

SABR Oral History Project

Interviewee: **Dick Groat**
Date: **October 10, 2019**
Location: **Champion Lakes Golf Resort, Ligonier, Pennsylvania**
Interviewer: **Steve Jeremko**
Duration: **2 hours 22 minutes**

Steve interviewed Dick Groat at his place of business at the Champion Lakes Golf Resort near Ligonier, Pennsylvania on October 10, 2019.

Dick played 14 years in the majors with the Pittsburgh Pirates, St. Louis Cardinals, Philadelphia Phillies and San Francisco Giants from 1952 through 1967. As shortstop, Dick batted a lifetime average of .286 and earned the National League's Most Valuable Player award in 1960 as he contributed to the Pirates' World Championship season that year. Later with the Cardinals, Dick also contributed to the team's World Series victory over the New York Yankees in 1964. In addition to baseball, Dick was an exceptional basketball player; he played the 1952 season as guard for the Fort Wayne Pistons of the National Basketball Association (NBA).

After his playing days, Dick owned and operated (with former teammate Jerry Lynch) the Champion Lakes Golf Resort and also provided radio color commentary for many years for the University of Pittsburgh Panthers men's basketball games with longtime announcer Bill Hillgrove.

This interview was held in the Champion Lakes Clubhouse. When we began the interview, the room was mostly empty but by the time we ended the interview, the room had become busy... therefore, there is increasing background noise as the interview continues. This interview is divided into three parts.

Part 1 (1:05:57)

- Early years growing up in the towns of Wilksburg and Swissvale located near Pittsburgh PA.
- Attending Duke University and his ongoing interests in basketball and baseball.
- Signed by Branch Rickey for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Playing in his first Pirates' game in 1952 and also playing basketball for the Fort Wayne Pistons in during the 1952-53 seasons.
- Experience with Pirates' teams of the early 1950s. Playing under Manager Billy Meyer.
- Coming back to the Pirates in 1955 after military service. Recollections on players on those clubs.
- Toughest pitchers he faced. Having his wrist broken by a Don Drysdale pitch (1960).
- Pivotal trade in 1959 that brought Harvey Haddix, Don Hoak and Smokey Burgess to the club.
- Pirates' World Championship season in 1960.
- Thoughts on Harvey Haddix, Ted Williams, Stan Musial, Don Hoak, Roberto Clemente, Dick Stuart and Bill Mazerowski.
- Game 7 of the 1960 World Series – a summation of the 1960 season. Hal Smith and Maz...
- The 1961 and '62 with the Pirates – and being traded to the Cardinals before the 1963 season.
- Playing on the Cardinals and having his best season in the majors in 1963.
- Thoughts on the Cardinals' players Ken Boyer, Julian Javier, Bill White and Bob Gibson.

Part 2 (0:55:41)

- The Cardinals make the 1964 World Series.
- Dick's morning radio show with Rege Cordic on KDKA.
- Thoughts on the 1964 Cardinals team. Having a poor season (for him) in 1965. Being traded to the Philadelphia Phillies.
- Seeing his old batting coach George Sisler – and getting some good advice to improve his batting.
- Last seasons with the Phillies (1966-67) and San Francisco Giants (1967).
- Starting up the Champion Lakes Golf Resort with partner Jerry Lynch in 1967.
- Self-assessment of his career – and thoughts of today's baseball. A group of Dick's admirers came to congratulate him (this part was edited out).
- Favorite ballpark (Forbes Field) ... most memorable game (WS Game 7) ... all-time team.
- Dick's off-season work, his wife and family. Operating the golf course.
- Dick's basketball career.
- Color commentary on radio with Bill Hillgrove for the Pitt Panthers.
- Dick's family and personal interests.