

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH JEFF IDELSON

SUBJECT: JEFF IDELSON, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME, IS SCHEDULED TO SPEAK AT A NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON MAY 11. HALL OF FAME THIRD BASEMAN BROOKS ROBINSON WILL BE A SPECIAL GUEST.

MODERATOR: DONNA LEINWAND, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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DONNA LEINWAND: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Donna Leinwand. I'm a reporter at *USA Today* and I'm president of the National Press Club.

We're the world's leading professional organization for journalists and are committed to a future of journalism by providing informative programming, journalism education and fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. On behalf of our 3,500 members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and our guests in the audience today. I'd also like to welcome those of you who are watching us on C-Span.

We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards, I'll ask as many questions from the audience as time permits. Please hold your applause during the speech so that we have time for as many questions as possible.

For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear applause, it may be from the guests and members of the general public who attend our luncheon, and not necessarily from the working press.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. From your right, Chris Morin, Thompson Publishing Group, and a member of the NPC softball team (Laughter), Neil Roland of Crain Communications, Karrye Braxton, President of Global Business Solutions, Inc., and also a member of the NPC softball team, the Honorable Spencer Abraham, former Energy Secretary and U.S. Senator, and a guest of our speaker, Peter Blank, editor of the Kiplinger Tax Letter (Laughter), Brooks Robinson, Hall of Fame third baseman and owner of the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs of the Atlantic League. (Applause)

Skipping over the podium, Melissa Charbonneau, Vice-Chair of the Speakers Committee. Skipping over our speaker, for just a moment, Jonathan Salant of Bloomberg News, a former NPC President and a Speakers Committee member, who arranged this luncheon. Most importantly, he is the coach of the National Press Club softball team. (Laughter) There are some people who are trying desperately to get into the Hall of Fame here. (Laughter) Stan Kasten, President of the Washington Nationals and a guest of our speaker. (Applause) Mr. Kasten will be speaking here on June 25th. Bob Benenson, editor of CQPolitics.com, John Domen, a freelance broadcaster, and finally Paul Dickson, author of the *Dickson Baseball Dictionary* and other baseball books. (Applause)

In 1839, an Army general named Abner Doubleday invented the game of baseball in a cow pasture in a little Upstate New York village known as Cooperstown-- or perhaps not. (Laughter) A Texas A & M University researcher reported, this year, that a version of what would become baseball was being played Upstate long before General Doubleday thought of the game. The researcher claims that baseball was not invented by any one person, but evolved from several games.

Whether or not baseball began in Cooperstown, almost every important event in the sport is represented there: the bats, the balls, lockers, uniforms and almost anything else associated with the national pastime can be found in what is probably the best known of sports halls of fame, the Baseball Hall of Fame. You can find the bat that Roger Maris used to hit his 61st homerun, the bloody sock Curt Schilling wore when he beat the Yankees in 2004, and Bobby Bonds' 756th homerun, asterisk and all.

What's not there are Mickey Mantle's toenails, or hair from Mike Lowell's eyebrows. Yes, the Hall of Fame has gotten letters from people who claim that they have such artifacts. Nor is there an exhibit, despite the claims of David Letterman, of insect parts found in stadium hotdogs or flume(?) ride(?) on tobacco spittings. (Laughter)

The man responsible for collecting all of those artifacts is Jeff Idelson, the President of the Hall of Fame. Whenever baseball history is to be made, Jeff tries to be there. "I'm kind of the opposite of the grim reaper," he once told the *Boston Globe*. "When I show up, it's a good thing." Mr. Idelson went to college in Massachusetts and then turned down a job as the second full-time employee of a new fast-food chain, the restaurant Boston Market.

He landed his first baseball job with the Boston Red Sox when he knew that Roger Moret won 14 games in 1975. As another Hall of Famer, Casey Stengel once said "You could look it up." And he later worked for Yankee owner George Steinbrenner before joining the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1994. Fourteen years later, he was named to succeed Dale Petrovsky as only the sixth President of the Hall.

With Mr. Idelson today is Hall of Fame's third baseman Brooks Robinson, once known as the human vacuum cleaner for his defense at the hot corner. He spent his entire career with the Baltimore Orioles. There was no free agency back then. And now owns the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs of the Independent Atlantic League.

With baseball deeply buried in the steroid scandal, many players who once would be shoe-ins for the Hall of Fame may not get the coveted plaques. We'll ask Mr. Idelson how the Hall of Fame should deal with the steroid era, and, of course, who will be the first member of the Washington Nationals to get into the Hall without buying a ticket. Let's welcome Jeff Idelson to the National Press Club. (Applause)

JEFF IDELSON: Thank you Donna. I appreciate the kind introduction. And I'm grateful to Jonathan and the National Press club for having me here today. It's really quite an honor. And I'd like to start by introducing my three dais guests: First, the Honorable Spencer Abraham, Chairman and CEO of the Abraham Group, an international strategic consulting firm here in D.C. Spencer is a former U.S. Senator from Michigan, Lansing, and was Energy Secretary under President George W. Bush. He grew up a Tigers fan and I believe still is, and is a great supporter of the Hall of Fame's mission, and a wonderful friend. So Spence, thank you for being here. (Applause)

Second is Stan Kasten, the President of the Nationals. Stan has an accomplished background in sports, and is the only person to lead three different teams in three different sports simultaneously-- try doing that: The Atlanta Braves, the Atlanta Hawks, and the Atlanta Thrashers. And he's really had success wherever he's been. And he oversaw the Braves during their hey-day that started in the '90s and included 14 straight division titles, five National League Pennants, and, of course, the 1995 World Series Championship. So, if the fans of

the media will be patient, there is no doubt the Nationals will be successful because of Stan's track record. Stan, thank you for being here. (Applause)

And my third guest, you know well from the Orioles, Number 5 Hall of Famer, Brooks Robinson. How lucky was the City of Baltimore to get the Saint Louis Browns franchise in 1954? Well a year later, they realized just how lucky they were when Brooks took over third base, and he didn't hang his spikes up for 23 more seasons. He combined consistency with power and defense, selected to play in 15 All Star games, set the American League record with 268 homeruns by a third baseman. And he earned a record 16 Gold Gloves for defensive excellence. He was MVP of the 1970 World Series when he hit 429. And his defense was so stellar in that series that his glove is in Cooperstown. There were no better competitors, no one who respects the game more than Brooks does, and no one who was greater between the white lines, especially when the chips were down. So it's not any surprise that in 1983, he was the first ballot selection to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Brooks, thank you for coming. (Applause)

As Donna mentioned, we're located in Cooperstown, New York, nestled between the Catskill and Adirondack Mountains. It's beautiful, about 75 miles west of the state capital in Albany, New York, maybe a six-hour drive or six and a half hours from the D.C. area. We're a very small town. We have one stoplight. We have 2,000 residents. We have one K through five and one six through twelve school. So we're pretty small.

We made it onto a map in 1786 when Judge William Cooper settled there, and the town was named for him. And the village really became famous when his son, James Fennimore Cooper, wrote extensively about the area in the early 1800s. His description of Cooperstown is "A place of solemn solitude and sweet repose with a placid view of heaven." And I could not agree more.

The Hall of Fame itself was the brainchild of local philanthropist Steven Clark, who conceived the idea as a way of generating tourism. And what a great idea Mr. Clark had. The museum now operates under the strong leadership of his granddaughter, our chairman, Jane Forbes Clark. She is dynamic, and she is effective.

When the Hall of Fame opened in 1939, amidst much fanfare, it really, truly, cemented the town's legacy. And it almost immediately became an integral part of Americana. On June 12, 1939, the first four classes of Hall of Famers from 1936, '7, '8 and '9, 26 men in all, were formally enshrined. And 11 of those 26 were living and took the train to Cooperstown. And listen to some of these names: Grover Cleveland Alexander; Eddie Collins; Ty Cobb; Walter Johnson; Nap Lajoie; Connie Mack; Babe Ruth; George Sisler; Tris Speaker; and Cy Young.

There was a Main Street parade and then an All Star game, complete with two players from each of the 16 Major League teams. Major League baseball was dark that day, as a salute to the game's history. Said Babe Ruth, as part of his induction speech to the crowd of 15,000: "They started something here, and the kids are keeping the ball rolling. I hope some of you kids will be in the Hall of Fame. I'm very glad that, in my day, I was able to earn my place. And I hope youngsters of today have that same opportunity to experience such feeling."

Well, I don't think Ruth's words could have rang more true for guys like Yogi Berra, who was 14, Duke Snider and Robin Roberts who were 12, Frank Robinson and Willie Mays who were eight, Hank Aaron who was five, and Brooks who was just two years old. Little did they know that one day, they too would call Cooperstown home.

Meanwhile, in Cooperstown that day, in 1939, there was an eight year old wide-eyed girl watching the induction from her dad's shoulders. Seventy years later, that little girl, Katherine Walker, is one of our cheery and energetic visitor services staff, regaling visitors of how she and her brother, and so many other little kids, carried the ball players' luggage from the train station into town, and how the kids followed Ruth around as if he were the Pied Piper. And though the induction ceremonies, today, obviously have a much different feel than they did in 1939, memories of that first induction endure more than ever, as its legend is passed along by Katherine and others.

The Hall of Fame, which started as a one-room gallery of plaques and baseball mementoes in 1939, has now a state-of-the-art 50,000 square foot American History Museum dedicated to baseball. We're a not-for-profit, 501-C3. And we're independent of Major League Baseball. We have a terrific hand-in-hand relationship with all 30 teams and the Office of the Commissioner. But we are truly independent. That independence assures that we're able to be objective and impartial in recounting history. There is no topic we'll shy away from. There's no story we wouldn't tell, if it makes sense.

We have a dynamic board comprised of team owners, Major and Minor League executives and Hall of Famers like Brooks. And our staff of 100, which doubles in the summer, is by far the greatest group of professionals with whom I've ever worked. Their intellect and passion give Cooperstown the feeling of a small university.

Our staff works hard every day to further our very simple six-word mission, which is preserving history, honoring excellence, and connecting generations. And we accomplish this as three entities under one roof: a museum with a library, an education center, and a Hall of Fame. Our museum itself has 38,000 rare artifacts, all of which have been donated, from Civil War era to Ty

Cobb and Cy Young, from Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig to Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron; from Roberto Clemente to Cal Ripken, to Ichiro(?) Suzuki, you'll find it all in Cooperstown.

History happens every day, and we're there to document it. It's really one of the ways we stay relevant. For example, on this date in 1963, May 11th, Sandy Koufax threw the second of his four no-hitters. A game-used baseball signed by Koufax from that gem is in Cooperstown. And for every kid that grew up in Brooklyn in the 1950s, this ball brings tears of joy remembering the great Koufax. Nine years later, on May 11th, Willie Mays was traded from the Giants to the Mets for pitcher Charlie Williams and \$50,000 dollars. And Cooperstown fans are reminded of Mays's greatness by seeing the glove he used to make his circus catch off of Vick Works in the 1954 World Series. "I had it all the way," Mays told me last year at induction.

Every day, his glove also reminds us of the grace and tremendous athleticism of the "Say hey" kid. And five years ago today, in the small western-most town of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, city officials released a set of 1791 bylaws which included the earliest reference to baseball to date, ever. Think about that, 1791, 218 years ago. The document was written to protect the windows in the town's new meeting house, by prohibiting anyone from playing baseball within 80 yards of the building. A copy of that town ordinance is hanging on the wall in an Early Baseball Gallery in our museum. And who knows? Perhaps they celebrated the Declaration of Independence with a game of baseball.

Three weeks ago, the new Yankees Stadium opened. Grady Sizemore hit the first grand slam in the new stadium. The ball crashed into the right field seats. The bat, however, landed a little further upstate. And looking forward, four months from today on September 11th, we'll sadly remember eight years earlier, when our nation was humbled by terrorist attacks. The story of baseball's role in the aftermath of 9/11 will continually be shared with future generations as we remember.

We share the story of Vin Navarro in Cooperstown, a New York City Fire Department battalion chief who, in the aftermath of the Twin Towers collapse, found a baseball in a desk drawer from the Trade Web Company amidst nothing but rubble. Navarro wrote to the company in an email saying "Being a baseball fan, a coach and a player, this item has become a symbol of hope for me. Baseball is the American pastime, a great game, from a great country."

When he donated the baseball and the email to our chief curator Ted Spencer two months later, he said "The ball's nicked up, but it's intact, and it came through. I feel the same way about New York City, the Fire Department, and the United States. We're banged up. We took a hit. But we came through."

Today, that ball and email is in Cooperstown and serves as a reminder of a terrible tragedy and how baseball often serves as a catalyst for inspiration.

Additionally, Curt Schilling's cap from the 2001 World Series is in the Hall of Fame and tells a similar story. The cap bears an American flag that was stitched into all Major League players' caps after 9/11, as well as a World Series patch. And also on the cap, in white pencil, Schilling wrote "God bless America" by the flag, "NYFD" and "NYPD" for the New York Fire and Police Departments on the back.

Pinned on the back is a silver police shield given to him by an officer where he and the Diamondbacks visited at Ground Zero before game three of the 2001 World Series. It's a very moving piece. And said Curt Schilling, "It's my belief that if you watch close enough, you will see players, many players, in fact, trying in some small way to say thank you, and that we won't forget you or your loved ones. And some of us will have messages scrawled somewhere on our hats or uniforms that you can read." And, of course, Curt was true to his word.

The library is our foremost research center in the world. Our staff handles 50,000 inquiries every year, from the third grader who wonders how baseball integrated, to the PhD candidate preparing a dissertation, to print and broadcast journalists across the country, who call or email us daily, our library stays very active. Even Paul Dickson has spent a lot of time in our library and used our archive to pen several terrific reference books, some of which are next to my computer. I guess you could call it an assist from Paul. And, if you turn to Page 15 of the *Dickson Baseball Dictionary*, you'll actually find the baseball meaning of the word "assist."

Our library archive grows every day. Nearly three million items are now catalogued, including half a million images, 12,000 hours of original recorded media, and subject files on virtually every subject that you can think of to do with baseball, and every player that donned a Major League uniform. In many ways, we are really the Smithsonian and Library of Congress rolled into one.

We strive to make our library and museum collections widely accessible, both inside Cooperstown and externally, through our traveling exhibitions. We currently have 18 loans to museums, to libraries, history centers, embassies and Major League teams. And we just embarked on a two-year, 50-city tour, in conjunction with the American Library Association, to bring the story of African-Americans in baseball to libraries and history centers across the country.

We also recently concluded a major touring exhibition called "Baseball is America," which featured more than 500 artifacts in a 5,000 square foot exhibit. The exhibit examined the relationship between baseball and American culture. It

was here at the Smithsonian Natural History in 2003. Thanks to our presenting sponsor, Ernst & Young, over seven years, it traveled to 15 of the most prominent museums across the country, was enjoyed by two and a half million people that are baseball fans and history buffs. Why does this matter? Because it shows that citizens in all corners of this country still care about the national pastime's history.

Baseball is America has been deemed one of the most successful touring exhibitions in history, sort of like baseball's version of King Tut. Our museum is also a vibrant educational institution. We have an education ambassador, Hall of Famer Ozzie Smith. And Ozzie can capture kids' attentions in the classroom the same way that he wowed crowds with his flair on the field. He helped share our mission with students all across the country.

We use baseball as a lens to teach 16 topics, including math, physics, American history, geography, character education, and Civil Rights to students who come to Cooperstown or in classrooms across the country, through a point-to-point videoconferencing. We also reach more than 10 million students every year through an annual electronic field trip, where we partner with Ball State University's Teachers College, which is in Muncie, Indiana.

From coast to coast, we reach into classrooms to get to these kids. For instance, two years ago, we broadcast from a World War Two Japanese-American internment camp called Manzanar(?), located in California's Mojave Desert. We educated kids about the positive role that baseball played for many internees, despite the injustice of those camps during World War Two.

And, just this fall, live from Coney Island in Brooklyn, we showed how music history and baseball have been intertwined for generations, using the 100th anniversary of *Take Me Out To The Ballgame* as a conduit for learning. In each case, again, more than 10 million students participated in live broadcasts, through Public Television, and over the Internet.

Through all of our initiatives, we share the relevance between baseball and everyday school and societal topics through hands-on learning. Because our programs are so engaging, students learn and have fun, both at the same time. Why is this important? Well, because baseball is such an integral part of American history. And the kids of today who are fans, and will someday raise their own children to be fans, they'll now have an understanding of why baseball is much deeper than just a game on the field.

We also have one of the premiere internship programs in the country for college juniors, seniors and graduate students, the Frank And Peggy Steele Internship Program. Twenty-five students come to Cooperstown for ten weeks.

And they experience valuable leadership lessons against the backdrop of a museum. And when I speak with the interns who are getting ready to graduate from college, I tell them to follow their heart. That's the time to do it. Or, Carlton Fisk used to say, dream, and dream with your eyes open. I also tell them that, as an adult, you can aspire to live where you want to live or do what you want to do professionally. And, if you can accomplish one, you're way ahead of the curve. If you can do both, you're in very, very rare air.

So that's a bit about the museum, the library and education. The last component is the Hall of Fame. We honor excellence by paying tribute to baseball's greatest players, managers, umpires and executives through election to the Baseball Hall of Fame. And I'll give you just a quick idea of how difficult it is to make the Major Leagues, let alone an election to Cooperstown.

There's about three million kids playing youth baseball today, many of whom are dreaming of making the Majors one day. And a small percentage of those kids will be good enough to play high school ball and then go on to play college ball. Of them all, 1,500 kids will be drafted next month, in June, who are good enough to sign a professional contract. They get paid to play baseball. Of those 1,500 kids who sign a pro contract, maybe 10% will ever step onto a Major League field.

It's hard to get drafted, it's even harder to make the Majors. Major Leagues began 133 years ago in 1876. And since then, there have been a total of less than 17,000 individuals to play the game. Put that into a little bit of perspective, 17,000 over 133 years, the country's largest employer today, Wal-Mart, employs two million people. That's how exclusive the Major Leagues are.

The Hall of Fame is the top of the pyramid, though. Two hundred and eighty-nine Hall of Famers overall, 202 are former Major League players who have a bronze plaque in Cooperstown. That is it. Bottom line, one out of 100 Major Leaguers today, one percent, will ever make it into the Hall of Fame. And they are truly the best of the best.

July 26th this year, we'll formally induct the three newest members, acrobatic power-hitting second baseman Joe Gordon, who starred for the Yankees and Indians from 1938 to 1949, also serving America for two years in the middle of his career. Gordon was a nine-time All Star in ten seasons. He won five World Series, four with the Yankees and one with Cleveland. He retired as the American League record holder for homeruns by the a second baseman. He was also the 1942 MVP and a very deserving candidate. Because of his military service, his plaque will have an Army/Air Force medallion below it, to explain the gap in his playing career, and to remind every visitor how Joe Gordon gave of himself for his country.

Baseball has historically been there during times of conflict, with the most glowing example coming during World War Two, when 95% of all Major Leaguers enlisted. At the Hall of Fame, we've had one Hall of Famer, Morgan Bulkeley, who served during the Civil War, 25 who served during World War One, 39 during World War Two, and five during Korea.

The second electee that'll be honored July 26th is Jim Rice, who tormented American League pitchers for 16 years while patrolling left field in Fenway Park. He was an eight-time All Star and the 1978 AL MVP, when he became the first American League player in more than half a century, when Joe DiMaggio did it, to have more than 400 total bases in a single season.

Hall of Famer Goose Gossage said of Jim Rice "No one scared me when I went to the mound during my career. But Jim Rice came the closest." Rice follows Ted Williams and Carl Yastrzemski as the "Successive Trio" of Red Sox left fielders who now can call Cooperstown home.

The third Hall of Famer, Ricky Henderson, the all-time leader in unintentional walks, runs and stolen bases. He was a ten-time All Star, the 1990 MVP, and he's one of 27 players with 3,000 or more hits. In fact, he ran so much that Yogi Berra, who managed him briefly in 1985, said "He can run whenever he wants. I'm giving him the red light." (Laughter) Leave it to Yogi. Well, we're not going to give him any red lights in Cooperstown. I think we're all looking forward to Ricky's speech.

The last weekend in July is Hall of Fame weekend. And, if you adore the game, as I know you do, there is no better place to be than in Cooperstown. It's somewhere where your baseball cards come to life. And each year, more than 50 Hall of Famers return for the largest single gathering of Hall of Fame members in one place in one time anywhere, any time. It's awesome. They are truly living legends of the game. And they'll come to gather, to share stories, and to welcome Ricky, Jim and Joe to their final team, the greatest team ever assembled, the Hall of Fame team.

You know, it's such a small fraternity of living legends. We have 65 living Hall of Famers, 60 who are players, four managers, and one executive, Lee McPhail. And even though they've all been retired from the game, many for decades, all are still very active and remain extremely relevant. You know, that's important for them, because it keeps them young. It's important for the Hall of Fame, for all the fans and for society, because it helps us to connect the past to the present. It helps us to connect generations.

Some examples: Ralph Kiner, at age 86, is still broadcasting Mets games. Jim Bunting is a U.S. Senator from Kentucky. Frank Robinson works for Major League Baseball. Tony Gwinn, who was the best college player in the country, Gary Carter and Rhine Sandberg are managing teams. And I wouldn't be surprised if any ended up managing a Major League club soon.

Don Sutton, Jim Palmer, Juan Marichal, Dave Winfield and Joe Morgan, they're all broadcasting. Several work for teams. Billy Williams is with the Cubs; Dave Winfield is with the Padres; Tommy LaSorda who, at age 81, is logging more airline miles than President Obama these days, works for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Hank Aaron is with the Braves. Nolan Ryan, he's president of the Texas Rangers. Cal Ripken, totally committed to youth baseball.

Then there's (*) and Yogi Berra, who both have museums they run. Bob's is in Van Meter, Iowa. Yogi's is in Montclair, New Jersey. You know, speaking of Yogi, he and I were sitting on the back porch at the Otesaga last year during Hall of Fame weekend on Friday, and it's about seven in the morning. Yogi's been up for a couple hours. And we're sitting there, and he says "You know," and it's kind of raining, he goes "How come it always rains on Hall of Fame weekend?" I said "Well, you know Yogi, we're kind of here between a couple of mountain ranges. We're on a lake, a little sprinkle. It happens." And he says to me "Why don't they move Hall of Fame weekend to another weekend when it doesn't rain?" (Laughter) How do you respond to that? I don't know.

So, as you can see, these guys, in their own ways, are still relevant, even in retirement, if you will. Because of our Hall of Famers, because history happens every day, and because our staff is so good about connecting the past with the present through exhibits and programs, the Web and conversation, the museum in Cooperstown is more relevant and more vibrant than ever. This year, we opened six new exhibits, including two major permanent ones.

Two weeks ago, Hank Aaron was in Cooperstown to help us cut the ribbon on our new exhibit called "Chasing the Dream: The Hank Aaron Story." Through this exhibit, visitors learn more about his entire life story, which is truly amazing, and has truly afforded him the title of hero. Hank Aaron defines Hall of Fame excellence.

The exhibit includes four topical explorations of the life and times of Hank Aaron, from his early days in Mobile, to integrating the South Atlantic League in 1952, to his climb to excellence in the Majors, to pursuing Babe Ruth's historic homerun record in 1974, in the face of intense hatred and racism, to his present philanthropic work and numerous accolades.

In many ways, Chasing the Dream represents the journey all Major League players experience throughout their careers. For Hank, it represents not only the quiet grace and dignity that he brought to the ballpark every day, but also the chase for immortality in the face of tremendous adversity, and pursuing the most hallowed record in all of American sport.

The exhibit will be the centerpiece to the Hank Aaron Gallery of Records, which will open in two years. And we talked to Hank about naming the Gallery of Records for him probably ten years ago. We wanted to pick an icon to represent all record holders. And Hank stands above all, with all the records he held when he retired, and still holds.

Think about this: He retired in 1976. Thirty-three years later, he is still the all-time leader in runs batted in, total bases and extra base hits. He still ranks second all-time in homeruns, third in hits, and fourth in runs. He showed up to play every day, which is why he is among the top five all-time in games played, at-bats, and plate appearances. He is also a member of the prestigious 3,000 Hit Club. And, if you took away each and every one of his 755 homeruns, he'd still have 3,016 hits.

Today, Hank Aaron remains an American hero. He remains incredibly relevant. And we saw that in motion in Cooperstown as visitors crowded to the museum for the opening, wanting to hear something from him or catch a glimpse of a man who means so much to so many.

The second major exhibit opening in two weeks, during Memorial Day weekend, is called "Viva Baseball." Orlando Cepeda and Juan Marachal will come to Cooperstown. It's our first bilingual exhibit. It's spectacular and very relevant, given that 25% players on Major League opening day rosters this year were born in Latin American countries. Viva Baseball celebrates the passion of the Latin love affair with baseball over 150 years. The exhibit focuses on the rich baseball traditions of the baseball-playing Caribbean based countries, such as Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Venezuela.

We are especially proud of the compelling story this landmark exhibition tells through the sights, sounds and zeal of Latin American baseball. Baseball is woven into the fabric that defines Caribbean culture, much as it does American culture. And, as Latinos continue to make a tremendous impact on our national game, our exhibit will evolve to document that impact, staying relevant.

Another new initiative for us comes Father's Day weekend, when we stage the first-ever Hall of Fame classic, a Legends baseball game. For a town steeped in nostalgia, this is right up our alley. This is a no-brainer. It totally connects generations. Cooperstown will become the ultimate Father's Day destination for

fans who adore the game. And we'll do it old-school style, with modern-day fun. There'll be a Main Street parade, free autographs, a kids skills clinic, our first-ever fathers and children and grandchildren catch on Doubleday Field, and so much more.

The highlight will be the Legends game itself. The Ford Motor Company is the presenting sponsor. And we're so grateful to Z.O. Jackley(?) from Ford, who's here today, for helping us to connect our two organizations which both have lasting imprints on American soil. We're forever building strategic partnerships and sponsorships to touch as many people as we can.

Five Hall of Famers are going to be in town for this first-ever classic: Paul Molitor, Phil Niekro, Brooks, Fergie Jenkins, and Bob Feller, who is getting to start. (Laughter) When I talked to Feller about it, I asked him "How long can you go, Bob?" And he said to me, "Is there a pitch count?" (Laughter) I said "No, Bob, there is no pitch count." He said "I'll go as long as I want him to go." He said "I'll be throwing as hard as ever. But the ball won't be getting there quite as quickly." (Laughter)

By the way, Bob turns 91 in November. And why would the Hall of Fame want to start a 90 year old in a baseball game? You ask. You know why? It allows us to connect generations. So many people know of the American success story of Bob Rapid, but very few have seen him pitch. And seeing him pitch brings history to life. We are so thrilled with our new tradition.

Fans of the game in history love what we are doing in Cooperstown and believe we're relevant. We know this because we have a thriving membership program. We have 30,000 members, all of whom want a deeper relationship with us than simply walking through the door. There are season ticket holders. They live all over the world. And behind New York, the number two state in terms of most members is California.

We talk to our visitors. We listen to our visitors. We observe our visitors. We want to learn what it is they like about the Hall of Fame and what they don't like. And to bring up Yogi one more time, as he said of his players who were not paying attention during a 1964 game, "Stay alert. You can observe a lot by watching." (Laughter)

Hall of Fame, today, also plays host to a calendar of nearly 1,000 events, many for members and others for anyone who walks through our door. For instance, for kids, we have sleep-overs in the Hall of Fame Plaque Gallery, scavenger hunts, hands-on activities and educational trivia games. Families can come, and they can meet Hall of Famers and ask questions. They've met Aaron.

They'll meet Marichal and Cepeda. They'll get to meet Ricky Henderson and Jim Rice. Sweet Swinging Billy Williams will be here in the fall.

When our visitors meet these legends, they are embracing history. The programs are broadcast nationally on XM Satellite Radio's Homeplate Channel. And we also distribute them worldwide through our website, Baseballhall.org. Looking out onto the horizon, the Hall of Fame has challenges to face to stay relevant. And we are prepared to meet them head-on. Two of the bigger examples are how we'll explain performance-enhancing substances in the museum, and what happens to players today who become eligible for election.

In terms of the museum, this era, we feel, is quickly concluding. But it will take some time to put some perspective into it so we can address it. It's kind of like writing a thesis paper for people of all ages. You have to have all the facts first, and then be able to tell a complete story in a very educational way to audiences of all ages.

As of today, we have the Mitchell Report and other subject files available to researchers in our library. And, in the museum, we have a statement that reads as follows: "This museum is committed to presenting and interpreting baseball history as it unfolds. Many records have been set, and milestones reached during the last two decades. And the effect steroids have had on these accolades needs to be examined with the perspective of time. In this museum, you'll find artifacts, images and stories of players who have or have been suspected of using steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs."

This story, and its impact to the game, are evolving, as there is a better understanding of performance-enhancing drugs, and their impact on history, the museum will be telling that story honestly and impartially. In time, we will tell the story in an educational way in our museum. And we're also in the process of developing a substantial education program for children.

The question also often comes up about players from this era who achieve greatness under the cloud of performance-enhancing substances, who will appear on the Hall of Fame election ballot in the future. Their candidacy lies in the hands of between 500 and 600 voters of the Baseball Writers Association of America, the BBWWAA.

Our election rules are straightforward and include instructing voters to look beyond the statistics and examining a player's overall contribution to the game. Historically, the BBWWAA voting body has exercised sound judgment in examining the careers of candidates being considered for election to the Hall of Fame, and have elected very deserving players. The five-year waiting period

gives voters some perspective of time. And, as such, one would have a hard time arguing that the writers have elected unworthy candidates.

We're comfortable with our rules for election as they stand, and don't foresee changing them, though we constantly review them to be sure they're relevant. We feel they're relevant and straightforward. And we have complete faith in the BBWWAA, that they will continue to use sound judgment.

We have had a relationship with the Writers since 1936, when Hall of Fame voting began. We all know that the newspaper business isn't as healthy as it once was. We're committed to standing by the BBWWAA as long as electors continue to cover the game, which gives candidates a review by a peer generation of impartial voters. If that model changes, we'll be prepared to change as well. Today, the system works well. And we hope it will continue to do so.

A couple of trends on the horizon, and then I'll conclude. The composition of the group The Hall of Famers has been reflective of the game on the field. Today, 26% of our 65 living inductees are African-American, reflecting the ascent of black players in the game in the 1970s and '80s, after Jackie Robinson integrated baseball and made it stronger. As the game grows globally, you'll see the number of Latino Hall of Famers increase, and it won't be long before players from the Pacific Rim are elected as well.

In closing, today, the Hall of Fame, more so than ever, is a very relevant place. We are truly a living, breathing history museum. And not many museums can say that. We're exciting, we're experiential, and we're very proud of that. Baseball is still our national pastime, and the Hall of Fame is the crown jewel of baseball. We are where the pulse and heart of our national pastime beats, the longest and the strongest every day. We are the history of the game. We are the soul of baseball. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. LEINWAND: Okay, we have lots and lots of questions that have been emailed to me from all over the world. So, we'll start with this one. "Why does baseball remain the national pastime, even as football draws more fans and better TV ratings?"

MR. IDELSON: Well, that's a good one. I think if you look at the way baseball has permeated culture over two centuries, it's pretty evident. It's in our language, it's part of our history, it's prevalent in the Oval Office. And it's been part of the fabric that's defined American society since the Civil War. So you can't help but have it be a part of your heritage. And, as such, it continues to be the national pastime.

MS. LEINWAND: With all the entertainment choices and declining economy, what can the Hall of Fame do to encourage families to visit? And how are your attendance numbers?

MR. IDELSON: Our attendance numbers have been good. We've had more than 14 million people come through our doors since we first opened. We annually draw between 300 and 325,000 people a year. Our numbers this year are tracking quite well with last year, which is very encouraging. I think if you looked at the breadth and depth of the experience-- and it's a family experience-- it gives you many reasons to come. The programs that we have with Hall of Famers, to the activities we have for children, lends very well to creating a great family trip to Cooperstown.

MS. LEINWAND: Who is the best player not in the Hall of Fame?
(Laughter)

MR. IDELSON: My goodness. It used to be Joe Gordon. That was always my answer. Now I'm in trouble. Oh gosh, I mean that's the beauty of this game, is who is and who isn't in. It's hard to have this discussion with other major sports. And with only one percent in, that leaves 99% that aren't. So, when you look at a ballot, and guys wonder why a player hasn't been elected yet, you say to them "Well, are they in the top five percent? Four percent? Are they in the top two percent? Not good enough. You got to be in the top one percent." It's hard to get in. It's objective. But, those that do get in certainly deserve it. How was that for avoiding the question? (Laughter)

MS. LEINWAND: We have plenty of people who are offering suggestions, so here we go with one. Shouldn't Roger Maris be in the Hall?

MR. IDELSON: Well, you know, that's a good question, back-to-back MVPs, of course the big homerun season. And he is represented in Cooperstown, Donna, as you pointed out in your comments. We have his bat and ball from his 61st homerun. But, you know, it's subjective. And, you know, the guys who look at Maris look at a great right fielder. Personally, he's one of my favorite players to have played. But, you know, maybe he's in the top two percent.

MS. LEINWAND: There are a lot of writers who believe Marvin Miller deserves a place in the Hall of Fame. I know this is not your decision; but, do you have an opinion you could share?

MR. IDELSON: Well, when you talk about guys who impacted the game, you could certainly put Marvin Miller in that category of guys who changed the game dramatically.

What he did for the benefit of players beyond salaries, in terms of playing conditions, television, things like that, is pretty heroic. Whether or not he ever earns election to Cooperstown, which is subjective, his story doesn't diminish. He has the satisfaction of knowing that he accomplished a lot of great things for the players. And in our museum and our library, you cannot talk about baseball without including Marvin Miller. Whether or not he ever gets in is subjective, and he's in the hands of our Veterans Committee.

MS. LEINWAND: Will Moneyball and the new statistics that it emphasizes have an impact on how players are evaluated for the Hall of Fame?

MR. IDELSON: Probably so. I mean, the OPS, if you will, which is the crux of Moneyball dates back to Branch Rickey. In fact, I was in a friend's house last week in San Diego, Glenn Doshay whose a part-owner of the Padres. And he was showing me a letter that he had that Branch Rickey wrote to Roberto Clemente when he was still in the minors, long-written out how he evaluated players, which was basically OPS. So I think that the voters have used OPS to evaluate players to some degree, and probably it will become more prevalent as we move forward.

MS. LEINWAND: Do you think the Veterans Committee cheapens the honor of admission to the Hall?

MR. IDELSON: No, I don't think so. I mean, you have to a court of appeals and something they call a Fame Election. The writers have done a great job no doubt, but it would be a pretty thin Hall of Fame if the writers only had election. Plus, you wouldn't have a way for managers, umpires and executives to get in there and Negro League stars as well. So the Veterans Committee has served a great role since the early 1950s. And right now we're tweaking the rules a little bit; it's gone through a few changes. But I think by and large they've done a pretty good job of electing qualified candidates.

MS. LEINWALD: Pete Rose said, "I should have been a dope addict because they get second and third chances." Was he right? Should he be in the Hall of Fame? (Laughter.)

MR. IDELSON: Man, oh, man. You know, I grew up loving Pete Rose. I'm that age where he was right in my sweet spot. He was the type of player I loved: got his uniform dirty, guys like him, and Brooks and Dwight Evans, and guys who really played the game hard; George Brett. But since 1921 there's been a rule posted in Major League clubhouses saying you won't gamble on the game.

And for Pete, he broke the rule and he admitted it. He said he did. Whether or not he ever earns election, he's not even eligible right now. He would have to apply for reinstatement to Major League Baseball and then be reinstated. But he broke baseball's cardinal rule which is gambling on the game. He did as a manager. I realize it was after his career ended, but as such right now-- It's unfortunate to have a Hall of Fame without Pete Rose. He is prevalent in our museum. But regardless of if he earns election or not, the accolades that he achieved are still recognized in Cooperstown.

MS. LEINWALD: Tough questions here. Have you been disappointed by the way Major League Baseball has handled the steroid issue over the years? What about the players when it comes to their use?

MR. IDELSON: I think Major League Baseball has stepped up and done a great job as of late with the steroid controversy. I mean, they have not, perhaps, the toughest I think policy in all of professional sports. So you've got to give them credit. And it takes two sides to make it work: Major League Baseball and the Players Union. And in terms of the past, I mean, the past is the past at this point. You have to look forward. And the game is getting much, much better in terms of ridding steroids from the game. It's very few and far between right now. And for ever time something comes out on steroids, baseball's that much closer to having it behind them.

MS. LEINWALD: Has it surprised you that Hall of Fame voters have been hesitant to vote for players linked to steroids recently? And do you think that that's going to change in the years to come?

MR. IDELSON: Well, in terms of the ballots, there hasn't been anyone who has tested positive that's been on the ballot yet. So those players, by and large, their careers are still going on. They're still being defined. When their careers end, there's a five-year waiting period and then they can be on the ballot for as many as 15 years. So the beauty of our system is the perspective of time. And it's an area that the writers are having a tough time grasping as all of us in terms of Hall of Fame candidacy of players. But with the perspective of time and with the rules being pretty clear, I think the tools are there for the writers to vote with their conscience and to do what they believe is right.

MS. LEINWALD: I know you mentioned the steroid disclaimer that you have in Hall, does the Hall have or do you plan any exhibit to deal with the steroids controversy and other scandals that have kept stars out of the Hall?

MR. IDELSON: Well, absolutely. I mean, I think in time you can't go through history without explaining this era. But it takes the perspective of time. I mean, when baseball integrated, the Hall of Fame didn't magically have an

exhibit on baseball integration; it took some time. Now with you walk through Cooperstown, you see very clearly and poignantly how baseball, in a lot of ways, was ahead of the curve 15 years before Martin Luther King's march baseball had integrated. So it takes a perspective of time to really understand, to have all the facts and to tell a story that everybody can relate to and understand. That's our job in terms of a museum. We won't shy away from the topic, but it's not going to be any time soon.

MS. LEINWALD: Do you think the avowed steroid users will ever be elected to the Hall of Fame and should they?

MR. IDELSON: Again, it's the \$64 million dollar question. As far as we're concerned, we're very comfortable with our rules. Our rules for election are pretty simple; they ask voters to look at a player's character, integrity, sportsmanship and the contributions to the teams for whom they played. If players are not on baseball's ineligible list, then they're eligible for election. Baseball writers take a look at the rules that we provide them with and will have to determine how they feel about the era, how they feel about players and whether or not they deserve a place in Cooperstown. Whomever they choose to elect, we will honor at the Hall of Fame.

MS. LEINWALD: Clearly, steroid use is not limited to baseball. Why don't other sports get the same scrutiny?

MR. IDELSON: Well, baseball, for a long time, has been held to a higher standard. And that's because it's part of the national pass-time, it's part of our everyday life. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I mean, there has to be some sport that's held to a higher standard and why not baseball? So because it's held to a higher standard, because there's 162 games a year plus 40 spring training games plus post-season-- I mean, baseball is always in the news, more so than other sports. And it's, I guess, more of a shock for people. The other thing is that people care about baseball records and statistics probably more so than they do in other sports. So there's that part where fans care about how records are set and it's such it affects all of us.

MS. LEINWALD: Okay. We have a few technical questions here for you. Can you please state, explain, recite the infield fly rules? (Laughter.)

MR. IDELSON: The infield fly rule, I believe, the umpire has the decision to call a fly ball within the infield an automatic out so that runners cannot advance with zero or one outs. (Audience remarks.)

MS. LEINWALD: A lot of coaches up here. Are there any prospects for uniformity regarding the designated hitter rule?

MR. IDELSON: Well, I think that's more of a question for Major League Baseball. Stan, have you heard of any of that?

___: No, I think they're very happy with two flavors of ice cream, rather than just--

MR. IDELSON: Yeah, two flavors of ice cream.

MS. LEINWALD: Okay, I was wondering if Mr. Robison might join us up here as well, save a few questions for you?

MS. ROBINSON: I'm sure Jeff got all the tough ones. You're going to throw me some soft balls, I know.

MS. LEINWALD: How are the Blue Crabs looking this year?

MS. ROBINSON: You know, we've talked about Marvin Miller and my own opinion, the three greatest names in the history of baseball: Babe Ruth, Jackie Robison and Marvin Miller as far as I'm concerned. That's what I wanted to make plain there. But anyway, I'm with a group called Opening Day Partners. We have the Atlantic Leagues in case you don't know. We have a team in Southern Maryland called The Blue Crabs, the York Revolution, Lancaster Barnstormers in Camden, New Jersey. And I'm part owners of those four teams with Opening Day Partners. But just to give you a little insight, this league really has a lot of credibility now. Long Island Ducks are in this leagues, Gary Carter's the new manager there, hall-of-famer, David LaPoint's pitching coach. York, Pennsylvania we have Von Hayes and Tommy Herr managing that team.

And in York, Pennsylvania we have Chris Hoiles and Tippy Martinez from the Orioles. And down here in Southern Maryland we have Butch Hobson and Andy Etcherbarren, a great group. And we're an independent league; we're not associated with organized baseball. We're doing wonderful. Had a sell-out down in Southern Maryland for opening day. Had 8,500 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which is a new record for our leagues. Joe Klein is our Commissioner. He has been around several general managers of several teams here, the Texas Rangers and Detroit Tigers. But anyway, I just wanted to bring you up-to-date on that.

MS. LEINWALD: Okay. What was your most memorable moment as a Major League ballplayer?

MS. ROBINSON: I think playing in my first World Series. As a youngster growing up in Little Rock, Arkansas, I never wanted to do anything in my whole life except be a professional baseball player. I kind of tagged along after my dad. He was my hero. I went to the same high school, I played on the same legion team that he played on. I dreamed of signing a professional contract, playing the minor leagues or arriving in Baltimore, winning the pennant, which we accomplished in 1966 and winning the World Series. And I think that's as good as it gets right there. I can remember saying, "Boy, if that ever happened to me, I would never care if I ever won another game." And to be a world champion, that's what it's all about.

MS. LEINWALD: Will the Orioles ever again reach the glory days of '60s, '70s and early '80s?

MS. ROBINSON: Well, I think they're on their way, I really do. I think that Peter Angelos, this is probably the first person, Andy MacPhail, that he has ever trusted, whether it be a general manager. Andy and Peter became friends when they were on the same negotiating committee when the players and owners were negotiating the basic agreement. And they became friends. And, of course, Andy's got a great record; won two world champions.

In Minnesota, he turned the Cubs around and he gave them their right way. And certainly Peter Angelos has supported everything Andy has done. And as they say, well, everything's in the pipeline. So we've got some great looking players in the minor leagues as far as I know. I go to three or four games a year. But I do follow the Orioles on television. But I think they're in the right direction, and I think they're going to win some ball games here in the next couple of years.

MS. LEINWALD: The Nationals have a very good third baseman by the name of Ryan Zimmerman. Ever now and then he'll make a good play, and the announcer will say, "That's a Brooks Robinson play." Does that bother you?

MR. ROBINSON: No, that kind of excites me if you want to know the truth. I love every minute of it. I say, I can still dive and catch them, but I can't get up anymore. That's my problem. But I will tell you one thing, Ryan Zimmerman is the nicest guy and kid -- I call him a kid -- you'll ever want to meet. I've had the pleasure of being with him several times. And this guy is some kind of player, I'll tell you. I mean, he's got a what, 28-day hitting streak right now? Yeah, I'll give it to you, if he played in New York, he'd be on the front of *Sports Illustrated* tomorrow and all the rest of the newspapers. But here in Washington, you've got a lot going on with the caps. And you're playing better now, right Stan? You're playing better now? And I get to watch a lot of their games. And I'm excited to do that.

But I really follow Ryan. And I was down at the University of Virginia about three years ago for their athletic banquet and baseball banquet. I met him, then I met him again a couple other times. But he is a super-nice kid. And I'll tell you what, he's going to be a great player. And he is just as good defensively as anyone playing the game right now. Made some errors last year, when you're young, you do things. You get up and you think you can throw him out when you really should hold the ball or something like that. But most of his errors were throwing errors I think a year or two ago. But he's matured. And he's just one weight(?) of a player, so I really like him.

MS. LEINWALD: Who gave you the nickname Human Vacuum?

MR. ROBINSON: Well, that was Lee May, played for the Cincinnati Reds in the '70 World Series. I made two or three plays off of him and threw him out. And he said, "Man, that guy's like a human vacuum cleaner down there, you know?" And then when he came over to Baltimore a couple of years later to play for us, every time I would see him, he'd say, "You know, Robinson, it's a good thing I hit those balls to you because no one in the world would ever heard of you if I hadn't." So it gives me a little humility.

MS. LEINWALD: All right. This is a question for both of you guys. Very important, what's your favorite baseball movie?

MR. ROBINSON: Oh, well you like *Bull Durham*, I know that's what you like. The one with Kevin Costner. Come on, I cried in it, *Field of Dreams*. Yeah, I absolutely cried in that movie. And I went with my brother-in-law and his wife, and they looked at me like I was crazy. But that was my favorite movie.

MR. IDELSON: I'll go with *League of Their Own*. That one is timeless, it's great. And my kids love it.

MS. LEINWALD: Okay. Well, thank you both very much. (Applause.) We are almost out of time. But before the last question, we have a couple of important matters to take care of. First of all, let me remind you and our members and future speakers, on May 14th, Sir Richard Branson, President of Virgin Atlantic, will discuss the crisis in aviation 25 years after Virgin Atlantic began at a National Press Club Speaker's Breakfast.

On May 15th, John W Rowe, Chairman and CEO of the Exxon Corporation will discuss national energy policy in a time of economic uncertainty. On May 21st, Ray LaHood, the US Transportation Secretary, will discuss his agency's involvement in President Obama's \$787 billion dollar economic

stimulus package aimed at turning around the US economy. Second, I would like to present our guests with the coveted NPC coffee mug.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

MS. LEINWALD: You're welcome. I have a couple more question for you. Okay, let's see what we've got. All right, we have two questions. So the Washington Nationals have been very good to our troops. How does the Hall of Fame support our troops?

MR. IDELSON: In our Hall of Fame gallery, we have, again, the medallions that help explain baseball's relationship with the military. And then anyone who is a retired military or active can get in for free. And we also have a program for MVets(?)

MS. LEINWALD: President Bush highlighted your sport with regular t-ball games on the South Lawn. Do you worry that baseball may get short shrift with the new administration since President Obama is known for his emphasis on hoops?

MR. IDELSON: No, I don't think so. I mean, we all know that President Obama is a White Sox fan. We know he likes Carlton Fisk and Harold Baines. And I think he's been kind of busy right now, but we have full faith in the Oval Office that baseball will be part of his resume.

MS. LEINWALD: Okay, thank you very much. (Applause.) I'd like to thank you all for coming today. . I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members, Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, JoAnn Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. Also thanks to the NPC Library for its research.

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by the National Press Club's Broadcast Operations Center. Our events are available for free download on iTunes, as well as on our website. Non-members may purchase transcripts, audio and videotapes by calling 202.662.7598 or emailing, archives@Press.org.

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Thank you very much and we are adjourned. (Gavel sounds.)

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