

## SPORTS-- THE CENTER OF MY LIFE

*Q: How about sports?*

QUINN: Oh, I was a huge sports fan and fanatic. Sports were the center of my life. I was a big New York Yankee fan when we lived in the Bronx. I remember going to Yankee Stadium numerous times, when we lived on Decatur Avenue. We would walk up 200th Street, past the Grand Concourse and down to Jerome Avenue where we would catch the EL to 161st Street.

I was there on Babe Ruth Day, June 13, 1948. I saw Babe Ruth in his uniform come out and take a few swings that day. It was six months before he died. I saw Joe DiMaggio in his prime and Mickey Mantle break in. I saw Ted Williams and the Red Sox play, and Connie Mack managing the Philadelphia A's the only manager to wear a suit and tie at the game rather than a uniform. All during the big period of the Yankees dynasty, I would listen to Mel Allen broadcasting the baseball games on WINS, sponsored by Ballantine Beer and White Owl Cigars. I used to know all the batting averages and the starting lineup for the Yankees.

So moving away from the Yankees was traumatic. I was suddenly cut off from sports just as I now had no friends. There wasn't any major league team in La Crosse or Wisconsin. So trying to find sports and friends, I would make up imaginary teams and give first names to players and assign them numbers, and have them playing games against each other. I started doing this on the train traveling from New York and it continued during those first lonely months with no friends in La Crosse. I would draw simple pencil images of the players on the pile of old letterhead paper my Aunt Kitty had given us, with her late husband's name [Dr. Paul Travers] on the top. I would give them uniform numbers and assign them positions on the baseball field. A figure named "Mole" who was very short with a top hat played short stop. His number was 10. "Ken" wore number 27 and played second base. "Dog" with a long face like a pooch wore 18 and played outfield. It became my make believe world, one that compensated for my lack of friends.

During football season, I would go [alone] down to the YMCA on Main Street in La Crosse on Monday evening and watch the films of the University of Wisconsin football games from the previous Saturday. This was in 1952 and '53, the era of Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch. Then the Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee, so I became a Braves fan, out of loyalty to my new home state. I remember cheering for them to beat the Yankees in the 57 and 58 World Series, but by then we had again relocated.