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1990 World Series article
under Paradise byline

It shows what
" " how

[Oct 1990]

MEMORIES IN THE FALL

By George Bush

It is said that you never forget your first love. For me, that was, and is, Barbara. A runner-up is baseball -- and more specifically, America's grandest sports event, the World Series.

My first memories of baseball came as a boy, growing up in Connecticut. I followed The Game, and memorized its box scores. My favorite team was the New York Yankees, and my father would take me to the big ballpark in the Bronx. There, I watched my favorite player, the Pride of the Yankees.

His name was Lou Gehrig, and he was a Hall of Fame first baseman. Moreover, he was a good and quiet man about whom teammate Bill Dickey observed, "Every day, any day, he just goes out and does his job." Half-a-century ago, the Iron Horse was stricken by a form of paralysis which now bears his name -- yet in a speech at Yankee Stadium, he said, "I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth." Lou Gehrig was, and remains, my hero -- but ~~it was we who~~ ^{the ones just} were lucky to see him play, especially in the World Series.

Even now, I remember my Dad and I listening ^{described} via radio as Graham McNamee ^{to the} ~~detailed the~~ October deeds of the fabled No. 4. He played in seven World Series from 1926 through 1938 -- the Yankees winning six. Lou blasted 10 home runs, had 34 runs batted in, and batted .361. Last fall, presenting the Lou Gehrig memorial stamp to the Hall of Fame, I thought of how he enriched the national pastime -- much as the World Series does October.

↳ the party

Since 1903, the Fall Classic has become a metaphor for America's love affair with baseball. Millions watch it; millions more listen to, read about, and argue it. ^{over} It evokes a feeling of family, -- ~~fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, employers and employees~~ -- each of us ^{becomes} a self-anointed expert. ^{(for a few golden days every October,} ~~It shows why~~ baseball is the most democratic of sports. ~~It~~ it's also, of course, the most republican ^{AA} and ^{whether it} why in the major leagues, ^{as} in Little League, ^{when it comes to baseball,} what counts is the size of your heart, and of your dreams.

Babe Ruth, whom I met in 1948 when he presented his papers to Yale University, spoke of this when he said, "Baseball comes up from the youth. You've got to start from way down, when you're six or seven years old. And if you try hard enough, you're bound to come out on top." He knew the World Series enchants kids of every age. ^{hiding} In the Babe's and, later, my children's, time, that meant ^{to} concealing a radio in class ^{disjunct} (catching a few innings before school recessed) or, better yet, feigning illness to watch/hear at home. Today, it means convincing parents to let you watch baseball after your ~~accustomed~~ bedtime. Whichever, the Fall Classic evokes a continuum of memories: We mark chapters of our lives by the World Series we recall.

For instance, after graduation Barbara and I packed up our red Studebaker and left the Northeast for Texas. ^{Our} The next decade was marked by the sights and sounds of baseball. Nationally, I remember three of the greatest announcers in baseball's tide of

brings back memories and

disjunct

Announcers - early & late.

times -- Mel Allen, Red Barber, and Vin Scully -- airing the 1950s Subway Series ^{with} of the Yankees of Stengel, Mantle, and Berra v. ^{the} Dodgers of Robinson, Furillo, Hodges, and Reese. Personally, my four boys entered Little League ^{today}, one of them owns a big-league team sadly not in the Series. ^(I coached it.) As for Barbara, well: Even then, tens of thousands of Texas kids played Little League. There were times I thought she was car-pooling them all!

Next came the sixties, when our youngest child -- Doro -- too, learned the magic of baseball. Together, the Bush family marveled at the Impossible Dream Red Sox, St. Louis' El Birdos, Detroit's first Series title in twenty-three years, and, of course, the Miracle Mets. In 1970, we watched as Brooks Robinson devastated the Reds and ~~received an automobile as the Classic's~~ Most Valuable Player. Exclaimed Johnny Bench: "If we'd known he'd wanted a car that bad, we'd have bought him one." The next year evoked more balladry by Roberto Clemente of the Pirates. Said Bowie Kuhn, accurately and eloquently, "He had about him the touch of royalty."

^{But} Clemente's artistry, ~~in turn,~~ ^{more than just this country} touched ~~this and other~~ ^{that} ~~countries~~ ^W showing ~~how~~ the Series is not only an American, but a globally institution. ~~I recall how~~ [≡] in 1975, the Red Sox and Reds staged what has been called the greatest game ever played -- Game Six of the World Series. Carlton Fisk smacked his twelfth-inning home run at 12:34 A.M. Eastern Time, giving Boston a 7-6 triumph. I was ^{Envoy} ~~Ambassador~~ to China at the time, and stationed in

ep?

[Handwritten scribbles]

*I show
[scribbles]*

*Baseball history
[scribbles]*

Beijing. Yet we knew immediately of Fisk's theatrics -- to the Embassy's Red Sox' fans, rare good news traveled quickly indeed! Two years ago, we were back here ^{in Washington} when another thunderclap occurred. In college, I had batted eighth -- or as I put it, second clean-up. In Game Six of the '77 Classic, a real clean-up hitter surfaced. Blasting three home runs to give the Yankees their first world championship since 1962, Reggie Jackson slugged his way into the million memories of America.

Since then, the World Series has added to its communion of ~~lore -- and all of us have shared in its communal spirit.~~ Over the past year, I've been impressed, anew, by how baseball is America's ambassador of goodwill -- whether greeting Little Leaguers on the South Lawn of the White House, hailing the Oakland A's in the Rose Garden, or telling Polish ^{boys and girls} youth in Warsaw, "Few things show America's love like bringing our national pastime to you." The World Series embodies that love, and the hard work which, each fall, ^{brings the} ~~links~~ league champions ^{together} in the biggest show in town. It shows why two of the most beautiful words in any language are, simply, "Play ball."

*glorious
[scribbles]*

Heart, game, [scribbles]

Last year a friend of ours, ~~AA~~ one of the great Americans of this or any time, ~~+~~ died, suddenly and tragically. It was Bart Giamatti who said, "Baseball is designed to break your heart." He knew, too, that ^{every year} the World Series annually lifts our hearts. Roy Campanella often mused that, "You have to be a man to be a big-leaguer, but you have to have a lot of little boy in you, too." Each October shows why those words endure today.

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As a boy, George Bush dreamed of being first baseman for the New York Yankees. Instead, he settled, ultimately, for another position -- pitching for America.