

D O N M U E L L E R

This conversation between Don Mueller and Walter Langford is being recorded in Don's home in St. Louis on May 5, 1987.

WL: Don, tell me in a few words of your start in baseball. How did you did going? Here in St. Louis?

DM: Born and raised within two miles of where I live now. Back in those days there was no American Legion baseball ^{in St. Louis County.} There was Sunday baseball. My brother was 3-1/2 years older than myself, and so I played with older boys. This led to my being a choke hitter. My dad, ~~was~~ incidentally, played for Pittsburgh, from '24 through '28 (you can pick that up through the Register). He's listed as being from Central, MO, which is a little town that is no longer here. My record shows me as being from Creve Coeur, which is actually the same area. So, I guess I was 13 and I was playing with boys who were 17 or 18, and in order to get my whacks I had to choke up. I was a left field hitter, I couldn't get around on those kinds of kids. But two years later on getting into Legion ball ^{in the city}, I was with kids my own age and I could naturally do just a little bit better. I went down on the bat a little bit, but never was a hitter with his hands down on that knob to where you got everything. But I'd hit home runs in Legion ball probably - well, I'd say, we had a small schedule of maybe 15-16 games, but I maybe hit 10 home runs. And I hit .600 for the two years I played and that was really fun. When you get to play ball with kids your own age and had had to play with kids older than you, it makes a lot of difference. So, I had offers from - at that time there were 16 big league teams - and the only team I didn't have a contact from was the Philadelphia Athletics. Connie Mack, his outfit. The Cardinals offered me probably the best contract, but

(you might research this) I think Sam Beadon still owned that club in 1944, and my dad said, "If you want to make better than average money, go where your big ball parks are. Go to New York." Mel Ott was one of my main idols, and he was managing the Giants. And so I went to New York. Could have gone to Chicago, to the Cubs. Charlie Grimm was a teammate of my dad's at Pittsburgh. The Cubs didn't want to give me the money we were looking for, and Charlie had stock in the Milwaukee club. He said, "I'll buy your contract. I'll own you. I'll send you to Milwaukee." My dad said, "No." Jim Gallagher was the general manager at Chicago. Dad said, "You'll get in hot water. The Cubs don't want to pay you this money and sooner or later the problem is going to come up that you (Grimm) wanted him, the general manager didn't." So that's why I didn't end up a Cub. Fortunately, it was a good move.

WL: Yep, the Cubs were going down, the Giants were always up there.

DM: Cubs were always doormats, but to play in Wrigley Field, I think I would have prospered there.

WL: No doubt.

DM: Yeah. But going to New York, I was on two pennant winners ...

WL: You sure were. Two famous ones.

DM: Yeah, that '51. Like I told this boy yesterday in this interview, "My wife was pregnant, and she was having a hard time delivering. On September 1 I hit three home runs against the Dodgers, on Sept. 2 I had hit one. Monte Irvin was the next hitter and was in the on deck circle, and he called me over and the count was one ball and no strikes. He said, "We just got a phone call that your wife had a baby boy." The next pitch I hit No. 5, and I only hit 16 all year. I only hit one after that. So, something inwardly was happening. I don't know what it was, but I wasn't a home run hitter, because going back to my earlier age I knew the best way to stay in the big leagues was to spray that ball around. I tried it the first two or three years with the Giants, for the Giants, when I first came to them, set the league record with 221 home runs in 1947. In 1949 they made that trade that

got rid of Sid Gordon, Willard Marshall, Buddy Kerr, and Walker Cooper. And we got Eddie Stanky and Al Dark. Now we've got an altogether different ball club. Leo's managing. He's a running manager. You hit and run, you squeeze bunt, you play for one run, you don't play for the big inning. So I said, "Well, can this swinging from the heels, because my minor league record was singles, doubles, and average. From then on, that's when I started to progress.

WL: Do you remember your first game in the majors?

DM: I pinch hit. I was hitting, I'd say, .350 at Jersey City in the International League, and I went 0 for 28 and Leo said he needed a lefthanded pinch hitter. That was my chance. Fred Fitzsimmons was our coach, and he took me out there that morning and he threw batting to me for I guess 45 minutes. And we were playing the Cardinals that day. Murray Dickson was pitching and Leo says, "Go up there and give him a whack." And I hit a line drive to right field, a base hit. Triple A, 0 for 28, big leagues, 1 for 1.

first

WL: That's wonderful. In those/years there you had guys like Johnny Mize and Rigney, along with those who got traded - Gordon, Cooper, Kerr, and or interesting others. Anything unusual/happen in those first two seasons before you became a regular?

DM: Well, I'll tell you first of all we made the trip to Chicago, my first road trip. We were on trains in those days, and I was rooming with Johnny Mize in a Pullman. Of course, he had the lower bunk and I was in the upper. He was smoking those big black cigars and all that smoke was rising on me, and I'm not a smoker. He was just burning my eyes so bad with that smoke. I went to the travelling secretary, Eddie Brannigan, a long-time baseball man.

WL: Yes, I know his name.

DM: I said, "Eddie, this man is burning my eyes off. I can't stand it. Get me another roommate." And he did. That little incident about cigar smoke

tore me up later on when I was in a car pool and we had a young catcher named Sal Yvars. He smoked cigars and he burned my eyes too. We lived together in the same little town. I moved up to where he lived and we had a car pool. I just couldn't stand cigar or cigarette smoke, it tears your eyes out. Walker Cooper, boy, he treated rookies nasty. He chewed tobacco and he'd come by you and you'd be sitting there, and he'd spit tobacco juice in your shoe laces. Now you're 20 years old and he's 30, and he's a big hunk so you're not going to tear into him, and you just take that abuse. Or, he'd walk behind you and he'd light a cigarette and put it in your pants pocket. He was really a practical joker.

WL: All of the old-timers tell me that, when they came up as rookies in the 20's and 30's, they couldn't get into the batting cage at all. The regulars wouldn't let the rookies even come near the batting practice.

I suppose that had diminished by the time you came up.

DM: Yeah, I think that faded away. I didn't see any of that.

WL: In 1950 you became a regular outfielder. Who was it you replaced?

DM: Willard Marshall. He was a good ball player. Home run hitter. He went in that deal with Boston.

WL: You had a good first season as a full-time player - .291 average.

DM: One little incident. In spring training we played Cleveland. They were training in Tucson and trained in Phoenix. So we played Cleveland quite a bit. Al Rosen was their third baseman and he and Leo got their heads together. Leo saw something in me, but Dale Mitchell was Cleveland's left fielder and he was a consistent .300 hitter. Rosen says, "Leo, I'll bet you \$500 that Mitchell will outhit Mueller for the year." The first of September came and I was hitting .330 and Mitchell has hitting maybe .318.

I don't know how ironic it is, whether it plays on your mind or what, but I sat down with a pencil and I figured out how many hits I would have to get in the next 25 games in order to maintain my same average. And he would have to do better. And you know I went 0 for 36, and I ended up

hitting .291 and Mitchell hit about .315 actually, .3087. Leo had to fork over that \$500. And I felt so bad about it that when the season ended I walked in to Leo's office - I haven't told anybody else about this - and I said, "Leo, I'm sure sorry I lost you that \$500 bucks."

I knew the bet was on, for he had told me in the spring what was going on. I don't know whether that's against baseball rules or not, but it was just a friendly bet. But at that time, \$500 was to my mind a lot of money. I don't know whether it was a lot of money for Leo or not. But I lost it for him, and all because I used that pencil and put a little too much stress on myself. I think I still hold that record of .0 for 36 on the Giants. Not a good one, but it's a record.

WL: Well, you have to have some bad ones with the good ones. What did they pay you that first year?

DM: Minimum salary then was \$5000. Put into perspective it doesn't jibe very well with the way salaries have gone up. It's terrible right now. Whatever the owners may be doing to try to correct this thing, I'd have to say they're going in the right direction.

WL: The majority of the public says that.

DM: When I was playing you could look at DiMaggio and at Musial and you knew who the stars were. They were making that 70, 80, 90 thousand. Nowadays you can't tell who a star is by the money they're making. The owners have been held up so bad ...

WL: Well, they had themselves largely to blame. Now they're going to have to correct it and they're doing what they can.

DM: They're doing it and there's a lot of screaming going on.

WL: That's understandable. The Players' Association is going to squawk.

DM: That's right. Like in this morning's paper, Lonnie Smith is a .296 lifetime hitter and nobody wants him.

WL: And he's the only player ever to play on three championship teams.

DM: That's what they say.

WL: And in pretty short order, too. I think it was the Phillies in '80, St. Louis in '82, and Kansas City in '85. In six seasons he was on three World Series champions. Well, in '51 you picked up people like Willie Mays and Monte Irvin, and Tookie Gilbert left that year.

DM: Tookie Gilbert. Yeah, he was a classic ball player that just never got a grasp on it. What was his dad's name? He owned the ...

WL: New Orleans franchise?

DM: He owned the Nashville ball club.

WL: That was it. Larry, Larry Gilbert. That's right.

DM: Oh, yeah. Tookie was a real good friend of mine. He died real young. I think he was 35 or 36 years old.

WL: Now, you guys were 12-1/2 games back on August 15 that season and put on a stretch run that has few equals. What sparked that mostly?

DM: I couldn't really tell you, except that we ...

WL: It just all came together.

DM: It all came together, and we had some old heads pitching. Maglie, Jansen, Koslo, Sheldon Jones. I read the paper and I can't understand what's going on with pitching nowadays that fellows hit two home runs in a ball game, they hit three home runs in a ball game, and it's just a lack of knowledge of pitching, as far as I'm concerned. I don't think the hitters have gotten so much better. I think they're just rushing the pitchers out of Class A ball, the next year they're in Triple A, the next year they're pitching in the big leagues, and all they're doing is throwing, and you don't get nobody out throwing.

WL: Yep. It sure has changed, certainly. Now they have a 5-man rotation and nobody is expected to finish a game - hardly ever. The reliever has become more important than the starter, almost.

DM: And then they're looking for the middle man, and then for the relief pitcher. Joe Page was probably one of the first prominent relief pitchers, with the Yankees. And Hugh Casey with the Dodgers. Of course, three

years later we had Hoyt Wilhelm, and he made his niche. He was my roommate for about five years.

WL: I was sitting in Pittsburgh one afternoon. On the side at Notre Dame I was tennis coach for 15 years and ~~tennis~~^{fencing} coach for 15 years, and had NCAA champs in both. My tennis team was in Pittsburgh and we were playing Pitt and Duquesne. I went to my car over by the side of the courts and Wilhelm was pitching. It was some time in May of '52. He hit a home run that day.

DM: Oh, that must have been the first game he played.

WL: Exactly. Then later I saw him pitch many times for the White Sox. I'd go from South Bend up to Comiskey Park very often to see the Sox play. All right. So, you caught the Dodgers ~~and~~ at the end of the season, and they had to rally in Philadelphia to finish in a tie with you, as I remember. Then you go into the playoffs. In the first game Hearn wins it on the mound, and Thomson wins it with a home run against Branca. That should have said something to Dressen. But it didn't apparently take. And in the second game Clem Labine really controlled you.

DM: He shellacked us. What was it, about 10 to 1?

WL: 10-0. And then it comes to the third game and Maglie and Newcombe go along 1-1 for 7 innings, and the 8th they get to Maglie for three and it looked like it was curtains. Newcombe retired the side in the bottom of the 8th.

DM: Newcombe was a good pitcher. Not finesse, just big power. Strong, 6' 6" guy who just blew that ball in there. Reverting back a little bit, Leo used to be on Newcombe from inning one. And in those days the racial issue was still alive, and he would just stand up there on the edge of the dugout and he'd give him some of the most terrible things. He'd say, "You're going to spit that bit" plus blah, blah, blah. He'd say, "We're going to get him. If we get a well-pitched game, we'll beat him." And that was his philosophy. All through his career, Leo's philosophy was just to rag somebody until you got him rattled. And if we had a good pitched game we could beat

Necombe, because he would just keep popping that fastball and that slider. Just humming it. And he would mow you. But you could catch up to ~~it~~ him because you can't throw that hard for nine innings. And if ^{you} had a good pitched game you could catch up with him.

WL: Okay, so we come to the bottom of the ninth and you're down 4-1 and it looks like curtains. But Al Bark singles and then you single.

DM: And my philisophy of hitting I guided that ball pretty good through the infield.

WL: Your single sent Dark to second, as I remember.

DM: Yeah. There was a controversy about whether Hodges should have been holding Dark on first base. That he should have been playing ^{back,} and if he had been he might have cut off my hit. But if he had been playing back, I wouldn't have hit it where I did. I would probably have gone through the middle. This was my philosophy of hitting. You slice one between the third baseman and the shortstop. The next time up the shortstop moves a couple of steps into the hole, and that opens up the center. That was my theory of hitting. Between that and hitting line drives, I could play the game that way.

WL: Real good. Now, Irvin popped up, Lockman comes up and hits one to the opposite field.

DM: Left field, bounces off the left field wall, Dark scores, and I'm going to third base. I'm looking over my shoulder to see if the cutoff man is going to get the ball and if it's a bad throw, I'm going to score. And here is where people say I slid into third base, but I didn't. I was looking ^{over} my shoulder and when I made my last two steps to third base, I overstepped the bag and I turned my ankle. I pulled the tendons out of both sides of my ankle bone. So I didn't slide but when I rolled that ankle it looked like I slid. The sports writers thought I slid, but I didn't, 'cause I was running.

WL: I've read some places that you sprained the ankle badly and other places say you broke it.

DM: It was a case of pulled tendons. I pulled them out of both sides of my ankle. No broken bones. I was in the hospital through the Series in the Polo Grounds, and I made it to the sixth game in Yankee Stadium. I was sitting on the bench with a cast on my leg. And I think I would have liked to go up there and hit with the cast on. I remember that last play, when Sal Yvars hit that line drive to right field and Hank Bauer came in and slid on his chest. Third out, ninth inning. It was all over.

WL: Now, back to when you come into third base and hurt your ankle, Hartung comes in to run for you.

DM: Hartung ran for me. That was the trivia question: Who was on third base when Thomson homered? Recall that?

WL: Yep. Were you on the bench or had you gone into the dressing room?

DM: I was in the dressing room.

WL: You didn't see the famous shot.

DM: All I heard was the crowd roar, and I thought, "Well, it went down the drain."

WL: They didn't have a radio in there and there wasn't TV yet.

DM: Didn't have a radio or nothing in there, and I thought it was all over until I could hear 'em coming in, just roaring and having fun.

WL: That's been called the most famous home run ever hit in baseball.

DM: The shot heard 'round the world, that's what they called it. Going back for just one more point. You know, nowadays if a wife's going to have a baby, a fellow usually flies home and stays three days. If that would have happened in my case, when I hit those five home runs in two days to beat the Dodgers about 9-3 and 8-2, whatever, if I had gone home for the baby's arrival, someone else would have been playing right field for us and we might ^{not} have won those two games. But then again, Bobby Thomson might never have had the chance to be what they remember him for.

WL: Yeah. Had he not hit that home run he would have been an ordinary baseball player.

DM: Yeah, a good ball player, but after we sold him and he broke his ankle, he was never the same ball player. One of the best runners I ever saw from first to third base. Probably in two steps he could cross this room. We were up in West Point - every year we's play the cadets - and they had a kid up there who was a blazer in the 100 yards. We said, "Well, we're going to race Bobby against this kid and see what happens." This kid comes out in track shorts, no socks, and track shoes. Thomson has got his uniform on, all this heavy wool clothing. They start 'em off and in 30 yards Bobby's looking over his shoulder. He's just watching that kid ~~xxx~~ back there, and he just run away from him. He was that good at being a sprinter.

WL: I think it was Travis Jackson who told me that Bill Terry was awfully fast and people didn't realize it because he was so big and such a powerful hitter. In spring training they were playing Washington and the Washington players were saying that Goose Goslin was faster than anyone the Giants had. Jackson got some of his teammates to join him and take the Senators up on that. So, it was Terry vs. Goslin, and Terry left Goslin behind so fast that Goslin didn't even finish. Now, here are three questions about that ninth inning of the last game of the '51 playoffs. We can't answer them, but I suspect Dressen went to his grave wondering about them. 1) Should he have let Newcombe start the 9th inning? ~~2)~~ They say that on the bench Newk had told Dressen he might be losing it. 2) Then, when he did decide to yank him, he had Preacher Roe and Carl Erskine and Clem Labine warming up with Branca. Roe hadn't appeared in the playoffs at all; maybe he was saving Roe to start the Series against the Yankees. But he brought in Branca, even if he remembered that Thomson had beat Branca in the first game. 3) And then, first base was open and he didn't walk Thomson because you don't put the winning run on base with a walk. But Willie Mays was next up and he ~~was~~ had not had a good playoff and hadn't had an outstanding season. He hadn't reached his potential yet. And the possibility of a double play is better with the bases loaded.

DM: Yeah, it's questionable. It could be he blew it right there. No doubt that Labine could have come back just for one or two outs. Labine had a fantastic overhand curve ball. I mean, he had a good curve ball. Of course, to throw Thomson a high fastball, that's bad news.

WL: It may be Dressen was thinking that Branca was a lot more experienced. He was in his 4th or 5th season and Labine was a rookie. But Labine was hot the day before.

DM: Yeah, I think he could have - well, he could probably have made the difference right there. You never know that, it's one of those controversial things.

WL: I see that the loser's share in the 1951 World Series was \$4951. Today that would be a real joke.

DM: Yeah. In 1954 we drew the largest share of any team up to that time. Eleven thousand dollars. Nowadays it's sixty thousand ...

WL: Sixty to eighty, depending on the parks they play in. Now, in '52 you came in second, 4-1/2 games back of the Dodgers, and in '53 you dropped to 5th place. Then in '54 you won again. Any thoughts on why you went down as low as fifth in a couple of years and then jumped back to first again?

DM: No, I really couldn't tell you about that. Like we were saying initially, this was so long ago that these little things that make so much difference have escaped my remembrance. But Antonelli had to be a big force in getting us back to the top.

WL: Sal Maglie was still around ...

DM: And we had Ruben Gomez ..

WL: Yes, and Don Liddle ...

DM: Yeah, and Marv Grissom and Hoyt Wilhelm were our main relievers.

WL: True, though in the '54 Series they didn't ~~have~~^{need} much, for each of them got in for only two and a fraction innings. Because they weren't needed.

DM: We had good pitching, and this is what we were saying before. You get old heads pitching and you can go a lot further than trying to go five innings

like they do nowadays. I was playing in an old-timers game, I guess five or six years ago, out in San Diego. I got on a flight at Lambert and Maglie was on the plane, coming from Niagara Falls. We sat there and were conversing, and I realized that I had been a dummy by not talking to pitchers about what pitchers do to hitters. I knew what I wanted to do to the pitcher, but I didn't ever turn it around and say, "What do the pitchers *want to do* ~~doing~~ to me?" And you'd see some of the wickedest line drives and balls hit up into the upper decks off of Maglie, but they would be fouls. And I said, "Sal, when you were pitching, did you deliberately take something off of those pitches right in their wheelhouse?" He said, "That's the name of the game. You don't want to try to throw strikes past them, until you get two strikes on them." Change speeds, let 'em hit those strikes, and then give them your best. And that's where he was sharp.

WL: I don't know whether it had anything to do with Maglie's career, but before he jumped to the Mexican League, he wasn't all that great a pitcher.

DM: No. Sal was a mediocre pitcher but he went to Mexico and they had that high altitude. And down there you can't throw a curve ball in high altitude. He got to where he could snap it and get by down there, but when he came back up here in this heavy air he had a heckuva curve ball. And he was mean.

WL: He looked mean and he was mean.

DM: He'd knock your cap off just as soon as look at you. That was his bread and butter.

WL: They say that the '54 Series was about as big an upset as the 1914 Boston Braves whipping Connie Mack's Athletics in four straight games. Both the Athletics and the Indians in '54 were big favorites to win the Series. I talked with Al Lopez about that and he says, "Yeah, if we had played the first two games in Cleveland, it might have been quite a different story. Wertz' 460-foot drive would have won the game, and even if it came down to where Rhodes hit that 260-foot homer it would have been an out.

DM: Yeah, that makes sense.

WL: On the other hand, there are always ifs and second-guessing, but those games were played in New York and that's what happened.

DM: That's where we picked up the edge. That was the year that Cleveland set the all-time American League record for wins at 111, and they were playing with Rosen hurt with a pulled groin, and Doby had a pulled groin. And they played those guys toward the end of the season, for they were shooting for that record. They didn't rest them. And it caught up with them. I don't recall if either of them had a bad Series, but they couldn't do what they would have done if they were healthy.

WL: Rosen hit .250 and Doby .125.

DM: Uh, huh. You've got your two big guns, and they're hurt. They had to play hurt, and all for the sake of this record. I think that could have made that Series a little more even.

WL: You're undoubtedly right, but effectively or psychologically the first game decided the Series. When Wertz hit a mammoth shot that Willie Mays ran down and then Rhodes comes up as a pinch hitter and hits a little simple fly go right field that drops in the seats, they just were completely taken off stride and they never recovered. I don't know if Rhodes was the MVP of the Series ...

DM: I really couldn't say. But Dusty belongs in a category by himself. He wasn't a baseball player. When the Giants signed him he was a softball player. And he did things I thought I was a good baseball player when I was in high school around here, just playing Sunday baseball. I thought, "Well, you can hit that ball." During the War they discontinued baseball. I went to CBC. So we played softball, so that we could stay close - all the Catholic schools in the inner city. And they surprised me, how they could throw that softball at that short distance. I had to battle like heck to hit .350 in softball. I thought it was going to be easy pickings to hit that big ball. But Dusty played a lot of softball and that's where he got

the quick bat.

WL: Well, you had a great Series in '54. 7 for 18, .389, scored 4 runs, drove in one.

DM: I think Alvin Dark had one more hit than I did.

WL: No, Don, according to this, he had the same. He had one less time at bat.

DM: I think I went 0 for 4 I must have been 1 for 4 in one game, the first game probably.

WL: Well, let's see. You were 2 for 5 in the first one, 0 for 4 in the second one.

DM: That was Early Wynn that got me in that game.

WL: And 2 for 5 in the third and 3 for 4 in the fourth. In three out of four games you were really producing.

DM: Cleveland had a heck of a pitching staff, and if you sweep 'em in four games..... you're talking about Lemon, Wynn, Garcia, and I don't know who started the fourth game.

WL: Lemon came back for the fourth game. They didn't use Feller in that Series. He was almost finished.

DM: So Lemon pitched two of them. He was the first man that had a really good slider. And I didn't know what a slider was until I'd played ball for three years. I was back in Class A ball at Jacksonville in the Southeastern League, and we had Bob Hooper.. He threw that slider. I would hit the slider like I'd hit the fastball. He'd throw it at the same speed, except that it just moves three inches, maybe four inches. I started noticing it and saying, "Why, that fastball is moving," and I talked to Hooper and he said, "Well, that's your slider." Righthanders will just try to start it in the middle of the plate and they'll move it in on you. Newcombe had a slider, but as hard as he threw you'd swing at his fastball and let your eyes do the job, because it was still a fastball that was going to eat you up if you didn't get around on it.

WL: Okay, what happened in '55? The Giants finished third, but you were

18-1/2 games out?

DM: Isn't that something?

WL: You had a good year yourself, though.

DM: I hit .333 that year. No, I hit .308.

WL: Let's see. .306 it says here. You drove in 83 runs, which was the most except for your first full-time season when you had 84.

DM: What did I hit in '53?

WL: In '53 you hit .333.

DM: You know, that year I had to hold out until the last day ~~of~~ before I went to spring training to get a thousand dollar raise. I think I was making \$14,000 and hit .333, and you still can't get more than a thousand dollar raise.

WL: Was that the highest you got?

DM: I got up to twenty-five thousand.

WL: Good.

DM: Nowadays if you hit .260 you're looking for a 100% increase.

WL: There are utility players hitting .225 who make \$300,000 a year.

DM: It's unbelievable. I've got three boys. My oldest boy signed with the Cardinals. He was drafted by them out of junior college. He played for two years in the Cardinal farm system. The Cardinals won the pennant that year and everybody on the club was holding them up for money.. Instead of holding the line with the big club, my boy was at Anderson, South Carolina, and they advanced him to Cedar Rapids in the middle of the year. And at the end of the year they disbanded the club because it was too costly. It was because they were trying to pay the parent club's salaries. So they sent him packing. Now there was my boy that should have been a big league ball player - wiped out. And I would have been a part of the first three -generation family in the big leagues. Has there been any since?

DM: No, I don't know of any. That hurt me something terrible. Right now the minor leagues have shrunk to the point where you're not getting quality ball players. And this goes right back to the point of why there are so many

home runs being hit. You've got established hitters and they're throwing these kids out there to slaughter. And they're slaughtered. It's good for the fans.

WL: Yeah, a lot of fans like that, but there are still lots of fans who like to see the tight ball games that are crucial where you play for a run.

DM: Myself, I never liked to go down to the ball park and watch a 3-1 or 2-0 ball game. I like to see hitting. I like to see 'em running and sliding. High-scoring ball games mean excitement. To sit there and watch strikeouts, that doesn't turn me on. But you need it, for that's part of the game.

WL: Well, the two things go hand in hand. The enormous number of home runs and the unbelievable number of strikeouts. Everybody is swinging for the fences and if you do that you're going to strike out a lot.

DM: I think one year I struck out ⁷ five times in ^{453 (156)} 430 times at bat. I didn't give the pitcher anything to work with. I wasn't a hacker. I went up there swinging. They couldn't throw a pitch up there that didn't look good to me. You can verify by looking at my record that I didn't have very many walks. I put the ball in play and I advanced a lot of runners. Nowadays they keep statistics that say, "This man advances so many men a year." Back then they didn't do that, and what I did ~~to~~ ^{was} give up myself to get a man from second to third. Chub Feeney, who just retired as National League president, was our General Manager. Just out of Princeton, I think. Tough man. Tough to get a nickel out of. He disregarded all those things like advancing runners. He looked at it and if you hit .280, you just hit .280. It didn't matter what you did in the process. He's a friend of mine, but I'd say a distant friend when you think about what he cost me. I was doing what Leo wanted, but Leo never went to the front office for me. I've got a letter in that cabinet there from when I signed a contract and it came out in the New York papers what I had signed for. Leo says, "I'm sorry to hear that. You're too

valuable to this club to be playing for what you're signing for," but that didn't register on Chub. He had me and that was it.

WL: In '56 Bill Rigney took over as manager.

DM: Yeah, that was my downfall.

WL: The Giants went down to sixth place, 26 games back. How do you mean, your downfall?

DM: I pulled a groin muscle in '56, and there wasn't such a thing as a disabled list back in those days. You sat on the bench and you recuperated, and you played. I pulled that muscle so bad, I still got scars. They would tape me from my knee to my waist, and I couldn't hardly walk up the steps. Remember the Polo Grounds, with those high steps? I had to drag my leg to get into the ball park, and they'd tape me up and I'd go play. I had to change my way of hitting. It used to be, I'd hit that ball, I'd move the infielders, and I got a lot of infield base hits, because I'd put 'em into the hole to where they couldn't throw me out. And hit line drives. Well, when I was playing with this injury - and it went through the whole year of '56 and '57.

WL: Yeah, I see your average dropped - to .269 and .258.

DM: I'd say I would have been about a .310 or .312 lifetime hitter if it wouldn't have been for those two years. It hurt me, it hurt me terribly. And the other thing about Rigney - he's a friend of mine, - I know Bill real well - they sold me to the White Sox in '58. That was the year the Giants went to San Francisco. To go to a new city that's never had big league baseball is the greatest thing that can happen to a ball player.

WL: Because of the novelty?

DM: The novelty, plus the great fishing that was going to be in San Francisco. And they traded me to the South Side of Chicago. Now that is possibly the worst thing that can happen to you, either that or be traded back to Philadelphia. So I went up there and I was having a good year in '58. Jim Rivera was

playing right field and we were playing the Washington Senators. They had a pitcher named Jim Constable pitching for them. Used to be a Giant. I said, "Jim, watch this guy Constable, because he's sneaky and he's wild inside and he can hurt you." He hit Rivera, I think he broke his arm. I'm not playing, I'm just pinch hitting and playing in spots. I play and I'm not really ready to play. I should have been but I wasn't, and I pulled that groin again. I was hitting maybe .340 or .350, then I tapered off and hit .230 or something and there I was. The trouble stemmed all the way back to '56. They never let me heal up. So the last few years were bad times.

WL: In your last season in '59 you just played a few games.

DM: I played till June 15 and then they cut me. I was 2 for 4 pinch hitting. And I came up with arthritis. I got the gout. Age 32. Couldn't put the shoes on no more. They left me in the hospital. I thought I had a broken foot. I played on a Sunday and on Monday we had a workout and I came out to the park and I couldn't hardly stand up. The club was going on the road and they said, "Well, you stay home." If you can't do us any good, we'll leave you home." I laid in that hotel room and I hurt so bad for a week that I lost about 15 pounds. I couldn't stand up, couldn't go get something to eat, and I was starving. Went back to the hospital - the second time, - the first time they couldn't diagnose it. The second time they found it, and I was still in the hospital when they gave me my release. Nobody even came to see me. They called me over the phone and said, "Your contract has been negated."

WL: Who was the General Manager then? Do you remember?

DM: Veeck was the vice president. Or he was the owner.

WL: Greenberg was there with him, I think.

DM: I went in and picked up my last check and came home. I tried to go back. I called Fred Haney up in Milwaukee. You see, Fred played with my dad in Pittsburgh. I said, "Fred, if you need a pinch hitter, I can help you."

He said, "I know you can." Because he knew me from when he was the Pittsburgh manager in the National League. But he said, "But I've got this young boy, Bob Hazle, who is my lefthanded pinch hitter. I'm sorry I can't do anything for you. Detroit called and said, "If you want to go to Portland, we'll send you out there." Well, that was the furtherest from my mind, to go out there and try to beat my way back when I'm hurting. I could sit on the bench and I could pinch hit and go with the pain. But not to go play every day just to try to get back. So, I hung 'em up. At 32 you're too young to be quitting. They say that gout comes from excessive eating/^{rich food}and drinking, and then I see all these guys I'll name no names, but how many are on each roster that abuse ~~themselves~~ ^{themselves} and they play till a ripe old age. And here I'm cut down when I'm 32.

WL: It's not right.

DM: No, it really isn't. You can't say it leaves a bitter feeling, because it's just written in the books.

WL: Yes, but there's gottto be a lot of disappointment there.

DM: Yes, there was.

WL: What was your biggest thrill in baseball?

DM: Probably that last month of '54 when Willie and I were battling it out. That's a prolonged thing, you know, when you're going down the stretch and it's three guys who are going neck and neck.- Duke Snider and Willie Mays and myself. And I was leading by a fourth digit of a percentage point. I didn't know it by statistics, but it had come out in the paper that Willie had not hit Robin Roberts good, and I got my hits off of Roberts. I felt, "Well, I got this thing in my pocket." But it didn't turn out that way. Willie, instead of doing he normally did which was to pull the ball, went to right field and he hit shots that day. He hit .345 and I ended up hitting .342.

WL: And Snider .341.

DM: That kind of blew my bubble as far as the World Series was concerned.

You could say, "What's your biggest thrill?" It wasn't the World Series. I had a big disappointment there.

WL: Well, even so you had a fine Series. So, what was your worst moment in baseball? When you turned your ankle, or when you had the groin pull?

DM: No, I'd say the worst single moment was when Harvey Haddix struck me out three times here in St. Louis. I said I struck out five times in one year, and Harvey got me three times in one ball game. To me, he was the hardest pitcher to hit. And he was a little guy, only 5' 9". But he was just a carbon copy of old Harry Brecheen. He came up under Harry and this was a terrible place ~~for him~~ to come to play ball. When you'd come into St. Louis they had Brecheen, Lanier, Pollet, with Brazle in the bullpen, and I'm a lefthanded hitter. And me coming home. And I wouldn't play half the time, because we had a platoon system (this left and right business). Those guys should have been off somewhere else, and if I had come into St. Louis to go against righthanded pitching, I' have been able to play at home. But I didn't get to play that much here. But I did hit one home run off of Harvey down here.

WL: What would you call your best game?

DM: Gosh, I don't know whether that would have been the day I hit those three home runs. I'd say it was when I hit the two home runs when my boy was born. Then again, I hit for the cycle against Pittsburgh. I don't know what year that was. Might have been '56. Dick Littlefield was pitching for Pittsburgh. I had hit a single, a double, and a triple, and Littlefield was a lefthanded pitcher. Normally I didn't try to pull lefthanders, I moved it the other way, because you've got to wait longer on the curve ball. I ripped him the last time up for the home run. So, I still think it would have been one of those two games in '51 when my boy was born.

WL: How come your father just played a few years with Pittsburgh?

DM: Mostly competition, I think.

WL: He was, as I remember

DM: Oh, he was a pretty good little hitter. He wasn't a big man but he was strong.

WL: What was his last season with the Pirates? 1924?

DM: I think '27.

WL: No, I don't think so.

DM: Maybe '27?

WL: He was with them in '26, which was the season that Paul Waner came up. They had Max Carey and Kiki Cuyler. That's competition, all right. The next year when they won the pennant, they had Lloyd Waner too.

DM: He stayed home. He was in the trucking business. They did all the brick hauling for the Alton Brick Co. He and his brother had trucks.

He played some infield, but then they had Pie Traynor at third base.

So, you take the two Waners and Kiki Cuyler, Pie Traynor ...

WL: And Glenn Wright at shortstop.

DM: The competition was bad and of course back then if you were a regular, you'd make \$3000 a year.

WL: Your uncle had a pretty long career, about 11 years.

DM: My uncle? I didn't have any uncle who played.

WL: Who was Heinie Mueller?

DM: Oh, a South Side Dutchman.

WL: He wasn't related to you?

DM: No relation.

WL: Then The Baseball Encyclopedia is wrong, I don't have it with me, but they say for Walter Mueller, "brother of Heinie Mueller and father of Don Mueller."

DM: No, that's a mistake.

WL: All right. I'll point it out to them. How did you get that nickname of Mandrake the Magician?

DM: Aw, you know, that old comic of that name. Evidently it came from

up in the stands or sportswriters. They'd see that ball and maybe I didn't hit it too good, but it was hit where it should have been hit

WL: Seeing eye?

DM: Yeah. Well, I did that continuously because it was better to hit it where you wanted to hit it than to hit it hard and right at someone.

That's where the nickname came from.

WL: Very logical. When you were playing, did you have your family move to New York during the season?

DM: Yeah.

WL: Did you live there all the time during those years?

DM: No, I kept my home here all the while. They'd move to be with me when I'd find a home up there. You couldn't live in the same place two years in a row.

If you rented, you got it for one year and then these people would find out you were a ball player after you had rented, and the next year they'd want to jack up the price, maybe double that figure. So you just had to keep moving around, for they would take advantage of you. I lived in New Jersey for about three years and a little bit north of New York City for two or three years.

WL: Many of the old-timers say that the toughest part about baseball was that the wives had the toughest part, being

DM: Oh, I'm sure.

WL: Being separated so much of the time, at least half of the time.

DM: If you're in your mid-twenties and starting your family, and you got to drag these little kids around. My dad used to drive them to New York, then he'd fly home, just to get them where they were going.

WL: After you left baseball, what did you do?

DM: I'm from a family of farmers on my mother's side, and I wanted to raise cattle. Did a lot of reading when I was playing ball, and I started buying farm property. I raised cattle, around ⁴⁰~~240~~ head in St. Charles County. But there was no money in it, so I went into life insurance. I sold life

insurance for seven years and tried to do part-time farming, and that doesn't work. If you're out there in the hay fields all day long and have to gear up and get after it in the evenings, it was a bad combination. I tried fish farming, built 18 ponds and was growing game fish commercially to sell. And the little farm boys were stealing me blind. They were catching all my breeding stock. It just seemed like everything I was doing was going in the wrong direction. So I worked for the Missouri Inspection Bureau, which is now the Insurance Services Offices. They inspect all commercial property for fire insurance. I worked for them for 14 years. Being on bad feet, trying to keep up with young kids, really can gear it out and I'm hurting so bad and trying to keep up with those young kids. It was a struggle. There were times on my feet where my feet were swollen and hurt so bad, and all I'd be wearing was socks and these rubber slipovers. You know, like you put over your shoes. That's all I had on and I'd be working down in St. Louis on those slushy streets when it was ten below. I was just cranking it out doing ghetto work. North St. Louis, up and down Delmar and Wellston. It was we had inspectors beat up and shot at. I never did have any trouble like that. I did have one close encounter up in North St. Louis. I was inspecting a church and - this has nothing to do with baseball, but that's all right - two colored guys and a colored woman pulled up to me. They were drunker than a skunk, at 10 o'clock in the morning, and they said, "We want a white woman." They turned around and I said, "I'm just inspecting this building." And I turned my back on them. They turned around and they came back again. And I think they wanted to nail me. I walked back to my car, and if that guy had opened ~~the~~ ^{his} door, I was ready to kick that door shut and break his leg. But the guy that was driving could have shot me. That was as close as I came to having real trouble, but I used to carry a blackjack all the time. Or a topcoat and keep that blackjack in the pocket. If there's one, you might take care of him, but if there's three...

WL: Forget it.

DM: You walk those sidewalks and you hear footsteps behind you, I don't know whether you've been involved with that kind of an element, but it's scary. When you've got three little boys and a wife to take care of, you don't want to take on that kind of a job. And they never told me that's the kind of work I was applying for when I went to work for them.

WL: No, they wouldn't get anybody if they told them. Do your feet still bother you?

DM: Terribly. I've got these shoes on now, but when you leave I'll have them off and be in slippers. They just burn ...

WL: Are there periods where they're better or worse?

DM: Hardly ever.

WL: And there's no medication to relieve that?

DM: Not to any extent. I can go to the doctor and take shots for it, but I try to stay from that, because it hurts your health to have too much of that stuff.

WL: What do you think about baseball today? Free agency?

DM: It's something that we never had a shot at, but I was happy with the club that I was with.

WL: A lot of them weren't.

DM: I'd say overall our ball club paid better than any of them. And yet, like I was saying before, we had a hard nut to crack with Chub Feeney. I know this is on tape, but I prefer that you scratch it, but I think they paid their colored ball players better than they paid their white ball players.

WL: You didn't make the move to San Francisco, but what did you and your teammates on the '57 team think about it?

DM: I really don't know. I can just assume that everybody was as thrilled as I was about the move - a new town, a new location, and everything. The way it turned out, I think the Giants wished they had stayed in New York. They've had so many problems out there.

WL: They really have. And they're not over yet.

DM: They blew it by not staying in New York. They could have had what the Mets have now.

WL: According to many people, Stoneham was kind of had by O'Malley.

DM: Right! O'Malley moved into a gravy train, and Horace - if he got talked into it - he got a white elephant.

WL: What do you think about guaranteed, no-cut, long-term contracts?

DM: Terrible, terrible.

WL: WL: All the ones I've talked to agree on that - Carl Hubbell, and others.

DM: Have you talked to Carl?

WL: Oh, yeah.

DM: Great, nice man.

WL: Oh, I loved talking to him. I've got a book coming out around May 1 on my conversations with 16 old-timers, and Carl is one of the most prominent. I talked with him two or three times in Scottsdale. He lives right nearby in Mesa, Arizona, outside of Phoenix. He had a stroke in about 1975, and he was slightly impaired. Not too much, but he had a little limp. And he showed me how the screwball had twisted his arm. I enjoyed talking with him very much. I also talked with Jo-Jo Moore, who played center field when Carl was there. I talked with Travis Jackson, their shortstop of that era.

DM: Yeah, Travis was one of the coaches when I went with the Giants.

WL: Well, Carl was in charge of the scouting or ...

DM: He was the farm director.

WL: I talked with Charlie Grimm, to Glenn Wright, to Larry French

DM: Oh, you got back there and got all those old ball players.

WL: Larry died just a few months ago. Five of them have died since I talked with them - Charlie Grimm, Riggs Stephenson, Dutch Leonard (the knuckleballer),

DM: Yeah, he was pretty good, but no one threw that knuckleball like Hoyt Wilhelm. It's funny about that Hoyt. He'd walk around in the outfield and

walk around until he got the wind facing just right, and then he'd want to play catch with you. And he'd hit you all over the place with the ball. If he could get that wind blowing right into his face, buy, he was uncanny.

WL: I also had talks with Joe Sewell and his brother Luke, and they were both most interesting. Babe Herman, who's out in Glendale, CA, George Uhle, the old Cleveland pitcher. He's the one they claim gave the name slider to the slider. A lot of these things you can't prove. Pinky Whitney, who played with the Phillies. Anyway, a good bunch of guys and I may now try putting out another book, in a year or two, if I live that long. I'll be 79 next month.

DM: Really? Son of a gun. I took you to be about 64 or 65.

WL: No, you have to remember I was going to college when you were born.

DM: Gee, you're remarkable.

WL: Well, I've been blessed with good health, Hon, and I say that there are three things that help a person to have a long and happy life. Good health, which God gives you, a happy marriage (which I've had twice), and a job that you love doing. There are so many people who hate their jobs.

DM: Oh, yeah, if you're carrying on and doing something like this, it's enjoyable. Well, that's great.

WL: I guess you never played on a hard surface.

DM: No, I've never even walked on it. Down here in Busch Stadium about in '62 we had an old-timers game. I guess I've played in about 12 or 15 such games around the country, but they've all been on grass. I just wonder. Right now you're seeing so many hamstring pulls.

WL: Yeah, I think the surface has something to do with it. Most players seem not to like it too much to play on, but it gives the infielders a true bounce, though they admit the ball comes at you faster. But in the outfield you really have to learn to play it differently on that artificial surface.

DM: I saw a game here last week when the Cardinals were playing San Diego, and I told my brother-in-law who was with me, "If I had been playing on

Astroturf, there's no doubt in my mind I could have hit .325 lifetime or better. Granted, the infielders play deeper, but if you have a true gauge on where you're hitting that ball, it'll go through, because it just picks up speed like ~~xxx~~ crazy. Whether I could have played in the outfield is something else, because as I look at them now I see that those rascals have to be able to run and run. I don't know whether Lindeman is going to be able to cut it or not.

END OF TAPE.

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