

Mike Hargrove

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Interview by John McMurray
Transcribed by Sebastian Kirkpatrick
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Q: This is John McMurray of the Society for American Baseball Research. We're pleased to be joined today by Mike Hargrove. Mike played twelve seasons in the major leagues from 1974 through 1985 with the Texas Rangers, San Diego Padres, and the Cleveland Indians. He was the 1974 American League Rookie of the Year and an All-Star in 1975 with the Texas Rangers, Mike went on to manage in the major leagues for 16 seasons with Cleveland, the Baltimore Orioles and the Seattle Mariners, including managing Cleveland to the World Series in 1995 and 1997. He's an alumni ambassador with the Guardians today, and we are recording this interview with Mike's permission on March 14, 2024. Mike, what got you interested in baseball?

A: That's a good question, John. You know for as long as I can remember, my dad played baseball, whether he played baseball, men's softball, fastpitch softball. So I grew up going to ballgames. You know, when he played at night, he played for a team in Perryton, Texas, which is my hometown. They played all throughout the summer and I went to all the games and got interested in the sport at that time. To tell you the truth, my favorite sport is really probably football. I mean, I really enjoyed playing football. I ended up playing it a little bit in college and the funny deal is, when I went to school on a basketball scholarship of all things, I got tired after my freshman year. We've been at it since, gosh, the middle of August, it was in the middle of February and all my friends were going out having a good time. And you know, I was not in season at that time. So I wanted to go do the same thing with them. And Dad called one day and said, "Are you going to play baseball?" And I thought about it, I said, "I don't think I can play with the guys at this level." And long story short, Dad talked me into trying. And so I walked on and made the team, and the rest is history. But had it not been for my dad making a special effort to call me — I mean, he didn't beg me to do it, he said, "Look, if you don't like it or you can't compete, then you don't have to do it. But just give it a shot." And I'm glad that he did because of the way things turned out.

Q: You were born in Perryton, Texas. I know that your high school did not have a baseball team. You played defensive back and punter in football. But not having a baseball team in high school had to be a little jarring.

A: Well, it was different. I didn't run track. (The only thing) I run for in my life was run for the dinner table. So I didn't run track, I was on the golf team, we had golf, and I asked our golf coach — his son was a real good friend of mine — and I asked him, "Why don't we have a baseball team?" And his answer was the weather's too bad and too inconsistent. So instead of playing

baseball in the bad weather, we played golf. So that was the reason they just didn't have a baseball program. They do now, but they didn't then.

Q: And you were known for having very quick hands. Did playing those other sports help you to develop your hand-eye coordination?

A: Well, you know, it probably did. I think the good Lord blessed me with good balance and quick feet and quick hands, and the talent to play sports. I was just a good athlete. Whatever sport I played, I didn't necessarily excel at it but I was good enough to compete. But yeah, quick hands and quick feet in professional sports, especially baseball, is so, so important.

Q: Now you accepted a basketball scholarship to Northwestern State College, now known as Northwestern Oklahoma State University, and I wanted to ask about your time there and particularly your time playing baseball. You were a consistent hitter, but at the same time didn't have a lot of power and didn't have a lot of speed, so it didn't fit the traditional mold of the first baseman perhaps.

A: Well, you're right, it didn't, you know, and that continued throughout my career. I didn't hit a lot of home runs. I was more of a gap hitter, line drive-type hit. And that's kind of the way it was for me. It probably is why my career as a player didn't last longer than maybe it should have because I didn't hit for a lot of power. I wasn't just a little popcorn hitter. I drove the ball, but it just seemed like when I hit my best shots, they were line drives and not long fly balls.

Q: And you did graduate with a degree in education, and then you moved to Liberal, Kansas, about 50 miles north of Perryton, and you worked in a meatpacking plant. And you played semipro ball for the Liberal Bee Jays. How important was that experience in getting you to the major leagues?

A: Well, I think it was very important at that time. The Liberal team, it was called the Liberal Bee Jays, was one of the premier summer college teams in the country, along with the teams in Alaska and in Boulder, Colorado, and Liberal and the Cape Cod leagues. So it was important because it allowed scouts that previously didn't see me play, allowed them to get the chance to see me play a little bit. And so I think it was very important, the exposure of being from a small school, there's always that question where you're successful, how would you have done competing against the larger school athletes? And I think it showed that I could compete with those because the guys I played with in Liberal and against, were people from Texas and Oklahoma and Oklahoma State and USC and UCLA, people like that from around the country. So I think it maybe answered some questions in their minds at least to the point to where they felt like I was draft eligible.

Q: And so you wound up being drafted in the 25th round by the Texas Rangers. On the one hand, you had to be glad to be drafted, but being drafted in the 25th round had to give you some pause.

A: Well, you know, when you're 20, 21 years old at the time, that was your aspiration, your dream was to play professional baseball. But I think just getting drafted anywhere was exciting. But you're absolutely right, 25th rounders are usually chosen to fill out rosters. So the high draft picks have a chance to play on a team. But sometimes they pick a guy like me loading around, blowing the draft, and it's kind of a diamond in the rough kind of thing, I think Don Mattingly was the same way. He was a low draft pick, so sometimes they get lightning in the bottle and thankfully they took a chance on me.

Q: You rose from semipro ball to the American League Rookie of the Year in really two years. What do you think was the biggest factor in you being able to make that transition, which is uncommonly done?

A: Number one: being a good athlete. I think the biggest thing is that that I have very good, and still do have very good, hand eye coordination and I never have struck out a lot. I always put the ball in play. I'll never forget, we were playing in the instructional league, the first year the Rangers had had it in years. Bob Short, who was the owner of the ball club at that time, and Billy Martin flew in to get to watch us play for four or five days. When Billy walked in the stadium when we were playing — I can't remember the team we were playing against — the left-handed pitcher was on the mound, and I hit probably one of the longer home runs I'd hit in a long, long time. Just as he sat down and looked up, I hit that, and I think that kind of connection was formed there to where they seriously looked at me as an invitation to big league camp as a non-roster player and I wasn't on the 40-man roster at that time. And again, they took a chance. I can't help but believe, and I don't mean to get real personal here, but I can't help but believe and see God's hand in the trajectory that my life and my career has gone. It's just that too many things have happened to me — to me, for me, and against me — in my career not to believe that the good Lord didn't have his hand in what was going on.

Q: You had a fine season with Single-A Gastonia in North Carolina and you wound up in the Florida Instructional League in 1973 and were scouted there by Billy Martin, who had taken over as the Rangers manager. Can you describe your relationship with Billy Martin and how his admiration of your style of play led to your arriving in the major leagues?

A: Well, I have nothing but respect and admiration for Billy. We had a good relationship. He believed in me and showed it a number of times. I thought he was probably one of the best tactical managers that I've ever seen. For instance, we had a game in Oakland one time and Chuck Tanner was, I think, the manager. He was a well-known manager at the time. We were playing in Oakland against the A's back in 1974. It was a tie ballgame. We had a runner on third base with one out in the eighth inning and Billy, he'd like to announce sometimes what he was going to do to kind of show off. And he said, "Look, they're figuring we're going to squeeze here, so they're going to pitch out and we're going to put the take sign on. They pitch out: ball one. They did the same thing: ball two. Same thing on the 2-0 count. He said, "They still think we're squeezing. I'm putting the take on." They went ball three. He said, "Okay, so now they're

going to throw a strike and we're squeezing here.” They put the squeeze on a 3-0 count, and they threw a ball down the middle of the plate, we put the squeeze down, the run scored, and we ended up beating them 3-2 that game. So it was things like that that he did that were so in tune with what was going on in the game, the nuances of the game. I learned a lot playing for him. I really enjoyed it. I thought he was a tremendous manager. There were times he would get kind of sidetracked, and his focus would leave him, but so very seldom did that happen. I really enjoyed playing for him, I think he was a great man.

Q: Now in 1973, you damaged a nerve at the base of your left thumb as a minor leaguer, which led to you formulating a routine at the plate. Could you describe the injury and what led you to having your distinctive plate ritual, which got you nicknamed “The Human Rain Delay”?

A: Now you have way too much information. I was playing in Gastonia, and I went 5-for-6 at the plate one night and did not hit a ball hard. I got jammed every time and got five hits out of it. To this day, I still can't even play pepper without it just stinging the bat and my thumb going numb. So I made a pad out of telfa pads, which are gauze pads, and athletic tape that I taped onto my hand and worked it and formed it over the base of my thumb. I put alcohol on it and dirt on it trying to get the sticky substance away. It took me a while to make it to where it fit right and I lost probably about 6 pints of blood doing that, screwing it down and chafing my skin. The first time I used it to play, I swung and got a base hit, and I ran to first base, and I reached down to take it off and it was gone. It fell off. So I made another one and I decided from then on I'd really screw it down hard to make sure it didn't come off. Then we were in an All-Star Game that same year, and the pitcher threw me a fastball, just a beautiful fastball, that I swung, and I think I hit that thing 4 miles high. Just one of those where you just missed it and it gets so high. I thought, right before the pitch, the sleeve on my shoulder was kind of caught and just a little part of my mind was thinking about that and went back to the bench. The next few days I thought about that a lot and came to the conclusion that the things that bothered me at the plate, I was going to get rid of those things pre-pitch to make sure that the pitch had my 100%, total concentration. The higher you go in your sport, the more mentally disciplined you have to be, and any kind of edge you can have is such a plus. So there were things I just did, I lifted my sleeve up off my shoulder, felt like my pants were going to fall down and reached back and dug those up. Just little things that I identified that took away [from] my concentration on what was going on and that whole thing developed from there. It honestly started with the pad on my thumb and making sure that was screwed down tight so it didn't come off.

Q: You would adjust your helmet, then you'd adjust your batting glove, making sure it was tight on your hand. You'd pull each sleeve on your uniform about an inch. You'd wipe your hand on your pants. Sometimes repeat the process again. To what degree did that process — obviously you wanted everything right — aggravate the pitcher or throw the opposition off their game? Was that something you were conscious of?

A: Well, not at first, I really wasn't. I didn't start doing all that stuff to bother the pitcher. It was later, probably in the big leagues, when I, all of a sudden, started seeing it bother some pitchers. Dave Stieb, who pitched with the Blue Jays and was a tremendous right-handed pitcher, let me know that it bothered him one day, yelled at me, and I had other pitchers yell at me to get in the box. I thought, "Gosh, you think I'm slow now, watch this." A guy like Dave, if you get him just a little bit away from his concentration, a little bit away from getting me out and being more PO'd at me than anything, then he's not giving me his best stuff. I found that that worked to my advantage in that regard. But I never, honestly, did do it to affect who I was facing. But if they let me show that it did bother them, then I would use that to my advantage. I used that time between pitches doing all of that, as a hitter to prepare myself for the next pitch, what the count is, what his out pitch is, what the strike pitch is, and you go statistically on the probability of him throwing the pitch that you're looking for, which is a fastball. Everybody that gets to the big leagues can hit the fastball. That's what we all hunt, and if I could work the count to get to that where I was 90% sure he was throwing a fastball, the odds are in my favor. So I used that time to think about, "Okay, you just threw a curveball, the count is now 3-1, he doesn't want to walk me. The chances have gone from going from 75/25 to 90/10 that I'm going to get that fastball now." I would sit on the fastball and use that time between pitches to get myself mentally prepared for that.

Q: So you get to the Rangers in 1974. You're a 24-year-old rookie and wound up being the team's most consistent hitter. But the Rangers weren't a particularly good team coming off of their 1973 season of 57 and 105. What was it like getting to Texas at that time? You're platooning with Jim Spencer at first base.

A: It was a dream come true, John. I mean it really was. Playing in the big leagues, I think that's every kid's dream. And no matter how bad the team was before, you have a chance to affect that it's going to be better, and we were. I was one of the rookies with Jimmy Sundberg, a good friend of mine, he was my roommate. We were both rookies together and we had people like Fergie Jenkins, and we turned it around from 105 losses to finish second in our division that year.

Q: You were not a power hitter; you were someone who hit to right-center a lot. Was that your aim, to be a gap hitter?

A: I tried as a hitter to stay in the middle of the field, from left center to right center. I didn't want to pull off pitches. I didn't want to be so late that I was hitting things down, straight away left field or down the third base line. I didn't worry about launch angle and exit velocity and things like that. I tried to stay in the middle of the field and give myself a chance to hit to the most productive spaces. It always bothered me, when baseball went to the shift, that hitters who had good opposite-field power didn't take advantage of that and stay in the middle of the field. They just kept trying to pull the ball. For me, it wasn't a real productive thing for hitters to be hitting into the meat of the defense, so I tried to stay in the middle field, where teams had to really play me pretty honestly straight up.

Q: One of your teammates was Jeff Burroughs, who had an outstanding 1974 season, an MVP season. Tell us about Jeff Burroughs that season.

A: Well, I hit third and Jeff hit fourth that year. Jeff got MVP that year and he drove in a lot of runs. I was asked a question one time: hitting .320, why didn't I drive in more runs? I said because by the time I got around to it, you know Jeff was there and there weren't a whole lot of runs to be hit. I hit behind him sometimes too and there weren't a whole lot of runs to drive in with Jeff hitting. Jeff had a great year, played right field for us and had a lot of power to all fields. At that time, the ballpark in Texas had prevailing wind blow in from right field. It blew in hard, so it wasn't a real home run hitting park. Unless you're just so strong and hit the ball so far, it wasn't a good thing to try to hit home runs in Arlington Stadium.

Q: Now, in your 1974 season, on June 4, you played in the famous (Ten Cent) Beer Night game in Cleveland. That was influenced in part by a scuffle that the team had gotten into with Cleveland a couple of games prior. Can you describe for us that scene and what you remember about beer night?

A: Oh God, John. First of all, that was my first impression of Cleveland. That's my first trip ever into Cleveland, Ohio. At the time. I hadn't hardly been out of the state of Texas in my whole life, so it was a little different going to a big city like that. I remember it started off fairly benign. I think there were a few radio personalities at that time that really played up the "Let's get the Rangers" before we got into town because of the scuffle we had had in the previous series in Texas with the Indians. None of us really thought much about it, worrying about what happened. It started off with people running from the right field bullpen to the left field bullpen between innings. One inning was two (people), the next inning was five, the next inning was 20, and the next inning was 30. I had about four pounds of hot dogs thrown at me, and I remember an empty gallon jug of Thunderbird wine hit about 10 feet behind me. I kicked it off the field, thinking the ground crew would come get it, and they didn't. Some guy jumped out of the stands, went over, picked the bottle up, and went back into the stadium. I thought, "Well, I'm going to be revisiting that jug of wine in a few innings." But they never threw it back, thank goodness. As it all unfolded, I was playing first base and I turned around between innings and looked out and the fans were milling around Jeff Burroughs in right field and they weren't just running back and forth, now they were around him, picking at him and yelling at him and grabbing a hold of him and someone grabbed his hat. That's when I took off for right field and what happened, happened. I know for a fact that had the Indians players not come out and helped us, it would have been a real nasty thing, but they did, and we all got back. One of the Cleveland pitchers hurt his finger, or got hurt somehow, and the umpire, Nestor Chylak, had his hand cut open with a piece of glass. So it was not a glorious moment in my memory of Cleveland, Ohio.

Q: Given that was your first interaction with the city of Cleveland, it had to feel odd to come back and play later. Did you hold any kind of grudge against the city because of (Ten Cent) Beer Night?

A: No, not really, because I never felt that level of animosity going back in there as the opposing player. When I got traded to Cleveland from San Diego, I was so happy to get out of San Diego because things just were not working at all for me there. When I came in, the fans of Cleveland accepted me and really made me feel good about being an Indian. Even though we weren't very good at the time, I felt good there. I felt good enough there that we've made it our home for the last 35 years.

Q: Back to your time with Texas. In your second season with the Rangers, you wind up getting moved to left field in May of that season. How did you feel about switching to the outfield, at least for a while?

A: John, I was just so happy to get to play more that I would have sat on the top of the flagpole and waved the flag for an at-bat, so it didn't bother me at all. I caught what I could. In my whole life, I've always been real quick. You know for 10 yards, I can stay up with anybody and probably beat you. But past the 10 yards, I've got no chance. So I had to really pay attention to how we were defending hitters. But I enjoyed it, I did enjoy it. It got me at-bats and got me playing time. Like I said, I would have sat on top of the flagpole for at-bats, so it didn't bother me at all.

Q: You were named to the All-Star team in 1975. Tell us about your experience there. Among other players in that game was Henry Aaron.

A: It was in Milwaukee and Sharon flew in for the game. You've got to take the chance to see people that you think you'd never in the world be within 50 feet of ever. I got to see Henry Kissinger. I got to sit and talk with Glenn Campbell. I had the chance to personally meet Henry Aaron and shake his hand. It was a three-day deal that you wouldn't trade the memories for anything, and it was a real honor and exciting and everything you would think it would be.

Q: The Associated Press reported that 96,000 fans from Perryton, Texas, helped to get you into that game. Tell us about that. In your one at-bat, you pinch-hit for Steve Busby and faced Don Sutton.

A: I got to the plate and, John, I was so nervous that, when I got ready for the first pitch, my eyes kept blinking to the point that it was real distracting. Don threw a fastball up and in that I barely saw and got out of the way of, and that settled me down. I hit a fly ball to right field, just hit it off the end of the bat a little bit and got out to the warning track. You always talk about pitches you'd like to have over, that's one I'd certainly like to have over. But it was a blast. There are 96,000 fans in Perryton, Texas where there's only a town of 10,000 people, so they did me right.

Q: Now in 1976, Frank Lucchesi has taken over as manager. He had moved you back to first base, but at the same time, you had a difficult season in the field, and for people who think of you as a slick fielding first baseman, that may be a bit of a surprise. What happened that season?

A: I got in some bad habits and the infield in Texas was really hard and fast, so balls got on me a little quicker than I had not adjusted to. Sandy Alomar Sr. was on that team. I played with him, and he played second base for us. Sandy, at that time, was toward the end of his career and I spent hours every day before games, and we would talk about the correct fielding positions and what it was I was doing wrong. There was a season-long process, but it certainly paid off. I've always had good hands but technically just was screwing things up terribly and didn't allow my good hands to really make a difference. Sandy worked with me, him and one of our coaches named Connie Ryan, that was our infield coach, they worked with me every day for months, and it paid off in the long run.

Q: You had some ups and downs in Texas. The team had a rough end to the 1976 season. Lenny Randle had a big confrontation with Frank Lucchesi. How are things going at that time from your point of view?

A: Well, it was spring training at the time when the Randle-Lucchesi deal happened. We were playing the Twins up in Orlando somewhere. I was in the training room with a good friend of mine. Bill Zeigler was the trainer of the Rangers. I always ended up in training with him, talking with him while he worked. We were sitting there before the game just talking and a photographer from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who had been following us around, comes running in the training room. He says, "Trainer, trainer, quick, get some tape, somebody's hurt." We ran out there and, by that time, they were sitting Frank down in the runway and you could tell he was not good, and tape wasn't going to help. They found out that Lenny had done what Lenny did. At the time, I knew that Lenny was going to leave spring training. Gaylord Perry and myself went over and talked to Lenny. He was packing his bags to leave, this was before this happened, and we talked him into staying, that it wasn't going to help if he decided to walk out. He should have been our second baseman. He should have been our starting second baseman and, for some reason, Frank wanted to rush Bump Wills and put him in there ahead of Lenny and it didn't sit well with Lenny. And I don't know what it was that Frank said. I'd heard it at times that something he said was racial, but I have a hard time believing that. But whatever it was, it triggered Lenny. I guess it was behind the batting cage and Lenny let him know he didn't appreciate it. It wasn't a good thing. I'm not sure how long after the incident happened that we traded Lenny, four days, a week, week and a half, I'm not sure, but Lenny was no longer a Ranger. Bump Wills was our second baseman. Bump turned out to be a really good player. I could see Bump had the talent, it wasn't Bump's fault at all, but, for some reason, Frank didn't like Lenny and it culminated in what happened, which was a shame.

Q: Billy Hunter wound up taking over as the manager, and he ultimately put you at the leadoff spot from time to time with Texas. How did that come about given that you were not a base-stealing threat?

A: Billy explained that to me in later years. I'd always hit third in the lineup, third or fifth. We had trouble with getting people on base to score. He had called and talked to, I think it was, Earl

Weaver, Billy had had worked for Earl forever with the Orioles. Earl said, "Why don't you put him leading off? You know, he gets on base, (on) base percentage is high. He can't steal bases, but he can run the bases. You got to get people on." So that was the impetus behind that, and it worked for us. We started scoring a few more runs than we had previously, and it worked out.

Q: In 1978, it seemed like things were going to go very well. You had Al Oliver, Richie Zisk, Bobby Bonds, and that team didn't perform particularly well. What happened?

A: I think it takes a little while for things to gel. Al was new, he had just signed as a free agent. Bobby came over in the trade, I believe. The talent was there, we had a lot of guys that could play. Sometimes it takes a little while for it to gel. There were years, I want to say, back in the late '70s and early '80s even, when a lot of teams are going out and signing big-time free agents and it wouldn't work. The first year, it just didn't work, and people were saying how bad free agency was, how it wasn't working, then all of a sudden they settle in, and they start to gel and find their identity as a team with those guys and things did work. I think that's what happened with us. Sometimes the addition of good free agent talent takes time to settle in and become a part of the dynamic. That's what I think happened, but who knows? It's baseball, baseball is baseball, you never know about baseball.

Q: Now, by this time, you've developed into a really strong defensive first baseman. Certainly, one of the most popular players that the Rangers had, but they also had a lot of financial difficulties and there were starting to be rumors that you might be traded. Was this something that you took seriously?

A: No, I didn't. I don't think any player ever thinks "I'm going to be traded." You think that's your home and it's where you are going to be. I'd gone to high school and the school mascot was the Rangers. I'd gone to college, and it was the Northwestern Rangers and I got drafted by the Texas Rangers. It was kind of like, "I'm not going anywhere, I've been a Ranger all my life, I'll be a Ranger all my life." From what I understand, the Rangers needed the cash for their expenses, and this was more a money deal. Me and Bill Fahey and Kurt Bevacqua were traded for Dave Roberts and Oscar Gamble and about \$300,000-400,000 in cash. So I was surprised. My wife, she's got her nose and everything anyway, she's a peach. She called Dan O'Brien, who was the general manager or the president of the ball club at that time, and asked him if I was going to be traded. I didn't know she was going to do it. His answer to her was, "Sharon, let's put it like this. If I was trying to sell you a swimming pool to put in your backyard for the summer," she said, "Yeah." He said, "My advice to you would be to not buy that swimming pool." So we kind of figured that was going to happen and when it did, I didn't react very well to it. Eddie Robinson was the general manager at that time, and Dan was the president of the club. I said some things that I, to this day, regret saying about Eddie because Eddie was a good man, he did a good job, he's a great ballplayer, and I regret saying those things about him. Sometimes, when you're 25, 26, 27 years old, you don't necessarily think about what you're saying and how hurtful it can be.

Q: San Diego, on paper, seemed like it would be a good situation. It was the kind of ballpark where you'd be able to hit into the gaps. You had Dave Winfield, Ozzie Smith had been there, Gaylord Perry. What went wrong in San Diego?

A: John, I don't necessarily know. I think that I got into some bad habits. I hit .250 for the Rangers the previous year. That's the lowest I ever hit. I got into some bad habits as a player and continued to have those bad habits. I think that Roger Craig was a first-year manager at that time in San Diego. I'm not sure that Roger believed in me that much. Billy Herman was our hitting coach and I don't know that he believed in me that much. It was kind of a situation to where, I started off starting and played for a couple, three weeks and hit the ball okay, but nothing special. And then he sat me down and started playing guys in front of me that I knew I was better than. I went to Roger, and I said, "Roger, what's the deal?" He said, "When I put you in there, get you a couple of hits. And I can leave you there." I said, "I understand that. I do." And I went back and, I think it was three days later, we were playing the Braves that came into town and I went 3-for-5 with a couple of RBIs and then didn't play again for two weeks. That kind of burst that bubble for me. So at the time, I went to Bob Fontaine, who was our general manager and asked him to trade me and said, "Things aren't working out here. It's obvious that the manager and hitting coach both haven't been believing in me. I don't blame them. But I think it'd be better for me and for you if you traded me somewhere where I could have a chance to be a player that I know that I can be." I think it was June 14 of that year, right at the trading deadline, I got traded to Cleveland.

Q: So you get to Cleveland. How did you feel about joining the Indians? Obviously, Andre Thornton was at first base at the time, which didn't leave an obvious position for you.

A: I ended up playing quite a bit that year in left field. I was happy to get the chance to play. I didn't care where it was, I didn't care who it was for, I just wanted the chance to play. Joe Nosssek and Dave Duncan, two of the coaches there at the time, especially Joe, who I'm really close to — is a really good man and a good coach — they took me in the indoor batting cage back under the center field bleachers. We went in there like it was with Alomar and Connie Ryan and my defense. We went in there every day for a month and a half, two months, and worked on things. I remember Joe telling me, he said, "Mike, I watched you hit a lot. I never remember your hands being so high to start with way up here." So we dropped my hands down and different things. It started slowly but surely. It wasn't an overnight fix, but slowly but surely, I started to hit the ball and drive the ball again, and feeling like I had a chance. As much as I owed to Sandy Alomar Sr. and Connie Ryan, I owe that much and more to Joe Nosssek and Dave Duncan because things just took off from there.

Q: I've heard you describe Len Barker's perfect game as the highlight of your playing career. Tell us about Len Barker in that game. He got stronger as the game went along. He had 11 strikeouts, but, I believe, none until the fourth inning.

A: Well, Len's a big, strong man anyway, but great teammate. I love playing with Lenny. He remains a good friend of mine to this day. Lenny didn't have control problems, but he could be effectively wild. He threw the ball 96-97, had a nice little curveball. He called it a slider, but it really was a hard curveball. I don't think he got past a 2-0 count. I don't think he ever got to a three-ball count against any hitters in that game. He was on fire. Everything he threw was where he wanted to throw it, and for strikes. I will never forget the ninth inning of that game; we all knew it was a perfect game. We were [playing the Blue Jays and it was Ernie Whitt, who's a dead left-handed pull hitter. So the odds of him hitting the ball toward me were real, real high. And I'll never forget, it happened to me one time and it's never happened since — John, I was concentrating so hard it was like if you took your television screen and put crate paper over the screen and then cut out a little square box with Ernie Whitt in the middle of it. That's what I saw in my mind. Everything was black except for that little, small square with Ernie Whitt in it as the hitter, and it scared me to death. Like I said, it had never happened before, it has never happened since. I was probably the happiest person in Northeast Ohio when he hit that fly ball to center field to Rick Manning.

Q: What was it like playing for those Cleveland teams? I get the sense that it was a good amount of camaraderie, even if you didn't have a lot of success on the field.

A: It really was. I've had a lot of people say, "How in the world did you play for Cleveland," because you're out of the race in late August, sometimes earlier than that. I found that competitors like to compete, and you play hard to win every game and you don't think about the fact that, hey — I'll say something crude — we're not just pissing up a rope. We're really out there trying to do our jobs and do it the best we can. Our problem was, we'd have a good hitting lineup one year and not a whole lot of starting pitching. The next year we'd get good starting pitching, and our lineup was a little weaker than it had been. We never could put the two together, but they're a good bunch of guys. There are some characters on those teams over the years, but, on the whole, guys were absolutely tremendous, guys like Tom Veryzer, second baseman named Jack Perconte, Ron Hassey. Our starting rotation one year had Len Barker, Bert Blyleven, John Denny and ... I can't remember. I'm 74 and sometimes 74 reaches way over me. We had four guys that ended up winning Cy Youngs later in their career, so it was just typical. We get one part that we needed and the other part wasn't as good as it had been. We fix that part, and this part would drop down. So it was just a time that we weren't successful, but I played with a bunch of really, really good people.

Q: Larry asks, "You may not have had much power, but you had a .396 lifetime on-base percentage, 80th all time. These days, that would be really valued. Do you think that ability was appreciated when you played?"

A: Yeah, I think so. I really do. The home run, at that time in baseball, wasn't the home run that it is now. But, yeah, I think it was appreciated at the time, maybe not as much as you'd want it to be, but somebody has to get on base. You can hit home runs all you want with nobody on and it's

only one run. I took pride in having a good eye at the plate. I felt that I was a better hitter the deeper in the count I could get. And there were a lot of times I go to the plate hunting a fastball and just be absolutely determined not to swing at anything until I saw the fastball. So a lot of times I went to a 2-0 count. I was a good contact hitter, and it didn't bother me at all to hit with two strikes.

Q: Jason would like to know, "Can you talk about some of your most memorable conversations with players from opposing teams while you were playing first base?"

A: I didn't talk a lot at first base. There's one that always keeps coming back to mind. He was a rookie with Boston, he was a September call-up, Steve Lyons or something like that. He came down and I'd never met the guy, obviously I didn't know his name. He pats me on the butt and says, "Hey, big guy. How's the wife and kids?" You know something I don't know? But along those lines, the conversations weren't deep conversations. "Hey, how you doing? You're swinging the bat good today." When I was playing with San Diego, Pete Rose hit the ball down the first base line. I dove and made the play and threw him out at first base. Two innings later, he came up and got a base hit, and I'm standing on first base, and he patted me on the back and said, "Hey, kid. Great play." So that made me feel good. But nothing deep or extensive in discussing World War III or things like that. You don't really have time to do that.

Q: Some of the pitchers that you had great success against included Gaylord Perry and a left-hander, Wilbur Wood. What was the secret to your success against those two very fine pitchers?

A: Wilbur, he threw that knuckleball and it just so happened that his knuckleball, for me, wasn't that effective. I will never forget; he got hit with a line drive in the knee one season and was out for a month or two months and his first game back was against us. He threw a knuckleball and I hit a line drive right back through the middle. He lifted his leg out and it hit him in the instep of his foot and bounced clear over to the third base dugout and just scared me to death. I thought it hit him in the knee again, and I felt terrible about it. When I found out it was his foot, I felt a lot better. Gaylord was around the plate all the time. I usually hit pitchers that threw a lot of strikes or nibbled, but they were around the plate. You could settle in and figure you're going to get something around one or two pitches in an at-bat to hit hard and Gaylord was that kind of guy. I'll never forget; I played with Gaylord a lot of times and I went into a little slump, and I was talking to Gaylord on the bench. He said, "Mike, you're so spread out that when the pitch is coming in, you're stepping back." I said, "What!" He said, "Yeah. Your front foot, you're stepping back." And I said, "Good gosh, okay." I shortened up my stance a little bit and started stepping forward and things took off again. And I said, "Now, why did you know that?" He said, "At some point in time, I'm probably going to face you. So I look at every hitter and see what they do and how they hit and why they hit. And so I can use that against them whenever I'm going to pitch against them later in my career." I always remembered that. So we go into Seattle, Gaylord's pitching in Seattle for the Mariners, and I was a notorious first pitch taker. I took first pitches all the time and I'm in the on-deck circle thing and I'm thinking, "You know what,

Gaylord knows that I take first pitch and 99.9% of the time, he's going to throw a fastball down the middle to get ahead of me. I'm swinging this time." Sure enough, he threw the ball down the middle of the plate, I hit the ball, hit it out of the ballpark for a home run. As I'm running around the bases, I'm thinking, "I out-mastered the master one time." And he's yelling at me, screaming at me, "What are you doing swinging at the first pitch, you no good ..." Things like that that you kind of carry in the back of your mind, sometimes they pay off, sometimes they don't.

Q: Now your career lasted through the 1985 season with Cleveland, and you quickly transitioned into various managerial roles. At what point did you see yourself first coaching and later managing?

A: I went to spring training in 1986 with the A's on invitation and didn't make the club and got a call from Dan O'Brien. He said, "We got a job for you if you want it as a hitting instructor at our rookie club in Batavia, New York. Why don't you drive down here to Tucson, and we can talk about it and see what we come up with?" I'm like anybody else. You're sitting in the stands, sitting in the dugout, you think, "Why is that manager doing this? Why did they do that?" On and on trying to kind of manage the game along with the manager, which, at times, can be productive, at times it can be counterproductive. I played for 11 managers in a 12-year career, which I think was an indictment on my talent that I got 11 guys fired. I had all these kinds of theories and things, "Wonder if this would work." I thought, "You know what? Baseball is the only thing I know. I went to college. I have my degree in education. I could stay out of the game once I retire as a player. Go back to Texas and teach high school and coach high school football or baseball or whatever they got." But I really wanted to stay in it and, to tell you the truth, I couldn't make a living any better, to be able to take care of my family better than staying in the game. When this opportunity came from Dan O'Brien, I drove down to Tucson, and we sat and talked. I'm committed to being the hitting coach in Batavia. He wanted me to go to New Haven, Connecticut, where the AA club was, until the short rookie season started in June. I talked him into letting me go home and recoup. He said that's fine, so that's what I did, and things worked out pretty good.

Q: So you were on the Indians staff as first base coach in 1990 and then you replaced John McNamara after the team had a particularly bad start to the season. People think about those Cleveland teams that were powerhouses, but they weren't a powerhouse at the time you took over. Were you at least optimistic about the direction of the franchise?

A: At that time, yeah, I thought we had a chance. We had a chance because we had good, young players. We had Albert Belle, we had Sandy Alomar (Jr.), we had Carlos Baerga. We were adding guys all the time. We ended up getting Chris James playing for us. I felt like we had the beginnings of a good core of young players that, if we could add to and develop that talent, we had a chance to do, what eventually we became to be. I was excited about it. I had been out of managing for two or three years at that time and my experience, as a first base coach, outfield coach, wasn't to think along with the manager. My job was to be a first base coach and coach up

our outfielders. I was hired at the All-Star break in 1991, and the whole rest of that season, as a manager, I felt like I was a half-step behind everything because I hadn't been thinking like a manager before, where you have to think out ahead. That whole rest of that season I played catch-up. So it was a little concerning to me that I had to do that, but it all worked out.

Q: Caroline would like to know, "Given that you have an even-keeled temperament, you also had a lot of, let's call it, strong-willed players that you had to manage. Albert Belle, Kenny Lofton, Manny Ramírez, and people like that. How did you approach managing those players and the personalities who were on those teams?"

A: The one thing we had going for us is that, even though we did have a lot of personalities, I let them be who they were going to be. I treated them like men, expected them to act like men. I do have the reputation of being pretty even-keeled in temperament. But, if truth be known, I have a terrible temper, I do. It doesn't take a whole lot to set it off, but when I'm over that, I'm completely over that. I don't hold grudges and I think the players appreciated that. I think that most of the guys that played for me enjoyed playing for me, obviously there's some that don't. Earl Weaver said one time his main job as a manager was keeping the 13 players that hated him away from the 12 players that were totally indifferent. I think that most of the guys, all the guys would say that I was tough on them behind the scenes, but that I was fair in my approach to them and how I treated them. Almost all of them respected that and reacted in good ways. We were able to convince those guys that your clubhouse is your home. And you realize that big league players are around their teammates more during the season than they are with their families. I always treated the clubhouse like it was our home. Do what you want to do in there within reason, but when it's time to play, it's time to play. Our guys really took up on that and when 6:30 would roll around, we'd be there at 12:00 in the afternoon and would work out and then we'd have our pregame, or after batting practice at 5:30, it was a completely different atmosphere in our clubhouse. It was quiet. It was introspective. You could tell guys were getting ready to play and they were serious about winning. So our guys knew when it was time to play and when it was time to stop and do your job and do it well. That's one of the things, I think, we were most successful in developing as anything.

Q: One of the biggest challenges you had as manager of the team was the boating accident with Steve Olin and Tim Crews (and Bobby Ojeda during spring training in 1993). Tell us about what it was like with the team and how do you console the team after something like that?

A: I don't think there's anything you can do or say that will act as a consolation. I'll never forget getting the call at night, right after supper, from Fernando Montes, our strength coach, saying that Steve Olin was dead. At that time, Tim Crews was still alive, and Bobby Ojeda was alive. Rick Adair, who was my pitching coach at the time, him and his family were over. We were having dinner. So we drove out to Little Lake Nellie. We got there and it wasn't good. All these little kids running around the Crews' house and their wives had a party out there, it was our off day. And you looked over across the lake, and it was a small lake, you saw these big, big lights

on and saw the boat there was far enough away you couldn't see anything but that. Walking into that house and sharing with Patti Olin right away and all the wives were somber, some were crying. It wasn't good. Sharon wanted to take Patti Olin back to the apartment, but Steve had the keys to their car with him. So I walked out of the house to go over to get the keys and the deputy lady stopped me and said, "Where you going?" I said, "I'm going to go over and get Steve's car keys." She said, "You don't want to go over there." She said, "I'll go over there and get them and bring them back to you." And I said, "Thank you." She went and got them, brought them back and I'll never forget, when she handed those keys to me, how moist and cold they were. I don't know why that stuck with me. I tried to warm them up as best I could before I gave them to Sharon and Patti. I did that and then Dan O'Dowd and John Hart showed up and Rick and I got in the car with them. Sharon and Lou Adair stayed there to help the wives. We visited them back at the apartment. But we went over to the hospital in Orlando to see Tim Crews because he was still alive. His family was there, we met them, talked to them, and we left there and didn't go home. Went straight from there to the ballpark. Got to the ballpark as the sun was coming up and we went in, me and Danny and Rick and John, and sat and talked about what we were doing. We called Hank Peters to get some advice on what to do. We canceled the game that day. We didn't have a formal workout. I suggested since guys are going to come here, just give them the option. They can go and work out or they can play catch. They can do whatever they want to do, it's a free day. They were all in the clubhouse and I remember Rick and I were walking outside and came back to the outside door to get into the side of the clubhouse. I remember reaching for the doorknob and said, "Dear God, I have no idea what to say or what to do. Please help me." And I opened the door, walked in and everybody is sitting there looking at me. I got a chair and put it in the middle of the room and said, "You guys, gather everybody to pull their chairs up around us." We sat there for two hours and talked. I would talk until I couldn't talk anymore and, all of a sudden, Teddy Powers, who was one of our pitchers, would start talking and God bless Teddy, he's one of my all-time favorites. And we did that for two hours. Some guys couldn't say anything. Some guys didn't want to say anything, but we carried on for about an hour or two. Then, some of the guys got dressed and went and worked out, and other guys didn't. That was kind of the first step, and I think it was the right step to take. Certainly, God put in my mind, and in my mouth, the right words and ideas to come up with. It wasn't fun, it wasn't fun. Still not fun.

Q: Now this team was developing into a powerhouse in 1994 at the time of the cancellation of the season in August. Cleveland was one game behind Chicago. We talk a lot about the 1995 team, but that 1994 team had great expectations, didn't it?

A: Going into it, it did. In '92 and '93, we finished with identical records those two years. You could see it and you could feel it was coming. I had a number of managers and coaches throughout the league that would stop me before games and say, "Hey, you guys got something good going on here, keep it going." It was apparent to our opponents that we had a chance. The '94 team came together. [In 1995] we won 100 games out of a 144-game schedule. That's not too bad. I think the strike date [in 1994] was August 12. I got the coaches around and I said,

“Hey, look, the last time there was a strike and we came back, they designated first and second half winners and those teams went and had playoffs.” I don't remember how far back we were from the White Sox. I said, “These next three weeks, we're going to play these next 21 games like every game is the last game this team will ever play. We're not looking to save arms. We're going to play these games like this is the last game we're going to play this season and try to finish ahead of the White Sox before the strike came.” That's what we did, and we came close, we were a game behind them when they pulled the plug. I was real proud of our guys because we presented it to them and they picked it up and ran with it. It was a good time and I think it really set the stage and laid the foundation for what we were able to do in the next few years.

Q: Starting in 1995, you won five consecutive American League Central Division titles, but I think anyone would say that '95 team was the best of them all. What do you remember the most about the '95 season that won 100 games out of 144?

A: The thing I remember the most, obviously the come-from-behind wins. I think we had 27 come-from-behind wins in the eighth and ninth innings to win. I remember feeling like we were never out of a game. I remember one time; we were down by one run going into the ninth inning and [José] Mesa was our closer. He had a tremendous year, he saved like 46 games that year. At the end of the inning we're thinking, “We're going back and score, so we needed him ready to start the ninth when we went ahead.” And it paid off a number of times. You go through a year as a manager, every day you go to the ballpark, there are small fires you have to put out. If you don't put them out, then they're going to become big fires and it takes a long time to put them out. But that year I don't remember one time or one instance that anything developed to where it was something that threatened to take the focus of our ball club away from winning games. It was a relatively trouble-free year and that's the thing I remember most about. I remember being real proud. I remember walking out after Jim Thome caught the final out of that game against Baltimore to clinch the division for us. I remember walking and seeing the guys celebrating and walking out, feeling like a proud dad, “Look what my guys did.” I felt very, very proud of them and tremendously grateful to be able to see them reap the rewards, if you will, the gratification that their efforts were rewarded.

Q: When you played Atlanta in the World Series, sometimes you run into a team that has just great pitching. This is the way that Tom Glavine did in Game Six. Is there anything that you would do differently?

A: No, not really. Maybe the only thing I might do differently is pinch hit Ruben Amaro for Jim Poole when we had a man on first base and no outs in the [sixth] inning. But my reasoning was that we had Dave Justice and a couple left-handed hitters coming up next inning and we've always worked on bunting with our pitchers. So I had confidence that Jim could put the ball down. He didn't and they gave up, I think it was, a leadoff home run to Justice in the next inning. Looking back at how it transpired, I think maybe that I would have gone ahead and pinch-hit Ruben Amaro. That's who I was thinking about doing that with and then brought [Paul]

Assenmacher in to face the left-handers. But I felt like Jimmy was throwing well at the time and Jimmy had done well against left-handers for us all year long. But other than that, I can't think of anything at this time that I'd do differently. I'd have the umpires call balls balls and strikes strikes instead of giving the Atlanta pitchers the ball six inches off the plate. So that's part of it.

Q: You got back to the World Series in 1997, but it was also a very different team and one that didn't have the expectations that the '95 team did. How would you compare the '97 team to the '95 team?

A: The '97 team was a team of grinders. I mean, we were grinding every night. Matt Williams was a big addition for us and helped out a lot being a great team leader. But we never really found our identity until late in the season in Anaheim. It was Jim Thome's birthday and Jimmy wore his pants pulled up and showed his socks. The style of the day was to pull your pants down as far as they'd go, but he had his pants pulled up to his knees. Somebody had the idea that to honor Jimmy for his birthday, we'd all pull our pants up. We did that, our pant legs up, and we had a great game against the A's. So we decided to do it again the next day and we had another great game, so that kind of became the thing. It was almost like a stupid idea that unified our ball club. It really took off and the ball club finally found its identity late in the season and we were able to continue that to get into the World Series.

Q: Tell us about José Mesa, obviously, in Game Seven. He had been so successful during the course of the season, converting 46 of 48 save opportunities. He seemed like the guy you go to in that situation. What happened?

A: Well, he gave up the lead. I know there are things that have been said about José, that he was scared, that you looked in his eyes and they were empty. I didn't see any of that. There's a friend of mine that asks me all the time why didn't I leave Mike Jackson in the game to close the game out instead of bringing in José? And I've explained to him 150 times, his name is Freddy Cinram, I told him like I tell you all, that José was our closer. If you got a close situation in the ninth inning of the seventh game of the World Series, you want your closer in there. Plus, Mike had told Mark Wiley and myself that, because we used him a lot in the playoffs because he's real effective, that, "I've got one hitter in me." He said, "Beyond that, I'm not real sure, but I can get one guy out." So we brought him in to get us to the ninth. And he got that out and brought José in and it didn't work out. It's just one of those things. Moisés Alou hits a broken-bat base hit into left center field and then, I forget who the next hitter was [Craig Counsell], hit that ball that they gave Tony Fernández an error on. I think it was a base hit because it took a bad hop right there at the end and things conspired for not to be successful. The only thing that I was upset about is when the Marlins catcher was at the plate.

Q: You mean Charles Johnson?

A: Yeah, Charles Johnson. He'd been throwing fastballs and sliders away, and I think he had a 1-2 or 0-2 count on him. Charles Johnson. The only pitch that we called from the bench all year

long, we called for a fastball in, and José refused to throw it, said no, he didn't want to throw that. I've told my pitchers forever, if you're not totally convinced that a pitch will be effective, shake it off and commit yourself to throwing what you think is best, but know that if I call a pitch, I think it's the one. But if you can't commit to that, then a pitch that's thrown uncommitted is a terrible pitch no matter where you throw or how hard you throw it. So, he shook Sandy off three times, and threw slider away and Charles got that little dinky base hit the right field. That's just maybe the only thing that I regret in not insisting that José throw that fastball in.

Q: You did take some criticism in the contemporary media for handling relievers, and Jim would like to know, “How do managers learn how to manage a bullpen, particularly in the American League at the time with the DH? There's no book or game situation that suggests how a manager should replace his starter for a pinch hitter.”

A: People say that I receive criticism for how I handle the bullpen. I thought I did a pretty good job. You know your pitchers, like Charles Nagy, over the course of his career, kind of established that at the 90-pitch limit, he started losing effectiveness. Little keys like that on guys, you watch your starter and his velocities dropped, obviously number one, but if pitches started coming up in the strike zone, you realize he's getting a little tired. Plus, the way the lineup sets up then, you can match pitcher for batter. Now you bring the reliever, he's got to pitch for three hitters, which makes it much more difficult to be able to affect the game as a manager. I think percentages will bail me out on this, that left-handed pitchers are more effective against left-handed hitters and right-handed pitchers are more effective against right-handed hitters. When you could, that's what I tried to do, especially from the seventh inning on. I think that the results proved that we were right more times than when we were wrong.

Q: Scott would like to know, “How did Billy Martin influence your own managing style?”

A: I played for two managers that really affected how I managed, Billy Martin and Dave Garcia. Billy always used to say, he'd tell us boys, “The first five innings are yours. I'll let you play the game. If you can win the game, that's great. I'll stay out of your way and let you play the first five innings. The last four are mine.” That's when you put hit-and-runs on, and steal bases and squeezes, and manipulate his pitching staff. So I learned that tactically from Billy more than anybody. From Dave Garcia, I learned kind of the human side of managing. Dave used to tell me that I used to pick his brain. I used to sit around Billy, close enough to Billy that I could hear what he was thinking because a lot of times he talked out loud. But Dave Garcia, I would pick his brain and he told me one time, and it made all the sense in the world to me, he said, “My job as a manager, and in any manager's job, the most important job is to get 100% out of whatever you got to give that day. I looked at him and said, “What?” He said, “Say you and your wife have an argument before you come to the game and you're only 80% there mentally. My job is to find a way to get 100% of that 80% you've got to give that day.” I kind of took that. I learned from that. I learned that communication was terribly important from Dave and Billy both. I learned a lot from the other managers I played for of what not to do. I learned that honesty was

probably the utmost thing you could have, and I got that from Billy and Dave. I used to tell my players, “You can come to my office anytime and ask me any question you want. Just be prepared for the answer because I won't lie to you. I'll tell you the truth as it is today. In baseball, the truth today may not be the truth four days from now, but it is today. Just be man enough to know that I'll tell you the truth and you handle it.” My players, I think, reacted well to that. I tried to treat them like men, treat them honestly and, I think, for the most part, it paid off.

Q: Now following your time managing in Cleveland, you went on to manage in Baltimore and then in Seattle. If you could, reflect on both of those managerial experiences after Cleveland. Tell us how they provided different challenges and what it was like to manage star players in both of those cases. You had Mike Mussina in Baltimore, for instance. You also had Ichiro in Seattle.

A: All three ball clubs are so different in how they were set up. How can I say this diplomatically? They were just set up differently and I don't mean personnel wise. I'm talking about how they did things. In some instances, it wasn't as good as it should have been. In other instances, it was just as good as it could have. In Baltimore, when I took over, we had [Cal] Ripken, [Jeff] Conine, [Brady] Anderson. We had a lot of good players, but they were all at the end of their careers, they were older players. At the All-Star break I went to Syd Thrift, who was our general manager, and I said, “Syd, we've got an old club.” And he said, “Yeah.” I said, “If by the All-Star break we're not in this thing, I think the course we have to take is we have to start trying to trade these guys and get younger and build for the future.” And we did that. The only problem was that we didn't get really dynamic players in return. I think that we got the players that we could get, and I certainly don't fault Syd for that. Our talent level in Baltimore over the four years was never enough to compete on a daily basis. We could get hot and win a lot of ball games, but we had young players that were learning how to play the game at the big-league level and it's just that that combination didn't work. So our talent level was never what it should be to be competitive on a day-in and day-out basis. In Seattle, Ichiro was Ichiro. He played hard. He was a tremendous talent. I had fun watching him hit and play. He did some things that kind of made me scratch my head and we would talk about them, and he would make sense when he explained to me what he was thinking at the time. It's been rumored that Ichiro and I had problems throughout the time I was in Seattle. I had no more problems with Ichiro than I had with any other player. We didn't agree on a number of things, but he was respectful, and he played the game hard and that's all you can ask for. Our talent level, we were able to identify some younger players to go along with what we had. We developed J.J. Putz into a closer and he was a tremendous closer for a long time. We had [Félix] Hernández as a young player, 19 years old, pitch for us. I enjoyed Seattle. Seattle, at that time, was a great place to be, a great city to be in. The fans were tremendous, and the Mariner organization was really good to the coaches and players. Some things happened that kind of soured me on the deal in Seattle, and so I resigned.

Q: And after Seattle, you went full circle, back to the Liberal Bee Jays. What was your thinking there?

A: My wife was my thinking. We were on our way back to Ohio and we decided to take our time, it was the first time in our married lives where we weren't on the schedule. We left Seattle and drove down and watched my son play in Bakersfield, California. He was playing A ball for the Mariners at the time. Got to see him play four or five games, which I hadn't been able to do since he was in high school. We decided to go through Texas and see our relatives up in Perryton and went up to Liberal, Kansas. My son, Andy, at that time, was playing for the Bee Jays. We went up there and sit down and a guy named Bob Carlile was the general manager of the team. He owned a sand and paving company there in Liberal. Great guy, he's a great guy. He knew better than to ask me, so he asked Sharon, "Do you think Mike would be willing to come back? Liberal kind of lost a lot of its luster that it had in earlier years. We're having trouble getting the colleges to commit their players to come play in Liberal. Do you think Mike would come back and coach this team, manage this team next year?" And she said, "Sure he will." It was the farthest thing from my mind. Sharon informed me when we left on the trip that I was going back and we had a long talk about that and decided, "What the heck. We're not doing anything. It would be fun to go back up, be around family, and a chance to still be around the game, though at a lower level, but still exciting to watch these young kids pursue their dreams and kind of help them out as we could, mentally and physically." I called Bob, I said, "I'll do it. I'll only charge you \$1. I get a quarter of that, and Sharon gets a 75-cent agent's fee." So we did that. He had a full basement that was better than most houses, and we lived down in the basement and had full run of his house. It was just him and Sharon and I. We had a great time. I don't regret doing that at all.

Q: Now, Mike, if you're okay on time, I have a number of questions from people if that's okay with you.

A: I'm fine.

Q: Okay. The most common question that I've received is, one from Abby and many others, "How would the Human Rain Delay handle today's pitch clock?"

A: I think I'd be okay. I tried to completely stop doing that. I had a couple of times that the American League sent a representative into Cleveland to talk to me about not doing the stuff that I did. I tried to stop it and I found that I was totally unprepared as a hitter from pitch to pitch by not doing it. I told him next time they came out, I said, "I'm not doing that anymore. This is ridiculous. It's something that works for me and it's my career we're talking about, so I'm going to stop." There with things that, probably, I could have eliminated and made it a bit easier, but I would have been okay, I'd have been alright.

Q: Heather wondered, "Do you think that your routine might have been a factor in leading to a pitch clock?"

A: Well, if it was, they sure waited a long time to do anything about it. I don't know that. There were a number of guys that took as long as I did. Mine was just identifiable because I did the

same thing every time. But you'd get hitters that would swing and then they'd walk around back to the batting circle and around and fix this and fix that and come back into the box. It wasn't as, apparently, lengthy as my routine was. Garciparra, Nomar did the same thing, maybe not as long as I did, but he did the same thing as I did every pitch. I'm sure that my name was brought up in the discussion on whether or not to do something about that, but, like I said, if I was the catalyst for it, they sure waited a long time to do something about it.

Q: Mike would like to know, "Which pitchers gave you the most trouble and which ones did you feel you had the most success with?"

A: Remember a pitcher by the name of Blue Moon Odom, pitched for the A's. I had trouble with him because, he was a right-handed pitcher, he would fall off to the left side of his body and then throw back here with his arm. So I had to really, really concentrate on where his hand was going to come through. That was a little disconcerting, especially for the first three or four at-bats I had against him, but I had trouble against him. Ron Guidry was tough on me. I didn't necessarily like facing Ron, but he was awfully good. Interestingly, one of the pitchers I enjoyed hitting the most was Catfish Hunter. I hit him well. I hit Don Sutton really well. Ironically, my rookie year, somebody came to me and showed me the statistics on my batting averages against pitchers, and I had much better batting averages against the Cy Young Award pitchers than I did against just the everyday pitcher.

Q: Les would like to know, "You managed many great players, including Hall of Famers. Who do you think was the best player you managed and the favorite player that you managed?"

A: My favorite player I managed was Sandy Alomar Jr. I really enjoy Sandy. We're good friends to this day, but it's hard to be friends with a player when you're managing them. He was my favorite because he played hard and played the game the right way and demanded that the players around him do the same thing. The best player that I managed, gosh there were so many. Adrián Beltré comes to mind. I really enjoyed managing Adrián. Oh, gosh. Kenny Lofton. Albert Belle was a great player. He's a great hitter and really worked and turned himself into, at least, an average outfielder. Manny Ramírez probably had the sweetest swing I've ever seen of anybody. Jim Thome. Jim was like Sandy. Jim played the game the way it was supposed to be played and then hit the ball when he hit it 14 miles, had a great eye at the plate. It's hard to say who the best player that I managed was. I mentioned a few and there are other players that I had that really fit that bill.

Q: Jim would like to know, "Having pitchers near the end of their careers like Dennis Martínez and Orel Hershiser, what kind of impact did they have on the team beyond their playing?"

A: They had tremendous impact. They're the guys that have been there, done that. The fact that, toward the end of their career, they were still effective made it even better. They had both been in the playoffs and the World Series. They both had successful careers and they both took their

job seriously as a pitcher, but as a leader, and they didn't shy away from that leadership. They didn't push it on anybody, but they certainly were there to lead, and they did a good job of that.

Q: Tom would like to know who your favorite major league teammate was.

A: Oh gosh. Probably Toby Harrah. Toby and I played together in Texas and we played together in Cleveland, and Toby coached for me for one year. Toby and I both have the same birthday. He's a year older than I am, but Toby was Toby. Probably the best athlete I've ever been around was Toby, and he could affect the game in so, so many ways. He's probably my favorite, and still is.

Q: Tom would like to know, "Do you remember Dave Stieb's Labor Day no-hitter against Cleveland in 1990? And what are your thoughts about it?"

A: I do remember it ... and I don't think about it at all.

Q: Jason would like to know, "As a player who played before widespread steroid use and a manager during the steroid era, what are your thoughts on whether steroid users should be allowed in the Hall of Fame?"

A: I don't think they should be allowed in the Hall of Fame. ... I never saw it. I never saw players administering the steroids. I saw things that I look back on now and I realize were probably the result of the steroids, but it wasn't something that was talked about when I managed. It wasn't an issue. I was totally surprised when [Ken Caminiti] came out [in a 2002 *Sports Illustrated* interview] and said he thought that 80% of the players in the big leagues at that time were using steroids. I never saw it, never saw any hint of it. I was shocked that he would say that. I thought he was so, totally wrong. But now that I look back on it, he was probably more right than wrong. I don't think they should be in the Hall of Fame, I really don't.

Q: As we finish our time tonight, Mike, I wanted to ask you what you feel the highlight of your career was, whether playing or managing.?

A: Golly. I had so many good things happen to me as a player and as a manager it's hard to pick one thing. Just off the top of my head, I was a rookie player playing for Billy Martin and at the time I'd been platooning as a hitter and just played against right-handed pitchers. We're playing a game against Detroit. We were in extra innings. We had a runner on second base and two outs and John Hiller, you remember John Hiller, the left-handed pitcher for Detroit, he was their closer, he was nasty. And I'm sitting in the on-deck circle thinking I'm going to be pinch hit for, and Billy let me hit. And I thought, "Wow." I ended up hitting a base hit to left-center field and we won the game. That was a highlight just because Billy had shown that he had confidence in me as a hitter and that went a long way toward cementing my belief in myself as a hitter if that makes sense. My highlight as a manager, there were really so, so many. But probably the night we clinched the division in '95. When Jim Thome caught that foul ball against the Orioles to end the game and when we clinched the division, my first thought was, "We just ended 40 years of

nothing. We just finished 40 years of frustration and brought a championship to the Indians and the Indians fans. I'll tell you this real quick. We used to do these press tours prior to seasons and when I was managing, we went somewhere down South, I can't remember where it was. A guy came up to me after this dinner or breakfast, whichever it was, and he introduced himself and said to me, "I've loved this game for so long and the way I got involved with my love of the game was my dad used to take me to games when I was 6-7 years old." And he said "I was so excited to watch the Indians win and it brought my dad and me so close." And he said, "If I have one favor to ask of you, I've got a son that's 5 years old. Is there any way that you can win to where I can bring my son to the ballpark, and we can start forming that bond?" One of my first thoughts when I saw that ball caught, this was a couple of years later, I thought, "I hope that guy had his son at the ball game today."

Q: And Mike, how would you like baseball fans to remember your career?

A: I told a writer in Amarillo, Texas a long time ago when I was with the Padres. He said, "What do you want to be remembered as?" And I said, "Well, you know, I'd like to be remembered as a player that went out there and gave everything I had every night, no matter what the score was, that if you as a fan came to the ballpark to watch me play, which I can't believe anybody would do that, then you felt like the effort that I gave you that night was worth however much money you spent for that ticket. I would like to be remembered for that. I'd like to remember for a player that, while not a superstar, certainly twinkled every now and became a better than average major league player, and a productive major league player." I said, "The sad thing is that when I'm through playing, people will remember me for that idiot that takes so much time between pitches." So that's kind of where it's been and that's okay, that really is okay. I'd like to be remembered for what I've been remembered for now and I'm good with that.

Q: Mike Hargrove, you've been extremely generous with your time, and it has been such a delightful 90 minutes with you, and I wanted to thank you for being with us tonight for our SABR oral history.

A: You bet, John. It's been my pleasure. I've enjoyed it.