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Q: One time I recorded an interview, and I just hit the “play” button (Garbey laughs). That was very sad. I’m going to start in the beginning, when you were in Cuba, OK?.

A: OK.

Q: It’s OK. What was the town, the city that you grew up in?

A: I was born in Santiago, Santiago de Cuba, but I grew up in Havana.

Q: Mm-hmm. What were your first memories about playing baseball?

A: Well, I started playing baseball from my early age. You know, like when I was 7, 8 years old. And they had a league over there where I was born, in Santiago.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: And that was where, you know, I started my first step, in the Little League. You know, they have the same kind of system they have over here in the United States. You know, you go from the Little League, to the grade school, and the high school, And I felt that in my case, I start in Santiago at 8 o’clock, at 8 years old, and then I went to Havana, I moved to Havana. Havana is kind of, , the city without changing. And because I was, you know, I was a little bit better than a lot of the other kids, they have a school in Cuba they call the EIDE. They have the sport school, you know, like a scholarship, from the early age, like when I was 11 years old. I was going to the school in the mornings, playing baseball in the afternoons, and then another school at night and then go to bed. So you had to stay in that school for the whole week and you go home only on the weekends. So from the, my youngest years, I was playing very, very good organized baseball.

Q: Were you able to watch games at the island leagues were playing back then in your young years?

A: Oh, yeah. Yeah, you know in Cuba the baseball was the #1 sport. And from my early age I was, you know, following the game. I knew all the body, I knew all the players who were playing in the national Cuban League.

Q: Who was your favorite team?

A: Well, my favorite team was my hometown team, where I was born, Oriente. But when I went to Havana, you know, when I was playing when I get to the Elite League, I was playing for the Industriales in Havana team. Which was, you know, the rival, the rival of my hometown team. But you gotta do what you have to do.

Q: Who were your favorite players before you became, you know, a player yourself?

A: Over here or in Cuba?

Q: No, in Cuba, in Cuba.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, you know, I have a lot of favorite players, like, I was very fond of Pedro Chavez -- I liked the way he was hitting. You know, he was my favorite guy to see him hit. And the way he was playing, he was playing hard, he was the kind of guy who was a very talented but very, very rough in the field. You know, he was a kind of hard player. Hard playing and winning guy. That was my favorite guy, my favorite guy. Pedro Chavez.

Q: In -- what positions did they have you try out as in the baseball school?

A: Well, I was not a tryout. I started out playing the middle infield.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: I mean, playing second and short. It was earlier, until I get to, to the Elite League, where they transfer me to the outfield. To the outfield and third base. And, you know, that's where I was playing all my life, outfield and third base. And then when I got here, you know, I started playing third base, because they had the necessity in the major league team in '84, the way Sparky Anderson was planning to play, you know, I was feeling better playing third base and doing the platoon situation hitting against a left-handed hitter. A left-handed pitcher, I mean.

Q: You said you were playing for Industriales.

A: Yes.

Q: How many years did you play for them?

A: For the Industriales?

Q: Yeah.

A: Industriales I played about four years. Four years for the Industriales, and that's a very good team in Cuba, you know. It's the team who is not easy to play. It's like you play here in the big leagues and in Cuba, you play for the Industriales like you play for the Yankees. Everybody knows who you are, it's on TV all the time, it's in the capital, you know, Havana, and you know, the publicity there is much better than anywhere else. It was very hard, very hard to make that team. It's a very popular team in Havana.

Q: And of course, most people living in the United States know very little about Cuban baseball -- since the Castro years, anyway. Because the veil of secrecy or, you know, embargos and all. But what is the cult of celebrity like when you become a baseball player in Cuba? What's the reaction to, to you if people see you? Is it much the same as the reaction professional players get here in the States? Or is it different?

A: It's about the same. It's about the same, you know. The only thing that change over there is how much money you're making. Which, you know, (chuckles) you don't make that much money in Cuba from playing ball, you know. But it's the same reaction. Everybody in Cuba know who you are, especially when you make the national Cuban team. You're -- everybody in Cuba know who you are, who's, you know who -- they treat you very fairly when you are, you are that kind of celebrity, when you are, you know, representing your country in the Pan-American Games or in the world championship. They know. They treat you very -- I mean, a little different than the regular people. We should not mind that, but it's like that everywhere, I guess.

Q: When did you, as a youngster, first get the sense that "I'm the best player here on the field, I'm the best player here -- on both sides."

A: Well, you know, I always tried to be the best when I was playing there. It's because it's a very, very hard competition there. The competition for position in Cuba there's a lot of much -- there's as much competition in

Cuba as there is here, I think. It's because it's the number-one sport. Everybody play baseball. And everybody wants to make it to the national Cuban team. Everybody wants to, not only to the national Cuban team, everybody want to play at least in the national championship, which is not easy to make, heh. Because, you know, you've got to go through a long process the whole year, and then the guys who are established there on that team, like Industriales or Oriente, and, you know, you've got to wait for, like they wait here for the major league, you see a lot of guys over here in the minor league camp try to get a chance and see if there's any spot open on that team. And that's the same way in Cuba. When you make it to the League, to the Elite League, you know you establish yourself there and you can play there for a lot of years. But, you know, the competition is very tough and you always have to think you're the best. If you're not trying to be the best at the level you play, this will be very, very hard for you to make it over there.

Q: Who were the scouts in Cuba who recognized your talent and brought you along, recommended you to different people?

A: Well, you know, Cuba is not like -- your numbers are your scouting. You know, it's not -- they have a lot of people in the stands over there. The commission, they have a commission of people who are, you know, who are looking at you through the whole year. But if you don't have the number, it's not, it doesn't do anything for you. You can have the talent, but a great talent, there, but if you don't put your numbers, if you don't hit .300 or you don't too many errors in the infield. You know, they go by numbers. They don't go by names. They don't go by the way you look in the field., They go by numbers. So anybody, I mean, the whole commission, I cannot point at one guy.

Q: Who were the coaches that you had that had a positive impact on you as a player?

A: Where, here or there?

Q: There. We're still in Cuba. We've still got a ways to go before we come here (laughs)

A: There's a lot of coaches over there. I had thought from the Little League, I could mention -- hoof! -- a bunch of guys. Alberto Blanco was good.

Q: Alberto Blanco.

A: Pedro Perez was good.

Q: Pedro Perez.

A: Pedro Perez from when I was in Little League, and EIDE, you know, in the school where I was talking to you about.

Q: How do you spell that, "ellay", that you were talking about?

A: EIDE. (in Spanish) E-i-d-e. It's like (in English) E-i-d-e.

Q: My Spanish isn't as good as yours.

A: EIDE.

Q: OK

A: It's like E-i-d-e.

Q: EIDE. OK.

A: So you know, there's a lot of, you know, from the time I was in the EIDE, you know, I have Pedro Perez, I have Andres Allon, and, you know, there's a lot of guys. I don't want to mention anybody. So, you don't want to miss a lot of people. I got a lot of help from there. From Oscar Sardina as a hitter, Oscar Sardina. There was a lot of people who, I mean, there wasn't too many people. To tell you the truth, nobody showed me how to hit. I was, I think I was born with that talent, you know, talent, and then I just make an adjustment, little by little, by the time I was growing up and up and up. But the guy who give me a chance to show that was Jorge Triolla, who was the manger of the Havana team. You know, he put me on his roster, and he give me a chance to show that, you know, to give me the opportunity to play every day in the national championship.

Q: Was there a hitter whose style you tried to pattern yourself after?

A: To pattern myself?

Q: To copy?

A: For me to copy him?

Q: Copy?

A: Copy him? Yeah, I mean, to, no, I did not see anybody that I tried to copy, no. I never did that.

Q: So your style came from the inside.

A: I believe that, I believe , I believe, you know, as a hitter you have to have your own style and work from there, you know. Just make a little adjustment and there's nobody who can be a better hitting coach than yourself.

Q: Were there any nicknames that your teammates or the opposition gave you in your playing days?

A: The teammates? No, no.

Q: No?

A: Not there.

Q: Here they did?

A: Oh, well, here, when I was in the major league, they would call me Bobby. You know, it's Sparky Anderson.

Q: Like the Barbie doll?

A: Bobby.

Q: Bobby, like Bobby Higginson.

A: Bobby. Bobby. Exactly. They just showed him my name, Barbaro, and he was, he had a little problem rolling the tongue to call, to say "Barbaro," So he just called me Bobby and all of the other teammates were calling me Bobby, too.

Q: Well, the name Barbaro, your parents gave you that name -- was it after a relative or--?

A: No. that's a -- I was just born that day. It's a day in Cuba that call it St. Barbara Day. So there's a lot of Barbaros in Cuba who were born that December 4. That's the day that which was St. Barbara. And there's a lot of Barbaros and a lot of Barbaras, you know? So just to (be) born that day.

Q: Teammates in your Cuban days that you had great friendships with. Who would those people be?

A: Well, they would be like Ray Bissente, Bissente Englada.

Q: Who would they be?

A: He was a great second baseman. Those guys are not playing any more, I guess (laughs).

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: They're too old. But Bissente Englada, Pedro Medina, Augustin Michete, Rouldilio Vidin, that's a lot of -- I was getting along well with everybody on the team, but, you know, Alfredo Isasi, Rodolfo Puente, Alfonso Trijolla, all those guys, I was getting along well with them, and all those guys becoming legends in Cuba, because they were too good. And they stayed back there until I left. And most of the guys have become the manager of the national Cuban team, some of the guys work with the commission of baseball in Cuba, you know, because they have that talent, they have that much quality.

Q: Were there teammates on the other side of the coin were just jerks?

A: What? (laughs) On the other side?

Q: Yeah!

A: Well, no, I don't think so. Everybody was trying to beat everybody there. Like I am saying, the competition in Cuba is very tough. And, you know, Oriente has a good team, Havana has a good team, the Pinar del Rio has a great team, Matanzas, you know. This was -- nobody called nobody names. I mean, this is baseball, this is very clean baseball. Very clean rivalry in Cuba. Nobody. They're not allowed to, to fight on the field or anything like that. You know, it was not like that. Very friendly rivalry. You played baseball the way it was supposed to be playing, you know. Hard, but not to hurt anybody, not to -- because you might hurt somebody from the national Cuban team, and then the country will suffer for that.

Q: Now, it was your dream, I imagine, to play Ligo Nacional, yeah?.

A: Excuse me?

Q: It was your dream to play in Ligo Nacional?

A: Yes, in the national Cuban team?

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. That's the dream of everybody in Cuba. If you play for the national Cuban team, everybody knows you.

Q: What was it like to be living that dream, to actually experience that dream, to be playing? You played how many years in--?

A: On the national Cuban team? Three years.

Q: Three years. And what was that experience like?

A: Oh, it was awesome. I look back on it now and I'm very, very proud of that. Very proud of that because it's not an easy thing to make. It's not an easy thing to make and when I make that team, we went to the world championship and we won those teams. We represent our country well. I'm very happy about it, and I take a lot of pride in--

Q: What year was it that you won in the world championships?

A: Seventy-sev-- seventy-six

Q: And the Pan American Games, how often did you participate in that?

A: I did not have a chance to go to the Pan American Games because it was not in that cycle. I make it to the world championships, and then, you know, the Pan American Games is every four years. The Pan American Games was supposed to be in here in Indianapolis in 1980, I don't know. Columbia, I think it was. But before that, I left Cuba before that.

Q: Where was the world championships held before that?

A: In Cartajena, Colombia.

Q: Now, what brought dissatisfaction inside you that that you wanted to leave?

A: Not dissatisfaction that I wanted to leave, yes, I wanted to come here to the United States and see if I could play in the major leagues, because it was very tough. I was the first Cuba from the Castro era who played in the big leagues. I mean, a lot of people don't know that. But they did not realize that or they did not have that kind of information.

Q: They think maybe El Duque.

A: They do have the information, but they don't say. I don't know why. But I was the first one from the national Cuban team from the Castro era who played in the national, who played in the major leagues. Well, now, at that time, is, I mean, the money is not the same way it is now, so, you know, the policing was not too good, but they come from the national Cuban team and they give him, like, 12 million dollars, and everybody knows him right away. And they follow up. But I won the championship, too. (chuckles)

Q: Did you seek permission through official channels to try to go to the U.S.A. to play ball? Or did you realize that they would say no?

A: No, they would not say no. You know, I came on the Freedom Flotilla, I did not defect from the national Cuban team. I came on the Freedom Flotilla in 1980. I mean, that was the time where Castro say, "Anybody who wants to go to the United States, they can go," and I was one of the ones who jumped in the boat. It was not like I defected from the team. I just left Cuba to play here or try to get the chance, to give the chance to play over here professional ball. I got the opportunity to do it and I take the chance.

Q: Who did you leave behind in terms of family?

A: Oh, I left my mother and I left two daughters and I left my brothers and sisters.

Q: What kind of boat? Was it even a boat?

A: It was a big boat. It was a big boat. I would not get on any outdoor raft. I would not do that. I am scared of that and I would not suggest anybody to do it. But, you know, if you do anything, and you have the chance to come here, so be it. But I do not recommend that. I came in the big boat, a fishing boat. Which was over, over-you know, it was too many people on the boat, but it was not a small boat. It was a long boat.

Q: How many people were on the boat?

A: It was, like 200 people, 200 people. It was like a fishing boat.

Q: How long was the trip? They say 90 miles to--

A: Twelve hours. Ninety miles on the boat is a long way. (laughs)

Q: Did you get boatsick? Seasick?

A: Huh? No, I did not. I did not get boatsick, because, you know, we were talking and there was a lot of people around. If you don't get too concentrated on the water, you can make it easy. But you know, people who start looking at the water, go with the boat and the bouncing, and then you get sick. But if you go by you just being there and talking around and walking around, it's not easy but it's not that tough.

Q: Were people surprised when they saw you?: "Barbaro Garbey is on our boat!" You know?

A: Well, the people who were here from Cuba, yes, they were very happy. Surprised because I was here and very happy at the same time because they would have some kind of Cuban guy wanting for the chance to play in the major leagues.

Q: Was there much difficulty getting people to believe that you were a Cuban baseball player who wanted a chance to play, and not just some Marielito?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, it was not that. Because what I did, the guy who signed me up Orlando Pena, he knows I was with the national Cuban team. And the only team I had to convince was the Tiger organization, because all the Cubans who were coming up knew what kind of player I was. And the only team, the only guy I had to convince was the guy from the Tigers, and the people around the league. It was not too tough to do.

Q: There was no competition for you services?

A: Huh?

Q: There was no competition for your services?

A: There was competition, but you know, I guess raising my game a little and I did what I had to do.

Q: But I mean, no other team than the Tigers were interested in you?

A: I don't care. I don't know. I don't think so. I don't think so, but they were the first ones, the Tigers, I just went over there and they went to the refugee camp and the first team that went over there was the Tigers. You know, I didn't know if somebody else will come around and I just jumped on the first offer I got.

Q: Pena knew your reputation?

A: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Q: Did he every show you his bubble-gum ball?

A: Who, Pena? He's a very funny guy but he never do that.

Q: He would put some bubble gum and tobacco juice on the ball, and--

A: Yeah, he's very tricky. Very comoso. Comoso pitchers.

Q: So after you got signed, did they leave you here in Lakeland to get acclimated, or--?

A: After I signed, after I signed, I had to wait in the refugee camp for about a month until my papers and the immigration were coming there, the working papers of the immigration were ready and then I flew to New York for one day. Some of my relatives, they were in New York so I called them. I called them. And I stayed there for one night,. Then I called David Miller and David Miller sent me the plane ticket to here, to Tampa. Straight to Lakeland.

Q: Describe what conditions were like in the refugee camp.

A: It was a refugee camp. The competition was not that bad. They treat us very well there. They feed us. You know, we have some place to sleep. They was feeding us three times a day, which in Cuba you do not see that very often. You know, it's not like in Cuba you were dying hungry, but it's not, it's not three, three meals a day. It's different there. They were treating us very well there. And then they send me over here to Lakeland, and in Lakeland I spent half a year. And they give me, like, a week, a week to get in game, game shape. And then I start playing for the rest of the year here, in Lakeland. I had a good year. I hit .364 and then I went to instructional league, and from there, it was, it was good to me.

Q: What was culture shock?

A: What? The culture?

Q: Culture. Living in America, different from what you see on TV.

A: The culture, well, not culture shock, but we know what to expect. I know what was expected of me. What I was expecting over here in the United States, you know. The way of live would be different, there would be the English would be better, but it was tough. You know, we have to, from the beginning, at the beginning we was living, me and two other Cubans who was signed by the Tigers.

Q: Who were those?

A: Roberto Salazar and Eduardo Pejusio. They signed, but they never made the national Cuban team. And the big, the A-club team. They didn't make the national Cuban team and, like, the junior league. Those guys were on the national Cuban team, the junior league. But they didn't make the national Cuba team, and they, you know, from there, the so-called major league. And we were living over there in the Holiday Inn, we were living with the late Dwight Lowry--

Q: We used to stay at that Holiday Inn. Yes.

A: Dwight Lowry was my roomie -- our roomie. An we was living all together. Four of us in one room, because the money is not the way it is right now. And you know it was a little rough to have that situation, what to eat, what to order in the supermarket, you know, what we going to eat tomorrow, who's going to cook, who's not

going to cook. So I had no to cook. Dwight was cooking for us, the first three or four days, and then we started making our, you know, our own food. Cuban food. (chuckles)

Q: Could Dwight speak Spanish? Is that why they put him with the Cubans?

A: No, no.

Q: Could you speak English?

A: No. How we get along? You know, anybody could get along with Dwight. Dwight Lowry was a great person, you know. But you know, we communicated with each other inside there. He was pointing (gestures), "Hey! Come to eat!" He'd point at the phone with the finger, and you know, when, and then those guys got released, Bill Edwards -- Bill Edwards was the general manager then -- and they signed a guy called Luis Sanchez. Luis Sanchez, he was playing in the rookie league. And they call him up to Lakeland. And he was helping me, you know, as my translator.

Q: How long did it take you before you felt comfortable carrying a conversation in English?

A: Ohhhh, it took me a few years.

Q: Were you--

A: I mean, not a few years, but before I carry a conversation was like -- ahhhh, I think the following year, I think, '81, I was, I was able to follow a conversation with my roomie. You know, the people who couldn't understand what I was trying to say and they knew my accent and they was trying -- they really tried to help me. And I really appreciate that from those guys. It was, like, they were, Darrell Woody (sp) and Steve Junger.

Q: Who was the first fellow?

A: Darrell Woody. Darrell. Darrell Woody.

Q: Darrell Woody.

A: Yes.

Q: And do you dream in English or Spanish now?

A: I dream in English now. (laughs). Well, you know, in order for you to have (laughs), in order for you to learn, I mean, sometimes you have to think in English. You know, You have to think in English. Even when my English is not so well now, but I try to think in English. If you are going to have to do something over there, I'm not saying, in my mind I don't say, "(speaks in Spanish)." That's Spanish. I just say inside me, "I got to go over there." I mean, I try to think in English: "I gotta go there, I gotta do this, I gotta do that," so that's the way, you know, you get, my English is getting a little better now.

Q: There is a value that you bring because of the ability you have to speak Spanish to players who are fresh up.

A: Right. Mm-hmm. I mean, over here, in the organization, there is a lot of kids over here from the Dominican Republic, from Venezuela, from Puerto Rico who don't, who don't speak any English. And, you know, we help them, I help them a lot.

Q: And they can tell -- we had, where I work, a fellow from Cuba who would translate news articles into Spanish. And when the other Spanish-language editors would read the translations, they would say, "That's a Cuban." (Garbey laughs) Because, you know, they could tell it was a Cuban or Argentine, or--

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Do you detect that yourself in the inflections or the little idiomatic expressions, the little phrases that say they're Venezuelans or they're Puerto Ricans or they're Cubans?

A: Oh, yeah. It's very easy. Very easy. Very easy. It's like here in the United States. I think maybe you -- maybe you, I can't -- but you can see can detect who's from New York, or who's from the North, or who's from the South. I can't do that. I don't know. I can't, everybody -- to me, everybody speak the same. They have the same accent. My wife, who's American, she listen to somebody speaking, she'll go, "Where are you from? Are you from the South? Are you from South Carolina, or Arizona?" I don't know. "How do you know that?" "It's because of the accent." Oh, that's the same way in Spanish. You know who's from Venezuela, who's from Puerto Rico, who is from Colombia, who is from Cuba, you know, it's different.

Q: When you came to the U.S.A., what gave you more trouble: being a Spanish speaker without much English skills, or having black skin?

A: The language. The language gave me more trouble than my skin. No question. The English was the one who give me the more problems. Because, you know, I did not, I tried to avoid any kind of situation that was who could get me in trouble or could be cut off in that situation with black and white. I did not, you know, you know -- what with my teammates, I would go where my teammates took me. But I'm trying to go here or go there or go anywhere where I don't know what situation I will confront there. I just tried to stay out of problems, stay out of trouble. And get rid of them. And today, I don't have any trouble, any problem with that.

Q: Now, your Triple-A baseball, before you joined the Tigers was in Evansville?

A: Evansville.

Q: What was that town like? It seems to be very remote. (Garbey laughs) and kind of small.

A: A small town, yeah. A small town, boy, in Indiana. Evansville. When I was in Evansville I did not go anywhere. I was all baseball. I was thinking just baseball. I was not going anywhere out to have a lot of friends in Evansville. I did not have a lot of friends in Evansville. I had a couple friends. And they were white persons. And, you know, they was going with me everywhere. And I did, as I said, I did not have any trouble with the, with that color barrier. I had more trouble with the language. Than anything else. I think everywhere.

Q: Now that we've done so much about your pre-major league days, let's go to 1984. It's a magical year, I think.

A: (laughs) I think.

Q: Everybody now says that players sensed that 1984 was going to be their year in camp. And you made the club out of spring training.

A: Yes.

Q: What was the competition like? How do you assess the competition in the Tiger camp vs. the competition in Cuban ball?

A: In Cuban ball. I wasn't, I didn't have too much competition. Me. I mean, I have good years in the minor league. I mean everywhere, everywhere they put me in the minor league I have a great year. I mean, for me, me to make it in 1984 was not a fluke, because, you know, I put the number, I showed the whole organization I was ready to play at the major league. And then when I get to the Tiger camp in '84, I already had the experience to be in that camp and two years earlier, early before I was in the camp in '81. Sparky Anderson was coming down here and they invite me to play over there, a few games in the major league. And then they put me on the rose in '83. On the 40-man roster. And so, when I got there in '84, I was confident in camp that I could make that team.

Q: You could not?

A: I could make that team.

Q: You could.

A: Yes., I could make that team. I hit .320, .325, in Triple-A, and I, you know, I was hitting third all the time. I was a good clutch hitter. I think I had the team made before the camp was done.

Q: Now I'm going to ask you your impressions of some of your teammates from the 1984 season. Jack Morris.

A: Well, Jack is a very competitive pitcher. You know, he's the kind of guy who don't, who don't back off to anybody. He just go after the hitter with his great pitches, his great stuff, his, it doesn't matter if he does not have his regular, not have his great stuff that day, or we will go out on the mound and battle. You have to beat him, because he was not going to let you beat him. So he's, he's a great pitcher.

Q: Has Jack been here yet to the camp?

A: Well, he was here last year. He was here last year, working with the pitching staff. I don't know if they have any plan for him this year. But I haven't seen him.

Q: He's going to be on the TV team this year.

A: TV. I understand.

Q: Howard Johnson.

A: Well, Hojo in '84, Hojo was in the major league the year before, in '83. No, no, yes, he was in the major league in '83, and as soon as he got some, he was not real, he was not the player who he become later in '84. So he was platooning there sometimes with me at third base, Tommy Brookens, sometimes Darrell Evans., You know, Hojo was the kind of payer who was learning all the time.

Q: He was what all the time?

A: Learn.

Q: Learning.

A: Learning all the time. He was hitting, extra hitting with Darrell Evans a lot. And hard-working and it pay off for him. A good base runner and stealing at that time. He was very quick with great power. A switch-hitter, you know. Of course, I played with Hojo from Lakeland, Double-A, Triple-A, and the major leagues. So I knew him very well and I knew what Hojo could do, and you see what kind of player he became to be.

Q: Darrell Evans.

A: Well, Evans was like a father figure for everybody. As soon as we, as soon as Darrell come to the team, you know, he come to the team, you could have seen the chemistry there. It will be different, it will be different, you know that that year will be different. That's what the people who were there before say. 'Cause I, when I get there as a rookie, you know, I see good chemistry there, and I see everybody was getting along well, everybody was playing hard, and everybody wanted to win. You know, everybody was playing the game the way they was supposed to (be) playing. There weren't playing, Sparky Anderson would get some players who would be playing the game the way Alan Trammell played the game. Everybody had their own rules. We set the rules, Sparky give it to everybody. You know me, With me, I would like to play every day, I would like to play every day in '84, but it was not the plan Sparky had, and we take the rules.

We was not bitching or talking behind people's back or talking about so-and-so, "I should have played today," "I should not play tomorrow," or whatever, you know. We was pulling for whoever was in the field. It was the team there, and we was pulling for everybody. And everybody was trying to do their job, everybody was trying to win. You put nine guys on the field and we are here on the bench, you know, but that's our team over there. So we had to, you know, focus in the same way they were focused in the field, we were focused on the bench. Because you never know when the opportunity for you would come. So you had to be ready, anytime. Sparky Anderson was the kind of guy who would just come around and say, "Be ready." Because you might hit in this inning, or even he see you are sitting there, but, you know, by the time the fifth inning comes around, you knew you could be in the game anytime. Anytime. So you had be ready for that. And that's what make it in '84 a great team. Everybody wanted to win. Everybody knew their role.

Q: Aurelio Lopez.

A: Oh, Aurelio was my father, I guess. And you know from the time I was here there in the minor league. He was the guy when I was going over there to the big league, for the big league camp, even though I was not on the roster yet, but like in '81, when I was over there Sparky Anderson wanted to bring over to the roster, I mean to play some games in the major league, Aurelio Lopez was the one who took me under his wing and tell me what, He was my translator. After the game he was the one who was taking me out to eat. And, you know, I can't say anything bad about that man. I really appreciate what he did for me. He helped me a lot. Plus he was a great pitcher, a great stopper. I mean, a lot of heart. A lot of heart is a lot of balls (chuckles). He was getting after hitters with his fastball and his lighter. He was a great, great pitcher.

Q: People used to call him Senor Smoke.

A: Senor Smoke.

Q: But do you call him that in the clubhouse, Senor Smoke, or is that just--

A: No, no

Q: --in the newspapers.

A: That was the newspapers. We call him Aurelio. Or Lopey.

Q: Larry Herndon.

A: A very classy guy who is like the same way. Hard work, hard work, and wait for his turn. You know, he was the guy who was playing every day, I mean, until '84. You know, Larry was a, you know, he was a 20-home-run guy almost every year, and 80 or 90 RBI. In '84 he struggled a little bit at the beginning and they start to platoon him, and he was quiet, and he took that role, too. Because you now, that's the kind of professional

business, you know, professional guy he is. And Larry was one of my favorite players on that team. I have a lot of guys. Everybody was getting along well. But Larry Herndon was, was my favorite guy.

Q: Lance Parrish.

A: "Big Wheel," you see, is a great catcher, a great, catcher; he was a cleanup hitter, and he had a great year in '84. I think he hit, like, 30 home runs, and drove in something like 90 runs. We don't have anybody who hit, who drove home more the runs. Lance was the one of the guys who was in, who was getting his hits and his home runs in the clutch. You know, and defensively, he was, you know, he was a great catcher. Hard work, too. You could see a lot of Lance here in the training camp. Everybody was around when Lance came here and do a lot of laps around the field, you know, taking care of his body and be ready for the season. A mentally tough guy.

Q: Milt Wilcox.

A: Wilcox? Ah, ha, ha. Wilcox was getting along very well with Aurelio. And with everybody. Wilcox was a veteran guy, too. And he did a great job for the '84. He was a, he was hanging around a lot with Aurelio and the Latin guys. A great person, and a great teammate.

Q: Lou Whitaker.

A: Ooh, Lou. Lou was a great teammate, too, a little bit more quiet like him and Chet Lemon have their own belief, and we all respect that and they respect what, whatever you do, One day they was going to the field and they was they was doing the 100 percent. And Lou and Chet, what can you say about Lou Whitaker? To me, he should be a little bit closer to the Hall of Fame than he is, than they put him. He had the number and 20 years playing with Alan Trammell and be the combination they was, that's not, that's not easy. That's something to sit down and think about. You know, how, how, you gonna find two guys who play together for so many years, and be a winner. It's amazing.

Q: Rusty Kuntz.

A: Well Rusty was a role guy, you know. He would platoon sometimes, He was the guy of guy who would sitting on the bench and look at everything and, you know, looking at the other manager and see if he can steal some signs. He was helping out that way from the bench a lot. You know, he was looking -- a very intelligent player. Very, very intelligent player.

Q: Doug Bair.

A: Well, Doug comes from Cincinnati. He was from Sparky Anderson's school (chuckles) so he knew. Doug Bair did a good job, too. I mean, we, everybody on that team was getting along well. And everybody, I mean, even the people who come later to the team, they was adapting the situation there. You know, they were making their own adjustment to the group, you know? They was getting in the group, with the same group, like Ruppert Jones. When Ruppert Jones came in the trade, you know, he, I mean, he feel welcome there. We feel comfortable there in '84. And, you know, Ruppert Jones did a great job there. Because, like, you know, that was the kind of team we was. If you play hard, you know, you are welcome here.

Q: Did Dwight make the club from spring training?

A: Mm-hmm, yes.

Q: So you had that one year together as teammates all season long pretty much, yes?

A: Yes., yeah.

Q: Because I don't know if he played in 1985.

A: He did, too. I think he did.

Q: What during your year, your two years as a Tiger, stung you in terms of the criticism that may have been in the press or on television?

A: You know, criticizing for me?

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, I don't remember the bad things. And at that time, I was not even reading the paper, and I was not even watching TV. You know, so I can't tell you, you know, what's, what was bothering me there, you know. The only thing I wanted to do when I was in the major league. When I was there was when Detroit was playing. It didn't matter what they say in the papers, it doesn't matter what they say on TV. I was playing my game. You know, I guess some people thought I was, I should have played a little harder or I should have been a little more of a hard worker. That was the way I was. Even you thought I was not in the game, I was playing hard. 'Cause that was the way I was playing.

You know, in batting practice there was a lot of criticism about how I was going about in batting practice. You know, there's a lot of people who take the batting practice different. I mean, I was going to the batting practice. The batting practice was to work on my stroke. I don't want, I was not going to the batting practice to try and impress anybody. I didn't try to hit a home run over here, or long pop-ups to left field so I can show you my power. No. I was the kind of guy who was going over to work on my stroke. To see if my swing was correct for me. This nice and easy swing. Now when I come to the game, I would have my mechanics down, and I just would just speed them up a little bit. Not -- a lot. Not a little bit. A lot. But that was maybe that's the kind of criticism I don't, I will, I don't take, because everybody's different, you know? I was going to the batting practice as well as I was doing it, it was, it was not like I didn't care. I was working the way I be -- I was working from the time I was on the Cuban national team, the way I was working here in the minor league to -- that was the system who took me to the major league. So when I get to the major league, I don't think I have any reason to change that. Because if I change, then I will become a different kind of hitter. And I don't think I could have been a different kind of hitter.

Q: How do you compare the competition between the major leagues and the Cuban League Nacional?

A: Oh, without a doubt, the major league is without a doubt the best, the best league in the world. You know, the Cuban league is good but not compared to the major league. The major league, in Cuba you can find, I mean, three or four good teams who can give a good competition, but not like here. It's not so much of talent here, like they have here in the major leagues.

Q: What is, for you, the feeling of having all of the, so many 1984 here in camp, like Parrish and Trammell and Gibson?

A: Well, it's not only for me, it's for the organization. Because you know, it's like everybody going to bring the mentality of how to play the game. How to be a winner. You know. What can you do to be a winner? That's how, you know, that's the same feeling everybody has. You know, you bring back the talent that has been together for so long. Like Gibby, Trammell and Parrish, and they will play around and Sparky around, and you have Kaline over there. You know, some of the kids, some of the players, they will take that message. The information those guys want to give it to them, they will take that kind of information and execute it on the field. And that's the same way we're doing over here. The same system they have over there in the major

league, we're going to have the same system in the minor league. So when they, you know, they move up a little on the ladder, they will get to the major leagues and major league players. And that, major leaguers. Major league players.

Q: So you've had meetings with all the minor league staff, and the major league staff about things like instruction and- approaches to-

A: Well, like you see right now, this is the major league, this is the minor league staff coming there. The rover. The roving people, and the camp director. So now they come from that meeting over there. From the meeting with Trammell and Gibby and other guys. Now whatever they say over there, that's what we're going to do here. You know what I'm saying? That's how we're going to play. And that's the tradition we try to give here. That the same tradition -- the way we were playing before, and the way it's supposed to be playing, you see. The camp right now is very different than--.

Q: Than last year's?

A: Ooh! It's a bit different. Not in last year. A couple of years back. I mean, the way they run the camp, we run the camp now, you can see we're going in the right direction.

Q: You have to go? I'll stop now. But I'll tell you that I'm going to make a transcript. I'm going to type up the notes to this interview. And I'll send you a copy, because some of the name, the spellings I may not have correct.

A: OK.

Q: But once you have a chance to look at them -- I can send it to you in Grand Rapids;

A: OK.

Q: And I'll send a copy of the tape and a copy of the transcript to the Baseball Hall of Fame Library, so they can have that in its permanent collection. And also a copy of the tape and transcript will be in Cleveland, Ohio, for the Society for American Baseball Research. And if we ever continue this, we'll just, you know pick up where we left off. We've got a lot of years between 1984 and 2003.