

MEN'S CLUB

Ed Kranepool: A Very Special Zoom Guest

BY HOWARD ARKIN

The weather forecast for March 25 called for a sunny day with temperatures in the 70s. This was a forecast certainly befitting of Ed Kranepool's appearance before the North Shore Towers Men's Club. Yes, baseball was in the air. Ed's Zoom lecture promised to attract a large audience and it didn't disappoint. In "Zoomspeak" this meant that all of the boxes on my computer were filled. To use some baseball jargon, by 7:30 "they were hanging from the rafters."

Kranepool spent his entire career, from 1962-1979, with the New York Mets. It's hard for me to imagine any player currently spending 18 years with the same team. The first seven years of his career were spent with a team that many considered to be one of the worst in baseball history. But in 1969 things began to change. A man walked on the moon and the New York Mets won the World Series. Four years later they would come within one game of duplicating the same feat.

Ed played an important part in each of those years contributing to the team's success. He exhibited a great batting eye during his career, striking out only 581 times in 5,436 times at bat. Another phase of the game that he excelled in was pinch hitting. His batting average in the 1970's was 396, and in one year he got 17 hits



in 35 times at bat.

A good part of the evening was spent with our club President, Toby Horowitz calling on those in the audience to direct questions to Ed. Many of them pertained to the glory years of 1969 and 1973. Ed stressed that he had a very good relationship with

the Mets' early management and its first owner, Joan Payson. He also expressed enthusiasm for the club's future now that Steve Cohen is the new owner. Money can do wonders.

Naturally Casey Stengel, Ed's first manager's name came up. He said that Casey could "play the clown" but would not extend the same role to his players. When in 1963 Jimmy Pearsall hit a home run and ran the bases backwards, Casey had him released the next day. Ed had his favorites over the years, as well as some "not so favorites". One of his "not so favorites" was Met catcher Jerry Grote, whom he did not speak to for nine years. Minneapolis Twins manager Gene Mauch was also not at the top of his list. In 1980, when Mauch called Ed and asked him to join the Twins, Ed chose to retire rather than play for him.

A few questions asked pertained to current baseball rules. He believes that if baseball is

to have a designated hitter it should apply to both leagues and the "shift" should not be outlawed. He feels that the games are too slow and he's usually fallen asleep by the time they end.

When he was asked who he thought was the greatest player of all time, without hesitating he chose his 1972-73 teammate Willie Mays. As for pitchers, he had high praise for Bob Gibson and Sandy Koufax. When asked about current Met pitcher Jacob De Grom, he acknowledged his great talent, but was disappointed that at this point in his career he has had so few wins (70). He attributes this to poor Met batting support and an overreliance on relief pitching. I found only one thing that I was in strong disagreement with Ed. He felt that Met manager Yogi Berra should have started George Stone over Tom Seaver in Game Six of the 1973 World Series. If any of you are really interested, Wikipedia will give you the details.

As many of you might be aware, in 2019 Ed underwent a successful kidney transplant at Stony Brook Medical Center. The Men's Club wishes him well on his recovery and hopes that his next lecture will be in person.

Don't forget, on Thursday, May 13, Professor James Coll will be discussing the workings of the Supreme Court. We look forward to seeing you there.



Men's Club Zoom Lecture Sal St. George Talks Billy Crystal

On March 17, Sal St. George was once again the moderator of a Zoom lecture for the North Shore Towers Men's Club. The topic for the evening's lecture was legendary comedian and actor Billy Crystal. Prior to the start of his discussion, Sal showed us a five minute film montage of some of America's greatest entertainers of the 20th century. He does this during most of his lectures to highlight the contrast between entertainment from the past as compared to entertainment today. Oh, for the good old days!

Billy Crystal was born in New York City 74 years ago. As was the case with many New Yorkers, he found himself growing up in the suburbs. In Billy's case it was Long Beach in Nassau County. His father Jack and his Uncle Milt owned the Commodore Music Store on 42nd Street where Billy spent many

hours, probably planting the seeds for his future life in show business. Billy's career got started in the 1970s when he appeared at The Improv and Catch A Rising Star, two well-known comedy clubs. He made a few small appearances on Saturday Night Live and by 1984 had become a Saturday Night Live regular. His catchphrase, "You look mahvelous" (Billy's imitation of Fernando Lamas) still resonates today.

After an appearance on All in the Family, he became close friends with Rob Reiner, and the friendship has endured until now. Rob directed Billy in a few successful films in the 1980s, the most successful being "When Harry Met Sally." This earned Billy a Golden Globe nomination in 1989. I'm sure that many of you remember Rob Reiner's mother, while seated at an adjoining table to Meg Ryan at Katz's Delicatessen,

uttering those immortal words, "I'll have what she's having" after watching Meg fake an orgasm. (Can I say that?!?) In the 1990s, Billy's film career continued to soar. Two of my favorites during this period were "City Slickers" and "Analyze This." This was a time in his career when he also found the time to host The Academy Awards nine times.

In 2005 I got a chance to see Billy in person. I remember one Saturday afternoon driving into Manhattan to see him in his one man show, "700 Sundays." The Tony Award winning show chronicled his adolescent years growing up in Long Beach. Sports had always played an intricate part in Billy's life, especially New York Yankees' baseball. In 2001 he successfully directed a made-for-TV movie based on Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris's race to beat Babe Ruth's single



season home run record.

An interesting bit of information that Sal imparted to us was that Billy actually had a Major League Baseball career. It seems that in 2008, on his 60th birthday, the Yankees signed him to a one day contract during spring training. He led off the game and was able to actually foul off a pitch before striking out. He was released the next day!

At the end of the session, Toby Horowitz opened the mike for questions and before you knew it, another Siegel/Horowitz Men's Club Zoom session was history.

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