



Reflections of a River Rat:

Jury duty wrecked my roadtrip;
Yankees fans set a new low

The conditions last week were perfect for a baseball road trip. Schools were on spring break, which meant lacrosse reffing would be paused. The Guardians were going to be home at Progressive Field in Cleveland, a mere four hours away on Interstate 90. Then I opened the mail and my heart ached.

The jury summons hit me harder than a combination from Boom Boom Mancini. I had to call the night before each court session to learn if I had to report. What a way to kill a week.

I've been going on road trips since I started following baseball as an 8-year-old. I knew just about every player on the 1967 New York Yankees from Hoss Clarke to Joe Pepitone. Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra were retired, leading to several lean years. It didn't matter.



MacArthur Stadium opened in 1934 with a cavernous centerfield 434 feet from home plate.

The Syracuse Chiefs hosted an exhibition every summer against their parent club, the Yankees, so for a 2½-hour drive on I-81 to MacArthur Stadium, you could witness the men in pinstripes sprinting, diving and sliding across the perfectly manicured expanses. The ball seemed to fly straight and true, and spin and hang in the air interminably, defying gravity.

The Yankees weren't going to waste Mel Stottlemyre's arm in an exhibition game, instead Fred Talbot took the mound backed by marginal guys like Tom Shopay and Jerry Kenney. It didn't matter. They wore pinstripes.



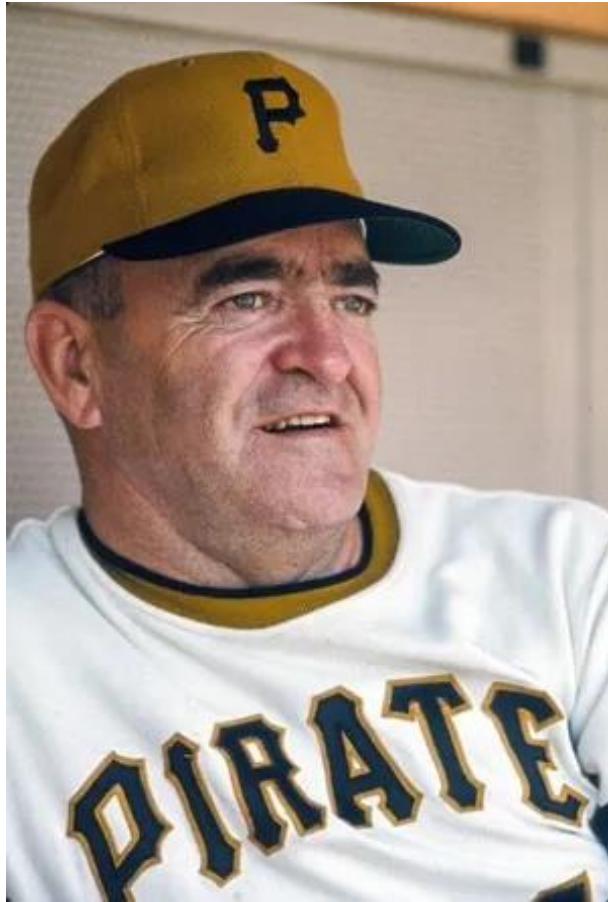
Jarry Park in Montreal, home to the Expos from 1969-76, with swimming pool beyond the right field wall. It has since been converted to a tennis facility.

When the expansion Les Expos de Montreal began play in 1969, my dad figured why drive 2½ hours to Syracuse for an exhibition when we can point the car to Jarry Park for 2½ hours and see major-league baseball.

The thrill was the same. You walked down the concourse to a green expanse interrupted only by the perfectly groomed arc of the infield dirt. You couldn't get a bad seat and the ballpark could become electric when Le Grande Orange, Rusty Staub, deposited a home run in the swimming pool beyond the

right-field bullpen. The public address announcer could make the names sing -- John Boccabella, Coco Laboy, Mudcat Grant, Donn Clendenon -- as the fans stomped on the metal plates below their seats.

My father, longtime Morristown baseball coach Fran Holleran, was relentless. We once left Morristown in a drizzle and he promised the weather would break by the time we got to the ballpark. I can remember when Pittsburgh Pirates manager Danny Murtaugh, a kindly grandfather-type, chatted up a bunch of Little



Pittsburgh Pirates manager Danny Murtaugh.

Leaguers in the right field corner of the stands, asking our positions and grades in school. Kindness never gets lost. Neither did the unrelenting showers. The game was soon called.

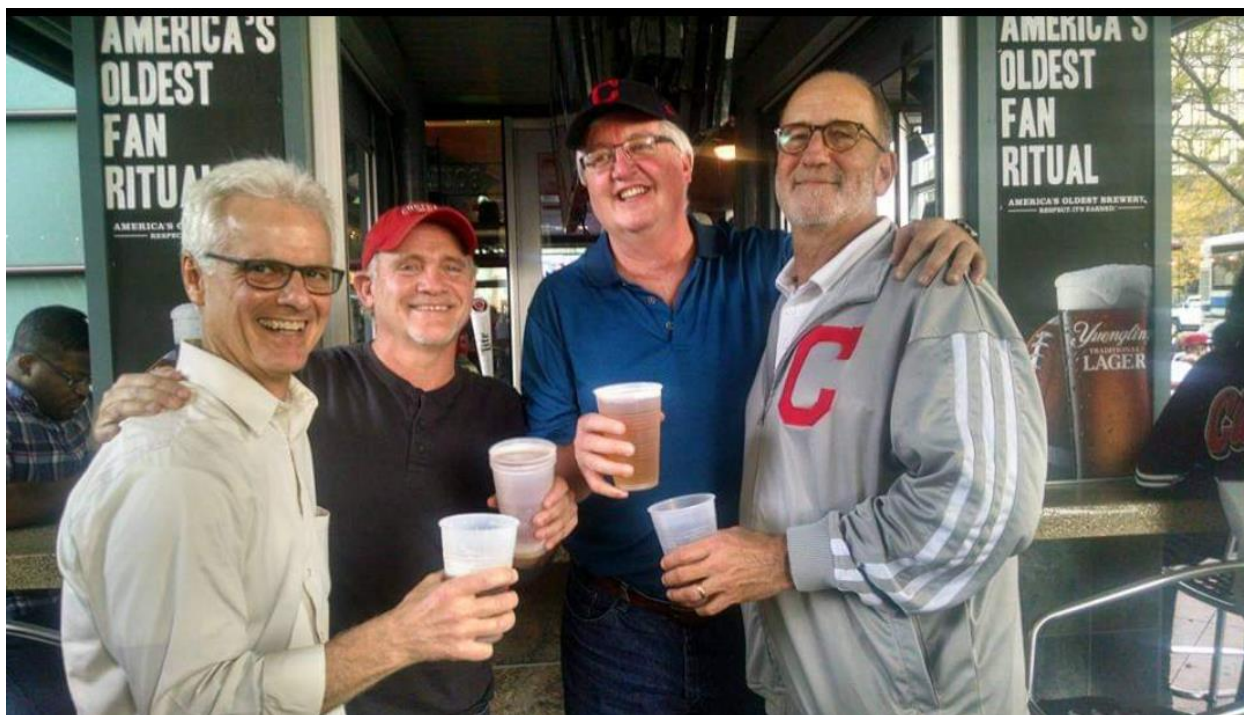
You could learn a lot on these trips, even over your father's objections. We would pester him to stop at the 1867-themed restaurant on Highway 401. One Sunday, we were waiting for our meals when a charter bus full of Argonauts fans stopped on the return trip to Toronto. They were fresh off a CFL victory over the Alouettes in Montreal when several drunks marched through the center of the dining room chanting, "We're No. 1. We're number 1!"

They were followed moments later by the inebriated fan, wearing a German-style helmet with white "A," sporting a Playboy centerfold and chanting, "She's No. 1!" My father tried to cover my eyes. He was not credited with the save.

One of the best road trips was planned for the 2016 World Series. The Indians had missed the chance to clinch their first World Series since 1948 when they blew a lead in Game 5 at Wrigley Field. The series was shifting back to Cleveland.

I phoned my old roommate and Democrat and Chronicle sports columnist Leo Roth and he returned the call two days later at midnight, just hours before we would leave. For us, this was considered advance planning.

He could easily write a column off this. We were traveling four hours and 30 years back in time to our days at the suburban News-Herald. The Chicago fans descended on Cleveland too, and were willing to pay north of \$300 to scalp a ticket. They wanted to see their Cubs win their first Series since 1908.



Thirty-five years before the 2016 World Series, Tom Breckenridge, Leo Roth, Jim Holleran and Mark Gillispie shared a four-bedroom farmhouse, dubbed the Sperry Dairy, and worked for The News-Herald in the east suburbs of Cleveland.

Tickets were too rich for our blood so we phoned our old housemates, Breck and Dizzy, for a gameday rendezvous at The Winking Lizard. We revisited all the escapades of our early 20s, several parties and one eviction that led us to the four-bedroom farmhouse we dubbed the Sperry Dairy. A few hours later, when the Indians were assured of losing, we grabbed our backpacks and hiked a mile south to the ballpark. We made instant friends among the throng outside the ballpark when we passed out iced Genesee beer from our backpacks. The Indians never mounted a rally, but the night was young. We found out how old we had become the morning after.

Cleveland's proximity makes it an easy road trip. My friend Lauren can make the four-hour drive seem like 40 minutes. She is an intense baseball fan who developed her allegiance to the Nationals when she worked in Washington as a lawyer. In Rochester, she joined the board of directors of the Triple-A Red Wings, became a high school softball umpire and runs a fantasy baseball league.

The mother of all road trips took us to Minneapolis for a Saturday night/Sunday afternoon combo between the Twins and Indians. Her wife was OK with the trip;



Lauren Frank umpires high school softball, runs a fantasy baseball league, and roots for the Twins and Nationals.

my wife was too. But we set a contingency plan in case the KissCam came around. “We’ll just hug,” she decided.

“Agreed,” I said.

During the Sunday game, the KissCam was patrolling the left-field bleachers, showing its video on the giant scoreboard, when it

fixed on a couple. He pulled her head down on his groin.

I never heard 30,000 people gasp in unison. They were revulsed. The camera immediately cut away while I wondered if she punched him out, threw away his ring, called an Uber, or all of the above.

“I can’t believe that pig!” Lauren shouted.

“Clearly, there was alcohol involved,” I said.

“That’s no excuse,” Lauren said.

“I’m not making excuses, I’m just wondering what could make a guy act that stupidly.”

I thought I had seen a lot of dumb fan behavior at ballparks, then the Yankees Bleacher Creatures showed me another despicable low on Saturday and Sunday when they mocked Steven Kwan after he was injured, threw garbage at Guardians outfielders, then taunted them. Classless.

Jim Holleran, a Morristown native, is a retired teacher and registrar for the Rochester City School District, and former sports editor of the Democrat and Chronicle. Reach him at jimholleran29@gmail.com or view past columns under “Reflections of River Rat” at <https://hollerangetsitwrite.com/blog/>