



# THE BOY OF SUMMER

*Yankee Stadium (1973 approx); Mickey Mantle 1964 Topps Baseball Card (one of Russ's prized possessions)*

By Russ Disotell

It's a dreary October afternoon in 1964. An all-day drizzle has brought a cold clammy feel to the day. Enveloped in a heavy raincoat, which feels like oil cloth and rubber, complete with a rain hat patterned after a knight's visor helmet, I am almost too warm. My crossing guard's white belt bunches the raincoat in all the wrong places. I am at the corner of Perth and Schofield, my customary post. It isn't the weather, or the raincoat that is causing my discomfort. Through the earphone attached to my transistor radio, I am listening to Bob Gibson and the St. Louis Cardinals win baseball's World Series over my beloved New York Yankees.

Saturday Night Live had a famous "Baseball has been very, very good to me" sketch. Minus the comedic tones and Latin American accent that's my sentiment. We moved a lot when I was young, baseball, and my Yankees, were my constant companion.

My dad was a manager for Beamish department stores. Beamish was very much like Eaton's only a smaller chain, smaller stores and smaller towns. Those of a certain age will remember Brockville's Beamish on King St. It was in the location that came to be known as Dave Jones Sports and then Tiny Prices. My dad was Beamish's trouble shooter, sent to straighten out stores and right the ship. Between Grade 5 and University we lived in Cornwall, Renfrew, Brockville, New Liskeard, Woodstock and Napanee.

We always seemed to move in the late spring or summer. Until I met new friends there was the baseball game on the radio to provide some entertainment and continuity. I grew up in Cornwall and with the Massena television and radio stations it was predestined I would be a Yankee fan. Mickey Mantle and Whitey Ford were my idols.

Every move I was able to find the radio broadcast of the Yankee's games. Magically, drifting through the night air would be the voice of Phil Rizzuto, the Yankee announcer. Radio was the king and if you were lucky you had that compact collection of crystals, diodes and wires known as a transistor radio. It was a boy thing. I don't remember girls having them. We carried them to listen to sports. While at St. Mary's in Brockville, I remember the teacher collecting transistors so we wouldn't try to listen to the World Series during class.

April, 1973 provided a perfect culmination to my youthful baseball obsession. Now in Toronto at U of T, watching an NHL playoff game, a friend pointed out that the next day (April 15th) was a celebration for the 50th anniversary of Yankee Stadium. I had never been to a big league game, so we decided we had to attend. We woke a third friend, who had slept through the hockey game and announced we were off to New York! Later, Ron would admit he didn't believe us until we hit the Canada U.S. border.

We drove all night, somehow found our way to Brooklyn, and got there just in time for the game. I was euphoric. Mrs. Babe Ruth was part of the ceremony as was Joe Dimaggio, the Yankee Clipper. I don't need a scorecard to remember that the Yankees and Mel Stottlemyre beat the Boston Red Sox 6 to 2. One abiding memory is how steeply inclined the stairs to the seats were. It felt like you could lean forward and tumble onto the field.

The arrival of the Blue Jays and sports networks ended my Yankee allegiance and how I followed baseball. But I still remember those nights with the transistor under my pillow and the voice of Phil Rizzuto as I drifted off to sleep... "Holy Cow!" Indeed. LH

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Russ liked the Yankees, and I being slightly younger remember growing up in Montreal listening to Dave Van Horne doing The Montreal Expos broadcasts on radio. How I miss staying up late when The Expos were on a road trip to Los Angeles or the west coast. I would stay up listening to Dave & Duke (Snider-Hall of Fame Player) and hearing Dave's sign-in phrase "Thanks Duke and hi again, everybody. Glad to have you aboard for today's game..." and his home run call "up, up and away" makes me miss the Expos to this day!