

Jimmy Piersall

Interview conducted by Mark Liptak in 2005. Originally published at White Sox Interactive in 2005.

The Chicago White Sox haven't had a lot of things to boast about in their 105-year history. World Series championships have been few and far between; in fact, the Sox have been rumored to be moving more often than they've won titles. But there's one area that the Sox can hold over most of the other clubs in baseball and that's in the quality of their announcers. Four men who have broadcast White Sox games have been honored by inclusion into the Broadcaster's Wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame. The roll call sees Jack Brickhouse (Radio 1945, TV 1948-1967), Harry Caray (Radio 1971-1981, TV 1973-1981), Bob Elson (Radio 1944-1970) and Milo Hamilton (Radio 1962-1965). In the future "Hawk" Harrelson may join those exclusive ranks.

The Sox have also had some wonderful broadcasting teams, individuals who meshed and brought all the excitement, agony, wins and losses to Sox fans. Among the better teams were Brickhouse and Vince Lloyd (TV 1956-1964), Don Drysdale and Harrelson (TV 1982-1985), Harrelson and Tom Paciorek (TV 1990-1999), Elson and Hamilton (Radio 1962-1965) and John Rooney and Ed Farmer (Radio 1992-2005).

But standing head and shoulders above those outstanding teams was the duo of Caray and Jimmy Piersall (TV and Radio 1977-1981).

Piersall was a colorful, controversial character during his years in major league baseball, but remember this before you dismiss him as something of a clown. He played for 17 years. He must have been doing something right. Piersall also was a two-time All-Star, a two-time Gold Glove award winner and may have been one of the finest defensive outfielders ever to play the game. Hall of Fame manager Casey Stengel said Jimmy was a better defensive outfielder than Joe DiMaggio. In those 17 seasons Piersall handled 3,851 chances.... he made a grand total of 39 errors.

When Jimmy came to Chicago to join Caray in the Sox broadcasting booth, things were never the same again. Gone were the days of 'happy talk,' of 'Friendly Bob Adams' and kibitzing about gin rummy games. Harry had been telling it like it was since he joined the Sox in 1971 and now that Piersall was on board, no one and nothing was off limits. Both men asked no quarter and gave none in return. Everything was tackled...players, fans, even owners. The fans loved it. At times Caray and Piersall were the only reason to even follow the Sox, as some of the seasons they were together were some of the worst in franchise history.

Since leaving the Sox early in the 1983 season, Piersall has remained in suburban Chicago. For years he has been a regular on WSCR radio, still sharp in mind and tongue at a sprightly 75.

I caught up with Jimmy early in the evening where we spent an hour and a half talking about good times and bad... of names from the past like Caray, Bill Veeck and Mr. and Mrs. Tony LaRussa, and names from today like Jerry Reinsdorf.

We talked about the how and why of his popularity (along with of course, Caray's.) We remembered 1977, and discussed the Sox of today.

We also turned off the path for a few minutes to talk about some of Jimmy's days on the field, of the Sox teams he played against in the 1950's and his unusual ability to get to know U.S. presidents like John Kennedy.

ML: Jimmy a lot of White Sox fans think your association with the team began in 1977 but technically it started years earlier. You played *against* the Sox for many years starting in the mid 50's. The Sox in those days had guys like Luis Aparicio, Nellie Fox, "Jungle" Jim Rivera, Billy Pierce, Early Wynn and Sherm Lollar. What was it like to play against those teams?

JP: For most of that time the Sox were a little above average. They had some decent players. Their offense was a bunt then a guy going from first to third on a single and then they'd score on a sacrifice fly. They always had some good pitchers, guys like Billy Pierce. I had good luck against him because I hit six home runs off him. When he'd throw that high fastball to me, he'd always get me out though. Another guy was "Minnie" Minoso. He was a great player, played hard all the time. He always used to keep a thousand dollars pinned to the inside of his uniform pocket. I never did find out why he did that. He'd slide into second and I'd think that pin was going to go right up his ass!' (laughing). Nellie Fox might have been one of the worst defensive second basemen I ever saw. It's a good thing he had guys like Aparicio, Ron Hansen and "Chico" Carrasquel around him.

ML: In 1959 your Cleveland Indians went head to head with the White Sox for the American League pennant. In late August of that season the Sox went into Cleveland and swept you four straight games. That pretty much sealed your fate. It's been a long time but what do you remember from that important series?

(Author's Note: On August 28 the Sox went into Cleveland with a game and a half lead. By the time they left on Sunday night the lead was up to five and a half games after the sweep. The Sox won 7-3, 2-0, 6-3 and 9-4, with Bob Shaw, Dick Donovan, Early Wynn and Barry Latman getting the wins. The smallest crowd for that series was the Saturday day game which drew over 50,000)

JP: We had a better team than the Sox that year. The difference was we had Joe Gordon as manager, the Sox had Al Lopez. 1959 was when they were still playing in Municipal Stadium which held like 80,000. Cleveland was like Yankee Stadium in those days, they'd draw huge crowds.

ML: The next year, 1960, came Bill Veeck's exploding scoreboard and apparently there was one time when it got on your nerves. Tell me about May 30, 1960 when you took on 'the Monster.'

(Author's Note: This is the passage that Sox author/historian Rich Lindberg has on the incident from his book, 'Who's On 3rd: The Chicago White Sox Story.' "On May 30th, James Anthony Piersall ended a madcap day by throwing a baseball at the board; Earlier Piersall had emptied the contents of the Cleveland dugout. It took the batboy 10 minutes to retrieve the bats, hats,

towels and balls. While this was going on, Piersall stormed into the Sox dugout. He grabbed a bucket of Gene Bossard's sand and dumped it on the field. If all this wasn't enough, Piersall amazed everyone by remaining rigid while "Minnie" Minoso's line shot sailed over his head for a double. Sox P.R. man Ed Short mistakenly thought a home run had been hit. To Piersall's agitation, the scoreboard was set off. For the first time in his life, "Jungle" Jim Rivera was speechless. Cleveland won the doubleheader. Piersall was slapped with a \$250 dollar fine.")

JP: In that first game umpire Larry Napp was calling strikes on pitches that were outside and I said something about it so he ran me. The problem was I wasn't talking to Napp. I started tossing stuff on to the field for like 10 minutes, I went into the Sox dugout and Jim Rivera was the one who kept handing me stuff to toss! I was back for the second game and on the final play I got hit in the head by an orange so I took the ball and just heaved it at the scoreboard as hard as I could. Remember in those days when the fireworks went off you had a lot of debris come down. I got hit two or three times that day with stuff. The next day I saw where Veeck wasn't happy about that.

ML: After you retired from baseball you eventually found a position with the Texas Rangers in the mid 1970's. On May 10, 1976 you made an appearance in the Sox broadcasting booth and did a few innings of the game with Harry Carey. (*Author's Note: The Sox would win the game 7-6 in 11 innings.*) Something happened that night in the booth, a chemistry connection between the two of you. The conversation was relaxed, funny, and insightful. Lo and behold in 1977 you were part of the Sox broadcasting team. How did you get the job? Did Harry go to bat for you? Did Bill Veeck contact you?

JP: What happened was that basically the Sox were auditioning players, looking for someone to work with Harry. I wound up being contacted by WMAQ radio and asked to come up to Chicago to interview. I don't remember who contacted me but I think it was the guy in charge. (*Author's Note: If Jimmy's correct; it would probably have been General Manager Charlie Warner*) So I went up to Chicago and was asked how I'd feel about working with Harry. I then was interviewed by Veeck and after we talked he said "well we don't have much money." I said, "How much do you have?" Bill said, "35,000 thousand." I said, "I'll take it." I needed a job, I would have taken 25,000 thousand.

The chemistry didn't happen right away. I knew the game but it took time to know when to jump in with comments. At first I used to bump Harry's arm to let him know I wanted to say something. I'd do it and Harry would stop to let me in.

ML: Before we talk about the on-field miracle of 1977, I wanted to talk to you a little on the broadcasting end of that season. First off opening day was in Toronto, a miserable day weather-wise with snow, wind and freezing temperatures. (*Author's Note: The first game in Toronto Blue Jays history saw them beat Ken Brett and the Sox 9-5.*) It was your first game in the booth and then afterwards you had to do the post-game interview with Jays winning pitcher Jerry Johnson. You were telling me that turned into an adventure...what happened?

JP: It was cold as hell and I was doing the post-game show. So I ask Johnson a question, I had done a lot of guest speaking, so I knew how to communicate. I ask the question and get like one

of two words for an answer. So I ask another question and get another one-word answer. Meanwhile the guys in the truck are telling me to stretch the interview and all this guy's doing is giving me short answers!

ML: Your primary partner that year and for most your tenure with the Sox was Harry Caray. In those days he was still in his prime, before the health issues came up. What made him such a great broadcaster? And what did you learn from him?

JP: Harry was a great broadcaster because he was entertaining. Baseball was his life. He was a con artist at times and he liked to drink his beer but he was a pro. One of the first things he told me that I still remember was "don't go in unless you've got something to say."

ML: You also worked with a trio of solid pros in Lorn Brown, Joe McConnell and Rich King but perhaps the most unusual individual in the booth with you in 1977 was Mary Shane. What were your impressions of her?

(Author's Note: In 1977 Shane became the first female ever to do major league baseball when she appeared with the White Sox. Shane was a 28-year-old Milwaukee housewife doing reports for WRIT radio when Charley Warner, general manager of WMAQ radio heard her. She auditioned with Caray in 1976 and was added to the broadcasting team in 1977. She never appeared comfortable with her fame and as a result Sox fans weren't comfortable with her. 1977 was her only season on the air with the Sox.)

JP: Mary Shane was a wonderful lady. She and I, in spring training, would go into center field with a tape recorder and broadcast the game. I needed the work as much as she did. She wasn't that bad on the air. Veeck wound up firing her which I thought was very unkind.

Joe McConnell was an excellent broadcaster, a very talented man. He did the NBA and the NFL for years.

Lorn Brown had a good voice but he was very insecure. Simply put he was an ass kisser. He actually used to drive Bill Veeck home at night, would bring him books to read and things like that. Can you believe that? He didn't care much for me.

ML: I guess this is a good time to ask your thoughts on Bill Veeck. Too many Sox fans he was the Pied Piper for the common fan, he saved the franchise from moving to Seattle in December 1975 but others have suggested that the man the fans saw, was different from the man who tried to run the franchise. Is that a true statement?

JP: I would say so. He was a fraud. He never had any money to run the team with. Harry didn't like him either. One day he was talking with some people, I happened to be walking past, and I heard him say "(Eric) Soderholm just can't play third base." Another person then said, "Yea but who else are you going to be able to get?" That just about sums things up.

ML: I understand Bill would sometimes talk to you and Harry about some of your on-air comments.

(Author's Note: One of the more humorous incidents, was when Jimmy was telling Sox fans to, in so many words, stay home during an April game with temperatures in the 30's. The next night after a conversation with Veeck, Jimmy in the pre-game show, issued a few well timed comments to Harry, including a tongue-in-cheek one along the lines of, 'It's a great night for a game coach. What do you think?' Temperatures were still in the 30's!)

JP: I never told Sox fans to stay home. What I said was "it's a really cold night." Bill said to me, "it's never cold at the ballpark." Another time Claudell Washington was playing and he let maybe five balls get past him into the gap. I said, "you know the fans are paying eight bucks to see this, you'd think he'd run a little. He's loafing." Bill called me up and said, "How do you know he's not hurt, maybe he's got a bad ankle?"

I said "if he's got a bad ankle what's he even doing out there in the first place?" Bill's problem was he really had nothing to do. If he could, he probably should have been announcing the games!

ML: One of the big controversies about 1977 was the so-called showboating by the Sox players. I mean the curtain calls, the Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye song from Nancy Faust and generally the way the Sox won games that year... a lot of last minute comebacks. Sox fans demanded and started this stuff, not the players, but teams like the Royals took personal offense to it. What were your thoughts on all that? Especially in light of what goes on today in major league baseball.

JP: Baseball is entertainment. The only thing I didn't want to see was anybody showing the pitcher up but I didn't have a problem with what went on that season. I used to always touch third base when I went into the dugout or came out for example. If I missed it or didn't touch it, the fans let me know about it. Like I said, it's entertainment.

ML: Returning to broadcasting baseball Jimmy, you were a guy who played hard all the time, you asked no quarter and gave none and your broadcasting style was the same way. Some players didn't appreciate the things that you and Harry sometimes said. You were telling me a story about Ralph Garr one day coming after you on it. Can you explain that a little more?

JP: Ralph was one of the nicest guys you'll ever want to meet, he was the type of guy who always had a smile on his face, he enjoyed playing the game but when he put that glove on he turned into Frankenstein. I just said on the air that he was a bad defensive outfielder. The next day I'm down on the field and he comes up to me and says, "hey blankety blank, why have you been saying I'm so bad? Didn't you ever make an error?" I said, "Ralph in 17 years, I made 39 errors." He shut up quickly and walked away from me.

I wasn't trying to say anything to hurt *anybody*. The fact is that I said what I saw. I said it because it was the player himself who screwed up. If you don't want the announcers to say

anything about it, then don't screw up. You do it to yourself. White Sox fans know baseball, they are knowledgeable. They were saying the same thing themselves.

ML: One player you did get along with and whom you had a lot of respect for was Chet Lemon. Why was that?

JP: Chet wasn't a very good outfielder at first because he came up as an infielder and made the change but Chet worked very hard. He hustled, he learned. He had trouble running the bases at first despite the fact that he was fast, but he picked up.

Another guy I respected a lot was Harold Baines. The Sox signed him out of high school and Bill asked me to work with him. I said "how much?" Bill named a figure so I did. Harold was very quiet and if you didn't know better you'd think he wasn't taking it in, but he was. It was the first time I ever tried to teach a player and I learned something about myself. I showed him the type of glove to use, how to set up in the outfield for hitters, how to think when he was hitting... just about everything. Harold was quiet but he always talked to me. He turned out to be a great outfielder with a tremendous arm. He may have been the best player the Sox ever had. After his knee injury he became a DH and was able to extend his career.

ML: In July 1980 you had a confrontation earlier in the day with Rob Gallas, then a reporter for the Daily Herald and then that night you and Mike Veeck got into it. Talk to me about the circumstances surrounding that will you?

JP: Mike was pissed because I said something about his mother, Mary Francis, who I think is one of the nicest ladies around, but the fact is that on her radio show she had said something about me and called me a name. I was asked about it and said, "Mary Francis Veeck is a colossal bore." I was in the booth that night ready to go on the air when Mike charged in, I was sitting on one of those higher stools that we used to see the field and he knocked me right off it. I had just recently had some heart surgery so I wasn't at full strength, I wish I was. Jim Angio, one of the folks that we worked with, was a big guy and he saw that and just belted Veeck. I didn't know if I was hurt or not so I checked into a hospital for tests.

ML: During the late 70's and 1980 very little was going right for the club. They were bad on the field, attendance was dropping, they suffered the stigma of "Disco Demolition," and there were rumors starting that Bill Veeck was interested in selling. Edward DeBartolo was interested in buying.

JP: DeBartolo would have been good for the Sox but Bowie Kuhn didn't want him because of his racetrack interests. DeBartolo called me and asked me to come to Ohio to meet with him. He wanted information about the Sox; he wanted to know what was going on.

ML: The league failed to approve the sale and that's when Jerry Reinsdorf and Eddie Einhorn stepped in. What was your initial reaction when those two were named the Sox owners?
(Author's Note: Reinsdorf originally was part of a group trying to buy the New York Mets;

Einhorn was with a group trying to get the San Diego Padres. When both of those deals fell apart they turned their attention to getting the White Sox.)

JP: That was a “Bud” Selig deal. “Bud” helped get them approved as owners. To repay him Reinsdorf had him named commissioner when they removed Fay Vincent. Selig was a temporary commissioner.... for ‘only’ about five years, despite the fact that he still owned the Brewers.

ML: The Mike Royko show saw you and Harry appear as guests on September 6, 1981. During the show you made your comments about player’s wives and got suspended for a time. Now I think I understood what you were trying to say, it just came out politically incorrect, but what amazed me was when you told me that despite all the disagreements, you actually got along very well with Eddie Einhorn and that he complimented you on having a good season in the booth. True? *(Author’s Note: Royko asked both Caray and Piersall how they handled the reaction from player’s wives when they criticized their husbands. Caray said “You know Mike I would love to call all the wives together someday and tell them what their husbands say about them across the ballfield.”*

Piersall said, “First of all they were horny broads that wanted to get married, and they wanted a little money, a little security and a big strong ballplayer. I traveled, I played the game. I got a load of those broads too.”)

JP: This all started when a group of the player’s wives, led by Tony LaRussa’s wife, tried to get me fired. As soon as I said it I thought to myself this could be a problem, but I was pissed off about them. The funny thing was Jerry Reinsdorf told me *himself* that both he and his wife saw the show and that he enjoyed it. Then Tony LaRussa went nuts over it and I was suspended.

The way I was suspended was kind of funny. Eddie Einhorn said he needed to see me. So I went to his office and he’s standing behind his chair, like he was afraid I was going to do something. He told me that I was suspended because the Sox players threatened not to play unless something was done. Yea, I did like Eddie, and he and I got along well.

ML: Sox ownership decided to go with the SportsVision experiment in 1982 and you were removed from the play by play booth while Harry left to go to the Cubs. You wound up doing the pre and post-game shows. The Sox started out like gang-busters but by July were a .500 club, then one night Tony LaRussa apparently had it with some of your comments and drove down to the studios after a game and confronted you. I have never heard of such a thing happening before or since at least until the Steve Stone / Cubs controversy. What happened that night?

JP: I had said during a show that whoever was coaching the outfielders wasn’t doing a very good job. They were out of position; they were throwing to the wrong base. It was a bad situation. So one night about 11 or 11:30 at night, LaRussa, Charlie Lau and Jimmy Leyland drive down to the studios. They told the guard they had an appointment to see me and he let them in. I’m in the studio and they march in. LaRussa’s yells, “Are you trying to get Leyland fired?” I didn’t know who was coaching the outfielders so I said “no, but whoever he is he’s doing a lousy job.” They started to act tough when one of our producers walked in, he was a real big guy, about

6-4 and when they saw him they left. I tore Tony's ass from then on. LaRussa acts real tough but he isn't and Leyland is nothing but a little phony.

All I can say is that Tony's real lucky he's had great players in Oakland and in St. Louis because he is a terrible manager.

ML: It almost seems like the Sox organization was split over Tony. Some thought he would turn out to be a great manager and some actually wanted to fire him around 1982 and 1983. Jerry Reinsdorf appeared to always be on his side. Why was that?

JP: Reinsdorf fell in love with Tony. He was a lawyer, was real smart and Jerry liked that.

ML: The 1983 championship season began in Texas where the Sox lost 5-3 after having a 3-0 lead after the first inning. Greg Walker and Scott Fletcher made some key errors and after the game you offered some comments. Now I didn't hear what you said because I was in Arlington for the series but I know the next night many of the Sox players and coaches were talking about your firing during batting practice. Do you remember what you said and why you were being fired from the TV side?

JP: I said that Walker wasn't ready to be a first baseman because he still needed to work on his fielding. A first baseman handles what, a thousand, fifteen hundred chances during a season? That's a lot of chances for a guy who still needed to work on his defense. Sure enough, he makes some big errors and the Sox lose. I said that Mike Squires needed to be playing first base. He was a terrific fielder, he'd help the rest of the infield and you can hit him in the eighth spot. LaRussa didn't like that.

ML: You still had your show on WMAQ radio, I know I used to get the Sox at night, working in Louisiana and sometimes would call you with questions. That turned out to be a glorious season for the Sox and their fans but apparently there was still some rancor in the front office towards you. The night of September 17, 1983, Jerry Reinsdorf was in the locker room during the clinching celebration, being interviewed by "Hawk" Harrelson when he unleashed his broadside at you and Harry. I don't know if you were watching it at the time but what was your reaction? *(Author's Note: Reinsdorf stated "wherever you're at, Harry and Jimmy, eat your hearts out. I hope people realize what scum you are." Harrelson was momentarily silenced due to the unexpectedness of it. The comment was shown live on both SportsVision and Superstation WGN-TV which picked up SportsVision programming in the 9th inning of the Sox win over Seattle.)*

JP: If I saw Reinsdorf in an alley, I'd punch him right in the head. After the 1982 season Eddie Einhorn saw me and told me how much he enjoyed my work and that "you got a job for next year." Well that's fine... it's the off season, everyone goes their own way. So time passes and I still haven't heard anything yet, spring training comes and I'm still waiting around. You know I needed to start preparing for the year. Finally, we get the O.K. I'm on opening night, I talk about Walker, and then the next day Reinsdorf fires me. He tells my agent, "Tell Jimmy he can have his money." He owed me 95,000 dollars. I never got it. I took him to court. Reinsdorf is a Republican and the judge hearing the case was also a Republican and knew Reinsdorf. The judge threw the case out, then died two days later. I never got the money.

ML: Bob Logan's book 'Miracle On 35th Street,' which came out after the season ended, had an entire chapter devoted to the controversy generated between the Sox owners and you, Harry and the Chicago media.. Among the comments from Reinsdorf was "I'll be up in heaven looking down before Piersall broadcasts another one of our games." He also said, "The only people I believe were unfair to us and carried personal vendettas were Harry Caray, Jimmy Piersall and Bill Gleason." Your reaction and why this intense dislike?

JP: He hated me because I wouldn't listen to him, I wouldn't kiss his ass. He loves for the players to do that but I wouldn't. Reinsdorf thought he'd be this popular guy because he bought the White Sox...he wasn't. He tried to be in the limelight and the fans hated him for it. He's done better the past few years because he's stayed away and hasn't said much. I got along with Eddie Einhorn because he was never like that.

ML: In the past 24 seasons, since current ownership took control, the only teams in major league baseball to have not made a World Series appearance has been the White Sox, Rays, Rangers, Mariners, Cubs, Pirates, Astros and the Expos/D.C. franchise. The Sox have had 14 winning seasons but the ultimate reward has escaped them. Why?

JP: The farm system has never produced enough good players to make up for the fact that for a lot of years Reinsdorf was spending more money on his office help then on the players on the field. Now at least he's starting to spend a little bit.

ML: For many years you've been a baseball analyst on WSCR radio. There have been times when the on-air hosts have belittled Sox fans particularly in the area of attendance. I recall reading about one of your responses to that criticism and it went along the lines of, 'what do you want? They are drawing almost two million fans for a team that's been just a little above average. If the Sox really start to win, the fans will come.' Is that an accurate representation of your comment?

JP: That's a true statement. In 1977 the Sox drew around a million and a half for the year. That was tremendous in those days. (*Author's Note: The actual attendance for that season was 1,657,135.*) If the team is good White Sox fans will come out. They aren't like Cub fans that'll come out regardless if the team is bad. A part of that is because in a lot of cases, Sox fans don't have that kind of money to spend. Today with prices being what they are, if a family can go to one Sox game a month they are doing well. So they aren't going to come out to see a losing team.

ML: What kind of financial shape are the Sox in today and what about the future? Do you know anything along those lines?

JP: I know someone on the Sox board of directors. I've been told the Sox haven't lost any money over the past five years. As far as the future, there are a couple of guys on the board of

directors who want to sell, but that'll never happen. Reinsdorf will not sell, and he's got three or four guys on that board under his thumb. They'll do whatever he tells them to do, like that soccer guy. (*Author's Note: Former Chicago Sting owner Lee Stern is a member of the Sox board of directors.*)

ML: What do you think of Ozzie Guillen's 'smart-ball,' attack and for that matter the Sox decision to get away from four years of station to station, all or nothing type baseball?

JP: Well they are still hitting home runs, but they look like a better team. I think Joe Crede has great ability. I really like what Juan Uribe is doing. He has been getting a lot of big hits for them and the Japanese guy, (Tadahito Iguchi) makes the turn at second base about as well as any second baseman I've seen.

ML: Jimmy this doesn't apply at all to the Sox but I found this so interesting I wanted to ask you about it. Is it true that you knew John Kennedy before he was president and that you two were friends?

JP: I had a home on Cape Cod and President Kennedy was my neighbor. He was a Senator back then. He used to come over when he was taking his kids for ice cream and he'd stop and get my kids. My kids and his kids were friends. One opening day, I was in Washington, and I got a call from Mrs. Rosemary Lincoln, the President's secretary. She said, "Jimmy, the President would like to see you in the Oval Office." I'm thinking, 'what did I do now?'

So I went to the White House and got escorted into the Oval Office. I'm standing there and thinking, 'how many people ever get to see this office?' I could see on the carpet the spike marks from the golf shoes of President Eisenhower. Eisenhower used to come off the putting green at the White House and just wear his spikes into his office. President Kennedy comes in and we just talked. He was a big sports fan. He gave me a P.T. 109 bracelet which I still have.

I got to know President Eisenhower as well especially when we both lived in Palm Springs. He said I was his favorite player. One day we were in Washington and it was opening day. He was there to throw out the first ball. I'm in the dugout walking past the ball bag so I grab a new ball. He throws the first ball out and the guys on the field are all pushing and shoving each other trying to grab it. While this is going on I go up to him and say, "Mister President would you sign this ball?" He says certainly and starts writing his name. While he's doing this I say, "You know people say I'm crazy, but why is it I'm standing here getting your signature while all those guys are out there acting nuts? (laughing)

ML: Jimmy you've been a big part of Chicago sports now for over 25 years. All in all, any regrets about coming to Chicago and getting so closely associated with the White Sox?

JP: How can you have any regrets? When I got here I needed a job, I was broke...now I've got two homes, four cars, and they are all paid for. I've got money in the bank; investments...things are very good.

