

SABR Oral History Project

Interviewee: **Elroy Face**
Date: **September 15, 2019**
Location: **North Versailles, Pennsylvania**
Interviewer: **Steve Jeremko and Lindie Heasler**
Duration: **1 hour 45 minutes**

Steve and Lindie interviewed Mr. Elroy Face at his home in North Versailles, PA on September 15, 2019. We found Elroy in good health and spirits as he graciously granted us time an in-person interview. Elroy Face was a dominating, right-handed relief specialist of the Pittsburgh Pirates teams of the 1950s and 1960s. Known as a master of the forkball, his skills contributed to many victories for the team. In 1959, Elroy posted an amazing record of 18 wins against a single loss. Our interview with Elroy is divided into two parts.

Part 1 (54:48)

Initial discussion of the athletic facilities named after him.

Childhood in Stephentown, NY and his family and U.S. Army service. Early work as a logger and carpenter and playing on Town Teams in the area.

Experience in the minor leagues in the Phillies organization in Bradford, PA, then in the Dodgers' organization. He later came to the Pirates, courtesy of Branch Rickey.

Beginning his Pirate career as a starting pitcher and his first win against the Cubs.

Sent back to the minors (New Orleans) to expand his pitching repertoire.

Back to the Pirates in 1955 with a new pitch – the forkball.

Discussion of 1950s Pirates' teams. Playing under Bobby Bragan – then Danny Murtaugh, with a new role as relief specialist.

The big trade that brought Harvey Haddix, Don Hoak and Smokey Burgess. Haddix pitches perfect 12 innings. Elroy goes 18-1.

The Bucs' 1960 World Championship year; Elroy plays a crucial role in the Series.

The Pirates fall back in 1961 and 1962.

The forkball...

Part 2 (51:51)

Many changes for the Pirates in 1963 with loss of several key players and new players.

Elroy gets injured in 1965. Playing under Manager Harry Walker

Discussion of the competitive 1966 season. Reflections on Bob Friend, Bob Purkey and others.

The 1967 Pirates and 1968 under Larry Shepard

Elroy's last year and unusual last game with the Bucs.

The Detroit Tigers during their pennant-winning 1968 season. Elroy with the Montreal Expos during their inaugural 1969 season. With AAA Hawaii in 1970 – and the end of his playing career.

Elroy's All-Time team by position.

The differences in today's baseball. Final thoughts and contributions to the game.