

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH CAL RIPKEN JR., FORMER  
SHORTSTOP  
AND THIRD BASEMAN FOR THE BALTIMORE ORIOLES AND A 2007 INDUCTEE INTO  
THE  
BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

TOPIC: "GET IN THE GAME," HIS NEW BOOK

MODERATOR: JERRY ZREMSKI, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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MR. ZREMSKI: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press  
Club. My name is Jerry Zremski, and I'm Washington bureau chief for  
the Buffalo News and president of the Press Club.

I'd like to welcome our club members and their guests here today,  
along with those of you watching on C-SPAN.

We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards I will  
ask as many questions as time permits. Please hold your applause  
during the speech so that we have as much time for questions as  
possible. For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you  
hear applause, it may be from the guests and the members of the  
general public who attend our speeches, and not necessarily from the  
working press. (Laughter.)

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to  
stand briefly when their names are called.

From your right, Joe Luchok, manager of public affairs communications for the March of Dimes and a member of the National Press Club Book Committee; Eleanor Herman, another Book Committee member and New York Times best-selling historian; Gus Gallagher, president and CEO of GCI and the organizer of our Press Club annual book fair and our Cartoons and Cocktails event; Patrick Fogarty (sp), online video producer for AP Broadcast; Joe Motheral, a freelance writer and the chair of our Book Committee; Ira Allen, freelance writer; Curtis Eichelberger, sports reporter for Bloomberg News; Angela Greiling Keane of Bloomberg News, the chair of the NPC Speakers Committee.

Skipping over our speaker for just one second, Lori Russo, the vice president of Stanton Communications and the organizer of today's luncheon and also, I must say, second baseman for the NPC softball team. (Laughter, applause.)

Bob Edwards, host of XM Radio's "Bob Edwards Show."

Steve Ginsburg, sports editor for Reuters; Mary Shaffrey, Washington correspondent for the Winston-Salem Journal and a native Baltimorean; Max Fine (sp), formerly with INS and Reuters, and a long-time Orioles fan; and Jeff St. Onge, reporter for Bloomberg News and the coach of the National Press Club's division championship softball team. (Laughter, applause.)

Here at the National Press Club, we have a tradition of turning headlines into history. All through the club you'll see headlines, front pages from the nation's history preserved to capture landmark moments for all time. Upstairs there's one that says, "Armstrong And Aldrin Take One Small Step For Man On The Moon." There's another from the hometown paper in Crawford, Texas, that reads, "Local Ranch Owner, George W. Bush, Elected As The Nation's 43rd President." (Laughter.) And nearby, you'll find a headline from the Baltimore Sun dated September 7th, 1995. It says, simply, "Immortal Cal." (Applause.)

You might say that there are 2,131 reasons for that headline. That's the number of consecutive games that our guest today, baseball legend Cal Ripken, Jr., played to break Lou Gehrig's seemingly unbreakable record.

But 21-31 is just one of the numbers that's key to understanding Cal's historic impact on our nation's pastime. He ended up playing in 2,632 consecutive games before finally taking a day off. He appeared in 19 All Star Games. He won two American League Most Valuable Player Awards. And this year he made one more record. In his first year of eligibility, he garnered the highest percentage of votes ever for a position player elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame. (Applause.)

Looking back at all the games I saw Cal play over the years, I think of three words: dignity, diligence, and dedication. And those are the very traits that have allowed Cal to reinvent himself as a philanthropist and a businessman. He founded the Kelly and Cal Ripken Jr. Foundation, which supports literacy, youth recreation, and health programs in the Baltimore area. He funds the Baltimore Reads Ripken Learning Center, and the Kelly T. Ripken Program for Thyroid Education at Johns Hopkins. And he's the founder of Ripken Baseball, which owns

the Aberdeen IronBirds and other business interests.

Today Cal will tell us how to "Get In The Game." That's the title of his new book, which details the eight elements of perseverance that he learned in baseball that are bringing him success in the business world. But I think we can also expect him to reflect a little on the lifetime of baseball memories that he's left for all of us, and on the 2,131 days and nights that made him "Immortal Cal."

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming baseball's Iron Man, Cal Ripken, Jr. (Applause.)

MR. RIPKEN: Thank you. You were 21 minutes shy of the last time that happened to me. (Laughter.)

I'd like to start off by saying thank you, and it's a wonderful honor to be with you at lunch today.

And I'm in the third city of promoting this book, and it is a book about perseverance. And I am introduced as the Iron Man all across this book tour, but let me share with you kind of a humbling experience I just had. I was at a book-signing in New York, and I sustained a neck injury. (Laughter.) At the book-signing. And I didn't know if I was going to be able to go on to the next book-signing. (Laughter.) I guess I WAS the Iron Man, I'm not sure. (Laughter.)

The book has been a wonderful project for me personally, because when you finish playing baseball, all you have left is to go back and reflect. And I think we all sit in that position sometimes in our lives where we go back and we want to find meaning for how we turned out. And this book allowed me the opportunity to go back and reflect on the reasons I had success.

To give you a little context on how the book came to be, when I went out from baseball, all of a sudden I was contacted by some speakers bureaus. And I was a hot product; they wanted me to come out and deliver a message. And they said, "You got a message to give." And I said, "Well, what is that message?" (Laughter.) And they said, "Ah, you can talk about teamwork, talk about leadership, talk about, you know, your individual responsibility, your work ethic, talk about perseverance." So I had this whole menu to choose from.

And they told me that the most important message I probably had to deliver was probably on perseverance because I was that guy that, you know, broke that record, 2,130 games played and 2,632 games. And everybody thinks I have this secret, you know, for doing that.

Now, early on, I answered the question very humbly. You know, when they would say, "How do you do it?" I would just say, "Well, I love to play, I'm kind of resilient, just kind of happens." And then everybody stares at me, kind of the way you guys are staring at me -- (laughter) --and they want something more. But I didn't really worry about that so much.

But it wasn't until, I remember, going back in my mind and thinking, okay, I remember when Derek Jeter asked me that question.

And Derek Jeter was at his all-star game in Colorado, I think it was the very first one, so he was running around like a little sponge trying to gather all this information. And so basically, he came up to me and said, "Hey, old man" -- (laughter) -- "you know, how do you play in all those games? You know, after two weeks, I'm kind of tired. You know, how do you do that?"

So I answered Derek's question very humbly, saying, "Well, I love to play, I'm very resilient, just kind of happens." And he gave me this really daunting look. And at the time, you know, I really didn't think much about it, but it meant one of two things. It meant, you know, "Okay, if you don't want to give me your secret, then don't. Keep it. Keep it; be that way."

But the second one, which I worried the most about, was, "You know, Cal, you're not nearly as smart as I thought you were." (Laughter.) And at that moment, I desperately wanted to be smart for Derek.

I wanted to give him a better answer.

So I let this all go until it came time to deliver this perseverance speech after I retired. And I started to think, you know what? I need to find an answer for Derek. You know, I need to go back and think about what it was.

And I remembered a reporter asked me a question, you know, could your record ever be broken? And I immediately answered that question, said, certainly, if I can do it, somebody else can. And the reporter followed up with a next question saying, what traits would that player have to have to break your record?

So then the light bulb started to go off. And I went back to a piece of paper, and I started writing down these traits. Now I came up with these eight things really quickly. And I was really happy, because my number was eight. (Laughter.) And I thought it was a really good sign. And then I started thinking about that and said, hey, there's some good stuff here. And maybe if I develop this good enough, maybe I can parlay this into a book deal. And I did. (Laughter.)

So the list that I came up with really is nothing more than your values and principles that apply in all of our lives. And yes, I tell it through the framework of perseverance, and my goal is in this book, we match stories to support those principles. They go all the way back -- some of the stories are told for the first time; some I've repeated a few times. But the idea is that when you read this, maybe there's something that you can -- it can resonate with you in your personal life or your professional life. That makes sense to you, and somewhere along the line, it will be helpful.

I know that when you stand up behind a microphone, you know, people think of you as a lecturer, that you are an expert in your field, so to speak. I don't consider myself an expert in my field. I think we all go through our life's experiences, and I see great value in sharing those experiences. So this book is nothing more than

sharing the good support that my parents had, the good support, the trusting relationships along the way in baseball had on me. And I share those with the intent that they reach someone and they help make a difference in their lives.

So to kind of tease you a little bit, there's a couple sections of the book that I'd like to expand on right now. Don't want to give you too much, because I want you to go buy the book. (Laughter.) But there's two sections in there, two of the eight. One is called Courage of Your Convictions, and one is called Life Management.

Now Courage of Your Convictions was something that Dad really gave me, one of the strongest things Dad gave me. And really I define this in the book as saying, when you feel like you're right, you have to have the courage to stand up, even though everybody else might be weakening around you. In the case of the streak, there were many times in the streak where it wasn't a popular thing. You know, we were losing; I was struggling; I wasn't hitting. And a lot of people wanted to take me on and say, Cal, you're being selfish; you need to actually sit down for the sake of the team. And the momentum would start to build.

Now, I stood up because I thought I was right, and I was right for this reason. I believe that all pro baseball players or pro sports players should come to the ballpark with this approach: you come there ready to play, you've done your work beforehand, you've put yourself in the hands of the manager, and if the manager chooses you, then you play. It's that simple. Now, is that reality in sports today? Probably not. Sometimes when the going gets tough, it's amazing how many 24-hour sicknesses come up when Randy Johnson's pitching or Pedro -- (laughter) -- or Curt Schilling and these guys, and it's amazing how they come back. But I always thought it was an honorable approach. It was one that dad gave me, so that no matter how tough it got going, I always came to the big leagues or to the game with sort of approach.

Now, because of that, sometimes you're labeled "stubborn." And in our household, the Ripken household, we kind of looked at stubborn as a good adjective, not as a bad one. And of course in our household, we had good stubborn and bad stubborn, and -- (soft laughter) -- and bad stubborn was when you were just being, you know -- you were just being stubborn for the sake of being stubborn. Then sometimes there was a gray area, that we had to decide which was good stubborn or bad stubborn. And we used to like to use dad's cases, you know, dad's experiences to debate those and argue which ones were good stubborn and bad stubborn.

One example of this would be dad loved to plow out the neighborhood of snow when he was home, and the idea of plowing out the neighborhood for the rest of his neighbors, because he was gone so much -- if he took care of them when he was home, then certainly they would take care of his family when he was gone, and he would seek comfort in that. So he had access to this old tractor up in the barn, and he built this big drag behind it, and it worked really well.

In the worst snowstorm one time, we went up there to start the

tractor, and the battery was dead. So he looked around and grabbed this tractor crank and put it on and he says, "Okay, boys, I'm going to teach you how to crank a tractor." Now, I was 16 and kind of feeling my oats a little bit, and I said, "Dad, is this really a skill that I'm going to need in the modern world?" (Laughter.) And he basically just said, "Shut up." And -- (laughter) -- and he said, "Okay, listen. I'm going to show you how to crank this tractor." So he said, "Look, you're going to push it down away from you and let the torque of the engine bring it back up. Push it down away from you, bring it back up." I immediately sensed that there was a safety issue

here. (Laughter.) He wasn't satisfied with the results he was getting by pushing it down and letting it come back up, so he said, "Look, we're going to -- I'm going to windmill this thing. But I never, ever want to see you guys do that, okay?" I go, "Don't worry." (Laughter.)

So he pushes it down -- now, he uses his strength both ways -- pushes it down, pulls it up, pushes it down, pulls it up, so he actually turns it faster to get this thing going. So sure enough, on his upswing, the thing fires, backfires, starts -- does something, and the fitting slips off while he's pulling it up, so he loses control of this big, heavy piece of metal, and it hits him right across the head. A big gash opens up on his forehead, and he falls back like this, takes an old oily rag and sticks it on his head. (Soft laughter.) I'm all scared. I was 16 years old, just had my driver's license. I said, "Come on, dad. Let's go to the hospital." So I put him in the car real quick, and we started to drive fast towards the hospital. He said, "No, no, pull over to the house." And I wasn't too upset about that because mom was there, and I thought mom was going to take over for me and I wouldn't have to be responsible. (Laughter.)

So Dad disappears in the bathroom, doesn't tell Mom. He goes down in there, starts to play with his cut on his forehead, puts a bandage on it, a butterfly, and then comes out. And it looked like it was a little cleaned up. It was a bad job, but I said, "At least that's better than the oily rag. Let's go to the hospital. We're going to go get the stitches and we're going to sew you up."

So I started to drive towards the hospital. I get to the stop sign, and he says, "No, go left." We go back up to the barn, and he cranks the tractor, starts it and plows up the neighborhood and never went to the doctor's.

Now, would you guys consider that good stubborn or bad stubborn? (Laughter.)

I'll give you another chance. (Laughter.) Dad used to love his garden. And so Dad -- I think, as a stress reducer, he loved to work with his hands. And he was pretty magical in producing really good tomatoes and zucchini and squash and those sorts of things.

One time there was a groundhog that got into his garden. And he didn't like it because it was starting to eat up his stuff. So he decided he was going to put a stop to this.

So he -- one night he goes and takes a lawn chair out and a cup

of -- or a thermos full of coffee and a shotgun. And he goes and sits right in the middle of the garden, waiting for this groundhog to show up. (Laughter.)

It didn't show up for the first day, so Dad was all tired, comes in, drops the empty thermos in the sink and goes to bed.

Second night, same thing. Didn't show up.

Third night, same thing. Didn't show up.

By the fourth night, you know, he was really tired, he was really cranky. We heard this loud boom about 3:00 in the morning. And he walks in, very happy, very content, and he says, "He won't be eating my stuff anymore." (Laughter.)

Now, is that good stubborn or bad stubborn? (Laughter.)

Now, let me remind you: we didn't live on a farm. (Laughter.) We were in a neighborhood, and we had quarter-acre lots, and the neighbors were right here and right here. (Laughter.)

So that was the day that Mom invented a new category of stubborn. There was good stubborn, there was bad stubborn, and then there was stupid stubborn. (Laughter.)

Now, the part in the book that I also talk about is life management, which is very important. I think we all have those issues. And what I mean in the book by "life management" is -- it's two things. One is that you want to achieve a certain balance in your life. And the other one is to try to exert some sort of control over some of the issues in your life that you don't think you have control over.

So I'll start with the control. In my world, everyone thought that because I played 21 years for the same team, that it was a very stable environment which I worked in. But if you really think about it and look closely at it, I had nine different managers, I think 10 different general managers, a couple of different ownership groups.

So things were changing all around me, and I had to deal with that. So it would drive me crazy if I couldn't find out what the expectations were on me on the new group coming in, and I didn't want to wait for that, you know.

So you might think that it's outside of your control, but then you start to think, okay, how can I bring it back into my control? So I would walk into the manager's office and shake his hand on the first day of spring training, and I would simply ask him a question. I'd say, "Congratulations. You know, well deserved. How do you see my spring training unfolding?" It's kind of a leading question, and, you know, it's designed to get an answer and designed to create some expectations. The managers would then turn around and say, "Well, Cal, you've been doing this for a while. How do you see your spring training going?" (Laughter.)

So then I would say, "Well, I used to think when I was very young

the more at bats I got, the more games I played, the readier I was for spring training. I don't feel that way anymore. I'm a little older. I got to do some extra work in the weight room, I got to do some extra work on the field. I'd like to work from a plan." And so the manager would say, "Well, why don't you go home and work out your plan and kind of submit something back to me." So I would go home and figure out the whole six weeks of spring training, bring it back and put it on his desk, and he would operate from that plan. So that became a template.

And I was one of the only people in spring training that knew where we were going to go from day to day. The rest of the ball players would come in, you'd have a big old board that has the rosters on it, and if your name was circled on that particular day, you were going on the trip. If it wasn't, you'd stay back.

And so I tried to explain that to a number of the guys because they said, "How do you always know that you're staying here, you're doing this and that?" And I would simply try to tell them that. But it was amazing to me that they wouldn't take the step, they wouldn't take the extra step. It's not combative; you're not going in there to start an argument. You're not going in there to say that I know more than you. All you're doing is trying to exert some sort of control over your spring training, or my career, that would help me. And so it was amazing to me that just those little things, that if you think about it, use your brain a little bit, you can help the manager manage you.

The one part that I had the most fun with, and I probably had the most challenge with in my personal life, is how do you manage your personal life and your business life. You know, there's constant conflicts that go back and forth. And I don't have any of the answers per se. The only thing that I can say that you should start from is the people that had really good success in the baseball world were the ones that actually looked at their lives not as two separate lives, but as one.

The ones that didn't have very good success says, okay, my baseball life's over here, and I live this separate life over here. Those are the ones that constantly had conflicts.

Now baseball's a very tough schedule on your family, no doubt about it. You're traveling; you're on the road; you're on the road half the time. When you're home, you're on the opposite side of the schedule. So that's particularly challenging, you know, anyway.

Now if you layer on top of that this consecutive games streak and you're playing all the time and then the expectations are you're to play all the time, even little things like coming home on an off day -- you come home on an off day to be with your family, but then you're a little paranoid about getting to the next city. So you have to leave extra early. You have to have three or four flights as your backups. There's always a little stress in your life, you know, from that point.

And so one time, in -- I was going to say -- 1993 -- but my first part of my life, my first six years of baseball, you know, I wasn't



married. So it's pretty easy to take care of yourself, so all these things didn't matter. I didn't have a personal life, really, to blend. It was all business.

I got married and it was still pretty cool, because my wife could then travel with me to the different cities really easy. We could see each other in the times that we had available to us. And then we had kids. Now life changes all for the better -- I assure you -- but it's challenging nonetheless. And our first child was born November 22 -- (audio break).

So when my wife went into the hospital and had to go in for four days, I laid down a mattress on the floor of Hopkins and I bunked in. And I was there to change Rachel first, I was there to feed her first, I was able to bond with her in ways that few dads get a chance to bond with her. And we as a team, as a new mother and father, we were able to help each other and support other and kind of get it off on the right foot before I had to go to spring training in February.

Now, that turned out really, really well. Our second child was born July 26th, 1993. Now, if you know the baseball schedule, that's dead in the middle of the season. And if you know the timeframe of the year, that's two years before the record was to be broken. And it just had turned maybe 1,800 games or something like that, and all the media -- any sort of criticism that was being bestowed upon me before that all of a sudden turned positive, and then everybody wanted me to break this record that was -- seemed -- or deemed unbreakable. And I think somebody wrote that, you know, Cal might not be there for the birth of his own child for the sake of the streak. This responsibility is far greater. And my wife read that. (Laughter.) So I came home and, you know, I tried to sit with her, and I put my arm around her and I said, you know, "Honey, everything's going to work out. I will be here. I will -- I promise I'll be here. This is my place. You know, this is what I'm going to do." And then I would turn around and go, "Oh, crap. What am I going to do?" (Laughter.)

And so I thought and thought and thought. Now, you're talking about exerting some sort of control over your life. I said, there's got to be a win-win-win here somewhere. There's got to be something that I can think of, that I can say, that I can appeal to my wife that makes this okay. And so I thought and thought and thought and I came up with an idea. So I went back to my wife, put my arm around her and said, "You know, honey, hypothetically speaking here, if I was to miss a game because of the birth of our son, then it would be okay. It would be the absolute right thing to do. I could live with that. I'd have no regrets. There's no problem with that whatsoever. It would be the right thing to do, and I wouldn't want you to think otherwise. But this day will forever be stamped in the history of baseball as the day that the streak ended, and that'll be our son's birthday. Is that fair to him?" (Laughter.) And she bought it. (Laughter.) But I think all I had to do was tap into -- I had to appeal to her -- to the protection of her children, and it worked.

Now, I stretched that a little bit for the sake of the laugh at the end. I admit it. But sometimes things just happen to work out just by dumb luck, and in this particular case, if you want to know

the real ending of the story, Ryan was going to be -- he was nine pounds and he was two weeks early, and the doctor was a little concerned, and the doctor wanted to get him out.

And so there just happened to be an off day between Minnesota and Toronto -- (laughter) -- and we scheduled it for that day, and I was there for the birth of Ryan. Matter of fact, I celebrated with a three-run homer in the ninth inning the next night. (Laughter.) So everything worked out really well.

So that's just a little bit the tidbits of some of the stories that support some of the values and principles. It's all over there. My dad's all over it, my mom's all over it. A lot of trusting coaches and friends are all over the book.

And again, we've even weaved an element of Lou Gehrig through the book. Don Phillips came in to help shape this list that I came up with all by myself, and he said, "Let's put it together. You're a little redundant here. Let's stretch this here. Let me challenge you on other stories to support your ideas and your notions." And he said, "And I want to weave Lou Gehrig through there because, you know, you broke that record, but there's a lot of similarities in values and there are similarities between the way that he went about his life." And some of the small things, like I love to play basketball to get in shape. You know, Lou Gehrig played basketball to get in shape. So there were wonderful things that we found that really makes it much more of a fast read and that makes it much more interesting.

So we're very proud of the book, and I would encourage everyone to look, you know, for one or two things in the book that might resonate with them.

At this time I'd like to take a few questions. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: All right, we do have a lot of questions, a lot about baseball, but a few about perseverance and baseball, and I think we'll start there.

Cal, when did you first start thinking about breaking Gehrig's record? And when did it become a goal for you, and why?

MR. RIPKEN: I didn't ever think about breaking Lou Gehrig's record. And it never became a goal to me. And that sounds really strange. I wanted to be a big-league player and I wanted to play. When I was drafted out of high school, I was drafted as a pitcher and a shortstop. Most everybody all the way across the board wanted me to pitch, including the people inside our own organization wanted me to pitch. And there was a little bit of a debate, there was a little bit of an argument.

There was some support for me to play as a regular player with the Orioles, and ultimately I was given a choice. You know, they said, "Okay, what would you like to do, Cal?" And the irony -- you know, with the benefit of full hindsight -- is I said, "Look, a pitcher only gets to play one out of every five days. I want to play every day." And so when I chose that, I went through the minor league system and played and developed, and I got to the big leagues.

And my first manager was Earl Weaver. I didn't come onto the scene and say, "Listen, you little" -- (laughter) -- some of those names that Palmer used to call him. But I didn't come in there and say, "Listen, this is my goal, this is my plan, you're going to put me in the lineup every single day." You know, it was quite the opposite. These managers just, you know, put you in the game. You had no power over them.

And I tend to look at it that the managers created the streak. They put me in the lineup every day, I responded, I kept coming back and playing. I was consistent. I was of value to the team in more ways than just hitting and fielding, and they recognized that value and they created the streak.

The only time I felt a little pressure was when it got close to 2,000 games. And when all the sudden, because of the 1994 season -- we cancelled the World Series and there was a strike. There was this great momentum that connected modern baseball with the past baseball in a way that was really cool, and I was part of that connection. And I felt like maybe for the sake of baseball, I had to get there. And that was the only time I really felt pressure. I didn't change my routines or what I did, but I felt a little pressure.

And -- but I can honestly say, I continued to play in all those games 500 games afterwards, not necessarily to prove that I didn't get -- I wasn't going to that finish line but I really wanted to continue the same approach in my later years as I had in my first couple of years. And so it was really important to show up and be ready to play. And those games seemed to add up one at a time.

MR. ZREMSKI: Now during your consecutive games streak, which was the hardest game that you had to play through.

MR. RIPKEN: The very first one. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: There wasn't a time when you just were really hurting, really tired, you just really didn't feel --

MR. RIPKEN: Yeah. I had fevers. I felt under the weather. Most people think I was immune to sickness, I was immune to injuries and those things. All those things were not true. I mean, I had injuries. I had nagging injuries. Early on, I found that by playing through some of these injuries, I had some of my best games, and maybe that happened in a really cool way. So every time I thought I was hurt and I couldn't quite perform, I kept thinking, well, last time I did this, I got five hits, so I've got to go play.

So I just think I pushed through it physically. I had a high tolerance of pain. I had a dad that the expectations, as you can tell -- you know, if he can take a shot with a tractor crank, you wouldn't expect me to come out for turf toe, would you? (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Now could you take us through your decision to sit out the game that ended the streak?

MR. RIPKEN: I think towards the end -- as I said earlier, the

managers created the streak. They kept putting me in the lineup. It was their decision.

You know, towards the end I think a lot of managers felt intimidated that they couldn't stop it, that it had to be left upon -- up to me to do that. And although I don't aspire to that sort of thinking -- I think that a manager's job is a manager's job and sometimes you have to make tough decisions and that's your job -- I started to think about it. And I said, you know what? It's about time. I think -- you know, it was about a point in my career that I said, well, I'll put an end to it and I'll return it to a free state, where the manager can make his decisions free of any sort of obligations to the streak.

So I thought about it, and I said, "Okay. To make me feel good, I can't do it, with all good conscience, while we still have a chance to make the playoffs." And we were still battling, and we were trying to make it.

But I thought if we would fall out of the playoffs, then I would actually end it.

And my thought was: let me end it on the last day of the season, game number 162, almost as if to say I could have played all of them if I wanted to, and let's start over the next year.

But I talked to my wife, and my wife thought, "Well, your last game's in Boston, you know, and you know, all the people that have watched you play all these years -- they've celebrated the fact that you've been in the lineup. So you should actually do it the last day at home."

And the last day at home, ironically, turned out to be against the Yankees. And so I didn't tell anybody till about 10 minutes till game time, walked into the manager's office and told him. And my goal was not to have this big announcement, not to have the press deal with it beforehand; I would deal with that after the game. But I wanted it to unfold in a very normal, natural way.

And it almost went perfect, except for one thing. Ryan Minor replaced me. He was a kid that was -- came up from Rochester, replaced me at third base. And as the team took the field, he would not take the field. And he thought it was a rookie prank. (Laughter.)

So I had to go up to him and say, "Look, I'm not playing. This is serious. I mean, look, I'm in my shower shoes." (Laughter.) "I'm not going out on the field. You got to go out there in the field." And finally he went out there in the field. He kind of got it.

And another cool thing that happened in that night is the Yankees on the other team was one of the first people to realize what was going on. And so Joe Torre and Bernie Williams and Derek Jeter and those guys, they naturally stepped to the top step of the dugout and gave me a -- their own version of the standing ovation, which, from a player's standpoint, when you're competing against these guys, that was a really good feeling.

MR. ZREMSKI: I think that anybody who knows your story knows how important your dad was to making you the ballplayer and the man that you are. One of our guests asked: Who influenced him? How did he become the man he was?

MR. RIPKEN: That's a really interesting question, because I don't know. I always looked to my dad as the jack of all trades, because he had two older brothers, and they were much older than he was. I think one was eight years older and one was 18 years older.

And his circumstances in his life -- he lost his dad in a car accident at 10 years old. And so the other two brothers were out of the house already, so he became the man of the house at 10. So I think in many ways he had to become responsible really early, and he had to learn, and he had to work, and he had to do other things.

I don't know who his mentors were. But he certainly was someone that didn't talk much about doing it; he went and did it. And that's -- I think that's the greatest thing that we all could do. When you want to teach something, you teach it by how you live your life and by example. I think that's the most powerful form of -- I think about that when I'm talking to my own kids. How do you teach them work ethic? That's something that's really difficult. How do you teach work ethic? You know, it's not whether you have it or not, but it's making that connection between your success and your ability to make it happen. And the way that you do that -- and what I try to do is, you try to do the same thing that my dad did with me. He just proves it, day in and day out.

MR. ZREMSKI: Would you encourage your son to be a baseball player the same way your dad encouraged you?

MR. RIPKEN: Well, most people think dad made his sons into baseball players. A lot of people out there think that dad drilled us for 16 hours a day and made us do pushups and all those sorts of things; he did the opposite. He said, "You need to find something you absolutely love and go for it." It just happened to be baseball. And watching dad -- dad was very happy when he put the uniform on. It almost seemed like he was transformed. If he was in a bad mood, he'd put his uniform on, he was fixed. And I think we all looked for that.

So when Ryan -- my little Ryan is a pretty good little athlete. My daughter is a graceful athlete. She's chosen to be in a dance company instead of doing athletics. But my philosophy, my view is the same way as my dad is -- don't put too much pressure on them. Let them choose what they want to do. Support them the best you can, and make sure that they understand that they have the power within themselves to make it or not make it.

So I don't know. Ryan's a pretty good basketball player right now. And I think it's kind of funny. I grew up in a locker room with baseball, because my dad was a manager in the minor leagues, and as a young kid -- maybe your age -- I was pulled into the locker room, and that was my comfort zone. I retired when Ryan was 8, and so I bring the guys over to play basketball in the house, and we sit around the clubhouse in the same sort of fashion that dad sat around the

clubhouse as a baseball guy. And it seems like that love of basketball seems to be, you know, filtering into Ryan. So I'm okay with whatever he chooses, as long as he's happy with his choice.

MR. ZREMSKI: I think you were long seen as kind of a throwback to an era where ballplayers just went out and did their job every day. And I -- you know, some people have had the sense that not all ballplayers are like that anymore, and I just wondered if there's really any difference that you see in the ballplayers back when you were starting out and today in terms of work ethic.

MR. RIPKEN: You know what I just did? I was reading your card and not listening to what you said. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: And the question didn't come from the card. (Laughs.)

MR. RIPKEN: You tricked me. I like that. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Sorry. You'll like this question better. Well, we're going to go back to the question that I made up on the floor --

(laughs, laughter) -- which is, how much difference is there, if any, in terms of work ethic between the players that you knew when you were starting out and today?

MR. RIPKEN: A lot is made of, you know, as we get older, it seems like all the older ballplayers say it's different now than it was. Nobody's willing to work for it. You hear those common sort of phrases across all sports and maybe across all businesses, people want to get there and they want to arrive and they want to have the good job and they want to make the money before they put the work in. I think that's true in many ways. But I think the discovery for young people, that when they do discover that they make it -- you know, it is the journey that is most important, it's not the end result, it's not the status, it's not the title, it's not anything else.

So if you can -- there's a lot of people that, when you make that connection, that it is about your hard work and it is about your feeling that you've done something and you feel proud about it -- you know, that's what you need to tap into.

I don't know whether society is changing a little bit. I certainly think that as we get older, we all seem to have that view that the generation before us has everything given to them and they don't work for it.

I don't know if I aspire to that, but I still think the principles and the values are the same, is you got to make sure that they understand that when they do something and they do it right and they do it well, it makes them feel a certain way, that that's the feeling you want to get, not the title, not the money and not the status.

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay. Back to the cards. (Laughter.) I think anybody that knows baseball knows that the game itself is a game that requires a lot of perseverance and patience. And to that end, one person in the audience asks, have you ever been beamed by a pitcher?

And if you did, did you storm the mound, even at Rochester?

MR. RIPKEN: I like that question. (Laughter.) As a person in Double-A, I charged the mound because two guys did home runs before me and the next pitch was right at my head. And, you know, I thought that's what you were supposed to do. So I went running out there and we got into a big fight. And I went down -- there was a couple suspensions that happened, and it was, you know, guys being guys.

As I learned from that, you know, it's pretty dangerous. You got metal cleats, you're laying all over, people are throwing punches where you don't even see them coming, and you realize that that's probably not the bright way to handle that. And so as we went up the ladder, there were many guys -- intimidation or this sort of thing happens in the highest level of sports, and sometimes your survival skills have to come in and take over. I mean, you can't be protected by the umpires, you can't be protected -- you have to actually send a message back sometimes. And there were times in my career where I had to.

And one of the stories in the book, I was wrestling whether I wanted to put that story in the book or not, but it was one where we hit -- or where Rick Sutcliffe threw close to Terry Steinbach in a bases-loaded situation in the first inning. He kind of took exception to that. When I came up in the first inning, they got two outs, 0-2 count on me, and the ball was right at my temple. I put my hand up and it hit me in the back of the hand.

And I suspected from past history that this was on purpose, this was intentional. I had the wherewithal to say, you know, "Steiny, was that intentional?" And his response to me, like, was, "Oh, no." (Laughter.) And I took that very sarcastically. I said, "Okay." So then I started to plan, how am I going to get him back, how am I going to get the Oakland A's back, how am I going to do this?

So I was on first base thinking, okay, if there's a ground ball, I'll just take Mike Bordick out to left field. And so I got on second base and I started thinking, wouldn't it be great if the ball was hit to the outfielder and there was a play at the plate? And certainly there was. So there was a line drive to right field. Ruben Sierra came in and caught it on one hop. Two outs. I was off at the crack of the bat, and I came running around third base. Steinbach caught the ball and came back to the plate. And I really didn't have any interest in being safe or sliding. (Laughter.)

And I hit him with all my force and knocked him down. And, you know, he held onto the ball and I was out, but it didn't matter to me at that point. They helped him back to the dugout. They had smelling salts in his nose -- (laughter) -- and they took him out of the game.

Now, that little thing, you know, that's a powerful thing to do because the word spreads around the league pretty quickly that that happened, and then you know, you've kind of insulated yourself from some of those things that happened before. So it's the reality of the sport. It didn't happen all the time. And I've never charged the mound in the big leagues. I always believed that there were other ways within the sport that you could actually send a message and get

back at people. But that was a story that I ended up putting in there for the reason that I'd be asked the question. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Other than your own, what are the most impressive feats that you witnessed in your life in the game?

MR. RIPKEN: I don't look at my own feats as being overly impressive. I mean, I love to play, and I think there's a lot of people that love to play and they go out there and play all the time. I happened to play all those games in a row. And it's kind of funny, I guess it puts it in perspective that after I broke the record, I think Pete Rose was quoted as saying, "You know, if I thought it was such a big deal, I would have done it myself." (Laughter.) Eddie Murray played virtually every game -- you know Eddie Murray was a guy that played 160, 161 every year, and he was the model for me. So a lot of guys went out there and played. I was always jealous of talents like, you know, Ken Griffey, Jr. Ken Griffey Jr. came on, there wasn't anything on the baseball field he could not do. And he was a fabulous player to watch. Alex Rodriguez came in sort of with the same young talent, that he could do a lot at shortstop.

So it was a great pleasure for me to watch some of these great talents and watch them play. And I think one of the things about the inter-league play that's really special now is that you get a glimpse in the other league a little bit more so you can see some of the great players over there.

I'm going in the Hall of Fame with Tony Gwynn. And it's -- I spent 24 -- (applause.) I'll say thank you for Tony. (Laughter.) And one of the great things about this is he played for the same team for his whole career. We have that in common. He's a good student of the game; he's a good person. And I spent 24 to 48 hours, upon the announcement, with him, and it was really a wonderful experience. But it made me think, you know, I wish I'd got a chance to see him play more because he really is a student of the game. He really was one of the best hitters in the game. And this process to the Hall of Fame is going to be that much better because of Tony.

But there are a lot of great performances out there. And it seems like the game today, if the focus stays in between those white lines -- you know, all these great stories, all these great performances come out, and the game seems to get more popular.

So I'm hoping that the focus stays in between the white lines.

MR. ZREMSKI: Speaking of Pete Rose, someone asked us, does Pete Rose belong in the Baseball Hall of Fame?

MR. RIPKEN: I really wasn't listening again. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: I could repeat it if you'd like.

MR. RIPKEN: I heard it.

I personally think, yes, Pete Rose should be in the Hall of Fame. (Applause.) He's the all-time hit leader. He went out there and



played -- 4,000 hits. I mean, I think when he is in the Hall of Fame, I guess the whole story about his life should be included in there.

The issues that always get caught up on -- should Pete Rose be allowed to be back in baseball and should he be in the Hall of Fame -- I think they're probably two separate issues. The easiest one is, yes, he's one of the game's best players; he should be celebrated in the Hall of Fame. The second one's not so easy.

MR. ZREMSKI: If a player is proven to have used performance-enhancing drugs, should their stats and records be wiped from the books?

MR. RIPKEN: How many questions did it take us to get to steroids? (Laughter.)

You know, that's pretty interesting to me, is -- you know, we talk about asterisks next to records and you know, the whole thing about Hank Aaron not coming to -- you know, if Barry Bonds breaks his record, maybe for the suspicion of performance-enhancing -- there is speculation, but so far that's all there is, is speculation. There's no real proof. I think if I was in Hank's position, you know, I wouldn't measure my accomplishment and my record against somebody else's. I would feel pretty good about my accomplishment just for what it was for me, and I would think that I wouldn't get too worked up about it. Because if it comes out to be that Barry used performance-enhancers, because I believe the truth always comes out, then that will be rectified at the time.

So I think it's less about that record that you're holding on to. It should be more about the feeling about what you've accomplished. And when you look in the mirror, you feel pretty good about yourself.

MR. ZREMSKI: Do you have any desire to be a manager or a coach in baseball?

MR. RIPKEN: Are you offering me a job? (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: No, I don't have a job to offer. (Laughs.)

MR. RIPKEN: A lot of jobs in baseball really interest me. I always -- as a shortstop, Dad encouraged me to manage along with the manager, think about what he was doing. Ask yourself, what would you do at this key moment in the game? Would you bring the guy in? Would you keep him out there? Go through the exercise. Therefore, you could get the result based on what happened.

It's really easy to sit in the locker room afterwards and second-guess the manager. It's not so easy to try to make a decision at the point that he has to make a decision. So I love the thought of being a manager. I mean, I love the strategic nature of it, the management for a long season.

It's not just a seven-game series. There's a lot of things that go on. To get that 162, it's a marathon of a season.

And to coach, I think that maybe some of the things that I

learned that dad taught me I could pass off to some younger kids and make the game better as a result of that. So those two sort of jobs would interest me. What doesn't interest me right now is I'd have to go back to the same schedule that I played to my whole life. My dad was in baseball; he lived through that schedule. I lived it with him. And as a player, I put my family through that schedule, and my kids are right at that right age that they're -- they almost don't want me around anymore. (Laughter.) So I'm going to hold on to that for a little while longer. My boy is 13 and my daughter is 17. We're starting to look at colleges and those sorts of things, so this phase of my life now -- I like the fact that I'm flexible and that I can make choices and be there with them. But when they're out of the house, it's a whole new ball game. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Now, this is probably the most-asked question today. I've got probably about a half-dozen various versions of this. If Peter Angelos sells the Orioles, would you consider buying the team? (Applause.)

MR. RIPKEN: Well, I'd need to raise a lot of money. (Laughter.) Any partners in the room here? (Laughter.) You know, that sort of question -- you know, it goes up and down. There's a lot of speculation. I happen to meet with Mr. Angelos probably every three weeks to a month. And he was very instrumental when I retired of helping the Cal Sr. Foundation start. He started with the first million dollars. He was very instrumental in helping me secure a minor league team up there in the stadium in Aberdeen. And so he serves in an advisory role many times, and for some reason, speculation seems to hype periodically, if I'm seen at a restaurant with him or something, that we're talking about the sale of the club.

You know, I'm not sure what Mr. Angelos will do. But if he ever decides he wants to sell, you know, I've always thought very highly of the Orioles. I would explore a possibility of being involved in the ownership group, certainly, because, you know, you want to restore the Orioles to the way that they were looked upon years ago when they had the Oriole Way and those sorts of things. They haven't had a whole lot of success. And I'm worried that in the market of Baltimore that sometimes the fans are becoming a little indifferent to the team. You know, the first year, you know, you're really with them, and then if

things don't go right, you're angry, you know, and say, okay, let's get the right team, let's spend a little more money, you know, there's all kinds of stuff, and anger is good because you still care. But I'm really fearful when they reach the indifferent stage and they start to look for other things in their lives, that it might (not ?) be hard to get that back into their blood and watch the team.

And the Orioles meant so much to me growing up, and in my career and as a kid, I'd love to be able to be a part of the next group, if it happened to happen.

MR. ZREMSKI: Why do you think the Orioles have had such trouble in recent years?

MR. RIPKEN: Really? (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: It's what the standings say.

MR. RIPKEN: I think this year, against all other years, I'm a little bit more excited, from a fan's perspective, in watching the game, because they have some young, good pitchers. They have some potential talent. They got some big guys that throw hard. And on any given day, they can shut down an offense, like the Yankees. And that's encouraging.

But when you have to start saying if -- if this player develops or if this pitcher comes into his own, if this happens this way -- if you're saying if too many times, you really can't have an expectation that they're really going to put it together and compete for the American League East.

I'm excited about, you know, some of the young guys -- Nick Markakis. So it looks like they have the nucleus of a pretty good young team. And we're going to -- I'm going to be watching them much closer this year to see how they develop.

I think in the past they've been kind of flip-flopping between let's try to win now, let's get a player in that we can -- that might fit in. So they don't fully go towards a rebuilding process, and they don't fully go the other way. So I think they're caught in limbo a little bit, and so it's hard to have success. It's hard to build off of that sort of plan.

But it seems like this year it looks like, you know, they have the nucleus of a pretty good young team, and it looks like they're rebuilding. And you know, I predicted, in an optimistic way, that they'd win 83 games, and I'm still hoping that happens.

MR. ZREMSKI: Someone, probably from Chicago, asks: Are you part of any group interested in buying the Cubs or any other major league team? (Laughter.)

MR. RIPKEN: No. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: At what point in your life would you consider running for public office in Maryland?

MR. RIPKEN: No. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Who is the toughest pitcher you ever faced?

MR. RIPKEN: There's a bunch of guys, all the elite guys. First of all, let me tell you, Pedro and Roger and Randy and all those guys -- they're at an upper tier. And it's a battle just to try to face those guys. So you could name any one of those guys.

But there was one guy that gave me fits, that I couldn't really hit, and his name was Len Barker. Anybody remember Len?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah.

MR. RIPKEN: Len Barker threw a perfect game for the Cleveland Indians in the big leagues, so that's indicative of the kind of stuff

that he had. He threw a 95-mile-an-hour fastball. He had this breaking ball that I swear would come up here and spin, and I would see it out here -- (laughter) -- and then it would disappear and end up over there somewhere. (Laughter.)

And I struck out 11 out of the 12 times I think I faced him. And I was really perplexed.

And one time in Cleveland I was sitting there on the on-deck circle, and I think Rich Dauer hit a double in a game in the 8th inning off Len Barker, put runners on second and third with one out. And I was sitting on the on-deck circle saying, "I have to be able to make contact to get this winning run in, but I don't know how to." And I'm sitting there thinking, I said well let me wait for Eddie Murray to come out of the dugout and maybe Eddie will give me a little advice. So I waited for Eddie to come out of the dugout to the on-deck circle, and I said, "Eddie, I can't, you know, see this guy. I can't put the ball in play. What should I do?" And so he sits back, takes a deep breath and says, "Now would be a good time to try something new." (Laughter.) And I said, "That's it?" (Laughter.)

So I think that was one of the earliest times where I radically changed my batting stance, and maybe that was the first time, because I'm the guy that's known for all these radical different batting stances, and ESPN made fun of me on the TV all the time -- I was open, I was closed, I was spread apart, I was doing the violin, you know, all kinds of things to try to knock it back in.

In this particular case I stretched out, I really decided, okay, I'm going to do something really radical. Spread out my stance, stood right on home plate, put my front shoulder in saying, okay, don't try to pull this, see the breaking ball a little longer, just punch it over there to right field. Get this run in. Get this run in. Come on, get this run in. So I leaned out over the plate and looking for the ball, looking for that breaking ball that I couldn't see. And it was a fast ball and it hit me right in the back. (Laughter.) And I was happy. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Now, 70 years after Lou Gehrig played, anybody who's a baseball fan knows Lou Gehrig and remembers Lou Gehrig. How do you want to be remembered?

MR. RIPKEN: Well, I had a chance to address those questions, you know, during retirement or during the streak. And I thought for a moment, I said, you know, to be remembered at all is pretty cool. And then I took that one step further. You know, you'd love to play on a winning team, you'd love to be in the World Series, you'd love to have that every single year. You'd love to be known as, you know, a winner with all those rings on your hands. But I think to me, I'd rather be looked at as just a gamer, someone that was willing to come to ballpark and try to meet the challenges of the day no matter how tough they were.

If it was Randy or Roger, or if I was 0-20 or 0-25, I was still willing to go out there and give it a try. So the expression in the sport is being a gamer. And that can be defined in many different

ways, but I'd like to think that being a gamer is someone that will come out every day to play.

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay. We're almost out of time, but before asking the last question, we have a couple other important matters to take care of.

First of all, let me just remind the audience of our upcoming speakers. On April 17th, Congressman Charles Rangel, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, will be here. On April 24th, Jim Nicholson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and on April 25th, the actor Sam Waterston will be here.

We also have some traditions here at the National Press Club, such as the plaque that you get to hang on the wall with all the others that are already hanging onto the wall. And guaranteed to last through 2,131 cups of coffee, the National Press Club mug. (Laughter.)

MR. RIPKEN: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: And our last question is, I think, also about perseverance. As someone in the audience writes, having lived through a 0-21 start for the Orioles in 1988, what advice do you have for the Nationals and their suffering fans? (Laughter.)

MR. RIPKEN: I wouldn't wish the 0-21 on anyone. That was the most miserable time in our lives. And I think -- I guess if I was advising some of the players, maybe not the fans so much, when you go through some of these tough times and you keep pushing forward, it becomes more rewarding and it becomes better and you learn more about yourself when you have to deal through the adversity.

And we talked about the other -- the book "Get in the Game." We also have a children's book that came out just the same time called "The Longest Season." And "The Longest Season" is a book that goes back and chronicles the '88 season from an 0-21 standpoint. And I chose that, as painful as it was to go back and look at that. Because I wanted the message to kids to say, look, things don't always go well. And here's an example in my life that things didn't go well, but it still turned out okay.

So dealing with adversity is the theme in that book. It's very well-illustrated. I had a great time in New York. I went to an assembly of middle-schoolers, and I read the book to them. And I realized that they didn't have a clue who I was. (Laughter.) And that's cool.

So I thought on my feet really quickly -- they named my stats, they say that he's one of seven or eight players to have over 400 home runs and 3,000 hits, and they were impressed with that. He has this record of 2,632 games. And I realized that they were still blank. And so I went up there and I said, you heard all those things, but I'm the guy that taught Jose Reyes and Derek Jeter how to play shortstop. (Laughter.) And then I had them.

MR. ZREMSKI: All right. Thank you. Thank you very much. You

take care. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: If I could just remind you to stay in your seats for a few minutes as Cal moves into the next room for the book signing.

Thank you all for coming today.

I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, Jo Anne Booze and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. Also thanks to the NPC Library for its research. The video archive of today's lunch is provided by the National Press Club's Broadcast Operations Center.

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Thank you. We're adjourned.

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