

Bobby Brown (BB)

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interviewer Tom Harris, New York City

Tom Harris. I'm interviewing Dr. Bobby Brown at his office in New York City. Today's date is May 16th, 1994. Doctor, you were born October 25th, 1924 in Seattle, is that right?

BB- That's correct.

OK, how many brothers and sisters in your family?

BB- One brother and one sister.

When and how did you learn to start playing ball?

BB- When my father taught me.

Really?

BB- Yes.

How old were you when you really got going, would you say?

BB- I can't remember when I started. I started before I can remember. All I know is that when I was in the first or second grade, you know, I could play. I could play better than any of my classmates.

What high school did you go to? Was it in Seattle?

BB- No. I started high school in Maplewood, New Jersey at Columbia High School but I finished up in Galileo High School in San Francisco. Virtually all of my high school was in San Francisco.

I see, OK. I assume you played for the high school team?

BB- I played for Galileo.

Third base?

BB- I played shortstop.

Shortstop. OK, how was that team, do you recall?

BB- The best high school team that was ever put together.

Is that right?

BB- That's right.

Did you have a state championship of some type?

BB- No, we had city championships and we won it two years in a row.

How was your career there?

BB- Well, in high school if you've got some talent you'd be able to do reasonably well and I played well. I made the all-city teams and I led the league in hitting one year and I was the captain of the team in my senior year. So, I had a successful high school career but we had a fantastic team.

It sounds like it. Did you have a favorite team or player growing up?

BB- Well, not really. I think I followed Arky Vaughn a lot because he was a lefthand hitting shortstop and that's what I was. In San Francisco, of course, we were pretty much removed from the major leagues.

The PCL?

BB- Right. I followed the major leagues closely but we didn't have TV and we didn't have any radio broadcasts of major league games. So, we followed the Coast League in actuality and we followed the major leagues in the papers. But I didn't really have a favorite team or league when I was growing up.

I've read and I've heard about the PCL that some of the players there were as good if not better than some major leaguers at that time and the pay was pretty good in the PCL. Was that your experience and knowledge of the PCL?

BB- Not really. There weren't any players out there that were as good as the major league players. There isn't any player in the Pacific Coast League that didn't want to play in the majors.

Really.

BB- The players who couldn't quite make the majors, or who came down from the majors, they like to play there only because the season was longer and the weather was cooler and they played in each city, they played a week at a time so that they played from Tuesday through Sunday and they traveled on Monday. And, if they went on the road, sometimes they were on the road for three weeks, but sometimes they were home for two and three weeks also.

I see, OK. It's my understanding that you had a tryout with Detroit sometime in your teens. Is that right?

BB- Well, I worked out with Cincinnati in 1941, when I was finishing my junior year in high school. The next year I worked out with Detroit and Cincinnati, the Yankees, and Brooklyn.

So, you worked out with several teams?

BB- Oh yes, a lot of them and then I worked out with the Athletics when they came to San Francisco. I worked out with the Athletics and those four teams but I also worked out with the Athletics when they came to San Francisco on an exhibition tour. So, I worked out with a fair number of major league teams and a good number of minor league teams.

OK, now, high school is over and you are ready at this point for college?

BB- Right.

UCLA?

BB- No. I went to Stanford and the war came on in December of 1941 and I entered Stanford in September of 1942 and I turned 18 in October of 1942 so I enlisted in the Navy. And the Navy didn't call me up until I had finished my first year at Stanford and then they put me in uniform and sent me to UCLA.

OK, so that clears that up. So, tell me about your time at UCLA and the Navy.

BB- Well, I was there for three semesters. I was a pre-med student so they left us alone. We were in the V-12 unit and I completed three semesters at UCLA and then they sent me to the Naval Hospital in San Diego for six months until a class opened up at Tulane in December the first of 1944. So, I entered medical school on December the first of 1944, in the Navy.

OK, now at this time, you are playing or not playing at this point in time?

BB- I played a year at Stanford and I played a year at UCLA and I played a year at Tulane as a medical student.

It must have been hard balancing your studies and playing.

BB- Well, yes. The academic loads were higher, or tougher during the war, because we had to carry so many hours. I think I had to carry nineteen or twenty hours and then I had five labs at UCLA. I carried, I think it was, fifteen hours at Stanford and of course, in med school, you don't carry hours. Twenty four hours a day is what you really are doing so the coaches worked out schedules for me where I could work out on my own.

OK, so when that was concluded, your time there, what was the next step for you?

BB- Well, the war ended in 1945 and I got out of the service in January of 1946 and I was about halfway through medical school at the time and then I had a chance to sign up and play professional baseball, which I did. So, I played professional baseball from 1946 until 1954 and I continued to go to school and I graduated from medical school in 1950.

OK, so now, you did come up with the Yankees in '46. Do you recall your first game with the Yankees? Well let me go back to this. Do you recall being contacted by the Yankees? How were you actually signed by them? A scout? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

BB- Well, they had a tryout camp in Newark. I was just in junior high school at the time. They had a tryout camp and you were supposed to be eighteen but I was thirteen and I went down with the tryout camp at Ruppert Stadium in Newark. And I tried out with all the other young guys who were trying to get into professional ball and when they found out I was thirteen, they immediately began to follow me.

How did you get to tryouts in those days? How did you actually travel? You were living out in the west coast, if I'm not mistaken, right?

BB- At the time I had tried out in Newark, we were living in Maplewood, New Jersey and you know, they just announced that they were going to have tryouts, which they did frequently in those days and anybody who was eighteen and wanted to come tryout just showed up. So, that's basically what you did. You just showed up and you filled out a blank and they put a number on your back and they started to work you out.

OK, so tell me how you were eventually signed by the Yankees. Who contacted you and how did it all come about?

BB- Well, you now, as I said, we had an outstanding high school team in San Francisco and when I moved from New Jersey to San Francisco, the high school team never played a game that there weren't at least four or five scouts in the stands. So that, all of the major league teams were following the kids in San Francisco and especially our high school team. So that, the Yankee scout in San Francisco at that time was a man named Joe Devine and then when I went to UCLA, he had Bill Essick, who was a scout in southern California follow me and then when I went to Tulane they had Johnny Nee, who was their southern scout follow me. So, they followed me all the time that I was playing and then when the war ended, they made the highest offer, so I went with the Yankees.

So now, in '46 then, you didn't play with the Yankees until you were done with school? Am I correct in that or did you spend a little time in the minors?

BB- I played in 1946, I played with Newark. I went to spring training with the Yankees. I got there late and then they sent me to Newark and then I played the whole year at Newark and then when our season was over, I joined the Yankees. I joined the Yankees the same day as Yogi Berra and Vic Raschi. We all drove over together with another

outfielder by the name of Frank Coleman. The four of us reported from Newark to the Yankees in late September of '46.

Do you remember your first game in '46?

BB- Not too well. I think we played a doubleheader against the A's and I think I did reasonably well. I know I think I ended up hitting about .333 for the eight or ten games that I played in. I think I got a few hits that first game, a game or two. I just don't remember that clearly.

Now, who was the manager in '46? The Yankees had three managers in '46.

BB- I think Johnny Neun was the manager when I got there.

OK, so now '46 ended for you and now '47 spring training comes and you're ready to start the season. You go to spring training with the Yankees, I assume, and you expect to make the team at this time. Am I right?

BB- Right.

And Bucky Harris is the manager at that time now. Tell me about your feelings going into the '47 season and how the team shaped up as far as you could see at that time. I know the Yankees had a guy named Billy Johnson at third, if I'm not mistaken.

BB- Well I, you know, I had hopes that I would be able to make the team. I hit .341 at Newark the year before in my first year and thought that I'd be able to make the team and we started out the team, Billy Johnson and I were platooning. He would hit against the lefthand pitchers and I would hit against the righthand pitchers. But I got into a game with Mel Parnell pitching for Boston and he hit me in the hand when I was hitting and I broke my finger and I couldn't play for two or three weeks and during that time the Yankees played exceedingly well. So, I never got back in as a platoon player. I did all the pinch-hitting and would fill in for everybody when they got hurt. Billy Johnson was a terrific player and he was, you know, just awfully good. You know, I wanted to play but it didn't surprise me that I wasn't getting much of a chance.

Let's talk about pinch-hitting a little bit. I know you were 9 for 27 pinch-hitting that year. What is it about pinch-hitting? Is there a special mentality required of a pinch-hitter? Can you tell me a little bit about how you might have prepared to be a pinch-hitter? I'm sure you didn't think about it until that season shook down. But, what about pinch-hitting can you tell me?

BB- Well, I think the few basic things about pinch-hitting. First, I think the best pinch hitters are hitters that don't strike out a lot, that make contact with the ball. Usually the pinch-hitter is the bench that's not playing so he's the pinch-hitter. I think that you have to watch the pitchers carefully, obviously, know what he's doing and know what he's not doing. You try to figure out what he's going to do to you and I think the most important

thing too, as a pinch-hitter, is you have to be ready to hit the first good ball. You can't go up there with the idea that you're going to look over one or two because by that time, it might be over. So, I think you have to be ready to unload the minute you get out of that dugout. What I used to hope for, I used to hope that the first pitch was a ball, so I could at least look at one. Then, I used to hope sometimes that I could follow one so I could take one swing and be ready. They didn't have batting cages and stuff like that underneath the stands. So, you really didn't get a chance to warm up very much until you got into the batting circle to swing some bats. But basically, you have to be a hitter that doesn't strike out a lot, that makes contact, and you have to be ready to hit the first good ball that's pitched.

You were 3 for 3 pinch-hitting in the World Series, as well, in '47 so that bears out what you're saying. So, what are your memories of the '47 Series, especially Bill Bevens near no-hitter? Do you have some memories of that?

BB- Well, it was a tough Series. We won in the seventh game and it went back and forth. I remember in Bill Bevens' game, he was pretty wild. I think he walked eight or ten people. And, they had scored a run despite the fact that they had no hits. They got a man on first base in the last inning and I think they put in Gionfriddo to run, I'm trying to remember now, Gionfriddo was put into run and he might have been put into run for Pete Reiser. Pete Reiser was walked intentionally and he had a very bad ankle and that was the winning run. I guess Gionfriddo was put into run for somebody else and he stole second. We had a chance to throw him out at second but he made it and I think they walked Reiser and Reiser came up to hit for someone and he had a very bad ankle and the big decision was whether to pitch to Reiser with the bad ankle or put him on first base, which was open. Bucky Harris elected to walk him and put him on first base and he was the winning run. Then, Lavagetto hit the ball up against the wall and scored. They put in a runner Reiser and that scored the runner that came in for Reiser. That's what I remember most about the game. I remember the next day that no one said anything after the game. We just dressed and went home. The next day we talked to Bill Bevens and said he got home and they went to cook their dinner on the stove and he said it didn't work. He said his wife ad called up earlier and shut the gas off. And he said he went to shave the next morning and there were no razor blades. He said that his wife had removed all the razor blades. So, everything got back into a normal fashion very quickly and that's how I remembered his reaction to the no-hitter that he lost.

OK, in the 1949 season, you ended the season series against the Red Sox. Pretty memorable in baseball history. Can you recall that time and the excitement of that final series against the Sox?

BB- Yes. Of course, in the last game the key hit was Jerry Coleman hit a little bloop-fly over the first baseman's head and the second baseman, the first baseman, and the right fielder all tried to chase down and that none of them could get to it and it took a screwy hop and I think he ended up with a triple. It was the key hit. It drove in a run or two to put us ahead. I remember then the game on Saturday. That game was on Sunday. I remember the game on Saturday because we were one run behind going into the eighth inning and

they put me into pinch-hit and I hit a ball that I thought was out of the park but I think Dominic DiMaggio or the right fielder caught it up against the fence. And then Johnny Lindell came up right after I did, right after me, and he hit a home run to tie the score and then we ended up winning the game. That tied us with the Red Sox in the standings and we won the final game on Sunday to beat them.

Yeah, pretty exciting series. I want to go back to pinch-hitting a little bit. How did the manager, you played for two, Bucky Harris and Casey Stengel, how did they tell you to pinch-hit? Did they tell you to bat for so and so or grab a bat, how did they tell you? Did they have a specific way of telling you to pinch-hit?

BB- Not really, you can usually anticipate. In those days they didn't have the designated hitter so the score would dictate almost if you were going to hit for someone. You could pretty much tell where your chances were going to be that you would be needed to hit. So, I would just start to try to figure out who I was going to be hitting against and what my chores were going to be and I would usually start doing this an inning or two ahead of time.

OK, is there a most memorable team that you played for in your mind, and why, if there is?

BB- Well, I don't think there's a most memorable team. I thought we had good teams every year that we played. I wouldn't say that one team was a whole lot better than the others. I guess the team, when we had Reynolds, Raschi, Lopat, and Ford was our top four pitchers. Then, when we had Woodling and DiMaggio and Henrich and Bauer, I guess Mapes too in the outfield, I thought those were good teams. Billy Johnson and myself, and then later McDougald and Martin and Rizzuto and when Jerry Coleman came, I guess he succeeded George Stirnweiss. They were all good teams. We had great talent from 1946 through '54 when I quit.

OK now, 1953 you didn't play.

BB- I was a doctor. I graduated from medical school in 1950 and I'm completed my internship in 1952. The Korean War was on and I think I joined the team opening day in '52 and I had to go into the service July 1st or '52 and they sent me to Korea. So, I missed half of '52 and I missed all of '53 and I got back to play a couple of months in '54 before I retired.

OK, about your retirement, what precipitated your retirement?

BB- Well, I had completed my internship and the next stage was to go into my residency so I could specialize and I just didn't think that doing it on a sixth month a year basis would be very smart. I just felt that I lost too much being in medicine, in six months and out six months. I just felt that time had probably come that I either had to play baseball full-time for awhile and forget about medicine and then start all over or give up baseball

and go on with medicine. I just elected to do the latter because it just seemed to make more sense.

You seem to have had an interest in medicine for a long time, almost as long as baseball. Would that be fair to say?

BB- Well, not quite. I became a pre-med student at Stanford after I got there. I started out in Chemical Engineering and I got my first taste of Chemistry in my freshman year and I said there's no way that I wanted to do this all my life so I switched my major to pre-med. And so, my interest in medicine really started when I got to Stanford. My interest in baseball was always there.

OK, so you settled into a practice after the '54 season? Would that be fair to say?

BB- No, I went into my residency, which is your graduate training to be a specialist. I was a resident in internal medicine at San Francisco at the county hospital under the Stanford service. I stayed there three years and then from 1957 to 1958, I took a cardiology fellowship at Tulane. So, I didn't get into practice until the summer of 1958.

OK, you had no involvement with the game during this period of time?

BB- No.

You were completely hooked up with medicine at that point. Ok, so then, in '58 you started practicing? OK, where did you have a practice?

BB- Well, it started when we moved to Fort Worth and I joined a very good friend of mine who was practicing cardiology there so I practiced in Fort Worth from 1958 until I came to the American League in 1984.

OK, you had no involvement in this period of time? With the game?

BB- In 1974 a friend of mine bought the Texas Rangers and he didn't know very much about baseball and he asked me if I could just go out there for a little while until he could kind of get his feet on the ground. So, I took a six-month leave of absence from my practice in 1974 and went out and helped him with the Rangers. I guess I was called the temporary president or interim president or whatever.

OK, now you became A.L. President in '84 you said, or '82?

BB- No, it was 1984 I became the President of the American League.

At that time what gave you the decision to become the president and give up the practice again?

BB- Well, I was fifty-nine years old and I had been practicing almost twenty-six years. I was really beginning to get tired. Cardiology is a tough specialty and I thought I was going to practice another three or four years and then try to ease into something else. At that particular time in 1984, they were looking for a commissioner to succeed Bowie Kuhn. Some of my friends in Texas that were involved with the Rangers asked me if I would go up and interview. I decided I would do that and so I had two interviews with the search committee that was really looking for a commissioner. But, they were really after a businessman and I think that had already made up their mind that they were going to get Peter Uebberoth. The American league presidency was also opening up because Lee McPhail was on his way to retirement so they asked me if I would be interested in that.

So, you decided to do it obviously and you've been here since. We'll go back to a little bit about your playing days. As I said before, you played for Bucky Harris and Casey Stengel. I wonder if you could tell me about Bucky Harris. What kind of a manager he was and person he was, if you can recall?

BB- Well, Bucky Harris had a lot of experience as a major league manager and he was a relatively quiet man and a nice man and he was a gentleman and you, I thought he managed quite well. He was a little different than Casey Stengel. They were both effective in their own way. Bucky, of course, is in the Hall of Fame. He was a good player and he managed for decades and he just was a very capable guy.

OK, can you tell me about Casey a little bit? There's a lot of stories about Casey. He's got widespread fame, you might say. Legend, almost. What was it like to play for Casey?

BB- Well, you had to be ready when you played with Casey. He was interesting. He had a knack for getting the right guy in the game at the right time. He was very unpredictable in a certain sense. He always had, what I thought was, left-handed logic. It made sense when you got around to thinking about it but it usually, you had to go backwards in order to get there. You know, he had great talent to maneuver and he maneuvered it very well. Of course, he used a lot of platooning because he had players that hit both right and left in different positions and he had players that could play more than one position. So, it gave him a lot of latitude in moving players in and out and I thought he did that very effectively.

What about the way Casey's relationship with the press went? They seemed to love him. How about when he spoke to the players and everything? He didn't use the double-talk and the things that he's famous for, the Stengelese that I guess that it's called. Did he speak to you in a straight way or was there some Stengelese also?

BB- He didn't consciously try to go from one method of speech to another. That's just the way he talked. Of course, if you're around him a lot, you got to know what he was really driving at. It was the people that were not around him a great deal were totally confused by what he was talking about. Of course, you had to be familiar with baseball to understand what he was talking about. Because his mind just jumped around from one

subject to another and he never would alert anybody that he was changing subjects. But, he was just a very interesting guy and we didn't have a whole lot of meetings or anything. But, when we did have a meeting, it was usually a classic.

Really! Do you recall any that you could tell me about?

BB- Well, you know, I can remember we were in a pennant race with Boston. I can't remember which year but we had a meeting up in Fenway Park that we were going over the hitters and by the time he went through Dominic DiMaggio and then through Pesky and the both of them, you know, Dominic was hitting .315, .320, and Pesky was hitting .320 or .330 and then they got to Williams who was hitting .360. You know you can't talk that much about guys that are that successful and he got to Williams and he finally got to talking about Long George Kelly that had played with him at the New York Giants. And so, for the rest of the meeting, he went over the New York Giants lineup and telling what each player could do and what he couldn't do. And finally, we ran out of time and so we spent the whole meeting talking about the 1922 New York Giants.

OK. I wanted to name just a couple of your teammates that you played with. If you could give me a little synopsis maybe of what type of person they were for a little bit of insight on how they played. Their records speak for themselves but if we could just get a little idea maybe a little bit about how they were. One guy that always interested me is Joe Page, one of the first relievers. Can you tell me about Joe Page? What kind of a guy was he?

BB- Well, Joe Page had a marvelous arm and was fearless. And, relief turned out to be the best place for him. He wasn't interested very much in training hard and his arm was so good that for three or four or five innings, he could get by on his arm. He could throw very hard and he would just walk in there and challenge hitters and get them out. So, until his arm went bad, he had a great year in '47 and a great year in '49 and he had an off-year in '48 but then he hurt his arm after that and he kind of drifted out of baseball. But, he'd walk in there and take their best hitters and just fire away and either strike them out or get them out.

OK, a guy you played with awhile on the Yankees was Tommy Henrich. Can you tell me about Tommy Henrich?

BB- Tommy Henrich was one of the great players in close games and in close situations. He was very average if the score was 10-1, but he was really exceptional if the game was close. And, he knew how to win a game and he made the very most of his talents and he was a deadly hitter in the tight spots. He could really hit well under pressure. He was a very good outfielder. He had an average arm but he got the ball away very quickly and he compensated for his average arm by a very quick release. He was a very, very smart player and a very, very tough player. He was really the consummate professional. He wouldn't put up with any foolishness with young players who weren't trying hard or weren't playing correctly. He'd let them know exactly what they should be doing and what they shouldn't be doing if they wanted to play with the Yankees.

OK, Johnny Mize came to the Yankees at the end of his career. Tell me what you remember about him.

BB- Well, remember he hurt his arm very early in the time that he came with us. I think he was in a collision at first base and he could never throw very well thereafter. So that, his time at first base was a little bit limited from that time on. But, of course, you know, he was a Hall of Fame hitter. He could hit for power and yet he struck out very little. He was an ideal pinch-hitter. He could pull the ball when he wanted to. He could hit the ball in the seats when he wanted to and yet, if he was in the hole when they pitched him away, he could hit the line drives into left field. He was just a complete all-around hitter. He could hit for average and power and he didn't strike out much.

OK, how about the late Billy Martin. How do you recall him? He grew up in the Bay Area as well.

BB- Billy made the most of his talents and Billy did better when he was on contending teams because he could really help a contending team much more than he could help a mediocre team. Of course, he was a little bit out of character with the Yankees in that he was noisier than most of us, but he could play. Again, he knew how to hit the ball behind the runner and hit the ball to right field and he could hit and run and he could make the double play and he was just a tough player. He was a tough guy.

Did you see him ever being a manager while you played with him?

BB- Well, you know, he didn't think too much about that. When he came to the Yankees, I guess he came in 1950 or '51 and I didn't play all that much with him. I played until the middle of '52 and I think that when I came back in '54, he might have been in the service also. So, I didn't see him all that much. Most of his great years came after I had gone so I couldn't formulate any ideas about him being a manager when he was that young.

Alright, you remember what he did to Casey as the story goes. How about Phil Rizzuto? What do you recall about Phil? How did he approach the game? What do you remember about him?

BB- Well, Phil could play shortstop as well as anybody could play it. He had great range. Nobody could come in or go back on a ball any better than Phil. He and Jerry Coleman made the double play as well as it's ever been made. He'd get rid of the ball very, very quickly. His only weakness is he didn't have a rifle for an arm. He had an adequate arm but he got the ball away so quickly that he could compensate for it. No matter where he was on the field, he could always beat that runner by a half a step. He never missed the easy balls and he could make the sensational plays. He talks a lot now about how much he bunted. He didn't bunt all that much. He was a pretty good hitter and again, he could pull the ball and every once in a while, he'd hit a home run. He just was a heck of a player. He probably, day in and day out, he and Joe were our two most valuable guys. We would have had trouble, I think, if Phil couldn't have played shortstop every day.

It's supposed to be the most important position on the team. That's what they say. How about, you mentioned before the pitching staff. I wonder if you could tell me about a couple of those guys. How about Allie Reynolds who was famous for both starting and relieving? I've heard that Allie was not afraid of any hitter. He'd go out there, no matter what. What is your assessment of him?

BB- He should be in the Hall of Fame. Again, there's never been any right hand pitchers that were a whole lot better than Allie. Some of them won more games but I doubt if anybody ever won more big games than he did. They didn't hesitate to stick him in there against the best pitcher on the other team, day in and day out. He had tremendous stuff. He could really throw hard. He had a terrific curve. And, if he only had to pitch and inning or two, he was almost unhittable. Where he didn't have to worry about going nine innings. He was a pretty good hitter. He just was a terrific pitcher, especially a terrific pitcher in big games.

I've also heard that, at least many people in my family said that about Whitey Ford, too. Tell me about Whitey.

BB- Whitey was, he didn't have a nerve in his body. He could throw harder than people ever thought and he had a great curve and he had a great change and he had great control. So, he could get in a spot with 3-2 and the bases loaded and everything riding on it and he could throw a curve or a change for a strike. And that's what made him so dominant as far as hitters were concerned. He was just a very, very tough guy to beat. And again, he was fearless. Nothing ever bothered him. He was just a tough, tough competitor.

Bill Dickey was a coach with the Yankees when you played. Am I right?

BB- Right.

Can you tell me a little bit about him, what you recall? Did he help the hitters or what was his role as a coach and what do you recall about him?

BB- Well, he was a nice man and, of course, he was a great player. And he coached first base most of the time and he was the batting coach but you didn't have to do a lot of coaching, with the hitters we had. And the hitters that we had had their own styles and hitting, no one tried to teach hitting as much as they do now. I think they had some people who were reputed to be great hitting instructors, like Lefty O'Doul, but for the most part the guys on our team had their own styles and worked on things themselves. Bill Dickey would help, if needed. But I think that in modern times there is a lot more thought going into the hitting process than there was in those days.

Yeah, probably because of video and every other thing now. It's more scientific. Right, OK. I know you played with Gil McDougald for a while. Tell me a little bit about Gil, when he came up to the Yankees, Rookie of the Year in '51. I know he played several

positions and apparently he didn't exactly have a successful career. Tell me about playing with Gil.

BB- Well, he was terrifically underrated. He's underrated now. He didn't look like he could do much of anything and he could do everything. He was a terrific hitter. He was a terrific fastball hitter and he had power. He'd hit fifteen, twenty home runs a year and he could hit extra bases. He didn't look like he could run, but he could fly. He could really run. And, he threw in a peculiar way but he had a good strong arm. And, he made the All Star team at second, short, and third and that's tough to do. And they shifted him, I guess, from second or third into shortstop and he played shortstop on a pennant-winning team. He was a complete player and he probably never got the recognition that he should have. To me, he was tremendously invaluable because you never had to hit for him. You never had to run for him and he could play three positions as good as anybody could play them.

OK, no discussion could be complete without your other two teammates, one being Mickey Mantle. Your impressions of him when you first saw him, do you recall? When you first saw him coming up?

BB- Well, I thought Mickey, coming up when I first saw him, probably had more talent than anybody I'd ever seen. You know, he could run faster than anyone I'd ever seen on a ball field. He could hit balls further right handed and left handed than anybody I'd ever seen. He was a good outfielder. This is all at eighteen. You just never saw such raw talent. I just thought and still do that if he'd taken care of himself, as far as rehabilitating himself from his injuries, and doing what he should have done, and he admits that he didn't do any of that, he should have broken every record that was ever in baseball as far as hitting for average, hitting for total bases, hitting for home runs. Just everything. Triples, doubles, whatever. He should've broken every single record in baseball because he was top flight at age eighteen and he should have played until he was, he should have played twenty years, really, and he would have been successful in every year.

He freely admits his rehabilitation habits were less than spectacular. Do you think that some of it is the advances that we've made with medicine these days? Different diet regimens and so on. Do you think that that's part of it?

BB- Well, they are certainly more refined now but I can remember that when they operated on Mickey's knee that the success of any knee operation depends on building up your quadriceps muscle and you have to lift a weight with a straight leg raising. He would try to hide the weight so he wouldn't have to lift it. So, if he'd have done in those days what the doctors wanted him to do, he could have gotten over his injuries a lot more quickly. And I think if he had been on an all-year-around training regimen, where he would run and stretch and do things all winter, then he would have been much better. But in those days, you know, a lot of the ballplayers, they didn't do anything in the winter but play golf or loaf around the house. I just think that he would have benefitted if he would have been on a year-around program.

And as we've said, he's admitted that himself. OK, last teammates, well, actually I had one more, two more actually. I wanted to ask you about your former roommate Yogi Berra. You said you came to the Yankees with Yogi from Newark. Tell me what your impressions of Yogi were when you first met him?

BB- Well, when you first met him you couldn't imagine him being a player. You'd look at him and you'd say there's no way this guy could be a player. But then you'd watch him and, of course, he had tremendous talent. He's one of the great people of the world. He's just a genuine nice, nice guy. He's always been that way and he's never changed from day one. You know, he was a terrific hitter. He had great natural ability as a hitter. He could hit balls that if they were anything close to him and he could really get the wood on it, and he could pull most anything that he wanted to. So that he could hit for a reasonably good average and hit for power. And he was tough, tough, in the jams, you know. He got to be very, very good at hitting late in the game and winning games for people. He developed into a really a fine catcher. When he first came up he was very crude. But he always had a very strong arm. He worked very hard under Bill Dickey. And Bill Dickey gave him a lot of pointers as to what he should do and what he shouldn't do and so he got to be very good as far as the mechanics of catching and receiving the baseball. No one could get out of the catcher's box and cover those swinging bunts and short hits any better than he could. He was like a cat. And he had much better speed than anybody ever realized because he played soccer as a kid and so he could go from first to third on base hits to right field all day long and he could score on short hits from second. So you never had to run for him and he hit into very few double plays. So he just was very good and people, of course, make fun over the fact that he gets the wrong word in place. But, there was nothing wrong with his thinking process. He's got a very good brain and you know, with the pitchers that he had, he called a very good game. He knows baseball and he's a very, very astute knowledgeable guy about baseball. He's an American treasure.

He sure is. Um, some of the sayings he's supposed to have said. Are some of them fact or fiction, or a lot of fiction, or...

BB- A lot of them are fact.

A lot of them are fact. Can you give me a couple that you know to be fact?

BB- Well, I remember one he said, you know, they asked him about playing left field in the Stadium, which is a tough, tough place to play in the fall because the sun gets low over that stands and the glare is terrific. You know, he said, "Left field is tough to play because the sun sets sooner out there." And everybody that plays out there knows exactly what he was talking about. But, for a writer to hear this, of course, they got very excited about it.

OK, one more teammate to ask you about is Joe DiMaggio. Your impressions of him when you first came to the Yankees? I suppose you were a bit in awe of him. You must

have heard so much about him. He was winding down his career a bit at that point. Tell me what your impressions of him were.

BB- Well, I saw Joe play when I was in junior high school. I saw him play in the '36 and '37 World Series when I was just a kid. My dad brought me over to the Series and I watched him play and then I saw him play a few games when I was in junior high school and when I started high school in New Jersey. So, I had seen him. You know, he missed three or four seasons in the war and when I saw him in '46 and '47, he'd always been, for me, the best player that I ever saw as far as a complete player, you know. He could cover center field as well as anybody that ever played it. Every play looked like it was easy. He had a great arm. He had terrific speed. People forget how he could run and he was the best base runner that you ever saw. And, of course, he hit for average and power.

OK, this is Tom Harris, I'm continuing the interview with Dr. Bobby Brown. Doctor, I wonder if you could tell me a couple of your closest friends on the Yankees.

BB- Well, the nice thing about the Yankees was that they didn't have any bad people on the team. All those guys were great guys and I think that most of them I've remained friends with ever since we played. So that, it wasn't a question of you just paling around with one or two and that was it. You had dinner with anybody who was available and you went to the movies with anybody who was available. I was probably the closest to Charlie Silvera because we grew up together as kids in San Francisco. We played together for a long time. But, you know, I was close to Yogi. We roomed together. I was very close to Ralph Houk and still am because we roomed together. I was close to the pitchers, Reynolds and Raschi and Lopat and Whitey and good friends with Johnny Sain. Tom Morgan, all good friends and I like Billy Johnson. You know, we competed for the same job and he was just a first rate guy and a first rate player. So, I don't want to leave anybody out. They were all just awfully good guys. Gil McDougald, who's been a lifelong friend. Gene Woodling and Hank Bauer, terrific guys. Cliff Mapes was a nice guy and Georgie Stirnweiss had the tragic end and he was a good person and all the first basemen. You know, Joe Collins and George McQuinn and Moose Skowron and Eddie Robinson and Dick Kryhoski, and all just super guys, you know? I'm sure, again, Tommy Henrich and Tommy Byrne. I don't want to leave anybody out. I just liked them all. I thought they were great.

Great. OK, let's talk a little bit about being President of the American League. Is there a typical day for the American League President in terms of what he does and how he functions?

BB- Well, not really. You never can tell. I guess there's always surprises. You've always got problems if there's a fight or some umpire gets sick or if they have some kind of a scheduling problem with rain and whatnot. Those things always come up and then, of course, you're involved in all of the business part of baseball. Even though, people don't realize that you're on every committee, so that you're involved in all of the major decisions that take place in baseball. So, you never know exactly when they're going to

have a committee meeting or when they are going to have a conference call or what emergency will arrive or come up next.

Yeah, that's what, I'm glad you said that because that's what I think the average fan doesn't realize what the presidents of the leagues are involved in. I'm glad you mentioned that. What are some of those meetings that you mentioned, those are the specific decisions that are made in terms of expansion, or what have you, those kind of things?

BB- Well, everything because you meet with the Executive Council and they're involved in all the major issues of baseball. You meet with the Ownership Committee where they're determining the various transactions that are going on between prospective buyers and sellers of teams. You're on the PRC that's dealing with labor negotiations. You're on the Expansion Committee that's evaluating that particular problem. You're on the Rules Committee looking at rules and rules changes and so you're really on everything. And so, you can never can predict each day what's going to come up that's going to involve you. I know that the writers think that all the League President does is sign a few balls and watch games. But, there's more to it than that.

I figured there was. You mentioned the fights and incidents of charging the mound and so on. In your opinion, is it more prevalent now or less prevalent than say, maybe when you played, or maybe a few years ago? Or is getting more intensive?

BB- Well, we never did any of that stuff when we played. We settled those things in a different way. If a hitter got plunked and they thought it was deliberate, someone on their side got plunked and everybody went on playing the game. When somebody hit one in Yankee Stadium that almost reached West Point and you were the next hitter, you better be a little bit careful because the pitcher is not going to be very happy and he might come a little bit close. You understood that and you went on about your business. Nobody ever talked about the inside of the plate or the outside of the plate. The plate was the plate. You didn't say that a pitcher couldn't pitch on the inside part of the plate or couldn't pitch on the outside part of the plate. You just felt that that's where he was going to pitch. He was going to pitch all over and try and get you out. You adapted accordingly. I guess the game was a lot easier in that respect, in those days because if somebody wanted to fight and have to settle it, they'd settle it somewhere else. They wouldn't settle it on a field, where somebody could interrupt it. And that didn't happen very often, really. But, so that is a change and you know, I think that this seems to be now in all sports and in all society. Sort of a macho atmosphere where certain people think that they have to protect their turf and all that stuff. We just didn't have all that business.

Is there anything you think could be done to curtail those types of things? At least in baseball, anyway?

BB- Well, I certainly haven't been successful since I've been here in stopping it. The fights stay about the same. The people think that they are a lot more prevalent now but if you go back over the last ten years, we average five to eight fights a year and that's well

over a thousand games. So people think they occur all the time but they don't occur that frequently. But, I guess the only way that it's eventually going to happen is if the penalties continue to get more severe and it gets worse and worse, they might finally get the word. The union doesn't help much because they scream all the time that nothing is being done. But they don't, you know, you've got player against player. You've got dues-paying member against dues-paying member and as far as I know, they've never taken it up in any of their meetings and whatnot and any time that you discipline a player, no matter what the fine is, or what the suspension is, of course, the union comes in and pleads the case, whether it's the hitter, the pitcher, or anybody else. So, I think that makes it a little bit more difficult to deal with it. Just the whole grievance process that goes on with the union makes it more difficult because the punishment takes a while before it can be levied and it's more cumbersome. I think it takes away from the effectiveness of the punishment procedure.

The grievances are heard before an arbitrator? How do they hurt?

BB- They can appeal to me, so they come to me to argue about what we've done with them. And they present their side of the case.

Right, but don't you still have the final say?

BB- I have the final say. They can, with certain provisions, if the suspension is over ten days or ten days or more and if the fines are over \$500, they can appeal to the commissioner.

I see, now currently there's no commissioner so how would those grievances be heard?

BB- They would appeal to Bud Selig or to the Executive Council.

And then they would hear?

BB- If some player wanted to do that, the appeal would be heard.

I see.

BB- It doesn't happen very often. I think it's only happened maybe once or twice since I've been League President.

OK, about suspensions. How are suspensions and amounts of fines arrived at? Is it a precedent and depends on what has happened in the past or do you make judgments on its merits or, how do you do that?

BB- Well, there's no set way. Obviously in the last few years the fines have started to increase in amount because of the salaries' increase in amount. You can't get a player's attention with what used to be a reasonably significant fine. So, the fines are increasing. The suspension, the time out for a suspension, it varies if you're a player or a pitcher and

if you're a pitcher, whether you're a starter or a reliever. If you took someone who is relieving and you suspended him for five or seven games, that might be a much greater punishment than if you would for a starter who might just miss his turn, but pick up a start a day or two late. So, you have to take all that into consideration. You usually don't, or at least I don't suspend a player for the same length of time that you suspend a starting pitcher.

I see, OK. What are your feelings about the designated hitter? You mentioned before, of course, back when you played, there was none. What do you think about it now and what should be done about it, if anything?

BB- Well, you know, there's arguments pro and con as to whether or not it's bad that one league has it and one league doesn't. Of course, it provides for reams of writing and articles about it and lots of arguments and people say that's good for baseball if you've got something like that going on. Our owners have always been pretty much in favor of it. I accept it. My wife likes it. I think the average fan likes it. The avid fan and the purist does not. The only thing that I could say is that in baseball, one of the things that's always appealed to me about baseball, is that you can't hide any weaknesses. It's a constant judge if you want the good fielder to be in there that can't hit or the good hitter that can't field or if you want the pitcher to hit when he's a pretty good hitter or not a good hitter and he's pitching well. Those are the things that I think make baseball so attractive. And, the designated hitter takes a little bit away from that.

If it were up to you, what would happen to the DH?

BB- Well, I think at this point, I better withhold any judgment on that.

OK, I understand you are retiring from this office. Is that right?

BB- That's right. They should be voting on my replacement at the next meeting and I would guess that I'm not sure when that person will report but I'll stay long enough to assure that person knows what goes on in the office and then I'll go home.

OK, why is it that you're leaving this office? Have you just had enough?

BB- Well, I think it's about time. I'm going to be turning 70 this fall and this will be my 11th year and I just feel that it probably would be good for me to do something different and probably good for baseball to get some different ideas.

What do you think you might do?

BB- Well, the first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to play a lot with my ten grandchildren. I'm going to play a lot of tennis and get settled in our home in Fort Worth and I'll see what shows up.

OK, last question. What do you see for the future of this game? Do you have any ideas of what baseball may be like in the future?

BB- Well, I think if they don't get a reasonable labor agreement where everybody can do well, at the present time you have a few owners who are doing well, and you have most of the owners who are not doing well. You have virtually all of the players doing well. There has to be a better balance and there's enough there to go around. I would hope that they would get a reasonable labor agreement so that everybody can play on the same field and have a chance at surviving. I think without that, there's going to be some severe problems. I think that you would hope that the attitudes would change a little bit where players in our sport, and maybe in all sports, could be more available to the public, more available to do some of the good things in society that need to be done. You would hope for that. And, I would hope that the game doesn't become just a TV game where all the changes are done for the benefit of TV and the audience and that they don't forget that in the long run that it's the person that comes to the park that pays to get in that really counts. And that, there ought to be a level where the admission price stays within the reach of everyone and that the seasons don't become too long or too onerous and they don't try to gimmick up the game to imitate other sports where the gimmicks seem to appeal to people.

Do you see more expansion in the future for baseball?

BB- Well, it's very difficult to develop a schedule for two fourteen team leagues. I've always said that it's a nightmare to get the kind of schedule that's effective and fair. It's much easier to schedule if you've got segments of four, eight, so that I would think that at some time in the 21st century, they're going to have to have thirty-two teams to make things a lot more easier.

OK, I don't have anything else to ask you. If there is something else you wanted to tell me? Otherwise, thank you very much.

BB- OK.

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