"Baseball has been called the national pastime and rightly so because it stands for the fair play, clean living and good sportsmanship which are our national heritage. That is why it has such a warm place in our hearts."

Franklin D. Roosevelt, August 5, 1936

From George Washington to George W. Bush, presidents over the years have shown their love of the game, and baseball has loved its highest-ranking fan. The documents in this packet are from the collections of the National Archives and Records Administration’s twelve presidential libraries and reflect the interest of America’s recent presidents in America’s favorite pastime.
Herbert Hoover (1929-1933): Herbert Hoover was an avid sports fan, and he strongly believed in the importance of sport as a positive influence in people’s lives. Long after he left office, the Cincinnati Reds baseball club contacted President Hoover and requested his permission to paint on the walls of Crosley Field a billboard-sized inspirational quote from the former president regarding baseball. President Hoover responded with several quotations from which the Reds could choose. *Courtesy of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, West Branch, Iowa. www.hoover.archives.gov*
May 23, 1956

Hon. Herbert Hoover
Waldorf Astoria Towers
New York, New York

Attention - Miss Bernice Miller

Dear Mr. Hoover:

Yesterday I had the pleasure of talking to a member of your staff, Miss Miller, and she advised that a request of this nature should be handled by correspondence.

It is our understanding that in an address, you made the following statement, or one similar to it -- "next to religion, baseball has the greatest moral influence on the people of our country".

Our wish is to use this statement, and your signature in script. If we are granted this privilege, it will be painted on the wall in right field between our sun deck and main grandstand at Crosley Field.

I learned from Miss Miller that you do not permit your name to be used commercially and certainly, that is not our wish. We do not advertise on our fences inside the ball park and your quotation would not be used as an endorsement of any kind. The only commercial advertising in the ball park is in each concession stand, where the advertised item is sold. We have a clock on top of our scoreboard, located in left center field. Supporting the clock is a block with "Gruen Watch Company" on it.

Across the street from our ball park, there are large billboards advertising a number of products, but this is not inside the ball park.

To the best of my knowledge, this would be an innovation in a ball park, and certainly one that adds considerable dignity to the game. Everyone in baseball is proud and delighted, when you mention the game. We are thrilled to know that you are a fan, and have such a keen interest in baseball.
We will await your decision with great anticipation.

Very truly yours,

John Murdough
Traveling Secretary
Cincinnati Baseball Club

JM:N
The Waldorf Astoria Towers
New York, New York
May 27, 1956

Dear Mr. Murdough:

I would be glad for you to use
a quotation from me of the import you
mention in your letter of May 23.

However, your quotation is not
quite correct, and I send you four statements
made by me. Take your choice.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. John Murdough
Traveling Secretary
Cincinnati Baseball Club
307 Vine Street
Cincinnati 2, Ohio

Enclosure
The greatest moral training, except for religious faith, comes from sportsmanship. And Baseball has had a greater impact on our American life than other American sports institutions.

***

The rigid volunteer rules of right and wrong in sports are second only to religious faith in moral training—and Baseball is the greatest of American sports.

***

Next to religion, sportsmanship is the greatest teacher of morals, and Baseball has given this greatest moral influence to our American way of life.

***

In the land of sportsmanship there are moral precepts second only to those of religious faith—and Baseball is in such a land.

***
June 6, 1956

Hon. Herbert Hoover
Waldorf Astoria Towers
New York, New York

Attn: Miss Bernice Miller

Dear Mr. Hoover:

Just a note to express our appreciation for your consent to use a quote from one of your talks in our ball park.

All of us were thrilled to learn that you had consented to our proposal.

Under separate cover we are sending a picture of the painting on the wall at Crosley Field.

May I again thank Miss Miller for her wonderful cooperation.

Every good wish.

Yours very truly,

John Murdough
Traveling Secretary

jmjmjc
2. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945): In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack and America's entry into World War II, Baseball Commissioner Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis grew concerned about the propriety of proceeding with the 1942 baseball season. President Roosevelt promptly responded to Judge Landis’ inquiry with what has become known as the “Green Light Letter”—giving baseball the green light to proceed and expressing the value of baseball in time of war. The signed copy of Roosevelt’s Green Light Letter received by Judge Landis now resides at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York. www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu
January 14, 1932

Dear Mr. President:

The season is approaching faster than I had expected. Conditions are now much better for Spring training camps (especially for minor league teams) than they were in previous years. However, I still feel that the time is ripe for action to be taken to ensure proper working conditions for professional baseball players.

My inquiry does not relate to the question of whether professional baseball should continue to operate. Of course, baseball should continue to operate. However, the inquiry relates to the question of whether baseball clubs are fulfilling their obligations to their employees, especially members of the organization whose interests are being represented in this correspondence.

I am happy to know that in addition to the sixteen major league teams, there are twenty minor league teams—members of leagues playing in the United States and Canada— and Western divisions, all of which are fulfilling their obligations to their players.

With great respect,

[Signature]

Washington, D.C.
January 15, 1942.

My dear Judge:—

Thank you for yours of January fourteenth. As you will, of course, realize the final decision about the baseball season must rest with you and the Baseball Club owners — so what I am going to say is solely a personal and not an official point of view.

I honestly feel that it would be best for the country to keep baseball going. There will be fewer people unemployed and everybody will work longer hours and harder than ever before.

And that means that they ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off their work even more than before.

Baseball provides a recreation which does not last over two hours or two hours and a half, and which can be got for very little cost. And, incidentally, I hope that night games can be extended because it gives an opportunity to the day shift to see a game occasionally.

As to the players themselves, I know you agree with me that individual players who are of active military or naval age should go, without question, into the services. Even if the actual quality of the teams is lowered by the greater use of older players, this will not dampen the popularity of the sport. Of course, if any individual has some particular aptitude in a trade or profession, he ought to serve the Government. That, however, is a matter which I know you can handle with complete justice.

Here is another way of looking at it — if 300 teams use 5,000 or 6,000 players, these players are a definite recreational asset to at least 20,000,000 of their fellow citizens — and that in my judgment is thoroughly worthwhile.

With every best wish,

Very sincerely yours,

Hon. Kenesaw M. Landis,
233 North Michigan Avenue,
Chicago,
Illinois.
Harry S. Truman (1945-1953): Writing from his hospital room in New York City where he was dying from cancer, the legendary George Herman “Babe” Ruth wrote to President Harry Truman in July 1948 inviting the President to attend the premiere of the motion picture The Babe Ruth Story. Pressing business in Washington kept the President from attending. The Babe died on August 16, 1948. Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Museum and Library, Independence, Missouri. www.trumanlibrary.org
Dear Babe:

I certainly appreciated very much your invitation to attend the Premiere of "The Babe Ruth Story" on July twenty-sixth. I regret very much that it will not be possible for me to be present as the Congress meets on that day.

Sincerely yours,

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Mr. Babe Ruth
Room 937 - Memorial Hospital
444 East 68th Street
New York, New York

(Gracie Herman Ruth)
4. Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961): Game 5 of the 1956 World Series between the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers was one of the all-time great games. With the help of amazing defensive plays by his teammates, Yankees pitcher Don Larsen became the first and only pitcher in major league history to throw a perfect game in the World Series by retiring all 27 Dodgers he faced. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, no stranger himself to great accomplishment against great odds, took note of Larsen’s achievement and sent him a congratulatory letter, to which Larsen humbly replied. Courtesy of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas. www.eisenhower.archives.gov
Hon. Dwight D. Eisenhower  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.  

Dear Mr. President:

I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciated your recent letter. And, if anyone was to ask me now what is the greatest thrill I've ever experienced, I'd certainly find it difficult trying to decide between the no-hitter and the congratulatory note I received from you.

My only regret is that I didn't have the privilege of pitching my perfect game with you on hand. I guess that really would have topped everything!

My deepest thanks again and warmest wishes that you and your family enjoy continued good health and a long and successful stay in the White House.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Most sincerely,

Don Larsen
5. John F. Kennedy (1961-1963): Jackie Robinson advanced the cause of civil rights for African-Americans in 1947 when he broke Major League Baseball’s color barrier, leading to the ultimate integration of America’s pastime. Over his incredible career, Robinson’s enormous talent led the Brooklyn Dodgers to six pennants and one World Series Championship. Robinson’s achievements were recognized in 1962 when he was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility. At the urging of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President John F. Kennedy sent a greeting to Robinson and the attendees of the great player’s Hall of Fame dinner. *Courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston, Massachusetts.* www.jfklibrary.org
Chairman
Jackie Robinson Testimonial Dinner
Waldorf-Astoria Hotel
New York, New York

I am delighted to join with all who honor Jackie Robinson tonight.

He has demonstrated in his brilliant athletic career that man's courage,
talent and perseverance can overcome the forces of intolerance. His
election to baseball's Hall of Fame was a great tribute, richly deserved.

The vigor and fierce competitive spirit that characterized his performance
as an athlete are still evident in his efforts in the great battle to achieve
equality of opportunity for all people.

With all best wishes,

John F. Kennedy
6. **Lyndon Baines Johnson (1963-1969):** Shortly after retiring following 22 seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals, baseball great Stan "The Man" Musial was asked by President Lyndon B. Johnson to serve as his Special Consultant to the President’s Council on Physical Fitness. Musial served with distinction in this capacity until January 1967 when he was named the Cardinals’ General Manager. Musial was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1969. *Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, Austin, Texas. [www.lbjlib.utexas.edu](http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu)*
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 24, 1967

Dear Mr. President:

It is with the deepest regret that I submit to you my resignation as Special Consultant to the President's Council on Physical Fitness.

I have had the honor of serving by your appointment for the past three years. They have been among the most exciting and important years of my life. Working to improve the physical health of our nation - and particularly with so many young people has been most rewarding.

We have received the highest degree of cooperation from your staff and from every department of the Government with whom we have worked. The leaders of physical fitness programs in schools and colleges and institutions all over the country have given our programs full support. The Advertising Council and many others have aided materially in bringing the need for physical fitness to millions of our citizens.

To all of these we owe a deep debt of appreciation. Without their support we could not have succeeded.

To you, Mr. President, I extend the thanks of all those who have benefited from this program. I am sure the effects will be felt for generations ahead. I have been honored by your appointment and by the opportunity you have given me to have been of service.

I wish for you the very best of health and success.

Cordially,

Stan Musial

Consultant to the President on Physical Fitness

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.
January 25, 1967

Dear Stan:

Three years is a short time in the life of a nation. Yet the three you have served as Special Consultant to the President's Council on Physical Fitness have been years of large and lasting influence for the American future.

So I accept your resignation, as tendered, with real reluctance.

Your leadership has brought fresh strength and spirit to our national life. For the first time, we have truly national priorities and programs directed to higher standards of physical fitness.

Their impact - your impact in vital measure - is evident in all corners of our life and land. In Federal initiatives, State laws, partnership with private groups, in schools and colleges, neighborhoods and homes.

And that impact is building. The quality of our lives, the tone and muscle of our society, will build on these foundations. You should find your greatest satisfaction in that, as I do.

We will grow fitter to confront the tests of our years. We will not grow older or weaker before them. You have given us our youth and health, and taught us to husband their strength.

In turn, I give you my pride and gratitude. America gives you its heart. We will all be cheering for a new chapter of achievement in your life.

Sincerely,

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Honorable Stan Musial
Special Consultant to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Resignation effective COB 1/25/67 for Mrs. Robb.

LBJ:CMM:ny

Original Annulled to: 65 Tram Drive

Copy of exchange sent to Mrs. Robb 1/5/67
7. Richard M. Nixon (1969-1974): In early 1973, the United States and North Vietnam reached an agreement that provided for the return of American prisoners of war. In February and early March of that year, Operation Homecoming saw the return to American soil of hundreds of POWs. As part of its opening day ceremonies, the California Angels baseball club planned to include several POWs and their families, and the club’s chairman, cowboy crooner Gene Autry, invited President Richard Nixon to participate. The President accepted the invitation, and his staff prepared a Background Memorandum for the event. Courtesy of the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NARA, College Park, Maryland. www.nixon.archives.gov

March 21, 1973

My dear Mr. President:

The California Angels open their American League season at Anaheim Stadium on Friday, April 6, with Kansas City.

Bob Reynolds, Harry Dalton and I would love to have you attend if your schedule permits. The Commissioner, Bowie Kuhn, will be here and we are also inviting many of the POW’s who have returned home to be our guests.

Knowing you are a baseball fan, I think you would enjoy it.

With warmest personal regards,

Gene Autry

The Honorable Richard M. Nixon
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

BASEBALL SEASON OPENER
BETWEEN CALIFORNIA ANGELS AND KANSAS CITY ROYALS
April 6, 1973
7:10 P.M.

Anaheim, California

From: Tom Hart

BACKGROUND:

Tonight's game between the California Angels and Kansas City Royals is the season opener for both Clubs. The Major League opener was played in Cincinnati yesterday with the San Francisco Giants defeating the Reds by a score of 4 to 1.

Commissioner Bowie Kuhn will host you tonight and will ask you to hand the first ball to POW returnee Air Force Major David Luna who in turn will throw out the first ball. Major Luna pitched a no-hit game for Orange High School in 1958. He and approximately ten other Southern California POWs, their families and relatives, and a group of MIA families are guests at this game and will be seated together behind home plate.

Prior to your arrival there will be a series of pre-game activities including a marching youth band, welcomes by Gene Autry and Bowie Kuhn, and introduction of Angels and Royals players and coaches.

Additional background is attached.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

7:10 p.m. Depart residence via motorcade en route Anaheim Stadium, Anaheim, California. John Ehrlichman will ride with you.

(Driving Time: 40 minutes)

SUGGESTED AD-LIBS FOR BASEBALL PASS PRESENTATION -- FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 1975

I played football in college but I also had a great interest in baseball.

There's something about a sport where you don't have to wear a helmet

that appeals to me.

I sometimes wonder if I wouldn't have been better off playing baseball

instead of football. The season would have been longer --- but I think the

doctor bills would have been shorter.

There are a lot of similarities between baseball and politics. One

of the worst things you can hear in baseball is: "You're out!" Same

thing in politics!.....Politicians were saying WAIT TILL NEXT YEAR

long before baseball fans ever thought of it!

Thank you for this gold pass to all the games and the honor of being

named your designated sitter for 1975

# # #
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

RECOMMENDED TELEPHONE CALL

TO: SPARKY ANDERSON
Manager
Cincinnati Reds

RECOMMENDED BY:
DONALD RUMSFELD

PURPOSE: To congratulate Sparky Anderson and the Cincinnati Reds for winning the 1975 World Series.

TALKING POINTS: I'm sorry I wasn't able to see all seven games you played against the Boston Red Sox; however, I was able to see last night's game.

I want to congratulate you and all your players for the professionalism you exhibited in winning the Series. It's always nice to see a team that has had such a long dry spell win (the Reds last won in 1940).

DATE: October 23, 1975

ACTION: Called Thursday P.M.
including Johnny Bench, Joe Morgan
or Pete Rose.
9. **Jimmy Carter (1977-1981):** In response to a question at his February 9, 1979 press conference about whether he supported the effort of some states to legalize gambling, President Jimmy Carter made the following statement: “When I was Governor, I opposed any form of legalized gambling, and I still have the same conviction that it's not well-advised... I wouldn't want to sponsor a constitutional amendment giving the Federal Government the authority to prohibit it, but my own personal opinion is that gambling is not good.” Carter's comments reached Baseball Commissioner Bowie K. Kuhn, who wrote to the President expressing approval. *Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum.*

[www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov)
March 15, 1979

Dear Commissioner Kuhn:

On behalf of President Carter, thank you for your recent letter supporting his statement against legalized gambling. The President appreciates your thoughtfulness in writing and sends you his best wishes.

Sincerely,

Susan S. Clough
Personal Assistant/Secretary to the President

Mr. Bowie K. Kuhn
Commissioner of Baseball
75 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10019

SSC/JMC/pt--
10. Ronald Reagan (1981-1989): During the Great Depression, Ronald Reagan launched his radio broadcasting career calling Chicago Cubs and White Sox games off of ticker tape reports for a radio station in Des Moines, Iowa. Reagan would later portray baseball players in the movies. On March 27, 1981, just three weeks after his First Inauguration, President Reagan hosted a luncheon for the Baseball Hall of Fame Members in the State Dining Room of the White House. During his remarks to the assembled baseball legends, the President recounted stories from his early days in broadcasting and film. Courtesy of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California. www.reagan.utexas.edu
and the ball came by on a fast play and the umpire bellows — bellowed out, "Strike one." And Metrowich lowered the bat and he says, "Gee, that was no strike." (Laughter.) The picture wasn't a comedy so we couldn't leave it in. But you know, I've always been sorry about one thing. Alex is in the Hall of Fame and deservedly so. Everyone knows that great 1926 World Series. He had won two games, received the greatest ovation anyone has ever received and then was called on in the 7th inning with the bases loaded, no one out, and one of the most dangerous hitters in baseball at the plate. And he came in and saved the game.

The tragedy that I've always regretted is that the studio was unwilling to reveal in the picture, was afraid to reveal what I think was the best kept secret in sports. A bad habit of Alex's was widely heralded and took something away from his luster. But they wouldn't let use use the actual word of what was behind, maybe his bad habit. Alex was an epileptic. And when he was arrested and picked up for being drunk in a gutter as he once was, he wasn't at all. But he would rather take that than admit to the disease that plagued him all his life. But he also, early in his baseball career, was hit in the head going from first base down to second, on a throw from second, they caught him right in the head and he was out of baseball for a while and they didn't know whether forever because he had double vision. And he kept experimenting, trying to find out if there wasn't some way that he could pitch. And he went to a minor league club and asked for a try-out and the manager got up at the plate and said, "Well, go out on the mound and throw me a few." And Alex broke three of his ribs on the first pitch. (Laughter.) His experiment had been that if he thought he closed one eye, he'd only -- (laughter) -- and the friend that was with him when they were thrown out of the ballpark said, "What happened?" And he said, "I closed the wrong eye." (Laughter.)

But there are men in this room that were playing when I was broadcasting and I promised to say something here to a great Cub fan that we have at the table that would make him feel good. I was broadcasting the Cubs when the only mathematical possibility, and Billy Herman will remember this very well, that the Cubs had of winning the pennant was to win the last 21 games of the season. And they did. And I was so imbued with baseball by that time that I know you're not supposed to talk about a no-hitter while it's going on because you'll jinx him. So there I was, a broadcaster, and never mentioned once in the 21 games, and I was getting as up-tight as they were, and never mentioned the fact that they were at 16, they were at 17, and that they hadn't lost a game because I was afraid I'd jinx them. But anyway, they did it and it's still in the record books. What isn't in the record books is Billy Jurges staying at the plate I think the longest of any ballplayer in the history of the game. I was doing the games by telegraphic report and the fellow on the other side of a window with a little slit underneath, the headphones on, getting the dot and dash Morse Code from the ballpark would type out the play and paper would come through to me -- it would say, "S1C." Well, you're not going to sell any Wheaties yelling S1C. (Laughter.) So I'd say, "And so-and-so comes out the wind-up, here's the pitch. And it's a called strike breaking over the outside corner to so-and-so who'd rather have a ball some place else and so forth and bagged out there."

Well, I saw him start to type and I

MORE
tight and I started -- Dizzy Dean was on the mound and I started the ball on the way to the plate and in the wind-up and he, Curly, the fellow on the other side was shaking his head and I thought just maybe it was a miraculous play or something, but when the slip came through it said, "The wire's gone dead." Well, I had the ball on the way to the plate. (Laughter.) And I figured real quick, I could say we'll tell them what had happened and then play transcribed music, but in those days there were at least seven or eight other fellows that were doing the same ball game. I didn't want to lose the audience. So I thought real quick, "There's one thing that doesn't get in the score book," so I had Billy foul one off. And I looked at Curly and Curly just went like this, so I had him foul another one. And I had him foul one back at third base and described the fight between the two kids that were trying to get the ball. (Laughter.) Then I had him foul one that just missed being a home run, about a foot and a half. And I did set a world record for successive fouls or for someone standing there except that no one keeps records of that kind and I was beginning to sweat when Curly sat up straight and started typing, he was nodding his head, "Yes." And the slip came through the window and I could hardly talk for laughing because it said, "Jurges popped out on the first ball pitch." (Laughter.)

But those were wonderful days, not only playing the part, but some of you here, I think, will -- I'm going to tell another story here that has been confirmed for me by Waite Hoyt. Those of you who played when the Dodgers were in Brooklyn, know that Brooklynees has a tendency to refer to someone by the name of Earl as "Oll." But if they want a quart of oil in the car, they say, "Give me a quart of earl." And Wade was sliding into second and he twisted his ankle and instead of getting up there, he was lying there and there was a deep hush over the whole ballpark and then a Brooklyn voice was heard above all that silence and said, "Gee, hurt his Hoyt." (Laughter.)

But, I can't take any more time doing this or we'd be here all day. They tell me that I'm supposed to go out there in front of the door to the Blue Room and because I haven't been able to say hello to all of you in here and, as I say, there are many of you that were playing when I broadcast in those telegraphic report games and not only recreated but as I just told you, now and then created some of the ball game. But I understand that we're going to have a chance outside here -- kind of a line where I can say hello and good-bye at the same time to each one of you.

And now I'm going to present -- no, the Commissioner -- there's something here that I think should be said. Commissioner, come on up here. (Applause.)

COMMISSIONER KUHN: Okay, fine. I just wanted to take a moment on behalf of all of us gathered here together to thank the President for his great kindness in having us all here today. I'm going to borrow a line from the man I talked to yesterday who is sitting here in the room, Mr. President, Bob Howsam. Bob and I were talking. I said, "I'll see you there tomorrow, won't I?" And Bob's a member of our Executive Council sitting over here and he said, "Commissioner, I will never be so proud or so old that I won't be thrilled to set foot in the White House and say hello to the President of the United States." And I think on behalf of us all, I can say we're very thrilled to be here, to be with you, to share with you some anecdotes about the game of baseball.

MORE
I want to just do one little thing that I found. I want to say to the President on behalf of baseball that I think we have contributed mightily to the President's situation here in Washington. Because he was a Cubs fans, as you can tell, and I've got an article I found in the Chicago Tribune which plainly indicates that baseball has prepared him for his career here. It says, "For four years, Ronald Reagan broadcasted games of the Cubs and in the process became that rarest of nature's nobleman," Dave Broder, "a Cub fan. Nothing before or since those four years has prepared him more fully to face with fortitude the travails of the Oval Office. As a Cub fan, he learned that virtue will not necessarily prevail over chicanery, that swift failure follows closely on the heels of even the most modest success, that the world mocks those who are pure in heart, but slow of foot. But --" and here's the good news, Mr. President, "but that the bitterest disappointment will soon yield to the hope and promise of a new season." (Applause.)

We thank you from the bottoms of our heart for your kindness and generosity here today. (Applause.)

MR. STACK: I'm Ed Stack, the President of the Baseball Hall of Fame and I have a couple presentations I'd like to make. Before the luncheon, the President greeted the Commissioner and myself in the Oval Office and was very gracious to sign our historic Presidential baseball which we have on display at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. He added his signature to the baseballs that have been signed by all of the Presidents since William Howard Taft. And tomorrow morning, it will be on display in Cooperstown for the millions of visitors to see when they come through the shrine.

Also, we presented the President with a lifetime gold pass to the Baseball Hall of Fame and we hope that he will use it many times in the future.

I'd like to ask the President to accept from us a couple gifts. The first gift that we have to present is something that Billy Martin sent from Oakland. Billy heard about the luncheon and asked that I present this to the Commissioner -- to the President and if he could open it and show the audience, I think he'll enjoy it.

(The President opens present.)

THE PRESIDENT: Hey, look, Ma. I made the team.

(Laughter.) I hope he hasn't got this too big. (Laughter.) A little big. (Applause.)

Well, I thank him very much. I thank all of you.

MR. STACK: The Veterans' Committee of the Hall of Fame met recently in Tampa, Florida to elect new members to the Hall of Fame: Johnny Mize, who's in the room today, was elected just a couple weeks ago. At the meeting, the Veterans' Committee wrestled with other candidates, the many candidates to the Hall of Fame. President Reagan's name came up because we all knew that he was a baseball player in the movie Grover Cleveland Alexander. But he didn't make it on this go around. So, the Veterans' Committee asked me to arrange for the Hall of Fame to present to the President today a remembrance from the Hall of Fame.

MORE
It's Grover Cleveland Alexander. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Hey.

COMMISSIONER KUHN: And on the back we have an inscription of what it's all about.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I'm -- believe me, I'm delighted to have this. This is just wonderful. I never had more fun or enjoyed anything more in my life than when we were making that picture. And I remember Nancy and I -- we were engaged and waiting for the picture to end to get married and she came out on a set one day and I said, "How would you like to have a baseball autograph by all these fellows that are -- all these ball players?" And, oh, she thought that would be great. And I started out, and I looked back and there were tears in her eyes and she was standing there. And I said, "What?" And she said, "Can't I go get them?" (Laughter.)

Well, I'm more pleased -- delighted to have this. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER KUHN: I'd like to just make one announcement. The Baseball Hall of Famers who are here, after the receiving line, if you could remain for a minute we will have a group photograph. I'm pleased to announce that this is the largest assembled group of Hall of Famers that have ever been in one place together at any time. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: See you all outside.

END 1:16 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release July 9, 1991

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT DURING CEREMONY HONORING JOE DIMAGGIO AND TED WILLIAMS
The Rose Garden

2:04 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Welcome to the Rose Garden. And may I salute, first of all, the Members of Congress that are here today. One of them, former big leaguer, Jim Bunning, now a Congressman who you may know. And probably you hit them over the fence off this guy. But, nevertheless -- (laughter) -- welcome, all you Fellows. And two senators here and, of course, our Commissioner, Fay Vincent, and especially to Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams.

And before I get started I want to single out the LSU Tigers championship baseball team. We're proud of them. And I'm sorry that your coach couldn't be up here, Skip Bertman, because of surgery. But I just can't tell you how welcome you are here in the Rose Garden. I hope you'll have a good tour around Washington, D.C. (Laughter.)

Now, Sandra Bertman is here somewhere. Right there.

Welcome, Sandra.

Well, this year that ball club -- I don't know if you all know this -- won 55 games to tie a university record. And they also played in their fifth College World Series in the last six years. So they're dominating college baseball. And it's most appropriate that we have so many members of the Louisiana congressional delegation here to honor them.

Let me just ask the team to stand up so we can at least identify you guys. (Applause.) Welcome -- welcome, welcome.

And now to the other honored guests -- Number 5 and Number 9. Looking at these two greats -- standing next to them -- I have a confession. I didn't think that I'd get to meet royalty so soon after the Queen's visit. But, nevertheless, here they are.

I don't want to reminisce too much, but I was 17 years old during their famous 1941 season -- fifty years ago. And like many American kids in those days and today, I followed those box scores closely; watched the magnificent season unfurl. In those days I was, Joe, a Red Sox fan; and my brother though, a Yankee fan. And fifty years later, that '41 season just remains a season of dreams.

Half a century ago, with much of the world already at war, baseball staged one of its greatest seasons. Brooklyn won its first pennant in 21 years and clashed with its cross-town rival, the Yankees, in a memorable World Series. The Yankees took the series, but our guests, in their own ways, really carried the entire season.

Who, even now, does not marvel at the Splendid Splinter and the Yankee Clipper? These genuine heroes thrilled Americans with real deeds. Both on the scene larger than life, on the baseball fields and then onto the battlefields. And both men put off their baseball careers to serve their countries.

Their service deprived them -- I think every baseball lover will tell you -- of even greater statistics, but also enhanced their greatness in the eyes of their countrymen. Today, as we
remember them, we honor them.

Next week, we'll witness the 50th anniversary of what many consider baseball's greatest feat, Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak. No one has gotten really close to that before or since.

In a song of the era, "Joe, Joe DiMaggio, we want you on our side." Well, I think everybody felt that way then and now -- and this entire nation did. That's for sure. Decades later, he was named baseball's Greatest Living Ballplayer.

Like Joe, today's other guest displayed a special kind of magnetism on the baseball diamond. Ted Williams, people will tell you, has many sides. He's an ardent conservationist, an avid fisherman, a pilot who served in both World War II and Korea. And I'm going to ask him to help me with my press relations. Do you remember how all that used to work out there in baseball? But I can learn from him. He told it as it was.

But he is also, perhaps, the greatest hitter in baseball history. Fifty years ago, he did what no one has done since -- he eclipsed .400 in the regular season. Most of you know how he finished off that campaign -- entering a season doubleheader. Ending the season there was this double-header. Ted was hitting .3995, statistical equivalent of .400 -- of an even 400. And to protect that average, his manager wanted him to sit it out. He refused. He went six-for-eight, and he finished at .406. That kind of courage and determination, frankly, made him one of our all-time greats.

Joe DiMaggio won the honors as the Most Valuable Player in '41. He batted .325 in his career, and amazingly, retired with almost as many home runs as strikeouts. And, of course, throughout it all he displayed his famous grace and modesty that set such a great example for our country.

Ted won six batting titles. And in 1960, at 42, he retired as only a deity could. He stroked a home run -- number 521 -- in his final at bat.

We'll think of these men tonight as we watch the 62nd All-Star Game in Toronto, Canada -- and we'll remember, too. We'll remember how Joe played in 11 All-Star Games. We'll recall how 50 years ago this month, Ted gave the Mid-Summer Classic one of its most dramatic moments -- a three-run, ninth-inning wallop in Detroit that gave the American League a 7-5 victory.

As we leave for Toronto, just in a little bit, let me speak for the old guys here: "May God bless these heroes of our youth." Again, my congratulations to LSU, the heroes of tomorrow in the pro leagues, I'm sure. We welcome you here. We welcome you for what you stand for as the NCAA Champions over these past years. And we're very grateful to have you here.

And so let me leave you with no further ado before embarrassing Ted and Joe to say a word, if they will -- play ball. It's all yours, Ted. (Applause.)

MR. WILLIAMS: I've always realized what a lucky guy I've been in my life. I was born in America. I was a marine and served my country, and I'm very, very proud of that. I got to play baseball and had a chance to hit. I owe so very, very much to this game that I love so much. I want to thank you, Mr. President. I think you're doing a tremendous job. And I want you to know you're looking at one of the greatest supporters you'll ever have. Thank you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Joe, you have the last word --

MR. DIMAGGIO: Thank you, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen. I'm honored. Thank you so much. And to you LSU players out there, congratulations on your championship. I know the feeling. I've been in one and two myself. It's nice to be here with you. And
thank you again.  (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: And now may I ask Major Bonwit to read the citations, please.

(Reading of the citations.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for coming to the White House.

END 2:09 P.M. EDT
12. William Jefferson Clinton (1993-2001): The 1994 players strike forced the cancellation of that year’s World Series, the first time in nearly 100 years that baseball had no champion. Although shortened by the ongoing strike the next spring, the 1995 season came to its culmination in a World Series between the Atlanta Braves and the Cleveland Indians. Before Game 1, President Bill Clinton used the occasion of his Saturday Weekly Radio Address to welcome back the Fall Classic and to express to the American people the value of baseball and its lessons of unity and tolerance. Courtesy of the William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas. [www.clintonlibrary.gov](http://www.clintonlibrary.gov)
where you go in America, sooner or later there will be a patch of
green, a path of dirt, and a home plate.

When I was growing up in Arkansas, baseball
connected me to the rest of America. My team was the St. Louis
Cardinals, the closest team to my home state. They were the ones
we got on the radio. And I spent a lot of hot summer nights
listening to the heroics of Stan Musial come over my transistor,
like thousands of other young kids all over America.

Baseball also teaches us tolerance. It teaches us
to play as hard as we can and still be friends when the game’s
over; to respect our differences, and to be able to lose with
dignity as well as win with joy -- but real tolerance for
differences. I mean, after all, my wife was raised in Chicago as
a Cubs fan, and she married me even though I’d grown up rooting
for the Cardinals. And everybody in the Midwest knows that when
Cubs fans and Cardinal fans can sit down together, that’s real
tolerance.

If you watch one of the 178,000 Little League teams
in this country, you also will see real community in America.
Two and a half million of our children get together to play this
sport, boys and girls. And that’s not counting everyone who
supports the teams and shows up for the games and practices and
bake sales. Communities large and small grow up around baseball
-- kids playing a pick-up game until it’s too dark to see; folks
going together for softball after work; families walking
together to see a home game at their local ball park.

This has been a wonderful baseball season. When
it’s over, and the owners and players sit down to resolve their
labor dispute, I hope they’ll remember the spirit of the season,
the spirit we all feel right now, and use it to come together to
build a lasting agreement. America doesn’t need to lose baseball
in a squabble. America needs to keep baseball.

During World War II, there was a debate about
whether baseball should continue while so many of our young
Americans were fighting for freedom around the world. President
Roosevelt knew we should play ball. He wrote, "It would be best
for the country to keep baseball going. Everybody will work
longer hours and harder than ever before. And that means they
ought to have a chance for taking their minds off their work even
more than before."

Well, we still need baseball. We know we have many
important challenges facing us as a nation, as we prepare for the
21st century. We know that we’re having important debates in
Washington and real differences. But tonight, I just hope
Americans will be able to take their minds off all that and their
own work for a moment. I hope they’ll be able to wonder instead
at the sight of a home run, a catch at the wall, the snap of the
ball in the back of a mitt. Soon these sights and sounds will
become a new part of our shared national memory of baseball.

Tonight, fans of the Cleveland Indians and the
Atlanta Braves will watch with special interest. But all of us
Americans have reason to smile, for baseball is back.

Thanks for listening, and play ball.