

Don Gutteridge
interviewed by Dave Heller
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Q: From what I've read, you were in the minors in 1941, then I read you were going to give up if you weren't with a major league team in '42. I was wondering if that was accurate?

A: That is very accurate. I was going to give up, and then Pepper Martin got me to go to Sacramento with him because he was a friend of mine, Pepper Martin was. So he's going out there to manage in Sacramento. I said, "Well, I'll go out there with you for one year, and then if I don't go back to the major leagues, I'm going to quit." He said, "Okay, if you'll give me one year, I'll be happy." That's because Pepper and I were buddies. So I went out there and had a good year, and the Browns bought me then.

Q: The Browns didn't have a very good reputation, I imagine ...

A: A couple of the Browns players were called into the service, and so they needed players, and so of course the Cardinals and Browns had offices together in St. Louis. I guess they walked across the hall, and they said, "Well, if you want the Gutter, you can have him for a little bit of nothing because he was going to quit anyway, anything they can get out of them will be better than nothing." So I guess that's why I ended up with the Browns.

Q: I read somewhere, I don't know if you said this or someone else, but there was kind of a defeatist attitude on the Browns, maybe when you got there. Was that washed away because of the manager, (Luke) Sewell or ...

A: Yes, Sewell. I think Sewell was the big reason all of us had better jobs because he started to give everyone a positive attitude instead of a losers' attitude. The Browns had been losers for so many years that they went about their work, and if they'd got beat, that was good, if they'd won, that was good, they didn't care about it. But Sewell installed a little self-confidence in us. He said, "Hey, we can win," he just kept telling us that all the time, "we're going to be all right." He kept building that up, and pretty soon, we got to thinking that ourselves, and that made a big difference.

Q: Babe Martin called you a pepperpot and a leader of the team. Would you classify yourself as that?

A: Well ... I've been called a pepperpot and all that, I don't know. I liked to play. I loved to play. I loved to play and loved to go to the ballpark and get on the uniform and perform. And I guess so many of them didn't feel like that, they called me a pepperpot. I don't know, whatever they say is okay with me.

Q: Do you think you were one of the leaders of the team?

A: I had a little more experience because I had been over with the Cardinals for 4 1/2 years, and guys kind of looked at me because of the experience end of it, and we had some fellows who hadn't been playing very long, and I guess it kind of fell to me. If they asked me questions, I'd try and tell them what we should do and what we shouldn't do. I guess you'd call me a leader, I don't know that.

Q: Were there team captains back then?

A: No, no, there was no team captain. There was no designated team captain.

Q: Looking at your career stats, you seemed to steal more bases when you got to the Browns. Was that just because of their philosophy?

A: It's because the Cardinals didn't steal as much because they had hitters like (Johnny) Mize and (Joe) Medwick and (Terry) Moore and all those guys. So they didn't really run as much, although they were known for their speed. Their speed was when they got on base, they didn't stop at one base, they ran all the time. But they didn't steal a whole lot of bases. The Browns, of course, didn't score many runs, and they had to score any way we could. And Sewell believed in hitting and running and stealing in order to get in scoring position. That's why we ran more, really.

Q: In the World Series, you didn't have any steals or hit and runs as a team.

A: You're right. I don't know why. I guess the opportunity didn't come up maybe. And besides that, they had a very good throwing catcher too, the Cardinals did. Walker Cooper.

Q: I read one thing that said you were 4-F, and another place said you were just down on the draft list.

A: I tried to go into the service two different times, and I couldn't get in because of two different things. I had bad knees, and they wouldn't accept me. And then also, I had aluminum in my urine, I had urine problems, plus the fact I wouldn't have been called anyways. I don't think because I was old enough, and I had a child, and they didn't get down to my name.

Q: You were 32 that year, and the papers back then seemed to say that you're some old ballplayer, and you're just 32. Was that the norm back then? You got out of the game a little earlier than nowadays.

A: At that time, like you said, we're old at 32. With the lack of ballplayers because of many of them going into the service, 32 wasn't old anymore.

Q: Do you think the quality of play was down a little bit during the war years?

A: I'll answer the question this way. You know they said we weren't a good ball club and one thing and another, but we were a good ball club. To tell you the truth about it, after 1944 and the players began to go, four or five of us went to other clubs and won the pennant. I went to the Red

Sox and we won the pennant over there with me playing, so was the same way with Denny Galehouse and (Jack) Kramer and Vern Stephens. All of us went to different clubs and all those clubs won pennants, so we must have been pretty good to play on pennant winners.

Q: I was reading something from a Luke Sewell biography in 1945, and they called your team a wartime freak.

A: *(laughs)* You mean Pete Gray?

Q: No, they called your St. Louis Browns of 1944 a wartime freak.

A: I think we were a good ball club. I think we played together better than most of the other clubs did, the other clubs had something else on their minds or something, I don't know. But we were a good ball club. When you go in and out of first place four or five times in September like we did and still come back and win the pennant, I think that's proof enough that we were a good ball club.

Q: Do you think you guys should have repeated the next year?

A: You'll have to look at the record, but I think we were just three or four back, and we had a chance at it, but we just didn't quite make it. I think if we had had a little bit better pitching in that year, we would have.

Q: You mentioned in the letter to me about people going out to the night spots in Cape Girardeau. I was wondering if you had any anecdotes about that?

A: Let me kind of tell you about Cape Girardeau, can I? In Cape Girardeau, of course, we couldn't go south, and so they let us go to Cape Girardeau, and we had a big field out there in the college there, they had a big field house. They hauled in about three inches or four inches of dirt on that field so we could take infield inside and hit groundballs or one thing and another because it was cold, you couldn't go outside very much, and we trained inside mostly, and go only outside probably to run or something like that. And then of course, there wasn't much to do in a town like that, there wasn't much to do. I think they only had one or two shows, and you know ballplayers are looking for something to do at night. Maybe we didn't work hard enough in the daytime to make 'em tired and go to bed. They frolicked a little bit, shall I say it that way? They frolicked a little bit.

Q: I think I read somewhere where you said Vern Stephens was particularly a ladies' man.

A: Yes, he was very much a ladies' man. And I roomed with Vern for a little while. Of course, I never did drink or anything, so they said why don't you room with Vern Stephens and maybe you can straighten him out a little bit. Well, I could never straighten him out because he was never in his room.

Q: I guess you had a couple of wild ballplayers. Well, maybe not wild, but night folk I guess you could say.

A: Sig Jakucki, he was a little bit on the wild side, so was (Bob) Muncrief and a few of 'em. They're not very wild, they liked to have fun, I'll put it that way.

Q: Mike Kreevich and Jakucki were two of the harder drinkers in the league, I guess.

A: Ellis Clary tells this story and it's true, but he kind of elaborates on it a little bit. But he says one time that Sewell went out looking for some of the players and he went up to a bar and there sat Mike Kreevich. And he said, "Well Mike, we better go home," so he took Mike home to the hotel and put him in his room, because Mike was a little inebriated. So then he went back to the same bar to see who was still in there and there sits Mike Kreevich. He locked him in his room, but he beat him back to the bar.

Q: There was a brawl late in the year with the Senators, do you remember anything about that?

A: What it was, what I think what started it. We had kind of bad blood between the two teams anyways. They had several Cuban players and a couple of our players got on 'em and called them Cubans and all that sort of stuff and so then they started to fight. Big (Tom) Turner and (Roberto) Ortiz started to fight and they started a big brawl and we had a big fight right on the field. That was before the game started! The umpires weren't out there yet, so they ran out and of course, someone hollered for them and the umpires came out of their dressing room and separated them. But it was a big brawl, everyone got involved in it.

Q: The Senators played the Tigers the same time you were playing the Yankees in the final weekend. Was there any worry on your part?

A: We were a little bit and said, "Hey, we had a fight with them and they don't like us, they might not play very hard." But they did and of course, you know the story, they beat 'em.

Q: In spring training, you brought a 14- or 15-year-old kid to try out for the team.

A: There was a young kid here named Atkinson, and he was a pretty good young ballplayer, and he was only 15 or 16 years old and we needed ballplayers, and he wanted to go play, so his dad said yes go ahead and take him, he gave his permission to get him out of school but I had to tutor him. I didn't exactly tutor him, but I made him study. And I saw to it that he got his lessons sent back to his teacher back home.

Q: Was he a good ballplayer?

A: He was a pretty good ballplayer, but he was real young. You know it's tough to play ball with a lot of guys who have been playing ball for several years and be a 15-year-old he had to be exceptional. He played a little bit in the minor leagues I think, then eventually he quit.

Q: What is your fondest memory of that season?

A: The last day of the season (*laughs*). I remember the last day of the season we were ahead, I think, two runs, that was the last game. It was the ninth inning, and they had a left-handed hitter up. I don't remember who it was, but I know he was left-handed because we had a short right-field fence, and so if he had hit a home run, we would have been behind of course. So it finally got down to where he popped up to George McQuinn, who caught the ball behind first base. It was a foul ball, and it went way high, and I ran over there, I was playing second, I ran over there, and I hollered, "Squeeze it, George! Squeeze it, George! Squeeze it!" and old George squeezed it, and we won the pennant (*laughs*).

Q: I guess it was quite a celebration that day.

A: Oh yes. It took me about 15 minutes to get back to the dugout because the minute that last ball hit into George's glove, we were swamped. George and I had to fight our way over to our dugout because our dugout was on the third base line. There were a lot, a lot of people on that field long before we ever got there. I think it was already jumping over the wall, and they swarmed us.

Q: Any memories from the World Series? I know you played years later with the Red Sox, but does the first one stand out as more special?

A: I think always the first one stands out more. I think one reason, too, I was a regular on the Browns and I played every day, and I figured I was a help to them. And with the Red Sox, I more or less played utility for most of the time. Of course, it was a big thrill to win, naturally. I don't mean that. But when you are really a part of it, a big, big part of it, plus the fact it was the first World Series I was in, I think that's like when people have their first-born, they're still tickled.

Q: I guess you guys were pretty big underdogs. Was there an underdog feeling, or did you think you could win anyways, even though you were going against the Cardinals?

A: (*talks about Red Sox*) With the Browns, we were in and out of it, and we had to beat the best ball club. What I thought was the next-best ballclub was the Yankees. Few people realize this, but the last four days of the season, we won four games in a row against the Yankees. Now the Yankees came in, and they were only about two games back, so if they had won those four games instead of us winning them, if they had beaten us four, they would have won the pennant. A lot of people don't realize that. But we had a battle all the way down. I think we were out of first place then back in first place in the month of September about four or five times. We'd be a couple of games behind, then get ahead, then get a couple of games behind and get ahead. Finally, we ended up ahead, of course.

Q: Any comments or thoughts about Luke Sewell?

A: I think there are two fellows who didn't get near enough credit for our winning the pennant that year and that was Luke Sewell. In spring training, in Cape Girardeau, he got together and said, "Now fellows, let me tell you something. We're a good enough team, we've got enough players here, we're going to win this pennant if we just bear down." And then during the course of the year he'd say, "See, I told you we were going to win the pennant. You can win this

pennant, just keep going.” He built up the confidence in us, plus the fact that I think we started with nine straight wins. Well, you can see what that did to the end of the season, we didn't have to win that at the end. I think had we won those nine games we said, “Hey, old Luke Sewell's right, we can win,” so we just went ahead and won. The other fellow that did more than anybody who gave him credit for was Bob Bauman, our trainer. He was a great trainer. He kept all those sore arms and all those guys who were beat up or one thing or another and didn't have much to go on, and he kept them going with his training and his treatment of muscles and that sort of stuff. I think those two guys deserve more credit than they got.

Q: Did Bauman have any special tricks that he used?

A: Yeah, he was a morale booster too. He'd get me on that table and he'd talk to you and say, “We can win this thing.” He really helped us all mentally as well as physically.

Q: *(ask about backgrounds of players)* Maybe the infielders, Floyd Baker or Mark Christman?

A: Mark Christman was one of the steadiest third basemen we've ever seen. He had a very active arm. Very, very active. And he was a good third baseman. He fielded his position very well and Mark was more of a quiet type of fellow, but he drove in a lot of good runs for us. When we really needed some he drove in some important runs for us.

Q: He was like your clutch hitter?

A: He was a clutch hitter. He wasn't flashy or buoyant, but he was a good, steady ballplayer.

Q: Floyd Baker must have been a pretty good fielder.

A: Oh, yes, he was an excellent fielder. He never made an error throwing it, I don't believe. He was a good, accurate thrower and a good ballplayer.

Q: How about your first baseman, George McQuinn?

A: I tell you one thing as an infielder, he made our infield. All you had to do with George is just start the ball in that direction and he'd come up with it. We were lucky that time when the Browns got him, he was with the Yankees you know, and who's going to beat out Lou Gehrig? So he was kept in the minor leagues, but he was a good ballplayer. And also every once in a while, George would hit a ball real good. He didn't hit a lot of home runs but he hit home runs when they needed it a lot. To this day, I don't know any first baseman that's any better fielder than him.

Q: He helped save you a couple of errors I guess?

A: He saved me a lot of errors, I know that. I'd just throw it in that direction and George would get it, he'd get it.

Q: How about your double-play mate there, Vern Stephens?

A: Stephens was powerful ... Stephens, truthfully, I think was one of the strongest, just physically strong players. He just really had to be because he never got any sleep. But he was a strong, strong player. He could hit a ball to all fields, he could hit a ball out of any field. Also, he didn't cover a whole lot of ground, he didn't have a lot of lateral movement, but when he got a hold of a ball, he had good strong arms, if he fielded a ball in deep short he could throw you out because he had as good an arm as anyone on our ball club.

Q: You played with him on the Red Sox too, didn't you?

A: Fact of the matter is, he played third base more with the Red Sox because Pesky was playing short.

Q: In the outfield ...

A: Mike Kreevich was an excellent fielder, he really got a good jump on the ball. Mike's arm wasn't as strong as some of the other center fielders, but Mike was a good, good fielder. He knew where the ball was all the time. He went to the ball all the time. He didn't roam around out there. When a ball was hit, he seemed to have the sense that he knew right where it was, and he went to that spot. He was a good fielder.

Q: How about the last-day hero, Chet Laabs?

A: He had a lot of power, but Laabs struck out quite a bit. He wasn't a real good fielder, just average. The thing was, someone said he ran the same speed all the time; he wasn't fast or slow, he just ran all the time. Footspeed, he didn't have very much of. He did have a good bat, but Chet struck out quite a bit. But when he hit a ball, it was gone.

Q: Do you remember your reaction when he hit two in that last day?

A: Oh boy, that was great. That was the best two home runs I ever saw in my life. *(laughs)* Those two balls he hit that last day, there was no doubt about it when they left his bat. They were way up in the bleachers. He hit the hell out of it.

Q: How about Gene Moore?

A: Moore was kind of a steady, very quiet sort of guy. Gene had a good arm from right field. He was just one of those old, steady ballplayers. He fielded okay and he hit okay. Gene didn't hit with a lot of power, but he made contact all the time. He wasn't one of those guys that struck out; he made contact most of the time.

Q: How about Milt Byrnes?

A: He almost platooned with Moore. Moore would get into a slump, and Byrnes would play. Then Byrnes would get into a slump, then Gene would play. Occasionally, in the later innings, he'd go in for defense for Laabs. Byrnes was a good defensive man.

Q: How about Al Zarilla?

A: Al Zarilla was the same identical thing, just like Byrnes. Trouble was they were both left-handed hitters. What we wished was that one of them would have been right-handed so they could platoon more. But Gene Moore, Byrnes, and Zarilla were all left-hand hitters.

Q: Mike Chartak?

A: He didn't play a whole lot. But Mike, we used him as a pinch-hitter more than anything else. Of course, all of them played pretty well because that was one of Sewell's tricks. He kept everybody playing. He didn't let anybody sit on the bench for two or three weeks at a time without playing. He played everybody so everybody would be ready. He didn't know if the guy would be there or be in the service or somewhere else. So Sewell had to keep everybody playing, and that's what he did. He kept everybody moving, playing.

A: *(talking about catchers fielding)* ... What happened was that (Frank) Mancuso was in the service as a paratrooper. And on one of his jumps, he broke his back, and he was discharged. It also hurt his neck, his spinal cord. He couldn't look up without fainting. If he looked up for a pop fly, he'd black out. That's why he really couldn't catch pop flies. He said jokingly, "Well, I run Christman and McQuinn every time there's a pop fly to him they'd just run like the devil to try to help him out." He couldn't look up very much. That's why he missed some foul balls. He was a good catcher; he could catch the ball. He couldn't look up. Hayworth was just one of those fellows that had trouble judging the ball when it went up over his head. There's nothing wrong with that; everybody has their faults. Nothing wrong with that. But neither one of them was very good on pop flies. They were both good receivers; neither one of them hit with any consistency. Mancuso probably had a little more power than Hayworth, but Hayworth made contact a little better. Sewell did a good job of kind of keeping those guys, one catch one day one the next. He kept them both going. He got the most out of them, I'll say that.

Q: How about Tom Turner?

A: No, he was just there for part of the year. He was our third-string catcher and caught in the bullpen quite a bit.

Q: Pitching department?

A: (Denny) Galehouse was a good pitcher, he was proof of that. He was a good, steady pitcher. Nelson Potter was a great pitcher too. He didn't have the speed but he had the control. And he threw a lot of breaking stuff. When we played behind Nelson Potter, we knew the infielders were going to get a lot of ground balls. He made everybody hit on the ground because he threw the sinker. He was really a good spot pitcher. Jack Kramer was a good pitcher. He had a good

fastball and a good curve. And he had good control of his curveball, and that made him a good pitcher. And Jakucki's best pitch was a slider with a fastball, then his slider. Jakucki probably had better control than anybody except Potter. But Jakucki would overpower you sometimes. He would come at you. He dared you. He was a fighter. He was a fighter on the field and off the field.

Q: Do you think because of Sewell these pitchers came around that year?

A: Yes. Sewell was very good with pitchers. Of course, he was a catcher in the first place. Plus the fact too that we had two good relievers. We had George Caster, who had a knuckleball and a good curveball. He was right-handed. And Al Hollingsworth was a left-handed pitcher. He had good control, he couldn't throw the ball hard at all. But he was an older pitcher, he knew how to pitch, he pitched with finesse.

Q: Tex Shirley?

A: Tex was kind of a spot pitcher. What I mean by that, if we had several doubleheaders in a row, then they would use him. The four we used most were Potter, Kramer, Jakucki, and Galehouse, with Caster and Hollingsworth being the relievers. At that time, too, relievers didn't have to relieve as much as they do now (set-up men, etc.). We didn't have that luxury. The starting pitcher went as far as he could, then here come the relievers. But George Caster won a lot of games with us. What I mean, he saved a lot of games.

Q: Willis Hudlin, why did he come back?

A: He came late in the season when it looked like we needed another pitcher to win the pennant. Luke Sewell had caught him at Cleveland when he was younger. Luke Sewell knew him, and if we needed a pitcher and Willis Hudlin was available, but just for a short time.

Q: What are your recollections of Sportsman's Park?

A: At the first part of the year, we didn't draw many people because people didn't think we were for real. But the Cardinals outdrew us all the time. Of course, the Cardinals were winners all the time, and they built up a following. We had to build up our following. I think was, the people that lived in St. Louis proper, in the city of St. Louis, were the Browns fans because the Browns had been there so long. But the people out around in the suburbs and in the little cities away from St. Louis were Cardinal fans because the Cardinals had a big radio network, and they broadcast to all these little towns around, and the Browns did not have that network available. So the people outside St. Louis were Cardinal fans, but the people right in St. Louis themselves were more of them were Browns fans.

Q: Was 1944 one of your best baseball years?

A: Yes, that's one of my fondest memories. I played with the St. Louis Cardinals, then went over to the St. Louis Browns, so I was really a St. Louisan.

Q: How did you get into baseball, and what did you do after baseball was over?

A: After I left them, I started coaching and managing in the minor leagues. In the White Sox organization, I managed their farm clubs for three years. Then I coached with the White Sox for 11 years. Then I managed the White Sox in 1969-70.

Q: Did you enjoy managing?

A: I really didn't enjoy managing like I thought I would. I'm glad I managed, but I wouldn't want to manage again. That's too much pressure. Then after I got fired by the White Sox, I started scouting. I scouted for the Dodgers for 16 years. I was scouting free agents and a lot of college work.

Q: How did you get into baseball?

A: I just wanted to play baseball. I think from the time I was a little boy, I loved to play ball. Grade school and high school, I wanted to play ball. I didn't know any other thing to do. I was playing with a local team here; they had a railroad team here (KCS railroad). My daddy worked for the railroad, so I started playing for the railroad team. A scout saw me and sent me up to Lincoln, Nebraska, and I got started. I didn't ever want to do anything else, I guess. I was always in the right place at the right time. Other guys were probably as good a player as I was, but I happened to be in the right place at the right time.

Q: Were you ever worried you weren't going to make the Browns?

A: No, I made up my mind I was going to play there. Funny thing, Luke Sewell wanted me. In spring training 1942, he came in and said, "I never met you, but I need a second baseman. You can play second base if you want to because nobody else can." I'd been playing third base most of the time, you know. He said, "Can you learn to play second?" I said, "I sure can." He said, "OK. You go out there and don't pay attention to anybody else but me." He wouldn't let any of the other coaches or anybody else fool with me. If I had any questions, I went directly to Sewell. He said, "Don't let any of these other guys fool you and tell you you're supposed to do this and you're supposed to do that. You just watch the other second basemen that we play against, and you make up your mind how you want to do it, and you do it." For instance, we went over and played the Yankees, and I talked to Joe Gordon about playing second base. We played against the Red Sox, and I asked Bobby Doerr how he played. You know they were pretty good second basemen. So I asked them questions about it, how to play second base and some of the things about it. Then I put all what they told me and what I learned myself, and well, it just ended up being me playing.

Q: Was it a tough adjustment moving from third to second?

A: I don't think it was a big difference. Truthfully, I was always a pretty good fielder. I could catch the ball. And that's the biggest thing. The difference in throw is where I had to make the difference. At third base, you have to raise up and throw hard overhand mostly. At second base, I could get a hold of the ball and flip it real quick. And I had to handle the ball a little bit quicker

at second base because I flipped the ball instead of throwing it hard. The double play was the toughest thing; I soon learned that. By asking Doerr, Martin, and Gordon, they taught me and showed me how to do the footwork.

Q: Was it a little bit tougher because Stephens was a rookie, or younger?

A: It was a little bit tougher. He and I got together a lot and talked about where I wanted him to throw the ball. I always liked to take the ball on the inside of second base, and he'd always try to get me the ball there. I guess we fielded 1,000 balls a day. Now it seems like 1,000 balls a day. He worked, and I worked. Also, when a double play came the other way, he wanted me to throw the ball for him. He always wanted the ball back of the base, so he could catch the ball, step on the base, and throw it. And I wanted the ball up in front of the base a bit. Also, Christman. He'd throw me the ball for hours at a time. Mark and I were pretty good buddies. We'd go out early, and he'd practice throwing the ball right where I wanted it, where I could make the double play.

Q: The World Series share, it wasn't a lot of money.

A: I think it was only \$2,700. We didn't get paid much either. I do remember one thing. After that World Series, the next year, they tried to get me to take a \$500 cut because they didn't make much money. After playing in the World Series, and me playing about 150 games in that season, they wanted to cut me. But I finally talked them out of it, and I got a \$500 raise. Isn't that something?

Q: What are your memories of Pete Gray?

A: In '45 we started out pretty good. It's always tough to repeat. We just didn't play as hard in '45. I think a couple of players came back. We just didn't have that same family feeling as in '44.

Q: Was it tight in '44?

A: Oh yes. I think about six or seven of us stayed at the same hotel. We were more of a clannish group than in '45.

Q: How loose was the clubhouse before the final game in 1944?

A: (Ellis) Clary was playing radio. He kept everybody loose. He was really good for us. He was a rabid football fan. The Chicago Bears were the hot team, and he was a Bears fan. Sewell would go out to the third baseline to coach, and he'd sneak out that radio and turn on the radio to listen to the Bears football game. We'd all listen, "Hey, what did they do? So and so made an end run." Then Sewell would come in, and he'd turn it off right quick and set it behind him. Sewell would go back out, and he'd turn it back on again. He kept us all loose and cool, Clary did. He was our pepper-upper.