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MOST VALUABLE PLAYER SERIES

# PHIL RIZZUTO

*A Biography of The Scooter*

by

JOE TRIMBLE



A. S. BARNES and COMPANY

New York

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## *Foreword*

*IF EVER* a player was born to be a star, it was Phil Rizzuto, the demitasse shortstop of the World Champion Yankees and the Most Valuable Player in the American League for 1950. Phil was handicapped at the outset of his baseball career because of his pint-sized proportions but by the time he had reached the semi-pro ranks, he was utilizing his size as an asset.

Most of Phil's teammates believed he should have been chosen the MVP by the Baseball Writers Association in 1949, which in itself is a tribute to Rizzuto for rarely do a player's teammates concern themselves about such matters. He and Joe Page finished second and third, respectively, to Ted Williams but it was Phil's opinion that the Red Sox slugger was entitled to the award. Page, Phil's teammate, declared that if people hadn't split their first-place votes between himself and Rizzuto the latter would have had a good chance at the grand prize.

"We won the pennant and the World Series," said Phil, "and that was enough for me." In that revealing sentence, Rizzuto summed up his entire philosophy of baseball—it is the team achievements which satisfy him, not his own as an individual.

Pennants are old stuff to Phil. He was on pennant winners in such widely disparate leagues as the Bi-State, the Piedmont, and the American Association before he rode home first with the Yankees in the American League in 1941. Oddly enough, Rizzuto has an amazing record for playing on pennant winners since becoming a Yank—five in the seven seasons he has played with the club.

Whether Rizzuto was the most valuable of the American League players in 1949 is water over the dam now, but there is no doubt that he was the most valuable Yankee both in 1949 and in 1950. When injuries were hamstringing first one Yankee and then another, tiny Phil remained marvelously intact.

“He was the one guy we couldn’t afford to lose,” said Manager Casey Stengel, “and fortunately, we had him in all but a couple of games in our two pennant-winning seasons.”

Joe Trimble has traced the career of Rizzuto with fine reportorial accuracy. As long ago as 1940, when Phil was with Kansas City, I visited with him to do a magazine article and I thought I knew most of his background and that of the Rizzuto family, but Trimble has mined deeper. And come up with more gold, too. This book is one which will make you feel as though you know Rizzuto personally.

*Tom Meany*

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## CHAPTER ONE

# *The Bum's Rush*

*CASEY STENGEL* is a lucky man, but not because his petroleum leases and real-estate investments have made him a millionaire. Those windfalls could be due to sound judgment. He is lucky because he blew a chance to avail himself of the talent of Phil Rizzuto back in 1936, and then got another opportunity to ride to glory with the greatest "little" baseball player in history—after a lapse of thirteen years. Few big-league managers, after muffing the opportunity to sign an outstanding prospect, get a second chance. Stengel was manager of the Dodgers in 1936 when Rizzuto was booted out of a tryout session and manager of the Yankees in 1949 and 1950 when the mighty mite carried the New York club to successive championships. He's like the guy who does a bad job of drilling for water and strikes oil.

Actually, Stengel didn't turn thumbs-down on the seventeen-year-old Rizzuto that summer afternoon many years ago. But the manager was guilty of losing the youngster by reason of his absence. Casey, at that time battling with the owners of the Dodgers, didn't attend the session at which about 150 kids were given token tryouts. Stengel

knew that he was going to be fired by the front office when his two-year contract expired the following year, anyway. He didn't bother to go to the morning gathering of sandlotters, and left the appraisals in the hands of others.

Coaches Otto Miller and Zach Taylor, the latter now manager of the St. Louis Browns, supervised the tryouts. They divided the kids into groups of twenty and lined them up in left center field.

"On yer mark, set, go!" Miller barked.

Then the youngsters, ranging in age from sixteen to eighteen and wearing baseball uniforms of varying fits, qualities, and conditions of servitude, broke in a wild dash toward the first-base stripe on the diamond.

The first five finishers in each heat were told to stay around; the other fifteen were sent home immediately. The theory was that if a kid couldn't run, then he wasn't a ball player. This, in itself, is ridiculous. Had their major league potentialities been decided upon fleetness of foot, scores of great ball players would never have gotten a chance. Mel Ott, Lou Gehrig, Ernie Lombardi, Gabby Hartnett, Lou Boudreau, and even Babe Ruth were slow runners.

Of course, Rizzuto had no trouble winning his "heat" for he could outrun any one of the youngsters on the field that day.

After the footrace eliminations, the approximately forty hopefuls who qualified were broken into two groups, some told to go into the field and others to take turns at bat. Phil was placed among the batters.

"A big right-handed kid was pitching," he remembers. "I had been a good hitter in high school at Richmond Hill and even managed to get my base hits in semi-pro competition on Long Island. I was nervous but I felt sure I would at least hit the ball.



"But I never did get much chance to. The first pitch hit me squarely in the middle of the back and knocked me down. It hurt like the devil and the wind was knocked out of me. I probably should have gotten out of the batters' box and rested up until the pain left. But I didn't want them to think I was afraid. So I stepped right in again. Then I could hardly swing, and, after missing a couple of pitches, heard Miller say, 'Okay, sonny. That's all. I don't think you'll do, little fellow. Good thing you didn't get hurt by that big guy.' "

Tears welled up in the eyes of the five-foot-high kid as he blindly dropped the bat, found his glove and trudged off the field. Dominick Angotti, Phil's uncle, had driven him to Ebbets Field for the tryout and he waited for him to change from spikes to street shoes.

"Don't feel too bad about it," his mother's brother told Phil. "It wasn't much of a tryout and you really didn't fail. What did they expect after that guy nearly knocked your head off with the first pitch? No wonder the Dodgers are in seventh place, they don't even know how to hold a tryout!"

Perhaps things would have gone differently if Stengel had been present, perhaps not. Casey, a sound judge of talent, doubtless would have taken a look at the kid's fielding, anyway.

The incident caused Phil some embarrassment during the 1949 World Series when, one evening while the classic between the Yanks and Dodgers was still on, he and Brooklyn outfielder Gene Hermanski appeared on a television program. During the interview, Phil was asked about the trouble he had getting a big-league team to bother with him.

Rizzuto, who had been passed over by both Cardinal and

Red Sox scouts because of his size and also tossed out of the Polo Grounds by the Giants, admitted that he knew what it felt like to be unwanted. He mentioned the Dodger try-out.

Hermanski, aware that it would make a good yarn, interjected, "Tell them who was managing the Dodgers when they tossed you out because you were too small."

Goaded by his puckish pal, Phil admitted that it was Stengel. The roar of the audience kept him from explaining, in defense of the manager, that Casey hadn't seen him that day.

Casey, whose life consists of gags and funny gyrations, can take it, but that nettled him a bit. The next day, when Phil came into the clubhouse to dress for the game, Stengel minced up to him in his duck-waddle style of walking and leered, "You think you're big enough for the big leagues now, son?"

A couple of weeks after he was chased from Ebbets Field, Phil received a letter from the Giants, inviting him to a tryout at the Polo Grounds. Uncle Dom again drove him up to the ball park and Rizzuto's eyes popped at the size of the place and the thought of the many great players who had played there.

Here, he felt, he would get a chance, not the brushoff the Dodgers had given him. All the other kids—there were over fifty of them—were allowed to hit, run, and throw. But the eager little boy from Queens was summarily dismissed the moment he stepped out on the field for his turn.

Bill Terry was managing the Giants at that time and he, like Stengel, has been branded in legend. Those who dislike the frosty-dispositioned Giant boss exult in passing along the story that he turned down Rizzuto as well as Frank McCormick, a New Yorker who later starred with

Cincinnati. Terry was only as guilty as Stengel—he also was busy elsewhere when the tryout sessions were held.

It was Frank (Pancho) Snyder, one of Terry's coaches, who gave Phil the gate without a second look. Pancho, a huge man with the build of a wrestler, had been a catcher in the National League for years—a hard-boiled character who measured ability in ratio to physical proportion.

Snyder, shooing the boy away, said gruffly, "You're too small, kid. You'll never do. Go home and get yourself a shoeshine box!"

## CHAPTER TWO

# *The Littlest Bum*

*THE CITY OF NEW YORK* was remiss in its obligations to growing boys back in the early thirties in that it never did provide enough public parks and playgrounds, ball diamonds and football fields. Indeed, it still is. Drive through almost any neighborhood and see the kids playing stickball or touch football in the streets, dodging autos and ducking cops in patrol cars who gruffly order them to "break it up." The cry "Cheezit, the cops!" is still heard these days, as it was when Phil Rizzuto was growing up in the borough of Queens.

It didn't matter much where one lived in the five boroughs—they all were overcrowded, excepting maybe Staten Island, and there was room there only because most people who had to work in New York had no desire to take the long ferry ride every day. In the late twenties and early thirties, the "better" people were moving out of the city—either to Westchester or to more fashionable Long Island communities. Those whose roots were too firmly imbedded in the city or whose financial foundations were not firm enough stayed. The Rizzutos stayed.

The only concession which Philip Rizzuto, Sr. and his

wife Rose were able to make was the removal of the family, when Phil, Jr. was twelve, from a house in Ridgewood (a community on the borderline between Brooklyn and Queens) to Glendale, which is just inside the Queens county line. And that move was made on behalf of the girls in the family, not the boys.

It has been written that Mr. and Mrs. Rizzuto were immigrants, but that isn't so, unless you want to go along with those who claim that Brooklyn is a foreign country. Philip Rizzuto and Rose Angotti were both born in the downtown section of the borough, not far from the Brooklyn Bridge. They grew up in the same neighborhood and were married there in 1913.

Mary, the first of their four children, was born a year later and Rose, named after her mother, came along in 1916. Papa Rizzuto, then a day-laborer, was not making much money and, in 1917, he tried to increase his income and improve the living standards of his growing family by taking a steady job. He was hired by the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company as a trolley-car conductor. His route was from Brooklyn to Queens, from Ridgewood to Richmond Hill, and so he moved Mrs. Rizzuto and the girls to Ridgewood.

They settled in a frame house on a little street named Dill Place. It wasn't much of a house—one of six others which were so constructed that the front entrance was on an alley. Phil, Jr., was born there in 1918, on September 25th, and a second son, Alfred, arrived two years later. He was the last of the four, each two years apart.

Theirs was the normal home life of a family of restricted income. Poppa worked hard driving his trolley and Mom labored from morning to night raising the four children. There was no extra money for entertainment, except an

occasional movie, and the Rizzutos, like their thousands of counterparts, got their fun out of the children. Occasionally relatives or friends would come over and share a bottle of wine and a spaghetti dinner and, of course, there were the family get-togethers at holidays. Both Philip and Rose had sisters and brothers who lived either in Brooklyn or Queens. Aside from such occasions, the home life was simple, circumscribed by the financial limitations and the immobility of four growing children.

Little Phil's biggest thrill in those days was when he took Pop's lunch to him.

"I used to wait on the street corner for his car to come along," he recalls. "Then I'd hop aboard and ride a couple of blocks with Pop while he opened the lunch box to see what Mom had prepared."

The Rizzuto kids went to P.S. 68 five days a week, to the movies if Mom had been able to save a few dimes out of the "house" money on Saturday, and to church on Sunday. The girls skipped rope and played "potsie"—a sort of hopscotch game in which they jumped on one leg from one numbered square to another on the sidewalk, the potsie pattern being laid out with colored chalk. The boys played ball, nearly all year round, either baseball, softball, stickball, or touch football in the streets. Even in the winter Phil would go out with another baseball-crazy youngster and have a "catch."

"They always were thinking of some kind of ball," Mrs. Rizzuto recalls. "Phil was always the littlest fellow in the games but he also was the fastest runner. I used to look out the window and see them playing 'association' on the street during the football season. That's touch football, with four or five on a side. He could run away from the bigger boys every time.

"In the spring and summer it was baseball, baseball all the time. His father was a fan and my brother Dominick, who lived near us, was, too. Pop and Dom and the boys talked about the big leaguers—mostly about the Dodgers, of course. We didn't think much of the Yankees and Giants in those days. They seemed so far away and the Dodgers were Brooklyn, our team. Every night at supper time the girls and I had to keep quiet while Phil and Al and Pop listened to the scores on the radio."

Some of the public schools had baseball teams and played in the Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) but P.S. 68 didn't have a team. So Phil learned to play ball on the sandlots—what few there were—and in the streets. His dad had given him a bat and glove when he was four—barely out of the toddling stage. He could hardly lift the toy bat then, but as he grew older and stronger, though hardly ever taller, he put it to good use.

Mrs. Rizzuto made Phil's first baseball uniform when he was eight years old. One day he came home all scratched up, with numerous rips in the suit.

"We couldn't find a place to play, so we cleaned up a lot," he said. "Didn't get it very clean, though, and I guess there were lots of rocks and pieces of glass around."

In 1927, the country was roaring along in its gayest, most prosperous era. Everyone seemed to be making loads of money and practically any business was a thriving one. Mr. Rizzuto, squirming on the seat of his trolley car day after day for the low wages paid by the traction company, decided to make a change. He had a chance to go with a construction company at much more money and couldn't pass it up. There were so many things the kids needed, dresses for the girls who were becoming young ladies, new clothes for the boys, furniture for the house, a new radio.

So he quit his \$40-a-week job on the trolley line and went to work at house-building.

Out of his new income, the head of the family saved enough to make a down-payment on a new house in Glendale, a two-family stucco dwelling on a corner. The Rizzutos moved in early in 1930, just a few months after the Wall Street crash in 1929. They rented out the upstairs apartment and renovated the cellar to provide a sleeping room for little Phil and Alfred. The new house was Mrs. Rizzuto's idea. Mary was sixteen and Rose was fourteen. They'd soon be having boy friends and it wasn't nice to have suitors calling for the girls at the old clapboard house where they had to walk down an oft-littered community alley to get to the front door.

Everyone was happy, but the new-found prosperity was fleeting. The depression was rapidly hardening the financial arteries of the country and Pop's new job didn't last. He was laid off and the family income was cut off. Phil, Sr. went back to the BRT and asked for his job on the trolley once more. But he had forfeited his ten years of seniority and so had to return as a new employee. That meant getting only part-time work as a sub and the irregular salary wasn't nearly enough to feed and house a family of six. The Rizzutos, like many thousands of other proud American families, couldn't keep the wolf from the door. They had to accept home relief. Phil was twelve at the time and he heard about the home-relief checks and saw his mother's look of gratitude when they arrived. He did his bit to help by delivering papers after school and Mrs. Rizzuto took in sewing.

Of course, Phil kept right on playing baseball. In fact, he was so good that he was able to play in company with



boys three and four years older than he. He could hit and field and, as always, outrun everyone else. Rizzuto was an outfielder then, and it was as a flychaser, at the age of twelve, that he played his first game in a major-league ball park.

The neighborhood team was known as the Ridgewood Robins and Phil tried out for it. The coach was a man named Willenbucher—a real-estate agent who, incidentally, had sold Mr. Rizzuto the new house. Phil was so small that it seemed preposterous that he could make the club. In fact, his size nearly cost him a chance that early in life. Mr. Willenbucher joshed him when the tyke said he was an outfielder. "I can see how you cover the outfield," he said. "You're a cricket!"

Phil, always a shy kid, grinned his embarrassment. The other kids, with the innate cruelty of children, called him "Shrimp," "Midget," "Runt," and "Little Dago."

But he bravely smiled at their taunts, and, in the tryout, showed them all that he was a ball player.

Willenbucher entered the Robins in a sandlot tournament sponsored by the *Standard Union*, a Brooklyn newspaper which ceased publication shortly thereafter. The Robins won in the eliminations and gained the final bracket, meeting the Coney Island Athletics for the sandlot championship of Brooklyn at Ebbets Field, home of the Brooklyn Dodgers. In those days the Dodgers were known as the Robins, called that nickname after their famed manager, Wilbert "Uncle Robbie" Robinson. The Brooks were a first-division club at the time and were battling for the National League pennant. Every one of "Dem Bums" was a hero to the star-gazing youngsters from the sandlots of the borough of homes and churches.

The Dodgers were Phil's team, of course. Although the Giants were a great outfit under John McGraw and he had been taken to Yankee Stadium to see Babe Ruth by his uncle Dominick, the kid only had eyes for the Brooks. In the light of his later affiliation, it might be a nice romantic touch to say that Rizzuto was a great Yankee fan, a worshipper of Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and that great Italian second baseman, the late Tony Lazzeri. But it just wasn't so.

Out in Glendale everyone was a Dodger rooter. When the kids got together, at the neighborhood candy store or while playing pool in the cellar of the Rizzuto home, the Dodgers were kings. Anyway, a guy as small as Phil didn't dare take chances by having any ideas of his own about rooting for another club—it just wasn't healthy. Everybody was a "Bum" and Phil was the littlest Bum of all.

It also would be story-book stuff to tell of how Rizzuto won the big game with a base hit. But that would be a mile from the truth. The Ridgewood Robins won the game, all right, but the only ball the Scooter hit was a foul.

"I was only about four feet high," he recalls, "and I was playing left field. I felt lost out there in that great big outfield but I did catch a couple of flies and didn't make any errors. But, at bat, I wasn't supposed to do anything. Mr. Willenbucher wouldn't let me swing at all because he figured I'd get a walk every time up. I was so small that they couldn't pitch to me.

"First I'd bat right-handed, then switch to the left side of the plate. But I wasn't supposed to swing. I walked the first four times up, but the fifth time the pitcher managed to get two strikes on me. When he threw another one that looked good, I had to swing.

"I fouled the ball and it was so low that it flew up under

the mask of the umpire behind the plate and hit him on the Adam's apple. He nearly choked and he was roaring mad at me!"

So, from almost the very beginning of his career, baseball's first switch-walker was a dangerous hitter!

## CHAPTER THREE

# *"I'll Take the Little One"*

*THERE WAS* no sport or athletic competition among New York City's high-school youngsters in the fall or winter of 1950-51 because the Board of Education, which held the purse strings, refused to reimburse teachers who coached and conducted extra-curricular activities for the children.

It was fortunate for Phil Rizzuto that the schoolteachers were not caught in such a financial squeeze in the early thirties, for it was high-school competition and the intense interest of a young coach who served without pay which pushed the little fellow toward his successful career.

Rizzuto, upon graduation from P.S. 68, enrolled at Richmond Hill High School. That was a few miles from his home but it was the nearest high school he could go to. If the city politicians were lax in providing playgrounds, they were grossly negligent in building and staffing sufficient schools. All the high schools were overcrowded and there was no money to erect new ones.

Richmond Hill, a section of Queens, was at the far end of pop's trolley route and farther out on Long Island than Glendale. Occasionally Phil saved the nickel carfare by

waiting for the old man's car to come along. Every nickel counted, back there in 1932, because those were the pre-New Deal times when nearly every corner had a man standing on it—selling apples.

Except for the athletics, Phil didn't care too much for school. He and the books fought a draw, neither gaining much from their association. Like most teen-agers, then and now, he considered the classroom a necessary evil. A fellow had to study so as to pass his grades in order to remain eligible for sports. The Scooter's affinity for learning was bred solely from his desire to stay eligible.

"He never thought about anything but baseball when he was in high school," his mother says. "He studied just about enough to pass and no more. His father and I were convinced that he wasn't going to become a well-educated man. Like most parents, we hoped he might go on and get the college education we had been unable to get. But he just wasn't one for the books."

While his book-learning was only passively attended to, Rizzuto's athletic development and education were rigorously pursued, both by the lad himself and by the coach of baseball at Richmond Hill, Al Kunitz.

Phil, timid and self-conscious about his size (he was fourteen but barely five feet tall), didn't go out for the baseball team in 1932, his first year in high school. He had intended to take a whack at it but was so shy that he gave up the idea when Johnny Zimmerlich, his best friend, became ineligible. The mite didn't know anyone else on the squad and was afraid to risk the ridicule of strange kids.

Zimmerlich got his studies in order the following spring and the two boys answered Coach Kunitz's call for candidates, Rizzuto nominating himself as a left fielder.

Kunitz commented on Phil's size, but more kindly than

others had. "You'll never make it as an outfielder," he said, after watching the youngster in a workout. "But with a pair of hands like you have and an arm like yours, what an infielder you'll make! Rabbit Marranville was a midget but he became a star."

Phil made the team—as the third baseman. A boy named Jimmy Castrataro was the shortstop and he was too good to be dislodged. The second baseman, Ralph Benzenberg, was the star of the club—good enough to be signed by the Giants to a farm-club contract after he graduated. He never made the grade in organized baseball, however.

Kunitz, who had been a scrappy varsity catcher at Columbia though he weighed only 135 pounds, knew his baseball. He helped all the youngsters become better ball players and Rizzuto credits the high-school coach with helping him more than anyone he has ever met.

"He worked hard with me," says Phil, who will never cease being grateful to the first man who believed in him. "He taught me to bunt and explained 'inside baseball,' such as the hit-and-run play. Al said I had better become an expert bunter because it would help my batting average. He pointed out that a ball player, in the average ball game, must hit three balls good—on the nose—to get one base hit. A smartly-placed bunt could make up for the bad breaks you get when your hard-hit balls are caught. Since I couldn't hit a long ball, I had to get my hits in other ways."

After that first season at Richmond Hill, Kunitz was sold on Rizzuto's ability to make the grade in professional baseball despite the runty build of the little infielder. Al had helped develop Marius Russo, a very fine left-handed pitcher, a few years earlier and Russo, who had gone on to college at Long Island University, eventually joined the

Yankee farm-system. Marius and Phil were to become teammates on the 1941 and 1942 American League pennant winners.

Kunitz’s opinion of Rizzuto was echoed by other coaches and newspapermen who wrote up scholastic athletics. Phil improved as he went along at Richmond Hill. He hit .354 in 1934, his second season on the team, was the captain, and received the highest accolade a schoolboy athlete can receive in New York City—an All-Scholastic rating. The *Long Island Press*, a Queens daily newspaper which is accepted as an authority on high school sports, named him as the best third baseman in the city.

The little fellow was not yet sixteen, but Kunitz wasn’t wasting any time. No Hollywood mother, incessantly hounding casting directors on behalf of her dimpled offspring, had anything on the young coach. Al was determined that Phil should get a chance to carry on his baseball career, either in college or professional ranks.

Of course, high-school competition wasn’t enough. Kunitz insisted that Phil get all the experience possible and this meant amateur sandlot and semi-pro ball in the summertime. During his first two years in high school, Phil played each Saturday and Sunday with the Glendale Browns, a neighborhood team, in a league known as the Queens Alliance. The teams in it were composed of youngsters between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one—though there was no age limit—and the kids played only for fun. They even sold chance books to get the money to buy uniforms.

In the summer of 1934 Phil moved up to better company, catching on with a light semi-pro club representing the town of Floral Park, which is in Nassau County and about fifteen miles farther from New York City than Glendale.

"That was the first team which paid me any money," the Yankee shortstop remembers, "but not very much of it. We charged admission but there were expenses and we had to pay guarantees to the teams we met. We didn't get a salary but it was arranged that we'd split up the profits at the end of the season. We did and I got \$120 for playing in eighty games."

Phil played shortstop with Floral Park that year and Kunitz switched him over to the most important infield spot at Richmond Hill High the following spring—1935. He had another fine season in PSAL ball and the *Press* again picked him as an All-Scholastic.

Kunitz, meanwhile, was getting the word about Phil around. He interested the St. Louis Cardinals sufficiently for that club to send a scout out to see Richmond Hill and its star shortstop. The Hilltoppers were meeting John Adams, another Queens school, in a game at Dexter Park, home of the famed Queens semi-pro team, the Bushwicks. In those days, many a Dodger fan was saying that the Bushwicks could beat the Brooks and there was a good chance they were right.

Phil had a great day. He made three hits and threw out one runner while sitting down, following a diving stop. He knew that the Cardinal "bird dog" was watching him, too. After his performance, Phil expected to be invited to meet Branch Rickey, then head bondsman of the St. Louis club's famed "chain-gang" system of minor-league clubs. He was disappointed.

"You had a pretty good day," the scout told him, "but, to tell you the truth, kid, you're not built to be a ballplayer. You're too small."

Phil felt a lot smaller than he actually was as the scout turned and walked away. But Kunitz comforted him.



"Don't worry, Phil," the ever-optimistic coach said. "There'll be others."

There were. The next one was from the Boston Red Sox, a chap named Egan. He looked Phil over in PSAL competition and also in his games with Floral Park. Incidentally, because the Scooter was still in school, he had to use another name when playing with the semi-pros. He adopted a fine old Italian name and, if you look it up, the newspaper box scores of the games will show that a fellow named Reilly played short for Floral Park!

Egan was much more interested than the Card scout had been—for a while, anyway. He offered Phil \$250 to sign with a Red Sox farm-team and Rizzuto went home to talk it over with his parents. That kind of money was big dough in those times and Mom and Pop told him to take it. He wanted to be nothing else but a ball player and if somebody was willing to pay him just for nothing but a signature, it was wonderful.

Phil could hardly sleep that night and the next morning he reported promptly at the designated spot to keep his appointment with Egan. But the man never showed, and, after waiting for a couple of hours, the dejected little guy trudged home—\$250 poorer and no nearer getting a start in organized baseball.

"I never heard of Egan again," Phil recalls. "At the time, I was sore and I told myself that he probably forgot all about me and went to a bar. But I guess he just decided that I wasn't good enough to waste that kind of dough on."

Egan's decision, however he arrived at it, proved to be a monumental mistake years later. Had Rizzuto been playing shortstop for the Red Sox in 1949 and 1950, Boston would have been participating in the World Series those years, not New York.

George Mack, a Yankee scout, also had been interested in Rizzuto by Kunitz. He had turned in a complimentary report to Paul Krichell, head of the New York club's talent-scout staff, and Krichell had also watched Phil in action a couple of times. Krichell did his spying quietly and Phil never knew, until much later, that the Yankee executive was assaying him.

Kunitz, never despairing, figured that Phil's path to the majors might possibly have to be a devious one—that additional experience in collegiate competition might serve to spotlight his talent. That, after all, had been the course of Russo and others such as Frank Frisch, Lou Gehrig—even Eddie Collins and Christy Mathewson.

Richmond Hill had a game booked with the Columbia freshman team at Bakers Field in the spring of 1935. It was a blustery day, the raw winds making the pitchers' plight intolerable and blowing flies into base hits. It was a high-scoring game and Benzenberg was the star that afternoon.

George Vecsey, then sports editor of the *Long Island Press* and now on the New York staff of the Associated Press, covered the game. When it was over, he huddled in conversation with Ralph Furey, then the lion cubs' coach and now athletic director of the University. Vecsey nominated Benzenberg as a possible player for Columbia but Furey answered, "I'll take the little runt at third base. He's got the makings of a good player."

Furey, at the urging of Kunitz, did consider Phil for a scholarship but the boy's grades at Richmond Hill were not good enough for admission to the University.

Kunitz, with the persistence and endurance of an insurance salesman, tried to get Phil into Fordham, too. He sent his prize up to the Ram campus for a workout, in

which Jack Coffey, athletic boss and baseball coach, looked him over.

"Fordham had a great team then," Phil says. "Babe Young, who later played with the Giants, was on first base and Tony DePhillips, who was signed by the Yanks, was the catcher. I worked out at short and took batting practice and, when it was over, Coffey offered me a scholarship. He insisted that I would have to come out for football, too."

The Ram coach figured that Phil's great speed would make him an asset to Jim Crowley's gridders—a scat-back who, lacking poundage, could run away from bigger men. Such a type is Buddy Young, former Illinois and present professional great with the New York Yanks of the National Football League.

Phil told Coffey he would think it over. Coffey went to Europe that summer and left the details to be worked out by a subordinate. Phil decided to take the two-sport deal but when he tried to get it arranged, no one in the Fordham athletic office knew anything about Coffey's offer. The Scooter gave up. Anyway, his high school marks would have made admission to Fordham as difficult as to Columbia.

Rizzuto was back in school in 1936 but, as the gag goes, he wasn't taking up anything but space. French and other languages were throwing him and he was playing hookey too often to keep up with his classmates. By mutual consent, Rizzuto and Richmond Hill High severed their connection in the spring of that year. Any education which would benefit him in later life would have to come on the diamond. He was determined to be a ball player and, though his attitude was wrong, he felt that school was a waste of time. Rizzuto did get a diploma, gratis, many years

later. In 1948 the school held its seventy-fifth anniversary celebration and all students who had gone on to success in life were awarded diplomas and certified as graduates.

Kunitz never relaxed in his crusade to find a place for Phil. Even after the little guy quit school, they kept in touch with each other. Phil, not wanting to be a dead-weight at home, got himself a job—through his reputation as a ball player. S. Gumpert & Co., manufacturers of food-stuff for hotels, had a ball team in the Brooklyn Industrial League, which played twilight games at the Prospect Park Parade Grounds. They needed a shortstop and Phil needed work, so he became a pudding puddler. His task each day was to help another man lift barrels of syrup and one hundred-pound bags of sugar so that they could be emptied into a huge vat to be made into butterscotch. Rizzuto could handle the heavy work because he had such muscular shoulders and arms.

The job and the ball games for the firm were a fill-in. Phil never wavered in his belief that he could become a major leaguer and Kunitz never stopped trying to find someone who would take the little man seriously. Al arranged the abortive Dodger and Giant "tryouts" that summer, and, when Phil was given the double brushoff, turned again to the Yanks.

Krichell had seen enough of Phil to realize that the boy rated at least a tryout, despite the handicap of his size. Krich, a smallish, cruller-legged guy himself, had been a big-league catcher with the St. Louis Browns before the first World War.

Paul, who is sixty-nine years of age now, is a unique character. He is the finest judge of baseball talent there is in the world. He has worked for the Yankees for thirty years and, more than any other man, is responsible for the

unceasing flood of talent which has been funnelled into Yankee Stadium. The Yankees don't get championship players by accident. Krichell and his staff of gimlet-eyed aides know how to sort the good prospects from the others. Paul can spot a kid in a Sunday-school league and make a pretty good guess as to whether the youngster will ever merit a locker in the Yankee clubhouse.

Krichell was much smarter than the Dodger and Giant officials in that he didn't believe in mass tryouts. "If you try to look at too many kids, you really don't see any of them," he says. "Give a good look to a few at a time and you are more apt to come up with the good ones. At least, you won't miss a kid because you didn't happen to pick him out from among a hundred others."

Paul sent Phil a letter early in August of that year (1936), inviting him to a tryout at Yankee Stadium. Phil had no way of knowing that this one would be different from the others and he was happily surprised when he got there and discovered that the Yankees had asked only twenty-five boys to come. There, in the largest of the three New York parks, he found himself in the smallest group he had seen.

"We were divided into two teams," he recalls. "We played a regular game—three innings—every day for five days. The Yankees were home at the time and we worked out before they came onto the field at noon. I played second base the first day and shortstop on the other four.

"It was wonderful. I saw Gehrig and Dickey and the other great Yankees. And Tony Lazzeri actually spoke to me. I guess I'd have gone home happy after it was over just for the fact that I'd been so close to those guys."

Krichell supervised the games and Coach Art Fletcher, manager Joe McCarthy's assistant, batted grounders in

infield practice. There were some pretty good ball players in the group, including Tommy Holmes, who later starred with the Braves, and Jim Prendergast, who went on to pitch for the Cardinals and Phillies.

Krich sounded out Fletch on the youngsters and the coach, who had been a star shortstop himself in the National League, said quickly, "I'll take the little one out there at short. He handles himself like a major leaguer right now."

After the fifth workout, Fletcher approached Rizzuto and asked, "Would you like to go away, kid?"

Phil nearly jumped out of his spikes at the question. After stammering a quick "Yes, sir," he rushed to change into his street clothes, dashed out to the nearest phone booth, and called his mother. After giving her the glad news, he dialed Kunitz to tell his faithful friend that the crusade had ended successfully.

Under baseball law at the time, a major-league club could not sign a sandlotter directly. He had to be taken on by a minor-league affiliate. Krichell wanted to give him a contract with a team in Butler, Pennsylvania, of the Pennsylvania State League, at \$75 per month. That was a Class D league and the Yanks also had a D team at Bassett, Virginia. Phil asked to be sent to the latter club instead, because the Bassett season, due to the milder Virginia climate, started a month earlier than Butler's, and he could make an extra seventy-five bucks.

"I thought that was pretty good money," Phil says. "The kids around home who had jobs were making about \$12 a week then."

Since Phil was a minor, one of his parents had to sign for him. The Yankees sent the contract to his home and Mrs. Rizzuto took charge.

"I went into New York to see Mr. Krichell," she relates. "I wanted to know more about it. Phil was only seventeen and had never been away from home. I didn't know anything about baseball or its ways.

"Mr. Krichell assured me that Phil would be all right. He said that he would see to it that he was placed in a good, clean place to live and that he would be as safe in Bassett as he would be at home. I signed the contract after he promised me that nothing would happen to my boy."

There was, of course, no bonus for the signature. That was before the days of the bonus-babies such as Curt Simmons and Robin Roberts of the Phils, Dick Wakefield of the Tigers, and Paul Pettit of the Pittsburgh Pirates. As kids, those fellows received gifts of from \$25,000 to \$100,000 for signing. Rizzuto got nothing but the chance to become a Yankee.

Years later, Yank General Manager Ed Barrow said, "Rizzuto cost me fifteen cents, ten for postage and five for a cup of coffee we gave him the last day he worked out at the Stadium."

Never, but never, has fifteen cents gone so far.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# *Minor Matters*

MRS. RIZZUTO liked to give a small party—just the family and some close friends and neighbors—when any of the children went away from home or when they came back.

“It always was much better when they came back from someplace,” she recalls. “Then I could enjoy myself. But I didn’t like the ‘going away’ parties because those always meant that I’d be without one of the children for a while.”

Mom didn’t care at all for the party she gave when Phil left for Bassett, in the spring of 1937. It meant Phil was going away from home for the first time in his life and Virginia seemed to be such a long way from Queens. Although she had the maternal foresight to realize that the youngster could take care of himself, she also was beset with the worries that all mothers possess when a child—Phil was eighteen—went out on his own for the first time.

“I wasn’t sure that it was the best thing,” she remembers. “He was so small and he didn’t look very much like a ball player. Even though Mr. Krichell had assured me he would be all right, I was not very happy. His dad and I both felt that the Yankees were too big a team and that he was too little ever to make the major leagues. This going to Bassett,



a place we had never heard of, didn't seem like the best thing for him. I wished it had been somewhere closer to home."

Phil, with fewer misgivings than his mother, reported to Bassett and Ray White, former Columbia University pitcher who was the manager of that link in the Yankee chain. White arranged for him to live at a comfortable boarding house "with nice people," as Krichell had promised Mrs. Rizzuto. Herb Karpel, Phil's Richmond Hill High buddie, was there too.

Bassett was as good a place as any to start a baseball career—no more. A small town of 3,500 people, approximately one-third of them Negroes, it was as much a part of Jim-Crow land as Mobile, Alabama. The principal industry, and just about the only one, was the furniture factory founded by E. D. Bassett, after whom the town was named. Bassett was one of eight small communities in the Bi-State League, all eight of which were in either Virginia or North Carolina. Each town or city was within a radius of seventy-five miles and the entire schedule was played in one-day or one-night stands.

"We never stayed overnight in another town—it was back on the bus to Bassett after every game," Phil recalls. "We never saw a hotel at all. Each of us got thirty-five cents a day meal money. The League rules set a limit of fifteen players on each squad. We had two catchers, six pitchers, and the seven other players. If anyone was hurt or a pinch-hitter was needed, a pitcher had to go into the game in some other position, as an outfielder or infielder."

This personnel limit was to become the underlying cause of near-tragedy for Rizzuto—an injury which threatened to cost him his left leg and end his career practically before it had begun.

Phil and the Bassett team started off the season in high gear and were rolling along in first place. The little short-stop was the most popular player on the team, both with his teammates and with the fans of the town. He hit well, fielded brilliantly, and was the subject of glowing reports which White dispatched to Krichell in New York.

But, after less than a month of the season, Rizzuto developed a "charley horse" in his left thigh. That's the athlete's expression for a sore muscle. It was difficult for him to move around on the bum member, particularly to cover ground and make the double-play pivot. But there was no one else to put in, so White tried to keep Phil going. Ray would spend an hour and a half each day before the game, treating the injury, himself. He wound a big wad of adhesive tape around the handle of a broken bat and kneaded the sore muscle in the fashion of a massage. Then the manager would tape it tightly, so that the shortstop could play with a minimum of pain.

This amateur physiotherapy did enable Phil to keep on playing. But, to the later dismay of both White and Phil, the delay in getting professional care resulted in something more serious. The treatment was a soporific but not a cure, and the pain was more intense each time the tape bandage was removed. So, shortly before Memorial Day, White took Phil to be examined by a Dr. Johnson, who had a private practice in Bassett and also served as examining physician for a railroad.

"What has happened," the doctor told them after looking over the injury, "is that the muscle in your leg has pulled apart. It's something that happens maybe once in a million cases of strain."

Dr. Johnson said that an operation was necessary immediately, because gangrene had set in. Any further delay

in cleaning out the infection would have been tragic for the tiny ball player. "If this had continued for a few more days, we would have had to take the leg off," the medic said grimly.

There was no time to get permission for the operation from Rizzuto's family. White, shaken at the diagnosis, accepted responsibility for the operation and signed the necessary papers. Dr. Johnson operated on Phil a few hours later, and a total of thirty-seven stitches were required to close the incision. Phil still carries a long red scar, from just above his knee almost to the groin. The surgery was so good that the leg never has bothered him again, aside from an occasional simple charley horse. "Charley" hops onto almost every athlete's legs for a free ride at one time or another.

Mrs. Rizzuto, unaware that her son was in a hospital, had her brother Dominick drive her down from New York with the intention of seeing Phil play ball over the holiday weekend. Instead, she spent her afternoons in the hospital.

"I never thought he'd play ball again after that," she recalls. "Dominick and I drove home with the feeling that Phil would be back with us after they let him out of the hospital and that the Yankees would no longer be interested in him. Baseball, of course, was not as important as his health and I was worried that he might be lame."

But the timely and successful intervention of the surgeon's scalpel had saved both the leg and Phil's career. After a couple of months' convalescence in Bassett, he was able to return to the lineup. He finished out the season and helped his team win the Bi-State pennant. Although he was able to play in only sixty-seven games, Rizzuto's ability was obvious. The mite hit an impressive .310, his eighty-eight hits including seventeen doubles, five triples, and five

homers. He recaptured his speed on the bases and in the field, too.

When Phil said good-bye to his friends at Bassett in late September, he expected to be back in the little town the following year. Although he had hit for a good average, his half-season on the sidelines figured to preclude promotion to a higher-class club in the New York minor-league setup.

White, however, had other ideas. George Weiss, Yankee farm chief, was promoting him to Norfolk, Virginia, of the Class B Piedmont League, as manager. This circuit, comprising the cities of Norfolk, Charlotte, Richmond, Winston-Salem, Asheville, Durham, Portsmouth, and Rocky Mount, was two notches above the Class D Bi-State. White, believing Rizzuto could make the jump, asked that Phil be shifted along with him the following spring.

The Yankee chief demurred at first, then yielded. Norfolk already had a fine-looking shortstop from nearby Sunbury, North Carolina, by the name of Claude Corbitt. He had been a star athlete at Duke University in nearby Durham, and so was a big local favorite. From the outset, the two youngsters were pitted against each other for the regular job as shortstop.

Rizzuto didn't start very well but Corbitt pounded the ball and led the club with a .320 average. The tall, slim Claude was the prime favorite of the Tars' fans and Rizzuto was resigned to a season on the bench or demotion to a lower level in the farm system. After a while, the front office in New York sent word to White that he would have to give up one of the two boys. Augusta, Georgia, Yankee link in the Class A South Atlantic League (Sally League), needed a shortstop. White decided to let Corbitt go. The move represented an advancement for Phil's rival in that he rose to a stronger league, a notch closer to the Yankees.

White, whose own reputation and future were involved, didn't make the choice out of sentiment. It would have been much easier and most pleasant for him to keep the local boy and sidetrack Rizzuto. The manager was interested in winning the pennant and he believed Phil to be a better man for the job than Corbitt. The subsequent major-league careers of the two players proved him a wise judge of talent. Corbitt, three years older than Phil, bumped around the minors until 1942 and then served four years in the uniform of Uncle Sam. When he returned from the wars, he had a chance with the Dodgers and couldn't make the grade. The Cincinnati Reds also found him wanting. Claude, a fine fielder, lacked Rizzuto's ability to hit good pitching.

The paying customers didn't take kindly to the dismissal of Corbitt and they howled for White's scalp. It was then up to Phil (Piedmont League newspapermen were then beginning to call him "The Flea") to vindicate the manager's decision. Rizzuto, who regarded White as his guardian angel, came through.

Norfolk had many good ball players that year; at least half a dozen of the others eventually made the grade in the majors. Among them were Aaron Robinson, former Yankee, Chicago White Sox, and Detroit Tigers' catcher; Jack Graham, first baseman-outfielder, who saw extended service in the National League with the Dodgers and Giants and also put in a season with the St. Louis Browns; Billy Johnson, fine Yankee third baseman; Milo Candini, a right-handed pitcher who spent six American League summers as a Washington Senator and then shifted over to the Phils in time to be a member of the 1950 National League champions; and Bud Metheny, wartime outfielder who helped the Yanks win the 1943 pennant.

Another rookie at Norfolk in 1938 was Jerry Priddy, a solidly built second baseman who was to become Rizzuto's alter-ego. While Phil was being signed by Krichell in the summer of 1936, Priddy also was being assimilated into the New York club's incubator. Across the country, in a Los Angeles suburb, Jerry's prowess was outstanding among the sandlot players. Bill Essick, who retired as West Coast scout for the Yankees only last year, signed him to a Yankee farm contract. His was also a Class D pact, with Rogers, Arkansas, of the Arkansas-Missouri League. Priddy, a moon-faced, deep-chested youth, was just a year younger than the little shortstop. He hit .336 at Rogers and so was promoted to Norfolk for the 1938 season.

There began an association which was to make them the most talked-of second-short combination in the minor leagues for the next three years and ultimately bring them to Yankee Stadium together.

Phil and Jerry became a Damon-and-Pythias duo, inseparable on the field and off. Seldom, too, was one spoken of without the other—they just seemed to be twins. Around second base they seemed to be fused into one super-human. Baseball men all over the country—scouts, owners, and newspapermen—passed the word that the Yankees had come up with the greatest second-base pair in minor-league history.

The superlatives were merited. By the end of the year, the fans of Norfolk loved little Phil and big Jerry. A sidelight on the pair was the strong affection Priddy had for his mitey partner. When an opposing player tried to give Phil the "works" in a take-out play at second base, Priddy stepped in and put the aggressor in his place.

"You have to settle with me when you do that," he told

a runner who had deliberately slid into Phil with spikes high.

"I'll do that if you want me to," the offender answered.

He did and took a whipping from Priddy. Rizzuto never asked for such protection but the rest of the league knew that it would be at hand and so, outside of the usual attempts to break up double plays at second base—routine slides which are accepted as one of the hazards of being pivot man on a twin kill—there were few attempts to maim li'l Phil.

The teen-agers were like a pair of matched jewels. The Yankee farm-system, then at the height of its fertility, was loaded with gems but none to compare with nineteen-year-old Philip Francis Rizzuto and eighteen-year-old Gerald Edward Priddy.

Priddy batted .323 in 132 games, with a league-leading total of thirty-six doubles. He had six triples, nine home runs, and seventy-three runs batted in. Rizzuto, in 112 games, cracked out a lusty .336 average and batted in fifty-eight runs. He banged twenty-four two-base hits, ten three-baggers, and nine homers. It was hard to tell which was the better but the Yankee farm boss, George Weiss, was in the happy position of not having to make a distinction. For Weiss, an enthusiastic race-track bettor, it was like having both horses in a dead heat for first. He couldn't lose.

After such sparkling performances as these, there was no doubt that Rizzuto and Priddy were on their way to the majors. Even his number-one fan and most reluctant believer, Momma Rizzuto, was beginning to feel a warm glow when other folks spoke of her little boy's chances of reaching the big leagues.

"They moved him to Kansas City the following season,"

she recalls. "And that impressed both his father and myself. He still wasn't making much money—he never really did in baseball until after the war—but he was getting ahead."

Despite his glittering performances, Rizzuto certainly wasn't getting rich. Who ever does in the minors? His \$75-per-month salary at Bassett was doubled when he was promoted to Norfolk. The elevation to KC resulted in it being doubled again. Baseball salaries cover only the six and a half months of the league schedule, of course, so Phil really was getting a yearly wage of about \$1,950 in his first year at Kansas City. His salary was doubled once more for his second year there, incidentally.

Kansas City, Missouri, is the premier link in the Yankees' extensive farm system—the make-or-break station at which the men are separated from the boys. Success there meant a jump to fabulous Yankee Stadium and the chance to wear the creamy-white flannels made famous by such greats as Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and Tony Lazzeri. Failure in KC put a prospect right behind the eight-ball, of course. The Yankee front office, which deals in humans with the sentiment and sympathy of a card-indexer built by International Business Machines, would earmark him for disposal. Unless a youngster was lucky enough to be picked up by some major-league outfit of less demanding standards than the Yanks, he was faced with the disheartening drop down the ladder to oblivion.

Phil met the challenge without flinching. Although the smallest player in the American Association—as usual—he quickly showed his class. "The little guy's a pro," was the accolade paid to him by opposing players and managers. He was even better against the tougher competition of the Association than he had been in Norfolk the previous year.



And so was Priddy. Each increased in stature and, together, became the outstanding stars in the Yankee chain.

Both had great natural ability and just about all they needed was added polish—they had to acquire “know how.” Billy Meyer, later manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates, was the field boss at KC and as fine a teacher as there was in the business. Then forty-five years of age, Billy had been in baseball for twenty-eight of them as a player in the minors (he was a catcher) and manager. Weiss has always picked his minor-league pilots just as carefully as most men do their wives. He had many good young prospects scattered through the fertile nurseries and wasn't of a mind to have any of them retarded by poor handling. Meyer deftly applied the veneer which smoothed and glossed the few rough edges the two youngsters still had. He taught them how to bunt, hit-and-run, tag runners, and play hitters. By the end of the year, they were the greatest names in minor-league baseball and seemed to be ready for the majors.

Their fielding was flawless and they hit with the force of blacksmiths. Little Phil whammed Association pitching for a .316 average, hit five homers, and batted in sixty-four runs. Priddy, twenty-five pounds heavier and six inches taller than Rizzuto, clubbed .333 and batted in 107 runs. Jerry's extra base-power was prodigious. He led the league with forty-four doubles, slashed fifteen triples and powdered twenty-four home runs.

Their exploits helped Kansas City make a runaway race to the pennant. The Blues won 107 games and Meyer was named Minor League Manager of the Year by *Sporting News*, a baseball weekly. Yankee Stadium was getting closer for the two ex-sandlotters from opposite sides of the country but circumstances dictated their continuance in the Association for one more year.

Ed Barrow, president and general manager of the Yankees, was offered \$250,000 for the pair or \$150,000 for Rizzuto alone after the conclusion of that season. That was 1939, before the dollar became cheapened by wartime inflation. He and Weiss turned down the barrels of money, even though they had no room on the Yankees for either player.

The year 1939 had been one of the most successful in the history of the New York club and its farms. The parent team had swept to its fourth straight pennant and world championship—an all-time record. Manager Joe McCarthy seemed to be set for years to come as far as second base and shortstop were concerned. Joe Gordon was the best second baseman alive and agile, artful Frank Crosetti was as classy a shortstop as the American League had seen in two generations. There simply was no reason for advancing Rizzuto and Priddy, although they were better ball players than many playing their respective short and second positions in the majors.

So, it was back to Kansas City for the 1940 season, and the presence of Priddy and Rizzuto guaranteed the Blues their second straight pennant. They reeled off 193 double plays, an American Association Record. Incidentally, this was the fourth successive year—each season they'd been in professional ball—that Jerry and Phil had played on flag-winning clubs. Priddy had helped Rogers cop the Arkansas-Missouri flag in '37, when Phil was at Bassett, and they had continued to travel as champions when they joined each other at Norfolk.

There was a slight shift in the performance of the pair from one year at KC to the next. Priddy slipped a bit, hitting only .306 for a drop of twenty-seven points. But he retained his power and drove in 112 runs, five better than the

previous season. Rizzuto, the scampering scooter, became the finest non-major-league ball player. Phil was the sensation of the league, though only twenty-one years of age. The mite amazed all baseball by making 201 hits for a .347 average. He belted ten triples and the same number of homers and knocked in seventy-three runs—high for his career in the important RBI column. He led the league in stolen bases with thirty-five. The fans of the midwest metropolis, voting in a merchant-sponsored poll, selected him as the most popular player on the club. At season's end, *Sporting News* tabbed Rizzuto as Number-one Minor League Player of the Year.

There was no doubt that, after the 1940 campaign, the firm of Priddy and Rizzuto would move up to Yankee Stadium. Barrow merely made it official when, during the winter, he placed their names on the Yankees' spring-training roster and sent them Yankee contracts.

The Yankee organization was the envy of every other team in baseball. Having Jerry and Phil was like having the Hope Diamond in one hand and the Kohinoor in the other—just in case of a tie. Staid, conservative baseball men who had no business connections with the Yanks went into unblushing raves over the prospects of the pair—concentrating most of their bravos on Rizzuto.

Tom Sheehan, Minneapolis manager, predicted that Phil would provoke as much of a sensation in the American League as Joe DiMaggio had when he broke in with the Yankees in 1936. Sheehan believed that Rizzuto was a great shortstop, rather than merely a good one. He preached the gospel of the Scooter's magnificence every time he gathered with baseball people, citing an instance to prove his point.

On Tom's Minneapolis club then was Hub Walker, former major-league outfielder who, after his retirement from

baseball, became a successful salesman for a Detroit automobile agency. Hub was one of the best drag bunters in the profession—probably the equal of Rizzuto, himself, at that precise art.

One of Walker's pet tricks was to lean over the plate in bunting position, when there was a runner on first base. Batting left-handed from this stance, Hub caused the defensive infield to swing into the usual formation, the first baseman tiptoeing in to field the bunt while the second baseman dashed over to cover first base and take a throw. Instead of bunting, Walker sometimes whirled the bat like a baton with his wrists and pushed the ball toward the spot just vacated by the second baseman.

"It never failed," Tom related, "so long as Hub was able to make connections with the ball, which he did most of the time. It was the perfect play—there was no defense for it. At least, we thought there wasn't any when the bunt was executed properly.

"We pulled it a few times against Kansas City, as well as against every other club in the League. But one day it didn't work because Rizzuto outfoxed us. He saw what was coming and charged clear across the diamond from his shortstop position, fielded the ball on the first-base side of second, and threw to Priddy at first. He got Walker by a couple of steps and Hub is very fast. It was a great play for Rizzuto to field the ball, let alone throw out the runner, because Hub gets a tremendous jump from the plate on that particular play."

Rizzuto had been making such great plays ever since he'd played ball. It's unlikely that any shortstop in the history of the game could cover more ground to his left than Phil—with the possible exception of long-legged Marty Marion of the St. Louis Cardinals. Marion became manager

of the Cards for the 1951 season after a back infirmity cut short his playing career.

Meyer considered Priddy and Rizzuto the best ball players he had ever managed. He had no doubt of their ability to move into the Yankee picture as regulars the following year. Asked about the kids' chances at the Stadium, Billy grinned and said, in his soft Southern drawl, "I wonder what the Yanks are going to do with Gordon!"

By that answer, Billy implied that both of the lads were good enough to step in as regulars and hold their positions for many years. He proved to be only half correct as a prophet. Phil made it but Jerry, after two so-so seasons as a Yankee, was traded off to Washington. He since has played with St. Louis and Detroit of the American League.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# *Rookie of the Year*

*PHIL RIZZUTO* was lucky that, from his earliest days, his good parents had so formed his character that he was endowed with the grace of humility. Had he been other than the modest little chap that he is, Phil might never have been a successful big leaguer at all. The Scooter could have become one of the many victims of premature publicity, talented professionals whose careers were ruined by overdoses of adulation in the newspapers and on the airwaves.

When Phil reported to the Yankees' spring-training base at St. Petersburg, Florida, in February of 1941, he had played only 462 games of professional baseball, all in the minor leagues. Yet his name was almost as well known to the thirty million ball fans in the United States as that of Joe DiMaggio. Surging tons of printer's ink and wild airwaves buffeted the mite from Glendale long before he ever put on a Yankee uniform. Certainly enough to turn his head, if he had been cursed with a head which could be turned.

Phil had been voted the Number-one Minor League Baseball Player for 1940. He and Priddy, through their

spectacular keystone capers, were labelled the greatest second-base combination ever developed in the minors. The Tigers wanted both boys but would gladly have taken either if the Yankee front office was willing to do business. It wasn't, of course. The club had finished third in 1940 and it could use good players as well as anyone else—particularly if the pair were even close to being the stars everyone claimed they were.

Rizzuto received most of the publicity, not because he outshone Priddy by such a wide margin, but because there was a shortstop's job waiting on the Yankees. Frankie Crosetti, after nine years as a star player, had gone into eclipse the previous year. He was slowing up afield and had practically forgotten how to hit. In 1940 he had the lowest batting average of any regular player in the major leagues, exactly .194. In 546 times at bat he had made only 106 hits and had driven in the anemic total of 31 runs. Phil was certain to replace the veteran Italian—a man who had been his own personal hero just a few years before, when Phil's uncle used to take the youngster up to Yankee Stadium to see the Bombers win pennants as the "Crow" starred in the shortfield. Priddy had no such opening because Joe Gordon was in his prime—twenty-six years old and acclaimed as the greatest fielding second baseman of all time.

For the four years prior to 1940, the Yankees were the greatest baseball team ever. They won four pennants and four world championships in succession—a feat never before achieved. They lost but three of nineteen World Series games in that period. They wrecked the American League in this devastating sweep, averaging 102 victories per 154-game season. Then, unaccountably, they lost the touch in 1940 and finished third to Detroit and Cleveland. It was the biggest collapse since Humpty-Dumpty defied the law of

gravity. Most of the blame was put on Crosetti's bad year and the experts blatantly proclaimed that young Phil would step in and remedy the defect. It was quite an order and an unfair burden to place upon the twenty-two-year-old rookie.

The first people to become alarmed over the winter-long tub-thumping were the Yankees themselves, President Ed Barrow and George Weiss, head of the farm system. Phil received word from headquarters that he was getting too much publicity in January of 1941—though there hardly was anything that he could do about it. *The Saturday Evening Post* ran an article acclaiming little Phil as the find of the year, labelling him "Rookie Number-one."

Phil had not signed his contract at the time and, in urging him to soft-pedal the hurrahs, Barrow may have been motivated by motives of finance, rather than psychology. Old Ed's hoary hands had strangled many a buffalo unfortunate enough to be riding a nickel in his possession. Phil did sign up shortly thereafter. Barrow offered him \$5,000 on the condition that he make good and Phil accepted readily. Actually, Phil would have grabbed the offer at half the salary because he was about to realize a boyhood dream—playing ball in Yankee Stadium.

The Yankees, then and now, are the greatest name in baseball. Who can really estimate how much it means to a ball-batty kid from the sidewalks of New York to put on a Yankee uniform? How can you gauge the bursting pride Rizzuto felt when he first climbed into the immaculate pin-striped pants and blouse of creamy white and tugged at the peak of the dignified black cap with the NY monogram embroidered on it in white silk?

"To tell you the truth," Phil reveals now, "when I first saw those big guys down there at spring training, I didn't



think I'd make it. They were so darned big—DiMaggio, Henrich and Keller, Ruffing, Dickey, Lindell—all of them. I was really discouraged for quite a while.”

Phil's lack of size actually kept him from getting into the clubhouse at Huggins Field for a while on that first day of spring training in 1941 at St. Pete.

He approached the low, wooden building in which the Yanks dress at the willow-bordered practice field and started to enter.

Fred Logan, long-time clubhouse custodian for the Yankees, looked up as the runty youngster stepped in and snorted. “Beat it, Sonny,” he barked, shaking his close-shaved head vigorously and waving a gnarled hand in the direction of the small bleacher stand which adjoins the field. Then, in the tired voice of one who is constantly harassed by curious youngsters and pesky autograph hounds, he added, “You can see the players when they come out on the field and get autographs signed, too. Outside, now!”

Rizzuto began to protest and Logan was in the process of evicting him bodily when Lefty Gomez, the veteran left-hander with the wonderful sense of humor, intervened. “Aw, let him in, Fred,” Lefty said. “He belongs here.”

Then, to Rizzuto, “Come on in here, you cockroach, before one of these Florida grasshoppers steps on you!”

Phil went in and found his locker—right between those of Bill Dickey and Red Ruffing. He was so scared that he wanted to turn around and run right out again. But those grand veterans quickly made him comfortable with their breezy conversation and incessant quips. In no time at all, Rizzuto found out how swell it was to be a Yankee—to be an accepted member of a select clan of proud, dignified professionals who were the finest in their business.

Although he had received a well-grounded baseball edu-

cation at Norfolk and Kansas City and had been under such great tutors as Ray White and Bill Meyer, Rizzuto still had a good deal to learn about the game. The Yankees, particularly Manager McCarthy and, of all people, Crosetti, gave him their time and their knowledge so that he could become a better, more-rounded ball player. So did Gordon.

"Can you dance?" the manager asked him the first day.

"Sure," Phil answered, grinning at what seemed to be a foolish question.

"Not on the dance floor," Mac snapped. "I mean on the field. Can you shift your feet as though you were doing a buck-and-wing dance?"

Phil, embarrassed, said no, and so McCarthy showed him how to use little dancing steps in going after a ground ball. He insisted that Phil practice those mincing steps so that he could field the ball without wasted time and motion. The manager also corrected a foot-fault which Phil never knew he possessed. Joe noticed that, in fielding a grounder to deep short, the rookie always jammed his spikes into the ground before stooping to pick up the ball. McCarthy made him bring his right foot to a sliding stop, so as to be in a better-balanced position to make the grab and the throw to first base. Gordon chipped in with demonstrations of the technique and Crosetti, literally helping Phil to swipe his job, joined in the instruction.

Those men made the little fellow a better fielder and contributed to his ultimate stardom and MVP selection. To them he is eternally grateful. Crosetti, particularly, taught him to take advantage of his size—to make his minute stature a favorable factor, rather than a detriment.

The outstanding feature of Phil's shortstop technique is that he actually does stop the ball short. He plays a very

shallow position, compared to most other shortstops, and there is no man in baseball who can play a ball as low as Rizzuto.

"If I played too deep, I'd be letting the ball play me," the Scooter says. "I prefer to rush the ball and play it low. For one thing, that makes the throw to first shorter for me. I don't have the 'gun' that some others have and, by playing close, I save time. When you figure out how many runners are beaten at first by half a step, that split second I save becomes important."

There probably wasn't a single phase of baseball that Crosetti didn't touch in his education of Phil that spring—hitting, fielding, base-running, sliding, playing the other hitters, and even the art of getting hit with a pitched ball without being damaged—a faculty for which the Crow was famous.

Someone else was interested in Phil, too. That was the chairman of his local draft board in Glendale. The Selective Service Law had been passed late in 1940 and Phil, being of age, had registered. One sunny morning Phil opened his mail and found one of those "Greetings" which were to become coldly familiar to over ten million American youths—an order for a pre-induction physical exam in New York.

He had the physical transferred to St. Petersburg and was okayed for service on March 19. Ten days later he was deferred because he was the major support of his family and placed in a 3-A classification. A deferment of that nature was a common one in those pre-war days and Phil's was perfectly legitimate. His dad was making only \$20 per week as a part-time dock worker and his brother Al, who was two years younger, was unemployed. Congress had not

legalized subsistence for a draftee's dependents at that time and so the local boards made it a practice to defer any man whose induction would exert a genuine hardship on his family.

With the draft board satisfied, Phil was able to devote his full time to making the Yankees. The advance notices were big and the little man intended to live up to them.

Priddy didn't go unnoticed while Phil was being tabbed as "most likely to succeed" in the Yankee training camp. He received instruction from the older heads and, after a couple of weeks of indecision on the part of McCarthy, became the focal point of almost all discussion among the writers and players in the Yankee party. The manager, after giving the matter a lot of thought, decided that he would have to find a place in the regular lineup for Jerry as well as Phil. Naturally, he realized that, since both were to be in there every day, it would be sound baseball to keep them together as a combination. This forced a radical maneuver—the transformation of Gordon, the very finest second baseman in baseball, into a first baseman. The agile infielder agreed to the switch because the team had no first sacker of any ability. He wasn't crazy about the idea, though.

McCarthy was roundly criticized for sidetracking Gordon's talent at a proven position in favor of a rookie, but Marse Joe stuck to his guns. He reasoned that the successful transformation of Gordon would insure a flag for the Yanks—he was that much sold on Priddy's chances of making the grade. The manager had no intention of hurting the Flash, of course. He merely was trying to help the Yankees regain the world championship.

Gordon looked like a fish out of water at first base, although he was the most graceful acrobat imaginable at

second. McCarthy stuck with the plan, anyway, and the Yanks opened the season with an infield of Gordon, 1B; Priddy, 2B; Rizzuto, SS, and Red Rolfe, 3B. Rolfe was the only incumbent in his regular position.

Rizzuto was the most alert rookie the Yanks had brought to a training camp in a long time. He had no trouble convincing all onlookers in the spring exhibitions that he was a big leaguer. Priddy, suffering by comparison in the minds of the players and writers who recalled Gordon's amazing second-base play, wasn't as big a hit as his partner.

Anyway, they began the season together and McCarthy's noble experiment was given a chance to develop into something substantial. The Yanks' first game was in Washington, which traditionally opens the season one day before the rest of the major-league cities with the President of the United States throwing out the first ball. President Roosevelt attended the game and performed the rite. FDR, alone, would have been a big thrill for the keystone kids. But they got another.

Just before the game began, Rizzuto and Priddy were fêted in a surprise ceremony. Phil, wide-eyed and happy, bubbled excitedly as two girls from Norfolk pushed baby carriages loaded with packages toward home plate. Each carriage was partially hidden by a huge floral horseshoe, under which was a travelling bag, full of presents from the folks and fans of Norfolk.

After the game, they opened their duplicate sets of gifts—shirts, socks, ties, slippers, pajamas, shaving kits, portable radios, candy, and books. All that was missing was a Christmas tree. A happy grin broke over Priddy's moonish map as Phil yipped and yeed at each present.

The Yankees opened at the Stadium two days later and both Phil and Jerry were understandably nervous. This

was it—the place they'd both been shooting at for five years. The largest crowd either had ever seen, 40,128, was in the big ball park as the Yankees squared off against the Philadelphia Athletics. Although they went hitless, both came through their debuts without much trouble on the field. But Phil will always remember his first day at the Stadium for something else.

"I had driven my ten-year-old Ford up to the Stadium from Long Island that morning," Phil delights in recalling. "It was a real jalopy—what the kids today call 'hot-rods.' It was a convertible at one time but was strictly an open-air chariot by the time I got it. There was no windshield, the canvas top was in ribbons, I had pinup pictures of Hollywood babes pasted on the dashboard and even had fur tails flying from the hood.

"There was only one parking place left when I arrived, right between two big, beautiful cars. One was Ruffing's Cadillac and the other was Gomez's La Salle. I guess someone told Barrow about it, because I got the devil from him.

"'That thing looks terrible out there,' he told me. 'Get it out of there after today and never let me see it again. Don't you realize that you are with the Yankees, young man?'"

Phil, scared silly, agreed to leave the heap home from then on.

"I should have asked him for the money to buy a better car," Rizzuto says, "but I was too dumb. I'd know better now."

Life was wonderful for the pair—but for only a couple of weeks. Then the pressure, still heavy on them as they made their debut in each American League city, got them. The team left for a western trip on April 29 and began to go bad. After two weeks on the road, and no improvement

in the over-all play of the club, the Yanks returned home.

A slow start had cost them the 1940 pennant as much as any other failing and McCarthy was anxious to avert another defeat in the championship race. He conferred with Barrow the morning of May 16 in the Harry M. Stevens, Inc., office at the Stadium. The Stevens family handles concessions at all three New York ball parks.

"It's no good, Ed," Marse Joe said quickly. "Gordon isn't going to make it at first base and the kids are jittery. The others haven't got enough confidence in the youngsters yet. We are good enough to win the pennant but we better get started. I'm going to bench Priddy and Rizzuto, put Gordon back on second, Crosetti at short, and try Johnny Sturm on first."

Barrow, who never in his life interfered with a manager's handling of personnel, assented quickly as McCarthy told of his decisions. Ed had managed the Boston Red Sox to a pennant away back in 1918 and respected the judgment and problems of the field leader of a ball club.

Phil reported to the Stadium at 11:30 that morning, as usual, and went out on the field to limber up. He saw Art Fletcher, McCarthy's third-base coach and number-one assistant, order Jerry to go into the manager's office in the clubhouse.

Jerry returned to the dugout a few minutes later, plopped down on the bench wearily, and, fighting back tears, said, "I'm not playing today, Phil."

The Scooter told his pal how sorry he was and was about to resume his place on the field when Fletcher advised him that he, too, was to see McCarthy.

"I really didn't think I was due for the same medicine," Rizzuto says in recalling that dismal day. "I knew the team wasn't going good but I felt that I was just hitting my stride

and that we would soon get off on a three- or four-game winning streak which would cure all our troubles.

“McCarthy asked me to sit down when I entered his office and then he said, ‘I am going to give you a rest for a while, Phil.’

“It was the first time that I’d ever been benched and I had a sinking feeling in my stomach. I pleaded with him to let me stay in the line-up but he shook his head firmly. ‘It will do you a lot of good to sit down for a while,’ he said.”

Phil doubted that the “sit-down” would be for just a while. He felt that he had blown his chance with the Yankees and was a flop—ready to be sent back to the minors. He was so sure of it that he suspected McCarthy was giving him bad news in a nice way. He sat there in the manager’s office, silently tracing meaningless designs with his shoe-toe on the worn carpet.

McCarthy felt sorry for him and tried to explain.

“You’ll get a different view of the game, Phil, when you’re sitting in the dugout watching the other fellows,” he said, kindly. “You’ve always looked at the game from a player’s angle. Now get it from the other side. Sit near me when the game starts. There’ll be situations on the field I’ll want to point out to you. Just remember what you are told and you’ll find that the benching is really of some use to you.”

Phil and Jerry were only getting the same treatment—education by benching—that other famed Yankees had received in their rookie days. McCarthy, a master psychologist and handler of other men, realized that relief from the pressure was necessary. Every newcomer tries hard to make good and one who has been ushered into the majors on a wave of publicity usually is so anxious that he “presses”—thus making himself look bad.



That was Rizzuto's trouble. As a dugout wallflower for the first time in his career, Phil offered no alibis and sought no sympathy. He didn't ascribe his bad batting eye (he was hitting only .200) to eye-strain induced by reading his press clippings.

"I don't blame my bum start on publicity," he told newsmen on the bench before the game that day. McCarthy had announced news of the benching of the touted pair right after he told the players, themselves. "Sure I saw all the nice things that were written about me. But they didn't hurt. I was pressing too much, that's all."

Phil has never been an Alibi Ike and it was characteristic of him to take full blame.

"I didn't realize it until some of the other fellows told me so," he went on. "They said I was so tightened up in the field that I was trying to throw the ball before I got it, that I was trying too hard. And, at bat, they tell me that I was going after bad balls. I didn't know it myself. I guess if I had known it I'd have stopped, but I don't know for sure.

"McCarthy says I'll be benched for a week or so. He didn't say exactly. But I'm not worrying. All the fellows have told me not to let it get me down. Joe Gordon told me that when he first came up he got off to a bad start and they took him out of the line-up for a while. When he got back in, he went like a house on fire and has ever since. Charley Keller the same and Rolfe and Crosetti, too. They tell me to just keep my eyes and ears open and my chin up and I will return."

The benching of Rizzuto was a master stroke—he was removed before he was ruined. The circumstances were involved, anyway. If the rest of the club, the veterans, had been playing up to par, Phil's lapses would not have mat-

tered. But the others had also started badly and the big hitters were in slumps. The team sputtered and coughed and seemed to be going nowhere. The pressure on Phil mounted and, undeniably, he was buckling under it. Not because he was afraid. A psychiatrist might have called it "guilt complex." His own errors and batting weaknesses were magnified in his own mind. Although all the stars were stuttering and stumbling, Phil could only see his own bad plays as the cause of the Yanks being a fourth-place ball club, struggling to stay at the .500 mark in games won and lost. He played every game over again at night in bed, giving himself a mental thrashing for his mistakes. This self-inflicted torture was slowly breaking him up and had he been left in the line-up, he might never have recovered the winning frame-of-mind.

Phil sat on the bench for a month, playing Charley McCarthy to Joe McCarthy. He looked, listened, and learned. Crosetti played a magnificent game at shortstop in place of the rookie and, combining with Gordon, gave the Yankees a lift. The team dropped its losing ways as the Yankee pride and confidence again permeated the bodies and minds of the veteran stars. DiMaggio, Dickey, Keller, Henrich, and Gordon started to rifle homers out of the park. The club hit a winning stride and drove to the top of the league standings. The Crow, oldest of 'em all with the exceptions of Dickey and Ruffing, hit at a .300 clip and seemed to be in the process of making a comeback in his own right.

It appeared that Crosetti's revival would keep Rizzuto on the bench all summer, but a sliding baserunner made that impossible. Frankie received a bad spike wound on his left hand in mid-June and had to leave the line-up. Phil went back in and, happily, the set-up for his return was

ideal. No longer was there any pressure on him. The team was hitting and winning and his occasional mistakes in the field or strikeout in the clutch went unnoticed.

Once he had returned, he proved himself worthy of being a Yankee. He and Gordon became the Magicians of the Midway. They made stunning plays, day after day, an agile, alert, reckless combination. The Scooter—he received that fitting nickname from teammate Billy Hitchcock at Kansas City in 1939—was the perfect complement to Gordon. They operated together with machine-precision, a combination such as the American League had never seen before. Even the ball players of the visiting clubs began to watch them in ordinary infield practice—and there is no greater compliment than the admiration of a fellow craftsman.

Phil was a dynamo of energy, enthusiasm, and spirit. He quickly became a great favorite with the fans at Yankee Stadium and, more important, with his own teammates. No player in the long and glorious history of the New York Yankees has ever been so popular with his co-workers. Not even Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth or Joe DiMaggio. Those men were respected for their talent and performances which touched the hem of greatness. But none was the lovable person, the warm human being Rizzuto is. Phil has never been in a fight and has never had an enemy and he hopes that that will be his epitaph. His teammates joshed and teased him—even as the P.S. 68 kids had years previously. Phil took the jibes and practical jokes without rancor. He played dumb and pretended he didn't know he was being kidded.

The other Yankees played gags on him just about every day and he enjoyed the quips and stunts. Always having been the littlest fellow around and therefore the butt of the

jokes, Phil was used to it. Ever-smiling, and seemingly gullible, he played the buffoon purposely. He was young and breathless in those first days as a Yankee, yet it was obvious that he possessed baseball sense that many older players never develop.

Off the field he was bewitched, bothered, and bewildered—or so it seemed. On the field his talent, class, ability, and intelligence burst forth in bountiful waves. He was the epitome of precision and perfection. Off the field he was a willing clown—on it a dead-serious businessman. There was nothing funny about the way he played shortstop or snapped the bat with his powerful shoulders.

Crosetti's injury restored him to the line-up but that was the only break he needed. He earned the rest—the right to be a Yankee. He was the regular shortstop because he earned the job and was an outstanding figure in the runaway surge of the Bombers that year.

In the switch which put Sturm in first base and restored Gordon to second, it was necessary that the shortstop position be filled perfectly. The revised infield situation worked because Rizzuto, in his first season, became one of the key men of the team. The 160-pound bundle of tightly-packed athlete performed beautiful miracles afield and dissected opposing pitchers with his bat. Despite his poor start, Phil batted .307 that year. His talent helped re-establish the Yankees as American League champions and put them into the World Series against the Dodgers.

He was, as predicted, Rookie Number-one.

## CHAPTER SIX

# *The World Series*

*TOMMY HENRICH* remembers the 1941 World Series as the only one in which the Yankees ever got mad. Phil Rizzuto remembers it because it was his first one. Most people remember it for Mickey Owen's unhappy muff.

By 1941, most of the Yankee players had been in the fall classic three or four times and had always won the big title from the National League representatives. It was old hat to these young businessmen who accepted the Series money each year as though it was ordained to be theirs the moment it was minted. Down through the years, Yankees have shared over \$3,000,000 in World Series pools. The extra dough each year was becoming part of the pleasant pursuit of being a Yankee.

The young men were not quite bored with it all. Rather, they quietly enjoyed the moneyed monotony of pennant upon pennant and the World Series victories following each flag. Supreme confidence in themselves fostered a haughty dignity in action. They knew no one could beat them and, consequently, were disdainful of the opposition which the NL presented. They had taken sixteen of nineteen games in the four Series from 1936 through 1939. The

Giants had managed to win twice in 1936 and once in '37 but it took the magnificent Carl Hubbell, one of the modern greats who is enshrined in the Hall of Fame, to pitch two of the victories. The other was a ten-inning game on October 5, 1936, in which Hal Schumacher triumphed by a 5-4 score over Pat Malone, the fat old reliefer.

The Yanks had swept through the Chicago Cubs in 1938 and the Cincinnati Reds the following year, neither NL team being able to win once. Their defective start in 1940 eliminated the Bombers from the Series and the Tigers took over the task of handling the job for the American League. They were new boys at it and failed. Cincinnati, having repeated as pennant winner, gained the World Championship, four games to three.

The Yankees had clinched the flag early in September of '41 without much exertion after having put together a seventeen-game lead by the middle of August. The Dodgers, on the other hand, were embroiled in a wild race which wasn't settled until the final week of the season.

That was the club led on the field by Leo Durocher and off of it by Larry MacPhail—a combination which provided hysteria, day after day. The National League competition had been a rat-race from the very beginning—a season-long crusade pitting the Dodgers against the world. Durocher welded his Dodgers into a new edition of the Cardinals' 1934 Gas House Gang, for whom he had played short.

The Brooks talked out of the sides of their mouths, curdled the air with blue words, forced umpires to battle for their right to be on the ball field, indulged in fist fights and bean-ball rowdiness with opponents, and generally cut a swath of vulgarity through the league. They played the game like a lot of toughs, accentuating Durocher's pet

piece of cynicism, "Nice guys finish last." Every other ball club in the league grew to hate them and wanted to beat them. The St. Louis club was the contender and it had six other teams rooting for it.

In a way, that was the toughest pennant race ever staged in baseball history. There have been a few closer ones but none in which one team engendered so much bitterness throughout the league. Durocher was thrown out of countless games for blasting umpires and some of his more acid remarks, both to the men in blue and to opposing players, were recorded for the eyes of President Ford Frick. These manifests later were turned over to Commissioner Landis and, following his death in 1944, to Commissioner Chandler. There is little doubt that Lippy Leo's full-season suspension in 1947 was due, in a large measure, to the complaints lodged by other clubs as far back as 1941.

Dodger fanaticism even reached a point where a pitcher was accused of trying to bean an umpire. Big Hugh Casey, star relief pitcher for the Bums, threw hard and high over the head of his catcher one day in Pittsburgh with the apparent intention of hitting George Magerkurth, tallest umpire in the league, with the ball. Casey had become enraged with some of Maje's decisions.

The Brooks mathematically clinched the pennant in Boston a few days before the end of the season but they actually won it on their last western trip in September—a frenzied journey in which they proved they had the courage to back up their boasts and the talent for winning ball games as well as inciting to riot. They left a residue of hate all over the league as they marched arrogantly into the first World Series at Ebbets Field in twenty-one years.

The Yankees, as they rolled along to their easy pennant, heard and read about the Dodger incendiaries and were

slightly amused. The perennial champs didn't play baseball that way and didn't figure they would have to do so to win the Series. Durocher notwithstanding, the Yanks were mostly all nice guys and winners, too.

The pressure of playing in his first World Series was enough to make Rizzuto edgy, and added to it was another burden. All year long, as the Yanks and Dodgers headed for their flags, the fans and newspapermen debated the abilities of Phil and his counterpart on the Brooks—short-stop Pee Wee Reese. A rivalry, impossible on the field during the regular season, was promoted in the papers and in the minds and on the tongues of those who read the papers.

When both were in the American Association in 1939 (Reese was with Louisville), Rizzuto had enjoyed a statistical edge over Pee Wee. Phil had batted .316 with sixty-four RBI's and had posted a fielding average of .944. Reese, a native of Louisville, had banged out a .279 average which included fifty-seven runs batted in and had fielded .943. There really was little to choose between them then for both were ready for the majors. Reese moved up in 1940, a year sooner than Rizzuto, only because Brooklyn needed a shortstop that year and the Yanks did not.

The Reese-Rizzuto rivalry became a focal point of the Series, not so much because of what they did but because of what players of both teams tried to do to them. The area around second base became a no-man's-land of flying bodies, flailing legs, and probing spikes. Every game was a close one and as the tension mounted, almost every play became vital. There were countless close ones at the midway, as hurtling runners tried to break up double-plays.

The Dodgers started it by trying to cut down both Rizzuto and Gordon as one or the other pivoted on a double-play relay, and the Yankees, getting madder with each



incident, retaliated against Reese and his second basemen, Billy Herman and Pete Coscarart. Brooklyn had to replace Herman, who pulled a muscle in the third game.

The rough stuff at second base consisted mainly of the base-runner going out of his way to nail the pivot man. Action pictures of the Series show Mickey Owen, the Brooklyn catcher, going ten feet out of the line in order to slide into Rizzuto as the latter was completing a double-play toss to Sturm at first base. Reese, himself, banged in hard as a retaliatory gesture for the wallopings he was taking from such aggressive Yankees as Henrich, Keller, and Gordon.

The umpires did not make any attempt to stop the mayhem. The "take-out play" at second base was considered to be a part of the game and, although it was flagrantly abused in this Series, the umpires shrugged and let everything go. For the record, they were Larry Goetz and Babe Pinelli of the NL and Bill McGowan and Bill Grieve of the AL, all of them competent veterans.

The slaughter at second base led to bean-ball squabbles. The "duster" also is an accepted practice in big-league baseball, it being an admitted fact that pitchers throw at opposing hitters in order to "loosen 'em up." Unfortunately for the Dodger staff in general and right-hander Whitlow Wyatt in particular, they had blazed their own trails as dust-ball throwers during the regular season. Wyatt was accused of throwing at the heads of Cub and Red players and he had been challenged often during the summer. Casey, too, was accused of trying to "stick one in an ear," as Durocher expressed it. They were suspect before the Series began.

Wyatt, in the final game, became embroiled with DiMaggio. The Jolter is ordinarily the most mild-mannered

of men and he never has had a fist fight on a ball field. He came closest to one with the big Brook right-hander and, since the men were well-matched physically (each a 205-pound, 6'2" giant), it might have been a corker. It never did get to the punching stage, though they did square off near the pitcher's mound.

Wyatt zoomed a couple of pitches close to Joe's noggin in the sixth inning of the fifth and deciding contest. That was the third at Ebbets Field. Joe took them and glared but determined to knock the pitcher's head off with a line drive. He deliberately slammed the next pitch right back at Whit but his aim was a bit high. It cleared the pitcher's head by a couple of feet and gradually gained height until Pete Reiser, the center fielder, caught it on the fly.

That was the third out of the inning and DiMaggio, after taking his turn at first base, ran to the mound to tell Wyatt off. The pitcher, who was angrily leaving the pitcher's box to go to the Dodger dugout along the first-base line, whirled around and charged back to sass Joe. They stood there barking for about ten seconds before Reese and the Yankee coaches intervened.

The Series had begun at Yankee Stadium on October 1, with the Yanks winning the opener 3-2, as Red Ruffing outpitched Curt Davis, veteran sidearmer who was a surprise starting choice by Durocher. Joe McCarthy pitted fiery Spud Chandler against Wyatt in the second game in New York and the Brooks won that one by the same score.

The fanatics in Brooklyn had said, before it started, that the Series would be won by the beloved Bums if they could hold the Bombers even in the first two games. Ebbets Field, Hell's Half-Acre for visiting clubs, would consume the proud Yankees in the next three.

The boast didn't quite materialize. The third game of

the Series and the first in Flatbush provided a scorching pitching duel between Fred Fitzsimmons, the Dodgers' old, fat knuckleball-thrower and young Marius Russo, the Yankee left-hander who was a Queens neighbor of Phil's and had preceded him by a few years at Richmond Hill High. The teams were tied 1-1, when a crackling liner from Russo's bat hit Fitz on the right knee in the seventh inning. The ball flew one hundred feet into the air and was caught on the fly by Reese at his shortstop position. But Fitz was crippled and Casey had to come on to pitch the eighth inning. He immediately gave up the winning run.

Brooklyn fans blamed that defeat on bad luck—and they had a point. The Dodger players felt the same way about it. "They aren't any better than we are, only luckier," said Mickey Owen after the game. How much luckier, poor Mick was to find out the next day.

The Bums needed the fourth game badly for they had to tie up the Series. They couldn't afford to lose and be down three games to one. Only once before in World Series history had a team dropped that far behind and then been good enough to win the championship. That was the 1925 Pittsburgh Pirates, who overcame the deficit by sweeping the final three games of the set of seven. But they were playing Washington, not the Yankees.

The Brooks battled manfully for it. They knocked out Atley Donald, the Yankee starter, and had a 4-3 lead by the time Manager McCarthy found employment for his ace relief artist, Johnny Murphy. They held the edge right up to the ninth inning with Casey, again relieving, on the mound for them.

Casey retired the first two hitters, Sturm and Rolfe, as the packed stands cheered the impending victory wildly.

Only one more to go, now, and the burly right-hander's sharp deliveries were breaking beautifully, down and outside, into Owen's mitt. Henrich was the next batter and there were two strikes on him when Hugh fired another twisting delivery. The pitch fooled Henrich, who missed his cut at the ball for the third strike.

A triumphal shout went up from the double-decked stands—and then the victory screams were suddenly stilled aborning. Owen had muffed the ball and was chasing it to the backstop as Henrich, alerted by the shouts of his teammates and coach Art Fletcher at third base, streaked towards first base. Hundreds of the fans had poured from the stands to embrace Casey and the other heroes and there was a wild scene as special cops, assigned to keep the crowd off the field, began pushing the spectators around. Durocher, who had dashed onto the field screaming at Owen to get the ball, was shoved by one of the bluecoats in the excitement.

When almost everyone calmed down, the umpires ordered the game to resume, with DiMaggio at bat, Henrich on first and the Yankees still in the ball game. One who never did get over that mad moment was Casey. The blubbery pitcher, red-faced and fighting mad, had been deprived of a victory which was in his grasp. Now he had to face DiMaggio, the toughest Yankee of them all. Hugh should have pitched carefully but he was too enraged. He fired the ball as hard as he could and DiMag calmly stroked a single to center, Henrich taking third.

Here Durocher made the mistake of his managerial life. Instead of removing Casey and giving the rest of the team, including the shaking Owen, a chance to calm down, he let the big pitcher keep on throwing fast balls at the rest of the Yankee line-up. Charley Keller, up next, drove a

high drive into the screen above the right-field wall for a double, scoring Henrich and DiMaggio and putting the Yanks ahead, 5-4.

The frantic Durocher now calmed down long enough to order Dickey, a powerful left-handed batter, to be passed so that Casey could pitch to Gordon, a free-swinging right-handed slugger. But he didn't remove Casey, and the Series was as good as over when Gordon doubled off the left-field wall, scoring Keller and Dickey. Rizzuto drew a walk after that and pitcher Murphy made the third out.

The Dodgers, completely deflated by the succession of swipes on the part of destiny, couldn't score in their half of the ninth and the Yanks laughed their way to the dressing room with a 7-4 victory. Wyatt was outpitched by the late Ernie Bonham the following day, 3-1, and crepe was hung in Flatbush.

Rizzuto is sorry he won't be able to tell his little girls that he had a vital part in the only World Series rally which won a game after the third "out" in the ninth inning. He cannot tell a lie.

"I was just as popeyed and excited as anyone—I didn't even see Owen miss the ball," he recalls. "I had my glove and Keller's and DiMag's in my hand. I stood at the end of the dugout, ready to rush down to the clubhouse under the stands. I thought the game was over when the big shout went up because I had seen Tommy miss his swing. I was halfway down the dugout steps toward the alley leading to the locker room when I heard the shouting from our bench and turned around to find people running all over the field and Henrich on first base."

Phil was glad when the Series was over for it had not been a good one. He exulted in the Yankee victory and looked forward to the winning share of over \$5,000. But,

being a proud fellow, he was not too happy with what he had done to bring the championship home.

Actually, it was only at bat that he failed—two grubby singles in eighteen tries, for a .111 average, with no runs scored and none batted in. Afield he was tremendous and less jittery than he thought he would be. He handled thirty-one chances, chalking up eighteen assists and twelve putouts and making one error. Reese was hardly as good. Pee Wee managed four one-baggers in twenty at bat for a .200 average, scored a run and batted in two. He was the fielding “goat” of the classic—excepting Owen, of course—with three errors in thirty chances.

All in all, it had been a wonderful year for the little fellow from Glendale—the Yankees, the pennant, the World Series. And then it was topped off, the very evening the Series ended, when he met *THE GIRL*.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# *Scooter Meets a Lady*

*THERE HAD BEEN* many pretty girls at Richmond Hill High and some cute little numbers in the neighborhood, too. St. Pancras Roman Catholic Church on Myrtle Avenue, just around the corner from the Rizzuto residence, numbered some darling teen-agers among its parishioners. But Phil wasn't interested. A guy growing up hoping to be a ball player doesn't think of much else but baseball. Some of the other fellows on the block would meet the girls their age after eleven o'clock Mass and walk down for a soda or to pick up the Sunday papers. Phil would be out on a ball field somewhere by that time of the morning, after having gone to church at seven or eight o'clock.

"I guess there wasn't anything in his life but baseball as long as I can remember," Momma Rizzuto recalls. "There always were lots of girls around—friends of our own daughters and others—but Phil never gave any of them a second look. He was very shy, of course. He wasn't interested in parties or dates while he was in high school and never thought about anything except the next ball game. We had a hard time getting him to dress up in his Sunday

suit—even at Easter. I can't remember him ever having a date before he left home to go to Bassett."

Mrs. Rizzuto wasn't worried about Phil's indifference to the young ladies. She realized that he would find out, after a while, that true love is more important even than baseball.

Phil was only a bit more than eighteen when he took the train for Bassett in the spring of 1937. Even if he had become girl-conscious at that point in his life, he would have abandoned the idea because of his larger purpose—making good as a ball player.

It wasn't until he went on to Kansas City in 1939 that Phil began to "date." There he had a "steady" girl for a while, brown-haired Betty Dresser. They shared a coke and an occasional auto ride and Betty went to the games at Blues Stadium. There was never any talk of marriage—he was only nineteen and she was two years younger. They merely were teen-age sweethearts—victims of puppy love and nothing more serious.

Betty's family was crazy about Phil—almost everyone who comes to know the little fellow warms up to him. Her folks hoped that, in time, something might come of the association. But tragedy struck their pretty daughter. She underwent what seemed to be a simple tonsillectomy in 1940 and died from a throat infection.

Mrs. Dresser, heartbroken, buried her and erected a tombstone which she knew would have pleased her little girl. On it was carved a facsimile of a ball player which looks a great deal like Phil, himself. Rizzuto visited the grave in Kansas City when the Yanks played an exhibition there in 1941.

There wasn't another girl in the Scooter's life until after



the 1941 World Series—and then only because of the fact that Joe DiMaggio couldn't keep an appointment.

The great center-fielder had agreed to appear at a dinner in Newark and make a speech the night of October 6. It was the date of the Fireman's Annual Smoker in the Essex House Hotel in Newark. The Yankee Clipper had been obtained for the occasion by Jim Ceres, a Newark resident and a close friend of his. Ceres had been asked to produce Joe for the occasion by Chief Emil Esselborn, of the Newark Fire Department, who was chairman of the affair.

Coincidentally, that also was the day that the Yankees beat the Dodgers for the fourth time in five games to win the world championship. DiMag had to renege on the engagement because his presence was demanded in San Francisco immediately. He had to check on the operations of his restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf. Joe booked passage on an early evening plane and, after the celebration in the clubhouse at Ebbets Field was over, asked Phil to drive him to LaGuardia Airport in Queens.

"While we were on the way out there," Phil says, "Joe spoke of the dinner and how sorry he was to disappoint those people. He asked me to telephone Mr. Esselborn and express his regrets. I did so and Esselborn asked me if I would like to come in place of DiMag."

Phil was reluctant to do so. He was certain that he would be a poor substitute for the outstanding player in baseball. "I imagined how disappointed the men at the affair would be when a little squirt like me showed up instead of DiMaggio," he recalls. "But I didn't have anything to do and Esselborn was sort of in a hole so I went."

The firemen and their friends were happy to have the Scooter, if they couldn't listen to and look at the Clipper.

Phil told a few stories in his ingratiating way, signed autographs, and just about saved the evening.

Chief Esselborn, grateful for the pinch-hitting job, thanked Phil after the affair was over and suggested that the little man drive over to his house for a cup of coffee. It would have been easy enough to say no and go on back to New York where the rest of the Yanks were enjoying their victory party at the Hotel Commodore or to Toots Shors', the eating place of the sports world in Manhattan. Probably more fun, too.

But Phil, ever gracious, accepted the invitation. And that was a decision which was to become the most important of his life. A step inside the front door of the Esselborn residence, the Scooter found his girl.

"I saw The Kid," Phil still recounts with a glow, "and I guess my eyes must have popped. I knew this was it. I went there for a cup of coffee and I was in love before I even got into the dining room. That was all. I didn't go home for a month!"

"The Kid," as he calls her, was ravishing, blonde Cora Esselborn, younger of the fireman's two daughters. The Dutch-Irish beauty, then nineteen, was a knockout. Now, the mother of three pretty little girls, she still retains her trim figure and probably is the most beautiful of the ball players' wives.

Phil was bowled over and showed it. Cora, with the reserve of a correctly-reared young lady, didn't reciprocate with a spontaneous demonstration. She had heard of Phil Rizzuto, of course. Jim Ceres, an avid Yankee fan who accompanies the team to spring training each year, was dating her sister Helen. Jim and Chief Esselborn talked about the Yankees continually. Pop listened to the games whenever he could, too. Cora, however, was not really a fan.

She seldom goes to Yankee Stadium even now. She never saw a regular-season game in 1950 but did get away from the children for both the Series games in New York as the Yanks walloped the Phils.

She took Phil in stride, as she had numerous other boy friends. Pop Esselborn didn't have to bring home a man for Cora and, of course, that wasn't his intention in asking Phil over.

Rizzuto began a whirlwind courtship that night—it was literally true that he didn't go home for a month.

"I was walking on air when I left her at midnight," he says. "I wanted to be with her all the time. I drove over to the Douglas Hotel in Newark and took a room. For thirty days straight we had dates. And after I took her home each night, I rushed back to the hotel and called her up. Then we'd talk for three hours more!"

Early in November Phil asked her to marry him and Cora refused. It wasn't that she didn't love him—she knew darned well that she did. But the whole thing had happened rather suddenly and she wisely decided to delay her decision.

"I just wanted time to think about it," Cora says now. "Every girl does, I guess. I was still pretty young and there didn't seem to be any need of hurrying. I enjoyed living at home, helping my mother. I wasn't working at a job and it's a good thing I didn't have one. I never would have been able to keep it because I would have fallen asleep every day after those nightly phone calls."

Cora's refusal stunned Phil. He knew he had found the right girl and was pretty sure that he was Mr. Right for her, too. Yet despite being in her company for twelve to fourteen hours every day, he hadn't been able to convince her. So, in something of the blue funk which envelops

spurned lovers, he went home to Glendale, packed a bag, and drove to Norfolk where he had friends who could lend broad shoulders on which to cry. He didn't dare stay home and worry his parents with his overdose of the "blues."

Pearl Harbor didn't do much for the rest of the world but the Jap attack did serve to bring Phil and Cora together once more. Phil was at Norfolk, mooning around like a lost soul, when the news was flashed that fateful Sunday, December 7.

Lefty Gomez, ever the gag-man, phoned Mrs. Rizzuto and kiddingly told her that the Japs were going to land in New York any day. The kindly old lady knew of Gomez's reputation as a prankster but she was genuinely worried that some such calamity might befall this country. She telephoned Phil and asked him to come home and he did so. Upon arrival in New York, he called Cora and she was happy to resume their friendship.

Phil wanted to get married right away but there were complications. Taking on a wife to support at that particular time probably would have focused the Glendale draft board's attention on him. The board had continued to defer him, granting the 3-A classification because he was the sole support of his parents. He realized that he eventually would be called to service but hoped that he could get in one more year of baseball in order to leave his parents enough money to support them during what would probably be his long absence in uniform.

Phil and Cora saw each other off and on until Phil went to spring training late in February and managed to have a date once or twice a week during the summer. "I didn't see her nearly as much as I wanted to," he recalls. "It just wasn't possible. The team was on the road half the time

and when we were home I had to be home early and stay in shape."

They did agree to be married but no date was set. Phil entered the Navy the day after the Cardinals licked the Yanks in the 1942 World Series, being assigned to boot training at Norfolk. He had enlisted in August.

"It got pretty lonely during those couple of months in boot camp," Phil says. "I called up Cora and said it would be a wonderful idea if we could be married in January."

By this time the young lady, who has a mighty good mind of her own, had decided that she wanted to be a June bride. So the wedding was set for that month.

Could Cora have foreseen the bizarre series of circumstances which were precipitated by her wedding date, she probably would have eloped with Phil. The Rizzuto-Esselborn nuptials, on June 23, were surrounded by zany events which might have been born in the fertile minds of the Marx Brothers.

To start with, there nearly was no wedding that day and only the threat of the first sit-down strike in baseball history made it possible.

Phil's duties, that summer, consisted largely of playing ball with the Norfolk Naval Training Station team. They played five or six games a week, including an occasional double-header. Gary Bodie, the coach, was a Chief Boatswain in the regular Navy—a hard-bitten salt who never let personal preferences (his or anyone else's) interfere with the operations of the Navy.

Phil set the wedding date with Bodie's permission and on the promise that he would be given the twenty-third off. Bodie intended to keep his promise when he made it, a few weeks earlier. But on the twenty-second, NTS played a lack-luster game and lost to the Norfolk Naval

Air Station nine. Bodie, disgusted, immediately scheduled a double-header with the Air Station team for the next day.

Rizzuto reminded Bodie that the schedule had been left open on the twenty-third because it was his wedding day and that all the ball players were going to the wedding. Bodie, red-necked at what he had considered loafing in the game, refused to listen.

"There's a double-header tomorrow," he thundered, "and every one of you guys better be here to play it. That's final."

Poor Phil was in a daze. Cora and the relatives of both their families were en route from New York and New Jersey for the ceremony. The church had been hired and the arrangements had been made with the priest. Phil had hired a parlor at the Monticello Hotel in Norfolk for the reception and had reserved a honeymoon suite at a Virginia Beach hotel.

Many a gag had been pulled on Phil, and this one, if it had been intended as a joke, might have been worth a real belly laugh. But Bodie wasn't kidding. Phil pleaded but got nowhere. The other players, most of them ex-big leaguers, sympathized but could offer no advice except to suggest that he postpone the wedding for a few days.

The raw deal was too much for Phil's best friend on the team, Dominick DiMaggio, to take, however. Joe's younger brother, outfielder for the Boston Red Sox, quickly made a bold move.

He walked up to Bodie and announced, "Coach, if Rizzuto doesn't get tomorrow off for his wedding, there won't be any game. I won't play and neither will anyone else. We strike if you try to make him show up here tomorrow."

Bodie, shocked at such a departure from old-line Navy

tradition, exploded. He threatened to have Dom court-martialed and, for a trump card, warned the player that he would be transferred to sea duty.

"Do anything you like," DiMaggio barked into the chief's purpling face. "There's nothing in the regulations which says that we have to play baseball. Send me to sea if you want to. I was happy back in San Francisco with the small-boat detail I had. That was sea duty, of a sort. The Navy brought me across the country to play baseball—I didn't ask for it! Same goes for the rest of us. Show us one rule which says we have to take orders to play baseball!"

Bodie had to back down. His charges against the players, if he had dared to make them, would not have held water. He agreed to let Phil's wedding go on as planned and re-scheduled the twin bill for the twenty-fourth.

Phil and Cora were married in a small Catholic church just off the training base in the late afternoon and then the wedding party proceeded to the Monticello Hotel for the reception. The ball players and other of Phil's friends among the enlisted men attended.

Before the party was over and before the bride and groom were permitted to depart, three of the players and another sailor quietly sneaked off. Dom DiMaggio had decided to fix up his best friend right good and he took along Don Padgett, ex-Dodger catcher-outfielder, Benny McCoy, who had played second base for the Philadelphia Athletics, and Morris Siegal, a sports writer who was serving his country as publicity man for the team.

They drove over to the Cavalier Hotel and Dom went into the lobby alone. He approached the desk clerk and, taking the precaution to remove his glasses, said, "I'm Phil Rizzuto. Is the suite that I reserved all ready?"

The clerk answered, "Yes, Mr. Rizzuto. But where is your bride? Didn't you get married today as I read in the paper?"

"Yes," Dom answered. "She'll be along in a few minutes. You know how Italian people are. She's saying good-bye to her folks and there's a lot of crying and I thought it best to come in here and see if everything is all right with the accommodations."

Fortunately for Dom, the ruse worked. He was in a sailor suit and so the desk clerk, not being a ball fan, didn't know him from Phil. He gave Dom the key and directed him toward the elevator. Dom thanked him and explained that he would be down shortly to escort his bride through the lobby and into the hotel.

The other three, meanwhile, strolled into the lobby and joined DiMag in the elevator. They ascended to the floor and entered the Rizzutos' room.

Dom had explained the business to Siegal, Padgett, and McCoy, and so they were ready. They drew up a table, set four chairs around it, and McCoy took out a deck of cards. Then they started a hearts game, expecting Phil and Cora to walk in on them at any moment. They had quite a wait.

The newlyweds fled the reception with the rice and "good lucks" ringing in their ears, climbed into Phil's Model-A Ford and streaked off for Virginia Beach. It was early evening and, as they rode along, Phil was congratulating himself on the smoothness of the affair—once Bodie had let it even begin.

Suddenly sirens began to wail over the countryside and Phil looked backwards (no rear vision mirror) to see if a motorcycle cop was after him. He saw none and was about



to step on the gas when a figure loomed on the road in front of the car, commanding him to stop.

Phil obeyed and the man, wearing the insignia of a civilian air-raid warden, opened the car and got into it.

"This is an air-raid drill, ordered by the Army," he stated amiably. "All traffic must stop until we hear the 'all clear.' Hope you don't mind if I sit here with you."

Cora, as nervous as any bride and overwrought by the long day, broke into tears as the sirens continued to howl. Phil half-thought it was a gag—though the warden was a complete stranger. But he couldn't imagine any of the fellows arranging a real air-raid drill with sirens to go with it.

At length the drill ended and Cora pushed back her tears as they neared Virginia Beach.

Phil registered and was given a key by a different clerk than the man who had been taken in by Dom.

He and Cora pushed open the door and stepped in.

Padgett, Siegal, DiMaggio, and McCoy looked down intently at their cards, paying no attention to the entrance of the bride and groom. They played out the hand and, as the tally was being recorded, each looked up in turn, murmured a polite, "Good evening," and then resumed play.

Phil, embarrassed, pleaded with them to leave but they merely grinned and smirked.

The poor bridegroom finally plopped down on a sofa and Cora sat next to him. The couple held hands and looked at each other, wondering if they'd ever be alone. The card players continued to play hearts intently, as though oblivious of the presence of anyone else in the room.

Rizzuto decided to order some coffee and McCoy suggested that he order some for them, too. The little guy,

figuring an appeasement policy might soften up the practical jokers, agreed. The four sipped the java when it came and continued their efforts to duck the Queen of Spades, which is the big penalty-bearing card in the game.

After about an hour the gag wore thin. The four sailors solemnly arose, thanked Phil and Cora for the use of the hall, and said goodnight.

It was the longest card game Rizzuto ever sat through!

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# *Bell Bottom Trousers*

*THE IMPACT* of Pearl Harbor was not too great on major-league baseball—the game and the business went on. But it was heavy on the ball players. By the very nature of their profession, they were almost all healthy young men and figured to go once war took a stranglehold on America.

There were a sprinkling of 4-F's and there were married men with families who were allowed to stay, of course. But of the 720 players on the active rosters of the sixteen big-league clubs as of December 7, 1941, more than 50 per cent went into the services.

Phil's 3-A rating had been obtained in peacetime because he was the main support of his family. Such deferments were customary when the peacetime draft was being administered by local boards. But it didn't figure to stand up for long after the declaration of war.

Rizzuto realized full well that his number would come up sometime during the spring or summer of '42—he was single and healthy and a number-one commodity in the military scheme. It was obvious that he would wind up in the Army before the year was out and very probably before the baseball season was over.

Phil, in common with a few million other young men, didn't want to go into the Army as a draftee. He preferred the Navy but, at that time, the naval service was entirely on an enlistment basis. The admirals had demanded that the Navy continue as a volunteer branch of the armed forces as long as was possible. (Eventually, early in 1943, the draft was extended to cover recruiting for all services except the Army and Navy Air Corps. Marines, sailors and soldiers all matriculated through processing by local draft boards. But, at the time, enlistment was possible.)

Accordingly, Phil looked around. He has always been subject to air sickness and so the possibility of a flying career was quickly disregarded. The Navy was his choice and he decided to sign up. The local board in Glendale was satisfied as long as Phil was acceptable to the naval authorities.

The little shortstop was more than acceptable—the Navy welcomed him. The top brass in Washington was divided on the merits of athletics in wartime, with the Army curtailing organized sport and the Navy fostering it in its pre-flight schools, college programs (V-12), and at domestic air bases and stations. For a ball player, the Navy was a good deal.

Some players already were in middie suits and liked the life. The Bureau of Personnel in Washington went along with the theory that a strong athletic team was a morale booster for the men at a base or airfield. Baseball players, gridgers, and basketball players of renown were gathered together to make the teams as strong as possible. The Navy recruited athletes avidly and unabashedly—the thought being that a hard-hitting outfielder might mean as much as a hard-hitting bosun's mate.

Freddy Hutchinson, pitcher for the Detroit Tigers, Bob

Feller, the outstanding hurler in the majors, and others were in early and were stationed at Norfolk Training Station in 1942. Hutch advised Rizzuto that he would be able to be stationed there if he applied in time.

Accordingly, the Scooter made up his mind. He informed the Yankees, Cora, and his parents that he was going to join the Navy and then, early in August, requested a couple of days' leave from the Yanks so that he could go to Norfolk and enlist. He explained that the chances were good that he could finish the season with the club and even play in the World Series which the Yanks were certain to make if he were sworn in right away.

McCarthy, anxious to have Phil as long as possible and desirous of having the likable youngster obtain as good a deal in the service as he could, assented. Rizzuto hopped a train to Norfolk, passed his physical, and was sworn in. He was given permission to delay reporting for active duty until October 7th. A discerning recruiting officer set that date on the assumption that the Yankees would wallop the National League winner in four or five games and complete the Series before the reporting date.

He wasn't entirely correct, however. Phil did manage to play the entire Series, but it was as a member of the losing team. The Yankees, who had not lost a World Series since 1926, were whipped, four games to one, by the St. Louis Cardinals in one of the biggest upsets of all time in the fall classic. Many reasons were advanced for the Yankee collapse, the most prominent being that many of the players, like Rizzuto, were bound for service and so had more on their minds than mere baseball. That might have been true—a half-dozen of the more prominent Yanks did get their "greetings" before the next spring training—but it wasn't so in Rizzuto's case. The toy shortstop was the

leading New York hitter of the Series with a .381 average and, in the fifth and final game, tied a twenty-five-year-old fielding record for shortstops by making seven put-outs.

The Series, aside from the fact that it was a losing one for his team, capped a fine season for Phil. He had been brilliant afield and a steady, damaging hitter from start to finish. The Yanks had won the flag without much difficulty, leading from the opening week, and showing 103 victories against but 51 defeats in the final standings.

Phil had played in 144 games, some of them while suffering from a brain concussion during mid-season, drove in 68 runs and batted .284. He led all the shortstops in the league in put-outs (324) and tied a major-league record for participation in double-plays by a shortstop in one game. On August 14, against the Philadelphia Athletics, the Yankees made seven twin killings in nine innings for a mark which still stands. Phil started or was the middleman in five of them, though woozy from the brain concussion.

Rizzuto never left the line-up during the three weeks when he had the concussion for the simple reason that he didn't know he had one. On July 26, Bill Hitchcock of the Detroit Tigers, a former teammate of Phil's at Kansas City, accidentally kicked him in the head as Phil slid into second base in Detroit. Two days later, the littlest Yank landed on his skull after colliding with a Chicago White Sox pitcher who covered first base as Phil tried to beat out a bunt.

He suffered from headaches and blurred vision in his left eye after the one-two whacks, plus inability to sleep at night and loss of appetite. Since Phil normally can go to his left or right at the dinner table as facilely as he can on the diamond, the last symptom bothered him most. It prompted him to reveal his troubles to Dr. Robert Emmett

Walsh, then the team physician. X rays showed no break but the doctor confirmed that the shortstop had been playing every day for three weeks with a concussion.

His sophomore year had been as good as his first one and Rizzuto was an established star. Many a first-year phenomenon washes out in his second season in the big leagues and quickly drops back to the minors or retires. Only a sound ball player continues along an even path and 1942 was proof that the Scooter had the stuff to be a big leaguer for years to come.

Those years, of course, would wait on the world struggle for freedom from totalitarian aggression. When Phil put his glove and bat away after the Series, he was through being a well-paid ball player for a long time. He had received \$6,000 his first year as a Yankee after rebelling at taking five grand as a rookie and had received \$7,500 for his second season. Along with ten million other Americans, he gave up his income and way of life for the greater necessity of winning the war.

Not that it was a tough war for Rizzuto. Like many "name" ball players, he was accorded a comfortable billet and his duties were confined almost entirely to athletics. If that sounds like favoritism, please remember that it was the Navy, with Commanders Gene Tunney and Tom Hamilton planning the muscle-building programs, which wanted things that way. In the Navy, enlisted men only take orders. They don't give them.

Phil's first order was to report at Norfolk on the seventh of October and he did so. "I would have missed the sixth and seventh games of the Series, if it had gone further," he says. "The only ones who knew that were Cora, McCarthy, and myself. We decided to keep it a secret, figuring that the Cardinals were tough enough without giving them the

advantage of knowing that I wouldn't be around for the final two games."

He and Cora went to a small dinner party at Joe Di-Maggio's penthouse apartment the evening after losing the final game to St. Louis and Phil hopped a sleeper for Norfolk that night.

The Scooter took his eight weeks of boot training like any other recruit, learning to be a sailor. He drew his gear from the "small stores" (quartermaster) and climbed into the strange-feeling bell-bottom trousers, middie blouse and white hat of an apprentice seaman. He would have been happy to forget all about baseball but the other recruits wouldn't let him. When the day's duties were done and the gang gathered in the barracks "rec" room, Phil was surrounded by eager youngsters wanting the "inside" on the Yankees, baseball, and sports. Phil, a gabby extrovert who enjoys a "bull session," kept them regaled with his stories.

After "boots," he was assigned as an athletic specialist right there at Norfolk and, for the rest of the winter, performed menial duties connected with the NTS athletic programs. Both the training station and the Norfolk Air Station which adjoins it had big-name boxers and basketball players, as well as ball stars, among the personnel.

With the arrival of spring in 1943 and the baseball season, Phil and the rest of the ball players became important people. There was great rivalry between the Training Station and the Air Station in athletics and each facility had the best teams that the recruiting officers could corral. The ball games were watched by thousands of gobs and officers and there was a good deal of friendly betting between the enlisted men from the stations, too.

Many of the spectators were already veterans of the fierce fighting in the Pacific—Guadalcanal, the Philippines,



New Guinea, Midway, and Pearl Harbor. Most of the others were headed out, after their brief stateside training, to the invasion of Europe or to the long and bloody South Pacific campaigns which led to the final defeat of the Japs. For them, these games were a treat, real entertainment which broke the monotony of duty and training. The Navy contended that the ball players were as valuable in raising the morale levels as the movies, USO shows, and in-person performances by stage and screen celebrities.

NTS played other teams than the Air Station. The Navy had enough major-league and high-minor-league talent to distribute it throughout the country. Stan Musial of the Cardinals, Dick Sisler, then a Card and later with the Phils, were the stars of the Bainbridge, Maryland, Naval Station. Great Lakes was loaded with outstanding athletic personnel—it was their football team which handed Notre Dame its only defeat in 1943. The pre-flight schools at the Universities of North Carolina, Georgia, and Iowa all were staffed with outstanding athletes.

The NC Pre-Flight Baseball team came up to Norfolk for games and on it were men like Buddy Hassett, first baseman for the Yanks in 1942, and Ted Williams, the great slugger of the Red Sox. Williams was a marine flight instructor assigned to training navy air cadets in the V-5 program at Chapel Hill.

Major-league teams, during spring training and in the regular-season interludes, also dropped by for games, usually to take a licking from NTS, which was stronger in personnel than some of the wartime squads left in the big leagues. The sailors went up to Washington that summer and beat the Senators in a game which sold \$3,000,000 in war bond admissions.

Among the good ball players at Norfolk that spring were

Don Padgett, Brooklyn outfielder; Benny McCoy, Athletics' second baseman and first of the long, lamented line of bonus players who received big dough for signing contracts (he got \$65,000 from Connie Mack as a free agent just before the war); Charley Wagner, Red Sox pitcher; Dom DiMaggio, star outfielder of the Boston Americans and younger brother of Joe; Dodger pitcher Hugh Casey; Sam Chapman, Athletics' slugging outfielder; Eddie Robinson, first baseman who saw post-war service with Cleveland, Washington, and Chicago of the American League; Pee Wee Reese, shortstop and captain of the Dodgers; Vinnie Smith, Pittsburgh catcher, and Freddy Hutchinson.

It was, as Hutch had told Phil previously, good duty.

"We had very little else to do besides play baseball," Phil recalls. "We'd report for muster in the morning, then go out and practice. If it was too hot to practice or we were too lazy, we'd go under the stands and drink beer or play cards. In the afternoon, most days, we'd play a ball game."

As you might expect, the little guy was the butt of most of the practical jokes thought up by the agile minds of the others, just for laughs and the idea of keeping themselves occupied. Phil, who lived off the base with Cora in an apartment, had a Model-A Ford of rare vintage, circa 1929. He and Cora would tool around Norfolk with it when he was off duty and he used it for transportation to and from the base. It wasn't much of a car—he had won it in a card game from a sailor who was about to ship out and didn't care if he lost it—but it was of as much value for transportation as a shiny new Cadillac would have been. Anyone who had to contend with the busses and street cars of wartime Norfolk, the most overcrowded city in the United States, can appreciate the value of any kind of locomotion.

Hutchinson, a broad-shouldered mountain of muscle,

and Vinnie Smith, of equally strong physique, used to delight in playing tricks with the car. Some days they'd sneak out to where it was parked near the ball field and turn it upside down, forcing Phil to go and get help to right it before he could get home to his new wife.

Every now and then one of the pair would swipe the keys from Phil's sailor pants in the locker room while the shortstop was out on the field, practicing or playing in a game. They'd drive the car right into the dugout, scattering the rest of the team, or else spin right out on the diamond with it and delight all onlookers by chasing Phil all around the field in a wild attempt to run over him.

"Lots of times I had to climb the backstop screen or dive off into a hole under the bleachers to get away from those maniacs!" Rizzuto remembers.

One day the Washington Senators came to the base for an exhibition game. Bob Johnson, who was part Indian and one of the strongest men in the majors, was told of the car by Hutch. The Nat outfielder, who was not in service because of a large family, shoved the little Ford out on the diamond and, before Phil's horrified eyes, tore the roof off the car with his bare hands. Everyone else on the squad was in on the gag and enjoyed it—even Phil, though it cost him ten bucks to get the top put back on properly.

The players indulged themselves in other gags at Phil's expense, some of them routine, such as nailing his street shoes to the floor and putting him into the shower with all his clothes on, and some bizarre stunts, one of the latter leaving the little guy in a most embarrassing condition.

The NC Pre-Flighters came up to Norfolk to play a game one afternoon during the summer but a sudden storm washed it out before the players could take infield practice. The teams, most of them big leaguers, sat around the locker

room recalling the "old days" and incidents during the past few American League races. Suddenly, with a pre-arranged signal Williams, Hutchinson, McCoy and a couple of others grabbed Phil and stripped him to his birthday suit.

While three or four held him down and kept his struggling to a minimum, Williams took a bottle of indelible red mercury solution which was used to paint parts of the body before adhesive tape wrappings were applied. The chemical, which looked like mercurochrome, protected the skin from peeling off when the strapping was removed. Ted then painted many kinds of messages and remarks on Phil's hide—some of them slightly obscene—and the others held him down until the red dye dried thoroughly. It was impossible to get it off with any available solution and it just had to wear off, a process which took a few days.

So Phil had to go home to Cora that night with his body decorated with the bright red paint and such sayings as "I Love You, Cora" on his chest and "I'm a Naval Hero" written on his bellybutton. Some of the other remarks were unprintable but Cora took it all in stride. She had heard of the gags that had been pulled on Phil at Kansas City and with the Yanks and understood that they stemmed from affection for the guy, not derision.

It wasn't much of a way to fight a war, of course, and the fun had to end. The fame of the Navy's athletic teams became nation wide that summer and, along with the acclaim, there were storms of protest. Most of these poured onto the desks of congressmen and were funnelled through to BUPERS—the Navy's code name for the Bureau of Personnel. They took the form of wires and letters from parents who decried the safe harbor of star athletes in this country while their own sons were overseas in the fighting.

The brass in Washington was too busy fighting two wars

to engage in a verbal one with the folks at home. They might have pointed out their reasons for ever having permitted the situation in the first place. Instead, they dispatched blanket orders which busted up the fine teams which had been recruited by the various naval establishments. Almost all the Norfolk athletes were sent overseas, Rizzuto being ordered to Gammadodo, New Guinea, in company with Don Padgett. They shipped out a few days after New Year's Day of 1944.

While at the receiving station at Gammadodo—he was awaiting shipment to some outfit which had a billet for an athletic specialist second class—Phil came down with malaria.

“We had been issued atabrine and told to take it,” he says, “but I was too smart. I listened to some wise guys in the barracks. They said it would turn my skin yellow. I refused to take it and the bug got me. It was nothing serious. Just about everybody in the South Pacific got it at one time or another and I guess it was as common as a cold in the nose during the winter in the United States. Anyway, they sent me to a hospital in Brisbane, Australia, for treatment.”

There Phil took all the medicine prescribed, and the only wise guys he listened to were doctors. They put him on a diet of milk, eggs, and steak and he gradually recovered his strength. He arrived “Down Under” in February, which was the end of fall there. During his hospitalization, Phil was befriended by Lieutenant Commander Jerry Seidel, a former Columbia University football player who was serving as assistant to Commander George Halas. The famed football coach and owner of the Chicago Bears was boss of the Navy's athletic program in that area and Phil was assigned to his staff by Seidel. The ex-Yankee led

classes of convalescing patients in setting-up exercises and helped organize participant sports and games for those whose condition permitted them to play.

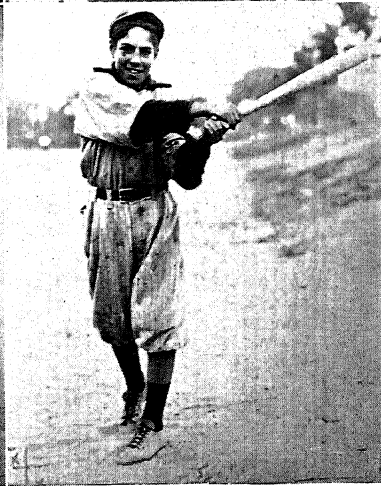
While Phil was in Australia, Cora gave birth to the first of their three daughters. Patricia Ann was born in Presbyterian Hospital, Newark, on March 8, 1944. Like many other servicemen, Phil had to wait until the end of the war to see his first-born in person, and by that time she was twenty-one months old. Cora sent along pictures of the baby as she progressed and described the thrills which Phil was deprived of—Patty's first steps and first words.

It was pleasant enough duty and Phil, as usual, was satisfied. But, in June, there came new orders.

The idea of collecting a group of major league ball players together in the service could be criticized if those players were in the States but there was little that anyone could complain about if they were assigned overseas for the same purpose of building morale. So, perhaps in some officers' club, an idea was born. Why not a service world series between the best Army and Navy players in the Pacific, some unidentified admiral reasoned. He contacted his opposite number in the Army and the general thought it was a fine idea.

So the services arranged a special Army-Navy series at Honolulu Stadium and quickly issued the orders which would bring the cream of the talent together in beautiful Hawaii. The Army already had assembled a pretty good outfit, the seventh Air Force team, in the islands. On it were Phil's former Yank teammates, Priddy, Gordon and Joe DiMaggio. The War Department, perhaps wiser than the Navy, had shipped its baseball talent out of the country early.

Dom DiMaggio, who had become a Chief Specialist in

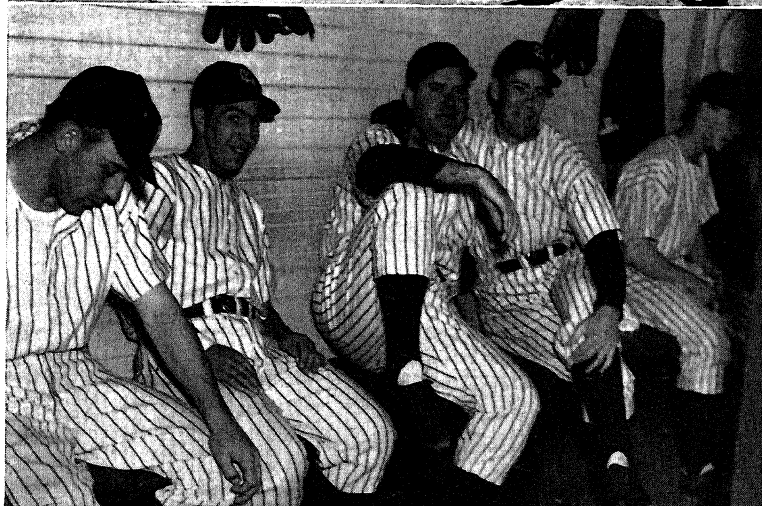


*Top: TINY TODDLER—One of the earliest pictures of Phil, taken when he was about two. LEARNING EARLY—Rizzuto hadn't got to school when baseball captured his fancy—a four-year-old slugger. Bottom: THE INEVITABLE—There hasn't yet been a five-year-old in Greater New York who hasn't been photographed on a pony. And it always looks like the same pony. FIRST UNIFORM—When Phil was eleven, he already had a baseball suit, complete to spikes.*



*Top: BASEBALL FIRST—No matter what the costume, Rizzuto felt he needed a glove and ball. A "PRO" AT LAST—Rizzuto in his first professional uniform, with Bassett, Virginia, in the Bi-State League, in 1937. Bottom: RIZZUTOS AT HOME—Left to right: Dad, Rose, Mom, Mary, Phil, and Alfred.*



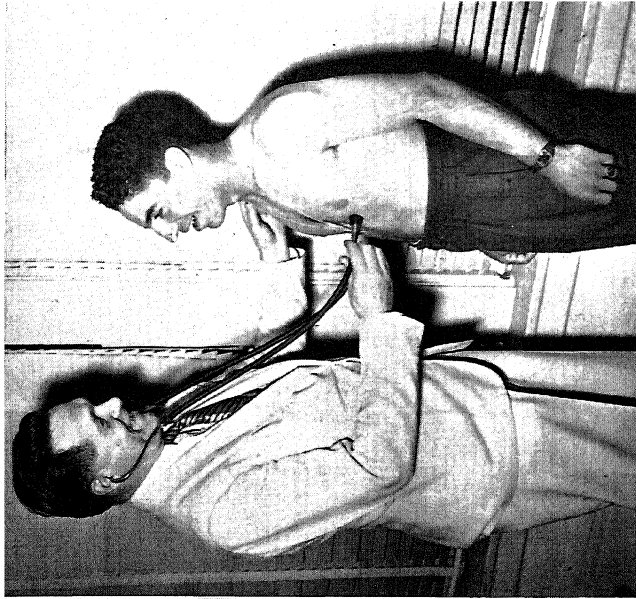
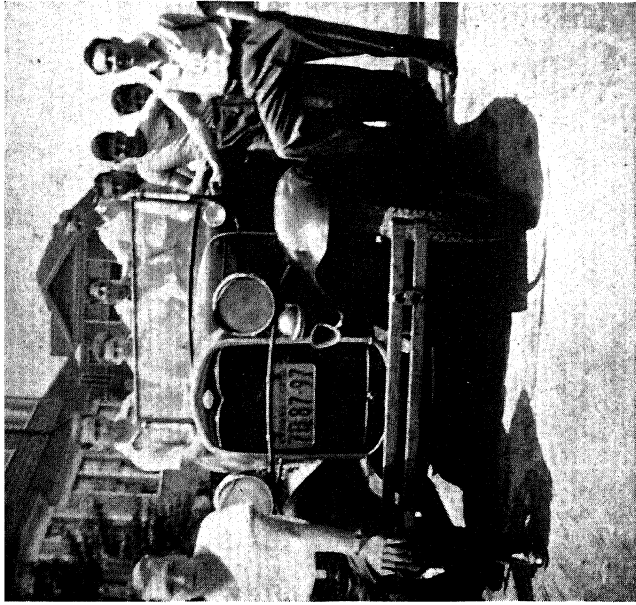


Wide World

*Top: ON THE WAY UP—Rizzuto, left, with Jerry Priddy when the two were Yankee farmhands with Kansas City in 1940. Bottom: NO BLUES WITH THE BLUES—The Scooter grins on the KC bench. On Phil's immediate left are Ivy Paul Andrews and the late Ernie Bonham.*

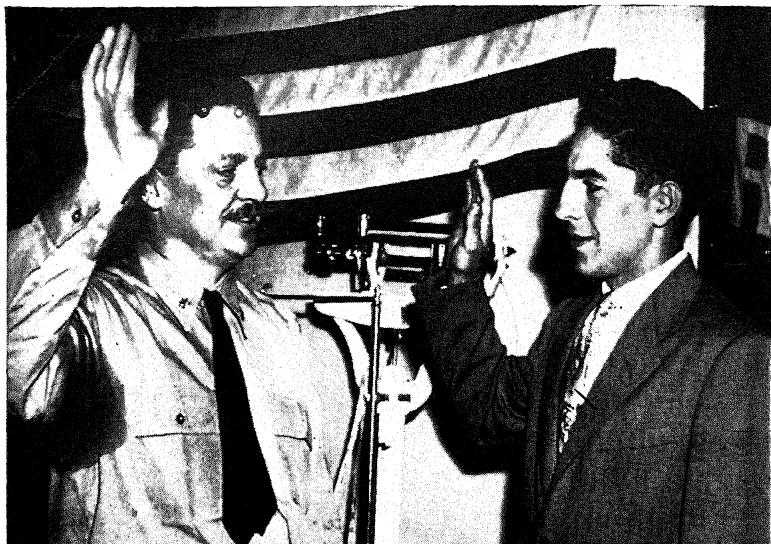


*EARLY TROPHY—Phil with trophy presented by Kansas City radio stations for his work with the Blues.*



Wide World

*Left: PHIL AND HIS GANG—Rizzuto always wanted a car and had no complaints about this jalopy he purchased in 1939. Right: THE FIRST PHYSICAL—Phil and the war clouds joined the Yanks together. Getting a draftboard exam in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1941.*



Wide World

*Top: SWEARING IN—Rizzuto enlisted in the Navy in September of 1942. Being sworn in by Lt. Commander John Quincy Adams. Bottom: UNIFORM SWITCHES—Phil, in baseball uniform of Norfolk Naval Training Station, meets Jerry Priddy, former Yankee teammate, then with Washington, in April, 1943.*



Wide World

*WEDDING MARCH—Phil and his bride, the former Miss Cora Esselborn, leave St. Mary's Catholic Church in Norfolk after their wedding, June 24, 1943.*



Wide World

*A LAST LOOK—The Risizatos drop in at Yankee Stadium during the World Series of 1943, shortly before Phil went to the Pacific.*





*Top: A NEW BALL CLUB—Phil and some of the men who played with him on the camp team in New Guinea. Phil is third from left; on his right is Frankie Darro, movie actor. Bottom: A LONG WAY FROM THE BRONX—New Guinea wasn't much to look at but Rizzuto managed to smile for the birdie. HOME WITH MOM—Mom shows Phil she kept his gloves in good shape while he was away. Home, after his discharge, in February, 1946.*



Wide World

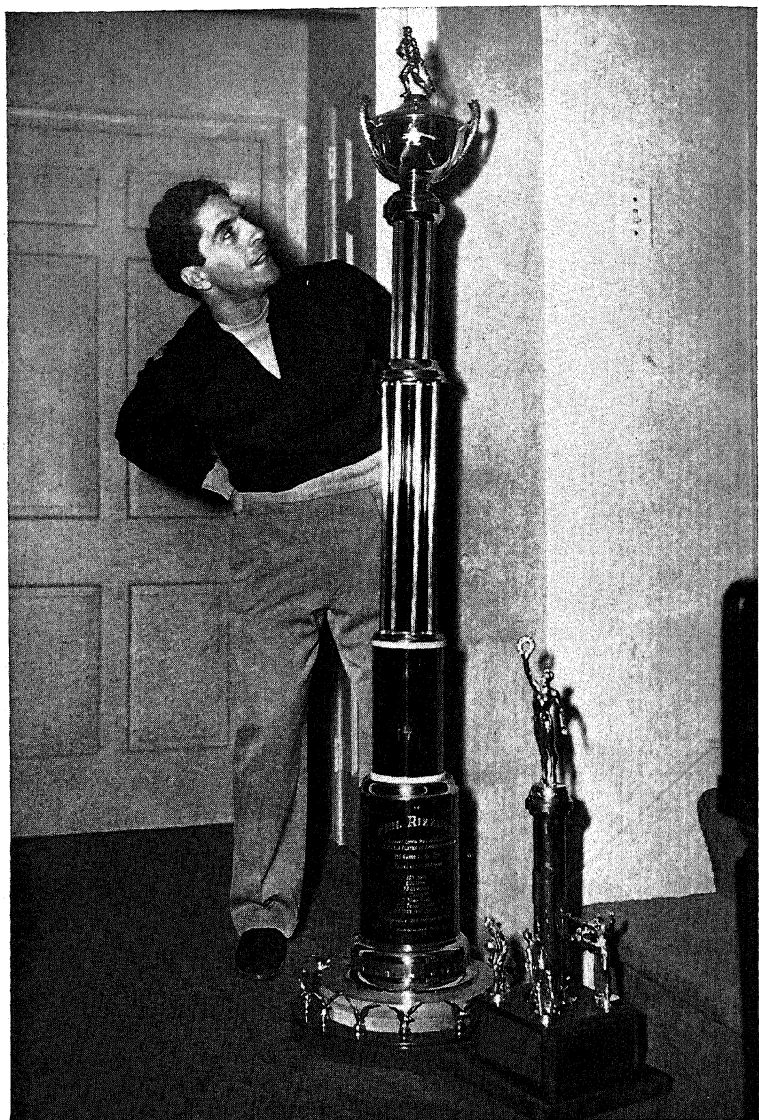
*RIZZUTO DAY—Fans honored Phil at Yankee Stadium, August 29, 1948, and he presented orchids to Mom. Daughter Patricia and wife Cora are in party.*





Wide World

*Top: PART OF THE LOOT—Convertible, shotgun, golf clubs, movie camera were some of the gifts Yankee fans gave to the Scooter. Bottom: HE'S MY BOY!—Manager Casey Stengel beams proudly as he and his shortstop accept plaques presented by New York writers, February, 1950.*



*NEVER RAINS BUT IT POURS!—The New York writers weren't the only ones to take cognizance of Phil's great 1949 season. Some of the trophies were taller than Phil.*



Wide World; AP Newsphoto

*Top: THE FLEA BITES!—One of Rizzuto's greatest offensive threats is the surprise bunt, manipulated here against the Phils in the 1950 World Series. Andy Seminick is the catcher. Bottom: UP WE GO!—Rizzuto leaps high to avoid the sliding Mike Goliat of the Phils in another Series play.*

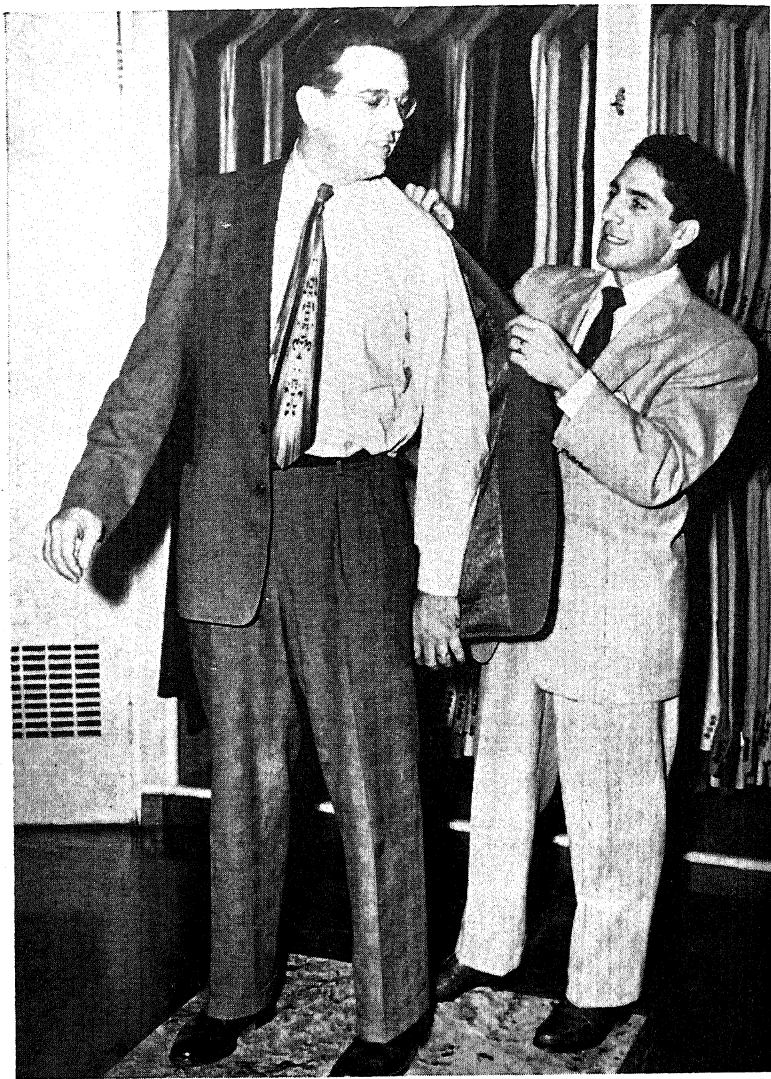


Wide World

*Top: TAKING HIS CUT—Despite his small size, Rizzuto takes a good raffle at the ball. Bottom: PHIL'S BASEBALL "FAMILY"—Roy Hamey, assistant general manager; George M. Weiss, general manager; Manager Casey Stengel and President Dan Topping all point to the dotted line as Phil signs his 1951 contract.*



*SANTA HAS COME TO TOWN—Pbil and Cora with their children under the Christmas tree. Left to right: Patricia Ann, seven; Infant Penny Ann; and Cynthia Ann, four.*



Wide World

**TRY THIS ONE FOR SIZE**—After being named the American League's Most Valuable Player, Phil tries to sell a bill of goods to the MVP of the National League, Jim Konstanty, ace relief pitcher of the Phils.



Athletics, also was in Australia. He and Phil were ordered to Hawaii by plane with a high priority. In order to make room for them on the Navy transport, two sailors who were going home on furlough after many months of front-line sea battles were bumped off the flight.

"Imagine us getting preference over them," Phil said to Dom in disgust. "These kids have been in the fighting and we're just ball players. Its a bum deal."

It was typical of Phil that he should feel a personal revulsion at the arrangement. Most ball players, used to getting the best things in life, would have bragged about being considered VIP's (Very Important People). It bothered Phil and he felt deep remorse that he had been the cause of the incident—though he could not have waived his seat in favor of one of the battle-starred sailors.

Regardless of the unpleasantness attached to his departure for Hawaii, Phil found the tropical island one of the great adventures of his life. It was all that the Pan American Airways travel folders claim—so good that he tried in vain to get a transfer to permanent duty there.

The Army-Navy World Series was a big thing on the islands and the betting between sailors and soldiers was terrific. "Some of those guys bet thousands," Phil recalls. "Many of 'em were loaded with dough won in crap games out in the South Pacific and no place to spend it. The ball games were good ones because every player gave out. There was no loafing or exhibition stuff. We levelled, out of pride in our services and in ourselves."

The Navy levelled a bit better, winning five straight games before letting the Army bounce back to take the last two. Bill Dickey, Yankee catcher who had been commissioned a lieutenant right after the Yanks' 1943 World Series victory over the Cardinals, was the manager. Among

## PHIL RIZZUTO

his players were first baseman Johnny Mize, then of the Giants and later a Yankee; outfielder Barney McCosky of the Detroit Tigers and, in the post-war years, the Athletics; and pitchers Virgil Trucks (Detroit), Schoolboy Rowe (Detroit and the Philadelphia Phils), and Johnny VanderMeer, who hurled successive no-hitters for the Cincinnati Reds in 1938. Phil was assigned to third base by Dickey and Pee Wee Reese was the shortstop. Bill, a fair-minded fellow, was bending over backwards to be certain that avid Dodger fans—from Hawaii to Herkimer St. in Brooklyn—wouldn't accuse him of using Phil at short and Reese in another position as an implication that he thought the Yankee was the better shortstop.

Phil's stay in Hawaii was a very short three weeks. Just about when he was convinced that he would love to wear a lei around his neck for the rest of the war, an admiral in Australia ordered him and Dom back. The war had moved up toward the Philippines and Phil was assigned to tag along. He was shipped to Finschhafen, New Guinea.

After two months in Finschhafen, Phil was promoted to Specialist, First Class, and assigned to duty aboard the SS *Triangulum*, an AK (cargo ship) which carried supplies from New Guinea to the island of Manus, in the Philippines Group. As a first-class petty officer, the Flea was in charge of a four-man gun crew on a twenty millimeter anti-aircraft gun. "We took a few pot shots at Jap planes that were snooping around now and then, but never hit one," he recalls.

Life on the *Triangulum* was, for the most part, undiluted boredom—of the kind so cleverly shown in the play "Mr. Roberts." Rizzuto used his off-duty time to write letters to Mom and Cora and play pinochle with Anton Christofordis, the fighter who had been a prominent light heavy-



weight before the war. Occasionally the ship nosed into a small island to deliver supplies and it was on a couple of those islands that Phil ran into other boxers. He met up with Steve Belloise, middleweight contender, and Gus Lesnevich, who came back after the war to gain the light heavyweight title.

He spent Christmas aboard the *Triangulum* and, having completed three months of duty aboard that vessel, was transferred to shore duty on the island of Samar in the Philippines in January of 1945. By that time, the entire Philippine Archipelago had been reclaimed from the Japs and the war was moving northward toward Tojo's homeland. The battles for Iwo Jima and Okinawa were still to come (in February and March, respectively) and the climactic atomic attacks on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9).

While on Samar, Phil was promoted to Chief Petty Officer and assigned to duties commensurate with that rank. He was in charge of athletics for enlisted personnel and it was a big job. The little guy organized softball leagues, ran handball and boxing tournaments, and supervised other recreation programs.

He was too busy to play much baseball himself, beyond a bit of pitch-and-catch now and then. In his entire nineteen months overseas, Rizzuto played only one ball game other than those in Hawaii. That happened in Finschhafen, New Guinea, late in 1944. An Army team—not big leaguers, merely soldiers and officers who liked to play ball—challenged a similar Navy group, which was organized by Rizzuto. Phil was the only professional ball player on either side.

The Army nine had a Negro pitcher named Jenkins, a "sleeper." He was a captain and could fire the ball as fast

as Bob Feller. Hundreds of the soldiers on the island, white and Negro, dug into their jeans for the dough to bet on Cap Jenkins and the Army. The money was matched, of course, by the ever-ready gobs.

Phil had to catch for his team, since there was no one else able to handle the mask and mitt. Jenkins was all that the wild-wagering GI's expected him to be but the Navy hurler was good, too. The diamond was a rough one cut out of a jungle clearing and the players wore only shorts and shoes. But it was an expertly-played game and the sailors won it 1-0, with Rizzuto scoring the only run of the game. Jenkins held the Navy to three hits but one of those was the game-winning double by the Yankee short-stop.

The Japs gave up in August and the millions of men in the Pacific could start thinking of home. Phil was ordered back to the States and left by ship in September. He and his shipmates heard the World Series on short-wave through the Armed Forces Radio en route to California. There was a great deal of betting on the classic, there being very little in life that sailors wouldn't wager on. Naturally, many officers and men sought Phil's advice before getting their money down.

"I picked Detroit to win the Series from the Cubs," the Scooter remembers, "and I was right in selecting the winners of each game as it was played—except one. I picked the Tigers in the third game—the day Claude Passeau pitched a one-hitter for Chicago. Some of the guys who followed my advice on that one looked a little mean for the rest of the day!"

The transport landed at San Jose in mid-October and the first thing Phil did, after phoning Cora, was to see a ball game. "I'd been dying to see a real game for over a year

and I heard that a group of Coast Leaguers and other minor-league players, some of whom I knew, were barnstorming. I went to Long Beach to see 'em."

He was shipped across country to Norfolk for discharge, at the Camp Shelton Separation Center. On October 28, 1945 (three years and twenty-one days after his gob career began), the little fellow became a civilian once more.

## CHAPTER NINE

# *La Cucaracha*

*THE YEAR 1946* ushered in a new era for all of major-league baseball—the post-war happy hour of bulging ball parks and fat profits. The Yankees were to prove most prolific of all, under the colorful leadership of Larry MacPhail. MacPhail had slipped into the Yankee Stadium picture in January of 1945, after forming a trio to buy the club. Dan Topping, heir to a tin-plate fortune, and Del Webb, an Arizona construction baron, were his partners. They paid the heirs of the late Colonel Jacob Ruppert \$2,900,000 for the teams and ball parks in New York, Kansas City, Newark, New Jersey and Binghamton, New York.

Larry presided over the club in 1945 but could do little more than make plans for the future. Fettered by wartime restrictions and the absence of the stars in service, he was unable to exert his tremendous personality and capacity for work to make a winner. The Yanks finished fourth that year, lowest place they ever landed in Joe McCarthy's fifteen years as field leader.

But that wasn't important—1946 was to be the big year. Over the winter, Larry rebuilt the box seat sections of the

Stadium to produce more comfort and larger revenue; put the first public bar and cocktail lounge into a ball park, the plush Stadium Club which was and still is snobbishly limited to holders of season-box subscriptions; installed the finest available lighting system for night ball, and set up a spring-training schedule which was designed to get the ball players into shape and also fatten the club treasury through gate receipts.

MacPhail was a strong believer in the value of training a ball team in the tropics. He had taken the Cincinnati Reds to Puerto Rico and his 1941 Brooklyn champs spent part of their time in the tropical breezes at Havana.

Accordingly, he booked the Yanks into Panama for their 1946 conditioning exercises. Because there were so many players returning from service who might need additional work to sharpen up their old skills and because it was going to be difficult for Manager McCarthy to cut a swollen squad of sixty ball players—wartime holdovers and service-returnees—down to working size, the conditioning began on February 10. That date, in the light of later events, was much too early.

Panama liked the Yankees and the Yankees liked Panama. The ball players attracted the natives of Panama City and the American government employees in the Canal Zone. These people thrilled at the long drives of such sluggers as Joe DiMaggio, Charley Keller, Bill Dickey, and Joe Gordon in the practice sessions and at the fielding shows put on by Gordon and Rizzuto around second base. These performances were planned, just as circus acts are staged. Joe and Phil made unbelievable fielding plays in the infield practice which ended each day's workout. The scorching heat shortened the sessions to an hour and half—from 11 A.M. to 12:30—and the keystone combination climaxed

each training period. The coach who was hitting to the infield would purposely slash grounders for which either Joe or Phil would have to range far and deep. They invariably came up with the ball and reeled off phantom double-plays with snappy pivots and throws.

The natives, jabbering in Spanish, thrilled at Rizzuto's quick stops and starts, his darting movements and silky smoothness in getting just about everything hit his way. "La Cucaracha," they dubbed him—"the cockroach." It was a term of endearment, a compliment for Phil's agility and fluidity of movement.

The Panama sun seemed to be baking everyone into shape though the Panama moonshine was acting as a counter-agent. More than two-thirds of the players in camp had recently returned from three or four years in uniform. Some had spent many weary months of boredom on island outposts, others had been in rough going on European and South Pacific battlefields. Spring training was their first release from the limits and pressures which necessarily are imposed upon men in military services.

As a consequence, many of the Yankees burned the candle at both ends—and enjoyed it. They practiced hard at midday and played hard at midnight. The night clubs of Panama proved as attractive to them as to other tourists. Rum, rhumba and romance was the order of the night 'neath the tropical moon. One Yankee player even became "engaged," though he happened to have a wife and child in the United States. Another befriended a general's niece and occasionally was seen spinning around town in the high-brass' big Cadillac.

Not everyone joined the fun, of course. The majority of the players confined their extra-curricular activities to sight-seeing, fishing, and shopping, and the occasional

parties which government officials gave for the team with the sanction of McCarthy.

Phil doesn't smoke or drink and hates staying up late. Panama and its attractions didn't change him. He was anxious to play baseball—he was then twenty-seven—and not too certain that he still was as capable a ball player as he had been in pre-war days. He never got out of shape or did anything to harm his condition. Yet, as time went on, the Scooter became the most prominent victim of Panama training.

The Yanks had been in the Canal Zone only a couple of weeks when the old malaria bug came back and bit the little shortstop. A malaria victim remains susceptible to the germ after he has been cured. Recurrences are possible, particularly if the person remains in or returns to a tropical climate.

Rizzuto always has had trouble with his weight—keeping it, that is. His malarial attack in the Navy pared him from 160 pounds to 150 and he never recovered the extra ten pounds while in service. After his discharge, he took it easy at home for a few months with Cora and Patty and then went to Florida with them early in January so as to get himself in the best possible condition for the ball season. He took a beach cottage at St. Petersburg, and there he did pick up weight and felt fine when he left for Panama early in February.

But the recurrence of the malaria quickly hacked the pounds off his husky, well-muscled frame. He isn't fat, so the loss of weight meant the sapping of strength. Dizzy spells in the heat of the Isthmus were evidence of the return of the disease and Phil was ordered to the government hospital at Ancon for treatment.

Sulfa and other anti-biotic drugs smothered the germs

but Rizzuto was very slow in getting over the effect of the attack—particularly the loss of weight. McCarthy rested him frequently during the ten-game schedule against teams in Panama and the Canal Zone—using rookies at short. Most of the other regulars, feeling great, played every day, however.

The team left Panama early in March, after a month of varied activity, and flew to Florida. The forty-odd players who had been in the tropics were united with some twenty who had reported directly to St. Petersburg. A few days after the tourist landed in Florida, the exhibition schedule was resumed, now against major-league clubs as usual. There were thirty of these games in the space of a month—March 9th to April 8th. Then the team broke camp and took off on a long tour of Texas and five other states, with daily games and wearying overnight train rides.

The Yanks won everywhere they went, of course, and the great names—DiMag, Keller, Chandler, Rizzuto, Stirnweiss, Gordon, Dickey, and Ruffing—drew huge crowds. The long training grind had achieved its dual purpose—the players were in terrific shape and the management had picked up nearly \$100,000 at the box office.

Baseball men who had seen the team in Florida, where it won its first nine games against major-league competition, quickly tabbed the Yanks as certain pennant winners. A few wise ones also noted that the players were already in mid-season condition, almost everyone at physical peak. There was an implication that some of the great stars, already over or nearing thirty, might be drawn too fine and ultimately wear out in the late stages of the pennant race. This forecast proved correct.

Phil, though weak and underweight, believed himself set for a good season. There were still the doubts, of course.



Rizzuto, although he plays without complaining when handicapped by injuries, is a worrier and a brooder. Some days he felt fine and sometimes the dizzy spells knocked him for a loop. But he was certain that all would go well once the season began, and that he would be playing on his third straight championship Yankee team as well as the seventh successive winner in his professional career.

The Scooter received a mild shock one day, just before an exhibition game with the St. Louis Cardinals, who also train at St. Pete. His mind, already heavy with doubt and insecurity, was made more uneasy when he saw his "successor" hand-picked and signed with typical MacPhailian fanfare.

Loud Larry called a special press conference to announce the acquisition of twenty-one-year-old Bobby Brown, a shortstop who had hit over .400 as a wartime collegian at Stanford, UCLA and Tulane. Brown was signed for a bonus of \$51,000, which was spread over three years to enable him to keep as much as possible from the tax collector. MacPhail painted a glowing picture of Brown, insisting that seven other clubs had sought the boy and that two of them had outbid the Yanks. Bobby, claimed Larry, was the greatest shortstop prospect since Hans Wagner bow-legged for Pittsburgh and the Yankees were very lucky to get him. The baseball writers of the New York papers, cynical and inured to MacPhail's boasts, marked the whole thing as another of Larry's extravagances and dubbed the youngster "Golden Boy."

MacPhail, beaming at the scribes as he recounted Brown's prowess, suddenly realized that his listeners were trying to smother their snickers. Will Wedge, veteran newspaperman who is now Librarian for the Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown but who then was Yankee correspondent for

the *New York Sun*, finally convulsed on Larry's blarney.

Wedge, a distinguished white-haired gentleman whose pen often dripped bitter satire, remarked idly to MacPhail, "May we write, Larry, that Rizzuto's job will be safe for another two weeks?"

MacPhail, never far from the boiling point, blew his top, and started to storm from the room. Only the presence of cooler heads kept the conference from ending right there. It might as well have, at that, for neither Larry's pretty words nor Brown's actions at shortstop could mount a threat to Phil.

Brown arrived at St. Pete the following day and worked out at short, under the microscopic examination of Manager McCarthy and the Missouri-minded pressmen. The new boy's obvious slowness of foot and apparent inability to cover ground—particularly to his left—was remarked on by most of the writers. Rizzuto, standing by like a small boy who fancies he has lost the love of his family upon the arrival of a baby brother, looked on in silence.

A newspaperman stepped over to comfort Phil, noting, "He's no bargain, Philly. I don't think you've got much to worry about."

Rizzuto grinned his appreciation and then added, rather forlornly, "Gee! Fifty thousand bucks. Boy, that's a way more money than they've ever paid me. I sure was born a few years too soon."

Brownie finished his first workout in a Yankee uniform, then dressed and sat in the stands to watch the game with the Cards. Rizzuto, meeting the challenge of his "successor" in the way he knew best, gave a most amazing exhibition in the field. The Scooter ranged rapidly in all directions to handle sixteen chances without the slightest hint of a fumble. He even made Marty Marion, the Card shortstop, look

ordinary in comparison and at that time Marion was acknowledged as the best alive—"Mr. Shortstop."

"My goodness," exclaimed Brown. "That little fellow certainly can play shortstop, can't he?"

After the game, Bobby was asked if he expected to replace Phil. He thought for a little while, then answered, "I guess some people must think I'm a pretty good ball player or else they wouldn't have signed me for so much money, before I ever played a game in organized baseball. Honestly, though, I imagine it will be a long time before I'll ever begin to think of taking Rizzuto's place."

The Yankees, with all their great pre-war stars back under the direction of Joe McCarthy, were heavy favorites to win the pennant. The greatest outfielders in the game—Henrich, DiMaggio, and Keller—were reunited. An aging but still effective Bill Dickey was set to do the catching. Nick Etten, a wartime player who had led the league in runs batted in and in homers while the conflict was on, was set for first base. Gordon and Rizzuto, the incomparables, were twin Gibaltars in the middle and George Stirnweiss, the batting champ of 1945, was a solid citizen at third base. The pitching staff, anchored by Spud Chandler, Bill Bevens, and Red Ruffing, with Johnny Murphy for relief duty, looked superb. Hardly anyone thought they could lose.

The rosy outlook changed quickly, however, once the season started. Some of the veterans never did recover from the habits incurred in their tropical holiday in Panama. Others just didn't have it anymore. A few experienced that one bad year that seems to come to all professional athletes sometime in their careers. The disintegration was mental, moral and physical.

The Boston Red Sox, with a host of their own stars returning from service, figured to give the Yankees some

slight competition that year. Instead, they overran the rest of the league and the Bombers in the first third of the season and virtually locked up the pennant by mid-June. The Sockers won forty of their first fifty games for an incredible percentage of .800.

The Yankee players, almost all of whom had known the invincibility of a long lead in pre-war days, knew the jig was up for them. Although there were over one hundred games remaining, they realized that the Sox were home free.

First to realize it, of course, was the smartest man in a New York uniform, the manager. Joe McCarthy, winner of more world's championships than any other pilot, threw in the sponge even before the month of June. He and MacPhail clashed over policy and Joe staggered under the dual burden of battling the front office while trying to lead a dispirited group of battle-wise veteran ball players. The onus grew too great for McCarthy and one day he climbed aboard his white horse, figuratively speaking, and rode off in all directions at once. MacPhail forced the Buffalo Irishman to resign and appointed Dickey in his place.

Bill, a brilliant catcher, did not prove to be a brilliant leader—though the cards were stacked against him when he took over the helm on May 24. He and MacPhail also battled through the rest of the season as the club floundered.

The pitchers held up fairly well but it was difficult for them to win because, with the exception of Keller, nobody was hitting the ball. Charley managed to carry the club along on his broad back, hitting .333 for half the season. Then the herculean task overwhelmed him and he went into a tailspin.

The Sox kept on galloping and the Yanks, bad as they were, were able to hold on to second place. Being the run-

ner-up is a creditable condition in most major-league towns but not in New York, where the fans are used to winners. With all his star players collapsing en masse, Dickey did very well to land the club where he did. That was the year, you may recall, when Joe DiMaggio failed to hit .300 for the only time in his career. He hit only .290 and batted home but ninety-five runs.

Rizzuto folded up with the rest. Phil was no longer the scooter of pre-war days. Hobbled by injuries, annoyed by batting slumps, and unsettled by the offers from Jorge Pasquel's Mexican League, the little man was a handicap to the club. At one stage, he went hitless in twenty straight times at bat. He was ten pounds underweight and getting weaker and weaker from the grind of daily play. The effect of the malaria recurrence was evident and he was further hindered by bruised and knotted thigh muscles. Frequent dizzy spells, some of them in the blazing heat of the playing field, added to his discomfort and the team's over-all deficiency. The little guy was a rambling wreck and, for a good part of that season, would have been better off in a hospital than on the diamond.

Eventually he got there, too.

On July 17, Phil was batting exactly .222—a bit below the team average of .239. The Yanks swept a double bill against the St. Louis Browns at the Stadium that afternoon but the day was marred by a near-tragic accident to Rizzuto.

Phil stepped to bat in the fourth inning of the second game and was mowed down by a fast ball which flew from the arm of right-hander Nelson Potter. The ball struck him in the vicinity of the left temple. The mite crumbled in the red dust near home plate like a battered rag doll and was carried from the field on a stretcher. His mother, who

usually goes to the afternoon games, was one of the horrified spectators.

She rushed down to the dressing room and waited anxiously outside, keeping her vigil with prayers while her son was being treated on a rubbing table. After ice packs were applied and Phil's mind was cleared, he was rushed by ambulance to New York Hospital for observation and X rays. The pictures showed no skull fracture and Mrs. Rizzuto was sent home with the assurance that her boy was resting comfortably.

Though the ball hit him squarely, Phil's life was spared by an inch or so. He was lucky that it did not hit him high on the temple, against the weak wall of flesh which would have caved in and permitted a serious brain injury. The upper portion of his cheekbone took most of the impact and, though groggy, he never even lost consciousness.

While he was lying in the clubhouse, awaiting the ambulance, Phil said, "I can't understand why I couldn't get out of the way of that pitch."

"The ball sailed," he was told. "You were lucky at that. It might have been worse."

"Yeah," he grinned through the pain. "That might have been Feller pitching!"

Bob Feller, Cleveland's tremendous fireballer, was then having a great year and setting a major league strikeout record of 348 batters for the full season. One of the Yankees' indignities earlier that year had been a no-hit blanking by the Indians' star. Potter, never a really fast pitcher, didn't throw half as hard as the Cleveland speedboy.

Phil was beaned on a Wednesday and released from the hospital on Friday, with permission to return to uniform by Saturday. But painful headaches and dizzy spells at home over the weekend caused him to go back to the hospital the

following Monday. While lying down or seated in a chair, he was comfortable, but any attempt to stand up or move quickly brought on a skull-wracking, dizzy feeling.

The doctors released him after two more days of observation and he rejoined the team, which had departed for a Western trip. He went back into the line-up right away, replacing Frank Crosetti who was serving as a stand-in.

Although the doctors had assured him that he was sound, Phil's teammates were afraid that the little fellow might be plate-shy as a result of the incident. In conversations away from Phil's hearing range, they recalled players such as Joe Medwick, Hank Leiber, and Bill Jurgens who never were good hitters after similar beanings, though they had been solid stickers before being skulled.

Phil quickly assured them with his performances. The week of rest, though unpleasant because of the headaches, proved to be a tonic. It gave his sore legs time to recover and made him fresher physically. The shortstop took on a new lease on life, his spirits surged and so did his batting average. He showed no trace of timidity at the plate as he began to bat his way out of the slump. Phil was successful at finally snapping out of his hit-famine and he picked up steadily over the rest of the season. Although the Yanks were out of the race—Boston had moved to the front by a sixteen-game margin—Rizzuto played as though there was a chance for the flag. He came on to raise his average thirty-five points during the final two months of the schedule and ended up with a .257 mark.

Despite the strong finish, it was a terrible year for Phil. Also for many of the others. The active careers of pitchers Ernie Bonham, Red Ruffing, Marius Russo, Atley Donald, and Johnny Murphy ended with that season, as did that of Dickey.

About the only man connected with the club who thought it was a great season was MacPhail. Larry's eyes were lighted with dollar signs all season as the Yanks became the first baseball club to play before 2,000,000 people at home. They drew 2,200,000 paying customers, breaking the old record by nearly three-quarters of a million. It was on July 17, the very day that Rizzuto was beamed, that the Cub's 1929 mark of 1,485,166 for a full season was surpassed. At that point, the Yanks had played only forty-six games at Yankee Stadium.

When he finally packed up his gear at the end of the season, Rizzuto was between a fit and a funk. He had watched men he had known as great players breaking up alongside of him. He had been told that Gordon already had been traded to Cleveland in a deal which was to be announced during the World Series between the Red Sox and Cardinals. He knew that Bobby Brown, his "successor," had batted a resounding .341 at Newark. The Golden Boy had been sent to the club's International League affiliate for seasoning, with the idea that he'd be available as shortstop for the 1947 club in the event Rizzuto was through.

Through? Phil wasn't sure. He just didn't know. So many of the others—even the great DiMag—seemed to be washed up. Even the reporters who, being his friends, tried to be kind about it, wrote that it was just a bad year—that so fine a ballplayer as Rizzuto couldn't be on the downgrade at twenty-eight years of age. But they didn't believe what they wrote. Too many of those scribes had the feeling that the most likable little guy in the world was a gone duck.

Through? That's the worst word in the English language for a professional ball player—the last one he wants to hear or think of. Few of them ever will admit they are



finished—it usually takes the harsh, uncompromising mathematics of the batting and fielding tables to get the point across to an athlete who has lost his ability.

Rizzuto, intelligent, sensitive, giving to worrying, was well aware that he might be washed up. The thought wouldn't leave him. His earning capacity might be disappearing. And he had turned down the chance to grab many thousands of easy dollars by the simple act of jumping to the Mexican League. Was he a failure? Was his security gone? Had he shot his bolt?

Phil didn't know. But the thought tormented him all that winter. It was like a cold rock in the pit of his stomach.

## CHAPTER TEN

# *Mexican Hayride*

*NOT SINCE* the Black Sox scandal of 1919 had the major league clubowners been so shocked. It was spring of 1946 and they were looking forward to an all-time bonanza. Baseball interest was at an unprecedented height. Exhibition games were drawing thousands and tens of thousands of people; the return of the stars from service promised the highest brand of baseball ever and the mountains of loose money in the immediate post-war era promised the fattest and fastest turnstile clicking in the history of the national pastime.

This was Paradise. Soon every owner would be rolling in money. Most of them had done well enough during the war years. Washington had given baseball a green light and, though the available players were older and less talented than in 1941, the magnates had managed to get along beautifully. The services took the healthy men but left a residue with which baseball was able to continue—at a handsome profit for the men who met the payrolls. Although night ball was curtailed on the East Coast and spring training during the three years of conflict (1943-45) was limited to the frost-bitten sections of the country

above the Mason-Dixon line, the game had prospered.

They had a big plum and it was ripe for the plucking.

But suddenly the shadow of a tall, dark man fell across the beautiful picture. Jorge Pasquel, one of the richest men and probably the most flamboyant in Mexico, had decided to start a new war—one in which he would pit the world's most important commodity, the American Dollar, against the baseball empire of the United States. Old Jorge, a swashbuckling merchant prince, had an overpowering ambition to make the Mexican League superior to the National and American league with the ultimate goal of having his native land and its league included in the World Series.

Jorge and his brother Bernardo had amassed vast fortunes south of the border by various dealings in imports. They, through the grace of President Miguel Alemán and the Mexican government, had become multi-millionaires. It was all legitimate enough and their practices were entirely in accord with past and present ways of doing business in our sister republic. Jorge, a strong man, carried two pearl-and diamond-studded revolvers in side holsters for his own protection. He admitted, with some pride, that he had once killed a man—"but in self-defense, of course."

The Pasquels had used money, Mex or American, to reach the pinnacle. The revolvers were good show but it was the buck and the peso which were their weapons. They believed that by the simple process of importing American ball players to Mexico, for higher salaries and bonuses than those men were receiving in America, they could raise the level of the Mexican League to the point where it would become a third major league. Jorge was certain that the star ball players of America could be had—for dough. His blueprint for action was etched in dollar signs. Pasquel was convinced that money would buy any-

thing and that a laborer would come to work for the establishment which would pay him best.

There may have been an undercurrent of chauvinism in the Mexican magnate's attempt to lift the standards of the Mexican League. There may have been a profit motive—though it was hard to see how he ever was going to get back the hundreds of thousands he was prepared to dole out to lure America's stars to his country. Most likely, the Pasquels decided to open up a dollar war with American clubowners for the primary purpose of making themselves the biggest and most publicized men in their country. Some perturbed American baseball people hinted that Jorge was trying to become president of his native land and that a sensational success in building up the country as a baseball power would achieve more fame and votes than a deftly-planned and consummated political campaign. Next to love and bull fights, Mexicans like baseball best. There are, it seems, many paths to national heroism.

The Pasquels began their raids quietly enough in the late winter and spring of that first season after World War II. Their agents approached players in Florida training camps, California sites and also those who, like the Yankees, were based in Latin America.

Since they knew they had to run their war on a grand scale—no one would be impressed if they had raided the American clubs for second-raters—the Pasquels engaged in high-rolling dice. Stan Musial of the St. Louis Cardinals was the top star of the National League and they set their sights on him. They went after Vernon Stephens, shortstop of the St. Louis Browns and star of the team which, in 1944, had brought the Mound City its only American League pennant. They gave Mickey Owen, brilliant Brooklyn catcher, \$90,000 to jump his contract with the Dodgers.

They worked as quietly as possible in the beginning. But when the American magnates became aware of these commercial commando tactics, open war was declared.

Jorge, resplendent in his fierce black mustachio and brilliantly diamonded attire, angrily promised that he had only begun; that he would get Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams to come to Mexico; that he, Jorge, would take as many American players as he wanted and that the raiding would stop only when the major league bosses buckled to their knees and sought an amnesty. Pasquel's lawyers advised him, correctly, that the "reserve clause" which was a part of every player's contract would not hold water in a legal test and that the major league owners' threats of suits would never materialize. The reserve clause bound a player to his club for the year following the contract—he could not seek other employment in baseball but could be fired on short notice.

Although he had listed DiMaggio as his top desirable, Pasquel didn't approach Joe with an offer at any time. There were reports that he had sent an agent to visit Williams in Havana, where the Red Sox had gone for an exhibition game in March, with an offer of \$500,000 if the tall clouter would jump to the Mexican League.

Jorge and Bernardo decided to wait a bit on the Yankees' greatest star and, meanwhile, to shoot for a couple of good ones. A Pasquel agent (a former minor-league ball player) quietly contacted both George Stirnweiss and Rizzuto in Panama, offering no concrete terms but suggesting that the Mexicans would make it worth their while to leave the Yankees. Phil delayed any decision and so did George, figuring that they'd still have a chance to do business after the ball season started, if they were so inclined.

The two little guys were roommates and they talked the

possibilities over from time to time. They also told other players of the Mexican agents and at least two pitchers, Frank Shea and Herb Karpel, and infielders Steve Souchock and Hank Majeski were interested.

"See what you can get for us," they told Phil.

Rizzuto didn't tell the Yankee officials about the approach, since he had not really thought seriously of making such a drastic change. The matter died there in Panama for the time being. Shea came down with appendicitis and had to be operated upon. Majeski and Souchock couldn't break into the lineup as regulars and so were not of particular interest to the Pasquels. Karpel never made the grade in the majors. Stirnweiss was attractive to the Mexicans because he was the American League batting champion, having hit .309 to win the crown in 1945, the last year of baseball, World War II style. Phil's malaria came back on him in the Panama heat and he was too sick to think of a switch to another tropical climate.

But late in April, after both Stirnweiss and Rizzuto had gotten off to miserable starts along with nearly all the other regulars on the club, they were approached again. Stirnweiss heard from the Pasquels first and turned them down. He explained that he was working on the first year of a two-year contract and that he didn't want to jump.

Rizzuto, unsure of himself and doubting that he could still play up to major-league standards after his war-enforced absence, was more willing to listen. If he was through, then Mexico, instead of being a land of exile (Commissioner Happy Chandler had decreed a five-year ban from the majors for all jumpers), would become a haven and the means of financial salvation.

The same man who had contacted him in Panama approached Phil as he came out of Yankee Stadium some ten

days after the season had opened. Phil walked toward his own car, which was parked near the players' entrance.

"Do you want to see Mr. Pasquel now?" the agent asked.

Phil, not certain, nodded and stepped toward the car. He looked in it and saw Karpel and three others.

Rizzuto recalls the shock he got as he was about to get into the car.

"I looked into my car, see. There's three guys sitting in it along with Karpel. I look at the guys. They're dark and scary and I don't know any of them."

"Karpel says, 'Phil, this is Mr. Pasquel.'"

"'My God,' I yell, 'Let's get out of here. What if MacPhail sees us!'"

"They insist that we take a ride and we drive over toward the west side. Pasquel, this is Bernardo, not Jorge, tells me to park under the elevated highway. We do and he and I get out of the car. With the traffic rumbling over our heads, Bernardo takes me behind a pillar and starts counting out a roll of bills nearly as big as Dickey's catcher's mitt. They're all thousands—on top, anyway.

"He says to me, 'Here, take this money. It is for you. For nothing. Come to Mexico. Leave right away with my chauffeur. Your family, everything. We fix.'"

Phil shied away from taking any of the money and they got back into the car. On the way downtown, Pasquel offered the Yankee shortstop a bonus of \$10,000 to sign and \$15,000 for the season. It was a quick twenty-five grand and half of it was to be deposited in an American bank at once. But Phil, knowing that Stirnweiss had been offered a five-year contract, merely said he would have to think it over.

Pasquel then said that he would give him a five-year contract, too, at \$12,000 per year and the ten-grand bonus

to sign. (The Yankees were then paying him \$7,500).

The ball player promised to call Bernardo the following day. He did and that evening he and Cora met Bernardo and others at the Wedgewood Room of the Waldorf Astoria for dinner. Included in the group were Mario Loustou, a friend of Pasquel who acted as interpreter, and his wife and two other couples who were friends of Bernardo.

"It was some dinner," the Scooter remembers. "Off gold plates we ate, I tell you. Champagne and thick steaks. Anything I wanted. Orchids for Cora. Pasquel wore a diamond the size of an egg and he caught me staring at it and wanted to give it to me."

The richly-dressed foreigner, through Loustou, kept up a running sales talk all through the gorgeous meal. One of the women at the table worked on Cora, too, telling her of the wonderful things which were available in Mexico—such as nylons and girdles—which American women still were having a hard time finding.

To clinch it, Bernardo put in a call to Mickey Owen, in Mexico City, and had the phone brought to the table.

"Owen told me how wonderful everything was down there," Phil says. "It sounded like the greatest deal in the world. I was impressed but, since then, I've wondered if maybe he had a gun at his back!"

Phil said that he'd be willing to jump if Pasquel would raise the bonus to \$15,000, instead of \$10,000. Bernardo agreed immediately. He even promised to throw in a new Cadillac after Phil was across the border.

The Mexican made one mistake, however, and it probably cost him the chance to get Rizzuto. He knocked American baseball all night long, insisting that it was not as well played or organized as the Mexican League. That tacked on Cora's nerves and made her dislike Mexico with-



out ever seeing the place or the brand of baseball. She had been willing to let Phil make the decision when the meal started but by the time it was over, she was wavering.

Another grandiose and unnecessary gesture rubbed both Cora and Phil the wrong way, too. Bernardo, with dramatic Latin gestures, acted out the story of how Jorge had killed his opponent in a duel. Bernardo flung himself to the floor of the Wedgewood Room and, while falling, drew an imaginary gun with the dexterity of Hopalong Cassidy out-drawing a villain. The Rizzutos tittered politely at the recital but privately wondered whether they wanted to bring up their children in a country where men fought duels.

Phil and Cora left the Waldorf with Pasquel's top offer written on a menu. Mrs. Rizzuto keeps it for a souvenir of the "mistake we almost made."

The following evening the Rizzutos were at home in their small apartment in Hillside, New Jersey.

Phil and Cora were discussing the proposed deal, with Cora voicing objections to everything but the financial angle. Phil's mother, who had been advised by Phil and Cora of the offer and was against it, called on the phone from Glendale to plead with her son to stay with the Yankees. Cora added her voice, telling him, "You'll be like a man without a country. It would be a disgrace for the children."

Phil fretted indecisively, still feeling that he should jump because of the financial gain. Uppermost in his mind was Bernardo's promise that "we will pay you more this year than the Yankees will in the next three."

"I admit that I was ready to go, right then and there," he said. "I was afraid it was my last year as a Yankee, anyway."

While he was stewing, the doorbell rang. A portly stran-

ger, with the face and figure of a cupie doll, grinned a cherubic "Hello." With him was his attractive wife.

Phil, harassed by his personal problem, was in no mood for company, particularly strangers.

"Yes?" Phil asked.

"I'm George Weiss," said the visitor, "and this is my wife."

Phil gulped and quickly introduced Cora. Although Weiss had been overseer of the farm system of the Yankees and had steered Phil's career through the minors, they had never met. And this was 1946, after both had been in the Yankee organization for ten years.

"Joe McCarthy sent me over," said Weiss. "He called me and said that he had heard you were on your way to Mexico. I want to talk to you about it."

Phil listened and while Weiss was advising him against the move, the phone rang.

It was McCarthy on the other end. Joe began to talk to Phil like a Dutch uncle. He reminded the little fellow about how he would be letting his friends down and added that it was dishonorable and disloyal to jump a contract.

"You jumped to the Federal League in 1914, didn't you?" Rizzuto shot back.

Phil seldom gets mad but he was fed up with the sudden rash of advice tendered by the club's bigwigs.

Weiss talked on, raking up all the ammunition he had thought of while driving the thirty miles from his own home in Jersey to Phil's.

When he left, George said, "Well, do me one favor. Don't leave until you see MacPhail."

Rizzuto promised and the next day he went into New York to see Larry. The Yankee president, bristling mad at

the Pasquels and at Phil for listening to the Mexican League offer, was in a wild-bull mood.

Rizzuto found himself in a unique and exhilarating position, one that few ball players ever enjoy. He was a prize and was going to the highest bidder—with he, himself, playing the part of the auctioneer.

“I’ll stay if you’ll give me a \$10,000 bonus,” he told MacPhail.

Larry did a slow burn at the holdup, stormed and raged.

“He asked me to sign a complaint against the Pasquels so that he could get an injunction,” Phil recalls. “I refused. I told him that they were only trying to help me by giving me more money for playing ball and that, if he wanted to, he could do the same thing.”

MacPhail then threatened to suspend Rizzuto unless he signed the complaint. Phil still refused. The executive, unable to sway the Scooter with threats, finally agreed to give him a \$5,000 bonus immediately and an additional \$5,000 at the end of the season if Phil had a good year. (He didn’t and never got the second bonus.)

MacPhail, to save face, insisted that the money paid was a “cost-of-living” increase which had been promised to the player because his \$7,500 salary for 1946 was no larger than the one that he had worked under in 1942 when the cost of living was so much lower. Larry did go through with the injunction proceeding but Phil was not listed as plaintiff.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# *Comeback*

*THE YANKEES* had a new manager in 1947, a new coaching staff, and new bleats and promises by MacPhail. One of the baseball writers, looking at them in spring training, remarked wryly that the big trouble was that there weren't enough new ball players.

There were a few, of course. Bobby Brown had come back after a great year at Newark, where he hit .341. There were other rookies around and there was a new pitcher, Allie Reynolds, who had been secured from Cleveland. Joe Gordon, whose ineffectiveness had irked MacPhail into rages the previous year, had gone to the Indians. Gordon's departure broke up the zippiest double-play combination in the business and Yankee fans, wondering what MacPhail would do to wreck the team altogether, were fearful that he would trade off even Tommy Henrich. There was a rich rumor that spring that Tommy was on the block and Loud Larry didn't make any vigorous denial of the suggestion.

Rizzuto, who had been so glad to see the end of the 1946 season, wasn't too happy to have to pick up again in the spring of '47. MacPhail had scheduled another tour of the

tropics and it was to begin with a flight to Puerto Rico. Phil had no stomach for the trip. He was afraid of another malaria siege and he loathed flying. But Larry had planned all activities in tune with the jingle of a cash register and, despite their deflation of the previous season, Phil and the other Yank stars were still big box office in peso land.

Too, it was an unhappy time to leave home. Cora was pregnant and a woman likes to have her husband around at a time like that. She had no difficulty, fortunately, and the baby—their second girl—was born on April 19, the opening day of the season. Phil learned of the arrival of Cynthia Ann while out on the field at Griffith Stadium, Washington, before the inaugural game with the Senators.

For Phil this was to be a year of decision—either he could come back to his pre-war eminence or drop down into a position of mediocrity. Another bad year and everyone would write him off as a war casualty and say what a shame it was that he lost the three best years of his life in service.

Most of the other veteran players were in the same boat. Excepting Charley Keller, none of them had had even half of a good year in 1946. Ruffing, Dickey, Murphy, and some of the others had been released. Billy Johnson, the third baseman, was labelled as through and offered in trades numerous times during the winter and even after spring training began. Johnny Lindell, veteran outfielder who had played during the war but had been relegated to a sub role when the Henrich-Keller-DiMag combination returned, also was ticketed for less green pastures by the Yankee top brass.

Only a “mass comeback” could get the Yankees back on top and Rizzuto had to be one of those able to climb baseball’s toughest hill. It has been said and written often, in

references to athletes, that "they never come back." It seemed unlikely that all those veterans, some of them on the shady side of thirty, could regain their ability at the same time. It was a long shot and the new manager, Bucky Harris, knew it. That was why he had insisted on a two-year contract for himself when he signed as field boss for MacPhail.

Harris and his aides, Chuck Dressen and Johnny (Red) Corriden, worked hard during the spring to develop the more promising rookies. The veterans were left alone, Bucky being one of those rare adults who, when in a position of power, doesn't abuse it. Although he was aware of the Panama party-boy stuff of the previous year, the pilot refused to set a rigid code of training rules. He treated the players as adults, cautioning them that they could only damage their own careers by intemperance. Most of those who had flaunted the training rules and midnight curfew set by Joe McCarthy quietly accepted Harris' "easy hand" without biting it.

The Yankees began training shortly after Lincoln's Birthday in San Juan and were playing games against native teams from the Puerto Rican League by Washington's Birthday. From that territory they flew to Caracas, Venezuela, for half a dozen games, three against native nines and three with the Dodgers, who hopped over from Havana, where they were training. The presence of Jackie Robinson on the Montreal Royals, Brooklyn's Number One farm club, forced Branch Rickey, then Dodger president, to train his clubs in a geographical location which would not be inimical to the Negro. The Yanks and Brooks clippeded from Venezuela to Cuba to play three more games and then the New York club took off once more for the States and St. Petersburg.

Harris, trying to avoid the mistake of '46 when the older players wore themselves thin during the long spring grind and eventually collapsed in the pennant race, never forced a veteran to appear in the line-up. Rizzuto, Keller, Henrich, and the others played when they wanted to and only as long as they cared to do so. There was one man, unfortunately, who had no choice. Joe DiMaggio, who had undergone an operation to have a bone-spur removed from his left heel the previous December, wasn't able to play. He went to San Juan but the incision refused to heal and he never put on a pair of spikes. The great center-fielder had to be flown back to the United States for a second operation and never went to bat in an exhibition contest that spring.

Rizzuto, under the Harris system, prospered. He kept his weight at 160 pounds, rested frequently, and paced himself. Phil, who never is far out of shape, took good care of himself day by day and never knew a moment of fatigue. He did have one worry—a soreness in his throwing elbow while the club was at St. Pete in late March—but that disappeared after a couple of weeks. It's a condition that hampers him every year but it was magnified in his mind in '47 because he was so anxious to have everything right physically. He knew the comeback trail would be a rough enough one for a healthy man.

With Gordon gone, Rizzuto inherited a new keystone partner in Stirnweiss, who had played second base for the Yanks during the war and had moved to third when Gordon and Phil were re-united in 1946. Snuffy, nearly as small as the Scooter, fitted perfectly with him. They showed early in training that they were going to make a steady pair around the middle bag.

There were other pleasing facets that spring. George

McQuinn, an aging first baseman who had been released by the Athletics, signed on with the Yanks and became a sensation at the bag. Johnson recovered his form at third base and Brown, though new to that position, also indicated an ability to play it. There were more good infielders than were needed.

The farm system incubated a couple of terrific rookies in pitcher Frank Shea and catcher Yogi Berra. Spud Chandler, veteran wheelhorse of the pitching staff, looked as good as ever. Except for the "hole" left in center field by DiMag's absence, Harris had a pretty fine-looking ball team.

Even that yawning chasm was quickly filled. DiMag, recovering rapidly after his second surgery, trained himself in Florida while the team was en route north on a barnstorming trip. He jumped into the regular line-up four days after the season began and went well. The Clipper played in all but ten of the remaining games of the schedule and finished up with a .315 average as well as ninety-seven RBI's.

Joe Page suddenly blossomed into the outstanding relief pitcher in baseball history and the rest of the staff went well. Seemingly, everything Harris did to win a ball game turned out fine. Despite a morale-shattering act by MacPhail in May, the club took a firm grip on itself, steadily forged to the front, and then ran away from the rest of the league.

Larry's faux-pas took place in New York, about a month after the season had started and when the club was making only a fair showing in the race. DiMaggio was in a slump and refused to pose for pictures at the request of a photographer one day during batting practice. He angrily insisted that he wanted to use his time swinging. Keller and Lindell,



following Joe's example, also turned down the lensman, who was from the Army Signal Corps and who had pre-arranged the set-up with club officials.

MacPhail slapped a \$100 fine on Joe and tagged the other two for fifty apiece. He also separated a rookie pitcher, Don Johnson, from \$50 when the kid reneged on appearing at a banquet after having notified the sponsor of the affair that he would be there. The Yankees have a clause in their contract which requires cooperation with the club in its promotional ventures. Larry invoked that and levied the fines.

Some ball clubs would have rebelled and quit in disgust at MacPhail's application of iron rule. But the Yankees didn't. Harris called the players together, carefully smothered the smouldering indignation and united the men into a team. They took out their anger on the rest of the league and, by late June, had opened up a gap of seven games.

They won the second game of a double-header on June 29 and then ran off eighteen more in succession, the nineteen straight victories equalling the American League record of consecutive wins set by the Chicago White Sox in 1906. That streak ended all possibility of a pennant race and insured the flag.

It was a happy year for the Yankees, for every one of the doubtful veterans made a marvelous comeback. DiMag was voted Most Valuable Player in the league. Page broke a record by appearing in fifty-six games, of which he won fourteen officially and saved sixteen others. McQuinn, who had been rescued from the boneyard, hit .300. And Rizzuto proved himself a champion among champions by snapping out of the doldrums of the previous season.

After each victory in Yankee Stadium that summer, Harris, his coaches, and the writers who travelled all year with

the club would go through a ritual. Someone would raise his glass after all had been served at the press bar and offer a toast: "To Joe Page" or "To George McQuinn" or "To Tommy Henrich."

Invariably, after taking a sip to the player named, Harris would add fervently, "And don't forget little Phil!"

No one really could, of course. Certainly no infielder in the major leagues filled a pair of spike shoes (he wears five and a half) better than the Scooter that year.

"He pulls a miracle out there each day," Harris said one evening. "I wouldn't trade him for any shortstop in baseball. I don't care if he only hits .250, it's what he does with his glove, the way he saves our pitchers, that makes him great. I don't believe I have ever seen a game in which he did not make one great play."

Phil hit more than .250 that year. He played in 153 games, missing only one, and whacked out a .273 BA. Although he usually batted first in the line-up, he managed to drive in sixty runs. Afield, as Harris said, he was a wonder. The mite erred only twenty-five times while handling 815 chances.

Corriden, oldest member of the Yankees at sixty, sang even louder praises of Rizzuto than did Harris. "Lollypop" Corriden was a popular and well-loved figure with the players and mingled with them. He enjoyed the confidence of the athletes to a unique degree—a habit he first picked up as a coach for the Chicago Cubs and expanded later on as aide to sharp-spoken Leo Durocher of the Dodgers. Corriden had helped greatly in the development of Pee Wee Reese, fending for the youngster when Pee Wee made mistakes which drew the barbs and barks of Lippy.

Corriden's pet among all the Yankees was Rizzuto.

"I've been in baseball for over forty years," he said one

day during a gab-session on the Yankee bench, "and I'll be darned if I ever knew a ball player with the priceless, perfect disposition of Rizzuto.

"Phil's a sweetheart. He means a tremendous lot to the team because everyone likes him and responds to his cheery manner and is the better for it.

"Phil, you might say, is the spark plug of the Yankees. He's the happy balance wheel which keeps the team spinning along merrily and successfully. His value can't be measured in mere fielding and batting figures. It's something that goes deeper. Growls and gripes in the locker room after a bad day disappear quickly with Rizzuto around. No team can get into the dumps with Phil to pep things up.

"I know Reese and admire him. But I have to go for Phil because of his disposition and the cute way he has of binding the Yankee infield into a perfect unit."

Reese and Rizzuto found themselves matched again in the World Series that year, the Dodgers having managed to outlast the Cardinals again. It was a riotous set of games, the most spectacular Series ever played between the two leagues. The Yankees won two of the first three games but dropped the fourth when Cookie Lavagetto's double with two on and two out in the ninth inning ended a no-hit game for Yank right-hander Bevens and earned a 2-1 Brook victory.

They divided the next two and carried the decision into the seventh and final game, which was played in Yankee Stadium on October 6.

Phil singled in the second inning to drive in the Yanks' first run of the game and, after hitting safely again in the fourth, scored what was to stand up as the winning run. Page pitched five scoreless innings in relief as the Yanks

took the title with the 5-2 victory. It wasn't sealed until the ninth when Rizzuto's sure hands strangled the Bums' last gasp.

Brooklyn got a man on base with one out in the final inning and Bruce Edwards was the batter. The chunky catcher drove a sizzling grounder to short and Phil, fielding it cleanly, tossed to Stirnweiss at second. Snuffy relayed the ball to first baseman Tommy Henrich and the battle was over. That was the third double play started by the little guy in the Series and concluded a perfect fielding performance. He set a World Series record for putouts by a shortstop with eighteen and had fifteen assists.

Phil also shaded Reese in their "battle within a battle" for the second time. The Yankee hit .308 to Reese's .304, a slight difference, but Pee Wee yielded in the field by making one error in twenty-four chances.

The Series-ending double play became a running gag among the Yankees the following spring.

Corriden would break the silence or small-talk of the locker room by booming, "And who is the unhappiest man in baseball?"

"Bruce Edwards!" would come the answering shout from a dozen laughing voices.

"And why is he the unhappiest man in baseball?" quiz-master Corriden would continue, with a grin.

"Because the damned fool hit the ball to Rizzuto!" would come the chorus.

Edwards has something in common with hundreds of other hitters. It's not smart to hit a ball anywhere near Rizzuto.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# *Tailspin*

*ALMOST EVERYBODY* figured the Yanks to repeat in 1948. Why not? They were the champions. Nearly everybody was back—except MacPhail. Larry had gone out of the Yankee picture the night the team celebrated its World Series victory at the Biltmore Hotel the previous October. After a long evening at the festive board, irreconcilable differences arose between MacPhail and his partners, Del Webb and Dan Topping. Webb and Topping summarily agreed to buy out his one-third holdings in the club for \$2,000,000 and then handed Larry his hat.

George Weiss, long-time farm-system director under Ed Barrow and then MacPhail, was elected general manager by the remaining partners. Unfortunately, Weiss' elevation was to result in a high-level echelon rift between him and Harris. The men who had to work together in harmony to insure the club's success were unable to do so.

Harris had been brought into the Yankee organization by MacPhail in the summer of 1946, from Buffalo, where he had been general manager of that International League team. Bucky bore no title in the Yankee picture at that time but it was assumed by most people—and apparently

by the sensitive Weiss—that he would be MacPhail's assistant. George believed that by virtue of his nearly twenty years of service to the club he should be the second-in-command.

Whatever explosion might have taken place that year was postponed when Harris was named field manager for the 1947 season with MacPhail as majordomo. Weiss, a retiring soul, shrewdly reasoned that, given enough time, MacPhail would blow himself out of the Yankee family. George was named MacPhail's assistant, and, when the Yanks rolled to their easy pennant in '47, everybody in the organization took a bow for the job well done.

But the clashing personalities of Harris and Weiss made an untenable situation in '48. They managed to keep their mutual dislike under the surface for a while but eventually anyone who came in contact with both could read the story in their faces. With the two most important men in the organization, the general manager and the field manager, pulling their oars in opposite directions, there had to be an adverse effect on the team.

The players sided with the affable Harris out of a natural resentment for Weiss. Most of them had come up through the farm system and had come to know George as a hard man who deprecated their worth and held them to miserable salaries while they were serving their minor league apprenticeships. The average ball player only knows two kinds of figures, batting averages and dollar signs. Weiss and Scrooge were, in their minds, carbon copies.

The breach between the executives was not the main cause of the team finishing third that year, of course. No matter what is going on in the front office, a ball player thinks mainly of himself and his team. The Yankees were trying to win the pennant for themselves, for the prestige

and the acclaim of the fans, and for the World Series money they would gain. But it is a fact that the continual discord did have an effect on some players.

More important, of course, was the fact that many of the athletes had bad years and Rizzuto was among them. Both Chandler and Bevens were forced to retire due to dead arms before spring training was completed and so the pitching staff was hit hard. Red Embree, who had been figured as a big winner when he was obtained from Cleveland in a trade the previous winter, turned out to be only a fair right-hander. Shea, Rookie of the Year in '47, was a failure for the first half of the season due to weight and arm trouble. Page lost his magic touch and wound up with a 7-8 record for the season.

The mass comeback of 1947 became a wholesale retreat in '48. Only a few of the old guard stood firm—notably DiMaggio. He was the Magnificent Yankee, a tower of strength and inspiration all season. Joe hit .315 and led the league with 155 runs batted in, although partially crippled during the last month of the season due to painful muscle tears in his thighs, an arm injury, bad knees and another bone spur—this one in his right heel.

It was 1946 all over again and only the managerial ability of Harris kept the club in the contest. The Yanks, crippled physically and affected by front-office dissension, hung on until the second-last day of the season, when they were eliminated by the Boston Red Sox in a game at Fenway Park. Boston won again the following day to tie Cleveland and force the first playoff in American League history—a one-game affair which the Indians won.

For Rizzuto, it was a brutal season and, once again, led him to doubt his ability to play in the big leagues. The Scooter was a walking ad for the band-aid manufacturers

from start to finish. He had everything wrong with him, at one time or another, except frostbite.

Phil tore a muscle in his right thigh in the first week of the schedule and was out of the line-up three different times in the first month. It was a deep-seated muscle tear which hemorrhaged. There was no treatment possible, no remedy except nature's own healing processes. His thigh was black and blue and Phil, recalling his near-tragedy in the minors, was pessimistic. He was afraid that it was the sort of injury which would never heal completely. As much as he loved baseball, the thought of showing up at the Stadium each day was agony. He was in no shape to play and only managed to do so when the leg was tightly taped to lend support and kill pain.

The leg never did heal properly that season but Phil managed to navigate on it after missing thirteen games in the month of May. The layoff gave it enough rest to enable him to hobble along the rest of the year. He came back to the line-up on May 28, on one leg, so to speak. Harris benched Bobby Brown, who was hitting .381 while filling in at short, in order to take advantage of the way the little fellow inspires his teammates.

His underpinning was only the first of Phil's troubles, however. In June, he began to experience dizzy spells while trying to catch pop flies in the sun. The heat bothered him and his eyes seemed to be out of focus at times. The optical illusions became so pronounced that Harris sent him to a doctor while the team was in Chicago on a western trip. Both Phil and Bucky figured he would have to wear glasses in order to continue in the line-up. But the optometrist vetoed that idea and assured Phil that his trouble could be remedied by eye exercises.



In July, after the dizzy spells subsided, Rizzuto was engulfed by a new plague—arm trouble. He had always had some elbow stiffness in spring training but it had always disappeared after a couple of weeks. This was not the disappearing kind. An examination by X ray showed bone chips in his throwing arm, in the vicinity of the elbow. Phil tried to hide the defect from the opposition but wasn't able to do so.

He and DiMaggio had the very same ailment but the outfielder was able to keep his a secret. The chips permitted one good throw per day and Joe never had to make more than one. The shortstop did, of course, and fans, writers, and opposing players noted the weakness of Phil's heaves as well as the painful expression on his face when he was forced to try the long throw from deep short to first base.

It was Rizzuto's worst year ever. He hit only .252 and could make only twenty-one extra base hits in 464 times at bat. His bad leg and eyes reduced his potency at bat—though the best bunter in the league, he couldn't run fast enough to beat them out—and cut his efficiency afield.

Strangely, Joe and Phil had to find different cures for their similar ailments. When the season was over, both went to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, to be examined by Dr. George E. Bennett, famed surgeon for athletes. Joe's calcification deposit had to be removed by surgery but Phil was able to beat the knife.

Phil was afraid to undergo an operation and didn't want to go to Baltimore. He had seen too many pitchers' careers ended by a gleaming scalpel. But Weiss insisted that Bennett, not Rizzuto, make the decision. The doctor, perhaps with a nudge from Phil, okayed a delay and the condition did clear up. Weiss had feared that Phil might suffer in-

flammation of the elbow during the following season and be forced to undergo an operation which would make him miss part of the schedule.

Despite his poor season, or perhaps because they wanted to lend some encouragement to their idol, friends and fans of Phil gave him a "Day" at Yankee Stadium on Sunday, August 29.

His parents were there to share the great occasion with the little guy. Mama Rizzuto was at most of the games, anyway, and Phil, Senior, came when he could. Rizzuto was showered with gifts, the prize presents from his faithful admirers being a television set and a luscious yellow Olds convertible.

It was a wonderful day and he appreciated the generosity of his friends. But the little shortstop, thinking of the kind of year he was having, couldn't help wondering whether this was going to be the last big day in his baseball career. Phil was beset with uncertainty and, as he drove the shiny new car home that night, wondered about himself and his future once more.

If a voice inside him had asked, "Little man, what now?" he couldn't have answered.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *Near Miss*

*THE WEISS-HARRIS FEUD* had been resolved the day after the 1948 season ended, with Bucky getting the boot. One or the other had to go and Webb and Topping, unable to run a baseball operation themselves, had to stick to the man who had the know-how. Webb, a rich man through widespread construction operations, is a resident of Phoenix, Arizona, but travels extensively in overseeing his coast-to-coast interests. In the Golden State he had come to know Charles Dillon Stengel, a transplanted Californian whose roots were in Kansas City, Missouri. "Casey" Stengel, who received his nickname from the initial letters of his birthplace, had been an outfielder with the Dodgers and Giants in the twenties. He had been a failure as a major-league manager with Brooklyn and the Boston Braves but was in the midst of his own successful comeback, at the age of fifty-nine, as field boss of Oakland, champions of the Pacific Coast League.

Despite Casey's waspish ways and boundless sense of the ridiculous, he is a smart baseball man. Webb picked him to manage the Yankees, and Stengel and Weiss decided upon a coaching staff which was to have the Yankee tradition

behind it. They hired Dickey, the once-great catcher who had managed the club unsuccessfully in '46, Jim Turner, a pitcher with the wartime New York club and later manager of Portland, Oregon, of the Coast League, and retained Crosetti, who had been carried over by Harris from the McCarthy era.

Stengel had his work cut out for him—but good. He, like Harris in '47, had to hope that the veteran Yankees could again come back to their real abilities. Additionally, Casey had a psychological problem. One of the reasons given by Weiss for his dissatisfaction with Bucky was the latter's weak handling of the "bad boys" on the club.

Some of the Yankee players had been enthusiastic night owls during the previous season and Harris refused to discipline them for their carousing. The thing got to such an embarrassing point that Weiss hired private detectives to tail the more fun-loving Yankees.

The gay members of the club were in the minority—only five or six of the twenty-five players—but they helped cost Bucky his job and contributed directly to the team's failure to win the pennant.

Stengel, in spring training, prescribed stringent rules of conduct, instituted a twelve o'clock curfew, and forbade attendance at the dog races on any night but Thursday. Weiss, an inveterate race-track fan himself, thought that the players had spent more time handicapping the puppies in the spring of '48 than they had in studying their own baseball form. He was behind the greyhound ban.

Rizzuto, who doesn't drink anything harder than an occasional glass of beer with his meals—that to keep up his weight—never was one of the party boys. Phil, good year or bad, was a model athlete. Stengel knew this and he never worried about the little shortstop. Casey, in fact, exempted

Phil from all the "policing" and gave him permission to miss the daily practice sessions if he cared to do so. Only once did the Scooter avail himself of that opportunity, incidentally.

The manager insisted on reduced activity by Phil right from the beginning. When the squad assembled at Huggins Field, St. Petersburg, on March 1, Stengel took Rizzuto aside and told him to get into shape as slowly as he pleased and to use his own methods.

"When you are ready to play ball, let me know," the manager stated. "Give that arm plenty of rest and don't throw a ball hard for at least a month."

Phil complied. He baked his right elbow through heat and diathermy treatments daily and was careful not to strain the elbow. Dr. Bennett had permitted him to avoid the knife on condition that he rest the arm completely over the winter and during the spring, as well. By the end of March, the calcification no longer affected his throwing and Rizzuto asked Stengel for a chance to test it in an exhibition game.

He had gotten into shape gradually and sensibly as Stengel had suggested—no rushing or straining at any time. He had played in a few exhibition games up to then but for only a few innings at a time. He hadn't thrown hard and, except for the "good feeling" in his elbow, there was no assurance that he could. While admitting that he wasn't sure of himself, he asked Stengel to put him into the line-up against the Boston Braves at St. Petersburg on the afternoon of March 31.

"I've got to find out some time," he said seriously to the manager, "and this looks to be as good a day as any."

It was one of the happiest days of his life. In the course of the 9-7 Yank win, Phil made eight hard throws. Three

of them were from deep in the "hole" between third and short. Phil made the last throw as hard as the first, with his full arm and without pain or flinching.

Stengel was a mighty happy man that day. Casey couldn't afford another illustrious cripple—he already had Joe DiMaggio on the doubtful list. The Clipper had undergone an operation in November for the removal of the bone spur on his right heel and that member was causing trouble. Joe tried it gingerly in a few Florida exhibitions and felt some pain. The team broke camp on April 6 and, a few days later, was in the little town of Greenville, Texas, for an exhibition. DiMag decided to put the heel to pressure that afternoon. He sprinted from first to third on a single by the following hitter and the pain made his hair stand on end. He had to be fitted with a braced shoe and flown to Johns Hopkins for another operation.

DiMaggio's injury was the most serious of seventy-three which beleaguered Stengel and the Yankees that year. Joe missed the first sixty-seven games of the schedule before finally making his seasonal debut on June 28 in Boston. That was the opener of a three-game series, with first place at stake. Had the Yanks lost two of the three, they would have dropped out of the lead they had held from the opening game of the season. DiMag broke in with an explosion which would have seemed fantastic if it had been described in a work of fiction such as *Frank Merriwell* or *Baseball Joe*. He hit four homers and batted in nine runs as the Yanks swept the series—all three of the decisions being gained through his four-baggers.

The Clipper's resounding debut took the spotlight off Rizzuto, who had been playing the most exciting ball of his career up to then. It also dimmed in significance an injury

to the shortstop—the only one which made him miss an inning that season.

The game on June 28 was a night affair and, in the first inning, Johnny Pesky of the Sox crashed into Phil as the latter took a throw from second baseman Jerry Coleman at second base. Pesky, a bit taller and heavier than Phil, was trying to break up a double play. His shoulder hit Rizzuto flush on the jaw and knocked him down.

The Yankees accused the Sox of playing rough and began to retaliate. DiMag plowed into Vern Stephens, Boston shortstop, with intent to kill in the following inning and, later on, Lindell, a 6'4", 215-pound giant, knocked second-sacker Bobby Doerr groggy with a slide.

Phil was able to finish the game but complained of a headache in the clubhouse and the Yankee trainer, Gus Mauch, arranged for X rays to be taken the following morning. Phil couldn't sleep when he got to bed that night and had to ask Mauch for sleeping pills. These knocked him out and caused him to oversleep in the morning. So, instead of going for the X rays, the shortstop went directly to the ball park.

Although he was slightly dizzy and "achey," he played the full game. It was a great play by the Scooter which cut off a Red Sox rally in the first inning at four runs and enabled the Yanks ultimately to achieve a one-run victory with a rally in the ninth. With one out and the bases full, Ellis Kinder was at bat. Kinder lined a smash off the glove of Cuddles Marshall, Yankee relief pitcher. The ball crackled on the ground toward second base. Coleman and Phil converged toward the skipping grounder. But it hit the bag and bounced off Coleman's right arm. Phil, racing behind second, picked up the carom, beat the runner coming down

from first to second for one out, and then completed the sensational double play on the hitter with a bullet throw to first. Only Rizzuto could have made that play.

Although he hadn't been able to eat anything which had to be chewed at breakfast—he couldn't move his sore jaw—Phil made two doubles in the game and beat out a squeeze-play bunt.

The Scooter went for the X rays the following morning and they proved negative. His jaw was bruised but there was no evidence of a fracture. The headaches were continuing, however, when he took infield practice before the third and final game of the series.

Then, in the first inning, his right arm began to quiver nervously as he went to bat. He fanned.

Phil took his place in the field for the Sox half of the inning and Pesky, his nemesis, banged a ball past the pitcher's feet and on over second base. Phil tried to reach it but couldn't control his left arm, which was shaking as with palsy.

Stengel immediately removed him from the game and ordered him to be rushed to Massachusetts General Hospital. Physicians there took an electro-encephelograph of his brain, in order to detect presence of a blood clot. This is the same test which is given to prize fighters who show distress from the after-effects of a blow on the jaw.

"They glued twenty-four wires to my hair and began to listen to what was going on in my mind," Phil related merrily the next morning. "They listened and listened but they must have heard nothing because the doctor said he couldn't find any serious symptoms. Toughest part of it all was the job I had getting the glue out of my hair."

There was no clot but the hospital held him for a day just to be sure he was all right. The condition—the arm



tremble—was diagnosed as a post-traumatic tremor, a slight nerve injury due to the wallop on the jaw by Pesky's shoulder.

Before he left the hospital, the little guy was told that the records of the nerve control test he had taken would be incorporated in a text book for the use of medical students. "It's to show the difference between normal and abnormal but they didn't tell me which I was," he gagged.

The Yanks moved along to Washington the next day and Phil missed that game, the only one on the schedule in which he didn't make the box score.

That scare was the worst one Phil ever had as the result of being the victim of a "take-out" play at second base. He is philosophical about the rough stuff, feeling that it is part of the game and must be accepted. He carries lumps and bruises on his legs and body all season long every year from the battering of enemy runners.

Pesky is the worst offender in Rizzuto's experience, a more rugged runner than some of the big players in the league. That may lie in the fact that Johnny is a small man, too, and it doesn't look so bad for him to crash into another little fellow. Where a big brute, such as Walt Dropo or Ted Williams, would be accused of picking on Rizzuto, Pesky is excused on the ground that he and Phil are of nearly equal size.

"Pesky, he's a corker!" Phil exclaims. "He must hit me a dozen times a season. And every time he does, he apologizes and picks me up. But the meathead wallops me again the next chance he gets. He has cut me up more often than anyone else—even Elmer Valo of the A's, the roughest slider in the league."

Strangely, no umpire has ever called an interference play in Phil's favor when someone deliberately plows into him

to break up a double play. The rules permit the men in blue to do so but Phil's still waiting for the first one to make such a decision.

"You just have to be quick enough to get out of the way," he says. "When I first came to the Yankees, Crosetti told me that I would have to master several ways of making the double play, such as cutting inside or outside the bag after tagging it instead of following through with a direct throw to first. He cautioned me not to let the baserunners know where I'd be in the vicinity of the bag because I'd get killed if I let them type me as a target."

The Yankees were lucky that Phil's injury didn't prove serious enough to keep him out of the line-up for an extended period. They needed him more than they did any other player. It's conceivable that they could have won the pennant if DiMag had not played a game, though Joe certainly was great once he got into action. But it is highly improbable that they would have been in the race at all if Rizzuto had been forced out for long.

Phil was the hub of the infield from opening day on. He played the first six weeks with a pulled muscle in his right leg, the result of a misstep on a diamond in Texas while the team was coming north. The leg had to be tightly bound each day in order that he could maneuver—a repetition of his experience the previous season.

But he stayed in there and held the team together, day after day. He was hitting well and working miracles in the field. Phil was the only constant fixture in the ever-shifting infield defenses. Johnson and Brown alternated at third base and rookies Dick Kryhoski and Jack Phillips at first base. Stirnweiss was at second, at times, in place of Coleman.

The peppery guy was, once more, the best shortstop in

the league and the main reason why the Yankees were leading the league for the first half or pre-DiMag portion of that 1949 season. He consistently made the plays which had been the trademark of his performances before the war. He went into the "hole" for ground balls which required throws that figured to pull his bad arm out of its socket. That the arm didn't go with the ball and still hung in its regular place, without showing symptoms of distress, was encouraging. That Phil was hitting close to .300 was more than anyone, including himself, expected.

Phil was zipping along, the outstanding player on the front-running club. At that time, in mid-June, the fans of the nation were voting for the players who would make up the teams in the annual All-Star Game, between the National and American Leagues, to be played in Brooklyn on July 12. Rizzuto had never made the Star Game because the bigger and better Yankees had overshadowed him. But this year, he was the biggest star of the Bronx Bombers and it seemed that he couldn't miss.

Unfortunately, he did. The fans, who voted in ballots supplied by the newspapers, were more taken with slugging performances than with all-round play. They voted Eddie Joost, the A's slender veteran, as top shortstop because he had hit eighteen home runs in the first ten weeks of the season and placed Stephens of Boston second because he, too, was hitting the ball out of sight and driving in a lot of runs. The fact that neither of them could carry Rizzuto's glove was overlooked.

Stengel, realizing too late that Phil was running third in the voting, put on a campaign to get votes for his little champ. He never failed to mention Rizzuto when he talked to newspapermen and radio men. Casey did everything but take out a paid ad for Phil. But both were disappointed.

The All-Star manager for the Americans, Lou Boudreau of Cleveland, needed only two shortstops and he selected Stevie as the alternate for Joost. Lou, himself a shortstop, realized Phil's worth but, to avoid criticism, he stuck to the results of the poll.

As the season went on, following the All-Star Game, Rizzuto proved how wrong the fans were. Joost petered out badly and Stephens went into a terrible batting slump which cost his team valuable games in their great rush to overtake the Yanks. Boston, which was twelve games behind on July 4, came on fast to catch the Yanks in the final week of the season. Except for a September slump by Stevie, they might have won the flag, going away.

The schedule-maker, with dramatic foresight, booked the last two games at Yankee Stadium with the Red Sox. Boston had to win only one of them to take the flag. They didn't and the Yanks, by sweeping the two-game series on the final weekend, became American League champions. Phil helped win the final game with a triple in the first inning. He scored after reaching third and that was the only run either team got until the eighth inning.

Rizzuto, beyond all doubt, had been the outstanding player on the Yankees—the most valuable man on the pennant-winning club. He led the Yankees in the following offensive categories: games played, 153; at bat, 614; runs scored, 110; hits, 169; total bases, 220; stolen bases, 18; doubles, 22 and triples, 7. In addition, he led all shortstops in fielding with only 23 errors in 792 chances. Joost came second with 25 boots in 819 chances.

Despite his brilliance, it just wasn't Phil's year to win elections. The All-Star snub was by the fans. He also finished second with the baseball writers, who named Ted Williams as the Most Valuable Player in the American

League. Williams, greatest of modern hitters, had lost the batting title by a fraction of a point to George Kell of the Tigers, each finishing with a .343 average. There was no real fault to find with the selection. Williams received thirteen first-place votes from the twenty-four writers selecting and Rizzuto but five. Ted's majority was clear-cut, the lithe larrupper gaining a total of 273 points, nearly a hundred more than Phil's 175.

The voting is held before the World Series, of course, so that the play in the classic would not influence the men casting ballots. And it was just as well, for Phil's Series exploits were, for the first time, somewhat on the dull side.

The Dodgers again were the opposition and, though the Yanks won in five games, Reese outshone Phil. Pee Wee made six hits, including a double and a homer, in nineteen at bats for a .316 average while Phil had only three singles in eighteen tries for .167. Afield, the little Yankee held a slight edge, with twenty errorless chances to Reese's one miscue in a total of fifteen chances.

There had been a lot of newspaper talk, with the fans picking up the idea, that Rizzuto should be the MVP in the league. Most of the Yankees thought he was, of course. Though he himself never said a word about it, Phil was hoping that he'd be accorded baseball's greatest individual honor.

The announcement of Williams' selection was made the day after Thanksgiving, although all the ballots had been counted and tabulated seven weeks earlier by Ken Smith, Secretary-Treasurer of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Usually the MVP winner is kept a tight secret until the day the story is released by Smith to press and radio. But, somehow, there was a leak and it was fairly common knowledge among newspapermen and fans that

Ted had won. The Baseball Writers' Association wouldn't have minded so much except that a story broke at the same time, to the effect that a gambling syndicate had made \$500,000 betting on a "sure thing," that Williams and not Rizzuto or Joe Page was the top man. The BBWAA, which had never been aware that anyone bet on the award, was incredulous—and embarrassed. Steps were taken immediately to avoid a repetition of the premature disclosure.

Rizzuto was not very much disappointed when the announcement came.

"How could I be?" he suggested. "I knew about it two weeks before. Anyway, Ted deserved it. He had all those homers and runs batted in and practically shared the batting title. A guy like me, who doesn't hit a long ball, has got to finish second to one of those sluggers. After all, I only hit .275.

"Not that I was glad to see Williams get it. I wasn't because I felt that a little guy like myself would never get another chance at the big prize. It only happens once to a fellow in my position, I figured. It was tough to come so close. I couldn't believe I'd ever have another year like that one and, even if I did, somebody like DiMaggio or Williams would have a better one!"

The New York Chapter of the BBWAA annually holds a dinner at the glittering Waldorf Astoria Hotel the first Sunday in February. The writers award two plaques, both named in honor of deceased members. The Bill Slocum Memorial Plaque is given for long service to baseball over a period of years and the Sid Mercer Memorial Plaque to the "Player of the Year." The New York writers voted the latter award to Rizzuto, hoping in some measure to make up for the fact that he had not been named Most Valuable

by the committee representing the entire national association.

They reasoned, along with Phil, that the little shortstop never would have another chance.

He was wrong and they were wrong.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# *The Heavier the Load*

*HIS GRAND COMEBACK* in 1949 could easily have been Phil Rizzuto's peak performance—the year of years in his career. There certainly was no reason to expect, as spring training began in 1950, that the little man could or would do anything more. He hardly had to. The Yanks were champions and they still had most of their good ball players. Only Charley Keller was gone and the veteran had not been a factor in the pennant and World Series triumphs.

The Yankees could win again—if Rizzuto had only an average season. Sure they had a couple of weaknesses—lack of depth in the outfield and a first-base problem. But they looked good enough to repeat, particularly with Joe DiMaggio healthy enough to start the schedule. It didn't figure to be a breeze—not with such strong clubs as Boston, Cleveland and Detroit to lick. But the Yankees were sound and sure to get good pitching. Casey Stengel wasn't worried a bit and he predicted the team would win again.

The manager was to find smoke shrouding his rose-colored glasses, however. Tommy Henrich's left knee went permanently lame before spring training ended. Shortly



after the regular schedule began, DiMaggio went into the worst slump of his long career. Even softball-throwing left-handers were making a monkey of the great hitter and, by the end of May, the Yankee Clipper was sinking with a batting average of but .227.

Such a performance by the star should have dragged the club down, too, particularly since Henrich was physically unable to take up the slack. But for the little man, it might have. With the other veterans slowing down, Rizzuto retained and strengthened the legend of greatness which has always been associated with the Yankees. The mite short-stop became the star of the team—the inspirational force which kept the club in the race.

Joe Cronin, Boston's general manager, was talking of the Yankees and the spirit which moves them one day. He pointed out on the diamond, identifying DiMaggio, Henrich, and Rizzuto.

"The pride of the Yankees did not pass with Ruth and Gehrig. It lives on in the minds and hearts of men like DiMaggio and Henrich and Rizzuto—an indefinable something which makes the word *Yankee* stand for something apart—the very best there is in baseball," he said. "Players like those inspire a respect for victory in the others around them; show them the enjoyment of winning. Look at those Yankees—they're *living!* They know that being a Yankee is *good*, the tops, the best there is in this business."

While Joe was plunging to the bottom of the league batting statistics, Phil was soaring to the top. The little guy blazed away at all pitching and built up a .355 batting average for himself in the first six weeks of the season. The Yanks swept all eight games on their first Western trip in May and Rizzuto led them with a .441 average during the streak. At thirty-two, in his tenth year as a Yankee, he was

having his finest season. His hitting had eyes popping all over the league and so loud were the paeons of praise for Rizzuto the socker that everyone practically forgot about Rizzuto the fielder—that is, everyone but the Yankee pitchers who lived better and longer on the mound because of his efforts. Phil's general excellence afield was so taken for granted that nobody noticed that he hadn't made an error since the season began. On the night of May 22, in a game against Cleveland, Phil broke the American League record for consecutive errorless games by a shortstop—and no one noticed it until a week later! The old mark had been Eddie Joost's 42 games and 226 chances, set in 1949.

The night was a momentous one for the Scooter in other ways, too. He found himself being "dusted off" for the first time in his career and, in the same game, came close to being injured for the only time all season. It was Mike Garcia, roly-poly Mexican right-hander of the Indians who dusted Phil four times. This served as a mark of tribute to the little man because beanballs are not wasted on poor hitters. Early in the game, Phil dove into catcher Ray Murray, 6'3" and 220 pounds, in a successful effort to score a run. His left leg, already giving stable room to a charley horse, was bruised in the collision and the wind was knocked out of Phil. Stengel and half a dozen others ran out to home plate as Phil lay in anguish. They were afraid they had lost him for a long time and that was one thing they just couldn't afford.

They gathered nervously as trainer Gus Mauch offered first aid. Meanwhile, many thousands of Yankee fans back east were shuddering along with the players as Mel Allen, Yankee broadcaster, screamed into his "mike," "Little Phil is hurt, little Phil seems to be badly hurt."

Fortunately, the impact only shook up Rizzuto and he

was able to complete the game. He was back in action the next day, though limping. Phil went on and played in every one of the 155 games the Yanks had in 1950—the extra one above the usual 154 coming about because a tie game with Washington had to be played off.

With Rizzuto burning up the league and running on toward a new fielding record, Manager Stengel began a promotion campaign to get the little shortstop elected to the All-Star team. Casey, who is as wise in the ways of publicity as he is in directing a team on the field, took the stump early. He had expressed his own disappointment at the fans' failure to nominate Phil in '49 and was anxious to avoid a repetition of that slight in '50.

Stengel believed that Joost and Stephens led Phil in the '49 balloting only because he, himself, and the baseball writers travelling with the Yankees had failed to promote Phil's cause in time.

The writers with the Yankees were only too happy to join in Casey's conspiracy of ballyhoo in behalf of Phil, to whom they believed the honor should rightfully go, anyway. The manager piously intoned eulogies of the shortstop and the writers saw that the praise was distributed throughout the nation.

"I've seen some great boys in the short field in my time," Stengel announced one day, "but none of them ever did anything Phil has not shown this year. In fact, I would call my boy 'Mr. Shortstop' because I cannot conceive of a better showing by Reese, Marion or any other shortstop in the game."

On another occasion, Stengel used the entire train trip from New York to Boston for a five-hour declamation on the value of Rizzuto.

"So he won't hit the long ball like Stephens or Joost,"

Casey bellowed. "But show me anything else he can't do better. He's the fastest shortstop in the league, covers the most ground, is the most accurate thrower, and has the surest hands. He can go get a pop fly better than anybody. No shortstop alive can make as many 'impossible' plays as Rizzuto. And did you ever see a better man on the double play?"

Stengel kept firing his ammunition as the voting began in June. "He's the best bunter in baseball," the manager roared to all within hearing. "He bunts with thought and precision and what a guy he is to use for the squeeze play! We won eight straight this season and Phil squeezed home the winning run in two of those."

Stengel repeated his demands that the fans vote for Phil in an interview with Hy Turkin, of the New York *Daily News*, shortly after that paper had begun to run the All-Star coupon which the fans were to fill in. The game was to be played at Comiskey Park, Chicago, on July 11.

"The fans are nuts if they don't vote for Rizzuto," Casey barked. "And tell 'em I said so!"

Lou Boudreau, who had played shortstop on five American League All-Star teams, added his voice to Stengel's.

"Rizzuto unquestionably is the best shortstop in our league," the then Cleveland manager said in New York early in June. "He always was a great fielder. Now he's becoming a great hitter. Fellows like Stephens, Joost and Chico Carrasquel of the White Sox are good, too, but you've simply got to put Phil ahead of 'em all, the way he's playing now."

Hank Greenberg, front office boss of the Tribe and an all-time great slugger, also rode along with the Scooter.

"I'd like to have him on any team I had anything to do

with. He can do more with his ability and equipment than any shortstop I've ever seen. About the only thing he can't do regularly is hit the long ball for you, like Cronin used to do."

It was news, of course, when Phil did make his first error of the season. It came in the fifth inning of a night game at Yankee Stadium on June 8—and on the easiest sort of a play. Bob Swift, lead-footed Detroit catcher, bounced a simple roller right to Phil.

"It was so easy that I over ran the ball," he said, explaining the muff. "I had lots of time but I flubbed it, pure and simple."

Just the day before, Phil had come up with a tremendous performance in a key game. The Yanks and Tigers were grappling for the league lead, with New York holding a half-game edge over the Bengals. A Yankee loss that day would depose the Bombers from first place. Rizzuto hit his first homer of the season as he helped rout Hal Newhouser, the visitors' star left-hander, and also got a single. He made a great stop of a smash over second base by George Kell, who was leading the league in hitting at that time, turning it into a fast double play. That sensational stab came in the fifth inning, pulled pitcher Vic Raschi out of a hole, and enabled the right-hander to go through to his sixth victory in nine games. Raschi is one of the Yankee pitchers who pay daily tribute to Rizzuto.

"It's nice to turn around and see that little guy at shortstop," he says. "He makes pitching easier."

Phil's error on Swift's bounder ended his errorless string at 288 chances in 58 games, a new record. He had committed his previous error—a bad throw—on September 17, 1949. His next one came in Cleveland on June 21. He made

only fourteen all year as he led the league's shortstops in fielding with a .982 percentage. He had 767 total chances and took part in 123 double plays.

Rizzuto was so terrific that he caught the fancy of the fans all over the nation. He didn't need Stengel's help to be named to the All-Star team. He won the shortstop position easily and played the entire fourteen innings as the National Leaguers won, 4-3.

Tom Ferrick, a veteran relief pitcher who began the season with St. Louis but was traded to New York on June 15, told the whole story of Rizzuto's value when he was asked the difference between pitching for St. Louis and New York. He had won one game and lost three with the Browns and showed an 8-4 record for the Yanks.

"Well," Ferrick answered, "in St. Louis when a batter smacked a hard-hit ball in the infield, by the time I turned around the ball was in the outfield for a hit and I had to start running to back up one of the bases. With the Yankees, I just turn around and watch Rizzuto and the other guy, Coleman, reel off a double play. Rizzuto gets the balls that go by other shortstops and that's the main reason why pitching for the Yankees is such a good deal."

Rizzuto believes that his best day of the year came in Cleveland on August 6. The Yanks had just blown a series of three straight in Detroit and then had come into Cleveland and split the first two games of a three-game set, winning Friday night and losing on Saturday. They badly needed the rubber game with the Indians on Sunday. Bob Lemon, who was the winningest pitcher in the league and probably the toughest for Phil to hit, was the hurler for the Indians. He was seeking his tenth successive victory.

The Scooter started operations with a single in the first inning, but that was wasted. It was memorable in that it

was his one-thousandth major-league hit. He came up in the third, with a scoreless tie prevailing, bases full and one out. He doubled down the third-base line, driving in two runs. Two more scored in the inning, making four and resulting in a quick knockout of the best pitcher in the league. Phil went on to make four hits in four times at bat. He added a single and a triple, for a total of seven bases, and had four runs batted in. The Yanks won the game, 9-0.

After his perfect day, Phil sat on a trunk in the clubhouse. He had just completed one of his greatest days afield, too. He was all over the infield at Cleveland Municipal Stadium, gobbling up tricky hitters and racing far over the foul line in left field for a couple of mile-high popups.

"You know, if you'd told me this morning that I was going to have this kind of day, I'd have told you that you were crazy. I've been tired lately and haven't felt well," he said, adding, "Nothing serious. Just sort of woozy every now and then. The doctors have given me eight different tests but all they can find is a low blood count. They've been feeding me vitamin pills to build up my energy. Of course, I hadn't been hitting and you always feel bad when you don't hit."

Phil paused and grinned, "You know, it has taken me three days to get that thousandth hit. And when I went hitless Saturday, while looking for the big one, I thought maybe I was going to have as tough a time getting that one as I did my first one when I broke in back in 1941.

"I'll never forget how hard I had to work for that one. We opened in Washington that year. Dutch Leonard shut me out in the first game and Sid Hudson did it the next day. We came home to the Stadium and played the A's. I

was horse-collared again in the opener of that series but I don't remember who pitched for them. Then, in the second game, Jack Knott was their pitcher. Pete Suder, my old Kansas City buddy, was playing third for them and my first two times up he made a couple of fancy stops to rob me of hits. Then, in the seventh inning, I laced one to left field on a line and I had my first major-league hit."

Rizzuto's steady hitting seemed to surprise some of the other teams in the league. That a fellow who had barely managed a major-league batting average of .275 should suddenly be elbowing his way into the five leading hitters was shocking. It made about as much sense as if crooner Frankie Sinatra—Phil's idol and pal—had suddenly decided to become an opera singer. There had to be a story behind it.

"Johnny Mize started it all—Johnny and his bat," Phil explained to inquisitive people who wanted to know the reason.

"I used to grip my bat too hard," he said. "I was so anxious to get hits that I was too tense. It made me commit myself and sock at balls that I should have let go by. Mize noticed that at batting practice one day in Florida and suggested that I loosen up my grip and relax.

"I did so and, at Mize's suggestion, I adopted a spread stance at the plate, widening the distance between my feet. It's the same stance I used to use in the minors, when I hit with more power than I have in the American League. My hitting seemed to improve in the exhibitions and I figured I was on the right track."

Phil found himself derailed just as the season began, however, and it was Mize who got him back on an even keel. The Scooter had gone hitless in his first eleven times at bat and was wondering what had happened, he looked to the first baseman for aid.



"Try my bat," Mize suggested. Big John is the kind of fellow who always is looking to help another guy out.

"Mize's bat started me off," Phil says. "I'm not saying that I just took John's bat and held it out and the base hits bounced off. But it was almost like that the first time I used it. We were playing Washington and I tried to duck away from a pitch. The ball hit the bat and went into center field for a line drive single. I said to myself, 'This is it.'"

The bat had a big handle and a big barrel. Phil stuck with it all season, except to change the length and weight specifications. In the hot weather, it began to feel heavy. Mize's stick was thirty-six inches long and weighed thirty-five ounces. In mid-June, Phil asked the manufacturer (Hillerich and Bradsby, makers of the Louisville Slugger) to reduce the weight to thirty-four ounces. It still felt a bit on the lead side, so in July the bat company made a further reduction to thirty-four and one-half inches and thirty-three ounces. That weight suits and Phil intends to order all his future bats in the Mize type but in his dimensions.

A ball player has to be as careful in his selection of bats as a dancer does his shoes or an actor his roles. Those are bread and butter implements.

Phil is mighty careful about his gloves, too. Although he is a small person, the Yankee shortstop has normal-sized hands. On him, they look large. The glove he is now using is five years old—that is, this is his fifth season with it.

He acquired it in 1947, during spring training at St. Pete. A kid pitcher named Pat Pasquarella was working out with the Yankees. Phil liked Pat's glove—ball players often test and weigh each other's equipment—and offered to buy it. The young sandlotter, grateful that a Yankee star had

admired something of his, quickly offered it to Phil and refused any payment.

It was that mitt—a long-fingered model from which he has removed most of the stuffing—with which the little Yank set his fielding record. Phil intends to use the glove for the rest of his active career, even though he has four others in his trunk. His only worry is that he may lose it. That's the only thing that will cause him to use another. All gloves wear out, of course, but the Scooter is so in love with this particular leather that he is going to avoid that, too.

"I figure on never letting it wear out," he says seriously. "So far, I've had new insides put in it twice and a new outside once. Even if it sounds like one of those old Ford car jokes, I wouldn't part with it for anything in the world."

Old glove . . . new bats . . . all-around excellence . . . daily miracles at shortstop . . . timely, powerful hitting . . . an incessant inspiration to his teammates. All these things made Phil Rizzuto in 1950, the best baseball player on the best team in the American League. From one end of the league to another, opposing players and managers, newspaper reporters and radio and television broadcasters all joined in the litany of praise to the little man.

The Yankees clinched the pennant on Friday, September 29, in Boston when the last remaining contender—the Detroit Tigers—was mathematically eliminated by the Cleveland Indians in a game in Detroit.

The Yankees held a victory party in Boston's Hotel Kenmore that night. Toasts were drunk to all, from the lowliest rookie who had pitched one inning, to Rizzuto, who had played in every game and had meant to the Yankees the difference between a pennant and finishing in fourth place.

Looking back, the players knew that the smallest pair of shoulders in the room had carried the heaviest load. With the decline of Henrich and the season-long batting woes of DiMaggio (Joe's late surge in the final month just got him up to the .300 mark), there was only one pre-war Yankee left who still was the same. In fact, he was better than ever.

Rizzuto had finished fifth in the league hitting averages with .324, which also was high for the Yankee team. He had made two hundred hits for 271 total bases and included in those were his seven homers. He had been the standout Yankee over the course of the entire season—the one indispensable man. When Henrich's bad knee forced him to the bench early in the year, a newspaperman commiserated with him. But the Old Pro, disdaining sympathy, said, "Don't worry too much about me. This ball club will get along fine even if I'm not able to play. But just pray that nothing happens to that little scamp at shortstop. He's the one we can't get along without."

When reminded that he was the last of the "Old Yankees," with the declines of Henrich and DiMaggio, Phil said modestly, "I don't belong in the same class, much less the same breath with those guys. Jeepers, I'm lucky to be on the same team with them."

The World Series was an anticlimax, for the Yankees and for the baseball world. The Phils, worn out after staggering through to victory on the final day of the National League race, were beaten in four straight games. Phil didn't have much of a series at bat, just two hits in fourteen times up, but he was his usual classy self in the field. It didn't make any difference. The Scooter had trailed the paths of glory from April to October.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# *A Foregone Conclusion*

*THE BASEBALL WRITERS' ASSOCIATION* carefully guarded against a premature revelation of its Most Valuable Player Awards for 1950. Ken Smith locked up each ballot in a safe-deposit box when it was received in the mail, without opening one envelope. Usually the announcement of the winner is held off until the day after Thanksgiving. But, in order to avoid a leak, he decided to spring the results on Thursday, October 26, a month earlier than usual.

The sealed envelopes were taken to the office of Ford Frick, National League president, in Manhattan's Radio City, and opened. The tabulations were made and the news was released to newspapers immediately.

The "lock and key" secrecy was unnecessary, of course. The voting only confirmed a fact that was evident just about every day of the baseball season—that Rizzuto was the Most Valuable Player in the American League for 1950. The little fellow won in a landslide, being accorded sixteen of the twenty-three first-place votes. Billy Goodman of the Red Sox, the league batting-champion, was a distant second with Yogi Berra, Yankee catcher, third. Goodman

received four first-place designations and Berra the other three. They finished in that order in the point tabulation, too. First place was worth fourteen points, second nine, third eight and on down to one point for tenth.

Phil's selection was no surprise to anyone—though he expressed amazement when a reporter phoned him at home to break the good news.

"Me? No!" the modest midget gasped. "There must be better players in this league than me!"

Phil shouted the word to Cora and the kids and they began to yell and sing. "They staged a snake dance all through the house," Phil says. "Everyone was kissing everyone else and Cora waltzed around with the baby in her arms."

The baby, Penelope Ann, had been born in July. Phil had hoped for a son, as he had when the other girls were on their way. "My brother has a boy and each of my sisters has a boy," he said after Penny arrived on July 7. "Guess I'm just never going to get a ball player in this family."

The MVP Award capped a long list of honors which Phil had gained in 1950. He had been selected as the "Best Dressed Athlete of 1950" by the Clothing Institute of America; named as the "Sports Father of the Year" on Father's Day in June; received an Austin sedan for being selected as the "Most Popular Yankee" by the fans of the Bronx; had been designated as the "Outstanding New Jersey Athlete of the Year" and had won a \$10,000 jewelled belt—The Hickock Award—as "Outstanding Pro Athlete of 1950."

Aside from the glory, the Most Valuable Award meant cash. Not directly, but the winning of baseball's highest prize meant high-powered ammunition in his battle for a substantial raise for 1951.

On November 28, 1950, precisely at 11 A.M., Rizzuto walked into the Squibb Building on fashionable Fifth Avenue at 58th Street, and ascended twenty-nine floors to the plush headquarters of the Yankees. Phil was ushered into the office of George Weiss and, after a brief discussion with the club's general manager, emerged as the fourth-highest-salaried ball player in the history of the New York organization. Babe Ruth had been paid \$80,000 per year, Joe DiMaggio \$100,000, and Tommy Henrich \$45,000.

Rizzuto minced happily atop the wall-to-wall carpeting, feeling as though he were walking on clouds. In his hand was a contract calling for \$40,000 for the 1951 season—the greatest amount ever paid a man solely for playing shortstop. Only Lou Boudreau, of all the shortfielders of all time, had gotten more per annum, and at least half of his \$65,000 from the Cleveland Indians in 1949 was for handling the role of manager.

The little fellow then stepped into an adjoining conference room to join Casey Stengel and a group of reporters who were discussing the future of the Yankees. Phil quietly took a seat on a wall-bench, smoothed the crease in the trousers of his glen-plaid suit, and winked at the manager. Ol' Case winked back and then, turning towards the newsmen, said jocularly, "Well—about shortstop, I just dunno. Seems as though we have quite a few likely-looking youngsters coming up from the farm clubs. May have to look over a few of them in case we need someone."

Then, nodding seriously in Phil's direction, "That is, in about five years or so. I think this little fellow here is going to be around for quite a while now. You know, when I took over this club in 1949 they told me I had problems and that the worst one was at shortstop. A lot of people

around here told me Rizzuto was through. I more or less believed 'em then.

"But I guess he wasn't. All this little rascal has done is miss two games in two years for me. He held my team together many a time when it should have fallen apart. I don't know but what I would have been back in the minors without the job he did for me. I told Weiss to give him a big raise and I guess that came about. I have to be good to Rizzuto, he's been good to me."

Phil grinned modestly at the praise, then, changing the subject to cover his embarrassment, offered to sell Casey a suit.

He wasn't kidding, very much. Next to his family and baseball, the clothing business is his life. For five winters he has occupied himself as a salesman and good-will ambassador for the American Shops, Inc., a large clothing firm in Newark. He likes to keep busy and the money is good. But, more important, he has been learning a business which could provide a comfortable living for Cora and the kids once his ball days are over.

He is on his way to realizing his ambition to become a small-scale industrialist. The owner of the Newark establishment, grateful for the business which Phil's presence brought him, will set up the littlest Yank in his own store in New York City. Rizzuto, without putting up a cent, will become a one-third owner of the place, the stock of which is valued at a quarter of a million dollars.

It is his name and fame as a player which has made his business career in Newark such a success. Bobby-soxers of both sexes, are (in the jitterbug jargon) "gone" when they see Phil. Little boys howl until their parents take them into the American Shop so that they can touch Phil, talk to him

and get his autograph. Teen-aged girls, though hardly to be classed as customers, clatter into the place in their saddle shoes, jumping up and down like crazy. Some days it takes the amiable, curly-haired little fellow fifteen minutes to get through the crowds and into the store. He signs autographs on every conceivable surface, even the babushkas which the delighted girls pull off their heads.

More important, Phil has sold suits. He has learned the business—buying, style, merchandising, tailoring, and financing. He has been taught the difference between quality and inferior goods. In the language of the cloak and suit trade, a poorer garment is called an “Eighty Six.” Many a time when Phil showed up at the start of a western trip wearing a snazzy new suit—he has nearly a hundred of them—Yankee players would josh him unmercifully, referring to the handsome garb as an “Eighty Sixer.”

“I like the business and believe I can make good in it,” he says of the retail clothing line. “I’ve got to think of the future. This big money in baseball doesn’t last for too many years. It took me a long time to get up in the bucks and I might go downhill in a hurry. How many players have you seen who were good one year, bad the next, and through after that? I’m not kidding myself. Some day my legs will go and they’ll get some other guy who can cover ground and make the double play better than I can. I expect to be a successful cloak-and-suiter when I’m through as a ball player. And I don’t think I’ll need my name in the headlines on the sports pages to keep me in business. Quality merchandise and a good deal for my customers will take care of that.”

All that, of course, is for the more distant future when it will be “Phil Rizzuto, Proprietor.” Stengel said this time is five years away and he should be pretty close. Phil,



thirty-two last September, should go on for five years more in baseball—provided both he and the world stay in one piece.

There should be a great many more base hits ringing off the bat of Phil Rizzuto in the clutch; more daring and successful base-running ventures; hundreds more of those sensational fielding plays which soothe the nerves of shattered pitchers and win pennants and, of course, more top-bracket contracts following conferences with the reluctant Mr. Weiss.

Phil was the first Yankee to sign for 1951 and his inking of the record pact was in the nature of a logistical triumph for the general manager. Weiss wanted Rizzuto in the fold first, so as to have a basis on which to argue with the rest of the raise-demanding athletes who had brought two straight pennants to Yankee Stadium. He told Rizzuto exactly that in a talk prior to the final contract get-together.

"I demanded a two-year contract first," Phil explained to his friends after he had agreed to take the \$40,000. "He quickly squashed that. He said he might have to give others a two-year deal if he gave me one. He insisted that no player should be signed for more than one year.

"He said that what happened to Tommy Henrich might happen to me," Phil related, "and that if I was unable to play, then he'd have to pay me for a whole year for nothing. I told him that was exactly the reason I was asking for a two-year arrangement—job security. But it was no go."

Phil also argued for more money than he finally accepted. He had made \$25,000 in 1949 and he blithely asked Weiss to double the figure. He didn't expect him to do so, of course.

"I tried to use Joe DiMaggio as a basis for my raise," Phil

recalled. "I figured that if Joe was worth \$100,000 a year for what he had done in 1950 (DiMag hit .301 but had to be benched for a week because of a slump), and I was the Most Valuable Player, then I figured to be worth at least half as much as he would in 1951.

"But Weiss laughed me off. 'People come to the ball park to see him hit homers,' Weiss said. 'They don't come in to see you bunt!'"

Rizzuto accepted the refutation.

For one more year, probably no longer, the littlest Yankee would have to wait before becoming the biggest one. But with the eventual decline of the great slugger, Rizzuto seems destined to become the top player of the top club in baseball nominally and financially. Artistically, he already had superseded even DiMaggio as the most important player in New York and in the American League.

The Scooter will carry the Yanks in the years to come. The fan, hurrying through the Stadium turnstile, will settle in his seat and look, not to center field for the star, but to the wide area between third base and shortstop. Other Yankee followers, finding their comfortable parlor chair and the appropriate channel, will watch their television screens for the little man who's always there.

Won't have a bit of trouble finding him, either. As Patricia Ann Rizzuto, aged seven, says, "It's easy to pick out daddy on the television. He's the littlest one on the field!"

# Appendix

## THE MOST VALUABLE PLAYER AWARD AMERICAN LEAGUE—1950

*Selected by the Baseball Writers' Association of America*

Phil Rizzuto was elected most valuable player of 1950 in the American League and received the Kenesaw Mountain Landis award.

Three baseball writers from each of the eight cities listed ten players in the order of their value. A first place choice counted fourteen points while any man second on a list received nine points, with eight points for a third spot and so on down to one point for being named tenth.

The tabulation:

| <i>Player</i>         | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>7</i> | <i>8</i> | <i>9</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Rizzuto, New York..   | 16       | 5        | 1        | 1        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —         | 284          |
| Goodman, Boston....   | 4        | 5        | 5        | 1        | 4        | 1        | —        | 1        | —        | —         | 180          |
| Berra, New York....   | 3        | 5        | 2        | 1        | 2        | 3        | 1        | 1        | —        | 2         | 146          |
| Kell, Detroit.....    | —        | 4        | 3        | 3        | 2        | 2        | 3        | 4        | —        | —         | 127          |
| Lemon, Cleveland...   | —        | 1        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 2        | —        | 2        | 1        | 5         | 102          |
| Dropo, Boston.....    | —        | —        | 5        | 2        | 1        | 2        | —        | 1        | —        | 2         | 75           |
| Raschi, New York...   | —        | —        | —        | 2        | 3        | 2        | 3        | —        | 4        | 1         | 63           |
| Doby, Cleveland...    | —        | 1        | —        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 3        | 3        | 4        | 1         | 57           |
| DiMaggio, New York    | —        | 1        | 1        | 3        | 1        | —        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1         | 54           |
| Wertz, Detroit.....   | —        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 2        | 1        | 1        | —        | 1        | 3         | 50           |
| Evers, Detroit.....   | —        | —        | 1        | 1        | —        | 1        | 3        | 1        | 1        | 1         | 38           |
| Carrasquel, Chicago.. | —        | —        | 1        | —        | 1        | —        | 1        | 1        | —        | —         | 21           |
| Trout, Detroit.....   | —        | —        | —        | 1        | 1        | 1        | —        | —        | 1        | 1         | 21           |
| DiMaggio, Boston...   | —        | —        | —        | 1        | 1        | —        | 1        | —        | —        | —         | 17           |
| Noren, Washington...  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 2        | 2        | 1        | —         | 16           |
| Doerr, Boston.....    | —        | —        | —        | 1        | 1        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —         | 15           |
| Mize, New York....    | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | 1        | —        | 1        | —         | 11           |
| Priddy, Detroit.....  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | 1        | —        | 1        | —         | 11           |
| Rosen, Cleveland....  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | —        | 3        | —         | 11           |
| Yost, Washington...   | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | 1        | —        | —         | 8            |
| Parnell, Boston.....  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | 1        | —        | —         | 7            |
| Ford, New York....    | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | —        | 1        | —         | 7            |
| Williams, Boston....  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | —        | 1        | —         | 7            |
| Garver, St. Louis.... | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | 3         | 6            |
| Stephens, Boston....  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 2        | —        | —         | 6            |
| Houtteman, Detroit..  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | —        | —        | 1         | 6            |
| Lollar, St. Louis.... | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | —        | —         | 4            |
| Lopat, New York....   | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —        | —         | 3            |
| Wood, St. Louis....   | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1        | —         | 2            |
| Dente, Washington...  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1         | 1            |
| Philly, Chicago.....  | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | —        | 1         | 1            |

*Honorable Mention*

Rosen, Cleveland, and Stephens, Boston, 9; Evers, Detroit, and Raschi, New York, 8; Priddy and Wertz, Detroit, and Williams, Boston, 7; Dropo and DiMaggio, Boston, and Noren, Washington, 6; Carrasquel, Chicago, Easter and Wynn, Cleveland, Ford, New York, and Garver, St. Louis, 5; Fain, Philadelphia, Houtteman, Detroit, Lollar, St. Louis, and Mize, New York, 4; Bauer, Coleman and DiMaggio, New York, Doby, Cleveland, Lehner, Philadelphia, Lipon and Trout, Detroit, Reynolds, New York, and Yost, Washington, 3; Brissie, Chapman and Hooper, Philadelphia, Ferrick, New York, Kell, Detroit, Lemon, Cleveland, and Parnell, Boston, 2; and Berra and Lopat, New York, Doerr, Boston, Coleman, Lenhardt, Moss and Stirnweiss, St. Louis, Groth, Detroit, Hudson, and Mele, Washington, Joost, Philadelphia, and Robinson and Scarborough, Chicago, 1.

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AMERICAN LEAGUE  
MOST VALUABLE PLAYER AWARDS

*Chalmers Award—Highest possible total, 64 points*

| YEAR  | PLAYER             | CLUB                   | POINTS |
|-------|--------------------|------------------------|--------|
| 1911— | Tyrus R. Cobb,     | Detroit Tigers         | 64     |
| 1912— | Tris E. Speaker,   | Boston Red Sox         | 59     |
| 1913— | Walter P. Johnson, | Washington Senators    | 54     |
| 1914— | Edward T. Collins, | Philadelphia Athletics | 63     |

(DISCONTINUED)

*League Award—Highest possible total, 64 points*

|       |                       |                        |    |
|-------|-----------------------|------------------------|----|
| 1922— | George H. Sisler,     | St. Louis Browns       | 59 |
| 1923— | George H. Ruth,       | New York Yankees       | 64 |
| 1924— | Walter P. Johnson,    | Washington Senators    | 55 |
| 1925— | Roger T. Peckinpaugh, | Washington Senators    | 45 |
| 1926— | George H. Burns,      | Cleveland Indians      | 63 |
| 1927— | H. Louis Gehrig,      | New York Yankees       | 56 |
| 1928— | Gordon S. Cochrane,   | Philadelphia Athletics | 53 |

(DISCONTINUED)

*Baseball Writers' Association Award*  
*Highest possible total, 80 points*

|       |                       |                        |     |
|-------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----|
| 1931— | Robert M. Grove,      | Philadelphia Athletics | 78  |
| 1932— | James E. Foxx,        | Philadelphia Athletics | 75  |
| 1933— | James E. Foxx,        | Philadelphia Athletics | 74  |
| 1934— | Gordon S. Cochrane,   | Detroit Tigers         | 67  |
| 1935— | Henry Greenberg,      | Detroit Tigers         | 80  |
| 1936— | H. Louis Gehrig,      | New York Yankees       | 73  |
| 1937— | Charles L. Gehringer, | Detroit Tigers         | 78  |
| 1938— | James E. Foxx,        | Boston Red Sox         | 305 |
| 1939— | Joseph P. DiMaggio,   | New York Yankees       | 280 |
| 1940— | Henry Greenberg,      | Detroit Tigers         | 292 |
| 1941— | Joseph P. DiMaggio,   | New York Yankees       | 291 |
| 1942— | Joseph L. Gordon,     | New York Yankees       | 270 |
| 1943— | Spurgeon F. Chandler, | New York Yankees       | 246 |
| 1944— | Harold Newhouser,     | Detroit Tigers         | 236 |
| 1945— | Harold Newhouser,     | Detroit Tigers         | 236 |
| 1946— | Theodore S. Williams, | Boston Red Sox         | 224 |
| 1947— | Joseph P. DiMaggio,   | New York Yankees       | 202 |
| 1948— | Louis Boudreau,       | Cleveland Indians      | 324 |
| 1949— | Theodore S. Williams, | Boston Red Sox         | 274 |
| 1950— | Philip F. Rizzuto,    | New York Yankees       | 284 |

\* System changed so that highest possible total became 336 points instead of 80.

(Courtesy of *The Little Red Book of Baseball*, New York City)

## RIZZUTO, PHILIP FRANCIS

Born Queens, New York, September 25, 1918

Bats Right. Throws Right. Height, 5 feet, 6 inches. Weight, 160 pounds.

| Year           | Club         | Lea.   | Pos.  | G                            | AB   | R                       | H    | 2B  | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | Avg. |
|----------------|--------------|--------|-------|------------------------------|------|-------------------------|------|-----|----|----|-----|----|------|
| 1937           | Bassett      | Bi-St. | SS    | 67                           | 284  | 53                      | 88   | 17  | 5  | 5  | 5   | 6  | .310 |
| 1938           | Norfolk      | Pied.  | 3B-SS | 112                          | 446  | 97                      | 150  | 24  | 10 | 9  | 58  | 26 | .336 |
| 1939           | Kansas City  | A.A.   | SS    | 135                          | 503  | 99                      | 159  | 21  | 6  | 5  | 64  | 33 | .316 |
| 1940           | Kansas City  | A.A.   | SS    | 148                          | 579  | 124                     | 201  | 28  | 10 | 10 | 73  | 35 | .347 |
| 1941           | New York     | A.L.   | SS    | 133                          | 515  | 65                      | 158  | 20  | 9  | 3  | 46  | 14 | .307 |
| 1942           | New York     | A.L.   | SS    | 144                          | 553  | 79                      | 157  | 24  | 7  | 4  | 68  | 22 | .284 |
| 1943-1944-1945 |              |        |       |                              |      | (In United States Navy) |      |     |    |    |     |    |      |
| 1946           | New York     | A.L.   | SS    | 126                          | 471  | 53                      | 121  | 17  | 1  | 2  | 38  | 14 | .257 |
| 1947           | New York     | A.L.   | SS    | 153                          | 549  | 78                      | 150  | 26  | 9  | 2  | 60  | 11 | .273 |
| 1948           | New York     | A.L.   | SS    | 128                          | 464  | 65                      | 117  | 13  | 2  | 6  | 50  | 6  | .252 |
| 1949           | New York     | A.L.   | SS    | 153                          | 614  | 110                     | 169  | 22  | 7  | 5  | 64  | 18 | .275 |
| 1950           | New York (a) | A.L.   | SS    | 155                          | 617  | 125                     | 200  | 36  | 7  | 7  | 66  | 12 | .324 |
|                |              |        |       | Complete Major League Totals |      |                         |      |     |    |    |     |    |      |
|                |              |        |       | 7 yrs                        | 3783 | 575                     | 1072 | 158 | 42 | 29 | 392 | 97 | .284 |

## World Series Record

|      |          |      |    |   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |      |
|------|----------|------|----|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 1941 | New York | A.L. | SS | 5 | 18 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | .111 |
| 1942 | New York | A.L. | SS | 5 | 21 | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | .381 |
| 1947 | New York | A.L. | SS | 7 | 26 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | .308 |
| 1949 | New York | A.L. | SS | 5 | 18 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | .167 |
| 1950 | New York | A.L. | SS | 4 | 14 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | .143 |

## World Series Totals

|    |    |   |    |   |   |   |   |   |      |
|----|----|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 26 | 97 | 8 | 23 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | .237 |
|----|----|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|------|

(a) Voted Most Valuable Player in American League for 1950



*Honorable Mention*

Seminick, Philadelphia, and Spahn, Boston, 10; Campanella, Brooklyn, and Blackwell, Cincinnati, 9; Sauer, Chicago, 8; Robinson, Brooklyn, Cox, Brooklyn, Waitkus, Philadelphia, and Roberts, Philadelphia, 7; Bickford, Boston, Pafko, Chicago, Maglie, New York, Hamner, Philadelphia, Slaughter, St. Louis, Elliott, Boston, Dark, New York, Jansen, New York and Schoendienst, St. Louis, 6; Sain, Boston, Snider, Brooklyn, Hearn, New York, and Kiner, Pittsburgh, 5; Reese, Brooklyn, Kluszewski, Cincinnati, Wyrostek, Cincinnati, Westrum, New York, Simmons, Philadelphia and Jones, Philadelphia, 4; Jethroe, Boston and Hiller, Chicago, 3; Torgeson, Boston, W. Cooper, Boston, Newcombe, Brooklyn, Smalley, Chicago, Ennis, Philadelphia, Ashburn, Philadelphia, Sisler, Philadelphia, and Konstanty, Philadelphia, 2; Gordon, Boston, Palica, Brooklyn, Klippstein, Chicago, Wehmeier, Cincinnati, Adcock, Cincinnati, Lockman, New York, Thompson, New York, Thomson, New York, Stanky, New York, D. Mueller, New York, Westlake, Pittsburgh, Pollet, St. Louis, Musial, St. Louis, Marion, St. Louis, and Lanier, St. Louis, 1.

## COMMITTEE

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**BOSTON**—Roger Birtwell, *Globe*; Gordon Campbell, *Traveler*; Robert Ajemian, *American*.

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NATIONAL LEAGUE  
MOST VALUABLE PLAYER AWARDS

*Chalmers Award—Highest possible total, 64 points*

| YEAR | PLAYER             | CLUB             | POINTS |
|------|--------------------|------------------|--------|
| 1911 | Frank Schulte,     | Chicago Cubs     | 29     |
| 1912 | Lawrence J. Doyle, | New York Giants  | 48     |
| 1913 | Jacob E. Daubert,  | Brooklyn Dodgers | 50     |
| 1914 | John J. Evers,     | Boston Braves    | 50     |

(DISCONTINUED)

*League Award—Highest possible total, 80 points*

|      |                      |                     |    |
|------|----------------------|---------------------|----|
| 1924 | Arthur C. Vance,     | Brooklyn Dodgers    | 74 |
| 1925 | Rogers Hornsby,      | St. Louis Cardinals | 73 |
| 1926 | Robert A. O'Farrell, | St. Louis Cardinals | 79 |
| 1927 | Paul G. Waner,       | Pittsburgh Pirates  | 72 |
| 1928 | James L. Bottomley,  | St. Louis Cardinals | 76 |
| 1929 | Rogers Hornsby,      | Chicago Cubs        | 60 |

(DISCONTINUED)

*Baseball Writers' Association Award*

|      |                       |                     |       |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1931 | Frank F. Frisch,      | St. Louis Cardinals | 65    |
| 1932 | Charles H. Klein,     | Philadelphia Phils  | 78    |
| 1933 | Carl O. Hubbell,      | New York Giants     | 77    |
| 1934 | Jerome H. Dean,       | St. Louis Cardinals | 78    |
| 1935 | Charles L. Hartnett,  | Chicago Cubs        | 75    |
| 1936 | Carl O. Hubbell,      | New York Giants     | 60    |
| 1937 | Joseph M. Medwick,    | St. Louis Cardinals | 70    |
| 1938 | Ernest N. Lombardi,   | Cincinnati Reds     | 229 * |
| 1939 | William H. Walters,   | Cincinnati Reds     | 303   |
| 1940 | Frank A. McCormick,   | Cincinnati Reds     | 274   |
| 1941 | Adolph Camilli,       | Brooklyn Dodgers    | 300   |
| 1942 | Morton C. Cooper,     | St. Louis Cardinals | 263   |
| 1943 | Stanley F. Musial,    | St. Louis Cardinals | 267   |
| 1944 | Martin W. Marion,     | St. Louis Cardinals | 190   |
| 1945 | Philip J. Cavarretta, | Chicago Cubs        | 279   |
| 1946 | Stanley F. Musial,    | St. Louis Cardinals | 319   |
| 1947 | Robert I. Elliott,    | Boston Braves       | 205   |
| 1948 | Stanley F. Musial,    | St. Louis Cardinals | 303   |
| 1949 | Jackie R. Robinson,   | Brooklyn Dodgers    | 264   |
| 1950 | C. James Konstanty,   | Philadelphia Phils  | 286   |

\* System changed, so that highest possible point total became 336 points instead of 80.

(Courtesy of *The Little Red Book of Baseball*, New York City)

## KONSTANTY, CASIMIR JAMES

Born Strykersville, New York, March 2, 1917

Bats Right. Throws Right. Height, 6 feet, 1½ inches. Weight, 190 pounds.

| Year                         | Club          | Lea.     | G     | IP.   | W.    | L.                      | Pct.  | SO.   | BB.   | H.    | ERA   |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1941                         | —Springfield  | E.L.     | 39    | 170   | 4     | 19                      | .174  | 60    | 82    | 197   | 4.55  |
| 1942                         | —Syracuse     | I.L.     | 5     | 20    | 1     | 0                       | 1.000 | 9     | 14    | 19    | 5.85  |
| 1943                         | —Syracuse     | I.L.     | 29    | 166   | 8     | 12                      | .400  | 45    | 72    | 144   | 3.42  |
| 1944                         | —Syracuse     | I.L.     | 14    | 45    | 8     | 6                       | .571  | 38    | 44    | 104   | 3.21  |
| 1944                         | —Cincinnati   | N.L.     | 20    | 113   | 6     | 4                       | .600  | 19    | 33    | 113   | 2.79  |
| 1945                         | .....         | .....    | ..... | ..... | ..... | (In United States Navy) |       | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 1946                         | —Boston       | N.L.     | 10    | 15    | 0     | 1                       | .000  | 9     | 7     | 17    | 5.40  |
| 1946                         | —Toronto      | I.L.     | 20    | 143   | 4     | 9                       | .308  | 47    | 46    | 135   | 3.88  |
| 1947                         | —Toronto      | I.L.     | 33    | 197   | 13    | 13                      | .500  | 78    | 62    | 179   | 3.47  |
| 1948                         | —Toronto      | I.L.     | 46    | 162   | 10    | 10                      | .500  | 73    | 59    | 163   | 4.06  |
| 1948                         | —Philadelphia | N.L.     | 6     | 10    | 1     | 0                       | 1.000 | 7     | 2     | 7     | 0.90  |
| 1949                         | —Philadelphia | N.L.     | 53    | 97    | 9     | 5                       | .643  | 43    | 29    | 98    | 3.25  |
| 1950                         | —Philadelphia | N.L. (a) | 74    | 152   | 16    | 7                       | .696  | 56    | 50    | 108   | 2.66  |
| Complete Major League Totals |               |          |       |       |       |                         |       |       |       |       |       |
| 3 yrs.....                   |               |          | 163   | 387   | 32    | 17                      | .653  | 134   | 121   | 343   | ...   |
| World Series Record          |               |          |       |       |       |                         |       |       |       |       |       |
| 1950—Philadelphia            |               | N.L.     | 3     | 15    | 0     | 1                       | .000  | 3     | 4     | 9     | 2.40  |

(a) Voted Most Valuable Player in National League for 1950.

## THE BASEBALL WRITERS' ASSOCIATION

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(Numerals after name indicate year in which member joined the Association)

\* Sports Editor

## BOSTON

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*Globe*: Jerry Nason \* '36, Melville E. Webb '08, Gene Mack '21, Hy Hurwitz '34, Harold W. Kaese '34, Roger Birtwell '36, John F. Berry '42, Robert Holbrook '47, Clifford Keane '50.

*Herald*: Edward Costello \* '42, Ed Cunningham '20, Bill Cunningham '28, Ralph Wheeler '42, Henry F. McKenna '44, Will Cloney '46, Victor Johnson '48.

*Post*: Gerry Hern \* '46, John M. Malaney '21, Robert Coyne '28, Gerald W. Moore '33, Howell D. Stevens '39, Albert Hirshberg '42, Joseph McKenney '42, Paul Hines '49, William Liston '50.

*Record*: Sam Cohen \* '31, Joseph Cashman '28, Dave Egan '32, John Brooks '34, John Gilloly '36, Stephen B. O'Leary '40, Matthew Keany '41, Murray Kramer '48, Alexander H. MacLean '50.

*Traveler*: Arthur Siegal '35, George C. Carens '14, John J. Drohan '28, Gordon Campbell '43.

*Christian Science Monitor*: Webster J. Morse \* '36, Edwin M. Rumill '30.

*Advertiser*: Michael McNamee '32.

*Associated Press*: William R. King '29, Joseph Kelley '46.

*International News Service*: James Bagley '35, Al Blackman '48.

*La Notizia*: John Garro \* '33.

*United Press*: Jack Frost '46, Henry Minott '47.

*Patriot-Ledger*: Roger Berry '50, Linwood Raymond '50.

*Telegram (Worcester)*: Paul N. Johnson '50, Roy J. Mumpton '50.

## BROOKLYN

- Eagle*: Lou Niss \* '30, James J. Murphy '20, Tommy Holmes '23,  
Harold C. Burr '28, Benjamin Gold '40.  
*Journal American*: Al C. Palma '18.  
*Long Island Journal Advocate*: Jack Schwartz \* '39.  
*Long Island Daily Press*: Michael Lee \* '39, Jack Lang '46, John  
Powers '49.  
*Long Island Star Journal*: Louis F. O'Neil \* '31, George C. Burton  
'44, Stephen Rogers '45.

## CHICAGO

- Daily News*: John P. Carmichael \* '32, Francis J. Powers '17, How-  
ard L. Roberts '35, Joseph Rein '46, Neil R. Gazel '50.  
*Herald-American*: Leo H. Fischer \* '24, Warren Brown '22,  
James E. Enright '43, Dan T. Desmond '45, William H. Becker  
'45.  
*Sun and Times*: Dick Hackenberg \* '47, Gene Kessler '23, John C.  
Hoffman '24, Edgar H. Munzel '29, Seymour V. Shub '48.  
*Tribune*: Arch Ward \* '28, Irving Vaughan '11, Edward H. Burns  
'27, Howard T. Martin '40, Edward Prell '35.  
*Associated Press*: Charles Dunkley '09, Charles Chamberlain '42,  
Jerry Liska '45.  
*International News Service*: Ken Opstein '50.  
*United Press*: Edward Sainsbury '47.  
*Howe News Bureau*: John S. Phillips '23, Fred K. Howe '34.  
*Polish Daily News*: Ted A. Tryba '43.  
*Baseball Digest*: Herbert F. Simons '28.  
*American League Service Bureau*: Earl J. Hilligan '38.

## CINCINNATI

- Enquirer*: Lou Lawhead \* '21, Harold E. Russell '18, Lou Smith '36,  
Bob Husted '46, Saul Straus '50.  
*Post*: Tom Swope '14, Clarence Wiese '43.  
*Times-Star*: Nixon Denton \* '37, Frank Y. Grayson '26, Walter  
Brinkman '26, George Bristol '40, Earl Lawson '49.  
*Associated Press*: Claude Wolff '48, Harold Harrison '49.  
*Daily News* (Dayton): Si Burick \* '46.  
*Journal* (Dayton): Ritter Collet '47.

## CLEVELAND

- News*: Ed F. Bang \* '08, Herman Goldstein '22, Edward J. McAuley  
'28, Hal Lebovitz '47, Regis McAuley '49.

*Plain Dealer*: Gordon Cobblestick \* '28, James E. Doyle '27, Milton Ellis '35, Fred G. Reinert '41, Harry N. Jones '47, Charles Heaton '48, Ed Katz '50.

*Press*: Franklin Lewis \* '30, Frank Gibbons '37, Robert F. Yonkers '41, Jack Clowser '41, Milton J. Lapine '44, Louis F. Darvas '48.

*Associated Press*: James Sibbison '49, Richard H. Smith '49.

*Central Press Association*: Walter L. Johns \* '39, William Ritt '31.

*Szabadsag (Liberty)*: Zoltan Gombos '34.

*International News Service*: Adolph Ponikvar '47, Howard Babcock '50.

*United Press*: Richard L. Dugan '45, Milton B. Dolinger '47, Robert Morrison '50.

*Beacon-Journal*: James Schlemmer '47.

## DETROIT

*Free Press*: Lyall Smith \* '44, James Zerilli '35, Thomas Devine '42, Robert E. Latshaw '43, Richard T. Thompson '46, Frank L. Williams '47, James B. Eathorne '49.

*News*: Harry G. Salsinger \* '09, Sam Greene '23, Harry F. Leduc '22, Harry V. Wade '22, Watson N. Spoelstra '39, Paul M. Chandler '47, Lee Kavetski '50.

*Times*: Robert Murphy \* '35, Leo Macdonell '27, Charles P. Ward '29, Edgar Hayes '32, Lewis Walter '35, Harold Kahl '38, John C. Manning '40, W. E. Anderman '40, George E. Van '43, George Maskin '48, Robert McClellan '49.

*Associated Press*: David Wilkie '26, Robert R. Sieger '45, Charles Cain '49.

*International News Service*: Frank R. Snyder \* '45.

*United Press*: Jerry Le Donne '50.

*Detroit A. C. News*: E. A. Batchelor, Sr. '08.

*Daily Star*: Douglas Vaughan '39.

*News-Advertiser*: Harry M. Dayton '19.

*Journal*: Thomas Mercy '49.

## NEW YORK

*Compass*: William Mahoney \* '50, Herbert Goren '36, Jack Orr '48.  
*Daily Mirror*: Dan F. Parker \* '25, Gus Steiger '24, Ken Smith '27, James S. Hurley '28, Fred Weatherly '39, Ben Epstein '45, Clarence Cassin '46, Leonard Lewin '48.

*Daily News*: James Powers \* '26, John Ebinger '36, Charles Hoerter '36, Hy Turkin '38, Leo O'Melia '40, Joseph Trimble '41, William Matthias '41, James McCulley '41, Dick Young '43, Dana Mozley '48.

- Herald Tribune*: Robert B. Cooke \* '38, Rud Rennie '25, Walter W. Smith '29, Al Laney '37, Jesse P. Abramson '37, Irving T. Marsh '42, William Lauder, Jr. '45, Harold Rosenthal '48, Edward Sinclair '48.
- Journal-American*: Max Kase \* '29, Lester Rice '11, Frank Graham '15, Bill Corum '24, Hugh Bradley '26, Harry Glaser '28, Lewis Burton '29, Michael Gaven '38, Barney Kremenko '46.
- Morning Telegraph*: Ira Seebacher \* '35, Thomas O'Reilly '41.
- Post*: Ike Gellis \* '49, Henry H. Singer '23, Bert Gumpert '32, Leonard Cohen '33, Jerry Mitchell '34, James Cannon '37, Edward Wade '39, Milton Gross '41, Al Buck '42, Arch Murray '43, Sid Friedlander '50.
- Times*: Raymond J. Kelly \* '20, James P. Dawson '18, John Drebingner '23, Arthur Daley '26, Roscoe McGowen '27, Louis Effrat '35, Laurence J. Spiker '39, Joseph Nichols '44, Joseph M. Sheehan '46.
- World-Telegram*: Joe Williams \* '14, Edward T. Murphy '19, Joseph P. Val \* '32, Daniel M. Daniel '13, Pat McDonough '32, Willard Mullin '35, Joe King '40, William Roeder '45, Lester Bromberg '47.
- Associated Press*: Ted Smits \* '47, Gayle Talbot '32, Ted Meier '37, Whitney Martin '39, Jack Hand '44, Joseph Reichler '44, Hugh S. Fullerton, Jr. '46, Harold J. Classen '48, Murray Rose '48.
- Associated Press Features*: Frank Eck \* '33, Tom Paprocki '31, James Becker '47.
- International News Service*: Lawton Carver \* '35, Pat Robinson '21, Bob Considine '33.
- United Press*: Leo H. Petersen \* '39, Jack Cuddy '32, Steve Snider '37, Oscar Fraley '40, Carl W. Lunquist '42, Milton Richman '46, Fred Down '47, Norman Miller '48, Stan Optowsky '48.
- Newspaper Enterprise Association*: Harry Grayson \* '33, Al Vermeer '45, Edward Mills '47.
- La Prensa*: Carlos F. Ferro '40.
- Il Progresso*: Joseph Arrata II '48, John Billi '48.
- Daily Worker*: Lester Rodney \* '39, Charles Dexter '37, William Mardo '46.
- Jewish Daily Forward*: Jay Grayson '30.
- Elias Baseball Bureau*: Lester Goodman '19.
- Baseball Magazine*: Clifford Bloodgood '23.
- George Mathew Adams Service*: Frank Leonard '18.
- North American Newspaper Alliance*: John Wheeler '09, Grantland Rice '12, Lawrence Perry '45.
- Reuters*: Harry J. Hennessy '41.

*Christy Walsh Syndicate:* Christy Walsh '20.  
*United Features:* John Pierotti '44.  
*National League Service Bureau:* Charles Segar '20.

## PHILADELPHIA

*Bulletin:* Edwin J. Pollock '18, Donald Donaghey '27, Franklin W. Yeutter '38, Jerome Carson '43, Raymond Kelly '46, Hugh Brown '50, Dick Cresap '50.  
*Daily News:* Lansing McCurley \* '25, Edward Delaney '30, Grant Doherty '49.  
*Inquirer:* S. O. Grauley '09, John Webster '27, Stan Baumgartner '28, David E. Wilson '29, Arthur H. Morrow '44, Allen Lewis '50.  
*Associated Press:* Orlo Robertson '44, Charles G. Welsh, Jr. '44, Ralph Bernstein '50.  
*United Press:* Russ Green '47, Albert Stees '50.

## PITTSBURGH

*Post-Gazette:* Albert W. Abrams \* '28, Ed F. Ballinger '09, Gilbert Remley '25, Jack Sell '28, Jack Hernon '42, James H. Jordan '44, Vince Johnson '46, Dan McGibbeny, Jr. '48.  
*Press:* Chester L. Smith \* '21, Jack Berger '25, Fred W. Landucci '32, Lester J. Biederman '33, Paul A. R. Kurtz '36, Harry Fairfield '42, Albert H. Tederstrom '46, Robert F. X. Drum '47.  
*Sun-Telegraph:* Harry Keck \* '15, Charles J. Doyle '15, Thomas Birks '29, James Miller '35, Philip Grabowski '39, Jack Henry '42, Jack Burnley '48.  
*Tri-State News:* John L. Hernon \* '21.  
*Associated Press:* Robert W. Temple '50, James Holton '50.  
*International News Service:* Troy Gordon '48.  
*United Press:* Rudolph Cernkovic '45.  
*Daily News:* Merril Granger '44.

## ST. LOUIS

*Globe Democrat:* Robert L. Burnes \* '37, Willis E. Johnson '09, Glen L. Wallar '10, Martin J. Haley '21, Raymond V. Smith '26, William Fairbairn '41, Reno Hahn '44, Harry Mitauer '46, John Rice '47, William Kerch '50.  
*Post-Dispatch:* J. Roy Stockton \* '22, J. Ed Wray '09, Herman Wecke '12, Dick Farrington '25, William J. McGoogan '27, Dent McSkimming '27, Lloyd A. McMaster '35, Robert C. Morrison '37, Harold W. Flachsbarth '39, Robert W. Broeg '42, Harold J. Tuthill '45, Amadee Wohlschlaeger '47, Neal Russo '50.

*Star-Times*: Sid C. Keener \* '13, Ray J. Gillespie '23, W. Vernon Tietjen '38, Raymond Nelson '39, Alvin T. Barnes, Jr. '47, Marion O. Milton '47, William J. Fleischman '49, Robert Devore '50.

*The Sporting News*: Edgar G. Brands \* '28, Ernest J. Lanigan '08, Paul A. Rickart '31, Arthur Plambeck '36, Carl T. Felker '37, Franz J. Wippold '38, Oscar Kahn '43, Clifford Kachline '44, Oscar Ruhl '45, Charles C. Spink '46, Lowell Reidenbaugh '48, Leonard Gettelson '48.

*East St. Louis Journal*: Ellis J. Veech \* '35, A. Edward Hagan '49.

*Associated Press*: Thomas Yarbrough '46, Allan Merritt '47, Nello Cassai '50.

*International News Service*: Joseph Oppenheimer '50.

*United Press*: Stanton G. Mockler '44, Paul T. Dix '47.

#### WASHINGTON

*Daily News*: Everett G. Gardner \* '48, David Reque '45, David Slattery '50.

*Post*: Bus Ham \* '45, Shirley Povich '25, William Ahlberg '47, Morris Siegel '48.

*Star*: Charles M. Egan \* '50, John B. Keller '19, Francis E. Stann '33, Lewis F. Atchison '35, Burton Hawkins '37, Merrill W. Whitteley, Jr. '47, George S. Clark '49.

*Times-Herald*: Al Costello '36, Robert R. Addie '42, Charles W. Barbour '49, Robert J. Wentworth '49.

*Associated Press*: Arthur L. Edson '47, Joseph Ives '49.

*International News Service*: William J. Kerwin '50.

*United Press*: Ernest Barcella '37.

*Gazette*: Jack Tulloch '30.

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