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An interview with:

DICK ENBERG

THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, again this morning the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum has announced that Dick Enberg has been named the 2015 Forbes C. Frick award winner for broadcasting excellence. Dick is the 39th winner of the Frick Award in its history. He'll be recognized as part of Hall of Fame Weekend 2015, with the awards presentation on Saturday, July 25th, at Doubleday Field, and Hall of Fame induction ceremony on Sunday July 26th in Cooperstown.

He is the top vote getter of a ten-name ballot that was advanced to the Frick Award Committee, and we are so honored in Cooperstown to welcome him to the Hall of Fame family. Since we happen to be in his hometown, he's gracious enough to be here with us today.

We'll take some of your questions. Ladies and gentlemen, the 2014 Forbes C. Frick award winner, Dick Enberg.

DICK ENBERG: Thank you. Now it's official. You can't change your mind. The final ten, when you consider the other nine candidates, the honor and the privilege of being named to this prestigious award is truly overwhelming.

When I received the call about 8:30 this morning from Jeff, it took me to my knees. Baseball is part of my DNA. I have a picture here as a 1-year-old where my dad teathed me on a baseball bat, and my grandfather owned a little grocery store. When I was four years old, he'd prompt me with baseball trivia. And if I could repeat it later, I'd go into the grocery store and he'd give me some Superman bubble game.

I dreamed about playing right field for the Tigers. I was 18, when they signed Al Kaline, and he took my job. Baseball is, I think, for everyone in this room that has loved the game, is family, and

this award takes me all the way back to my youth and my dreams as my high school friends and college friends -- I never made a JV baseball team in college -- said, 'Enberg, you always thought you were a good player, but you only talked a good game.' So it worked out okay.

It takes you back to the men that taught you how to broadcast the game. Even though you didn't know that that would be your role someday. The national announcers as a kid were Red Barber and Mel Allen, and I grew up with Van Patrick being the voice of the Tigers and then the great Ernie Harwell. And living in Los Angeles, when I took the job with the Angels, it was Vin Scully and our own Jerry Coleman -- who received the Ford C. Frick award. And so did all the great baseball stars, including my hero, Ted Williams. Being able to rub shoulders in a booth with Don Drysdale and Tony Gwynn, Mark Grant here with the Padres, and those I've been able to interview and know; other than the birth of my six children, this is one of the greatest days of my life.

Q. Dick, congratulations. Your signature has been "Oh, my!" Did "Oh, my!" come to your mind when you got the phone call this morning?

DICK ENBERG: It was certainly an 'Oh, my!' moment. 'Oh, my!' came from my mother who used to say it often, usually in dismay. It's something that I had done or encountered. A nice Midwestern term. It's a term of acknowledgment. You go to the marketplace in the Midwest and folks will be talking, 'Did you hear about the Jones boy? Oh, my; is that right? And how about the game on Saturday? Oh, my.' So it's been a good friend of mine that I've used when I can't think of anything else to say, and certainly this morning, as my wife said, I was blubbing too much to really verbalize an 'Oh, my!' but this is that kind of day.

Q. You come from the era of the big personality broadcasters. Do you think there is a general lack of the big personalities in baseball broadcasting now? Is it possible it's a

product of what marketing departments want in the game?

DICK ENBERG: Well, I think it was more important when baseball was our companion in radio. Radio allows us to use our imaginations. Television gives you the punch line immediately. So as you go back 50 years, that baseball announcer in your hometown was your close friend. He was in your house or in your garage or in your car more than anyone else. So it had more impact. You associated your team with the announcer who called the games of your team.

Harry Heilmann was the announcer when I was 12 years old in Detroit, and he would recreate games on Western Union of the Pantages Theater in downtown Detroit. That was a real treat. Dad took me down to see Harry Heilmann in this little booth, called the game off Western Union.

So, yes, it was much more powerful than it is today. And it's also diluted today. There is so much more of baseball, whether it's your local telecast or your national telecast or your national news, your cable coverage and all the rest, this isn't an answer to your question. But it was asked of me earlier. Baseball is the most demanding and most compelling, and most intimate game of all the games. In part because counting spring training, you're doing 200 games, 200 exposures. And because of the pace of the game, there are times when the pitcher doesn't throw the ball, and the batter doesn't want to get into the box, and the game isn't very interesting, and you have to call upon humor or history or other elements that, for which you've prepared, all of which makes it a more intimate experience between you and your audience. If baseball on radio is by far the toughest test of any professional sportscaster of any sport.

So if you can do it, and this is my answer, if you want to know who the best broadcasters are in sports, go to radio and listen to those that do baseball well on radio. If you can broadcast on radio a baseball game well, then you can call any other sport well. I could teach you to do well in any other sport.

Q. Your eyes look a little red and you mentioned you were blubbering. How emotional was this for you?

DICK ENBERG: Don't get me started. People have accused me of crying at a red hat. But we go to movies, and I'll start shaking and getting teary eyed. My wife with her tough Polish

background will give me an elbow in the ribs and say, 'Come on, get it together here.'

I'll be 80 years old next January, in a couple of weeks. For 80 years I've loved this game as far back as I can remember, being teathed on a baseball bat. To have this as a culmination of my professional life and my love for a sport, it's too good to be true, especially in light of those who are so qualified to earn this Ford C. Frick award. Really, to make the final ten, I was very excited. I mean, that was a wonderful victory and a privilege to be on that same list with those other gentlemen. You think about Ralph Kiner, and Joe Nuxall, and the others that how does it get any better than this? I hope at some commendation for not wanting to get in the way of the game, but allowing me to be a docent, if you will in my repertoires, to make if somebody tuned in, they didn't tune in to hear me in any sport, much less baseball, but they hoped when they heard my voice that they'd get an honest, well prepared, passionate approach to the game, and that's always been my goal. In a way I accept this honor today as saying, 'Hey, Enberg, you hit a Grand Slam.'

Q. I'll always think of you with the Angels and associate you with the Angels, pardon the Padres. How much of an influence was Gene Autry on your life?

DICK ENBERG: Mr. Autry was like a second father. He loved the game dearly. He was in the clubhouse almost every game and he'd go from cubical to cubical, not only in the Angel clubhouse but the opposing clubhouse. He kept score even when he really couldn't see. He would sit up there at 90 years of age and have his score book out and have somebody nearby. He'd hear the sounds of a play, and he could pretty much guess if it was an out or a hit. He would say 'It's 6-3, Cowboy,' and he'd write in 6-3.

Maybe the most difficult time of my life is when I went through a divorce while I was an Angel announcer. During the process, a couple months into the season, I was doing games and I'd say that is the story from Anaheim Stadium and good night everyone. We'd be walking out of the booth and wouldn't remember anything I've said. My mind was one place and I was trying to describe and do my work in another.

So I finally went in to see Mr. Autry to apologize for my effort. I went in to see him and I

said I'm going through this divorce process, and I know I'm not at the top of my game and I want to apologize, and I hope you'll be patient with me. I'm going to be better. I'm going to get it back together again. But I hope you'll stay with me. And Gene in his own way said, 'Well, Dick, I was going to have you come into my office because I was going to tell you that knowing you're going through a divorce you're doing a hell of a job.' And that was Mr. Autry.

Q. I want to know what you feel the difference is between calling a game locally where the viewers get to know you over the course of the season and years versus doing one nationally.

DICK ENBERG: That's an excellent question. It was one of the tests when I left the network to take the Padres job five seasons ago. After doing a couple of games, I remembered Matt Kemp, it was a game with the Dodgers. And Kemp in the late innings made a diving catch racing into shallow left centerfield, backhanded the ball in the 8th, 9th inning that could have won the game for the Padres, but with his defensive play won it for the Dodgers. I naturally blurted out my training as a network announcer is right down the middle, no bias. You just want the game to be good. If it's an upset game, you hope the team behind catches up to make it a more interesting game. I blurted out one of my 'Oh, mys' on a Kemp catch.

I was called into the office of management a couple days later and they said we're getting some phone calls from Padres fans that you're a little too friendly for the opposing team. What do you mean? He said, 'Well, they brought up that as an example.' But he said that was a great catch and deserved that. He said, 'Well, it would be nice if you could use those Oh, mys on the Padres team and call that a bit different way. If it's a home run call is touch 'em all," use that for the Padres home runs, but you don't have to be quite so excited for the opposition.' Kind of took me aback because that isn't how you're trained on a network level. But I understand that.

When you think back to the announcers in your hometown, I would think immediately of Harry Caray being one, that you have to show your bias for the locals. I mean, you are the voice of your hometown team. So I consciously have tried to alter, not dramatically, my approach to calling the game based on whether that play was one made by the home team Padres. Hey, I've lived here half my adult life. I'm proud of that San Diego cross on

the front of the jersey. This is a great place to live. I'm privileged to be able to be the voice of their baseball team.

So, yes, it is different. You could leave a network game, get in the car, head for the airport and say, I think we did a good job, it was a good game. It was close, it was interesting. Quite in contrast you leave a game where you lost a heartbreaker and gave up three runs in the 9th inning and you're driving home saying, 'Oh. It colored the whole day and night because the home team didn't win and lost in a heartbreaking manner.' So, yes, there is a difference.

Q. At the beginning of your speech, you rattled off a lot of names of broadcasters and stuff like that. Has it dawned on you that you're now at a very special fraternity with all these names that you talked about? The Harwells, the Scullys and everyone like that?

DICK ENBERG: It really is hard to imagine. I'm a dreamer and have been going all the way back. Wanted to be the athlete. I wanted to be that person. Lucky enough to be able to talk a pretty good game. I've been lucky enough to receive a lot of wonderful honors in my life. But the investment that I have in this game of baseball going back to being a young boy is more than any other sport. To be honored on that list of great voices, those that taught us all how to do it, the pioneers of this game and still the red head up there in Los Angeles as the poet laureate of our business, and to be able to still hear him and how great he's able to help us enjoy this wonderful game, to even be considered on the same list or in the same sentence, it's an ultimate honor.

Q. You mentioned here a little bit about the influences that have led you to this great moment. Can you just talk about how Mt. Pleasant, Michigan and CMU played a role in you getting to this day and being a Chippewa?

DICK ENBERG: A plug for the Chippewas in Central Michigan. I will tell you, my very first baseball broadcast was for the only station in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, WCEN. They sent me out to call the local town team in a town called Rosebush, that is north of Mt. Pleasant, and the Mt. Pleasant Green Sox were playing another team. And I had all the big equipment, and I'm all excited.

This is the first baseball game I'm actually going to broadcast on radio. It lasted one inning.

One of the players in the bottom of the first inning broke his leg sliding into second base. They only had nine men, so they decided to call it off. So that's how my career began with the broadcast of a one-inning, town-team baseball game. So it's come a long way from there.

I applied at that radio station for the custodial job at \$1 an hour, because that was the best paying job on or off campus as a Central Michigan student. The names you remember going back that far. Russ Holcomb was the general manager of the station. I went in and said I want to be the janitor. I had worked one summer at a Detroit factory, and I know how to handle a mop and a broom. He said, hey, you've got a decent voice. I'd never been in a radio station. He put me in a little broadcast booth. Gave me a five-minute news summary and a couple of commercials and turned on the tape recorder. I said, 'Don't I get a chance to look it over first?' He said, 'No, no, let's just see what you do.' So I went to Central, and I was a junior, and I could read. So I read the copy, and three weeks later I got a call to come in. He says, 'You've got the job.' I said, 'Where's the broom closet?' He said, 'No, no, we're going to hire you as our new weekend disc jockey.' I didn't even know how to turn on the turn tables. The records would go -- every time I was the disc jockey. But my eyes brightened. I said, 'How much does that pay to be the disc jockey?' He said, '\$1 an hour, same as the custodial job.' So that's how it all began.

Three, four weeks later the sports director left for whatever reason, and they knew of my passion for sports and I was suddenly doing a 15-minute sportscaster every day as a college student, calling the college Central Michigan, high school football and basketball, and one-inning baseball games. So good fortune that somebody heard the voice and said let's give this guy a chance. There is probably a very good custodial job waiting for me down the line.

Q. Congratulations. You've done just about everything in sports broadcasting from the NFL, the Olympics, basketball, Final Four, everything. Why baseball? It obviously touches your heart so much. Why this game above the other games?

DICK ENBERG: Well, it is the best announcer game. As I said before, not only the passion that I have that's in there, in the DNA, the fact that it's -- I think Harwell said, 'It's opera without music.' The poetry of this game, there is

so much more that gets deeply into the soul of me, of man, than the other sports. The other sports, they certainly are eye popping and basketball and football, and frantic and it's all there. But baseball has its own wonderful slow pace that allows you to really absorb its beauty. Folks here in San Diego will attest to the fact that I love the double play. It's the one, you know if you go to a baseball game, basically you're going to probably see one double play or more. When you think about it in this game that in a matter of four seconds a ball has to be struck, fielded by someone cleanly, and thrown to another player cleanly, caught by that player trying to avoid somebody trying to knock him into left field and make another throw to a first baseman and he makes the catch, and then four seconds you've created two outs and there is a beautiful ballet right in the middle of all of that. The double play symbolizes in my mind the one play that tells the story would be the cover page of the baseball book and why you should love this game.

It gives you a chance to absorb it. My great-grandfather could come back and see the Padres opener, and I wouldn't have to explain an awful lot to him. He would understand the game and maintain that consistency and its beauty. It really is a wonderfully beautiful game. Football has its -- I guess you could say the beauty in certain corners, but it's a violent game. A collision game, a manly game.

Basketball has great athletes, perhaps the greatest athletes. But it's back and forth, catch your breath, but little time to express how you feel about it. I guess that's really the answer. Baseball gives you a chance to express what you feel about the game. Not only call the ball, as I was taught my very first broadcast with the Angels, Fred Haney came in and said, 'I heard you in Spring Training, Enberg, you're going to be just fine.' This was 1969. Haney was the broadcaster of the old PCL, when I grew up with the Angels and the Stars.

He said, 'I'm going to give you a little piece of advice. Report the ball. Don't tell me what you hope it will do or think it will do, just report the ball.' Of course we've advanced beyond that. That was an old Kenesaw Mountain Landis dictum. He said, 'I won't come back in the booth. I just want to give you that piece of advice, which is really a good one, because when you can't think of anything else to say, the ball will take you to something to say in every sport.'



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But to have that time to feel, really feel what you're talking about is unique to baseball.

Q. How have you stayed contemporary? How have you stayed relevant? How have you ignored people trying to push you to the side because they know you've had a great career and they want to take your job away? How has that all manifested itself to you staying the great broadcaster you still are?

DICK ENBERG: Well, it's going to happen. It happens to everyone. The first clue is when you get a Distinguished Lifetime Award. When you start getting those, you know that the clock is ticking down and your time is about up. I just, because I've lost both my younger brother and my younger sister this year, I'm feeling my mortality more than ever before. There has never been a man on his death bed that says I wish I had worked more.

But my problem, my dilemma, is while I'd like to go on and expand and do other things and travel with my wife, maybe write another book, maybe go back and teach, that is a thought as well, my job with the Padres isn't work. It's something I enjoy doing. I love waking up in the morning knowing I'm going to go to the ballpark and I have to prepare for a game that is going to have a totally different script from all the thousands of other games I've seen or called. So that is the tug of war that personally I am going through. Whatever.

I do want to leave on my own terms before they say, 'Hey, Enberg has really lost it here. We've got to move forward.' This being the high point of my broadcast life today, we'll have to go on and think from there.

Q. You mentioned earlier Harwell a bunch of times and you know the legend he is in Detroit. Can you talk about how he influenced you?

DICK ENBERG: Well, I'll tell you a story. I was coaching and teaching at Cal State Northridge, San Fernando Valley State College, and it was a very young university. Harwell and the Tigers came to town. I boldly stayed at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, and I boldly called the hotel and asked if I could have Ernie Harwell's room number, and they rang it through. Ernie answers the phone, and I asked myself, he could care less who I was. I said, 'I'm from Armada, Michigan, and I grew up as a Tiger fan,

and I'm here coaching baseball.' My hook was I'd like to take you out to dinner as if that really mattered to Harwell. He said, 'You'd like to take me out to dinner, would you?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Well, I'll go out to dinner with you.' And the result of that was exactly what I wanted. And Mr. Harwell said, 'Do you want to go to the ballpark tonight?' Because they were playing at Dodger Stadium against the Angels. Do you want to go to the ballpark tonight? And I said, 'Oh, could I?' And he said, 'Well, you can sit in the booth with me.' 'Oh, really?' So that was the best dinner I've ever bought for anyone in my life.

Then he got to know me, and whenever he was in town he would invite me to be with him. We've done some other events together. Again, you talk about the poetry and the care and the passion of the game, just look up Ernie Harwell. Personified just that. Thank you, everyone, for caring. This has been a beautiful day.

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