

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH DALE PETROSKEY,
PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

MODERATOR: JONATHAN SALANT, PRESIDENT, THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 1:01 P.M. EDT

DATE: THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2006

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MR. SALANT: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. I'm Jonathan Salant of
Bloomberg News, president of the Press Club.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience today, as well as those of you
watching on C-SPAN. This broadcast will also be heard on XM Satellite Radio this Saturday
from the National Press Club.

Please hold your applause during the speech so we have time for as many questions as possible.
For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear applause, it is from the guests and
the members of the general public, not from the working press.

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by ConnectLive and is available to members
only through the Press Club's website at www.press.org. Press Club members may also get free
transcripts of our luncheons at our website. Nonmembers may buy videotapes, audiotapes and

transcripts by calling 1-888-343-1940. For more information about joining the Press Club, please call us at area code 202-662-7511.

Before introducing our head table, I'd like to remind our members of future speakers. On July 10th, Senator Arlen Specter, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee will be our guest. And also in July, we will have Pennsylvania's other Republican senator, Rick Santorum, the head of the Senate Republican Conference. On September 9th, the Press Club will hold its ninth annual 5K run and walk, benefiting the Ellen Persina Scholarship for aspiring journalists of color.

The Baseball Hall of Fame has graciously donated a behind-the-scenes tour of the Baseball Hall of Fame to our online auction. You can get more information about the run/walk and other auction items part of the sound auction and the race at our website, www.press.org.

If you have any questions for our speaker, please write them on the cards provided at your table and pass them up to me. I will ask as many as time permits.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. Please hold your applause until all head table guests are introduced.

From your right, Bill McCloskey, BellSouth Corporation; Keith Hill of BNA, a member of the National Press Club's Board of Governors; Dick Ryan, a retired reporter for The Detroit News and former president of the National Press Club; the Honorable James Symington, former congressman from Missouri and a former White House chief of protocol; Lori Russo, vice president of Stanton Communications and vice chair of the Press Club's Communications and Market Committee and a star player on the Press Club's softball team -- (laughter) -- His Excellency Flavio Espinal, ambassador from the Dominican Republic; John Hughes of Bloomberg News, the chairman of the National Press Club's Speakers Committee; Curtis Eichelberger, Bloomberg News and organizer of today's event -- and Curtis, thank you very much -- John Dalton, former secretary of the Navy; Michael Phelps, the publisher of The Baltimore Examiner; Steve Ginsburg, North American sports editor for Reuters; John Mitchell of Reader's Digest; and Ed Epstein of The San Francisco Chronicle.

(Applause.)

There are many halls of fame, like the Basketball Hall of Fame, the Hall of Fame for Great Americans and the National Soccer Hall of Fame. But when we talk about THE hall of fame, we can only mean one: the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York. That's the place where Abner Doubleday may or may not have invented baseball. (Laughter.) The Hall of Fame dates its beginnings in 1934 when an old, homemade baseball was found near Cooperstown. It was put on display along with some other baseball items, leading to support for a museum.

Today, the Hall of Fame attracts more than 350,000 people annually to peruse its 50,000 square feet of exhibit space. The 165,000 items include Ty Cobb's glove, "Shoeless" Joe Jackson's spikes, the written agreement selling Babe Ruth to the Yankees, and a recording of Russ Hodges

screaming, "The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!" after Bobby Thompson's home run off Ralph Branca in the 1951 playoffs. A \$20 million renovation completed in 2005 added new interactive exhibits and made the museum more accessible to people with disabilities.

Two hundred seventy-eight people have been inducted into the Hall of Fame, including the first woman, Effa Manley, the co-owner of the Newark Eagles. They won the Negro League championship in 1946, a year before Jackie Robinson integrated the majors.

Overseeing all of this is Dale Petroskey who has what my colleague, Curtis Eichelberger, described as one of the greatest jobs in America. Mr. Petroskey is a lifelong Detroit Tigers fan, and I'm sure he's happy about how their season is going so far. A former star second baseman in high school, Mr. Petroskey wound up not playing baseball for a living, but rather a contact sport -- politics. He worked for the Michigan House Republican Caucus, then was chief of staff to Congressman Bill Goodling, and eventually served as an assistant press secretary to President Reagan. On the wall of Mr. Petroskey's office in the Hall of Fame is a picture introducing legendary Tigers broadcaster Ernie Harwell to President Reagan, himself a former sportscaster.

He's run into some politics in his current job as well. In 2003 Mr. Petroskey cancelled the 15th anniversary celebration of the movie "Bull Durham" because two of its stars, Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins, were outspoken opponents of President George W. Bush's decision to attack Iraq. Mr. Petroskey said that he was concerned that the two actors would use the Hall of Fame as a platform for criticizing the war. He admitted later that he should have called them and asked them to keep politics out of the celebration. "Well, I made mistakes, you know," he said.

When Mr. Petroskey became president of the Hall of Fame, one of the inductees, pitcher Don Sutton, told him, "You've just been handed the keys to the Vatican."

Let's welcome the overseer of baseball's shrine, Dale Petroskey, to the National Press Club.

(Applause.)

MR. PETROSKEY: Well, thank you, Jonathan, and thanks for the very kind introduction and the invitation to be here. This is a real honor for everyone connected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

A few words about my special head table guests: first, Ambassador Espinal of the Dominican Republic, a great baseball fan himself from one of the great baseball-loving nations on earth, the Dominican Republic. And Juan Marichal sends his best to you, Mr. Ambassador.

Former Navy Secretary John Dalton -- Secretary Dalton came up to Cooperstown a couple of Memorial Days ago and dedicated a plaque, which sits in our gallery, which honors all the hall of famers who served during wartime in the armed services, and really appreciate that. John's a great Yankees fan and now he's a Nationals fan. He can have a National League team, too, now.

Jimmy Symington, my great friend in Washington, who's had a distinguished public service career. He's from Missouri, so you know Stan Musial's his man. And he's also just a wonderful, wonderful human being.

I was going to have Dick Ryan as one of my guests at the head table, but the club beat me to it and invited him anyway. Dick had a great career as a reporter for The Detroit News and was a club president here -- all-around great guy, and he is Charlie Gehringer's biggest fan still.

I want you to know that my brother, Dennis, is in the audience over here. And Dennis is a senior vice president with the Travel Industry Association -- (applause) -- and they promote travel and tourism to and within the United States. I can't think of a better time for us to be showing the world what great people the American people are and all the wonderful things that America has to offer than right now. You may have seen this week in Time magazine -- the cover story is about how important siblings are to all of us. Well, Denny and I have been very close since we were little boys, still close today, and he still has a pretty big impact on my life. So thanks for being here, Den.

I'll talk about three things today: first of all, what the Hall of Fame really is. What do we do in Cooperstown every day? Secondly then, I'll tell you a few stories. And then third, I'll talk about what has happened in baseball and what's happened at the Hall of Fame since I was here five years ago.

Let's start with Cooperstown. I think it's important to put the Hall of Fame into the context of where we are. We're in this little town in upstate New York, 70 miles west of Albany, between the Adirondacks and the Catskills -- 2,300 people in this little town. And it sits on the shores of Otsego Lake, which is nine miles long and was made famous by James Fenimore Cooper in his "Leatherstocking Tales." He called it "Glimmerglass."

Cooper's family founded this little village, and that's why we're called Cooperstown, a very special place with lots of amenities. In Cooperstown, we have a four-star resort hotel, the Otesaga; a championship golf course on the lake -- it's called Leatherstocking. We have one of the great summer operas in America -- it's called Glimmerglass; a teaching hospital affiliated with Columbia University called Bassett Hospital; and three world-class museums: the Fenimore Art Museum, which has perhaps the greatest collection of early American, Native American and folk art in the country; the Farmers Museum, which is a working farm depicting life in rural upstate New York in the 1850s; and the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Cooperstown is a very special place. Many people think it's the most beautiful little village in America, and I have to agree with them. And the Hall of Fame sits right on Main Street in this little town.

If you send a letter to the Hall of Fame, you can write "Baseball Hall of Fame, Main Street, Cooperstown, New York" and it will get there. Our full name is actually The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. We're a nonprofit educational institution founded in 1936 -- yes, the ball was found in '34, but we were actually incorporated in '36 -- opened our doors in 1939. We are completely independent of Major League Baseball, though we enjoy a very special and good relationship with Major League Baseball. We have about 100 full-time employees and our annual budget is \$16 million a year. And we exist for three reasons: to preserve history, to honor excellence and to connect generations.

Now, how do we fulfill that mission? We really are three entities under one roof. We're a museum, we're an educational institution and we're a Hall of Fame where we honor the game's greats, and I'm going to talk a little bit about each.

First of all, the museum. How many of you have baseball collections? Wow -- pretty good. Well, we have the world's greatest baseball collection. We have 35,000 items: bats, balls, gloves, helmets, spikes, catchers gear, uniforms, 135,000 baseball cards -- probably some of the your mother threw out. (Laughter). Our library contains 2 million documents, 500,000 historic photographs and 10,000 hours of original TV and radio recordings. We do not pay for any artifacts, for any documents. Everything we have has been donated to us, and these items help tell the story of baseball history from the earliest days right up to today. And it's not just the major leagues; it's the Negro Leagues, it's women in baseball, it's the minor leagues, it's little league baseball. We are the game's institution of record. We are baseball's Smithsonian and Library of Congress all rolled into one.

Second, we're a nonprofit educational institution. We take this part of our mission very seriously. Every day of the school year, yellow school buses roll up to Cooperstown and outbound kids -- kids on a field trip -- and they come inside and they're taught math and science and history and geography and other subjects by teachers, teachers who have education degrees. We also teach through distance learning via satellite to classrooms all over the country from San Diego to Boston, from Seattle to Miami. We also work with Ball State University to produce a one-day lesson plan each year that's broadcast to schools throughout the United States on the Internet and through educational public television. For the past five years, we have reached 15 to 20 million school kids a year, each year this way. In February, the next lesson plan will be how baseball was played by Japanese-American internees in the camps on the West Coast during World War II. They were playing baseball just to prove to their captors that they were every bit as American as they were.

We also have the Frank and Peggy Steele Internship Program for college kids. This year, 450 applied for that internship, 25 were chosen. They come to Cooperstown for the summer, they get paid and they work in their area of study, whether it's business of communications or library sciences or history. So we're very proud of our efforts in education, and not enough people know that we're a serious educational institution.

Third, we're a Hall of Fame, which honors the game's greats. The plaque gallery in the Hall of Fame is America's shrine to its baseball heroes. And you can pick up any newspaper any day and you'll see a story about a hall of famer, a future hall of famer, a potential hall of famer or somebody who's not in the Hall of Fame who should be in the Hall of Fame. (Laughter.) More than any other sport, baseball fans really care who's in their Hall of Fame. That's what makes it special.

Now, what percentage of major leaguers make it to Cooperstown? One percent. One out of 100 major leaguers will ever have a plaque in Cooperstown. So if there are 750 players in the major leagues today -- 25 players on a roster, 30 teams -- 743 will never see Cooperstown, a handful will. That's how special it is, and that's how exclusive it is.

So again, we're three things: We're a museum, we're an educational institution and we're a Hall of Fame, which honors the game's greats.

As Jonathan said, seven years ago when I started this job -- seven years ago this month -- Don Sutton put his arm around me and said, you know, they've just handed you the keys to the Vatican. And I knew exactly what he was talking about, because it really is the spiritual home of the game. It's where the stories reside, where they're captured and where we share them, and I'd like to share a few of those stories with you.

When Ted Williams was playing, he let everybody know what his life's goal was. He said when I walk down the street, I want them to point a finger at me and say there goes the greatest hitter who ever lived. And a lot of people think that Ted Williams was the greatest hitter who ever lived. Some people believe it was Babe Ruth, some people Ty Cobb, some people Stan Musial, others Barry Bonds. I'd like to make a case for the player I believe is the most underrated player in the history of the game: Hank Aaron.

Now, you say how can Hank Aaron be underrated? Everybody knows Hank Aaron has the most home runs in major league history. That's precisely why he's underrated. When people talk about Hank Aaron, all they talk about is home runs. Let's throw away all 755 home runs -- he still got 3,000 hits. The all-time hits leader is Pete Rose, second is Ty Cobb, who's third? Hank Aaron -- 3,071 hits. He's the all-time home run leader; but who's the all-time RBI leader -- probably a more important statistic? Hank Aaron -- 2,300 RBIs, 300 more than Lou Gehrig who's in second place. He's got 13 percent more RBIs than the next player in history. By the way, he also has the most extra base hits and the most total bases in the history of the game. To give you a perspective on his career, he played 23 years. Every year of those 23 years, he averaged 33 home runs, 100 RBIs and a .305 batting average -- first year to the last year -- Mr. Consistency; does not get his due.

Since we're just five days away from this year's all-star game in Pittsburgh, I thought we might talk a little bit about all-star games. Vin Scully, the great Dodgers broadcaster, once said it's a mere moment in a man's life between an all-star game and an old-timers game. (Laughter.) One of the most remarkable all-star game feats occurred in the Polo Grounds in 1934. It was only the second all-star game, and Carl Hubbell -- the great New York Giants left-hander, now hall of famer, gave up a single to lead off the game to Charlie Gehringer. Then he walked Heinie Manush, and then he proceeded to strike out Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Jimmy Fox to end the first. He started the second by striking out Al Simmons and Joe Cronin. He struck out five hall of famers in a row, but not Charlie Gehringer.

Much is made of fans voting for all-stars, and fans love to have their say. They elect the starting nine through their ballots, the managers pick the rest, and for the past few years, fans have been able to elect one player on MLB.com, the last player on each roster on both the American League and National League roster. And the deadline is today, and 25 million votes are going to be cast for the last player -- the 32nd player on the American League team and the 32nd player on the National League team. That astounds me. That shows you how strong the game is. That shows you how much people care.

When Bob Feller was growing up on an Iowa farm in Van Meter in the 1920s and '30s, his father built him a baseball diamond on that farm and invited the neighborhood kids to play. His father caught him every night. In the summer, he caught him in the hog lot, in the winter in the barn, and virtually willed his son to the major leagues.

And Bob Feller signed a major league career and was pitching for the Cleveland Indians before he was even out of high school. In his first four full seasons in the major leagues, he won 100 games. And then on December 7th, 1941, the Japanese dropped the bomb on Pearl Harbor. The next day, Bob visited his father who was dying of brain cancer, and he asked for his permission to enlist in the U.S. Navy. His father gave him his okay. Bob then drove to Cleveland from Iowa to ask permission of his employer, the Cleveland Indians, and they said to him, "You know, Bob, you don't have to go; you're the only son, your dad's dying, so you don't have to go." He said, "I know I don't have to go, I want to go," and they reluctantly agreed to let him go.

He enlisted on December 9th, 1941, and did his duty to the last day of the war -- no special treatment, just a sailor who fought in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. He was decorated with five campaign ribbons, studded with eight battle stars. His first full season back, 1946, he won 26 games after being out for four years; he finished 36 games. And years later, when people would say to him you know, Bob, you gave up those four years; if you would have stayed here, you would have won 100 more games. And his reply was and is today, at age 87, "The Germans don't play baseball, and if we lost that war America wouldn't be playing baseball anymore either." It was Bob's way of putting into perspective what was at stake, what we almost lost in World War II.

I had the privilege of speaking here in 2001. And the other day, I was thinking about all the things that have happened in baseball and at the Hall of Fame in the last five years.

Let's start with the major leagues. Five years ago, I was asked if I thought there would ever be a major league team in Washington again. Well, I couldn't be happier for the fans in this area, and I couldn't be happier for the Lerner family, who just won the bidding process for the team here in Washington. And by the way, it wasn't easy. There were lots of forces against bringing a team back in Washington, but Commissioner Selig very carefully and very artfully built a consensus among the owners and the right thing happened.

The last time I was here, I was asked if I thought the financial differences between teams was a problem. I said yeah, it's a big problem. At the time, the commissioner was pushing for a tax on teams that could afford to pay for higher payrolls, and that the tax would go to the teams who couldn't afford those payrolls quite so much. That system, along with the wild card, has worked better than anyone could have ever imagined.

I want you to consider this: The last four seasons -- 2002 to 2005 -- we've had four different champions of the American League and four different champions of the National League playing in the World Series. '02 it was the Angels -- this is the American League -- '02 was the Angels, '03 Yankees, '04 Red Sox, '05 White Sox. In the National League -- '02 Giants, '03 Marlins, '04 Cardinals, '05 Astros.

Five years ago, financial disparity was a huge problem in baseball. The playing field has been leveled and it's a much stronger game as a result of that.

Five years ago, I was asked about the internationalization of the game. In March, the first World Baseball Classic was held. Sixteen teams participated thanks to the infrastructure and the influence of Major League Baseball. The final two teams are Cuba and Japan. Cuba has no major leaguers and Japan has two. What we do know is that there are great players from all over the world playing in the major leagues. What the WBC taught us was there are great players from all over the world not playing in the major leagues.

In the past five years, many people are following the game much more closely. This season, Major League Baseball and minor league baseball will very likely set attendance records for the third straight year -- probably 75 million in the majors, 41 million in the minors. Big numbers. And competition for the entertainment dollar has never been stronger.

Why is this happening? Several reasons:

First, beautiful new ballparks throughout this country -- Detroit, Seattle, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Houston, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, San Diego and San Francisco. People love going to these new old-style ballparks.

Secondly, parity. Parity helps. The more teams that stay in the playoff races longer, the stronger the game.

Third, the Red Sox-Yankees rivalry. No question that by the Red Sox and Yankees being very strong at the same time, the game is stronger.

Fourth, the owners and players got together and avoided a work stoppage in 2002. That removed the cloud and allowed a long runway and a lot of momentum for Major League Baseball.

And fifth, the dramatic increase in the number of hours fans are watching the game on TV and watching the game on MLB.com. More interest by more people means a stronger game. MLB.com has been great for baseball. You know, now fans anywhere in the world can get all baseball any time by clicking a mouse or on their cell phone at their own convenience.

When I was here five years ago, one question I didn't get was steroids. Since then we've been inundated with rumors and allegations. A strict new policy, drug policy, with tough penalties and mandatory testing proposed by the commissioner and agreed to by the players' union has taken place and several players have been suspended as a result of that. A special committee appointed by the commissioner and led by former Senator Mitchell is conducting its own investigation. Despite all the good that has happened in baseball today, how this is dealt with is baseball's most important challenge by a mile.

Now let's talk about what's happened in Cooperstown at the Hall of Fame in the past five years. Back in 2001 Jane Forbes Clark was our new board chairman. Strong leadership and sound

stewardship by Jane and the board, along with lots of hard work by a talented staff, has allowed us to make real progress.

On the museum side, our first-ever national traveling exhibition, "Baseball As America," which was here in Washington a few years ago, has been to 10 of the finest museums in the U.S, thanks to our national partner, Ernst & Young. Our talented curators created an exhibit using 500 important artifacts and documents to tell this story: that baseball has always reflected American values throughout history and sometimes even helped shape those values.

Nearly 2 million people have seen "Baseball As America" since it began at the American Museum of Natural History in 2002. It's currently in Detroit at the Henry Ford Museum. We and Ernst & Young are thrilled with the response. And it's now going to St. Paul, Minnesota, later this year and Cleveland next year and we're trying to take it to Boston, Atlanta and Dallas as well.

Five years ago I mentioned we were conducting a major research study on 100 years of African-American baseball from 1860 to 1960. More than 50 researchers worked five years on the project. Last year the study was completed and there were two results: the first one, a book published by National Geographic called "Shades of Glory," which really outlines the spirit of African-American baseball and the Negro Leagues over the past 100 years. And the second was the first ever set of comprehensive, verifiable statistics from the Negro Leagues. And once these stats became available, our board appointed a 12-person committee to conduct an election.

The board appointed Fay Vincent, former commissioner of baseball, as the non-voting chair of that committee, and Frank Robinson, one of our great Hall of Famers and a member of our board, to be a non-voting advisor to that committee.

In February, 17 new Negro Leaguers, including Effa Manley, the first ever woman to be elected to the Hall of Fame, were elected. They'll be inducted in Cooperstown on Sunday, July 30th. In one day, the number of Negro Leaguers in the Hall of Fame will nearly double from 18 to 35, and they'll go in with Bruce Sutter, who was elected by the baseball writers this year.

Another major development is our \$20 million renovation, our largest ever. The museum has never been more up to date. It's never looked better. Our curatorial staff has created three great new exhibits for it: one on women in baseball, one on the Negro Leagues, and one on 19th century baseball. Several more are planned and will be opened within the next couple of years.

Five years ago we hadn't even begun our endowment campaign. We're now at \$7 million toward a \$50 million endowment. When we reach our goal, we'll be able to meet every challenge and pursue every dream that comes our way.

I was here in April 2001, a few months before 9/11. None of us knew then how our lives were about to change. From time to time, the after effects of 9/11 make us realize even more how much the Hall of Fame means to people. After the attack on the Pentagon, Jackie Lynch, who was a new widow, wrote about her 49-year-old husband Terence in The Washington Post. And these are her words: "We went to the Hall of Fame last August just before he was killed. He

couldn't wait to get on the road. He was like a little kid he was so excited. We grew up in Youngstown, Ohio, and Bill Mazeroski of the Pittsburgh Pirates was his idol. It was 100 degrees in the shade that day and there we were watching Bill Mazeroski get inducted. I'm so happy we were able to send him to the induction.

He did so much for us. And looking back, I'm glad we could do something for him that he always wanted to do before he died."

Sure, baseball is great fun, but it's also a very important part of American life and many relationships. And when you stop to think about it, what would our lives be without baseball? What would America be without baseball? It wouldn't be the America we know. Certainly the game is woven into the fabric of this country. Baseball is far more connected to its history and American history than any other sport by far, and we in Cooperstown like to think we had a little something to do with that.

As today's stewards of baseball's Hall of Fame, our responsibility is to treasure and share those memories with as many people as possible. And if we do our job well, the common heritage we've always shared as Americans through baseball will not only endure, it will flourish.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: We begin, to no surprise, with two steroid questions.

If a player is known to have used performance-enhancing drugs, should that automatically disqualify him from the Hall of Fame?

MR. PETROSKEY: I've never heard that question before. (Laughter.)

We don't know enough right now. I think the Mitchell committee, other things that are going on, are going to tell us a lot more over the next couple of years than we know today. There are a lot of rumors, there are a lot of innuendoes, there are a lot of allegations, but there aren't a lot of facts. And I think that's getting a little bit ahead of the game. I think we'll see what the facts are and then we'll act accordingly.

MR. SALANT: We're in what will always be remembered as the baseball steroid era. Could this era be noted in some official way in baseball statistics?

MR. PETROSKEY: That's a good question. And you know, history takes a little bit of time -- you know, games that are being played today, but we don't have a historical perspective on this for many years later. And we'll see. We'll see what we find out through the investigations and when all the facts come out and then I think we'll have a better idea of what to do.

MR. SALANT: Along those lines, do you think that -- or do you have to wait for the Mitchell commission -- what the impact will be on the election of individuals such as Bonds and Mark McGwire and Rafael Palmeiro?

MR. PETROSKEY: Well, that will be interesting. You know, Mark McGwire is up for election next year and he's going to be on the ballot. And it'll be an interesting vote, because there are about 500 baseball writers who vote in these elections. And as you know, you need 75 percent to get elected. And it'll be a good early test on how writers are feeling about folks who -- where there's some -- where there's been some question about how they've performed and gotten those statistics.

MR. SALANT: The Hall of Fame forthrightly addresses the issue of segregation in baseball. Do you foresee a time when it will discuss the issue of steroids?

MR. PETROSKEY: Absolutely. We document the history of baseball for good and bad. We have documented the Black Sox scandal, segregation of baseball and other negative things that have happened in the game. And once we have a historical perspective on steroids and performance-enhancing drugs, I'm sure that we'll deal with it in the exhibits. And no baseball fan will come up there and feel like they're being whitewashed. We'll deal with it in a very direct way.

MR. SALANT: Here's one you haven't heard of yet: Pete Rose and "Shoeless" Joe Jackson. This question says, you have "Shoeless" Joe Jackson's spikes but have not admitted "Shoeless" Joe or some of the greatest past stars such as Pete Rose. What is the likelihood that this situation will change?

MR. PETROSKEY: Interesting question, because, as I talked about in my remarks, we are a museum and we're a Hall of Fame. And while Pete Rose is not in the Hall of Fame and Joe Jackson is not in the Hall of Fame, they're all over the museum, because you can't tell baseball's story without telling the story of Pete Rose and "Shoeless" Joe Jackson. And we have Pete Rose artifacts all through the museum. We have Joe Jackson all through the museum.

Right now, both Pete and Joe Jackson are on baseball's ineligible list. You know, everybody who ever saw Pete Rose play loved Pete Rose as a player. I loved Pete Rose as a player. Pete Rose broke a rule in baseball you can't break. You can't bet on the game while you're in the game. And every locker room has posted on the wall outside of it as you walk in -- both in the minor leagues and the major leagues -- that you can't bet on baseball.

And Pete finally, a couple of years ago, admitted that he did bet on baseball. And it's sad. It's sad for Pete. It's sad for the Hall of Fame. It's sad for Major League Baseball. It's sad for the fans, but Pete put us in that situation and it's too bad.

MR. SALANT: Will the Hall of Fame ever induct a player who receives a unanimous vote? And who, would you speculate, might be that person?

MR. PETROSKEY: (Laughs.) Are there some Orioles fans in attendance here today? (Laughter.) Pretty tough to do. Joe DiMaggio took three ballots to get in -- hard to believe. Tom Seaver has the highest vote percentage in history. He missed by five votes. He says he's still looking for those five writers. (Laughter.)

Pretty difficult. You know, reporters -- I'm not telling you anything you don't know -- reporters are a pretty independent lot. And I think some people might think that an individual who looks like a lock, if he's going to be 100 percent, they might say, I'll withhold my vote because he probably wasn't the greatest player in history. So I don't know. That's a good question, and we'll see if it ever happens. But we should have some pretty big vote totals next year, I would think -- Tony Gwynn and Cal Ripken.

MR. SALANT: As a Mets fan, I do take great pride in the fact that Seaver still holds the record.

Do you think that the Hall of Fame will see players like Cal Ripken who stay with one team for their entire careers rather than switching teams as is so commonplace today?

MR. PETROSKEY: Well, people talk about that a lot, but some people tend to forget the reason why players are switching teams. There was something called free agency back in 1976. And before 1976, everybody loved it because nobody switched teams unless there was a trade. In a sense, they were in indentured servitude. They couldn't go anywhere, or else they were out of baseball. Those teams owned those players. And since '76 now, they have the independence to sign with whomever they want, just like all of us do.

And you know, people talk about it being a negative part of the game. In a sense, maybe it is, but I will tell you: When a big free agent goes to another team, there's a lot of interest by that other team who gets that free agent. And there's a lot of talk all through the off-season about free agents and where they might land. And I think it has in some ways spurred greater interest in the game because of their ability to move from team to team.

MR. SALANT: Do you believe that race plays a role in Hank Aaron being underrated?

MR. PETROSKEY: Well, I think it certainly does, because Hank Aaron was one of the first African-Americans to break into the major leagues. He was right in that group with Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby -- Larry Doby who came six weeks after Jackie Robinson. And Minnie Minoso, who was a dark-skinned Latino, couldn't play in the major leagues before Jackie broke the color barrier; and Ernie Banks and Frank Robinson and Willie Mays and all those great players of the late '50s and early '60s. So if you take yourself back into that context and that time in American history, it probably does.

The other reason is perhaps that he played in a market that wasn't as big as New York or Los Angeles.

MR. SALANT: This questioner asks -- suggests that Hank Greenberg would also fall into a similar category of being underrated. What do you think?

MR. PETROSKEY: Yeah, I don't think enough people know about Hank Greenberg. What a great, great player he was. And he came within a couple of home runs of breaking Ruth's record and he had a little time to go and he just didn't get there. But Hank Aaron (sic/Greenberg) was one of the great players of all time, and of course, we love him in Detroit.

MR. SALANT: Who is the one player who deserves to be in the Hall of Fame but isn't, in your opinion?

MR. PETROSKEY: Shall I make a hundred other people angry? Oh, gosh, I start getting into this game, it's dangerous. You hear a lot of talk about players like Dom DiMaggio and Gil Hodges and Ron Santo and Tony Oliva, players like that -- Burt Blyleven, Jim Kaat. I'm on a slippery slope here, but there are a lot of players who are great.

And you know, one of the things that came up yesterday, I was talking to my good friend Bob Delathey (sp) about Heinie Manush. And we happened to come across Heinie's name and we looked up his records.

Heinie Manush is a guy who played 17 seasons and had a .330 lifetime average. Now he played a long time ago, so we don't think about Heinie Manush. But who are the players who maybe played a long time ago who maybe deserve some recognition, but because they're not on our radar screen, they're not going to get any recognition or any support?

So very tough to get into the Hall, but there are a lot of great players. Remember, top 1 percent. A lot of great players are in that top 3 or 4 percent, and that's why the debate rages.

MR. SALANT: On the same line of questioning, there were several great players inducted into the Hall with great lifetime statistics, but are not remembered for having a great impact at any one time. Are there too few players like Ron Guidry and Jack Morris, who were tremendously dominant at times but do not have great lifetime statistics?

MR. PETROSKEY: Usually the definition of a Hall of Famer is "excellence over time." And if you look at a typical Hall of Fame career, there's a couple years to ramp up and it's about 12 or 14 really strong years and then a couple years on the back end where they're getting a little bit older and their stats just aren't the same.

It's very rare that a player comes into the Hall of Fame with just a few good years. Roger Maris is a great example of that. Roger Maris was a household name in America in the early '60s and broke the home run record. He was MVP two years in a row and he's not in the Hall of Fame. If you look at his home run total, it doesn't compare to a lot of the other Hall of Famers who are there; his total is in the 200s. And a great player, great all-around player and everybody loved having him on their team. But he's not a 400-500 home run guy. And I think for a (corner ?) outfielder, you know, that's sort of the measuring stick for a lot of them.

MR. SALANT: Do you think the induction of Negro League players was overdue?

MR. PETROSKEY: Definitely. A lot of people don't know this story, but in 1966 Ted Williams was inducted. And he used his induction speech to come to the microphone and talk about how great it was to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. But he said, you know, this is not a complete Hall of Fame because there are players that are not here. And those players who aren't here are not here only because they were never given a chance to play in the major leagues. And he was

talking about Satchel Paige and Cool Papa Bell and Josh Gibson and some of the great Negro League's players.

And five years later, Satchel Paige was the first Negro Leaguer inducted. It was Ted Williams who opened the door for the Negro Leaguers in Cooperstown. And since that time, 17 others after Paige were inducted into Cooperstown. And we wanted to do a study that gave us the stats to do an election so that we could at one time do an election so that they didn't have to wait one more day, the deserving ones, to have plaque in Cooperstown.

And we're very proud of that research. We're very proud of the election, and we're excited about July 30th, because it's going to be one of the most historic and important days in the history of the Hall of Fame.

MR. SALANT: Speaking of Satchel Paige, this questioner writes: Is there a basis by which Satchel Paige could be rated among major league pitchers?

MR. PETROSKEY: It's too bad that Satchel Paige came up to the major leagues at the age of 42, because people remember him at that age. And if they would have seen him when he was 22, you know, or 25 or 28 or 30, like we see a lot of great pitchers today, then you have a chance to rate them. But I think he was playing out of the glare of the lights until he was 42 years old. Then when he came up, you know, he just wasn't himself. He was very colorful. He was a great showman. And he still was a pretty good pitcher; he just wasn't the Satchel Paige of his younger years, that's all.

MR. SALANT: You'll like this question. To what do you attribute the turn-around of your Detroit Tigers? (Laughter.)

MR. PETROSKEY: Who here would have predicted in spring training that the Tigers would have the best record at the All-Star break.

Governor Engler, would you? (Laughter.) Okay, all right.

Pitching, great pitching, a great manager obviously. I'm a big Alan Trammell fan. I think Alan Trammell is a great player. He's a wonderful human being. Jim Leyland is a great manager. And he's doing something to get that team to play together and believe in themselves. And they had the nucleus when they brought Ivan Rodriguez over to anchor that team as the catcher, not only to bring a Hall of Fame player, future Hall of Fame player, over there to do it, but also to work with young pitchers. And he's helped in so many different ways.

And probably the final piece of the puzzle is Jim Leland when he came over in the off season.

MR. SALANT: This questioner wants to know if today's kids -- should today's kids be playing more baseball and other active sports and spend less time on cell phones, PCs, XBoxes, and other electronic devices. (Laughter.)

MR. PETROSKEY: No, I think they should be on their cell phones -- (laughter) -- on the baseball field. No.

It is a problem, although if you go to a lot of parts of this country, the South in particular, California, Arizona, you know, New Mexico, Texas, right across the Southern belt there, you should see how baseball is being played. It's being played better than it's ever been played by young kids.

It's not played as much in the North, as much as I'd like to see it being played in the North, because so many other things take over in the North; because we're inside six months a year. But when you have sunshine 12 months a year, and you can play baseball at that level, we're probably sending better kids -- prepared -- better- prepared kids to colleges and to minor league careers, and perhaps major league careers, than we ever have.

I would like to see, if I could, Jonathan, baseball being played in the inner city again. It's a big problem in baseball that the African-American players are reduced -- the numbers are being reduced for African-American players. Major league baseball is doing a lot, they're doing all they can to try to get those numbers up again and try to capture those best athletes who are going to other sports now.

But The RBI program is one that's returning baseball in the inner cities -- that's what it stands for. Torii Hunter, some other major leaguers are now involved in trying to get baseball back into the inner cities. And I think that's a challenge for Major League Baseball, but I think they're doing a pretty good job of trying to get it back into the inner cities.

MR. SALANT: You have a lot of young kids playing soccer which supposedly is easier. How do you convince those kids to play baseball?

MR. PETROSKEY: Don't get me started. (Laughter.) Soccer is a great game. (Laughter.) Choose my words carefully here. Baseball is a very difficult game to play. It requires a lot of different skills -- catching a ball, throwing a ball, hitting a ball, running. And it's an individual game. And when a kid is up to bat, all eyes are on that kid. When a kid is on the mound, all eyes are on that kid on the mound. When a ball is hit to the shortstop, everybody knows if he made the play or made an error. And so there is a lot of defeat in baseball. There's a lot of disappointment. There's a lot of failure in baseball.

And so what I see is a lot of parents pulling their parents out of Little League and putting them on the soccer field. Because young soccer players run around like a swarm of bees following that soccer ball -- (laughter) -- and nobody knows who's any good and who's not good. (Laughter.)

And I'm being a little facetious, and I apologize, because I do think soccer is a great game. But I do think a lot of what happens is, parents can't stand the failure. And they don't want to sit on the sidelines and watch their kid make the error, or watch their kid strike out. So they say, it's easier on me if I just put them in soccer.

And baseball is such a great game to teach character and to teach picking yourself up, dusting yourself off, and going at it again. It's a great individual sport. It's a great team sport, too.

I don't mean to disparage soccer in any way. It's a great sport. But I think there is some of that that goes on in suburban American. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. SALANT: What's the biggest difference in baseball between baseball today and baseball 50 years ago?

MR. PETROSKEY: Fifty years ago -- wow! Why don't we take it back to 1946, let's say 60 years ago? Obviously better players, because 60 years ago the only players on the field were white. And so if you watched the Yankees today, that would mean there would be no Posada. That'd mean there'd be no Robinson Cano, probably no Jeter, no Rodriguez, no Bernie Williams, no Melky Cabrera. They would have a different team on the field.

They wouldn't have their best team on the field. Sheffield -- I forgot Sheffield; Melky's in for Sheffield right now. But the fact is that the game is so much stronger because we're letting everybody play. Everybody gets an equal chance to play this game now, and not just from the United States; from all over the world. Each hero is phenomenally talented. Hideki Matsui, Jose Reyes -- you know, they're coming from all over the world to play this game, so it's a much, much stronger game.

I do think the game is stronger. You know, we used to talk about the glorious '50s and the game in the '50s. And the game in the '50s was in one quarter of this country. It was from Boston to Washington to St. Louis to Milwaukee. That was it. That was it. A quarter of this country saw baseball; the rest of the country was shut out for baseball 50 years ago.

And we talk about it because if we happened to live in one of those great cities that had baseball, it was our game. We were lucky. But the game today is coast to coast. You know there are 30 teams and not 16 teams any more. It's on TV, you know, 24/7. You can watch any game any night now. And it's a stronger game.

And I think Major League Baseball is probably in a golden era right now. Let's set steroids aside, because we all know that's a problem that needs to be dealt with. The game is really strong right now, and they've made a lot of great decisions in the past five to 10 years to get this game on a great path and give it a great future.

MR. SALANT: Have changes in either balls or bats affected the dynamics of the game?

MR. PETROSKEY: You hear that from time to time. The balls used to be made down in Haiti, and they were hand-sewn. Now they're made in Costa Rica, and they're made by machine. So you hear that they're tighter.

I know Willie Mays once said to me, he said, I used to be able to take a ball and use my hands and move the laces around on it a little bit. Balls were much softer then. He said, throw me a

ball. So I threw him a ball. He said, look at this; you can't do that to these balls. The ball is just wound tighter.

So I don't know that, but there are a lot of people who think that, you know, certainly the maple bats are harder than the old ash bats were, and the balls are maybe wound a little bit tighter. But I don't know that for a fact.

MR. SALANT: Are there plans to reschedule the celebration of the film "Bull Durham"?
(Laughter.)

MR. PETROSKEY: That's a great question. How many of you have ever done something and wished you could take it back and do it over again? (Laughter.) That was one for me. I'm going to put it into context for you. It was the spring of 2003. We had been into Afghanistan. Our military had just gone into Iraq. Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon, the stars of "Bull Durham," had been invited up to the Hall of Fame to do a 15-year celebration of the movie "Bull Durham." They had been invited a long time before.

And of course, they were very vocal critics of the president and the Bush administration's policy on going into Iraq. Very hot time in America -- white hot, as a matter of fact. And I wanted to take the steam out of that -- that was my goal -- and just to say, look, now is not the time to do this. You know, we're going to cancel the celebration. So, fired off a letter. Should've picked up the phone. Should've picked up the phone and talked to them because I believe most people are reasonable people and would understand that we didn't want to start any kind of controversy at the Hall of Fame. And I'll bet it would have been a much better way to do it, and I regret I didn't do it. And I wish I had that one back.

MR. SALANT: If not "Bull Durham," what is your favorite baseball movie? In fact, what is the best baseball movie ever made?

MR. PETROSKEY: It may surprise you to hear this, but I think the best baseball movie ever made was "A League of Their Own." And the reason is that most people, and I consider myself in this category -- very, very strong baseball fans -- never knew that women played professional baseball during World War II in the Midwest; that when a lot of our players were overseas, fighting in the war -- Bob Feller, Joe DiMaggio, Hank Greenberg and others -- that there were women who were being paid to play professionally in the middle part of this country. And I think that that was a great public service that Penny Marshall performed by doing that movie.

And I'll tell you a little story. As a catcher, her name is Pepper Davis, and she's in her 80s now in a wheelchair in Southern California. And she was at the Hall a couple of years ago, and she was signing a lot of autographs.

And I said, Pepper, did you sign a lot of autographs when you played? And she said, till the last one went home. And then for 40 years I never signed another autograph, because nobody knew we ever played. And then Penny made the move; I've been signing autographs ever since.

Penny Marshall gave those women their lives back. Those women are prouder of being professional baseball players than anything they ever did in life, just like the ex-major leaguers. They considered that the greatest thing they ever did, and Penny Marshall gave them their life back.

MR. SALANT: Before I ask you the last question, I'd like to give you an official National Press Club coffee mug -- (laughter) --

MR. PETROSKEY: Thank you.

MR. SALANT: -- suitable for drinking a beverage while you're watching games on TV --

MR. PETROSKEY: Thank you. That's great.

MR. SALANT: -- and a certificate of appreciation for appearing here today. Thank you very much.

MR. PETROSKEY: Thanks, Jonathan.

(Applause.)

MR. SALANT: Of all the items and exhibits in the Hall of Fame, what is your favorite and why?

MR. PETROSKEY: My favorite is the Willie Mays glove that he used to make the catch over his head in the 1954 World Series. And it's maybe for a reason that you might not suspect. Willie donated that glove to us, but before he did, one of the clubhouse boys in the Giants -- in the clubhouse needed a glove to play Little League baseball with. And Willie said, here, take this. And so the kid was out on the sandlots playing baseball with Willie Mays' glove that he used to make the catch with for a couple of years. So it's all beat up, and it doesn't look like the typical major leaguer's glove. But it speaks to me about the child in Willie Mays, and what a wonderful spot in his heart he had for children when he was a young man. And it says a lot about who he is, I think.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SALANT: I'd like to thank everyone for coming today. I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, JoAnn Booze, and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. Thanks to the Eric Friedheim Library at the National Press Club for its research, and remind you that the library offers research not just for me doing the luncheon but for all club members who need help in journalism.

We're adjourned.

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