

Denny Galehouse
Interviewed by Dave Heller
October 22, 1995

Q: What do you do (today)?

A: Scouting.

Q: For whom?

A: San Diego (Padres).

Q: In 1944, you were working at a war plant if I recall.

A: Good! We made aircraft and I worked during the week. We'd get Saturday afternoons off. I'd catch a train to wherever the team was and get there Sunday morning and pitch the first game and then go back to the station and go back home.

Q: Were you at spring training at all (with the St. Louis Browns)?

A: No. My spring training was just around home, playing catch with people and doing mid-running on the streets.

Q: And that got you in shape okay?

A: It was after a bit. At first, I was almost with them but then the rest of the team playing every day and working out every day, I soon fell behind in conditioning. And after about four weeks or so, I didn't have much luck.

Q: How tiring was it going back and forth from Akron to St. Louis?

A: St. Louis, New York, Boston, or wherever they went. Washington one time. It's not like staying with the team and being addressed overnight at the hotel.

Q: Eventually you quit your job, right?

A: When I figured that the Browns had a chance to win the American League pennant, I contacted my draft board and asked them if I quit and was with the team full-time, would I be taken before October? And they said no, it would be after October sometime.

Q: When did you get drafted?

A: Not until April the following year (1945). ... (The war) was on the downhill side but I still had to go into the service. I missed that year.

Q: You missed that whole year in 1945?

A: Went in in April and came out in October. Great Lakes in the Navy.

Q: Once you got into it, your arm gets into shape ...

A: There was no problem with that, even prior to that. It's just the fact I couldn't get into as good shape as the guys who played all the time. But after I went back, the rest of the year was a pretty good year for me. In fact, that's why I was considered by the manager as the best pitcher at the final part of the season. So, it's the reason I was chosen to start the World Series.

Q: Was that a surprise to people in the public that you were chosen to start the Series?

A: It probably was because Nelson Potter had won 19 games and here I had won nine and lost 10, because most of my losses were while I was commuting back and forth.

Q: There was no derision on the team that you were chosen? It seemed like everyone got along.

A: We seemed to, yeah. Got along pretty good. There wasn't any cliques so to speak. That I knew of, at least. I wasn't one to run around like some guys did.

Q: Did you room with anybody that year?

A: I can't remember who. It wasn't that important. I guess I roomed with Jack Kramer, I know that when we were both with Boston I roomed with him some.

Q: Was this the most exciting time of your baseball career?

A: I would say so. There were other times. I had a pretty good career against the Yankees who were a pretty tip-top team at that time. And I think in spite of the fact that I was playing on a losing club, I think if you look it up, I won more games against the Yankees than they beat me. It wasn't much. But I know a player that shall remain nameless cost me three games in Yankee Stadium in one year. I was with the Browns and this one player made three mistakes. He charged a ball and it went over his head. Laid back the next time and it hit in front of him. Charged the next one and it went over his head. All in the late innings of different games. With runners on and beat me. I was ahead in the score and those things beat me.

Q: That wasn't in '44 was it?

A: I'm afraid it was.

Q: In the end it turned out OK, I guess, you guys won the pennant.

A: Well, right.

Q: Going from the Red Sox to the Browns, was that disappointing to you?

A: It was more so many years later when I found out how it happened.

Q: What happened?

A: The (winter) meetings were held in Atlanta and the last day of the meetings they had the big bust out at the Coca-Cola factory and the president of the Browns came up to one of the officials of the Red Sox and was crying on his shoulder because he hadn't been able to make a deal and he asked the Boston what he'd take for me and Fritz Ostermueller. And the Boston guys put up a pretty high price, what he thought would be enough to stall him, and the (Browns) guy said I'll take him. And that's how I went to the Browns.

Q: When you got there they weren't too bad, around .500 I guess. Was the losing attitude still there?

A: Well they were kind of a fun team; I mean fun off the field. It was pretty hard to relate to some of their activities, but you can't go around disciplining anyone yourself as a player. You ride the waves and let it go at that.

Q: And I guess (manager Luke) Sewell was there when you came over ...

A: No, no. Zack Taylor was the manager (in 1946). Fred Haney was the manager when I first went over there (in 1941) and Sewell came just a little bit later.

Q: Was Sewell the one that was responsible for making the team what it was in '44 or was it just a coincidence?

A: I suppose the front office and Sewell, they had some players. I guess that he got some that he wanted. It was pretty well established as to the players that had been there. There weren't many new ones there.

Q: Was the quality of ball that much less (during the war)?

A: All I can say is this: We played in the World Series and they talked about it. But the World Series Cardinals had Stan Musial, Whitey Kurowski, Marty Marion, Walker Cooper, Mort Cooper, they had pretty much a big-league team. They weren't an easy squad. They won the National League by quite a bit and of course we had to battle right up to the last to win the American League pennant.

Q: The last week you fell out of first place and had to bounce back.

A: We played the Yankees in a four-game series and the Washington Senators went into Detroit for four games and we were one game down. It turned out we had to win them all and Detroit had to lose two, which they did.

Q: You had a big brawl against the Senators earlier in the month but they didn't fold.

A: We were rained out the first day so they played a doubleheader on Friday and we won those. I pitched on Saturday and shut the Yankees out 2-0. And Sunday was the game when Gene Moore hit a single and (Chet) Laabs hit a home run, that happened twice. That put us in the Series. Of course, after my game on Saturday when I shut the Yankees out, the manager came to me and told me that if we got into the Series I was going to start it.

Q: He told you that after your game?

A: After my game, yeah.

Q: So you knew already?

A: I knew way ahead of time and nobody else did. Nobody else knew who it was.

Q: Was it easy to keep quiet about that?

A: We were told to keep quiet, yeah. (My wife), she knew enough to keep quiet.

Q: Was it as big a deal 50 years ago as it is today, to be the Game 1 starter in the World Series?

A: You'd have to call that as big (of a thrill.) I had one other thing that thrilled me in one series against New York when I was with Cleveland, my first full year in 1936. I relieved on Friday, the starting pitcher got in trouble and was behind. I relieved and they didn't score any more runs. Until my turn to bat. Of course in those days you got a pinch hitter when you were behind, so they hit for me. And then on Saturday, the same thing happened and I pitched 2 1/3 or 2 2/3 innings until my turn came to hit again and they pinch hit. Then Sunday, we were down at the (Cleveland Municipal) Stadium. That's when we'd play weekends in the Stadium and weekdays at League Park. On Sunday, the game was in the bottom of the eighth inning and the manager came over to me and he said, "Do you think you can pitch an inning?" And I said, sure. So I went down and warmed up and pitched the ninth inning and we tied the score in the bottom of the ninth. It was 4-3 against us and we tied it 4-4. And the game went through 16 innings, tied 4-4. I pitched through the 15th. That was kind of thrilling to me to be able to stop the Yankees

three days in a row and have the Yankee manager tell our manager, he said, our guys just don't think they can beat me.

Q: Back to the World Series, you pitched two complete games, 15 strikeouts.

A: (We won) 2-1 the first game, lost the second one 2-0. And in that second game, the opposing pitcher, Mort Cooper, we both pitched two complete games. In that second game we set a strikeout record for two pitchers in a nine-inning World Series game, 22, and it's never been broken.

Q: What do you think accounted for that? You weren't a big strikeout pitcher. Was it the white shirts in the background or day games?

A: They were day games, there had been some background problems, but there were some pretty good hitters up there.

Q: Were you on your game?

A: I got into real good shape at that time, was pitching regularly. And I had excellent stuff. I know some of the Cardinals said later on that one guy was saying too highly, they told me he wasn't very fast (*laughs*). Meaning that they were surprised by the speed I had.

Q: Were you known more for a slider or curveball, what was your specialty?

A: I threw a fastball, slider, a curveball occasionally. Most of the opposition thought my slider was a curveball. Pitched everybody inside if I could.

Q: Paychecks weren't as big as they are today.

A: Our losing World Series cut was \$1,900. War bonds and taxes. We couldn't do anything about it. The government was in control and still are. Bleeding us dry.

Q: Do you remember the last game against the Yankees; what was the celebration like?

A: It was like every group that finally realizes they've won. There's a lot of hollering and silly interviews. They're no different then than they are now. You're very happy to have won and finally to have gotten to be in a series. It's just a fine feeling, there's no doubt about that. That's happened to everybody every year. So any question about it is kind of redundant.

Q: If you were with the team in '45, do you think they would have won the next year?

A: It's possible they would have. There was a very disturbing influence that Pete Gray was there, that one-armed guy, and he tended to hurt things I think.

Q: A couple of other players said that the pitching wasn't the same and Pete Gray took away Kreevich's job. Did you ever meet Gray?

A: No, never saw him. I went into the Navy in April from then to October. Since I had four pre-war dependents, I got to apply for release as soon as the war was over in Japan. And of course, until the paperwork went through it was October when I got out of the service.

Q: Too late to help the team.

A: Yeah. Everything was over. In fact, in '45 I went down from Great Lakes and pitched some batting practice to the Cubs. They played the Tigers in the World Series. That wasn't during the Series, but it was during the season a few times.

Q: What can you tell me about some of the players from the 1944 Browns team?

A: They were a bunch of alright guys trying to make a living.

Q: I heard McQuinn kept to himself.

A: He didn't keep to himself, he was one of the regular guys. And of course, in my first game, he's the one that hit the home run.

Q: He was 32 or 33, and back then that was considered old? Why was that, was it because of no DHs who couldn't hang around more?

A: In those days, of course, we traveled by train. And the trip from St. Louis, for instance, to Boston was a night, all day and the next night. We could leave like on a Thursday night and we'd get in on Saturday morning to Boston to play a game.

Q: So it took its toll.

A: You can go coast-to-coast (now) in a couple of hours. But we were all together for that three days or 36 hours. The team was together, playing, talking, and of course sleeping. Eating on the diner (car) and everything, we were just always together. It doesn't happen very often now, everybody has their portfolios and stocks and investments and going over them, I guess.

Q: Was Don Gutteridge the leader of the team, the "pepperpot"?

A: Ah, he was a holler guy. He was the guy that tries and keep everybody up. There were several guys like that, though. Others were the quiet ones, who let their actions speak for themselves.

Q: Vern Stephens: heavy hitter on and off the field?

A: He was a good hitter and a pretty good fielder on everything but a ball hit straight at him. And more infielders have told me that's the toughest ball to field because you can't judge the hops as well. But he'd look bad at the plate on a curveball or a certain pitch and then they'd throw the next one the same way and he'd hit it out of the park. He was just that way.

Q: Tex Shirley always had his hat on, I heard.

A: Yeah. He was really bald. He always kept his cap on too. He was really bald. That's before everybody shaved their heads, like they do now.

Q: What can you tell me about Jack Kramer and Nelson Potter?

A: They were both good pitchers. Potter, of course, was accused of cheating so much. He threw a sinker and a screwball and had a pretty good slider. A sinker-slider. And he was accused of wetting them every once in a while to get them to break a little more.

Q: What was the players' take on Potter's suspension?

A: He never admitted it, let's put it that way.

Q: Were there guys, like Gaylord Perry, that were known for the spitter?

A: Sometimes on other clubs I knew guys that wet the ball a little bit. They were accused of it but never got caught. I knew one I could tell when he was going to throw it because he would signal the catcher. He'd turn his glove a certain way when he had one loaded. I don't know whether the other players on the club knew that or not, but I knew it.

Q: What about Jack Kramer?

A: He was a good pitcher, had good control. Knew how to pitch. He was a strong guy. He had a good assortment. But the main thing is he could spot the ball pretty good, better than a lot of us.

Q: Did the team think they could win the pennant that year?

A: Well, after they got off to a good start and everything, they thought they could, yeah. And of course, I felt so too or else I might have stayed on and out of the Navy, but I thought it was all right to, that we had a chance to win. Which of course we did. Kramer, I don't know, he won 17 or 18 games that year.

Q: In the World Series, Game 2, the error by Potter ...

A: He bobbled it and threw it away — a double error. That cost us the game. The bunt was in order and they bunted. Trying to sacrifice. He bobbled it a little and trying to throw it, he threw it past first base down into right field. They scored, and it led to two runs.

Q: You were up 2 games to 1...

A: We should have been up 3 to 1.

Q: Do you remember your second start? Cooper had a great game but you were on also.

A: Yeah, we were neck and neck for a long time. I got behind Ray Sanders three-nothing and I come in and got two strikes on him, but he hit the one up and on the roof in right field for the first run. Then later on in the game, Danny Litwhiler hit one in the center field bleachers just to the left of the screen at that time.

Q: When the Series was finally over, was there a feeling of “that was our one chance”?

A: That was an opportunity. But it's still something that will be remembered in history for a long time as the only American League pennant for the Browns.

Q: Were the St. Louis fans pro-Browns or pro-Cardinals?

A: That's funny, we always used to say all the fans said they were Browns fans but they all went to see the Cardinal games. That's what it seemed like to us because the Cardinals drew a lot better than we did.

Q: You didn't draw very well until the last weekend of the year.

A: That last weekend we drew well. They filled the park on the last Saturday and Sunday! Especially on Sunday.

Q: How hard was it trying for a pennant and having low crowd turnout?

A: Well, I believe the Cardinals' winning purse was about \$5,000 something, and ours was \$2,000 something, before they took out everything. Then we had \$1,900, and that was for a full share.

Q: But what was it like playing in front of sparse crowds, was that tough to do?

A: That never bothered me because I'd played in front of big crowds in Cleveland and New York, and I just never felt ... I never paid attention to the crowd, let's put it that way. Crowds never did bother me. I used what I called the tin ear, I didn't hear what they were saying. You didn't pay attention to it; you concentrated on your job. What you were supposed to do.

Q: Did you have the feeling back then that St. Louis was not a two-baseball team town?

A: Everything pointed to that, yes. It's a known fact that fans go out to see winners. That's every place in any sport.

Q: Even in '44, you guys were winning, and they still weren't coming out to see you.

A: Because of the past history of not winning. They just weren't believers until the last few days, I guess.

Q: Any anecdotes ...

A: You probably heard this regarding (Sig) Jakucki's off-field habits. Prior to his final game on Sunday in the regular season, a lot of us older ones got to him and said, "Now hey, we know you like to drink, but for goodness sake stay sober tonight and be ready for tomorrow. We've got a chance to win the pennant, and you can be a big part of that if you can just do that." So he promised he would. And the next day, just before the game, one of us, I don't know who now, gave him a little two-ounce jigger to take and loosen him up. And that was it. But he kept his word that night and didn't drink. He was a real alcoholic. I wouldn't say an alcoholic, but he drank a lot. He was the bar fly.

Q: I heard Kreevich was before he came to the Browns ...

A: I guess Kreevich (was), but he always played good. He always played well. It never seemed to bother him. Course, there again I didn't do all those things, so I didn't know what all was going on with the other players.

Q: Was it a surprise that Jakucki pitched that last game?

A: Well, he was the one that was going better actually, so it was a logical choice since the rest of us had pitched on Friday or Saturday. The other guys at that time were really not that dependable. So it was a logical choice by the manager.

Q: I don't know if you remember, but George Caster pitched a lot for you during the season but didn't pitch at all in the World Series.

A: It's a funny thing about George, he'd relieve anybody else and stop them. But I don't think he ever saved a game I was in. I mean it was whether we pitched too much alike or what, but he would never save one for me. He never did, he would try. ... Our starting pitchers went good enough that they didn't need too much relief. And how much relieving was there? But we never had enough a lead for a saver to come in.

Q: What was (Bob) Muncrief like?

A: He had a good curveball. He threw across his body a lot but he had a fairly good year too. He had a good curveball and a decent fastball. Why he wasn't considered a starter during the Series, I really don't remember. It was a logical thing the way Jakucki was going and the way Kramer had pitched and Potter. I never knew until years later that Potter was really disappointed that he didn't start the first game. It turned out the manager was right. I did the winning the first game and Potter messed up in the second game. It was just a matter of fate or karma or whatever.

Q: Do you remember when you were told you were going to start, what your reaction was?

A: I just ... fine. I was always one to say, "Hey, you want me to do it? OK." When he told me, I was in the shower. I was always a heavy sweater, and after I pitched I'd sit around in the clubhouse and probably everybody would be gone. The rest of the players, until I got through

showering and quit sweating and everything, they were getting dressed. So I was in the shower when he was in the shower and he said, "If we're in it, you're it." So I said, "OK, if that's the way you want it." I didn't say if that's the way you want it, I said OK, fine. And everybody was asking around who was going to pitch. Nobody knew but me.

Q: What was Luke Sewell like as a manager?

A: He was in control of things. No question about that. I think he made up his own mind. Maybe he consulted with the general manager or something, I don't know. And of course, with the coaches. But he was one that made the decisions really.

Q: There were no pitching coaches back then, who did you work with?

A: We had just the two coaches, Hoffman and Zack Taylor. They were coaches, but that was it. There was a guy catching in the bullpen, he wasn't an experienced baseball person. We were pretty much on our own with what we had to do.

Q: What do you think about modern pitchers today?

A: That's why I don't think you'll see Cooper's and my (World Series strikeout) record broken. You won't get two pitchers to go nine innings.

Q: One of your former teammates said that he thought Sewell played favorites.

A: I don't know whether he did or not. That was probably someone who wasn't playing much. I think he played who he thought was best for the job, or who was going best. I don't think he was anti-anybody. You know, you have 25 men on a team. You're not going to please everybody ...

Q: Do you remember the two fights with Washington?

A: I missed them both. I was in the clubhouse changing clothes on the (Tom) Turner-(Roberto) Ortiz thing. Someone came in and said they're really battling out there, and by the time I got out there, they had separated and it was all over. And the (Nelson) Potter-(George) Case thing, I don't think lasted long enough to be too much other than a wrestling match.

Q: I guess you were happy the Senators didn't fold in the last series of the season?

A: That's right. Dutch Leonard pitched the last game against the Tigers. I guess the story came out that someone called him and threatened him. He had the nerve enough to go out and pitch a great game. And we'll always be thankful to him.

Q: Was it a magical team, or did things all just come together?

A: Well, they just got to believe. The farther the season went along, they got into something, then they'd come out of it. They'd start to think this is our year if we're ever going to do it. Then the next year, they might have been able to do the same thing, but they got a little too complacent about things. And then the Pete Gray thing kind of interrupted the normal routine of things.

Q: What was it like going to the Red Sox in 1947?

A: I had what might be considered the best half-year of my life. I won 11 games in a little more than a half-year.

Q: Was it disappointing for a player not to have won a World Series?

A: You always like to go all the way, to get to the highest point you can be. But sure, it's disappointing that you never got to win the World Series, but everyone can't do it. There have been some pretty darn good players over the years that never got to the World Series.

Q: What did you do with yourself after baseball?

A: I started scouting right away for the Red Sox. I've been in pro baseball since 1930. With the Red Sox 15 years, Detroit for nine years, Dodgers, Cardinals, Mets, and the last 14 years or so with San Diego. Just in Ohio now. Used to have Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, and Michigan. Joey Cora and Andy Benes were in my territory. Lloyd McClendon. Ken McBride started an All-Star Game with the Angels. Frank Bauman and a whole bunch of others. Matt Mieske, A.J. Sager.