

Chet Lemon

*Interview conducted by Mark Liptak in 2004.
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It's amazing what you forget. Take this example. In the 2004 Chicago White Sox media guide on page 294 under the heading of "career batting leaders," you find this in the top right-hand corner. Under the listing for top career OPB + slugging leaders, sitting in the 5th position all-time is Chet Lemon at .814. Ahead of him is Frank Thomas at #1, Magglio Ordonez, Minnie Minoso and Eddie Collins. Not bad company.

Lemon is another one of those very good White Sox players that few knew about, primarily because for most of his career in Chicago, Chet played on some bad, nondescript clubs. He had to go to Detroit before getting national recognition and getting a World Series ring with the 1984 Tigers.

But make no mistake ... Lemon was pretty damn good.

He was with the Sox from September 1975 through the 1981 season, playing in two All-Star games in 1978 and 1979. He led the American League with 44 doubles in 1979 as well as leading the league in the most painful category, hit by pitches, twice, while with the Sox, in 1979 and 1981. Chet hit over .300 three times with the Sox and in another year batted .292. He was a consistent double-figure home run producer with a high of 86 RBIs in 1979.

Defensively, his speed enabled him to cover the ground in the original Comiskey Park. He led the league in putouts and outfield assists in 1979. Given the ability of some of the guys he played with in left and right field, sometimes it looked like Lemon had to play the entire outfield!

But as remarkable as his major-league career was, perhaps what has happened to him after baseball is even more compelling.

Shortly after retiring in 1990 Lemon was struck by a rare illness and, frankly, wasn't expected to survive. Somehow he did, aided as much perhaps by his deep religious convictions as by the help of medical science. He has since survived a relapse, as well.

Lemon is now [as of 2004] a highly successful coach in Florida. His Eustis high school "Panthers" won the state 3A title in 2003. He was the assistant coach to the team that won the title in 2000. His son Marcus, a shortstop, is expected to be one of the top picks in the 2006 amateur draft and Chet also coaches one of the state's top AAU programs and is president of the Florida AAU chapter. Among the players who will soon be making an impact in the pros that he helped, are Prince Fielder and Rickie Weeks. It's a remarkable story.

I spoke with Chet at his Florida office. A lot of ground was covered included how Lemon came to the Sox, how he became an outfielder and who suggested it, his part in the incredible "South Side Hit Men" team of 1977, how he survived getting hit as much as he did, his relationship with Tony La Russa and his teammates, who often misunderstood his quietness as snobbishness and the circumstances that led to his being dealt to Detroit for outfielder Steve Kemp after the strike shortened 1981 campaign. We also discussed Chet's illness, his faith and the realization that he might not be on hand to see his son get drafted.

ML: Chet, you came up in the Oakland A's organization, a team that won five straight Western Division titles and three World Series in the early to mid-1970s. What were your thoughts when you got the news that Sox G.M. Roland Hemond acquired you for the team and how did you find out about it?

(Author's Note: Lemon was acquired on June 15, 1975 along with pitcher Dave Hamilton, in exchange for pitchers Stan Bahnsen and Skip Pitlock.)

CL: "I had first come up with the A's in 1974. It was myself and Claudell Washington, who'd later come to the Sox. I wasn't able to play though because I was recovering from a broken ankle. I was ready to play in 1975 but had nowhere to play. I was an infielder and Oakland had guys like Sal Bando and Bert Campaneris in those positions. I had heard a lot of talk about teams being interested in me. When I found out about the deal I thought it was a great move. I was finally going to get my chance and in a big market as well. That's what you wanted. You'd always hear guys saying 'I want to play in New York, I want to play in Chicago, I want to play in California.' Those were the *big* markets. It was an opportunity for me because I loved playing."

ML: Do you remember your first game and at-bat in the big leagues?

(Author's Note: It came on September 9, 1975. Lemon grounded out to first base in the 9th inning of a 5-4 loss to the Angels in Chicago. The pitcher was Jim Brewer.)

CL: "I remember it was against the Angels and that I faced a guy I remember admiring while I was growing up in Los Angeles; I think his last name was Brewer."

ML: Very good! Do you remember how you did?

CL: "No ... I don't. I do remember my first home run, though. It was off Frank Tanana of the Angels. They were beating us and I took him into the upper deck. After the game I remember hearing him on the radio and he said something like, 'well we had a big lead and I just threw the rookie a changeup.' I thought to myself, 'O.K ... I'm going to own you from now on.' And I did. He even came up to me one time and told me that I owned him. He was a very good pitcher in the years he and Nolan Ryan teamed up together with California."

ML: As I understand it, you were a third baseman in the A's minor-league system yet by 1976, your first full year with the Sox, you had been made into a center fielder. How did that all come about, and is it true that then-White Sox manager Paul Richards is the guy who suggested the change?

CL: "Paul may have been a part of it, but I'll tell you when it first came up about me becoming an outfielder."

"In late 1975 when I was with the Sox, I was at third base and a ground ball was hit toward the middle. I started running and cut in front of the shortstop and actually wound up around George Orta at second base! (laughing) The very next day I was on the top step of the dugout, it was early in the day since I'd always be one of the first guys to show up. Chuck Tanner, the Sox manager, came up, put his arm around my shoulder and said, I can remember this like it was yesterday, "Son, I want you to start taking one hundred fly balls a day because if you stay an infielder you're gonna kill somebody!" (laughing)

ML: One of the problems, I guess you could call it, for big-leaguers is that they make everything look so easy. But that had to be a tremendous change for you going from the infield to center field. Describe to me some of the drills and work that you had to do to be able to pull this off.

CL: "It was a challenge and it took a lot of work but I wanted it. I used to say there are no bad hops in the sky. I'd say to myself that no matter where the ball was hit I was going to beat the ball to the spot. I became a student of the game, that's where a lot of the work was done. After a few years, I knew all the pitchers and how they were going to throw to hitters. I knew the signs, I knew where the ball was going to go if a right handed pull hitter was up and one of our pitchers threw him a breaking ball for example."

"It got to the point where for me; it was a lot of fun to rob guys of hits. Bobby Bonds said to me one time that I was one of the best young outfielders he had ever seen. This was a guy who played with Willie Mays, and for him to say that to me ... boy, that was special. Cal Ripken Sr. also told me that I was one of the toughest outfielders to go from first to third on. That was because I was always very aggressive charging balls."

ML: 1977 was your second full year in the majors and it was much better than your first season and that's something that usually takes more time than that. (*Author's Note: Chet played in 150 games, with 553 at bats, 99 runs scored, 151 hits, 61 were for extra bases, 67 RBIs and a .273 average*) Sometimes it seems that jump for guys are actually bigger in season three from two then from season two from one. Would you agree with that?

CL: "Without a doubt. When you first come up, you want to stay in the big leagues. You play hard but you're also scrutinized hard. The challenge comes is trying to develop a balance to not let things bother you to where it hurts what you are trying to do. As you get older you start to understand more. In my case I don't think it was until 1979 that I really understood what was expected of me by the Sox. It was about that time that Bill Veeck and Roland Hemond starting pushing me to the forefront to try to be the leader of the club."

ML: 1977 was a magical season for White Sox fans, the "South Side Hit Men" were terrorizing American League pitchers and the love affair between the fans and players were unmatched. Going into that season though nobody had any high hopes for the team. So how in the world did you win?

CL: "You know, that 1977 team was a lot like the Tigers team that won it all in 1984. Those guys played the game hard, they wanted to win. That 1977 team was like that. Eric Soderholm was an inspiration that season, coming back from the knee injury like he did. We were close to winning it that season, a lot closer than people thought."

"We believed we could win it but we came up short in the pitching department. The Sox just weren't able to get the help that we needed to put us over the top. Still that club did some extraordinary things."

ML: When I interviewed your teammate Eric Soderholm, he said frankly, you were the best player on the team because you were the only one, and I'm paraphrasing here, that could really play defense as well as offense. No offense to Ralph Garr or Richie Zisk, but did it sometimes feel like you had to cover the whole outfield?

CL: "Those guys were solid but remember they were offensively orientated. If a ball was hit in the area of Ralph or Richie they'd get it, but that wasn't their focus. Ralph could hit anybody in baseball; he was a former batting champ. If he wasn't hitting a bullet somewhere, he'd bunt. If he

hit a ground ball and it wasn't within a few steps of the infielder ... forget it, he was on base. Richie had produced before in the big leagues. Remember, if you can hit, they'll find a place for you."

ML: They say winning is contagious; that seemed to be the case that season. Once you guys got a few wins under your belt and were pounding the baseball, did the realization come that 'we can play with anybody'?

CL: "Yes, that's exactly what happened. Once we got a few wins under our belt that gave us a lot of confidence. It was a fun year. We played before packed houses every night. You had the fans screaming for curtain calls. It was quite a year. Detroit had great fans, especially in 1984, but even they couldn't compare to the fans from 1977."

ML: How much fun was that 1977 season to you?

CL: "Oh man, it was unbelievable. We had a really close team. After we started winning the "South Side Hit Men" thing came out. I remember eight or nine of us got dressed up in old suits and we stood before a Rolls Royce. They made a poster out of that. To this day I miss the fans from that year."

ML: Let me ask you, Chet, about the curtain calls. When I spoke with Eric (Soderholm), he mentioned that there were players that weren't fond of having to do that. Those players were concerned how the opposition was going to respond to that. What were your feelings about the curtain calls?

CL: "That's true; there were some guys who weren't sure about it. As for me, it just lifted you up. It was like electricity running through your body. I think most of the other players on other teams understood. It wasn't us trying to put them down. They knew that you have to accommodate your fans. It was unbelievable."

ML: With the thousands of games that you played, Chet, I don't know if you'll remember this one play, but if so, I'd like to know what you can tell me. It was on July 3, 1977. The Twins were in town and the Sox beat them the first three games to take over first place.

I was in the stands that day and in the second game of that doubleheader one of the Twins hit a drive into the gap in left-center with a man on base. You sprinted backwards and to your right and at the last second stretched out your left arm making a shoetop backhanded catch before crashing face first into the wall. Do you remember that play?

CL: "Oh yeah! One time I was invited to appear on that kids TV show they used to have "The Baseball Bunch," hosted by Johnny Bench. What they do before you come on is show a minute or so of highlights from what you've done and that play was on there. I remember it! Any time you start hitting the warning track, you know you're only a step or two away from the wall. "

"That was one of the things about playing center field in Comiskey Park when I was there. They had such a big center field and you had a lot of room to roam. (*Author's Note: In most of the years Lemon was with the Sox there was no center-field fence. The barrier was the base of the original grandstand where the scoreboard was located ... 445 feet away!*) It was terrifying. You could never take a pitch off. You always had to be on your P's and Q's. I was always fearful that if I made a mistake or didn't get to a ball, you could play it into a double or triple or if it went over your head in center, an inside-the-park home run."

"I remember another catch that I made and, boy, I wish I had the video of it. We were at home and a guy hit a ball over George Orta's head at second, so it was in right-center field. I went after it and said 'I got it.' Richie (Zisk) started over and said 'you take it.' The problem was the ball was curving away from me! I kept running and running and running and the ball kept curving. Richie had already backed off so it was up to me. Finally as I get to the *right field foul line* I dive and make the catch. I get up and start brushing all this chalk off me, meanwhile Richie is laughing and the fans are giving me a standing ovation."

ML: Tell me about the All-Star experience?

(Author's Note: Chet played in both the 1978 and 1979 games. In 1979 he played eight innings, getting hit by a pitch from Joaquin Andujar, scoring a run, and making two putouts.)

CL: "It was a great feeling to be recognized as one of the best players. What also was nice was getting to know the other guys. You realize that they are all just like you, they all put their pants on one leg at a time, and they all have the same fears. I think you appreciate the game more as a young player and as an older player. When you're young it's a real thrill being there. When you're older you appreciate how much the game means to you. It's during that middle period when you seem to lose focus. That's when you hear guys gripe that they should be there but aren't and act like they don't care."

"I also had a chance to play in Japan after the 1979 season with the All-Stars. That was an experience! I was hitting third in the lineup and there were guys like Eddie Murray hitting right behind me. We grew up together in Los Angeles and we were both on the team playing in Japan. They treated us like kings, you'd go out and there would be your picture everywhere. That was incredible."

ML: I wanted to ask you about your hitting style and stance. You were right up on the plate. You knew that pitchers were going to pitch you inside to try to tie you up. How did you come upon that style of hitting?

CL: "I don't think I realized that I was that close to the plate. I was probably that way growing up all along. You know, I actually didn't mind being pitched inside; I *wanted* to be pitched inside. I felt I could always turn on pitches. If you look at my hits, like all those doubles, I think you'll find that I went down the left-field line in most of them. Larry Doby taught me a lot about hitting. He was my manager with the Sox for a while. He'd always say that I had one of the quickest bats through the strike zone he ever saw so I didn't need to try to do too much. When you start swinging too hard, you start lunging at pitches, turning your head at the point of contact and that type of stuff."

ML: There was something that took place in 1979 that seemed out of character for you. Tony La Russa was named manager on August 2. On August 21 in Milwaukee, you left the club before a doubleheader. The accounts that I read said that you and Tony had a disagreement over letting you get some extra hitting in the batting cage. You came back the next day and apparently both of you settled your differences. What happened that day?

CL: "I was being immature. Yes, I went back to Chicago. What happened was that I came out to the park early and was taking some extra hitting. While I was there Wayne Nordhagen decided to show up. Tony said 'Chet, let Wayne hit some.' I said to myself, 'Wait a minute, I'm here early trying to get more hitting, he (Nordhagen) shows up and suddenly he can start hitting on my time?' I basically told Tony, 'Who are you telling me what to do?' We said a few things to each other and I left. As I was leaving Roland (Hemond) stopped me and said, 'Chet, please don't

leave, don't do this." I know he was concerned about a lot of things, including the fact that Tony was just named manager and it would look like he had already lost control of the team."

"What people don't know is that Tony and I played together when we were in Denver. (*Author's Note: The Denver Bears were the Sox Triple-A team in the mid '70s, setting minor-league attendance records at Mile High Stadium.*) I was one of the first guys who saw Tony and recommended him to be a coach. Tony loved the game."

ML: What was your relationship with Tony and what did you think of him as a field manager?

CL: "Tony was a great manager! He always had a sharp mind. He always made a commitment to his players. He was a very loyal person and if you treated him with respect, he'd reciprocate and do anything he could to help you. Tony was a 24/7 type of guy when it came to baseball. His record shows how good of a manager he became."

ML: I've also read accounts, Chet, that perhaps some of your teammates misunderstood who you were and what you were like. By that I mean there was some criticism that perhaps the fact you were quiet and had a secluded locker in a corner didn't make you a team player.

CL: "When you get to the big leagues, you had to stay focused on what you were doing. I had my own mind and felt it was better to stay focused. I also didn't want to develop any vices; I didn't want to compromise my religious beliefs."

"I was never judgmental about any of the guys that I played with. I always respected my teammates, pulled for them to do well, and respected their privacy. I was just a difficult person to read and understand. Maybe I should have been more outgoing, but my goal was to be the best player I could be. That's takes a commitment. I couldn't understand why some people didn't work as hard. It takes a special talent to play in the major leagues. I didn't want to lose that."

"I also grew up poor. Looking back at the time, I didn't realize it, but that was the case. I was grounded in reality. Honestly, I always felt more secure and more comfortable when I was between the white lines than when I was outside of them."

ML: 1980 came and went but in January 1981 new ownership appeared in Jerry Reinsdorf and Eddie Einhorn. They had something Bill Veeck did not have, a lot of money and at first they actually spent it. By the time spring training ended in 1981, when you looked around you saw Ron LeFlore, Carlton Fisk, and Greg Luzinski dressing in Sox uniforms. How did you feel about that, especially after the three previously poor years for the club?

CL: "I was excited, especially about having Carlton Fisk as a teammate. He was truly a great ballplayer who respected the game."

ML: You hit .302 in the strike-shortened season and played your usual solid defense but on November 27, 1981, you were shipped to Detroit for Steve Kemp. The reasoning, as I remember it, was that the Sox wanted more balance in the lineup and Kemp was left-handed. (*Author's Note: Harold Baines was basically the only power threat from the left side as opposed to having guys like Fisk, Luzinski, and the newly acquired Tom Paciorek who were all right handed hitters.*) Were you ever told by the Sox why they let you go?

CL: "That may have been part of it, but there was another reason."

"In spring training 1981, I had verbally agreed to a five-year contract that would have made me the highest-paid player on the team. It was a great negotiation. Eddie Einhorn, Jerry Reinsdorf, Roland Hemond, my agent and I all sat around a table one day and worked everything out

including some deferred compensation. For some reason I hadn't gotten around to actually signing the document, though. A few weeks later they signed Carlton Fisk and his numbers came out. When I saw those I told my agent, "Hmm, maybe we need to renegotiate." Everything that I did in five years, I did in Chicago and now I wasn't going to be the highest paid player anymore? I know it was childish on my part but that's the way I felt at the time."

"It created some problems. After a period of time I said that I'd just play my next year out (1982) and then see what happens in that offseason. I guess the Sox thought that I was automatically going to go the free agent route and that wasn't necessarily the case. However I did know that other clubs were interested, I knew that Earl Weaver of the Orioles wanted me badly and that the Sox were close to trading me to them at one time."

"It was weird how some things happened. I mean "Bull" Luzinski, whom I respected, and thought did a great job for us by supplying power, came out and said something like 'If he's not going to sign, then we need to get somebody for him.' After the trade I did play out my option but Detroit re-signed me to a 10-year deal which gave me security. I had some no-trade clauses in it so I had some control if I was going to be uprooted again."

ML: Do you remember your feelings the first time you came back to Comiskey Park as a member of the Tigers in 1982? (*Author's Note: April 29, 1982*)

CL: "Yes, that also was weird. It was strange being on the other side of the field. I wish things had worked out differently. I know the fans loved me and appreciated my work and I enjoyed performing for them. The problem was that nobody took the time to understand me a little bit. I wasn't that bad a person. In order to be who you are, you can't change."

ML: You played through the 1990 season and it was shortly afterwards that you got sick, a very serious illness. What happened?

CL: "I had noticed that it was taking me longer to heal from injuries. I remember saying to myself, "Am I getting old?" because I always took care of myself. In spring training 1991 the Tigers discovered that I had too many red blood cells in my body. The Tigers thought the numbers they got were wrong. My stomach was always hurting. I thought maybe I had an ulcer or it was just stress. The doctors couldn't find out what was causing it."

"They finally did an ultrasound and discovered that I had tiny little blood clots in my portal veins. (*Author's Note: The portal system includes all the veins which drain the blood from the abdominal part of the digestive tube and from the spleen, pancreas, and gall-bladder. From these viscera the blood is conveyed to the liver by the portal vein. In the liver this vein ramifies like an artery and ends in capillary-like vessels termed sinusoids, from which the blood is conveyed to the inferior vena cava by the hepatic veins. – from Gray's Anatomy of the Human Body.*) My illness is usually found in older men of Jewish decent, it's practically never found in African-American men, especially in the shape that I was in."

"About 30 minutes after they discovered that, I was rushed to intensive care, hooked up to machines and given blood thinners. Not only did I have blood clots but I had too much blood and it was too thick, like slush. The doctors were fearful that if one of those clots became loose...well you know what happens when that takes place."

(*Author's Note: In many cases when blood clots break loose they go through the blood system getting lodged in the smaller arteries. That can cause a stroke if the clot is lodged in the heart or brain, very often death takes place.*)

"I was in the hospital for two or three months in the spring of 1991. I was in incredible pain... just trying to turn over in bed was agonizing. I was being fed intravenously. I did not want to eat, I couldn't eat. I lost about 60 or 70 pounds and was down to about 130 pounds. I couldn't even get out of the bed. I was in very bad shape. I remember seeing ESPN do my eulogy. There was no way to have any type of major surgery done because I was on blood thinners to prevent clots. If they tried to operate I'd bleed to death."

"My faith prohibits me from receiving blood transfusions so I'd never make it through. If they took me off the blood thinners my blood would thicken up again and I could die because of a clot."

"The doctors were able to try a slight procedure to open up some of those portal veins. It was risky. I was so agitated that despite all the medications they gave me I couldn't go to sleep. Finally I did and I remember waking up, seeing the doctor standing by my bed. He looked over at me and said "Chet, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that you're awake and alive. The bad news is that the clots are still there."

"The doctors kept taking the excess blood out and keeping me on blood thinners. Slowly, very slowly I got better. It was a miracle. The doctors finally said I had to start eating if ever I was going to make it out of the hospital. They started me on Jello that had been warmed in a microwave. Have you ever tried to eat that stuff? (laughing) To this day I won't eat Jello. Slowly, very slowly I got a spoonful down. Then later two spoonfuls ... then three spoonfuls. It was an effort just to eat that."

"After a while I finally started eating a sandwich. I'd get maybe one bite down and have my wife eat the rest. See, the doctors told me that only if I started eating would they let me go home. After a period of doing this my wife finally told me, "I can't keep doing this, you have to start eating." The doctors thought I *was* eating. Finally I started to eat and they let me go home. We had a hospital bed placed in our home and that's where I went. I was so weak the first time I tried standing up I was like a kitten."

"I was on so much pain medication, things like Demerol, that after a long period of time you can get addicted to it. As I started to get off the medication I started to have withdrawal issues ... things like cold sweats. For about a week I could never get through a night without them. I would sweat profusely. The sheets would be soaked, literally like they were out in the rain. We always had to change them. I was always so very, very cold."

"I'll always remember the kindness of the fans and the people that I knew in baseball. Both Roland Hemond and Kenny Williams called me, I'll never forget that. The fans called, sent me stuff, and remembered me in their prayers."

ML: Chet, I've never asked this question before in this context, so if you choose not to answer it I certainly understand. One of the reasons athletes make it to the pros is because of their confidence. They just know they are going to get the job done whatever it is ... *they* are in control. With everything that was going on, as you saw yourself get worse and worse ... were you afraid? I mean we are talking about life and death here, something that is not normally faced in sports.

CL: "Oh yeah, yes I was afraid. I was close to death. People were shocked that I survived. They think that I survived because the procedure that they did may have opened up some small holes in the clots and just enough blood got through. Then I think the body healed itself in the sense that it rerouted blood around the bad areas. The human body is amazing and wonderful. I give

thanks to almighty God for giving me the strength to survive this. The physical condition that I was in before this happened also helped me get through it."

"I've had some relapses over time but I've improved. My weight is back to 190 pounds. I haven't stopped doing the things that I love. I'm in the weight room; I'm out on the ballfield. Sometimes I'll take some hitting or go out in the outfield."

"People who have this don't normally live beyond 15 years but I enjoy life, I'm doing fine. I have to take medication every day; I go to the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville every month to have my blood checked."

"My wife and family have been there for me. I know this has been hard on them but I'll make it."

ML: How did you get into coaching, Chet?

CL: "When I retired I started the Chet Lemon School of Baseball. That was in 1993. It really took off and the sons of former players like Frank Viola, Tim Lincecum, and Cecil Fielder spent time there."

"I found that I loved coaching. We started an organization that was called the Juice Program. We have five or six teams that go from 10 years old through high school that are part of the state AAU program. They are among the top teams in the nation. One of the older clubs, the one my son plays on, went 117-2 last year. They won everything in sight. We play all year 'round because the weather permits us to. So far this season that club is 16-1 and we missed three weeks because of the numerous hurricanes Florida got. Nine of my players wound up getting drafted and practically all the rest got college scholarships."

"I got into high school coaching as an assistant with Eustis High School. We won the state 3A title in 2000. Then when the opportunity to become the head coach came up I took it, which surprised a lot of people. I did it because I wanted to be able to be with my son as much as possible and to provide guidance for him if he needed it. Last year we were able to win the state championship again."

"As far as my role in the state AAU program, we have over 26,000 participants in numerous sports for both boys and girls. I oversee it and help work with the kids as much as I can. We hold a lot of events in connection with the Disney Company, which hosts many, many of our activities and championships. They have always been a great supporter of what we try to do with the youth of the state."

ML: Tell me about your son Marcus, and when can the Sox draft him?

CL: "(laughing) He'd *love* to play for the Sox. He's told me that he wants to play for the teams that his dad played for. He's eligible for the 2006 draft. Right now, Marcus is more polished than I was when I was his age because he's had so much more experience. He understands the game and wants to constantly play. He loves it. He's twice the player I was. The thing that I have tried to teach him is that if you want to be the best, you have to work the hardest. I've told him that somewhere someone who has the same dreams, is working out, hitting, taking ground balls and that if he wants to keep up he has to work just as hard as they do."

"His mother and I have watched him grow from a child to the person he has become today. We have treasured those times. He is an outstanding young man."

ML: Chet, putting a wrap on this interview, can you sum up for me the six-plus years you spent in Chicago with the White Sox?

CL: "I have a saying when I talk about my days with the White Sox ... that city and that organization *raised* me. They taught me how to play the game, they allowed me to learn, they applauded my efforts and they motivated me to get better. I learned so many of life's lessons by being in Chicago. I am so grateful to the team and the fans for the opportunity they gave me. I've talked with my wife about moving back to Chicago someday. If the opportunity ever came along to get back connected with the White Sox organization, you know that I would be very interested!"



