

Talkin' Baseball: Summer 1962

At the Hermitage, Listening to my Philco Transistor Radio

By Larry Ginsberg

Mel Allen: One Out, Hector Lopez on Second, "three and two what'll he do" on Roger Maris...Angels lead five-one, bottom of the fifth...rain starting to come down harder...Angels lefty Bo Belinsky winds and deals, strike three swinging, two outs...and Mickey Mantle strides to the plate. Mantle hits right against the Angels Southpaw. Belinsky gets the signs from Buck Rogers behind the plate, deals, ball one, fastball low and outside, Belinsky shakes off Rogers, gets a pitch he likes, "Here's the pitch. Mantle swings. There's a tremendous drive going into deep left field...it's going, going, gooone! A Ballantine Blast by Mickey Mantle! How about that! The score is now Angels 5, Yankees 3. The Moose, Bill Skowron, now at bat, two outs, rain coming down harder still...Belinsky's into his windup, here's the pitch...line shot up the middle, second baseman Moran to his right, dives, comes up with it...over to first...three outs.



Red Barber: From the Catbird seat. Crew Chief Nestor Chylak is signaling to the grounds crew to bring out the tarp.

Phil Rizzuto: Angels 5, our Yankees 3, bottom of the fifth. If the game's not resumed, it's complete. Now a word from our sponsor: Ballantine Beer and then: "Rainout Theatre."

Mel Allen: Welcome back. The Ol' Red Head is going down to the visitors' dugout to interview Angel's manager Bill Rigney. I plan to interview my esteemed colleague Phil Rizzuto, former AL MVP and All Star shortstop for our Yankees.

Phil Rizzuto: Not this time Allen. It's time for our fans to meet Melvin Allen Israel, Esq.

Mel Allen: Whoa, Scooter, how ...

Phil Rizzuto: Holy cow, Allen, you're a mouthpiece so I did my due diligence.



Phil Rizzuto, Mel Allen and Red Barber

Phil Rizzuto: Allen, with that accent, you're a real Southern Jew Boy?

Mel Allen: Yeah, Scooter, I was born in Birmingham, Alabama, the Pittsburgh of the South. I grew up during the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression, and I attended college and law school at the University of Alabama, graduating law school in 1937. At 'Bama, I was the PA announcer for Crimson Tide football, and became their play-by-play announcer in 1933.

Phil Rizzuto: So, counselor, what caused you to become a broadcaster?

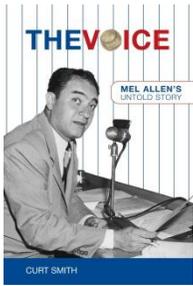
Mel Allen: Well, I decided to take a vacation to the City, and on a lark, I interviewed for a position as a Staff announcer for CBS radio. Got hired for the princely sum of \$45.00 per week and started doing big band remotes, emceeing Truth or Consequences and became a sportscaster understudy for Ted Husing and Bob Trout.

Phil Rizzuto: Allen how did you first become a national celebrity?

Mel Allen: So, on March 6, 1937, the station cut away from Kate Smith's show and I ended up announcing the Hindenburg Crash live from Lakehurst, NJ. Then during a rain-delayed Vanderbilt Cup, I adlibbed from an airplane for about a half hour. In 1939, I became announcer for the Warner Brothers & Vitaphone film short-subject *On the Air* with Leith Stevens and the Saturday Night Swing Club.

Phil Rizzuto: Did you do any other non-sports broadcasting, Allen?

Mel Allen: Yeah, Scooter, I did interviews of sports figures and musical personalities for CBS Radio's "Thirty Minutes to Play" during the early 40s. And in 1947, I was a disc jockey for WINS-AM in the city, believe it or not. At present, I host the program *Monitor* on NBC Radio.



Phil Rizzuto: Allen, you've been the "Voice of the Yankees" since 1937. What are some of your most memorable recollections?

Mel Allen: Scooter, there are so many...where do I start? Other than two years with US Armed Forces Radio during WWII, when I broadcasted "The Army Hour," I've been with the Yankees for 21 years now. I replaced Garnett Marks in June 1939 when he forgot our sponsor at the time, and called Ivory Soap, "Ovary Soap." Let's see there, Scooter: I called DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak in 1941, Maris' assault on the Babe's single-season home-run record last year, and Mazeroski's walk-off World Series homer against our Ralph Terry to end the 1960 Series. However, my most poignant Yankees memories were in 1948, when a cancer-stricken Babe Ruth said *adieu* to the Yankees and to all of baseball and on July 4, 1939, when I introduced the immortal Lou Gehrig, who then said: "Though I've had a bad break, "I am the luckiest man in the world." Scooter, there wasn't a dry eye in the stadium that day, including mine. On a bit lighter note, I loved to make up Yankee nicknames including yours, Scooter, as well as Joltin' Joe DiMaggio and the Old Reliable Tommy Henrich.

Phil Rizzuto: What other sports announcing have you done, Allen?

Mel Allen: Quite a bit actually. I announced both the Yankees and the NY Baseball Giants until 1943, when I went into the Army. In football, I announced quite a few Rose, Orange and Sugar Bowls as well as the NFL Redskins in 1952-53, and the NY Giants in '60. I even hosted Jackpot Bowling in '59.



Yogi Berra



Leo Durocher

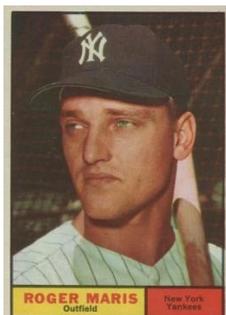
Phil Rizzuto: Fans, on a lighter note, Allen, Leo Durocher and Yogi were all spoofed in the MAD Magazine comics baseball story, "HEX!" and Allen's likeness was licensed for a two-issue "Mel Allen's Sports Comics" series in 1949-50.

Phil Rizzuto: So, Allen where's home?

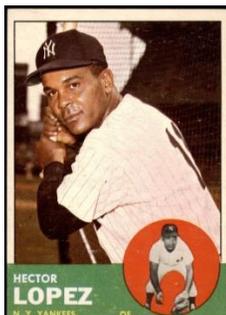
Mel Allen: When I'm not on the road, I like to hang out with my sister Esther Kaufman and her family in Greenwich, CT.

Mel Allen: Well, Scooter, the rain's appeared to stop and they're removing the tarp, and it looks like the game's going to continue. And now, a word from our sponsor.

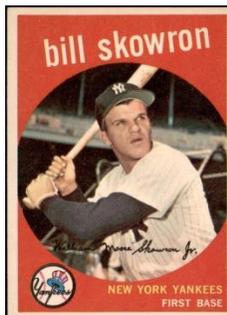
Mel Allen: So, hello there, everybody, for the Ol' Redhead, the Scooter, and yours truly, Mel Allen, after a 49-minute rain delay with the score 5 to 3, Angels in the top of the sixth Knuckleballer Bud Daley's on in relief of Yankee's Jim Bouton. The first batter he'll face: Angels centerfielder, Little Albie Pearson.



ROGER MARIS
Outfield
New York Yankees



HECTOR LOPEZ
N. Y. YANKEES
OF



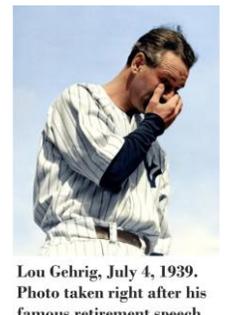
bill skowron
NEW YORK YANKEES
FIRST BASE



Umpire Nestor Chylak



Tommy Henrich



Lou Gehrig, July 4, 1939.
Photo taken right after his famous retirement speech.