

A L L O P E Z

This conversation between Al Lopez and Walter Langford in Al's home in Tampa on January 10, 1985.

WL: Al, what do you see as the principal differences between major league baseball prior to 1940 and the present time?

AL: I think there hasn't been that much of a change, but I think that the principal thing I see now is that the boys are getting bigger, the kids are getting bigger and they're just swinging much harder, they're using lighter bats, and there are more strike outs now than there used to be. We used to make more effort to make contact with the ball. The catchers, for some reason or other, the passed ball situation - me, being a catcher, <sup>I</sup>notice this more than an ordinary player - but to me it's ridiculous the way the passed ball situation is concerning the catching. And I don't see why it should be.

WL: Do catchers throw out as high a percentage of base stealers as they did in the old days?

AL: Well, that's another change that's occurred in baseball. No, they didn't used to try to steal as much as they do now.

WL: Now, is the stealing more the fault of the catcher or the pitcher?

AL: Well, it's a composite of three things. I think there's more speed now in baseball, they concentrate more on speed than they did in the older days. And the pitching, the kids are taller and it takes maybe a couple or three seconds more for them to be able to deliver the ball than in the olden days when the shorter guys and the short-arm pitchers (were throwing), and they're going to have to do something about the pitcher's windup. I don't think it's the catcher's fault in most cases. There's a couple of catchers - Carter does -

and there are a couple more that can throw those guys out. They position themselves to be able to get rid of the ball quick, like the Miami quarterback Marino who has a quick release. That's a big thing in throwing guys out. You can't wind up to throw the ball, in both catching and pitching.

WL: A lot of the old-timers I've talked to who knew you and played with you, like Glenn Wright and Babe Herman and others, said that was one thing you had - the quick release.

AL: Well, yeah, I was kind of quickback of the plate. I was small (and I'm not bragging) but I was a little more on the quicker side than most of the bigger guys.

WE: Yeah, that figures. What do you feel about the designated hitter?

AL: Well, again, there's another change in baseball that happened. Personally, I think it takes a lot away from managing. The other thing - I haven't really gone into it - is the percentage of how much increase is there in the scoring of runs. I haven't gone into that, but I don't see that much difference in the scoring. Personally, if I was managing I would like to be able to manage a little more than you do with the DH.

WL: The DH hadn't come in when you quit managing, had it?

AL: That's right.

WL: Just after you left it came in. What about artificial surfaces?

AL: Well, I think it's a great advantage to the hitters. There's no question about it.

WL: And to the management, with fewer rainouts.

AL: That's right. It's a real advantage to the hitters. I'd rather see just a regular turf, and I think a lot of the players would too.

WL: I think most of them would. Free agency?

AL: Free agency, I think it's a terrible thing, when that judge made the decision. I guess he knows the law, but I think it hurt baseball.

WL: I do too. And, growing out of that, today's salaries?

AL: Again, I don't blame the players for getting all they can, but the cause of it is management. They have nobody to blame but themselves. And I think it's going to get worse instead of better.

WL: You wouldn't want to predict the divisional winners in this upcoming season?

AL: No, I don't see that far ahead, and there have been quite a few changes. But one thing that disappointed me last season was the White Sox. I thought the White Sox would finish a lot higher. They had great pitching, and the thing they were strong at was the thing that failed them - the pitching. And I hope they have a better season.

WL: Well, the hitting failed them too. Their batting average dropped quite a bit.

AL: But I thought the pitching would hold them up. They had real strong pitching, and I thought they would hold up.

WL: In fact, I never saw where anybody picked anyone else than the White Sox to finish first last year, and they were the biggest disappointment of the season.

AL: I think so.

WL: And they were favorite team from the day I hit Notre Dame as a freshman in 1926 until I left South Bend a few years ago. Now, what about further expansion in both leagues? Do you see that coming in a few years?

AL: I think so. I think that eventually they'll have to expand both in football and in baseball. There are large cities that want football and want baseball. I don't see why not. I think it should be. One thing they have to straighten out is that the American League has two more clubs than the National League.

WL: Yeah. It's got to be evened up.

AL: Yeah. And the American League schedule is all screwed up on account of that. They have to do something about that. I hope they expand pretty soon.

WL: Then they would have to expand by just two teams into the National League or two in the American and four in the National, to even them off again.

AL: That would be asking too much, because where are you going to get the

players for six teams? I think, if they can, they should get two more teams in the National League and then play inter-league baseball.

WL: Yeah. Now you're talking. Do you think that Tampa is the Number 1 probability for an expansion team?

AL: Oh, I think Tampa Bay and Denver are real good, logical choices.

WL: Where would they play in Tampa? Is the Stadium where the Tampa Bay Buccaneers play, is that suitable for baseball?

AL: Oh, perfect. A perfect location. They have a field there - they named it Al Lopez Field - after me/- that is not large enough. But their plans are to build a big stadium there and it would be a perfect location because it's centrally located for the whole Bay area and also the surrounding towns around Tampa.

WL: What about the campaign of the people in St. Petersburg to get it over there?

AL: Well, I don't blame St. Pete for trying to get a stadium. By the way, I think what they had in mind was that Tampa beat them to football by building a stadium ahead of time. Tampa finally got a football franchise and they're trying to get a baseball one too. I don't blame St. Pete at all, but I think the ideal location is Tampa.

WL: And neither one is so far from the other but what they can .... it's all one big, I'd like to say happy family, but maybe that's not it right now.

AL: I see in recent years a growing number of Hispanic players in the major leagues, particularly from the Dominican Republic. After I retired at Notre Dame I lived and worked in the Dominican Republic for three years running a private foundation, and I saw a lot of the winter league games over there, etc., and they really are baseball crazy. But why don't we get more players in the majors out of Mexico?

AL: Well, Mexico has their own league and I don't know, for some reason they don't produce like the Dominican Republic.

WL: Mexico has leagues that are regular season, as you say, and also a winter league.

AL: That's right. They have a winter league also. You've got to give the

Dominican Republic a lot of credit. They've done a tremendous job. Before, it used to be Cuba. Cuba still has a lot of good players. And then Puerto Rico came along pretty good. But now the Dominican Republic by far is producing a lot more players than any other of those places.

WL: If we could open up relations with Cuba some time soon, do you think there would be a dozen or two ball players ready to come up out of Cuba?

AL: I think so. They're very enthusiastic over there about baseball and I know I played some games over there before I got to the majors once and then I was there twice with the Brooklyn ball club. Once with the All-Stars, and we had tremendous success. They had some good players.

WL: You must have played with, or certainly against, old Dolf Luque.

AL: I caught him with Brooklyn and then he went to the Giants. To me he was a great pitcher. I learned a lot from catching him. I was just breaking into the big leagues then when he was at Brooklyn.

WL: If I remember correctly, you're on the Veterans Committee for the election of people for the Hall of Fame.

AL: That's right.

WL: Tell me this. Do they elect many or very many after they have died?

AL: Oh, yes. There's been a number of players that were elected after they died. A lot of them. That's what the Veterans Committee is all about, to select players that have passed away or else players that are still living. A fellow like Glenn Wright, whom you mentioned a while ago, I thought he was a great player and his name has been brought up a number of times. And Babe Herman is another one.

WL: Yes, I talked with both of them. Glenn died, you know.

AL: Yes, that's a shame, for he was a <sup>good</sup> ~~great~~ friend of mine. Great player.

WL: I talked to him over two years ago. He was in pretty good shape then, out in Fresno, but months after that I had a letter from his son saying that he had a stroke and they brought him back to Kansas to live near his son, and that's where he died.

And I've talked two or three times with Babe Herman, and they're good possibilities (for the Hall of Fame). And there are others like Arky Vaughan ...

AL: Arky Vaughan. I rode with him. A great player.

WL: Does the Veterans Committee have a restriction that they can only elect two in one year?

AL: That's right.

WL: What do you think about that?

AL: Well, I think it's a good idea. If you start getting too many in you're going to cheapen the thing. It's quite an organization, and it should be a very selective thing.

WL: If there is still a number of old-timers that are worthy and new ones are constantly becoming eligible as times moves on, it sort of tends to squeeze out ....

AL: You'd be surprised at a lot of people that you think, or a lot of people think, ought to be in, have been voted on over there and they didn't get in, because you have to get a 2/3 majority of the votes. You'd be surprised at how many. Those three fellows you mentioned. Their names have been supported but they didn't get the 2/3 majority. You'd be surprised at how many fellows go through the process. The thing that they try to do is to keep the thing as exclusive as possible. And I'll tell you about George Kell, who got in last year. George was never mentioned, I think it was the first time he was mentioned, and he was voted in right away. He was never mentioned before. But we go through a list of all of the players that are eligible to be in, and they try to select the two best nominees that they possibly can.

WL: Two more things. Now that Joe Cronin has died, have they selected a new chairman for the Committee?

AL: Not yet. Not that I've heard of. I think they're probably going to bring it up in the next meeting.

WL: You could very well be the guy.

AL: I hope not. That's too much work for me. I just want to relax and be

one of the members.

WL: It seems to me I remember that in several seasons the Old-Timers Committee has selected one player and one non-player, like Happy Chandler or somebody. Some people say there ought to be a separate category for former managers and executives and commissioners, etc., so that the Committee could choose its two players every year.

AL: Well, I think the rule is that you can choose two players and another person such as an umpire or an official.

WL: This intrigues me, Al. In 1930 the whole National League averaged out, hit over .300. I think six of the eight teams batted over .300, up to .319, and if you averaged out everybody in the league - pitchers, pinch hitters, utility players - they all averaged over .300. And in this past season (1984) it averaged out in the National League to .255. That's a difference of about 50 points. There are several possible reasons for that, I guess, but what would you think it is mostly? Is hitting for average a lost art? Like you say, they swing for the fences now and that's bound to reduce contact and elevate the strike outs and everything. Or are today's pitchers that much better, which I kind of doubt. But maybe the effectiveness of relief pitching has accounted for it. Or the expansion has lowered the quality overall in the players. Or does the rise of other pro sports - football, basketball, and all the other pro sports - which are taking a lot of the athletes nowadays whereas that wasn't true in the '20s and '30s, does this explain it? Got any thoughts on that?

AL: Yes. I can tell you from my experience that in 1930 when I first came up, we had a real good ball to hit at, and that's the year that Bill Terry led the league with .401. Babe Herman hit, I think, .393. And like you say, most of clubs were good hitting teams. The following year - I think McGraw complained about the ball because he was playing in the Polo Grounds where the distance down the lines was very short, I think 250 feet or something like that and most anybody could hit a ball out - and McGraw complained that you couldn't

manage a team with a ball so lively that it would <sup>go</sup> out of the ball park like that. Anyway, in the National League they changed the ball considerably, they deadened the ball a lot. It hurt, well, it hurt me. I hit .309 in '30 and I went to .275 or something like that. It hurt Hack Wilson, who had hit 54 home runs and drove in about 190 runs in either '29 or '30.

WL: '30.

AL: He went down, way down, and finally they got rid of him. Of course, he hit the ball mostly to right center, but the ball had a lot to do with it. I was talking with Bill Terry about this myself, about how I thought it affected the hitting, and he said "Well, I still hit over .340." He and Hafey and Bottomlet finished practically in a tie, and Hafey won it by a fraction of a point. But I said, "You forget that the year before you hit .401, so you dropped about 60 points." You know, the .300 hitter went down to about .270. And a lot of people would say "Look, you're not a .300 hitter any more." But that's getting away from it. The ball had a lot to do with it. But then they started bringing the liveliness back in the ball, and now I think the ball is livelier than ever.

WL: I believe you're right.

AL: But getting back to what you were talking about, in those days we played all day games. And the pitcher who started would have to pace himself like a race horse would have to pace himself to go a mile and a quarter or a mile and an eighth. The pitcher wouldn't let out so much as they do today. Now the pitchers go out at night, which helps the pitcher because it's cooler and that's a great advantage for the pitcher. And again they're big, strong kids, they throw hard, and they go out there for six or seven inniggs, and today the big part of the game is the bullpen. You brought that up yourself. The bullpen has a lot to do with it. In those days we had some huys in the bullpen, but they weren't especially bullpen pitchers. They were guys who would come in after the starter got in real trouble. A guy like Burleigh Grimes,



he'd go out there and he'd beat you, 6-5 or 5-4 or 2-1. Whatever he had to do, he did it. And Luque was the same way. And Dizzy Dean. They can't tell me that there are any pitchers today that are greater than Dizzy Dean or Carl Hubbell or Dazzy Vance or Walter Johnson. Those guys were great, not that these guys are bad. They're great pitchers, but we had pitchers just as great in those days as they have now.

WL: All right. Could you name, and maybe even rank, the best half dozen managers you saw in your playing days in the major leagues?

AL: Let me see. I can name you one fellow that I admired, that I thought was the one who brought in more things like the hit-and-run and going to the opposite field and stuff like that, and he was John McGraw. He had great success. I never played in the American League in those days, but I played against John McGraw and I admired him very much. I thought he was a great manager. He knew what he needed for his club to be a good club and he went out and got it. In those days you could trade with the lower clubs - Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and clubs like that.

WL: That's another drawback of the free agency and the long-term contracts and guaranteed contracts that have reduced the ....

AL: I think the long-term contract hurts baseball, I really do. Anyway, now going back to managers, I was fortunate enough that I played under five managers and they're all in the Hall of Fame. I think Boudreau is not in the Hall as a manager, but I learned something from Lou, I played under him. I played under Casey Stengel twice, at Brooklyn and at Boston, and he's in the Hall of Fame. Bill McKechnie was another one that I learned an awful lot from, and he's in the Hall of Fame. Frank Frisch is in the Hall of Fame.

WL: He could be in either way, as player or manager. You played a little bit for Wilbert Robinson.

AL: Well, he's in the Hall of Fame. I forgot him, I'M sorry, but he was my first manager. He was a great guy to play for.

WL: Yep. There were some good ones. Were you with Cleveland as a coach in

'48?

AL: No, I was more to try to help. McKechnie asked me to, he was a coach there.

WL: Your playing days ended in '47?

AL: Yeah. Then I went to manage Indianapolis in '48, '49, and '50.

WL: It seems to me that it was a sort of shame that Feller couldn't have won a game in that '48 Series, that first game especially.

AL: Yeah. I saw that game. I was in Boston. It was a real fine ball game. He got beat 1-0.

WL: Do you feel that Masi was out at second base?

AL: Well, again, that's just one of those things that it's hard to call from the stands.

WL: Mel Harder tells me that he's got photographs that prove it.

AL: Yeah. I was in the stands and I saw it. And I knew the play, because I had been with Cleveland the year before. They practiced that play and Feller and Lemon both could pull the play because they were quick and they knew the play. It was a count play. They counted, you know, and then turned around and wheeled and threw. I was looking for it and it happened, but I couldn't call it from the stands.

WL: Well, even if he had been called out, you'd never know who would have won the game eventually. In '54, when everybody thought that Cleveland with its great season record and great pitching and balanced ball club was going to win the World Series, and then they had that unhappy story of losing in four straight, I figure it wouldn't have taken much for Cleveland to have won it.

AL: Well, I think we would have had a good chance if we had got that first game. You see, sports is funny. You get streaks where everything you do is right. In that year we won 111 ball games, it's a record right now. I don't recall that we lost more than two games in a row at any time through the 154 games of the season. Everything we did was just going perfect. We beat the Red Sox in Fenway Park eleven times. We played 13 games there and we won

11 and lost 2. And they were a first division ball club, they finished 4th. everything that we did was perfect. Then we went into the Series and it looked like everything we did just went wrong. I think, looking back on it now, that if we had started the Series in Cleveland we would have won the first two ball games. Because Vic Wertz's ball would have been a home run, away out of the ball park in Cleveland. Those things turn around, and we don't know. But the Giants were a good ball club. They were a better ball club than you give them credit for.

WL: A short Series like that can turn on just a few things.

AL: That's right.

WL: Who could have figured that Dusty Rhodes would have that kind of a Series?

AL: It happens in every World Series. Every time you play in a Series you see somebody that's unexpected that comes out and stars.

WL: Yeah. Pepper Martin in '31. In the '59 Series, if Lollar had scored on that drive in the 8th inning of the second game, the Sox would have had a couple of men on and nobody out, do you think they could have gone on from there?

AL: That was the turning point. Even if he hadn't scored he could have stayed on third base. But I give the Los Angeles club credit. They made two perfect relays, and people don't realize that. I forget who the boy was that was playing left field for the Dodgers, he used to play for the Cardinals, but he got a real perfect bounce from the wall and relayed it to the shortstop. Then the shortstop relayed it to the catcher on a perfect throw, and Lollar was out easy. But even if he hadn't gone and stayed there, we would have had three men on and nobody out. And it might have been a different ball game.

WL: And of course good old Sherm, great as he was, was pretty slow on those basds.

AL: He was a little bit slow.

WL: And he cut pretty wide around third base. I remember sitting in the stands

one night. It was the 9th inning of a tie game and Lollar was on first base with two out and Billy Goodman was at bat. I said to a friend who was with me, "Boy, he's got to hit it to that longest spot in right center field for Lollar to have any chance to score." By God, he hit it right there and Lollar scored. Now, how frustrating was it to manage in Cleveland and Chicago all those years from '51 on through '65 and finish second about ten times, most of them behind the Yankees?

AL: Well, it was no frustration. I was very fortunate. I had good people to work for, and I had good ball players to play for me and they people I got along with. And I think that's the main principle of a good ball club, to have cooperation. Players that are satisfied, not complaining about everything. If you have people who really want to play the game and go out and give you all they've got, I think that's the big part of it. And I had no frustration. I had winning ball clubs, good ball clubs to work with, and I had good management too.

WL: That point you make about players being satisfied and happy and playing well together, I don't think that exists to the same degree these days. They're all business men and ...

AL: Well, I think this is a very important part in any ball player. If you can keep your players in the proper spirit to go out and win it, it means an awful lot. And teams, it doesn't make any difference whether it's baseball or basketball or football, you got to get everybody to give every effort they can. I tried to stay away from that type of guys that were trouble-makers or something like that.

WL: But it just figures that there can't be as much togetherness these days. They travel by plane rather than on the train, and they don't spend that much time together. They play night games rather than day games, and I think there is ...

AL: I'll tell you what they complain about. That they get tired. About going from the Coast to Boston or something like that by plane. To me, if they had

gone through what the older players went through, going from St. Louis to New York by train so that there would have to be an off day. And sleeping on those hot trains in the summer time with no air conditioning. They would appreciate the plane. The plane is air conditioned, you sit there in a nice comfortable seat that you can sleep in if you want to, and the girl brings you a beer or a soft drink or a cocktail. It's a lot easier than it used to be when we were playing.

WL: Oh, my, yes. I remember Dutch Leonard - I talked to him before he died - and he told me that when he was playing with Washington for Clark Griffith, they had those train rides with no air conditioning so that they nearly died. So they went to Griffith and said to him one time and said, "We'll pay for the ice." They put ice in big containers and blew air over it to cool things. First they asked him why he didn't get air conditioning and Griffith said, "Oh, that's bad for players. That's bad for the pitchers' arms. You'll get a sore arm."

AL: In St. Louis there was no air conditioning in the hotels. You could hardly sleep.

WL: Well, when they went to Griffith and said they would pay for the ice, he said, "Well, that's a good idea." How would you compare Judge Landis with the various commissioners who have followed him?

AL: Well, again, it's just like trying to compare some of these fellows with Babe Ruth. I think Landis was the greatest. I think he was the greatest because he could afford to be that way. He didn't need the job. I'm just quoting somebody else, but I understand that one time there was an owner who was complaining about the way he was handling things, and Landis just took his contract and tore it up in front of them and said, "If you're not satisfied with the way I'm doing things, just get somebody else." And everybody voted for him to stay. And that's the reason I think he was such a great man. And he was very conscientious in trying to keep away from trouble. He could and foresee things coming/before they happened and he would call the player or the owner and settle the thing before anything wrong would happen, which meant an

awful lot.

WL: And furthermore, he was brought in in a time of desperation, and he was given powers that no commissioner since has had.

AL: Well, he did a lot for baseball. I have a lot of admiration for him.

WL: (The story of Glenn Wright unknowingly talking in the stands during spring training with Al Capone, and Landis calling him in the next day to forbid his talking with him again.)

AL: He could foresee things, I'll say that for him.

WL: Who was the best righthanded hitter you ever saw?

AL: Rogers Hornsby.

WL: Everybody says that. How about the best lefthanded hitter?

AL: Well, to me I think that Ted Williams was as good as any. More compact and more of a swinger. But I've seen a lot of good ones. Paul Waner, not a lot of power, but he was a great hitter. Williams was so much different, so much stronger. I've seen a lot of good ones. Bill Terry was a great hitter.

(Al's sister-in-law announces that breakfast is ready).

WL: How about the best righthanded pitcher?

AL: There were a lot of good ones. Dizzy Dean and Dazzy Vance. I saw a little bit of Alexander when he was about through, but he was a great one. And for lefthanders, I didn't play against Grove but he was great, and so was Carl Hubbell. There are so many that you could mention, I'm sorry to leave some of them out.

WL: Let me just ask two or three more and then we'll pause for breakfast.

Who was the best base runner you ever saw?

AL: Best base runner I ever saw.

WL: You didn't see Ty Cobb?

AL: I saw him at the end. Max Carey I saw a little bit of. At that time Max Carey was the best in the National League. We didn't have that much speed.

Kiki Cuyler was pretty good when he used to be with the Cubs, and I think he was on his own. I think McCarthy let him run whenever he wanted to.

WL: Was Luis Aparicio as good as Max Carey?

AL: Oh, Aparicio, I should think of him. Aparicio was great. We had him on his own. He used to do that. I thought you were talking about the ones I played against.

WL: In a sense I was. How about the best outfielder?

AL: Terry Moore was great.

WL: Uh, huh. I talked with him too. Did you see Speaker?

AL: No, no.

WL: How about the best defensive play~~er~~ you ever saw in baseball?

AL: Best defensive play. I think one of the best ones I ever saw was a play that Terry Moore made on me. I hit a blooper. I hit the ball on the handle with three men on in St. Louis and two out, and he came in on the dead run and just dove at the ball with his bare hand, and caught the ball barehanded. I don't see how he held the ball barehanded, but he made a tremendous play on it. And I understand he used to make them like that practically every day.

WL: Speaking of barehanded, Charlie Grimm tells about ....

AL: He was great. I've seen him do that.

WL: (Story of Charlie catching pitcher's best pickoff throw barehanded).

Could you pick out any one game that you think was the greatest game you ever watched?

AL: One of the great games for us in Cleveland was when we played the Yankees in Yankee Stadium. This was when the Yankees were a powerhouse and Reynolds was pitching against us. He was one of the best in the league at that time. He was pitching ~~us~~ against us and they scored I think it was 7 runs in the very first inning against either Wynn or Lemon. We had to take him out real quick in the first inning, and I started bringing in bullpen pitchers and pinchhitting, and the first thing you know we're creeping up on 'em, and we finally ended up beating them in the 10th inning, 8-7. They didn't score a run or get a base hit after the first inning. I think that was one of the most outstanding games I can ever remember.

WL: (Story of game when White Sox led Yankees about 6-0 one evening in Comiskey, and Yankees kept chipping away and finally Mantle homered in the 9th with two on to win it).

WL: Who was the best umpire you ever saw?

AL: Bill Klem.

WL: Everybody says that too. And the best game you ever had?

AL: The best game I ever had I think was in the Polo Grounds, I think the first game I played against the Giants. I think I got five for six that day. We scored a lot of runs.

WL: What would you call your greatest thrill in baseball, AL?

AL: That's a question that I get all the time from kids that write to me and want to know about that. Well, I've had so many thrills, like becoming a professional ball player, when I never thought I would be one. I played ball in school and sandlot ball around Ybor City and was fortunate enough to be picked up by the local team here. I signed a contract when I was 16 years old. So that was a thrill for me, and then to be bought by Brooklyn, a major league club, was another dream I never thought would happen. And then to get to play in the majors, why I came home like I was driving a cloud or something. The only Tampa boy that ever played in the major leagues. And then after that I played in All-Star games, managed in the World Series, managed All-Star teams, and who could ask for any more thrills than that? And after all of that happened, I became a Hall of Famer, which was another big thrill.

WL: Yep, that tops it off.

AL: That's right.

WL: What was the best team you ever played on?

AL: Best team? I think I would have to say Brooklyn was the best team I played on. In 1930. We finished 4th but we were on top most of the year but at the end we got a couple of injuries. Johnny Frederick pulled a hamstring muscle and Rube Bressler broke a finger. That hurt us a lot.



We were in bad shape after that.

WL: What was the best team you ever managed - the Cleveland '54 team?

AL: Well, again, they were both good teams (Cleveland '54 and Chicago '59).

I'll say the Cleveland pitching staff was the best pitching staff I've ever seen on any club. Chicago and Cleveland were entirely different types of ball clubs. One (Cleveland) was hard hitting, good pitching, power hitting, and Chicago was good pitching and speedy defense.

WL: Do you remember any unusual, very funny, or strange plays that happened?

AL: You know, at the time it happened it didn't seem strange .....

WL: Well, what was the treatment that rookies got when you came up?

AL: It wasn't all that bad, you know. They talk about ... I didn't expect anything different from what I got. I knew that I wasn't going to be welcomed, especially by the one whose position I ... But they treated me nicely, as nice as they could. Nobody was bad. I think almost everybody goes through that same procedure until you become one of the regular guys.

WL: 1930 was not only the best team you may have played on but statistic-wise it was your best season too.

AL: It was my best season in the major leagues. I hit .309 that year.

WL: And you had some great teammates there. You had old Bobo Newsom just coming up at the same time.

AL: Bobo belonged to Brooklyn at the same time that Mungo came up. We had some good young pitchers from around that same area as Bobo and Mungo came from.

We had three or four of them.

WL: How was Lefty O'Doul?

AL: Lefty was one of the smartest hitters I ever saw. He was a great hitter and a real smart hitter. He could figure things out pretty good.

WL: And Hack Wilson was on his way down when you saw him.

AL: Hack was with us a couple of years. A great guy. Like you say, he was on his way down. The ball was not as lively as it was when he ... I think that hurt him.

More than any other one particular ball player.

WL: Yeah, that's possible. You played with a lot of great names in the different places where you went. No question about that. And in Pittsburgh you saw Rip Sewell.

AL: Yeah. I caught Rip Sewell, about seven years.

WL: Was he throwing his blooper ball then?

AL: Yeah, he came with that thing. He said he got the idea in the bullpen. He was in the bullpen and he would be warming up and finally the last ball he would throw me he would lob it. And I think that was the start of it.

WL: The fact that he could do so that it would come down over the plate for a strike was ....

AL: That was the amazing part of it. It was just a lob ball but he had such good control.

WL: When you had Larry Doby (in Cleveland) I guess he was a pretty good hitter.

AL: That should have been. He was a good ball player but he should have been better yet. He was a fine ball player. But I think that Larry had so much pride in himself that he wanted to do better than what he did. And he fought himself an awful lot. He was his worst enemy. But he was a real good ball player on a good ball club. We had a good ball club there at Cleveland. And he helped us an awful lot, and it's a shame, because he could have been better if he didn't fight himself the way he did.

WL: After he came over to Chicago I saw a doubleheader there one Sunday afternoon against the Yankees, whom we all hated vigorously, and in each game in the first inning he came up with two men on and bashed a home run and it was all over in both games.

AL: He had power. He had everything. He was a very proud man, Larry was, and his feelings were hurt very easily. And he tried so hard, I think he tried too hard. And I think he hurt himself by doing so.

WL: How about Minnie Minoso?

AL: Ninnie was a great guy on the club. Everybody liked him and he was a good hustling ball player, played every day, hurt or not. He just played and he was a good ball player on a good club.

WL: Billy Pierce?

AL: Great pitcher. Real nice guy, I wish, you know, I had some great guys but I wished I had 25 guys to manage like Billy Pierce. He didn't drink, didn't smoke, you didn't have to worry about a thing about him.

WL: Gerry Staley, do you think that he, if he were like he was then, would be a good relief pitcher today, or have they advanced in that?

AL: No, he'd be a good relief pitcher. Gerry had a real good sinker ball that.... it really sunk a lot, and he made you hit that ball on the ground.

WL: Then you had Juan Pizarro for a while.

AL: Juan Pizarro. Juan was another guy like Larry, had tremendous ability and was a moody fellow. You know, well, he had one thing against him - he didn't speak the language too well, although he got to know it pretty good in time.

But he had tremendous ability and should have been a lot better than what he was.  
or three  
He pitched good for me. He had two/good years for me.

WL: And Gary Peters came up while you were there.

AL: Gary came up a great guy and pitched good ball for me.

WL: Joe Horlen too.

AL: Yes, Joe Horlen.

WL: Did you expect John Romano to be a better catcher than he turned out to be?

AL: John should have been better. He was a little bit on the lackadaisical side. Nonchalant side. And if he had been just a little bit more aggressive I think he would have been a real fine catcher. Good hitter. Power.

WL: And Tommy John also came along.

AL: Tommy John did a good job for us. I think Tommy John should thank Ray Berres, for Ray was the one who really helped Tommy John an awful lot.

WL: How about old Bill Veeck?

AL: Bill Veeck is a good friend, a great guy, and I wish he was back in baseball.

WL: Yeah, I think many people do. Now, since you quit managing in '69, what have you been up to mostly? Just enjoying life down here ....

AL: Just enjoying life and playing golf as often as I can. I play four or five times a week.

WL: Can't beat that.

AL: Nope.

WL: Al, I thank you very much for chatting with me and I hope you have a lot more chances to play a lot more golf, and see a lot more baseball games.

AL: I thank you very much.

WL: My pleasure.