he would stroke a scant few hours after our meeting, which flew completely out of Fenway and sunk the ill-fated Red Sox that evening. Let me tell that story.

I had sought to interview the young star for a few years. Finally, on a Wednesday the word came from the Texas front office that I could have "15-20 minutes" with Ian if I came to Fenway Park at 3:30 on that Friday, September 2, 2011. I shot an answer back to John Blake, the communications director. "I'll be there. Please have a pass waiting."

I get to Fenway. Pass waiting. Call John on his cell. He comes out of the clubhouse, through the ancient tunnel leading to the Rangers' dugout where I'm waiting, and says, "Ian wants to do it in the clubhouse." "Oh damn," I say to myself, "too noisy for my digital voice recorder. And probably too short a time with Ian there." We walk through that very narrow tunnel, where I had never been before, to the clubhouse. I say to John, thinking of all the great players who had trod here since Fenway Park was built in 1912, "Well, we're walking where Ty Cobb walked." The clubhouse is small, many players, noisy; "Here's Ian," says John, hello, handshake. "Is there a quiet place here where we can talk?" I ask Ian. His look gives the answer. "How about the dugout, Ian, quiet out there now, better to record?" "Oh, is this going to be recorded?" "Yes." "Olay," says Ian. I'm getting a good feeling already. Yes and yes. Off we go through the tunnel, me

leading. Can't walk side by side in here. As we go I ask Ian if the team flew in last night or today? "Last night, but we got here at 6:00 a.m." The life of a ballplayer.

We sit down side by side, turned toward each other, in the empty dugout, looking out at a practically empty and cavernous Fenway Park. I point to an impossibly distant red seat high in the vast right-field bleachers, where Ted Williams hit his famous 502-foot home run in June 1946, and tell Ian I was there that day, which indeed I was. "Nobody could hit it that far," he says. Maybe Ian thinks I'm making it up, I think. I allowed there was a brisk west wind that day. Ian says, with an impish little grin, "What was it, a hurricane?" That drew a belly laugh from me. I think, "Okay, Ian's got a healthy streak of skepticism and a good sense of humor, he's accommodating, I can get along fine with this guy," and pressed the record button. And so we did get along for a half-hour talk in which the centered Ian Kinsler spoke forthrightly of his life in and out of baseball.

John calls to us from the lip of the dugout about twenty-five minutes in, "Ian has to go, team meeting." I answer him, "Three more minutes, please," and string it out to five. A handshake and mutual thank-yous, and Ian disappears into the tunnel.

I thank John, and say, with an impish grin of my own, "Let's hope Ian doesn't do tonight what he did last night [two homers versus the Rays]." But he does—a mammoth three-run big fly over the Green Monster, seats and all, that downed the Sox. And he followed that in Sunday's Rangers win with a duplicate of that blast, not to mention a triple, a single, and a sparkling snag of a sure hit at a crucial spot. [In the ensuing six games, Ian ripped three more

homers, and over that ten game stretch scored 15 runs, batted in 11, hit .400, and slugged over 1,000!]

So I'm asking myself, Did the "unseen" choose me to be Ian Kinsler's good luck charm the previous night, today, and Sunday [and for a week after that? Hello Nolan Ryan!]⁶

In some strange way that collapse only added to the mystique of Fenway Park and the Boston Red Sox. It seemed safe to prophesy that the celebration of the one-hundredth birthday of Fenway Park when the Yankees invaded it yet again on April 20, 2012, would provoke vivid memories of heroes and goats for tens of thousands of Americans all across the land, and would whet their appetite for more startling events sure to follow as the next century of Fenway Park's history unfolded. And so it did! In the very next year a relatively rag-tag group of professional and spirited ballplayers converted the Sox last place finish of 2012 into a World Championship in 2013!

Providence entered my life at age seventy to favor me with a second career as an author. Now well over a decade and a half later that new calling would provide me with the ultimate gifts of my eighty plus year love affair with Fenway Park. By that time I had published two books, *Voices of Brookline*, about my hometown, in 2005, and *American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, in the Spring of 2013. The first had contended for a national prize, and the second was greeted with a gratifying

6. Excerpt from the chapter "Ian Kinsler: Major League All-Star Second Baseman" in *American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, by Larry Ruttman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 482-91. The book is available by visiting www.americanjewsandamericasgame.com.

gathering of good reviews, and ultimately was chosen as the best baseball book in America for that year by *Sports Collectors Digest*.

The Red Sox mystique was further enhanced when *The Great Fenway Park Writers Series* was instituted in 2006 under the guidance of the well-known George Mitrovich, and with the blessings of Sox owners John Henry, Tom Werner, and Larry Lucchino. Then and now it is the only literary series ever sponsored by an American professional sports franchise. It continues today, and has attracted a plethora of distinguished authors to speak at Fenway Park.

One day in the summer of 2013, I got a call from George Mitrovich. Introducing himself, George quickly got to the point of his call. Would I care to present my book in The Great Fenway Park Series at Fenway Park on September 20? Would I! George Mitrovich is a persuasive guy, but he didn't need to expend those skills on me as I interjected with a restrained and low key, "ABSOLUTELY!" George added that there would be a guaranteed audience of over fifty, and as part of the deal, each was committed to buy a copy of the book which I would sign. Was this nirvana? Is this truly happening to me?

I had recently done a successful program on my book with Dr. Charles Steinberg, who like Casey Stengel before him had given up dentistry for baseball, and then and lately has been Fenway's resident communications and extravaganza guru. His talents had also been lent not only to the Baltimore Orioles and San Diego Padres, but to Bud Selig, the former Commissioner of Major League Baseball. So I suggested a short while later to George that I'd like to invite Charles to share the podium with me, to which he readily assented.

And so it came to pass on that sparkling September Wednesday! Knowing that the good Charles Steinberg, a man far more adept at pulling rabbits out of hats than teeth out of mouths, would take a

good cue and run with it, I concocted a tongue-in-cheek question with an historical and serious edge to start off the program, which ran thusly:

“Charles, everybody knows you’re a public relations guy *par excellence*. Other than the fact that the father of public relations, Edward Bernays, who lived a biblical life and a half from the 1890’s to the 1990’s, was Jewish, and incorporated some of the ideas of his Jewish uncle, Sigmund Freud, into his PR ideas, what is the relationship of public relations to being Jewish?”

Ten or so minutes later Charles completed his answer, and turning to me, said, “Was that too long? Anyway, that’s my answer.” My immediate and heartfelt response was, “No Charles, not at all. Now I don’t have to tell all these folks what my book is about because you just did.” Indeed he had, talking about his early years, parents, school, his bar mitzvah, anti-Semitism in Baltimore where he grew up becoming a dentist, and how a part-time job early on with the Orioles led him into his life work, and much more, all delivered informatively and humorously. The rest of the program was in like vein, seemingly enjoyed by all, and certainly by Charles, George, and me. Charles even offered to do it again with me wherever and whenever. WOW!

Could I have ever dreamed I would enter the portals of august and beloved Fenway Park to enjoy such an experience at eighty-two!

One of the attendees at that program was Kevin Cullen, Pulitzer Prize winning columnist of the *Boston Globe*, since then bought by John Henry, the principal owner of the Red Sox. Meeting Kevin there for the first time, in the company of the celebrated Ben Bradlee, Jr., the three of us shared some easy talk prior to the program. Later that evening at a party at the home of Boston hostess and televi-

sion personality, Smoki Bacon, I ran into Kevin again. He colorfully, articulately, and profanely described a threatening encounter he had had some years before with the notorious Whitey Bulger, then in his homicidal heyday, in Whitey's South Boston lair, about whom Kevin has famously since written prolifically and fearlessly as an author and journalist.

What a Wednesday!

Comes Friday morning. The *Globe* is delivered to my home. A column by Kevin entitled, "For the love of the game," strikes my eye. I think it might be about baseball. I start reading. MY GOD! It's about Wednesday, George, Charles, me, my book, and Craig Breslow (among others I had written about), the Sox accomplished lefty reliever by way of Yale University, whom I had spoken of at some length that day, having interviewed Craig for a chapter in my book back in 2008 when it wasn't clear he would ever make the bigs. Done with panache and point, Kevin's column was delightful to all, and most especially to me. That column added new meaning to the term "free advertising." You can imagine I walked on air that day, making it twice in three days I had inhabited the ether.

Perhaps only a talented Irish writer like Kevin could tie together the hirsuteness of the 2013 Red Sox with Jewish religiosity and the vagaries of fortune in concluding his column with these prescient words:

"I'm thinking they should make the Red Sox clubhouse keep kosher because the team really took off this season as soon as half

the lineup started sporting facial hair that make them look a lot like Orthodox rabbis. Those beards are working.”⁷

7. See “Craig Breslow: Major League Relief Pitcher, Yale University Graduate” in *American Jews and America’s Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, by Larry Ruttman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 421-27. The book is available by visiting www.americanjewsandamericasgame.com.



The author and his baseball-loving friend, Alan Dershowitz, having fun doing a play-by-play telecast of a game of the Martha's Vineyard Sharks in 2014. If Yalie Breslow has the spotlight why shouldn't Harvardian Dershowitz?

They sure did! And that pennant triumph is what brought about another prime Fenway Park thrill. In some mystical way, I had succeeded in interesting Bud Selig in writing the foreword to my book, but geographical and logistical considerations had contrived to keep us from being in the same place at the same time for a photo op together.

Finally the stars were aligned as the Sox prepared to entertain the Cards in the second game of the World Series. That very day Pat Courtney, Mr. Selig's pleasant and obliging right-hand PR guy, contacted me to appear just prior to the game at a press conference at which Mr. Selig was presenting the Commissioner's Lifetime Achievement Award to the just retired greatest closer ever, Mariano Rivera.

Before the award was given there, at close range on the podium, was my favorite pitcher ever, Pedro Martinez, who only lately has shown that his right hand casts a spell on readers as well as batters. Beside me, smiling beneficently as the award was given to Mariano, was his manager for many of his years with the Yankees, Joe Torre.

A few minutes later in the crowded anteroom waiting for the photo op, there I was shaking Mariano's hand and sharing some words with him. And then I was standing with Bud Selig, arms around each other's shoulder and both of us with broad smiles as the flashbulb popped several times! WOW again!

From tugging my father's arm to be taken off the Fenway green to the boy's room at age five at my first baseball game ever in the mid thirties to this, more than eighty years later! Now that's a trip! Sure, I watched the Sox lose that night on an errant and atypical throw by the above-mentioned and theretofore near perfect Craig Breslow, but that was only a blip as they went on to blow the Cards

away to win the World Series, and prove Kevin Cullen right that, “Those beards are working.”⁸

As the next two seasons unfolded, the Red Sox struggled to stay afloat. As the Jewish holiday of Passover was celebrated in those years I thought maybe I should send some matzos and gefilte fish with horseradish down to the Sox clubhouse while finding a way to keep the barber away from any beards so the Boston Red Sox might again find their way to the Promised Land, instead of more basement finishes.

In baseball, as everyone knows, good fortune can turn to bad in a trice, and it did to a fare thee well with the Sox over the next two years when they finished dead last, only to rise from those ashes to finish first in 2016. But it was over and out, swept in the first playoff series against the Cleveland Indians, piloted ironically by the Sox’s recently deposed skipper, Terry Francona.

Not that there weren’t lots of good things happening in those years. Probably prime among them was David Ortiz’s incredible final year in 2016 when the forty year old posted numbers no batter of that age has ever matched in MLB history, leading the American League in doubles, RBI, slugging, and OPS, not to mention intentional passes for the third time in four years, in itself showing the respect,

8. For Larry Ruttman’s story on Bud Selig, see “Allan H. ‘Bud’ Selig: Innovative and Controversial Commissioner of Major League Baseball” in *American Jews and America’s Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, by Larry Ruttman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 326-35. To view the book or the photograph described in this paragraph, visit www.americanjewsandamericasgame.com.

if not fear, in which the iconic slugger was held. The tributes to him all across baseball mirrored that respect.

Home grown players arrived during those years whose swift rise to stardom appeared to signal another era of Red Sox dominance. First among those was the unlikely emergence of the relatively diminutive Markus “Mookie” Betts, second baseman become Gold Glove outfielder overnight, as a slugger and icon of the game with nonpareil talents in all phases of the game.

It appears I might have had a hand in Mookie Betts’s retention by the Red Sox. When he first appeared with them in the midst of the 2014 season, the most extravagant report assayed his future to be as a major leaguer for sure, but not as the spectacular one he quickly developed to be, with his apogee still not yet in sight at this writing. Somehow, who knows why, I envisioned Mookie’s future back then in 2014 just as it has happened, power and all, along with feeling the attraction of his outgoing and grounded personality, which already is making him the face of the game. At that time the Sox were considering him as trade bait. Only weeks into his rookie season I strongly wrote my predictions to then GM Ben Cherington, asserting that, “This kid will soon be great! I’ve never seen anybody that size who could hit the ball with such authority, and very few with his natural ability afield or at bat, and I’ve been watching since the days of Teddy Ballgame.” Ben respectfully responded on the same day, “Thanks for the note Larry. I don’t think we’re that far away.” It turned out that Mookie was not traded, and the rest is still an ongoing history which bids fair to bring this amazing player to the very top of the greasy pole. Along with thousands of fans

everywhere, I'm thrilled every time I see him perform miraculous feats on every side of the ball.⁹

Other players cultivated in the Sox gardens were Xander Bogaerts at shortstop, Jackie Bradley in center field, Christian Vazquez at catcher, and Andrew Benintendi in left field. Allied with them are new and decisive GM Dave Dombrowski's high level acquisitions, like pitchers Craig Kimbrel, David Price, and Chris Sale. A gift in 2016 was the resurgence of run producer Hanley Ramirez, returning to his first home in baseball, and the maturity of 2016 Cy Young winner, Rick Porcello.

Other key players who have provided thrills to Red Sox Nation and me over the last decade or so should be mentioned. Here are some who come readily to mind: spirited Shane Victorino; tricky game-saver Koji Uehara; man of many positions Brock Holt; stoic and reliable Jon Lester; menacing Jonathan Papelbon; Captain Jason Varitek; great hot corner guardian Adrian Beltre; talented Clay Buchholz; solid Mike Lowell; reliable switcher Victor Martinez; workhorse reliever Mike Timlin; good guy slugger Jason Bay.

Not to be forgotten was the lymphoma suffered by Manager John Farrell which took him away from the team in 2015, his treatment and recovery from that life threatening condition, and the patient and caring character of Red Sox owners John Henry, Tom Werner, and Larry Lucchino, in restoring Farrell to his position, rewarded by his leadership of the Sox to the 2016 and 2017 division flags. "Everything that goes around comes around," as the saying goes.

9. For more information on Mookie Betts, see Wikipedia contributors, "Mookie Betts," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mookie_Betts&oldid=841400686 (accessed May 16, 2018).

These latter years of Red Sox history have been blessed by the presence of Dick Flavin, affectionately called, “The Poet Laureate of the Boston Red Sox,” and his installation as the team’s public address announcer. All that seems fitting considering Dick Flavin’s long career as a writer, poet, and humorist with a distinctly Boston edge, as in his successful one actor play, *According to Tip*, about former speaker of the House, the iconic Tip O’Neill. In that same vein, Dick charmingly rewrote *Casey at the Bat*, into *Teddy at the Bat*, featuring Boston’s greatest hero, Ted Williams, which played a part in inspiring *The Teammates*, the late David Halberstam’s most popular book, about Dick driving with Dom DiMaggio, and Johnny Pesky in 2001 from Boston to Florida to visit the failing Splendid Splinter, where he recited the poem for the three stars of a half century before. Flavin’s later highly praised book of poetry, *Red Sox Rhymes* (2015), which reads like Dick charmingly recites, enhances the picture of the Sox as a literary as well as a baseball powerhouse.

As I write this paragraph late in the afternoon of Sunday, June 4, 2017, the esteemed Red Sox have just vanquished the Orioles 7- 3 behind Andrew Benintendi’s two home runs and Chris Sale’s strikeout pitching, not to mention Mookie’s 500th MLB hit, a swinging bunt, which led to a first inning run. Just yesterday the returning David Price pitched a masterpiece. Has slick fielding, weak hitting, Devin Marrero, arisen as our new power hitter? We got the guys. On from Baltimore to Yankees land for three before returning to the friendly confines of centenarian Fenway Park. Hope springs eternal. PLAY BALL! I prophesy we win the pennant this year. And if we don’t, just “WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR.”

Well, here I am over four months later on Friday the 13th, Friday the 13th day of October, 2017 that is, an appropriate day to record that the answer to my prophesy is “WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR,” and

that the estimable Devin Marrero will not be our new power hitter, a cylinder in the engine we badly need. Only a few days ago our Sox bowed to the Astros in the ALDS, and shortly thereafter the worthy but faulted John Farrell was dismissed as manager after five eventful up and down seasons in which he directed a World Championship, two successive last place finishes, and two successive first place finishes, providing many thrills, and, as said, courageously defeating cancer along the way. That uneven record stands as a metaphor for his tenure on and off the field.

That five year tenure can be summed up in five late season games, the first two of them away games which I saw up close and personal lying on my couch in front of my big screen TV tossing proverbial and poetic Cracker Jacks into my mouth, along with a few peanuts along the way.

On September 20 the Sox swept Baltimore in Baltimore 9-0, continuing their winning ways on the road as they fought off the hotly pursuing Bronx Bombers. Yes, Devin Marrero smacked a two run homer to the opposite field, Mookie Betts hit a laser to his favored left field, Hanley Ramirez had three hits and as many ribbies, but the day belonged to Chris Sale who started off eclipsing Roger Clemens's best total of 292 strikeouts, and went on to whiff 13, and achieve 300 punch outs for the season. Aficionados asked why Sale was sent out for the eighth to do that with the playoffs impending and Sale tiring?

A few days later in Cincinnati that seemed not to matter as the not to be believed Mookie Betts led the Sox practically single-handedly to an unlikely 5-4 sixth win in a row. Down 4-1 in the eighth, Mookie approached the plate with the bases loaded. In a long at-bat Mookie won the battle, slugging the ball briskly over the heads of the field-

ers to the wall in deepest left center field for a base clearing clutch game tying double. The game winning play that followed was one that only a baseball genius like Mookie Betts could pull off, scoring from second without slackening his speed on an infield dribbler to the left side of seventy feet or so by rookie Rafael Devers, knowing instinctively from the start Devers could beat the throw to first, and he could beat the throw home to score handily in a cloud of dust. Now that's a win above replacement!

By the time the penultimate game of the regular season arrived in Boston on Saturday, September 30, the Red Sox had adopted an untimely losing habit, foreshadowing their ultimate fate, by losing two to the Astros, and risking being chased down by the onrushing Yankees. Showing their guts, they reduced their magic number to zero by besting the Astros behind standout pitching from Drew Pomerantz, David Price, and Craig Kimbrel, and timely hitting from Ramirez, Devers, and new favorite, Mitch Moreland. All looked good for the playoffs!

Turn the clock forward a week to the third game of the ALDS against those same Astros who had taken the first two games of the series in Houston. The Sox needed this one at home to stay alive! It seemed like *deja vu* all over again when the Astros rang Doug Fister's bell for three runs in the first. Shades of Denny Galehouse! Even before that the irrepressible Hanley Ramirez had presciently unfurled his "BELIEVE IN BOSTON" banner during team introductions, and made us all believe with his four for four day, ably aided by the steadfast, Rick Porcello, and the reborn, David Price, both pitching with heart, that rookie Rafael Devers again, and fielding nonpareil JBJ, otherwise known as Jackie Bradley Jr., stroking homers, and the ever present Mookie Betts running what seemed like half a gridiron a la Don Hutson to seamlessly snare a sure

three run homer out of the hands of the fans in the far right field grandstand to turn the momentum of the game 180 degrees in a split second. By the time it was all over, the Astros had only those first three runs, but the Sox had ten. Hey, there's a reason we love this "slow" game to death!



Mookie Betts after running half a gridiron about to steal an Astros' three run homer off the bat of Josh Reddick with his amazing catch in the third game of the 2017 American League Division Series.

Hope, not to mention fighting spirit, was still unquenched the next day when prize rookie, Andrew Benintendi, displayed his classic swing to stroke a two run shot off no less than the relieving Cy Young pitcher, Justin Verlander, to give the Sox a late game lead amid a sterling four inning relief effort from the obviously taxed, Chris Sale. Another shade from the past appeared, reminding us painfully of

Grady Little allowing a depleted Pedro Martinez to struggle on in the 7th game of the 2003 ALCS against the Yankees, when Sale was inexplicably allowed to come out for the eighth inning, instead of the menacing but shunned set-up man, Addison Reed, smartly acquired by GM Dave Dombrowski for spots just like this. Predictably, Sale watched in dismay as his new nemesis, rookie Alex Bregman, coolly smacked one over the Monster and all to tie the game. Still no Reed. Instead amazing closer, Craig Kimbrel, brought in to stem the tide, for once could not, later in that inning yielding to Josh Reddick, once a raw Sox rookie but now a seasoned veteran hanging in there spoiling pitch after pitch, until poking a single through the left side to untie the game. Adding insult to injury, old foe Carlos Beltran stung Kimbrel by denting the Monster yet again in the top of the ninth to give the Astros a two run cushion.

Luckily too, because the face of the Red Sox franchise future, Rafael Devers, led off the ninth with that rarity of rarities, an inside the park home run which bounced crazily and distantly off one of those above mentioned odd Fenway angles in deep center to bring the Sox back to a deficit of one. Then, one, two, three, and you're out. The face of the Red Sox franchise past, future Hall of Famer, Dustin Pedroia, grounded out routinely to end the game, the Red Sox season, and John Farrell's Red Sox managerial career.

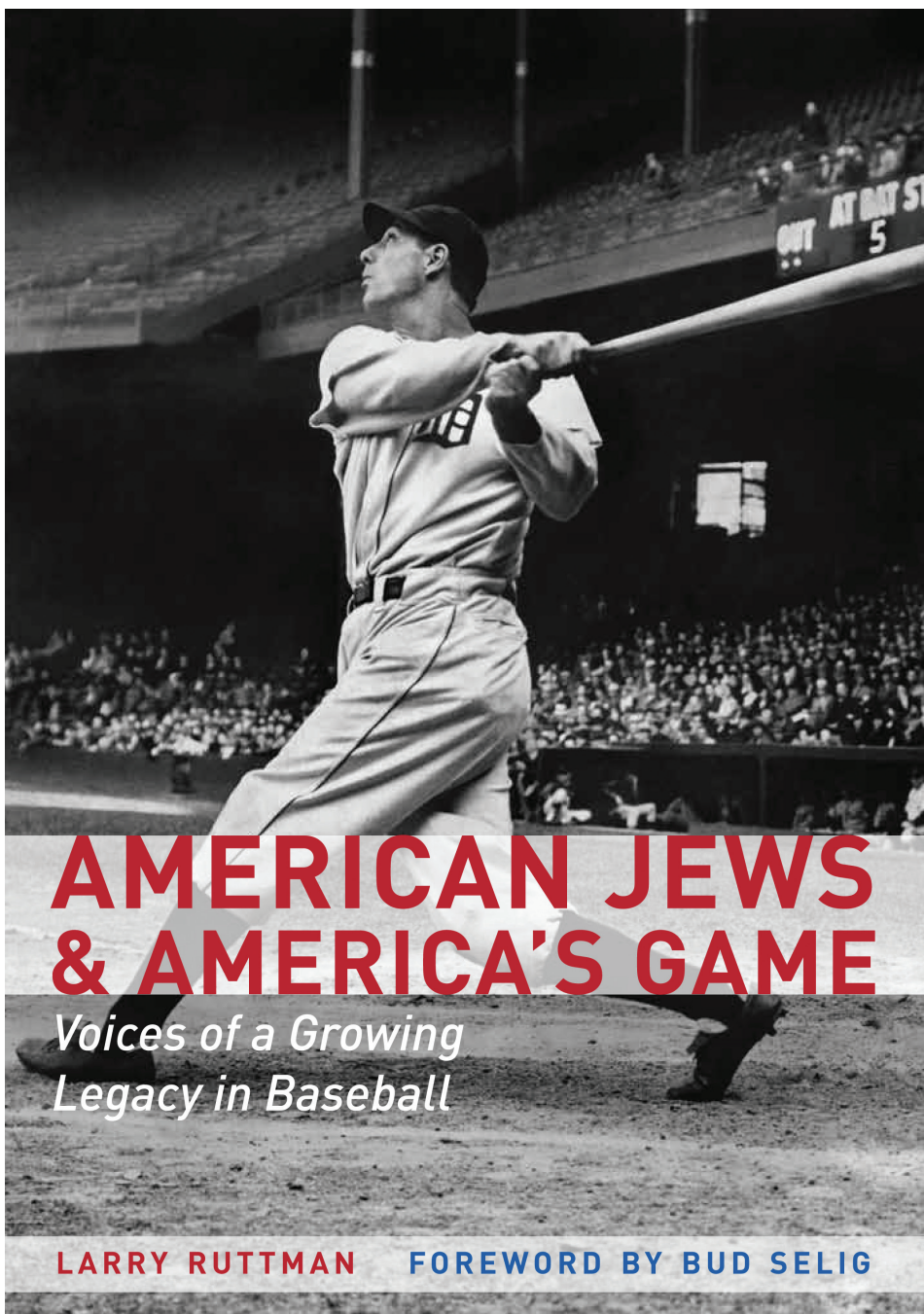
Not many days later, on October 22 to be precise, in the interstice between the Astros and the Dodgers winning the flag in their respective leagues, the Red Sox chose Alex Cora to be their next manager. A former infielder for the Sox, an acknowledged game changing coach with the Astros going into this 2017 World Series, and the first Latino manager for the home team, Alex brings more good things to his first MLB managing stint than many a veteran manager.

So God willing, I'll be back to Fenway Park in 2018, and every year after that God grants me life. Whether it's "Wait until next year," or "this is the year," unlike Yogi like Hollywood mogul Sam Goldwyn, who famously said, "Include me out," I'm all in!

A Note from the Author

Hi, good reader. This is Larry Ruttman saying that if you enjoyed this memoir, you'll love my book *American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*, pictured on the next page with Hank Greenberg juicing a homer at Yankee Stadium, chosen as the #1 baseball book of 2013 in America by *Sports Collector's Digest*. Several extracts of reviews follow. Within its 550 pages, 43 stories of players and off-field luminaries, and over 80 illustrations, you'll find baseball nirvana in the company of Americans from Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth to Ted Williams and Hank Greenberg to Mookie Betts and Kevin Youkilis. Yes, it's all about America! Please turn the page to see the cover of this beautifully produced 10 1/2" by 7 1/2" volume in either soft cover or cloth cover, perfect for your library or a gift. Please purchase the book or learn more about it by visiting <https://bit.ly/2GY1Evv>.

LARRY RUTTMAN



AMERICAN JEWS & AMERICA'S GAME

*Voices of a Growing
Legacy in Baseball*

LARRY RUTTMAN

FOREWORD BY BUD SELIG

Praise for Larry Ruttman's

American Jews and America's Game *Voices of a Growing Legacy in Baseball*

"The historian Jacques Barzun was right when he said, 'Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball.'" Larry Ruttman knows that too, and that is why I chose to write this Foreword to his book *American Jews and America's Game*. His stories cover almost one hundred years of American history and the place of American Jews in that history.... This is a book that celebrates family—baseball's, yours, and mine."—from the foreword by **Allan H. "Bud" Selig**, Commissioner of Major League Baseball

"This longtime attorney remains a gentle, always enthusiastic questioner, interested in his subjects' love for the game, their experiences with anti-Semitism and their connection to their faith."—**Kirkus Reviews**

"[Among] a handful of books that have acquired the status of classics."—**Robert Birnbaum**, "Baseball Books 2017 Part I and more," *Our Man in Boston*

"Ruttman spent five years researching the book, interviewing not only Jewish players and executives but fans, like Rabbi Michael Paley and famed attorney Alan Dershowitz, who just plain love baseball. It's fascinating stuff."—**Kevin Cullen**, *The Boston Globe*

"American Jews and America's Game is handsomely produced and nicely illustrated, but the heart of the book is Larry Ruttman's enthusiasm and total delight in meeting and talking with so many baseball personalities. The interviews are personal, with the unifying theme of Jewish identity, although both Ruttman and many of the people he speaks with call themselves cultural Jews and do not practice Judaism. But when Ruttman describes his excitement at sitting with Ian Kinsler in the visitors' dugout at Fenway Park or receiving a phone call from Sandy Koufax, readers will share Ruttman's sense of wonder and joy."

—**Maron L. Waxman**, *The Jewish Voice*

"There may well be more books about Jews and baseball than there are Jews who played professional baseball. But this one is different. Here baseball's most interesting Jews speak in their own words about their lives, their love of the game, and above all about their Judaism. Informative, inspiring, historically significant and a pleasure to read, this is a book that anybody who cares about America's game or America's Jews will cherish."—**Jonathan D. Sarna**, author of *American Judaism: A History* and chief historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History

"Each interview is jam packed with great information that was not only inspirational at times, but also very interesting to read. Ruttman conducted all the interviews himself, traveling across the states and to as far away as Israel. Overall, I think the book is really excellent!! You will learn so much and Larry has a great writing style. I would highly suggest buying it, for anyone who is interested."—**Matt Nadel**, age 14, Seamheads.com

"I thoroughly enjoyed [*American Jews and America's Game*]. I know that all the people who will have the pleasure of seeing and hearing you will share the same feelings I have.... What a great book you have written!"—**Al Rosen**, 1953 American League unanimous Most Valuable Player, 1987 Executive of the Year as the General Manager of the San Francisco Giants, well-known as "The Hebrew Hammer"

"*The Boys of Summer* was really something else: genuine players in their next life. But *American Jews and America's Game* is as much cultural history as it is baseball, and there is nothing quite comparable."—**Sol Gittleman**, Alice and Nathan Gantcher University Professor of Judaic Studies, Tufts University and author of *Reynolds, Raschi, and Lopat: New York's Big Three and the Great Yankee Dynasty of 1949-1953*

"It's a tremendous piece of work, and we're lucky to have it."
—**Rob Neyer**, *Baseball Nation*

"This book of intimate and revealing conversations with Jews who care passionately about baseball is a surprise and delight... In the tradition of Studs Terkel, Ruttman's warm and folksy style lets us feel like we're in the room with them as they share their thoughts and feelings about Judaism, baseball, and life. It's a great read. Ruttman has a gift for bringing people out and the results are fabulous."—**Rabbi Rebecca T. Alpert**, professor of religion at Temple University and author of *Out of Left Field: Jews and Black Baseball*