

Gil McDougald (GM)

1/24/1994

interviewer Tom Harris; Spring Lake, NJ

This is Tom Harris. I'm interviewing Gil McDougald at his home in Spring Lake, New Jersey. Today is January 24th, 1994. Gil, you were born May 19th, 1928, San Francisco. Did you grow up there?

GM- We grew up in San Francisco and I had one brother, no sisters, and my brother now is living out in the midwest in Minnesota and he's got a large family and he enjoyed watching the kids that same way I've enjoyed watching my children grow up here.

When and where did you learn to play ball?

GM- Well, we learned to play baseball on the sandlots in San Francisco. At that time, baseball was probably at its high point in San Francisco. Many ballplayers came from that area and I think they all started the same way, playing on the sandlots. And you graduate maybe playing in high school and then to college or often guys skipped college and went into the minor league system.

What was the name of your high school?

GM- I wound up going to high school at Commerce High School and then after high school I went to college for one year and then signed a pro contract. I was undecided what I wanted to do but eventually I decided that I wanted to play ball. Give it a shot.

OK, what position did you play in high school?

GM- I played basically in high school, I pitched a little and played the infield positions. At that time, everybody had trouble hitting the curveball and I think that's where I ruined my arm, throwing curveballs all of the time.

How did you do in high school?

GM- I surprisingly did pretty well pitching and I never was very big at that stage and least then I was at least five foot seven, five foot eight at the most in high school and I couldn't have weighed more than a hundred and forty. So, I grew late. After my senior year I started to grow and put on weight. That's when, all of a sudden, I started to learn to hit a little better.

How was the team?

GM- The team did fairly well. We were always competitive at Commerce but at that time there was a couple of other high schools, Gallalel (?) High School and Mission High School that were extremely good in baseball.

What did you do after high school?

GM- Joe Devine signed me as a scout out there. He was the west coast scout and head scout at that time. Joe signed many good ballplayers. He was the one instrumental in getting Joe DiMaggio to come back in 1935, I think it was, for the Yankees. Of course, in my era you've got Coleman, Silvero, Bobby Brown, all them players. We had an all-San Francisco ballclub in 1951 when we went out to spring training in Phoenix, Arizona. We switched from St. Petersburg. We fielded in spring training an all San Francisco nine and Joe Devine almost signed all the players.

Wow! So, Joe Devine is the scout that signed you, right? Devine, is that his name?

GM- My first year I played professional ball at Twin Falls, Idaho and that was in the Pioneer League. Then I went on and played my second year in Victoria and the Western National and my third year I played at Beaumont, Texas in the Texas League my third year. I played second base, strictly.

Do you remember any of the managers you played for and how you did in those minor league years?

GM- Yes, I remember all my managers. In Twin Falls, we had Charlie Metro, who was a former major leaguer that never really probably was an outstanding star but he was a good outfielder and he played the infield also. Then we went up to Victoria. Ted Norbeck was our manager out there. Ted was a player that played for the San Francisco Seals for like 10-12 years and my third year at Beaumont, I played under Rogers Hornsby, the great Hall of Famer. Rogers was a person that you'd better put out on the ballfield, otherwise you wouldn't be there, you know.

He was very demanding?

GM- Uh huh. That was the only thing that he thought was important in life -- baseball. If you didn't play it like your life depended on it and enjoyed it and played it hard, you wouldn't be with him very long, you know.

Did he know the game very well?

GM- Oh! Right after my year in Beaumont, he went up to manage the Cincinnati Reds and that's when I went up to the Yankees and he brought three of the ballplayers from our ballclub with him to Cincinnati at that time.

How and when were you called up to the Yankees?

GM- Well, actually, they didn't really call you up. It's like after my third year at Beaumont, they send you a contract and my contract was to Kansas City which was a couple A or Triple A ballclub at the time. And, I had told Joe Devine at the time that I

would give baseball three years. If I didn't make it in three years, I was going to try some other line of business. He got upset at me because when I got the contract for playing the next year, they cut me after I was the Most Valuable Player in the Texas league. They cut my salary \$50 a month so I wasn't too interested. I wrote a letter to Clark Carroll who later became the president of the Kansas City major league club. I told him what I thought of him, you know, and in the meantime, then, all of a sudden, he calls up George Weiss with the Yankees and George Weiss then calls Joe Devine and it became a real round-robin. So, Joe comes running to me and he's mad as heck at me and I says "Joe, why are you mad at me? I told you I'd give you three years. If he doesn't think I'm good enough, why don't you trade me to some other ballclub?" I says, "Maybe they'll think I'm interested enough to play for them." So, they then sent me to Phoenix. That was the year, '51 they'd switched their camp. I said, well great, because it's close to San Francisco. You only have to go down five, six hundred miles and I says, "It's no big deal if I don't make it. I just hop a train and go home." In the meantime, I didn't want to be on the other side of the country and that's one of the reasons they hang a lot of ballplayers at that time and they sign you cheap because the guy has no way of getting home, you know. Things in the minors weren't what you'd call very nice at that time, you know.

Very low pay, right?

GM- Yeah. I think I got \$200 a month my first year and they thought I was overpaid.

OK, do you remember your first major league game?

GM- You know, it's funny. I didn't remember my first major league game I played until Bob Turley joined our ballclub. And he told me, Gil, the first game you played in the majors I pitched against you and you hit a homer and a double off me. I said I couldn't even remember it. At that time, I was so focused on the game of baseball that I wasn't worrying about names or people or anything else. I was zeroing in on playing the game. So, I didn't really remember who was pitching or what team it was. I couldn't tell you, you know.

OK, well you started off pretty nice. You were named Rookie of the Year in '51. Tell me about that.

GM- It was a year that I had a pretty good year once I started to play regular, but I felt a little bad because I thought Minnie Minoso had a good year with the White Sox and I thought basically he deserved it more than I. The difference I think was the exposure. New York against Chicago. More newspapers in New York. More exposure and everything becomes a little better if you play for New York than it really is, you know.

What's the biggest difference between the majors and the minors?

GM- I think, as far as I'm concerned, the conditions make it easier to play in the majors. The only reason I remember this was my first year with the Yankees, we barnstormed back from San Francisco, back through Texas, and now I started playing in Triple A

ballparks, which eventually like Los Angeles and San Francisco, which were real fine Triple A ballparks, good lighting, and we went back to Beaumont, and oh my gosh, some guys said, how could you possibly hit here? They're candlelights! That's when I realized, all of a sudden, wow! These lights are bad! But, then when I got back to Yankee Stadium and tried to play in some of these other ballparks, all of a sudden, it's beautiful playing at night and there's no shadows or anything and I got used to playing night ball because in the minors you played night ball. So, I was happy they played more night ball than day ball.

OK, in 1951, you win the World Series against the Giants. You hit a grand slam in Game Five. You had seven RBI's. That must have been great!

GM- You know, when you play in a World Series, it's hard to say who's going to have the good series or good games. It seems to me like most of the time the real stars of the team never do as well as some of the people they don't expect to do well. I remember hitting the grand slam. Yeah, that was a thrill, but only in the respect that we won the game! It broke open the game and we won the game...

You won 13-nothing.

GM- Yes. But otherwise, you know, it means you're just lucky when you come out with a lot of men on in certain situations and that's going to dictate if you get lucky and you get a hit or something, you're a big hero. You strike out and they read it in reverse. That's all.

The Giants, Bobby Thomson's home run, all of that going into the series. Do you remember what it was like going into that series?

GM- It's a funny thing. We didn't go over that day because we were waiting for Thomson and the Dodgers to get their playoff over. The Dodgers, I believe, won the first game. The Giants came back...

The Giants won the first in Ebbets' Field.

GM- I think it was Labine...

Labine shut them out in the second game.

GM- He pitched a heck of a game. All of our guys were rooting for the Giants and Stengel got mad as heck at us and looking, he said, "I think we can beat the Dodgers. I don't think we can beat the Giants." The guys said the difference is there's fifty six thousand people that come to the Polo Grounds and there's only about thirty three and the difference is quite a few thousand dollars to each player. So, all the guys, they wanted to play in the big park, where the World Series bonus was more than you made in a yearly salary. I made more in the Series that year than I made in the entire year of playing ball.

OK, the Yankees won eight pennants and five World Championships during your career there. Which one stands out the most?

GM- Well, I think each one in itself stands out. But, I think the one that I enjoyed the most was when I played shortstop for the complete year in 1957. It was a transition year for the ballclub because Bill had quit and there was no shortstop in our Yankee chain that Casey had confidence in and he asked me if I would try playing shortstop. I said, "No big deal. I'll try to play it and if you don't like me, I'll play another position." You know. But, I found that why you like it is you're like the center of the stage. You see every pitch. It's easier to position yourself when you see every pitch that's being called by the catcher. So, you're ready to move in whatever direction you feel according to the pitch and the batter. Which way? Is he going to pull it or will he be behind the pitch and hit the other way? So, that became more interesting to me. You know, when you play third base, each position you just stay there and wait for somebody to hit a ball to you or bunt. But you can play a whole game at third base and not have anything happen.

You played three different positions for the Yankees. You were brought up as a second baseman. Did you have a favorite position to play? I guess shortstop, from what you're saying?

GM- Well, everybody's asked me that question. Which one did I think I played the best and I said I always thought second base was my best position basically because I had played it more through the minors. But, when I came up, everybody said that I was a better third baseman, they felt. I didn't like third base, as much. But then when I got to play shortstop, everyone said, "Well, he's too tall, he's too gangly, he's too this, he might, he doesn't have a good arm to play this..." Aaay, it just proves that when somebody reacts that way to you, it becomes a bigger challenge. I think I proved I could play the position pretty well.

You did. Your batting stance was an open one early on. Did you develop that stance yourself?

GM- My batting stance was considered odd only when I started playing pro ball. Actually, I guess I developed that playing sandlot ball and nobody ever made a comment about it. But, once you play pro ball and the sportswriters, all of a sudden, they start writing about it and all of a sudden, that became like the center of attention all the time. They never talked about my fielding. It was always about how I held the bat. The funny thing about it is if they looked at a film when they ball was just on its way, my hands went up and they just didn't just hang that way and swing the way somebody would describe it. Because once the ball is being thrown to you, it's funny, everybody then watches the ball. They don't watch the hitter. And me, so that's how sportswriters wrote. They look at your preliminary the way I held the bat and they thought it was odd. But, if you look at the hitting position of my hands and any other hitter, they are almost in identical spots when the pitch was coming over the plate.

OK, now did you, did Casey Stengel ask you to change your stance and how did it affect you?

GM- Yes. Well it affected me only in the respect that I got mad as heck because I felt that I was hitting the ball well but Casey, thinking like a good manager that he was, he was mad because I always pulled the ball with my old stance because it was open and I'd always wanted to get out in front of the ball. The problem was I'd hit a shot to left field and the baserunner on first would only go to second. He couldn't go any further. He wanted me to spray the ball to center, or to right center, right field, so the runner could go from first to third, which is what you really want when you're playing ball. Then, if there's one out, it takes away the bunt situation. If you only advance one base then maybe the next guy's got to bunt to get him into better scoring position, you know.

Who was the toughest pitcher that you faced in your time in the majors?

GM- Oh man, they all were tough for me, but I think a pitcher that I enjoyed facing, and we he had his great year, really, that was Bobby Shantz.

Oh, really?

GM- Yeah, Bobby, he had that sneaky fastball and he had a great curve that year when he won 24 games.

'52 I think, with Philadelphia.

GM- Yeah, and he was the MVP and besides that he turned out to be one of my best friends and of course, it's funny, I remember when to us, poor Bobby's arm was really hurting. He used to take shots with needles to kill the pain and it used to kill me just to watch him come in and you know he was hurting out there, but he'd never show it.

Now, you retired after 1960. What caused you to retire? Were you injured?

GM- I had told the organization a year before. In fact, coming home from the World Series. I think we finished on the road. I went up to Casey after and I said "Case, look, get somebody prepared to play whatever position you want them to play that I would be playing because at the end of next year, I'm quitting irregardless of whether I was the MVP or whatever." I says, "I don't anticipate it, but it wouldn't bother me if you had played somebody and I had to sit on the bench. It's not going to bother me, if that's what you want to do." Well, as it turns out, nobody believed me including George Weiss. So, at the end of the '60 season, I had, I guess, a fair year, and they thought when I went in, they said, I told them, well playing for Case. In the meantime, I knew he was going to talk to George Weiss about it and in the meantime that was the year that they had the new franchises starting out in California and Washington. So, they had to protect x amount of ballplayers. They told me, the organization, after which in a phone call, that, "Don't worry Gil, you're protected." Then, I got a call from my buddy Joe Reichler, who was the sports editor of the AP at that time, and Joe said, "Gil, you're not protected, I'm calling

for the General who owned the club down there in 1960, he bought the club, and he wants you to play for him.” And I said, “Joe, I wouldn’t play down in Washington, no matter how much money you paid me. I just don’t like the Washington area.” Secondly, I said, “Joe, I told you I’m going to retire.” Then, not more than, I would say, three weeks go by and he calls me again. He says, “Gil, Washington has given the California Angels the rights to claim you in hopes that I’d go back to my home state and possibly play for them.” Gene Autry, at that time, he called me five nights in a row trying to entice me with dollars and everything else and I said, I finally told him, “Fine, Gene. I’ll play for you on one condition. I only play home games.” “Ah,” he says, “You can’t do that!” “Well,” I said, “You got your answer. I don’t want to go on the road anymore. I don’t want to be away from the family anymore.” That’s how it ended up. Then I called Joe and I says, “Joe, look, whatever you want. You write the story anyway you want. I’m retiring. So, I don’t want to tell any of the other guys. I prefer you doing it.” I says, “Real simple, you can put it anyway you want.” At that time I had started a business and all of us started a business in ’57 and in the meantime, they didn’t believe that I’d quit. So I said, “Joe, release the story, then they’ll know.” But the problem was the Yankees were really upset with me because I think they lost two hundred and something thousand because whoever drafted me would have to compensate the Yankees. In the meantime, I was so mad at the organization because they really lied to me and told them that I was protected. And I think that’s the number one thing you couldn’t do in baseball. That’s the one thing I never did. I wouldn’t lie to somebody and I had a lot of people working for me. And, I says, “I’d at least be truthful to them.”

OK, after you retired, I understand that you coached in college ball. Can you tell me about that and what other involvement you had with the game?

GM- Yes. I went over and coached the Fordham University baseball team. Part of the reason was who called. Peter Carlissemo, at that time, was the Athletic Director and now Peter Carlissemo, Jr. is the coach at Seton Hall. I knew Pete. Pete was at the University of Scranton at that time and he was just coming over to Fordham to be the Athletic Director. He says, “Gil, our program, they’re really in bad shape. Would you think about it?” At that time I had my company set up pretty good in 1970, about, so I had been in business about 14 years and I said, “Pete, you can get somebody better than me who is probably interested more.” So then, I come home and I happen to tell my wife and my family at dinner and they said, “Dad, that would be a great idea. You can go over and have fun.” So I thought about it and I went back and I called them and I said, “Look, Pete. As long as you tell me I don’t have to win one game as long as I’m there. I’ll play.” So I went over there and it really turned out to be enjoyable until my hearing started to go and it started to get bad and then I decided, you know, look, let my assistant run the club and be the coach which Pete said and my assistant took over at Fordham and he did very well. But then, it’s a tough place to get a lot of kids to come, who are good ballplayers, because it’s too cold in the spring. You don’t play enough good games in good weather. So most of the good kids that are more advanced in baseball go somewhere else to play.

How long did you last? How many years did you coach at Fordham?

GM- I think I coached seven years over there.

And you do anything else in baseball, other than coaching at Fordham?

GM- Nah, not really. I did scout for George Weiss. When he called me I felt it was a way, if there was any obligation on my part, this was a good way to end the obligation. I scouted for him in 1961, which was his first year. When the Yanks fired him and he went over to the Mets and Casey went over there and I scouted for him and his basic New Jersey area. And only for three months. That was our deal, three months, and I said, "Fine, I want to be paid. I don't want anything." "If you've got a specific team at that time, you had the Triple A ballclub down in Jersey City at that time," and I said, "If you want me to scout for Triple A, fine. If I you want me to look at a specific college player, a high school player," I said, "No problem." That's what I did for him.

OK, your manager for your entire career was Casey Stengel. If you could tell me your memories about Casey. What was it like playing for him?

GM- Wow. I guess, it's funny. The first five years I played for Casey Stengel, were the worst years I ever put in in baseball. He was on me constantly and everybody on the ballclub couldn't understand why everyday, if we're having a meeting going over somebody, that he would get on my box for something. I used to get so mad at him that they'd see they'd see the smoke coming out of my head. So finally, in 1955, we lost the World Series to the Dodgers that year and we all went over to Japan and when we got over there Casey asked me, he says, "Gil, would you be interested in playing short for me because Phil didn't make the trip." I said, "Yeah, Billy Martin and I can play it. You know, whatever one you want to play it, we'll take it." In the meantime, one night he had said that the bar in the hotel is off-base. So, at one o'clock in the morning, I was hot as heck and I came down and we all had our wives there and I said I'm going to have a beer to get warm. So, I went down and I'm sitting at the bar and nobody is there. I look around first and nobody is there. In the back, there's Casey, you know. I didn't see him when I went in and then I hear all these Japanese sportswriters were interviewing him and stuff. All of a sudden, I said, "No use running now. What's he going to fine me?" I says "It's not during the season so he can't fine me much." As it turned out, he came up to me and he said, "Who's the best pitching coach in baseball?" I says, "It's Jim Turner and you signed him." "I didn't ask you that. I asked you who's the best baseball coach in baseball is?" I said, "Well, hell, everybody knows that Cleveland pitching coach is the best pitching coach." "Now, that's the way to answer," he says. Then he sat down with me and had a drink. And I said "Case, I gotta ask you a question. You must hate my guts. In five years there isn't one thing I've ever done that's made you happy. Why don't you just get rid of me and you'll save a lot of aggravation and I certainly won't get an ulcer, which gotta come along, and we'll both be a lot happier." You know. He says, "Look, I'm not trading you. Ever." I said, "Case, why are you getting on my box?" And he says, "It's very simple. You are a better ballplayer when you're mad." And he says, "I plan on keeping you mad." You know. Well, after that, I understood because he says, "What do you think would happen if I got on Phil Rizzuto that way?" I says, "No comment." Because some people have thin skins and some have thick skins. And, with me, I'd get

mad whereas other people might get mad and quit on him. And that's what he was afraid of. You know. So, he used me, and my locker was right next to Phil, to shake up Phil or somebody else. That's why everybody was wondering. Why he always got on me. But, that was something about him. He knew his ballplayers. That's what made him a great manager and he knew who to prod and who not to prod. Like treat Mickey with kid gloves because he was afraid if he said something to Mickey he'd felt rude or something. And, he knew the pitchers to get mad at. He knew the pitchers not to get on. That's part of managing and it's part of the same thing when you're in business. You've got to know your personnel. If you don't, shame on you!

What was your opinion of his managing style? Did you like how he moved players around?

GM- Casey, I believe, was what I would call a hunch manager a lot of the time. Casey would try something that basically other managers, he'd go against the book, so to speak. I've seen him sometime when a lefthander came into pitch, instead of going to a righthander, he'd put up a lefthander like Woodling to pinch hit or something. Because he said when you ask him, "Why would you do something like that?" "Because," he said, "This lefthanded pitcher threw a slider and he always jammed a righthander and it was a lefthander, it would be out over the plate and hit the fat bat of the bat or something." He'd always have an answer why and he was always good at pulling pinch hitters. He just seemed to know what hitter could hit that type of pitching that was being thrown that particular day against him. That's when you start thinking ahead and really are involved in the game. Casey, I thought myself, was one of the better managers. He wasn't afraid to make moves where a lot of other managers would. You know. If you go with supposedly your best ballplayers, it's hard for sportswriters to criticize you. But, if you go against the book, that's when sportswriters can really jump on people.

That's true. Did you ever see him again, after he retired?

GM- Yeah, I'd seen Casey a couple of times after he retired. Because at that time, I was pretty involved around the Metropolitan area. I'd seen him most of the time in what would have been the winter. At a banquet, a sportswriter's dinner, or something like that. I could never say I was close to him because he lived in Glendale, California during the winter so all I'd see him was whenever we'd have a big dinner, or something. I was going to mostly all of the big dinners that pertained to baseball at that time.

OK, you played shortstop for Don Larsen's Perfect Game in the '56 Series. Tell me your memories of the game.

GM- Well, I guess the thing I remember most was the last out and Dale Mitchell was up and Dale, at that time had played for Cleveland for years and Dale was the type of guy that never struck out. Everybody saying that, oh boy, somebody's going to have to catch the ball and call him out. And I was playing short and I said, "Hey, that's where Dale Mitchell always hit." I could never forget. I think it was maybe one of the few bad

pitches. It broke. I thought the pitch was really borderline. It could have been called either way but Babe Pinelli called the out.

Two strikes on him.

GM- And when a pitcher's that close in that type of a game, I believe that Dale should have swung the bat. You know. But, you gotta understand that when you're a good hitter like Dale, you're disciplined. And, normally speaking, that borderline pitch is given to a good hitter, most of the time. They might give you the pitch low. In the American League there's normally a high ball umpires and in the National League, low ball umpires, they said. And this was surprising, because it was a National League umpire that called him out on that pitch, which surprised me. But that was my best memory. I had one other thing happen in that game was a ball that I went into the hole for. It ricocheted off Andy Carey and Jackie Robinson had hit it. And, I threw him out at first and it was really a bang-bang play and that they wrote up as one of the big plays that really saved the no-hitter at that time, you know.

You played with many great players on the Yankees. I'm going to state some of their names. I'd like you to tell me something about them, maybe an incident, a short story, anything you recall about them. Describe what the person was like, on or off the field. Phil Rizzuto, you mentioned before.

GM- With Phil, it was a real pleasure playing with Phil when I played second or third because, especially when I played second, and you had to be an infielder to appreciate him because of the way he threw the ball to you, like on a double play. He had the light throw and it was easy to handle for a second baseman to complete the double play. Phil, to me, was pretty much the key to our ballclub for a lot of years that I was first there, like from '51 on. Because, if you don't have that good shortstop up the middle, too many balls that could turn into double plays, you only get one out and then, all of a sudden, that one out that you don't get back, comes back to haunt you afterwards. Phil, in my book, was extremely important to the Yankees at that time.

How about Allie Reynolds?

GM- Allie Reynolds. It's a crime that Allie isn't in the Hall of Fame. It just amazes me that he hadn't been considered years ago. Because, at that time, Allie should be in based on his record, as it is. Allie used to relieve as well as start and he relieved against all the tough clubs in all the tough situations, and they didn't give any recognition to this. Where now, you see them put Hall of Famers in a relief pitcher. Here you have a great starter and a super reliever and they didn't even consider him. It amazed me because if you went and asked ballplayers of our time who was probably the most outstanding pitcher, there's no question that Allie Reynolds would be number one or two. In fact, in my book, had every bit the stuff that Sandy Koufax had.

Really?

GM- Well, everyone called him a righthanded Koufax. His curveball was similar. I even wrote a letter last year. Oklahoma gave Allie a day and I had a fellow write me and ask me if I'd write a short letter saying something about Allie they could read at a testimonial dinner they gave him. Then I said, I'll go one step further. I'll write a letter to the Hall of Fame. Which I did, and I never have done that for anyone else. But it really bothers me sometime when you know certain persons deserve wholeheartedly to be there and he's not recognized. Yet, other people get in and you've got to laugh and say, hey, they're nice guys but do you mean to tell me that he's better than this guy? That's the thing that turns you off because the Hall of Fame, the thing that bothers everybody about it, there's no prerequisites on what you have to do to get in. They don't say you've got to play 20 years or two years. They don't say you have to hit .400 or .250. Or, you've got to win 400 games or win fifty games. There's no rules on what you have to do. They don't tell you you've got to be a great fielder, a great thrower, a great hitter. Everything now is, you know, a guy's a great hitter. But, he's a bad outfielder, he's a slow runner, but he's still a Hall of Famer. To me, when we went into pro ball, they told us if you can't do three things, you aren't even considered as a major leaguer. Those three things were it—hit, run, and throw. If you can't do them well, how can you be considered for the Hall of Fame? This is my thinking.

How about Johnny Mize?

GM- Big Johnny Mize. Johnny was a great hitter. Another guy, he just came into the Hall of Fame recently, but John was a power hitter, hit 50 homers a few years and he also was a man that struck out very few times, which is very unusual for a power hitter. Johnny Mize, after playing with him on the same ballclub, John, playing first base, I think, had one of the surest hands at catching the ball, a thrown ball, that just about anybody I've seen.

Really?

GM- With John, he couldn't get off the dime. He couldn't move to field balls. To me, that wasn't important because I played second, I'd just lean a little more to where John was, if a lefthand hitter was up that I knew could pull the ball. So, you more or less protect each other. When I played third base, I'd move off the line to protect the hole more so Phil could play closer to second base. At that's the way you make double plays, you know.

Eddie Lopat.

GM- Ah, Eddie Lopat. Great lefthanded. Eddie was probably the pitcher that more hitters hated to face than anybody because, with all the junk he threw, he could really foul up a hitter's timing. And, Eddie was a great competitor. Eddie, in my book, was another one of them guys, if he could have thrown a little bit harder, with all the other assortments he had, he'd be one of the untouchables as far as a baseball pitcher goes. Because, Eddie had great control. Eddie probably could throw the ball on the dime nine out of ten times. When he was going to pitch a guy away, you knew he was going to pitch him away.

When he said he was going to pitch him in, he'd pitch him in. A lot of pitchers nowadays are not pitchers—they're throwers. They throw the ball but they have no idea where that ball is going. So, how can you, as an infielder, position yourself accordingly if the guy doesn't pitch the way he says he's gonna? That becomes a difficulty when you play with guys who are throwers, instead of pitchers.

[tape change]

That's what made him [Ted Williams] a great hitter because the umpires would give him the benefit of the doubt, a lot of times. In the meantime, he never beat us one game in ten years that I played, Ted Williams, because the whole meeting was don't pitch to him when there's men on and he can beat you in a game. So, we pitched around the plate, and say if he went to swing at a bad pitch, heck, he never did. But with Yogi, with men on base for us, that pitcher, if he threw a bad pitch, Yogi would like to swing at that as well as a grounder, or high pitch, or outside pitch. That simply made him great because he didn't want to leave it up to the next guy to do something. And, he swung the bat. To me, that's what you need to be a good hitter. I feel a good hitter is someone that doesn't want to say, "If he doesn't throw it down the middle, I'll walk to first base." If you look at how many balls are hit six inches off the plate for homers, you'd be amazed. Yogi was one of them types and to me, besides being a great friend of mine, I think he deserves the Hall of Fame as much as anyone I've known, you know.

How about the late Vic Raschi?

GM- Vic Raschi was a great pitcher. Of course, I hold that Raschi, Reynolds, Lopat, and Ford were all great pitchers.

Was he really kind of mean, Vic Raschi? I hear that...

GM- Vic was big and strong and Vic's only problem was, if we knew he could get through the first two innings, we're home free. For some reason, throughout his career, his problems came in the first two innings. If they didn't come then, they didn't come. And, I remember Casey used to say, "Dammitt, take ten minutes more and warm up and be ready!" But, it wasn't a case of being ready. I think Vic was always ready but it just seems like probably he wasn't focusing in the first couple innings and getting the ball where he wanted. But, he was another great one. I don't know how many he won but he was probably close to a couple of hundred wins, too, you know.

He relieved, too. Didn't he pitch also in relief, Vic Raschi?

GM- Yes.

Like Allie Reynolds. Not as much, but he did relieve, right?

GM- Vic's main pitch was the good fastball and then he developed a pretty good slider, later on, and I remember, he told me one time, when he went in and had a salary talk and

he really was having a real tough time with George Weiss and George Weiss finally conceded the salary to him, but he said, "Don't ever have a bad year." The next year he traded him to St. Louis which really upset a lot of us because Vic was such a good pitcher, you know.

How about the late Billy Martin?

GM- Billy Martin. I grew up with Billy on the west coast.

Oh, you grew up with Billy! When you were kids?

GM- Well, it was different high schools. He was over in Oakland and I was in San Francisco and our high schools used to play against each other.

Oh, really.

GM- So, I played against Billy in baseball and basketball. He was a great competitor. Billy probably didn't have the tools that a lot of managers might want, but his fire, and makeup, and competitiveness made up for any thing that he lacked otherwise. He would challenge any pitcher, anytime. He'd yell at him or do anything to try and upset him. He was a great bench jockey and that made him a good manager, I think. Because Billy sat on the bench quite a bit but Billy didn't waste his time. We used to call him, Stengel used to call him "my manager." You know. Billy really idolized Casey and it was no surprise to see Billy stay in baseball and become a manager. Because he really loved the game and that was his life. You know, it's great, I guess, if that's what you want. But, I think it's probably one of the toughest areas for any person to be put in to be a manager and today, I think it would be worse. You've got so many guys with big egos and making big dollars and how do you tell them what to do or what you want them to do? I would think it's an impossible position to be a manager now.

Enos Slaughter.

GM- I never really seen Enos when he was at the top. I played against him in spring training games, a lot in St. Petersburg. But, when Enos came to us, he was pretty much at the end of the line so it's unfair to judge somebody...

Was he a fiery competitor also?

GM- Oh, yeah. You could tell. He's hustling everywhere. That was his trademark, hustling. I think what probably helped Enos a lot was Enos always swung down on balls and he played in St. Louis where the ground is like playing on concrete, it's so hot out there and the ground's hard. I'm sure he hit a lot of ground balls through that infield out there. Of course, that can add 25 or 30 points to your average, real quick, over the course of a year. But, Enos was certainly a fine outfielder as far as a hitter and an all-around player.

OK, you came up with Mickey Mantle in '51. Do you remember Mickey struggling early on and Casey bringing him to the Yankees? He had a hard time in the beginning.

GM- Mickey and I came up together and the first time I'd seen Mickey, he was a shortstop. The first thing I said was, "You've got to be kidding!" I watched him take balls and he had no idea where he was throwing. He had a great arm, but anybody that sat in the dugout, over first base, was ready to get killed by him. Eventually, it was real obvious to me and I was just a young kid and I had to laugh. But, you didn't laugh when you'd seen him swing the bat. That first year, in '51 when we trained in Phoenix, he started out in Phoenix and I'm telling you he hit balls you can't believe. That first year in '51, every park we came to play in, they talked about who hit a ball over this spot? Like, when we went to Pittsburgh, they said Babe Ruth hit one out of the park and they had named some guy, I think Beard or something, hit one out. Mickey hit one out his first time out and he hit it out over the roof of the park. I remember, when we played in Southern California, we had an open field and he got up. They had a field house that had to be five hundred feet behind the right field fence. And I'm telling you he hit it so hard it looked like it was going to hit the field house out there. Just unreal. Nobody talked about it because there was no way to measure it, you know. But, we went to L.A. It was down there, I remember. He came up and he hit two homers in a row. One lefty and one right, right over the center field fence and one of them, the outfielder came running like diagonally, like a line drive, and all of a sudden the ball took off and it cleared the fence. The outfielder was in a state of shock as well as a lot of players had never seen him, you know. But, he had tremendous power. The ball in Washington, I wasn't impressed with. That's the one they said went 560 foot. That same night, I remember, there was a gale blowing out that way and I remember Gus Triandos hitting a popup to the infield and the ball hit into the seats and Gus was in a state of shock. He didn't even want to run it out because he thought it was...so, he had a lot of help with that one. If you look at the ballpark and the fence beyond the stands and you say, wow, somebody hit it out of there, it's hard to believe. But, conditions that time was what helped him a little. Mickey might tell you that, too. But, he certainly didn't need help on any of his hits. If he had played in any other ballpark, he'd have hit so many homers it would be unreal. Because, he used to hit them to Death Valley in centerfield and you know, out there in Yankee Stadium, you had a backdrop. Once it got beyond the stands in that open area, like where the bleachers are out there, you know, it would get the flow of the wind coming back towards the home plate. He'd hit them 460-foot outs and there wasn't another ballpark outside of maybe Detroit, in center, that went 460, you know. But he was, certainly, he had the tools. Mickey was speed, fantastic speed. I can't think of anybody that played that I think could go from first to home as quick as Mickey could. You know. Once Mickey got going, it was like he put it in cruise. He just motored and he just had all the tools to be a great ballplayer.

Did he have trouble adjusting to New York, being from the country? He was a country boy.

GM- I don't think it matters where you come from. I think, you know, wherever you come from, they've got baseball. It's hard to judge somebody unless there's a good,

competitive group. At least wherever they're playing. But, if you've seen the way Mickey was built and everything and the way he swung the bat, you just said, "Give him some time, and because evidently he had the great eyes and the great reflexes." And, once you put it together, there was no stopping him.

OK, how about Whitey Ford?

GM- Oh well, Whitey, another Eddie Lopat-type pitcher with a little extra speed. Whitey always had the curveball that was the weapon. He had a variation of curveballs and sneaky fastballs. And, could move the ball around and spot it very well. Just like Eddie Lopat. That's why he's a Hall of Famer. He always won. He was a winning pitcher all the time and Whitey was just a good competitor. He enjoyed pitching and you could see it.

If you had one pitcher to pitch a game, is it Ford, is it Reynolds, is it Raschi, is it Lopat, which one?

GM- Allie Reynolds. Especially if there was 80,000 people there, too. Because, and the bigger the game, the better he was. You know. That's my book. That's my thinking. Of course, a lot of guys might say Whitey because he was a Hall of Famer or Raschi or Eddie Lopat even. I said, I would hate to make the pick, to go one, two, three, four. You had to play with them and I think you almost had to see the team. The team didn't matter as far as Reynolds was concerned. If they loaded it with lefthanders, it still wouldn't bother him. I'd still take him over Whitey, you know.

OK, Elston Howard.

GM- Elston Howard. Super tools. Ellie unfortunately, the way the structure was in baseball, was late getting up. He should have been up five years before, at least. He certainly would have established himself as probably a Hall of Famer. Because, the only thing that Ellie lacked was a little foot speed. But, he had the great arm. He had the great power. Good clutch hitter. He had all the basic tools to be a great catcher. You think of the great catchers like Ernie Lombardi, Howie was a little faster than Ernie Lombardi.

A little bit.

GM- But, Ellie was an elegant looking ballplayer. And, in my book, a super person. Unfortunately, he shocked everybody and certainly he got a beautiful family and Darlene and the kids have done very well afterward. We always are in touch with her, at least around Christmastime.

How about Roger Maris? I know you only played one season with Roger but I've heard a lot about Roger.

GM- Well, in my book Roger Maris belongs right up in that Hall of Fame without any doubt. Here's a great example of the thinking of sportswriters where prejudices come in because of personalities and stuff. When I first seen Roger, he was playing for Cleveland.

The first time I seen him, I couldn't believe the beautiful strokes he had and he used to hit all the balls, line drives to left center, center, right center. He didn't pull anything. He was hitting, one year, the first year I'd seen, if you looked it up, .400 maybe, into July and all of a sudden came up with an appendicitis. He would up dropping a hundred points and when he came back he went 1 for 80, I think. He had a heck of a time. Then they traded him to Kansas City and I remember when Casey came to me and he said, "Gil, who do you think that we could get that would help to really solidify our ballclub?" "Hell, if you can get Maris to come over, look what he'll do to your ballclub. He'll give you an outfield that's second to none." And I was very happy because I got to play with Roger. He came over in '59...

'60.

GM- And I only got a couple of years but he proved to me that I was right when I mentioned to Casey to get him. He proved himself. He was the MVP twice, I think. When you're the MVP over Mantle, Ford, Yogi, I said, you've got to be one great ballplayer. In my book, what's a Hall of Famer? Could anybody play the outfield better than Roger? Could anybody run better than Roger? Could anybody hit any better than Roger? He fills the requirement of a Hall of Famer. Anybody else watching, I got to laugh because now they are going to say, "Well, he didn't play long enough." I says, "Everybody put Koufax in. How many good years did Koufax have?" The first four years that Koufax pitched was horrible. Then he pitches four great years and he's in. Well, how come? I mean, if 50% of the time he wasn't a good pitcher and 50% of the time he's a great pitcher. Does that make him a mediocre pitcher? You know? How come guys that win 300 games are in? Because I look at the records and there's 300 wins and 280 losses or something. Is that a Hall of Famer? You don't win many pennants if you got a pitcher like that, you know. These are the questions that I question because I wish they never had a thing called the Hall of Fame. Because really it does a disservice to certain ballplayers, such as Roger Maris, you know. And Allie Reynolds, in my book. And they're trying to ease it by having seniors or whatever they call them.

Veterans.

GM- After they come out a few years. After the first go-around, you go onto to another list. But, Roger, in my book, I don't think any manager would prefer anybody else in right field. Maybe a Kaline at the same position and you needed a right hander instead of a lefthanded hitter because these two were the same type of ballplayers. Great fielders. Great arms. Good hitters. And, everybody hated his guts when he hit 61. They turned against the kid. Why, because he broke Ruth's record? Big deal.

He wasn't supposed to.

GM- Records are broken in every sport in every day. It really is a good crime that he isn't in, in my book.

OK, last one. Joe DiMaggio. Tell me what you remember about Joe. I know it was his last season with the Yankees, but...

GM- I have the same problem with Joe as I had with Enos. I only played with Joe one year and that was his last year. So, it's hard to judge him based on the year that I seen him. You really almost have to talk to somebody who played with Joe, over the years. I mean, I know how great he was because I heard enough stories about him. If everybody considered him the greatest player of the century, I certainly would, too. One thing that I remember about him when I was playing second base or even third base. I had peripheral vision where I could see the center fielder without looking out there. And I know he was moving before the hitter even hit the ball on a fly ball. Because I'd seen the movement. That's what a lot of your writers...and they were right when they wrote it. I knew he moved, too. It's instinct. He had the great instinct to play in the outfield. I imagine that when he had a good arm, he must have been really some piece of work. I bet nobody would take an extra base on him. But, when I seen him I know he had the sore hose and we were all covering up on him by going out quite a distance to take a relay throw. As a hitter, he was a similar hitter to me in one respect. We always pulled the ball. But, Casey never got on him one time! But, the difference was he pulled the ball a little better than me and a little further than me.

OK, if you don't mind, can you tell me a little about the Herb Score incident and did it have any effect on you?

GM- I don't remember the last time I'd seen Herb. That was a night I know that he had took niches out on me as a ballplayer even though, as a hitter, you have no control on where the ball's going to wind up after you've hit it. You might have an intention of hitting a ball to a particular field, but when you get a guy who could throw like Herb, who really, they were climbing around 100 miles an hour, it's pretty hard to say, I'm going to hit the ball to left, right, or center. This particular pitch he threw to me that night, I'll never forget. I don't know how I hit it. It was very seldom that he's throw one that was down. Most of the time Herbie was up around the letters, that borderline pitch all that time. That's why he struck out a lot of people because it would look good and you'd keep swinging at it and you'd keep missing it, you know. But, he threw this one low to me and I just flicked my wrist and I could see him. He didn't even come close to getting into his follow through because it hit him on the right eye and him being a lefthander, if he had followed through properly and had time to follow though, if anything, it would have hit him in the left eye! Because he would have been following through with his head movement in here. But, I don't know what happened. I still don't know. I don't remember running to first base because as soon as I'd hit him I'd seen blood fly, you know. Then afterwards, I really didn't feel like playing anymore. You know, because the game was held up for a long time and you know he's in bad shape. Broke all his cheekbones so I had called the hospital right afterwards from the locker room. They got the hospital for me and the doctor come, the doctor that operated on Herb. He kept in touch me with each town I went. He said, "Gil, please don't quit. It's not your fault." And everybody's trying to control me saying it's not your fault, including Herb's mother who telling me, "Gil, please go play. That's part of the game. I know you had..." "No, no, I

didn't." Herb happened to be a good friend. That made it worse. It was the last one you'd like to hit. But, as it turned out, Herb wound up, after that, the following year, he just never was the same. The year after he wasn't the same and he kept trying and it really hurt me to watch him because I think he said he hurt his elbow or something pitching on a cold night, he mentioned afterwards. After he returned. I feel that all the medication and stuff that he took changed his pitching motion in some way that he didn't look like the same pitcher. This is the way he was pitching. He was recoiling before he even threw the ball. And I'm sure he didn't realize it but when something happens to anybody and he gets hurt, everybody's consciously watching to see if he's going to do anything different. And most of those times, in baseball, you really zeroed on pitchers because you were trying to figure out what they were throwing all the time. So, right off the reel, it was obvious that he had switched and changed his delivery pattern, you know. But, he was a super kid and he was a guy that certainly started off like he was a cinch to make the Hall of Fame but that's what happens. I don't know. The first year he won twenty games and struck out better than a couple hundred right off the reel and then to have something like this happen and take away your livelihood, I can imagine how it must have hurt him. But, fortunately, Herb went into radio and I guess did some TV work and stuff and basically he made his way and I think probably, in the long run, maybe it was better. He had a better life for him than baseball. The only thing is he would have been such an attraction for baseball if he had stayed in it. He would have been like a Bob Feller was for Cleveland for years.

OK, I understand the Yankees went on a tour after the '55 season. We talked about it before. Where did you go and what were some of the experiences on the tour?

GM- Well, we traveled all around Japan. We first started off, we went to Hawaii and we played half a dozen games there in about twelve days and then we went and played in Manila. We played a game and then we flew into Japan. We drew more people in the 26 games than the Washington Senators drew in the whole year and we played, I remember, in Osaka, Japan, eighty-two thousand. Couldn't get any more people in. They were everywhere. We played in Tokyo, capacity was 42, I believe, packed. But, I was most impressed is when we played in Sapporo, Japan which was in the northernmost part of the islands and the northern part, the skiing area. When we got there, at game time, it was 32 degrees. The people were sitting in the stands. They sat at seven o'clock in the morning and the game didn't start until one. When we got out there, we played the whole game with jackets on, you know. It was quite an experience, I think, given the exposure to see what other ballplayers in different nations, how they play the game of baseball. What I felt was they were not fast. They were race runners. They weren't strong. Most of their ballparks were very small in comparison to ours. Three hundred to left. Maybe three twenty to left center. It was a hitter's paradise for any one of our major league ballplayers that went over. I think what they've done is they're fanatics on the game and they've developed and developed and I think now, they might have some real good pitchers over there and so much better hitters than they had years ago. They had Sadaharu Oh that was their big home run hitter. He was the only one that I've seen that really swung the bat like a major league ballplayer here did.

Did you have a favorite team or favorite player when you were growing up?

GM- Not really. I grew up in San Francisco and we always considered San Francisco a major league town and I followed the Seals out there which was Triple A, at that time. But, I had no favorite ballplayers. I think my dad might have, but I didn't.

The Seals were good.

GM- Yeah.

The Pacific Coast League was a good league.

GM- Yeah. Lefty O'Doul was the manager out there for twenty-odd years. They always had a good team because they were an independent ballclub. They always drew well. Charlie Graham, the old owner of the club, muscled up baseball at the time and he got some good ballplayers.

Are you still following the game today? And, what do you think about it?

GM- Oh, I'm a bad baseball fan. I watch the playoffs, I guess, and the World Series and if I happen to catch a couple of games, maybe, before the late movie or something, I watch a few innings whether it be the Yankees or the Mets. But, I'm not really what you'd call a good baseball fan. I just think the game has changed an awful lot now in a lot of ways and it's hard to compare when you played as against when they are playing now. Because a lot of diamonds now are Astroturf. The clubs are larger. The bats are skinnier. Everybody's swinging for long balls. If they had played under a certain manager that we had at the time, everybody now strikes out a hundred times. They think nothing of it. If they were playing under our days, some manager would tell them, you better get a big, thick bat and learn to go for a single instead of trying to hit a homer when you're a hundred and twenty pounds. That would be the general thinking. But, I feel that the game has grown geographically. It's good for the country. It gives everybody a change to see major league baseball. I think the largest amount of fans we drew was something like 2.3 million. Now, the Cubs draw 4 million. New clubs, who could expect Colorado to play baseball there, and they draw four million. Toronto, Canada draws four million. The people evidently love the game. I think the reason why is because it's an easy game to understand. I think another thing is the exposure. The ballplayers aren't hidden like football where they wear a helmet and you don't know one ballplayer from another. You know a Montana because he gets his picture in the paper or maybe a Taylor for the Giants. But otherwise, it's hard to recognize almost anyone of the football players or skaters, it's hard. Basketball, everybody will know Jordan but I'm sure if you took all of the San Antonio or Dallas ballplayers probably, nobody could name even one guy if he walked down the street, you know. When we were there was a lot of exposure. I think there were seven newspapers in New York. Everyone's got their picture in the paper or something and I think really, a lot of these things have changed now. There isn't newspapers. You've got idiot boxes. Everybody watches it so there's tremendous exposure on the television now. When we were there television was really just in its

infancy. So, television, with all of the money coming in, really changed the game of baseball. That's what created all the different clubs and expansion and interest I think, you know.

Did you ever see any of your teammates now? Who are some of your friends?

GM- Yes, I see quite a few of the guys. Basically, at golf tournaments when I play. I see Yogi. I used to see Joe Collins all the time. Joe passed away years ago. And Eddie Lopat, who just passed away recently. I used to see him all the time. Now, I see Mickey when he comes in for Yogi's tournament. Phil has a tournament and we go up. I see a lot of the Dodger players, Branca. I see Hermanski and a lot of the fellas that live in this area, I see with some regularity during the year. My closest friend is Bobby Brown, Doc Brown and he comes down to visit me. It's kind of tough because they got him running all over the country, as the President of the American League. But, Yogi comes down but not that often. I was helping Yogi come down and they bought a home down here and they thought the kids have all wanted them to come down and they could enjoy the Jersey shore and their grandchildren and stuff.

Right. OK, is there anything else? Any other memory or thought that you want to share? If not, I think we're done here.

GM- Well, I think it's a great game. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed playing it for ten years in the majors and some years in the minors but I also enjoyed business once I got out of baseball. Different types of competition. I think the big thing that's important for young people that want to play baseball to remember is like when I was a college coach. I told all my young men. I said, "Look, you're not coming here to just play baseball. You're coming here to get an education." And to me, that's the important thing that young people, whether they are in basketball or football or baseball, understand that you've got four years to perform a sport at the university. But, you've only got four years to put something upstairs that's going to stay with you the rest of your life and if you get the right stuff up there, you'll be able to make a good living for yourself and the odds of playing any sport on a major league level is very limited. Because, you've got to be very lucky and everything goes your way. You don't get injured. So, the most important thing, I feel, is everybody understands that and thinks education first and then baseball second if that's the sport they are interested in. My memory of baseball was good. But, any time you win the memories are better than when you lose. The funny thing about it is I think of the year we lost to Cleveland when they beat us in 1954. They won the pennant and then went on and lost the World Series to the Giants. That year, we won a lot of games. A hundred and four games and they won 112, I think it was. In a 154 game schedule, I thought we'd played great. We split 11-11 with Cleveland that year but nobody else could beat them. They really chopped up everybody else. So, I remember the year we lost better than the years when won because I thought that year we should have won. We won more games than the other years I played for them. So, it's funny. Sometimes, I think you learn a little humility when you lose, too and that helps, you know. It sort of knocks a little of the ego out of you. It makes you play a little harder the next time.

OK, that's it for me. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

GM- You're welcome.

-Transcribed by J. Thomas Hetrick, March, 2005.