

escalated beyond what these small towns could afford, and the NIL finally folded after the 1955 season.

Hays does a good job of taking us along on his travels around the league, as he tells us much about the rural towns, the players and the fans that made up the NIL. A summer job was part of the deal for each player, and Hays had the good fortune to be a writer for the local newspaper, which brought him into close contact with many of the local townspeople. But, at the age of 27, Hays finally decided to get on with his life after playing six summers in the NIL, at the end of the 1953 season he retired from baseball to pursue his career as an artist. *Take Two and Hit to Right* never tries to represent itself as a serious history of semi-professional baseball in Nebraska. Instead, it brings us a good baseball story and a nice tale of small town America in a much simpler time.

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PIERSALL, JIM, AND AL HIRSHBERG. *Fear Strikes Out: The Jim Piersall Story*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Pp. 224. \$11.50 pb.

MANTLE, MICKEY, AND ROBERT W. CREAMER. *The Quality of Courage: Heroes In and Out of Baseball*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Pp. 185. \$9.95 pb.

Many Americans of the 1950s found ready heroes in the baseball stars of the era. The University of Nebraska Press has re-issued these books of baseball heroism in the tradition of John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*. These stories are part of a genre a generation removed from the revealing, highly critical, tell-all sport stories that have inundated bookstores since Jim Bouton's *Ball Four*. With the help of Al Hirshberg, Jimmy Piersall tells the story of his own mental breakdown and subsequent recovery during the 1952 season while playing for the Boston Red Sox. Mantle describes the attributes he finds heroic as he has seen them manifested in the people he has known.

The sexism in sport was not apparent to either of these authors. Both of these narratives reaffirm a masculine identity that is strong, courageous, hard working, and autonomous. Both of these books affirm sport as the exclusive domain of men. Mantle tells twenty-two stories of courage, which includes a story of a little boy facing the fear of the barber, and he ignores women altogether. The role of women as revealed in Piersall's book is strictly domestic.

Piersall's narrative began in his childhood. As a child he had to cope with the burden of his mother's psychiatric disorder and his father's heart disease. His overwhelming sense of responsibility at such a young age caused numerous anxieties, which eventually led to acute paranoia, culminating in a complete mental breakdown. The road back was a bumpy one, including encounters with cruel and intolerant fans. His story is not only one of courage, but also a story of tolerance, understanding, and forgiveness. Piersall found most people sympathetic and supportive. His final act of courage was to tell his story.

For Mantle, baseball provided a proving ground through which a person's courage could be tested. Courage was acted out in many situations, like when Freddie Fitzsimmons

struck out Johnny Mize with the bases loaded under the intense pressure of a World Series. Mantle argues through these stories that courage is the ability to handle adversity with grace. The most courageous man Mantle had ever known was his own father, facing death with dignity, never complaining, while thinking of others more than he did himself. He quotes Hemingway, arguing that “guts is grace under pressure” (28). The truly heroic will rise to the challenge under the most adverse circumstances.

Both of these books are autobiographical, but not in a contemporary sense. The writing style is clearly that of the 1950s and 1960s. The literary quality is similar to those written by other sport stars of the era. In *Fear Strikes Out* there are numerous shifts from first to third person, making it sometimes difficult to understand who was the speaker. It is apparent that the book has two writers, and these shifts occur when the voice changes back and forth from Piersall to Hirshberg. The publishers have duplicated the original works, errors and all. These are not scholarly works, but they certainly inform the sport historian. Our heroes take many forms, as shown by the diversity of stories in *The Quality of Courage*. Neither Piersall nor Mantle was trying to embellish his own heroism. Both men reflect in their writing a great deal of humility, owing their success to the friends and family that embraced them.

It is clearly sport literature that distinguishes itself in time. It is for this reason that an examination of these works may be of benefit to the sport scholar. Baseball was going through a significant change in the 1950s. It was only beginning to reinvent itself. The process of integration was slow. The reader must examine these works for their silences. For these men, the 1950s were a time of opportunity and apparent equality. The society rife with political conflict was just coming to the surface, but had seemingly not touched baseball. Baseball was still an unchallenged bastion of American white middle-class values. From these stories it is easy to conclude that baseball taught character, courage and democratic values. These both are non-critical, warm and fuzzy advertisements for baseball and Americana. The student of American social history will recognize a culture of optimism reflected in both of these stories, but one must guard against being sucked into believing that these opportunities were equally accessible to all Americans.

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KEIM, JOHN. *Legends by the Lake: The Cleveland Browns at Municipal*. Akron: University of Akron Press, 1999. Pp. xii + 298. Illustrated. Notes, bibliography, appendix. \$35.95 cb, \$17.95 pb.

When I moved to Cleveland on Labor Day 1973, a ticket to a Cleveland Browns football game was a precious item of inheritance. When I attended my first Browns' game a week or so later, it was only because a season ticket holder had been sent out-of-town on business and trusted his seats to me and my wife for one game. It is nearly impossible to convey the pride and avid loyalty of Cleveland to its Browns during that dark period of the city's history. City Hall was struggling to avoid bankruptcy. Race relations were strained to the breaking point. The downtown business district along Euclid and Prospect Avenues had