

Gentile

Q: His wife is on the internet, so I took them into the bedroom where the computer was. It was the first time he had seen the site and it has been up almost two years now. As I may have mentioned to you, you are the one, that when I sat down with you that first, and talked with you, you were the one that inspired all of this. I got to thinking, there are tons of baseball fans out there who would love to know what is Jim Gentile doing. What is Don Demetar and of course, I have had the good fortune, as I think I have mentioned to you, since the first time we talked, uh I have interviewed 18 retired baseball players. I love it. My uncle asked me last night, as does everyone, how much money are you making off of this thing. I said, and the truth is, I have yet to figure out how a person could make money selling a web site. I would love to know. I intended to off set by cost and my wife keeps reminding me, that I have not done that yet.

A: There has to be a way.

Q: Well, I.

Q.: He works, I talked with his wife, Tuesday night. He had gone to bed. I sure you know more about , he had that accident.

A: No, I didn't know that.

Q: Oh yeah. 94 and she said, she told me that it broke every bone in his body.

A: Oh my.

Q: It was about 8:30 and he was already in bed asleep, so, but she said, feel free to call. He and Don Demetar are buds and maybe if nothing else, he can come and join you and Don when you set down to interview Mr. Demetar. She said call, so I called this morning and he answered the phone. Thursday is the only day he works and he is an auctioneer or something for Hoodibur. For their used car sales on Thursdays.

A: Ah.

Q: So he said I will probably be busy til about 3, but yeah I would love to sit down with you, you know and.

A: Oh great.

Q: Yeah. So I am hoping I get the opportunity you know.

A: Then you will spend the night.

Q: I may have to.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. I would if I knew I had the interview and you and everything. So, and Don Demetar is not a sure thing, because again, like everyone, we are all busy. He indicated that I should call around 12:30 or 1:00 and he would try to be free.

A: Yeah

Q: So I am hoping I can get that one. I had never really thought much about interviewing Sturdevant. Didn't know much about him, but some friends of mine over in Fort Smith, knew about his condition and of course he played with Mickey and all that, you know, I knew that.

A: Right, right.

Q: It could be, I'm sure it could be interesting. I know it would be interesting to me, because I just love talking baseball and hearing you guys talk about stories and .

A: I'm sure he has a lot to .

Q: I'm going to take you back to Frank Zuppo .

A: No way I can.

Q: No, no, no. No, I wouldn't dare do that. Um, and you said that the three of you all, who played the with the Orioles at about the same time, went to the same school.

A: Sacred Heart.

Q: Sacred Heart of San Francisco.

A: In San Francisco. It is funny how we all ended up with Orioles.

Q: Very funny. Strange.

A: Uh, especially me. I was, you know, with the Dodgers to start with and then all of a sudden I go over there and the Frank is already there and uh, uh Frankie signs with them and the he's over there. It doesn't happen very often.

Q: Just proves it's a small world doesn't it?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah. And Zuppo only had 18 bats.

A: Yes. He uh, uh, Frank was behind, just like I was behind Hodges, he was behind Gus Triatnes.

Q: Yeah.

A: And us, then you had Joe Gindsberg who was behind Gus and he was a pretty good major league catcher himself, so Frank just had to wait. Uh, he played in the minors for about 6 years. He has the distinction of being the only player thrown out of a game before it started.

Q: Zuppo?

A: Frank. We used to have the mound in front of the dugout in Baltimore.

Q: Uh huh.

A: And he was warm and skinny. Ben Hurley was coming out main umpire and Frank went, "look out, look out!" like he was going to throw it at him and he threw him out of the game.

Q: Just messin around.

A: Messin around. Threw him out of the game before it even started.

Q: Frank Zuppo. Like I said earlier, you know, all I remember, I guess it was, he probably had one card that was printed.

A: Probably, yes. In fact, I think I got it hanging up in my office.

Q: Is that right? Did he really have eyebrows from one end to the other?

A: Well, he finally plucked the middle, but he was a mature fellow and he had a lot of hair.

Q: Yeah. He would have been Italian too? Zuppo would be Italian.

A: Oh yeah, yes.

Q: Bertania would be Italian?

A: Yes.

Q: Was Sacred Heart pretty much Italian neighborhood?

A: Well it was close to North Beach. It was just off Van Ash. Uh, a lot of Italians lived there. When I went there, those were the Sacred Heart Irish, is what they were called.

Q: Hm.

A: The three years we won the championship, they were all Italians. That was just funny that everybody said Irish. There was Canecho, Cazaza and Santini Santino, Comassi. It was quite a kick.

Q: Nothing sounded Irish did it?

A: Not one. I was the closest. Cause I was half and half.

Q: Uh huh. You've mentioned a second ago, like Zuppo was behind Treandos, you were behind Hodges. Were you behind Gil for several years?

A: Uh, 7.

Q: 7 years.

A: I signed in 1952 and they didn't change their infield until they got out to LA in about 1959. Then I think from 1959, once they got Cey and Russell and Lopez and Popeye on first, Garvey, they didn't change their infield for 6 or 7 years.

Q: For a number of years after that.

A: When I was there, there was Hodges on first, Jackie Robinson on second, until he retired, and then Gilliam, Reese, Capinella, Furillo in right, Snider in center.

Q: Heck of a team wasn't it?

A: They stayed that way all the way up to LA.

Q: What was the outfield? I remember Snider and .

A: Furillo in right, left field was open. They had quite a few left. Dick Williams, Andy, Hemanski, Amorose Somoli. They tried everybody out there. But the mainstay were those guys. Those 7.

Q: Because of your hitting ability, did they ever toy with the idea of moving you there?

A: No. No.

Q: Didn't want you running around out there huh?

A: That was the problem. The running around. No. I played one time. I played right field in Montreal AAA and uh, I went back for a fly ball and ran into the fence. Turned probably a double into a triple. Buzzy was there, who was the vice president of the Dodgers, and a guy got a base hit with a man on second with a ground ball into right and I got the guy out at home plate. So he asked me about it and I said I have no idea how to play the outfield.

Q: Never have?

A: Never have I said. The big thing is back then, they could keep you for six years, as long as they had options on you. They didn't have to sell you. Had no agent.

Q: Couldn't get out, couldn't walk away. Couldn't ask to be traded?

A: Oh you could walk away, but that was it.

Q: Yeah, only option.

A: That's it. Take it or leave it was back then.

Q: So then spring training with those guys, including Robinson?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Gilliam when he was coming up?

A: Went to Japan with him in 56.

Q: Wow.

A: I led the club in everything.

Q: During spring training?

A: During the trip to Japan.

Q: Yeah.

A: They told me not to play winter ball, cause I was getting. I went to Spokane that year and I was getting, in 58, and I was getting mechanical they said. I had played 7 summers and 7 winters and they paid me to stay home. I go to spring training and they sell me to St. Paul. But by the grace of God, Baltimore gave me a shot and I got to stay. And that was the whole thing. That's why AAA, I'm sorry.

Q: That's ok. I'm sorry you are having to do this for me when you.

A: AAA was so good because ball players, when you have played a few years in the minors, and you are waiting to get a shot, that's it. You just want to know if you can play in the big leagues. You want to know if you can hit. Give me a shot and if I can't hit, I'm a minor leaguer.

Q: There you go.

A: But it's the idea of how long you can hang on to get that shot. You know if they didn't sell you, you'd ask them, why don't you sell me? Of course their answer was, nobody wants you. But you would run into scouts who said we are trying to buy you, they make the price too high.

Q: There you go. They were going to keep you there? What do you think most times their thinking was? Hodges gets injured?

A: You know Woody retires. I was still young. Even though I only played seven years in the minors, I was only like you know, 24 or 25. What happened was they go out to LA and we are playing in the Colliseum, which was huge in right field, even Snider wouldn't hit em out. He had great power. The next year when we are going into the Coliseum, it was either me or Norm Larker and Larker was good 300 solid hitter. I'm a long ball hitter.

Q: Yeah.

A: So he got the job. I just got sold to St. Paul.

Q: And St. Paul was a farm club for ?

A: The Dodgers AAA.

Q: Hmm.

A: But at the end of the year, I was left on the AAA roster and if they waited, I could get picked up for \$25,000. So they decided to sell me on a look see to Baltimore for \$50,000 and a few players. Willie Maranda and Bill Lejoy. I had a 30 look. If I didn't make it, the Dodgers got me back plus \$25,000.

Q: Wow.

A: Dodgers had to give \$25,000.

Q: I see. Well it gave you to opportunity, like you said, whenever you went to St. Paul. I want to ask you a question. You said something about leading in everything when you were in Japan. How many games did you guys play over there?

A: We played 19.

Q: 19 games?

A: Played 19 games. I had 11 home runs. I was hitting everything. I mean you couldn't get me out.

Q: Wow.

A: That's is how I got my nickname Diamond Jim from Roy Campanella.

Q: Roy Campanella.

A: It was just things, they didn't think anybody would pick me up, I guess. Because after you have been in the minors as many years as I, you can get labeled a minor league player. They start seeing all these different things you do wrong. You know, there are a lot of people who say oh you won't hit the big leagues cause he has such a big swing.

And, I did. I had a big swing.

Q: You did. I remember that.

A: But, I was not a 300 hitter. I knew if I could hit 260-270, drive in 85-100 and hit 25-35 homers, I could stay and that was my job. The home runs and to drive in runs.

Q: Yes. So you had really a dynamite 19 games in Japan and even then, the first baseman would have been who?

A: Gil Hodges.

Q: Gil Hodges. He went to LA with them.

A: Right.

Q: And Gil would have had to been late 30's right?

A: Probably, yes. But he was in such great shape. He was about the best first baseman in the National League for years. He was really a phenomenal fielder and you could see his record in hitting. So you know, there was nothing you could do. It wasn't a matter of some guy hitting 220 in front of you.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was an outstanding major league player.

Q: And uh, the argument still rages in baseball circles, that he ought to be in the hall of fame.

A: Yes, I believe he should be. A few guys in there that haven't got his stats or weren't his type of player.

Q: Was he a lifetime 300?

A: You know, I don't know.

Q: I don't know either. Course he was like yourself, he could hit the ball.

A: That was his yes.

Q: So in spring training you rubbed shoulders with Jackie Robinson? I don't know how, but I am sure fans envision players sitting around after the games talking about everything in the world. Maybe the women in the stands, but also you who did what when. Are there any stories from Jackie that?

A: Maybe the Dodgers themselves because they their cliques, but when you are a rookie coming up there, your on the fringe.

Q: I see.

A: You know, you are sorta lookin and you are keeping your mouth shut and you are just doin what you are supposed to do. You know when you are on the field, they will talk to you and everything, but off the field, you kinda felt a little away from them.

Q: I guess so.

A: They had played so many years together. You know.

Q: Yeah.

A: I remember Pee Wee and Gil used to hang around you know. Zimmer and Snider you know, were good friends and Drysdale and these little cliques went different ways. So uh, if you were a rookie, you just go your own way.

Q: Did you ever meet Preacher Rowe?

A: No I didn't have the pleasure.

Q: He was gone by the time you got there.

A: Right.

Q: He was one of the players that I have interviewed at his home in Missouri. What I was leading up to, and but let me ask about it, and have you comment on being on the fringe. To me, as personable as you are, and as tall as you were then, it is hard for me to imagine Jim Gentile on the fringe of anything.

A: Well.

Q: But it had to do with that professionalism and that cliquishness.

A: Oh, absolutely. I mean . I wasn't back then, sounds like, I wasn't outgoing.

Q: Right.

A: Because I had a , well they labeled me with a bad attitude. I just had a temper.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I have always said this. I don't understand, when I am not in uniform, I am a different person. I put on a uniform and I just, I wanna win. I wanna do good. When I don't, I don't get mad at anybody but myself. And that would hurt. Because back then they would say, he is not a team player. He is only worried about himself. Well I, it wasn't that I was worried about myself. I was mad at myself cause after spending 7 years in the minors, I knew how fast you could get back there. I knew I had to do my job. If I didn't do my job for that night, I was a little upset.

Q: Sure.

A: I wished I could have said, hey that is gone.

Q: You've seen players who can do that?

A: Brooks Robinson.

Q: Walk off the field? Really?

A: One of the nicest guys I have ever met. Gus Treandres. You go 0/4 or 0/8 and they smile. They can forget it. It is gone.

Q: Really? I'm more like you. I'm you know.

A: I couldn't. I mean I would go home and see that fast ball that I missed or the error that I made or something. I'd think about it all the time.

Q: Sure. You don't think those guys did much of that? They were able just to keep it between the lines?

A: Unless they could hide it until they got home.

Q: Yeah. And then beat the dog up or something.

A: Right. I just couldn't. If we won a game and I went 0/4, but Steve Barber pitched a great game, and we won. I would go around and say nice going to everybody. Great game Steve and all that.

Q: And then you'd.

A: If I wanted to sit in my locker and think about it, I didn't feel like I was hurting anybody. But I was, I was hurtin myself, because the higher echelon would say, look, he is only worried about himself. Not worried about the team. But I was, I mean I hittin 4th and I'm not drivin in any runs. You know. I had chances, but I didn't. I'd think about it. Try to figure out what I'm doing wrong.

Q: Hmmm.

A: But now, you take Paul O'Neill, he can throw a bat and get mad, stuff like that. He is aggressive, I like his attitude. When I played, it was.

Q: Attitude, bad attitude. Angry young man.

A: That's it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I guess I was when I put a uniform on. I was out of uniform, people would say, you seem different.

Q: Cause you were huh?

A: I was and I still am.

Q: You're putting the uniform on now. You are managing the Fort Worth Cats.

A: Fort Worth Cats. The Central Independent Pro League. Yes..

Q: The Central Independent Pro League. You managed them last year?

A: Yes. It was the first year we joined the league. We finished 3rd. Got in the playoffs, but got knocked out the first round.

Q: You are optimistic about this year too aren't you?

A: Oh, I really am. I am really sorry about my throat.

Q: I hope it is not putting too much of a strain on you.

A: We are in a new league called the central league. We've got a bunch of teams from the Texas Louisiana league. Gonna be a much stronger league. We are playing 96 games this year, instead of 72. It's a higher level. I mean the players are better. Last year our first year, we were pickin up college kids and guys who had played. It was all of a sudden we had to get a team together. Now, we know what we are doing. We know how to go to the internet to find players. See if we can sign em.

Q: See if there is some talent out there that you can go after?

A: We have got my 3 outfielders that hit all over 335 last year in the league.

Q: That reason alone to be excited.

A: Yes. If they do what they did last year. We should be in good shape. Our pitching looks good.

Q: How does Jim Gentile take the enthusiasm he had for the game when he played, which as you said back then was called anger or whatever, how does that interpret as a manager, when you are sitting on the bench and maybe a player, or maybe even you, felt like you made the wrong decision?

A: Oh I ...

Q: Still hard on yourself?

A: Oh yeah. At one time, at one spot there, I had 7 straight guys thrown out at home plate. Whew... I gotta say something. We're dead. By ten or fifteen feet. Cause I had to learn being a third base coach, that if a ball is hit right at the left fielder and the guy is fast, you know. When you are in a game and it is 2 to 1, you try to squeeze runs in.

Q: Sure, you bet.

A: But I had a couple plays at home, that the umpire missed completely.

Q: Yeah.

A: I know that is sour grapes, but really.

Q: Well they are not professionals, probably in the sense that you are used to.

A: I got to a point where I thought it was me, so I took a night off. I told my pitching coach to coach third. He got 2 thrown out. So I decided it's not just me. So, yeah, I had to bite my tongue sometimes.

Q: But you do? You have learned to do that? And you don't vocalize as much as you did?

A: You know a funny thing? I do the fantasy camp for the Orioles in Florida. Course those guys are business men who come down and maybe haven't played ball for 10 year or 20. Some have played the over 30 leagues and they make stupid mistakes, okay. You can't get mad at them. So I have learned that to just kinda roll with it. Uh, there is times I get mad. I mean, I challenged my 3rd baseman to a fight last year. He made me so mad I just said lets get it on. I mean he just wouldn't listen to what I wanted him to do.

Q: Will he be there this year?

A: No. He is teaching school.

Q: Not very manageable huh?

A: Well no. He wouldn't listen. And that is another thing. You get some of the kids out of college and they had a great year in college, but they didn't get drafted. They get over to wood and we must have gone through a 100 dozen bats and they think they are used to hitting that inside pitch and getting it over the infield with an aluminum bat and with a wood bat, it splits it in half. Takes em a little time to get used to it if they have never used a wood bat.

Q: Absolutely. Managing now, this will be your second year. Longer season. Of the managers that you played for, of course the only one that jumps out at me is Paul Richards.

A: Yes.

Q: I would be interested in hearing your comments about Paul. Was he fiery at all?

A: You know, he didn't say much. But you could tell when he was upset he would grit his teeth and this vein would just pop out on his neck. No, he. It is funny, it was different back then. The manager was the manager. He is the only one that said anything. We never in the clubhouse ever had a guy get up in the middle of the clubhouse and make speeches or anything like that. When you went to the ballpark, you knew your job. You can in and said hi Jim. You went out took infield. Took batting practice. You know, maybe small talk or whatever. Game started and you played your game. With Paul Richards you sat on the bench. You better know whats goin on. We didn't have the bathrooms downstairs. You had to go up to the clubhouse and tell the coach you were going to the bathroom. Richards had like a clock in his head. If you were gone over maybe 3 minutes, he sent someone up after you. Nobody got to sit in the clubhouse. You were on the bench. Paying attention to the game. What's going on out there.

Q: Even. Let me broaden that. Now I could see where he might be concerned if Jim Gentile has got a sore knee and is not playing, he wants you watching. Frank Zuppo is going nowhere. He would want Frank on the bench?

A: Oh yes. Nobody in the clubhouse.

Q: Nobody?

A: Nobody. That's what got me when I went to play some old timers games a few years ago. These guys, it's the 3rd and 4th inning and they are not even dressed. They are still sitting in the clubhouse watching it on TV. It just didn't, I couldn't figure it out.

Q: Wow.

A: It's completely different that way. Like I say we didn't have like a team leader lets say. You know, someone to get up and say fellas we gotta do this. Everybody knew their job and you went out and did it to the best of you ability for that night. Now I think that is why the Orioles, and I have always said, when the got Frank Robinson, he brought leadership over to the team. Things like that, that's where it started. It was kinda.

Q: Kind of loosening it up?

A: Right and getting the team together.

Q: Camaraderie maybe?

A: There's the whole thing. We had camaraderie, but when the game was over, you know, we used to have parties and stuff like that, but we never had anyone get up in the middle of the room.

Q: Never really a leader?

A: No.

Q: But, maybe there were guys like a Jackie Brant or whatever, who was crazy enough to want to be a leader, but they weren't permitted to?

A: Well this is just the way it was. Like you say, but gradually Frank came over and he started that Kangaroo court and stuff like that and the guys really started to gel together. I think in 60 when they had what was called the kiddie corp, that is when the Orioles started to go.

Q: No doubt.

A: We had a good ball club. Young pitching staff.

Q: Oh man.

A: You know, if we would have had the playoffs, we would have been in the playoffs every year. We were second or third.

Q: Behind the Yankees.

A: But we played good against the Yankees.

Q: Yeah well, in fact, I'm sure you know this, but having been an Oriole fan since 1957, when I was nine years old. Up until a few years ago, the Orioles was the only team in major-league baseball who had a winning record against the Yankees.

A: We played em a series at home, 5 games. We beat em 5 straight. We swept em.

Q: That was in 60 or 61'?

A: It was 61.

Q: I think it was 61.

A: Then we went and played the week games. New York played 4 straight and they swept us. We went in first place and went out in second place. Then we started just gradually, next thing you know, I think we ended up 14 games behind or something.

Q: Wow

A: And we won 96 games.

Q: 14 games behind and won 96.

A: And won 96.

Q: 96 today would and you are gonna be a wild card minimum and probably lead in your division.

A: Yeah. Oh yeah. We had some good clubs. We had some real good ballplayers.

Q: The kiddie corp that you mentioned, course I think of a lot of names, again being an Oriole fan. You know, Chuck Estrada. Barber came up during that period of time. Milt Papas, all those guys. How much credit do you think the manager, supposedly Paul Richards was a pitching manager. He knew pitching.

A: Yes.

Q: You would not disagree with that?

A: No. No. He knew pitching. He sure did.

Q: Did he just recognize talent or did he know how to groom a ballplayer or pitcher?

A: You know it's funny. I never saw Paul Richards talk to too many guys. He left that up to Harry, our pitching coach. See now a days, they got a bench coach, hitting coach. We didn't have a hitting coach. We had a pitching coach. We had a first base coach and a third base coach. None of em were deemed hitting coaches. The closest thing to, when I played, that we. Babe Daldron, who took Lou Gehrigs place on first base, was a scout for Kansas City. I'm not sure if he was a coach with me in 64 or not, but he started taking 8mm films of the ball players. Watching them hit, you know. Didn't think much of the idea. We used to go underneath the stands and he would hang up a white sheet and show

the film on the white sheet of you hitting. He would say now see how you are doing it, you are pulling out. He would try to help the hitters. That is the first thing that I ever heard of anybody doing.

Q: Kind of a hitting instruction?

A: Right.

Q: Hmmm.

A: Babe Daldron.

Q: Yeah. I have heard that name.

A: Yeah, he replaced Lou Gehrig. When I signed in 52, when you went out and played. You either did it or you didn't. Nobody talked to you about hitting. You either did it or you didn't. I mean if you were doing something really bad, the coach or manager was supposed to say hey, try this or try that, but there was no regular hitting coach. So while Paul Richards was a good manager, you really feel like a guy like Harry, should be given a lot of credit for that kiddie corp?

A: Absolutely. During spring training Paul would talk to em you know, but again, these guys just had good talent.

Q: They did. Frank Bertania was in that group wasn't he?

A: Yes.

Q: Was he a righty?

A: Lefthanded.

Q: I didn't remember. I didn't want to get away , you know you were sharing about your team that you are managing now, and obviously you are excited about that?

A: I really am.

Q: Great opportunity I'm sure.

A: It is. At my age to get back in the game. The bus trips are long, but it is fun.

Knock on wood, I am in good health, cept for this throat, but I enjoy it. I'd like to do it for a couple more years. I do the fantasy camp and other than that, I just take it easy. I'm learning, that every year you gotta find players. You know, you want to improve, so you gotta trade players. Pete Obryan played for Texas. He is part owner and he is personnel, so we work together. He does most of the signing, cause he knows how much money we got.

Q: Sure.

A: But he will call me and say I got this guy, what do you think? And on Sundays were are up in Dallas working. We bring in these guys and we see something we like, we might either invite them to camp or see something really extraordinary, we might sign em.

Q: Yeah.

A: But just because you sign the kid, doesn't mean he is going to be there.

Q: Isn't that something? Different than.

A: It's , there are so many players out there, but when you get kids, and I say kids, they are 24 or 25 and they get to a point where they say to themselves.

A: We got a good outfield this year.

Q: Great.

A: We got a first baseman who is coming back. He has been off a year or year and a half. Hit 350 at Evansville the last year he played. Second baseman, Tony Parameo, his uncle is the batting coach for the Texas Rangers. Played at Tyler last year. We got a short stop

we got from Albany. Got a third baseman I call the ghost, cause I haven't seen him. We don't know how he can play, but he was a parade all American in high school. He went to college. He didn't get drafted, but Cincinnati really liked him, but they didn't draft him. So I call him ghost until I see him.

Q: Til you see him yeah.

A: Catcher was with me last year. Just came out of college. Did a real nice job. Just learning catching. Played a lot of third base. Did a real fine job. Got a great arm.

Q: Great.

A: Pitching we got Jose Guzeman.

Q: Do you?

A: Pitched real well for me last year. He was 4 and 1 and hurt his knee coming off the mound. They had to go in so he couldn't pitch for the last part. Then he came back and pitched one playoff game, I mean one game before the playoffs and his knee bothered him.

Q: I am curious, and if it is confidential feel free to say so, a guy like Guzeman, what would he make?

A: You know I don't know. I would say, well if he is a franchise player, he could probably make as high as \$3,000 a month. The last year and this is someone told me he donated his whole salary to charity. That is what someone told me. He is a real nice fellow.

Q: He played when he was in the pros with Toronto?

A: Toronto and I think he played with the cubs. Ended up with the Rangers for awhile.

Q: Is his major league career over?

A: Oh yeah. I don't think he is going to try. I think he is 38.

Q: I figured he was probably mid 30s anyway.

A: So I don't know if he is going to try again. I don't know.

Q: Which is the ideal kind of player you are looking for?

A: Right. You know, he has a couple of restaurants in the Dallas area.

Q: So he is at home?

A: Yes. And he draws real well. We average a little over 2200 people per game.

Q: Great.

A: When he pitched, we got more. You know we would almost fill the stadium.

Q: Yeah. What is the capacity there?

A: Well I think 4500. They are now building us a new stadium. They are in the midst of building a new stadium.

Q: You have got to be excited about the future then. Not just for you and the fun you are having there, but the prospects of the team and the league.

A: Absolutely. That's what I mean. The teams that are in the league now are mainstay teams that have been around for quite a while. Amarillo, San Angelo. Good baseball towns.

Q: Good baseball towns. Does Guzeman, you know I mean, people like me, the fan like me, think the guys like him who played, probably more than 5 years in the majors are gonna be qualified for his retirement.

A: Oh sure.

Q: Does he go on the bus too?

A: Well, he didn't last year. Cause he only pitched at home last year.

Q: He didn't want to pitch anywhere else?

A: He just pitched at home and he went to Tyler, but this year he says he is going to make some trips. Whether that means on the bus or he will drive down, and go home.

Q: That is permissible?

A: Oh yeah, you gotta give a give some lead way. I mean, he has other businesses. If he wasn't a started, I'd say no. If he comes in and does his start, he is not going to pitch for four days. Our road trips are usually just 6 days.

Q: Right. So he just misses one start anyway?

A: Well if he is going to play. He is going to be the second game, we figure out. He is not going to start again on the road. He is going to open up at home, so ship him home.

I haven't talked to him yet.

Q: But you have every reason to believe that he will be there?

A: Oh I know he is going to. They went back in and completely cleaned his knee. I called him after the operation and he said he was feeling fine. He was going to start running and everything. When I talked to Pete he was all signed and read to go. Said he is going to make road trips.

Q: You have to feel good about that?

A: Yes. Because he is a good influence on the ball club. That's one thing that helps. Last year I didn't have the comrade that I wanted, because I had 7 Latin players and most of em didn't speak good English, so they stayed together. You know it was hard. You look at my dugout, I had a group of guys sitting outside the dugout and the other guys sittin in the dugout. I'm not gonna have that this year.

Q: Good.

A: We are all going to be in the dugout. I told my pitching coach, whatever pitchers you think are going to be in relief, short relief or long relief, they can go to, him and the extra catcher can go to the bull pen. The rest of the guys I want watching the game, seeing what is going on. Watching the hitters. You know, that is the whole thing in an independent league, you gotta take the attitude that this is pro ball. This is a second chance. Now if you get a guy that is teaching school and he is just doing it for the summer, you know, you gotta get his attitude that hey we gotta win. You know you wanna win. It's just not a summer job.

Q: And it's not just for fun. I mean we got something going here.

A: Right. That's right. So that's the whole thing. Trying to get everybody in the same frame of mind. Last year was hard for us. Our clubhouse was a mile away from the ball park.

Q: Good grief.

A: So you had to get dressed and drive you car over, get back, change, come back to take infield.

Q: Pain in the rear wasn't it?

A: Well in that respect and one thing I did wrong was say you wanna hit today? It might be 95 or 98 or over 100. Lotta of guys would say no. I'd say okay, but we are taking infield. One or the other. We hit, no infield. It was so hot. We'd go to Baton Rouge and they wouldn't even hit.

Q: Wow!

A: Albany wouldn't even hit.

Q: You said you did wrong. What are you going to do this year?

A: This year we hit everyday.

Q: Everyday?

A: Everyday. I gotta enough guys that I can. You know if the guy gets tired. I got good players to fill in. Last year I didn't. With a month to go in the season, I lost all my Latin players to Visa problems. I was stuck. We had to sign who ever we could to finish the season. We were in second place. I lost all these. Lost my short stop, starting pitchers, second baseman.

Q: Not good. Back to major league baseball for just a minute. I remember several things you talked about that I would like to have on the recording. One was, well I think before I ask about Bob Fellar, to put in an incident I think you told me about with him maybe. Were you on more than 2 All Star teams?

A: Three. 60, 61 and 62.

Q: Was that your first year in Baltimore?

A: Yeah.

Q: You went there in 59?

A: No. It was my rookie year. I was an alternate. I was an alternate in 61. I was a starter in 62.

Q: Well Jim you must get a lot of satisfaction from having really your first major league season and you were an All Star?

A: Yes. I was so excited. I never even thought about it. I mean I was having a good year at mid way, but that doesn't mean anything.

Q: Yeah.

A: Back then the players and managers voted. It wasn't a popularity poll like it is now. I can't remember who the first baseman was, but that I believe in 60 Paul Richards was the manager. No he wasn't, but whoever it was, chose me. As second first baseman. Back then we played two games. You know, one in July and one in August.

Q: They were that far apart?

A: Yeah.

Q: I didn't remember that. I just assumed they were on a weekend. Maybe a Friday night or something.

A: No. One in July, like it usually is. Then we played another one in August.

Q: A month later? Two or three weeks later?

A: Well I gotta. I just found it, the Chicago Wrigley one, it was August. I don't know what the date was.

Q: Wow. Back in the 60's, those two games, did you get to bat more than once or twice?

A: The first two, I didn't. I got up once in each one. Then in the second year, 61, was the year we got rained out in Boston in the 5th. I was getting ready to pinch hit. I pinched hit in New York. Casey Stengall didn't know my name either. He didn't know me from Adam. He wanted me to pinch hit he said. Give me the big guy that swings so hard he said.

Q: Stengall.

A: In 62, I played both games 9 innings. I was the only guy to do it.

Q: In 62?

A: I was a starter and I played both games 9 innings.

Q: How did you do?

A: Uh. Well lets see. I think I got a career average of 187.

Q: All Star game. Didn't break any bats did you?

A: No. After we played Wrigley, Colavito got up against Marasho and hit a three run homer. I got up and I couldn't find my helmet, so I put on a Yankee hat. I got a base hit. I got to first base and Hal looked at me. I said I told you gotta buy me.

Q: There you go. Put that Yankee insignia on and you suddenly become a hitter.

A: But it was fun. It's not like it is now. They got the fan fest. The home run derby.

Q: The fall showcase.

A: We went into town the day before we took batting practice. I'm trying to remember if it was the day before or the day of. To tell you the truth, I can't remember. You just took batting practice and that was it. Then when they introduced you, and that was my biggest thing. We are home. San Francisco people who thought I would never make it, you know after all the years in the minors, here I am on the All Star team. Everybody introduced me as Don Gentile.

Q: No!

A: I almost died. He came up to me after and said Jim I am sorry. He said I looked at Gentile. In World War II there was a pilot, an ace, named Don Gentile. He was a flying ace.

Q: He was embarrassed as he could be too.

A: Oh yeah. He apologized to me.

Q: San Francisco. 61, 62?

A: I wanna say 61.

Q: Were you there? Wasn't the Texas All Star game when Stu Miller was blown off the mound?

A: Yeah. And I don't know. Unless it happened twice, he got blow off when he was pitching to me. It was 2 and 2 and he fell backward.

Q: The wind actually kinda got him off balance.

A: Yeah, but the story is it was Yogie Berra. So I don't know if it happened twice or not, but it happened against me I know.

Q: In the All Star game?

A: Yeah. Cause he would wind up and the wind would come in. Your pants would just stand straight out. It just blew. The funny thing is, he ended up being my roommate in Baltimore.

Q: Yeah.

A: We roomed together the last year in Baltimore.

Q:Stu Miller. Quiet fella?

A: Very quiet. Come to the ballpark and he'd put on his shorts and sweat shirt with a turtle neck and socks then sit and do crossword puzzles. He didn't have to go out and run. What did he weigh? 140 or 150?

Q: Yeah.

A: To get through a whole year, he couldn't run everyday. He was funny. He is the same way now. You can't get him out of Sacramento I don't think.

Q: Wow.

A: I know a lot of people have ask. They wanna do interviews. I know we went into the Baltimore Hall of Fame together.

Q:Did you?

A: Yes. He didn't want to. They had a tough time talking him into coming.

Q: I loved seeing him brought in because you knew the guy was going to throw strikes.

A: He could twist it. That's what threw you off. You were up there hitting.

Q: Yeah, I forgot that.

A: That was his whole thing. But he threw slow.

Q: Yeah. In fact I read someone who said of Stu Miller, this has been years ago, when he was pitching, he had three pitches. Slow, slower and to heck with it.

A: He created that slow curve with that neck.

Q: Snap that neck?

A: Yeah. Snap it just as he let it go. And you would start to jump almost you know. Then he would give you his little fast ball about 82. It would look like. They said Frank Howard had a tough time hittin it.

Q: Try to get out in front of that pitch everytime wouldn't you? I bet you would have had a tough time against him. With a big swing and you know.

A: I think in the All Star game he struck me out. I think. I'm quite sure he did.

Q: Well do you think he always had that snap?

A: Oh yeah. That was his thing.

Q: He always did it?

A: Yeah.

Q: I had forgotten that til you said that. I've seen that on TV and to in the ballpark.

A: That is something I wish I could find is some film of me playing with. Back then they didn't take a lot. Uh. I've never been able to find any, but .

Q: Maybe I could put that on my website and somebody will hit on there and their daddy will have had a camera.

A: They did a. Jim McKay was the head of the sports. Oh for petes sake.

Q: ABC?

A: Yeah. ABC. I don't know, what was it, sports spectacular?

Q: Yeah. Wide World of Sports.

A: There you go. Wide World of Sports. He did a deal on Paul Richards. I did the Vitalis commercial before that.

Q: Wow

Q: Because of our parents, because of our nationality, because. You probably dealt with this anger that you felt. And it wasn't anger, as you pointed out very clearly, it really, anytime you felt that you should have done better. I mean no one probably, that change up on a 3 -2 count?.

A: 3 -2 change up yeah.

Q: Who would have thought it?

A: You know I wasn't bad. I mean. He called me out, but the umpire took that I threw the bat. That just changed my career completely. I was looked at. It was in the first part of June. I already had 7 home runs and I was doing better. I was learning how to hit in the Astrodome, cause I had come over there in 65.

Q: It was enough difference that you had to learn?

A: Well it was so big. The ball didn't carry.

Q: I see.

A: You felt like you had to put an extra charge into it you know. It was always refreshing to go out on the road, because it was tough to hit in there. The first year I hit seven, the short time I was there, I hit seven home runs and none of em in the Astrodome.

Q: I see.

A: Richards called me in. He was managing Houston at the time.

Q: Paul was? Okay. You mentioned Grady Hanton and I thought maybe he was the manager.

A: No, he was the manager the follow year in 66.

Q: Okay.

A: When I went over there in 65 he was in Kansas City. He wanted me.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I got over there and I just wasn't hittin real well and at the end of the season he called me in the office and told me I had to get myself together. He said you don't have to swing any harder, you don't have try any harder to hit em out of here. He said they'll go. He said but, go home this winter and get your head on straight and don't worry about the Astrodome.

Q: Do you think he was right? I mean you indicated that it was tougher to hit.

A: Well I went home that winter and I worked out and just said to myself, gee man, I can't swing any harder. The first exhibition game that we played, I hit one out of Danny McClain. So I thought well I can hit em out of here. I think , out of the seven that I hit, I hit 3 out of there before I got sent down. I was my own fault. You know sometimes I think back, you know, like I was raised without a father. My grandmother raised me. I could have been angry, I don't know. I never wanted for anything, my grandmother was a wonderful person and I was very lucky. I have been lucky my whole life. I went to public schools and I would go one day, then take a day off. I didn't have any reason to go. I tried out for the baseball team and the coach there said, you are a sophomore, and only juniors and seniors play on the varsity. I played with all these guys on the varsity. I just played better than them. I played in every league with these guys and they all tried to talk to the coach and say he can play coach. No, gotta be a junior. Then I met Dick Murray, who was managing, the coach at Scared Heart. He asked me how I would like to go there and I said, well my family can't afford the tuition. Don't worry, you are a hardship case. They paid for my books. He went around. See if you went to a Catholic school, you could live out of the area, but if you lived where I lived, you had to go to Lincoln. So now I transferred to a private school. I could live in. He went around all over, I think everybody on our ball club had a scholarship.

Q: He was looking for the good of our team wasn't he?

A: Well he won in 50,51, 52. He won 11 years. He was either in the play offs or the championships.

Q: Wow.

A: I think he might have crossed the line a few times, is all.

Q: Maybe.

A: But a lot of the ballplayers we had were signed pro ball that never went anywhere. I mean they, but he was a heck of a coach. He was a Dodger birddog.

Q: So he knew talent? Recognized talent and the Dodgers realized that?

A: Right.

Q: He funneled you that direction then? Was he instrumental in

A: Well when I was a senior I knew I was going to get some money. I knew, because I pitched my senior year and I won 12 and lost 1 and had an ERA of something like 0.35. Then I pitched in an All Star game, the East bay against the West bay and should have only pitched 3 innings, but the Mission High coach, George Wolften left me in the for 9 and I struck out 18.

Q: Wow.

A: So, uh, when I graduated people came around mostly as a pitcher. But I knew if I had any career, it wasn't going to be pitching.

Q: Really?

A: I could throw hard and maybe they could teach me a curve ball and stuff, but I couldn't throw a curve ball or anything. A change up, I knew nothing about it. I just reared back and fired.

Q: You were big enough and strong enough you could throw it be em.

A: Right. So they all came in and wanted me as a pitcher. Well the Dodgers came in and they said we will give you \$25,000 as a pitcher or \$25,000 as a first baseman. So I said fine. So I signed with the Dodgers. I signed in 52 and I wasn't going to go out. They were going to wait til 53 to send me to spring training. Around the last part of July they said Santa Barbara just clenched the pennant. Why don't you go down there and see what pro ball is like. One of the veterans got hurt. When I walk in, I hadn't touched a ball in about 6 weeks. I walked in to San Jose stadium and George Sugar the manager handed me the ball and told me I was pitching. Well I had a no hitter for 8 innings. Then I lost 3-2 in the 9th. He used me in the last month and I ended up with 2 wins and 6 losses. The 2 I won, I hit home runs in. So the Dodgers asked me if I wanted to come in, I was on a AA roster. They asked if I wanted to come in as a first baseman or a pitcher. I said I would like to try first and I never went back.

Q: Yeah. You always like to hit though, didn't you?

A: Yes and I liked playing first. I just, my biggest thing was that running in the outfield. I couldn't see that everyday. When I went down to Santa Barbara, you know in high school you run a little bit, but I got down there and they put me with this left handed pitcher, Jake Abbott, and he loved to run. He ran me so much I was throwing up in the outfield. That's what got me off it, I said hey this isn't for me. So when they offered to let me try first base, I jumped on it. I went into spring training and something happened. I was hittin everybody and we started playing games. I mean I would play a game with the Fort Worth club in the morning. Afternoon I might go play with Montreal. Then I played the night. I was playing 3 games a day. Everybody wanted to see me for some reason. So finally, I thought I was going back to Santa Barbara as a first baseman, Class C, but they said well, we are going to send you to Pueblo Class A. After everybody starts cut, you will probably then go to Santa Barbara. I said well, okay. Well I went there and right off the bat I started hittin so well that I stayed all year and led the league in home runs and RBIs. I hit 34 homers and drove in 109.

Q: In Pueblo?

A: Yeah.

Q: 34?

A: If the put, I thought I was going to the AA club the next year. They sent me right back to Pueblo. Told me to have a good year.

Q: Hodges , was he in his prime in 51 too? He was, wasn't he?

A: He was a young man, you know. He was probably 24 or 25 if that. It was just one of those thing. That's how baseball was back then. So many guys, Jim that played AAA that would probably have been outstanding major league ball players. That had great years in AAA. There were guys that were in the big leagues, say 4 years and 60 days and they went to AAA if they needed that extra. 177 days back then was a year. So they were hoping to get back up there for the last 80 days and to get in. Then they made it 4 years. That was one day you were eligible.

Q: One day?

A: One day, yeah.

Q: Bout 5 years and 1 day.

A: No. One day. You start.

Q: I interviewed Ennis Slaughter and of course he, you know, the old school and all of that. He was talking about. In fact, I think he even mentioned how much he was drawing and I'm sure what about 15 years probably in the majors. Course you qualify for it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Does it make a difference? You probably had what, 7 or 8 years?

A: Yeah.

Q: In the majors?

A: Yeah. 7 ½ .

Q: If you had or if someone else had 12 or 13, would there be a difference in income?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Would there?

A: Yeah, but not that much. I mean because, you have a base, your base might be 6 or 7 hundred dollars. Or 800 dollars. Then you variables that the money that they invest is what has been raising ours every year.

Q: Right. Exactly.

A: It's not that, it's a nice bit of change. We get, you know, guys that have been up there about 12 years are probably getting \$3,000.00 or better, you know. I know I can't complain with what I get. I'm very happy . In fact that helped me retire in 57.

Q: There ya go.

A: Because it is steady. The big thing is, if you keep the medical, they take so much out of it.

Q: And you have kept the medical?

A: Oh yeah, I kept the whole thing since I have been out.

Q: That's what I do for a living is sell health insurance and I know how important that is to have something, otherwise it could cost you an arm and leg.

A: I think I pay right now, I used to pay 420 a month for me and my wife. When I turned 65, I went up to a high level and it dropped down. Right now I think I pay 380 or 340 a month. And that is my secondary.

Q: Yeah, but it's there for you.

A: But it's there, right. Medicare is number in the other.

Q: Sure.

Q: One thing before I forget, a lot of people hit on my website and they ask, find out more about what these guys did when they got out of baseball. I remember some things

that you said, and of course we have talked about what you are doing now. You are back in your first love of course, with baseball. Now you were at , was it at Target?

A: No. When I first got out of baseball, I uh, I didn't know what I was going to do. A friend of mine in San Diego owned about 6 stores in El Paso and Arizona and they were called Glow. They were like a K-Mart plus disconnected service center with gas. He asked me how I would learn the tire business and service business. So, I worked for him in San Diego for about 6 months. Learned about tires. Then he asked me to go to Albuquerque. So I went on the pretense I was going to be the assistant manager. Well when I got there I found out that they put out in the service center changing tires and oil changes, which I knew nothing about. You put a car up on a rack, I was scared to death.

Q: I bet.

A: I figured that car up then go poof. I got to asked this mechanic, Bill was real nice to me, Bill Rowe was his name. He showed me how to set the, you know, or if I had a question, he would take time to show me. I was out there for 6 months all by myself. Had to walk two miles to the motel after work and at 6 in the morning. He used to go by on Saturday after work and I'd get a carton of milk, some bread and bologna or maybe peanut butter and go back to my motel room and just lay there praying for football. I'd watch football.

Q: How many months did you do that?

A: 6 months. My wife was in San Diego with the two boys.

Q: Doesn't sound like a fun time.

A: It wasn't. Cause I mean, you know I didn't go around telling people I was a , if someone asked me, I'd tell em that was my brother. They'd say did you play pro ball? No, that's my brother.

Q: Why would you do that?

A: I was embarrassed. Still had an ego.

Q: Oh sure. Most men carry it to their grave.

A: Big leaguer all these years and suddenly here you are changing tires. Well after 6 months, our store manager who was also a , he went around to the other stores. They made him a partner. So they had to have a manager, so they took Bill Rowe. Who was mechanic at the time, but had experience as a manager and became manager. I didn't know it at the time, but they said do you want Jim Gentile as your assistant or let him go? I mean he could have said no, I don't want him. I would have been stuck in Albuquerque. He said no, I like him. He stayed out there and has learned how to do this stuff. I became assistant manager and I stayed there for a year. Then they gave me my own store in Tempe Arizona. I worked for them for 5 years. Then I went to work for a company called Giant. I worked for them for a year.

Q: Is that a grocery?

A: It was tire company. I got a Midas Muffler shop. I was there for a few years and then got out of that business and moved here to Oklahoma City. Went to work for TG&Y.

Q: Oh, that's what it was.

A: In the service department. Ran the auto department. Then Venture came into town and they hired me. I ran their tire department and they liked what I did so they brought me inside and I had a third of the store I think. I did that for 8 years.

Q: 8 years.

A: Then I just decided enough is enough. I am 57 and I retired.

Q: Well Jim I didn't have the talent, obviously that you had, but I can relate to people. Cause I mean you guys were, you were icons to the fans. You were heroes and that would be tough. Most players have the same stories don't they? It's not just Jim Gentile.

A: Oh no.

Q: All these guys end up doing things.

A: A lot of players that , in my time, I think a lot of guys. The guys I think maybe came from a small town. They had hooked up with something. Skinny Brown and guys like that .

Q: They got into the automobile dealerships and various things.

A: Where I never did that. I worked. When I was in the big leagues I worked for the ball club and then when I had my restaurant, a couple of restaurants I had in Baltimore before I got traded, I took care of those.

Q: Diamond Jims?

A: Diamond Jims. It was . I never really worked at anything but baseball.

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: I said to my wife when we came back from Japan, I said what am I going to do? She said you can do anything. I said what is that? You know, the jobs of fronting for a company wasn't there . Public relations wasn't there any more. So I had to go to work. I wished back then someone would have thought having counseling for players. People would say what do you do when you are finished. Well you never wanted to talk about that.

Q: No.

A: You knew around 34 or 33 or 34 back then, that's when they said you were finished. You didn't want to think about that at the time.

Q: No, of course not.

A: You figured something was going to come along. You'd hook up with something. Even going to Japan I thought was my big break. Ruptured my Achilles tendon and didn't get to play. They didn't bring me back.

Q: I bet you could have done something in Japan.

A: Yeah. Our ballpark, center field was only 250 feet.

Q: I would have loved to have seen you play a couple of years there. Look at them stats. I'm going to go out to the car and get something that I want to show to you that I found very interesting and you may already have known.

Q: 755 home runs. It's interesting that if Mark McGuire had gone to bat as many times as Hank Aaron, Mark McGuire would have 1240 home runs. Mickey would have 817. Ruth would have had 1051. Jim Gentile would have had 757.

A: How bout that.

Q: How bout that. If you had gone to bat as many times as Hank Aaron did, you would have hit within, you would have hit 2 more home runs than Hank Aaron would have hit.

A: You know, if I, my kids always ask me, they say dad you only 179, cause they hear 300. I said well fellas I only really had 6 good years to play. My last year was up and down, up and down. I said I had quite a few, the guy at the , he just called me, the guy at Sports Digest, no not Sports Digest, Collectors Digest. Have you ever seen that book?

Q: Um huh.

A: Well he is doing an article on me and he called me. He told me in the MacMillan encyclopedia they changed the RBIs where Maris and I tied. Now, my wife called Barnes and Nobel.

Q: Barnes and Nobel.

A: They said the only one they could get is 1997. Well I know that they changed it 5 years ago and no one told me.

Q: Yeah.

A: There is a new one out, you know.

Q: Sports Collectors Digest?

A: No. The encyclopedia. MacMillans encyclopedia.

Q: I don't know.

A: I don't either. He says, he was reading it, in fact I am gonna call him. He told me that it says right here. Maris 141, Gentile 141.

Q: Well I'm not familiar with the MacMillans, I have one that shows everything. Mine is some years old because the players I interview, no of them played into the 70's. So I don't need a 2000 edition. But I was at Barnes and Nobel last week and there is a 2002 edition. It may not be MacMillan, they may have published it and I don't know the official name of it, but it is a concise something of baseball players.

A: I wish you would look it up.

Q: Yeah, I will. I have this tape transcribed. Another name jumped out at me on that list, starting at the top with McGuire at 1248. Babe Ruth, Ralph Kiner, Harmon Killibrew, David Kingmen, Mike Schmidt, Ted Williams, Bob Pointer would have had 823. Mickey at 817. Jimmy Box. Jim Gentile was number 13 at 757. Dick Stewart at 705. Johnny Blanchard. Dave Nicholson.

A: How bout that.

Q: Others just below the top 100. Steve Bilcho, Dale Long, Dave Mickelson. Boy I remember when he came up. He was touted to be a slugger wasn't he?

A: Oh yeah. He had a body like superman.

Q: Wow.

A: But if he hit it, he hit it a mile. He took more batting practice than anybody I ever saw. Richards worked with, worked with him, worked with him. He just, I don't know what it was. He just had a lot of holes in his swing. Lot of holes.

Q: Did he swing at bad pitches?

A: Yeah, he'd swing at bad pitches. He'd miss good ones or boy all of a sudden he would hit one over his head and knock 9 miles.

Q: I remember you talking to Dave Nicholson doing that. I remember a pitcher that the Orioles brought up. Bartkowski?

A: Delgowski.

Q: Supposed to have been able to throw the ball 140 miles an hour or something?

A: Fastest I have ever seen.

Q: Fastest you have ever seen?

A: I figured him no bigger than Stu Miller. So I mean.

Q: Really, he must have had an arm like a cannon.

A: It was. It was unbelievable. People couldn't believe it. I mean he would wind up and you'd think. It was just that he threw so long in the minors. He just threw his arm out.

Q: Did he?

A: Well when he came up to the Orioles, he got bad arm trouble.

Q: Jim Gentile played his first pro season in Santa Barbara. This is the guy who did the research. I'm sure this is that very book that you are talking about. I have not read this. I thought I would read it out loud and see there is any comments that you have. First pro season Santa Barbara. Pueblo Dodgers in 53 and 54. Played 4 games with the Dodgers in 57 at age 23. 12 games with the Dodgers in 58. After a year at St. Paul, he hit the bigs with Baltimore in 60. Last year in the majors was 66 when he played 49 games and 33 more for Cleveland before. He went to the minors. Played Oklahoma City 66. 21 homers in San Diego in 67. He said he can't find any record of you playing in 69.

A: No. I was in Japan.

Q: He would have been 35 years old then. Like you said you were right there at that age, where back then, that was considered down hill, close to retirement.

A: That's how many times at back?

Q: Hank Aaron went to bat 12,131 times. If you had gone to bat 12,131 times, you would have hit more home runs than Hank Aaron. I thought you would like that. These are the type things that you guys do. They sit around and do these things and it blows my mind.

A: I met the guy from Saber in San Francisco. He is connected to the sporting news. Had his card for a long time. Name started with a G. Anyway, I have to be out to dinner and he saw me and came over and told me. He started to get on me about the RBIs. We should change it. I'll push to get it changed. You know, I have never gone after anybody to change it. I figured he's a Yankee, they are not going to change it.

Q: There you go.

A: You know but, I figure they'll do it and I'll be dead like they did to Hank Wilson, they found his 192 RBI. He really needed that one. He read it to me. The Digest, he read right out of it was Maris and me 141. I'm sorry, I wish I had paid more attention. My son does. My son found a thing honoring the best 100 at 8 position. I guess I was 94. They go by your years and different and I was 94. Pete O'bryan was 96. I said as the years go on, Pete you and I are gonna sorta be etched out. We got about 4 more places then we are gone.

Q: I don't know. I remember Pete's career. I don't see how it could stack up to yours at all. That's just an opinion. Course kids.

A: He was a different type of hitter too. He was lucky enough to make the big money. That's how he bought these ball clubs.

Q: Was he later enough in the years, when the money was there?

A: Yeah. Guess so. He must have made good money, cause he's the one who invested in Fort Worth and Tyler. Now Tyler has moved to Jackson. He just sold, I don't know how much he had, but he just sold 12 1/2% to Carl Bell so he could get this stadium built. Pete didn't want to be in on the stadium.

Q: I wanted to ask you another story that I remember was the time that we visited before. This is a video. Actually Jim I don't do video recording, but I cant' down load this audio onto the internet, but I can this. So if you don't mind, I am just going to turn this on and get a little bit of that rusty voice of yours.

A: Oh boy.

Q: And I may or may not use it. It's a little more complicated than downloading and stuff. It's recording. I wanted to ask you next and if you want to share some other things that's great, I may ask you about Jackie Brown. I was curious about the concept. Before I

do that, you told me that you were in Houston and you were at the airport and at that time your wife was your girlfriend I guess. Her parents were baseball fans. Something about .

A: Well what happened is I had met Paula when she was flying for Braniff. I met her when we were coming out of Chicago and we started talking. I asked her to come up to the Astrodome and everything. So we were dating when this problem came up. When they suspended me for a week, I drove down to Dallas and she took a week off and we went to Galveston and spent a week on the beach.

Q: Great.

A: Yeah. I'm sittin here wondering what's gonna happen.

Q: You couldn't enjoy that very much.

A: I wasn't enjoying it because I didn't like, I didn't know what was going to happen. Anyway, we get back and I go see Tal Smith and he tells me, well we put you on waivers and nobody, you a hot item, nobody has picked you up. You have two choices, you can retire or you can go to Oklahoma City. Well if I go to Oklahoma City, they gotta pay me my big league salary, so I didn't want to lose that.

Q: Absolutely.

A: So I said I'll go to OK City. I drive back to Dallas and I've got two days to be there, so that afternoon we go out to the park out there and Six Flags and have a good time and we get home and Paula's mother calls and says guess who's coming to town tonight? Paula says who? Jim Gentile is coming in. He is going to play for the 89ers tonight. Paula said no I don't think so. She says oh yeah, it's here in the paper. No mom. I don't think he is going to make it there tonight. Well how do you know? Cause he is standing right here. I've been dating him for the last two months. So I didn't show up that night. I went in the next day. I drove down the next day, but it was pretty comical. Her mother really loves baseball. They used to go to all the 89ers games back when they were in the old stadium. She was really excited that I was coming.

Q: Sure.

A: Then to find out that her daughter is dating is quite a thing.

Q: How long after that did you marry Paula?

A: It was 66 or 67. We waited a year, yeah. Also I didn't know whether or not her parents were really in love with the idea of her going with me, because I had already been married and had 3 kids. Paula was only going on 23 and I was 31. So I wrote em a letter. Tell how I felt, but if they felt it would be better for their daughter to find someone else, that hasn't already had life. They said no. They were just happy with me. So we have married 34 years going on 35.

Q: The boys that you mentioned. You have a son in Waco?

A: Yes, Bob is 32.

Q: That would be from this marriage?

A: Yes and I have another one who should be getting up to go to work who is 30.

Q: Who lives here you mean.

A: Yeah. He is staying with us for awhile.

Q: Great. So then you had 3 from the first marriage.

A: Right.

Q: And you have 2 from the this one. Rather than personal, back to baseball.

I told you a couple of weeks ago that I hoped and I still intend, if Jackie Brant, will allow me, I still have to talk with him, if I can interview him and you said something that commonly used as an expression for Jackie Brant, a flake. Flaky.

A: Flaky.

Q: Flaky. What, by definition, does that mean?

A: Well you just never knew what he was going to do. He was just flaky. He'd do some stupid things. But on the field, he could play.

Q: He was a good ball player.

A: Yes. He could field as good as Willie Mays. He could field and he could hit. He just didn't get the publicity that he should have gotten. He was with the Giants and you had Willie Mays and all that. We got him when he came over to Baltimore. Played great for us. He just didn't get the publicity. He was one of the better center fielders that has ever played out there.

Q: Did he bat in front or behind you?

A: Jackie hit, I'm thinkin, sometimes he hit second.

Q: Second?

A: Yeah, second. In fact I think when I hit the grand slams, he was on both times. Herzog was hittin 3rd. I hit fourth.

Q: You know that is funny, Jim. I followed the Orioles, I've told you my stories about why I fell in love with them as a kid and stuff. I hardly remember Whitey Herzog being there.

A: Really?

Q: I can remember you and Jackie Brant, Stu Miller, Chuck Estrada and all those guys. Treandos and Skinny, but Herzog. What position did he play? The outfield?

A: Outfield. There is always a position that a number of players play. We had Snider. We had Tasby. We had Herzog as right fielders. See right field was a place where. We always had Brant in center and maybe Wigling in left and you know. Right field seemed to be. There was never a guy who played everyday.

Q: Right field was the problem area.

A: Then we had Albi Pearson. I think we moved Brant over to left and put Pearson in center I think, but uh, Whitey played right field real well.

Q: Was he there more than a year or so?

A: He was there a year. I'm trying to remember, I have to look. I have the pictures hanging up in my office. No he could play.

Q: Wow. I knew Herzog was a good player, just somehow he just, in my memory bank, I knew he was there. I did not remember him playing and so Herzog would have batted third did you say?

A: He batter third when I hit the two grand slams.

Q: That was two in one day wasn't it? Same day? When you had 5 that year.

A: Yep.

Q: Has the record ever been tied?

A: Oh yeah. First baseman for the Yankees Don Mattingly he hit six.

Q: Hit six? Grand slams?

A: I happened to be home that afternoon and watched him play. He got up there with the bases loaded and he already had five, left-handed.

Q: I'm sure your like this right?

A: A left-hander was pitching I wasn't looking for him to hit it. He did, he hit it in the upper deck. I said to myself, heck I had the record for 26 years.

Q: Heck of record. 5 grand slams. How many career did you have?

A: 7

Q: 5 in one year.

A: You know it's funny. There are certain years you don't get very many times with the bases loaded, but in 61 I got up quite a few times with the bases loaded. The next day I didn't start after I hit the two grand slams. I pinched hit in the 8th inning with the bases loaded and struck out. Then the next game we played against Minnesota and Pasqual was pitching, I hit a two run double off the top of the fence with the bases loaded. That series I got up quite a few times, but then you never know when you are going to get up again. I got up against Phil Riggin in Detroit and hit one off him with the bases loaded. Then the 4th one I pinched hit against Ed Rackow, Kansas City at home. The 5th one we were playing in Chicago and it was raining and the bases were loaded and they brought Don Larson into pitch against me. The first two pitches were high fast balls for strikes and the rain is coming down and I'm wailing at it, didn't know if I was swinging at water or the ball. The ump calls time with 2 strikes on me. I just looked at him like , Jesus one more pitch. Paul Richards had just left as manager. He quite in the season. He was up in the radio booth with Jack Brickhouse and they got on the subject of me and I had been in a little slump and Richards said yeah but he is the type of hitter that he might walk out of that clubhouse and hit one right out of here. He said he comes off the bench swinging. I got up there the first pitch he threw me hit the upper deck and grand slam.

Q: You mentioned several things that triggered thoughts. I still want. Phil Riggin, wasn't he the guy that they made the manager in Baltimore?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you think that was a good move?

A: If you play baseball long enough.

Q: I was shocked.

A: Well I think , that wasn't as bad as bringing Martinez out of the radio booth. Houston had just left as manager. The pitcher.

Q: The pitcher. Yeah, I know who you are talking about.

A: Well here is a radio announcer for x amount of years and they are gonna make a manager. If you have been around baseball long enough you know what did Casey Stengall have to do? He put 8 names on the line up, go get em. There wasn't a whole lot of thinking gone into it. I mean no to take anything away from Casey, but you had the hitters he had, you know.

Q: That's what Jerry Lumpy said about. He played in that era when the Yankees, just you ink it in you know. He said of course Stengall slept most of the time, which I had heard that story, but I didn't know if I believed it, but evidently he did. Course then he went to the Mets and course he loved the spot light and if they lost , he loved it. They were on the front page of the paper. No matter what the Yankees did, the Mets were going to be on the front page.

A: Larry Durger.

Q: A good pitcher.

A: He was with me in 65, 66 and was just a young kid. What do you call it? He'd been in baseball, Phil had been in baseball, been pitching coach, coach and everything. If you had

been around baseball and stayed in the environment, there is no reason why he can't go down there. You have your idea what you want to do. You have your team and it's just a matter of making the right moves once in a while. Once you put those guys out there, you can't hit, you can't catch and if you lose ten games in a row, it's not the manager. He's put the best that the owner has given him to put out there, but he gets the blame.

Q: Every time, doesn't he?

A: See ya later.

Q: Yep, every time.

A: I have never been able to figure that out. He doesn't swing the bat. They try to say it's the attitude. That's bull. Your losing, you losing. It's not the manager, he can't get in there and beat you with a whip.

Q: As much as some of them would probably like to.

A: Yeah, cause the manager knows if he is losing, losing, losing. He knows his job is in jeopardy. All you can do is try to get the guys pepped up to go out there. Tell em they can win. When I played at Kansas City, we had good ball players. We had David Segee. We had outstanding pitching. If they pitched a good game, we didn't hit. If we got a guy out there that we knocked around for 8 runs, they got 9. Just a mediocre ball club. I looked the other day and I think one season we were 24 1/2 games out. Just happens. We had a good ball club. I couldn't see where. We had Charles and Degreen. We had Colavito that year, he had 34 homers. They either scored one run more than we did or we didn't score.

Q: You mentioned Camilio Pasqual. Did Jim Gentile like the high hard one or that curve ball that Pasqual threw, was it tough?

A: He was a tough pitcher. I don't wanna sound cocky or nothing, but the game that I had against him in 1960, we went over there to play em. I hit 2 homers and drove in 5 runs. I think that is one of the reasons that I stayed. Not that he didn't get me out over a period of time, that one game I needed, I got. I think that helped me to stay on the Orioles in 60. Then we came back to Baltimore and we played. I was 2 for 4 and drove in 4 runs. It just got me going.

Q: Sure.

A: Otherwise, if I did have a good game that day, I could have been playing at Toronto.

Q: Yeah. It was the high hard one? Is that the one that you liked the best?

A: I had to learn how to hit that. That's what they used to do is just go up the ladder. When I first started out. I learned how to hit that. I was a good curve ball hitter.

Q: Were you?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you hitting Pasqual didn't surprise you?

A: No.

Q: As great a curve ball pitcher as he was, you had confidence.

A: Some days he is gonna get me out, some he can't. A 260 hitter. So they got me out more than I got them, but I still got my hits. I needed to get the hits. I don't care if I am 0-3, that last time up at bat if I tie the game or win it.

Q: You've done your job. Absolutely. Pasqual pitched for the Senators for several years. My Dad was stationed in, was actually in the Pentagon, and we lived in Arlington Virginia. I'd go down and see the Orioles play the Washington Senators. Pasqual pitched.

Baltimore had a player that went, Buster Nerum, didn't they have him? He went to Washington maybe?

A: I don't remember Buster.

Q: You don't remember Nerum? Who was the pitcher, you may have been there, who was the pitcher that the Washington Senators had that struck out 16 Orioles, 18 Orioles.

A: Tom Chaney.

Q: Tom Chaney.

Q: Were you there then?

A: You know, I don't remember. I'm sure, I know his name, just don't remember if I was there, played in that game or not. Probably did. I probably gave him a couple. He was a good pitcher, had a good curve ball and knew how to pitch.

Q: As a hitter, and these figures here attest to that, as a great hitter, a good homerun hitter, Ted Williams, they said he could read the seams on the ball. He could see the ball that well. His vision was that good. Was that something that you felt? One of the strengths that you had?

A: I don't think so. I just hit what I could see. You pick up the spin in the ball if it is a curve ball or something, but as far as seeing the seams, no. I mean that almost like stopping the ball.

Q: Yeah it is.

A: My fielding was excellent. He surprised 45,000 fans by getting a base hit.

Q: That's terrible. Was that a backhanded compliment?

A: Well you know they would come up and tell me and I'd say after spring break that's the only surprise. I used to just tell em. Wait til the bell rings.

Q: I guess Bobby Boyd was on his last leg as a major leaguer.

A: Well, I don't know where he went after that. He stayed with us during the 60s. The thing is, Bobby was a 300 hitter, an outstanding hitter. He didn't drive in a lot of runs. He was a long ball hitter.

Q: That's what he needed with the line up. I'm gonna have you sign some blank cards if you don't mind.