

To Some He Was the Best

Mays Was the Soul of Springtime

BROEG & BASEBALL



ST. LOUIS—Willie Howard Mays had a date with Cooperstown from the moment Leo Durocher first patted him on the fanny at New York's Polo Grounds in 1951 and turned loose on the baseball world one of the finest—"THE best," Durocher would say—ever to pull on flannel bloomers.

If, as said by Leo the loud-mouthed lion, who wisely treated him like a lamb, Mays WAS indeed the best ballplayer ever, you could get arguments all right, but none nearly so convincing as the all-round ability of a ballplayer who was born at the right time.

Oh, not late enough to capitalize on the salary craze that accompanied the recent rights of ballplayers to play out their options.

But Mays did well enough from the time he came up to the Giants early in the 1951 season, an unbelievable 20-year-old wunderkind who had batted .477 in 35 games for Minneapolis of the American Association, until almost the very end.

Sure, except for pitchers, he was the oldest ever to play in a World Series (nearly 42½ years) and he showed his age and shaky legs with the Mets at Oakland in 1973. But, for virtually all of those 22 seasons in between, replacing Stan Musial at the top, Mays was THE best in his league, at least.

TO WATCH MAYS play was to watch Rembrandt paint or hear Caruso sing. Artistry, sheer artistry, such as Willie's running the bases, defying one of the game's "don'ts" by looking back over his shoulder, but not losing stride or step.

En route to the Hall of Fame, Mays could run rapidly with a shuffling gait. He could hit with a savagery that made him at least a junior-grade Babe Ruth, meaning for power as well as for majesty when he swung and missed. And he could field... well, as if he were Joe

DiMaggio or Tris Speaker, also masters of the outfield middle, and he threw with strength and accuracy even if he couldn't always bother with something called hitting the cutoff man.

Willie played with an exuberance that was as obvious as the fact he was in the lineup 150 or more games for 13 seasons. He was the kind of guy who could lead the league in hitting or, more likely, home runs and stolen bases and inspiration.

When THE SPORTING NEWS picked him as Player of the Decade from 1960 through 1969, Johnson Spink and associates weren't trying to cater to New York, where he was a god, or San Francisco, where they'd finally realized that he wasn't Superman in blue leotards and a red cape. Just great, that's all, but not a one-man team even if he almost busted a gut trying to prove that. Occasionally moody and brusque, he was probably the closest to perfection they'd ever see at Seals Stadium or Candlestick Park.

PERSONALLY, I enjoyed watching Mays field and run the bases more than hit, but from the time he came back from military service to lead Durocher's Giants

in '54 with a league-leading .345, which included 41 homers and 110 RBIs, he was some hitter.

At New York, with the horse-shoe-shaped Polo Grounds, Mays was versatile enough to hit 30 homers and steal 30 bases or to achieve 20-plus doubles, triples and homers in a season.

However, at Candlestick Point, the trade winds whipped from the left-field corner across the diamond to the right-field foul pole. To pull the ball was a disaster for a righthanded hitter, particularly one who'd just been encouraged to get out in front of the ball.

But Mays adjusted. He learned to lash line drives to right center where the wind wouldn't hold up the ball in New York, but in 'Frisco he swished it instead toward the closer, short part of the park nearer the line. In 1965, with the Giants in San Francisco, he homered 52 times.

WHEN YOU CONSIDER that Willie missed nearly two seasons when in the Army and still hit 660 homers, only 14 of which came his last two years, you'd have to figure that if he hadn't traded the black-and-orange of the Giants for the olive drab of Uncle Sam, he would have got to Ruth's 714

before Henry Aaron arrived there.

For all of his power, I remember best a not-so-simple single.

It was the ninth inning of the third game of the 1962 playoff at Los Angeles. Mays had earned the Giants a half-share of the regular-season title with a final-day home run that beat Houston's Turk Farrell, 2-1, while St. Louis' Curt Simmons used a homer by Gene Oliver off Johnny Podres to shade the Dodgers, 1-0.

Now, trailing L.A. by two runs, bases loaded in the ninth inning of the last playoff game, Mays came up to face Ed Roebuck, the exhausted sinkerball relief ace. This was the center cut of Willie's career but even the most famous player of his day might top that sinker into a double play. Instead, hitting straight away, Mays drove a torrid shot through the box, as hard as I ever saw, and the ball glanced off Roebuck's bare hand for a run-scoring single, knocking out the Dodgers' bullpen ace and serving as the catalyst to a four-run, pennant-winning rally, 6-4.

AFIELD, THEY talk so much about that great catch Mays made, back to the plate, in deep center field at the Polo Grounds in the 1954 World Series. But his wheeling, on-

target throw was more spectacular than his over-the-shoulder grab, as he was inclined to agree. Mays was so intuitive as well as fast that he was out there, pounding his glove like a catcher camped under a pop foul, when he caught Vic Wertz' terrific smash.

I didn't see Mays' great catch-and-throw against the Brooklyn-based Dodgers when he raced to right center at the PG, gloved the ball in full flight and, turning in the air, fired an on-the-fly peg to the plate for a double play.

That's the one chesty Cholly Dressen said tartly:

"I'd like to see him do that again."

I'd settle to see again a catch Willie made at Pittsburgh's spacious Forbes Field one night when he fled at full speed to left center, back there near the brick wall where the Pirates kept their batting cage, and leaped to make a backhanded grab that deprived Roberto Clemente of a triple.

Whether he was shuffling or chuckling, smiling or sullen, Willie Howard Mays just made that all in the day's work of a guy who might not have enjoyed every minute of it, but who certainly made the public think he did.

Pirates' Don Robinson Frets Over Inactivity

By CHARLEY FEENEY

PITTSBURGH—It has been a quiet winter for Don Robinson, the Pirates' 14-game winner, who isn't used to inactivity.

Robinson, voted National League Rookie Pitcher of the Year by THE SPORTING NEWS, reluctantly accepted the advice of General Manager Pete Peterson and isn't pitching in winter ball.

Instead, the 21-year-old righthander has been spending many days in Kenova, W. Va., playing basketball.

"There's not much else to do," he said. "I'm getting anxious for things to happen."

ROBINSON HASN'T signed a contract for 1979. He pitched for the \$21,000 minimum last season and he has been quoted as saying he wants four times that figure in 1979.

Robinson says he hasn't had any more aches in his back that limited his pitching for a spell last summer. Despite the aches, he emerged as a key pitcher in the Pirates' unsuccessful stretch drive.

He was 14-6 with a 3.47 ERA and his control was an important factor in his success. He ranked seventh in the league in walks per nine innings. He walked fewer than three batters a game and he pitched several complete games without giving up a walk.

Like most pitchers, Robinson had some slumps. He often blamed himself.

"I was forgetting how to think out there," he said once after the Dodgers had routed him.

HE LEARNED from his mistakes and Philadelphia scout Hugh Alexander labeled him a "young Seaver."

"And," said Alexander, "he will get better because he has command of all his pitches."

Larry Sherry, who watched Robinson pitch in the minors and later

with the Pirates, praised the youngster's know-how.

"He is a good listener," Sherry said, "and, even more important, he absorbs information about pitching."

"I've always wanted to pitch in the big leagues," Robinson said. "I was a pretty good quarterback in high school and I think I could have succeeded in college football, but I wanted to play baseball more than anything."

Peterson knows that in these times it is important to keep a talented young athlete happy or he will think of free agency some day.

Peterson has spent most of the off season trying to sign Dave Parker and perhaps it's time for him to concentrate on some other players, including Robinson.

The Parker negotiations hit a snag recently and Peterson said both parties were "starting from

the beginning."

Pittsburghers: Parker was honored as the Pittsburgh Dapper Dan Man of the Year and he also was named the winner of the Roberto Clemente Award. . . . Frank Taveras was the toughest Pirate player to double up last year. He grounded into only four double plays. . . . Willie Stargell's 11 grand-slams put him in second place among active players. Willie McCovey, with 17, leads.

Sorensen Shows a Flair—For TV

By MIKE GONRING

MILWAUKEE—For those who have followed the career of the Brewers' Lary Sorensen, it seemed natural that the pitcher should become a part-time broadcaster.

There are few players in the American League as easy to interview as Sorensen, and few as quotable. And when a reporter talks to Sorensen, there is the overriding feeling that Sorensen knows what he wants out of the interview.

"I can talk," he admitted. "I can do it as well as anybody. And I enjoy dealing with the press. I like to see my name in print with something intelligent after it."

GIVEN HIS talent at talking, the next step seemed obvious. Sorensen, a speech major in radio-television-film at the University of Michigan as an undergraduate, and a journalism minor, was hired to work in the sports department of WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee.

He made his on-the-air debut January 13 after a long training session that left WTMJ executives impressed. "I think he's done amazingly well," said Wayne Godsey, the station's news operations director.

"He doesn't have the sort of deep voice you sometimes look for in a broadcaster. He doesn't have that

polished delivery yet.

"But he has a flair for it. He comes off fresh, delightful, natural. He is a likeable-looking guy. He has a fresh look that should go over very well here."

"AND THE nervousness that sometimes affects new people doesn't seem to affect him at all."

Sorensen spent much of his time observing others in the sports department, including Mike Hegan, a former Brewer who made the

switch from part-time newsman to fulltime in 1977.

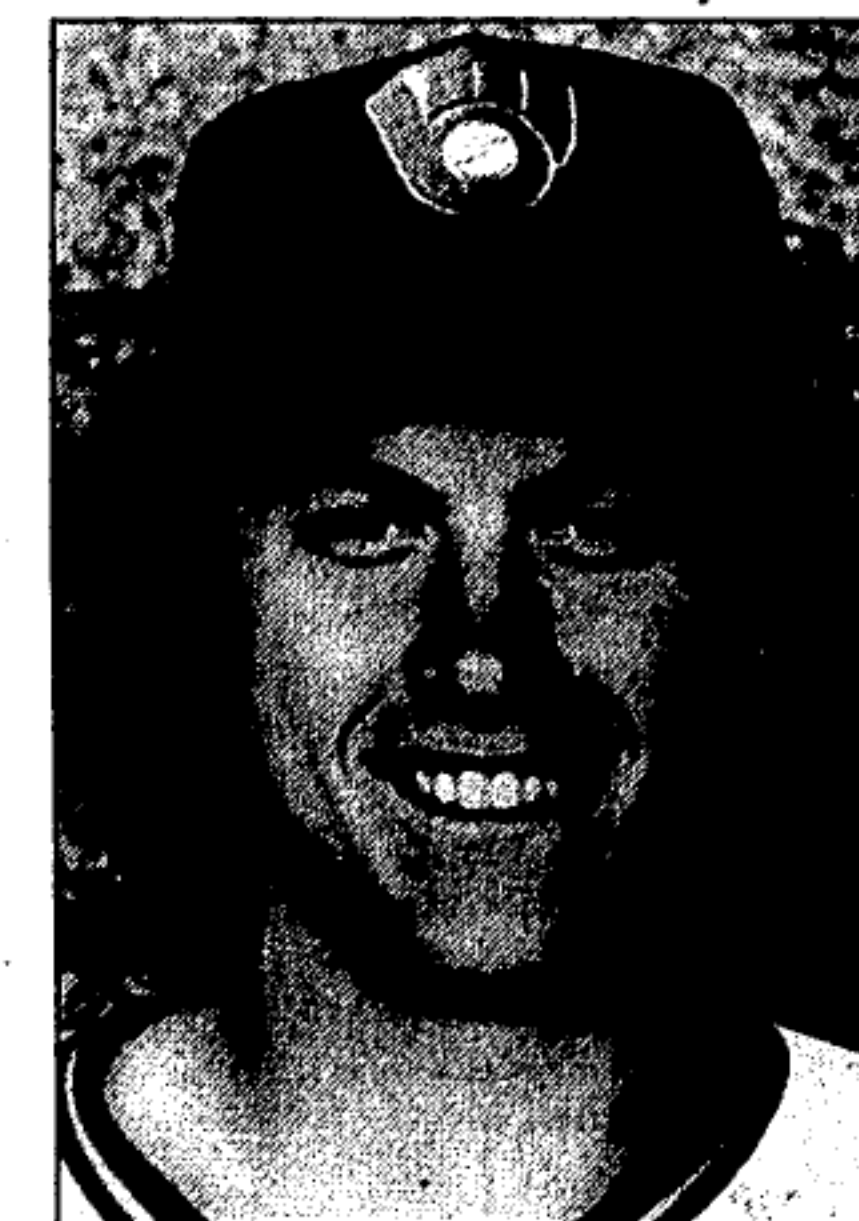
"The writing part I'm used to," said Sorensen. "That's what I did in college."

"But getting the film edited and doing the voice-over on film, that's pretty complicated. Getting it ready to go. There's a lot that goes into that."

IT MAY BE good mental preparation for Sorensen the pitcher, as he begins the 1979 season, his second full season in the major leagues. Last year, the righthander won 18 games and made the American League All-Star team.

"I thought I should have won 20," he said. "But on the other hand, for the first full year in the big leagues, winning 18 games is nothing to be ashamed of. Next season, I'd like to win 20 and I think I can."

Brewer Bits: The Brewers had sold 2,000 season tickets by the first of the year, the first time they had done that. They sold 2,500 for all of the 1978 season. . . . Eleven promotions are scheduled for 1979, including two new ones—a concert that combines fireworks and music and a sports socks day. . . . Brewer President Bud Selig and General Manager Harry Dalton have taken to playing doubles tennis against players Sal Bando and Larry Hise, with little success.



Lary Sorensen



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Willie Is Giants' Answer to Jackie Robinson

Mays Dynamite at Bat, Magnet in Field

20-Year-Old in Running as Top Rookie

Unbothered by 13 Straight Failures at Bat, He Has Old-Timers Gaping at Him

By CLAY FELKER
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Carrying nothing but a shaving kit, seven bats and a glove—and with only three and one-half months' experience in Organized Ball—**Willie Mays**, it might be said, came up to the Giants very lightly burdened. However, since then, the so-called experts have loaded down the 20-year-old hitting and fielding sensation with the heavy labels of "Rookie of the Year" and "Best kid ball player to come up in years," or they say about him, "He's got a chance to become the greatest Negro ball player of all time." But all this doesn't bother **Willie**. Nothing does.

The "kid everybody likes" (as Grantland Rice tagged him) just sits there in the dugout and talks with a quiet, rock-like confidence that would be amazing even in a seasoned veteran. With his wide, white smile gleaming out of a pug-nosed, baby face **Willie** says: "If you worry about one thing, pretty soon you start to worry about others. I don't worry about nothin'."

And **Willie** doesn't worry. Although he went to bat 13 times before getting his first major league hit (a home run) and went one-for-26 before really finding the range, **Willie** kept saying: "I can hit anything." Recently he has been as good as his word.

Consider the demonstration he put on in Chicago in batting practice. The first one he hit was a rocket that went into the center field seats about 30 rows up in Wrigley Field. Leo Durocher, who was talking to some Chicago newspapermen, stopped and stared, as did the players in the Cubs' dugout. **Willie** swung at ten more balls, seven of them over-the-fence drives—four into left and three into right. In the game later, **Willie** deposited one more in the left field bleachers—this one in the tenth inning off Dutch Leonard with a man on to win the game for the Giants.

Top Tribute by Tom

Tom Sheehan, chief Giant scout who watched **Willie** all during the club's second western trip and who was sitting on the bench, turned to a couple of players sitting beside him and raved: "Did you ever see anything like that? That kid is the best-looking young ball player I've ever seen. I saw DiMaggio and all the rest, but this kid's tops."

Down at the other end of the dugout, Leo was having his say: "This is the best-looking rookie I've seen in 25 years in baseball. I look at **Willie** and you know who I think of? Pete Reiser when he came up. What could Reiser do then that **Willie** can't do? Run? Okay, but that's all. There's nobody in the league got a better arm than this kid. There's nobody got more power. There's nobody can go get them any better than he can."

"And what a lift he's given this team. Since he's been with us we've come to life. And he's just a baby. In two years, Mays is going to be the greatest ever to lace on a pair of spiked shoes."

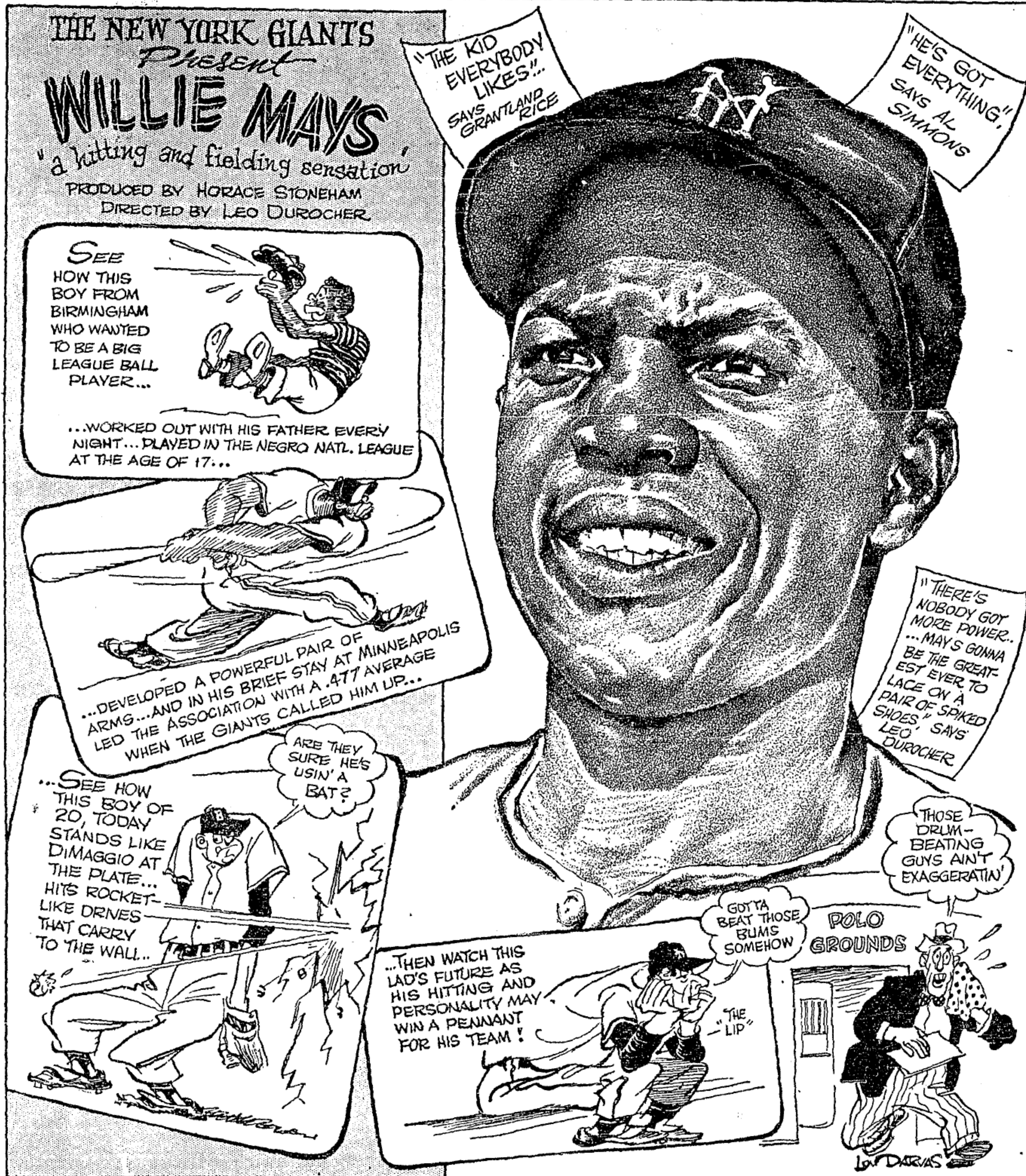
Al Simmons, one of the all-time greats with a bat, saw **Willie** play recently and had this to say about him: "The best kid I've seen in years... look at that stance at the plate... look at that poise. He's got everything."

Sheehan echoes this sentiment, explaining, "What gets me about him is his confidence and the natural way he grasps things and continues to do them. After all, **Willie** was a high school kid only a year ago."

Still, even in high school, **Willie** showed promise of future stardom. "I always played with the big kids," says **Mays**. "The kids my age weren't as good as I was. I was always the youngest kid on the team."

Born May 6, 1931, **Willie** Howard Mays, Jr., came by his athletic her-

He Has Everybody Talking



Millers Feared Worst--and It Happened

NEW YORK, N. Y.—From the start of the season, officials of the Minneapolis farm had feared that **Willie Mays** would be spirited away by the parent Giants.

A sports writer, reporting the feeling around the Miller offices, said that whenever a representative of the Giants came around,

General Manager Rosy Ryan would give him the routine:

"**Willie**? Oh, you mean **Willie** ah-what's-his-name-ah, **Mays**. He's doing okay for a raw kid. Been improving. Certainly been a wet spring here, hasn't it?"

But the Giants grabbed **Willie** in late May.

with five home runs, but by now the major league scouts were beginning to appear.

Still in high school, where he graduated in the spring of 1950 with a B average, **Willie** was untouchable under baseball law, so, remaining unfettered, he engaged on the side in various scholastic athletics. One season, as quarterback for Fairfield High, he passed for 118 points, completing nine passes in a row in one game, and blasted 65 and 70-yard punts. As a result of his high school gridiron feats, he was offered a scholarship to Tennessee State, but **Willie** had his eye on the big leagues.

The Boston Braves had a scout buzzing around him who wanted to turn **Willie** into a pitcher, but the Giants out-hustled the Braves' ivory hunter

to corral **Willie**. Needing a first baseman for Sioux City, the Giants had their eye on the Black Barons' long-ball-hitting first sacker, after a glimpse at him in the Polo Grounds, and as a result they sent Scout Eddie Montague to Birmingham for a further look. He wired back that the first baseman was all right, but that **Willie** was the real prize.

The Giants swung into action. The Black Barons, temporarily low on ready cash because their bus had gone up in flames in the Holland Tunnel after a New York game, were glad to accept \$10,000 for **Willie**. The Giants gave the youngster a \$5,000 bonus to sign.

So with his nine brothers and sisters

buzzing around the dining room table, **Willie**, Sr., signed the contract for his 19-year-old son at 4 o'clock one Thursday afternoon, and on Friday, **Willie** was on the train for the Giants' Trenton Inter-State League farm team. On Sunday he played his first game against Hagerstown and went 0 for 2. The next game he was 2 for 4 and he has been banging away ever since.

He "Slumped" to .353

Willie hit over .400 most of the season at Trenton, but slumped to wind up with .353 for 81 games. Strangely enough, he still showed no indications of his tremendous power, collecting only four home runs.

But the growing boy added voltage to his power supply. **Willie** put ten pounds on his five-foot, 10½-inch long-legged, square-shouldered frame and now weighs 179—and is still growing. He clubbed eight home runs in his brief stay with Minneapolis this season while leading the Association with a .477 average before joining the Giants in late May, and through August 7 he had hit 17 home runs with the Giants.

Though **Willie** is a power hitter, he hits the ball where it's pitched, slam-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4, COL. 4)

Giants Discover a Mound Stinger—Steve Stone

By PAT FRIZZELL

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.—It was not until his second major league start that the real Steve Stone stood up.

Then the Giant rookie righthander pitched impressively against the Astros.

"I was determined to do well because I hadn't done so in my first game," said Stone.

The poised 23-year-old from South Euclid, O., returned to the form that made him so exceptionally promising in spring training.

"I was pleased with Stone's pitching," coach Larry Jansen said after Steve held Houston to one run on seven hits in seven innings. "The longer he went, the better he got."

Stone, virtually unheralded even in the minors until late in the 1970 season, is solidly established as the Giants' No. 3 starter.

"He's the most promising young pitcher we've had since Juan Mariachal came up," reiterated Jansen.

The 5-10 graduate of Kent State University could make a tremendous difference in the Giants.

And he wasn't even on the varsity roster when spring training began.

An all-round athlete in his hometown, Stone was signed by the Giants in 1969.

Sent to the California League, he won seven consecutive games and struck out 17 Lodi batsmen in nine innings, but finished with only a 12-13 record and 3.61 earned-run average.

Nevertheless, this meant a jump to the Texas League, where he was 9-5 with a 3.95 ERA for part of a season with Amarillo.

Shot at Big Time

Then, in mid-1970, Steve was boosted to Phoenix (Pacific Coast). His 5-3 record and 1.71 ERA there gave him a big league chance.

"I began getting my curve over the plate last year," Stone said. "That's the main reason I improved enough to merit a chance up here. I've been able to mix in enough off-speed pitches to keep the hitters off-balance."

Steve expressed his attitude about spring training in February.

"I'm going to need a real good spring to stay up here," he assessed matter-of-factly.

"Unlike a veteran, I'm going to have to pitch well every time out."

So he did, seven times in a row. His ERA for 34 spring innings was 2.12. He struck out 33 and walked only 14.

"Stone has pitched well consistently," said Manager Charlie Fox some 10 days before the clubs began playing for keeps. "He's our No. 3 starter."

Steve started the Giants' third league game at San Diego—and was taken out in the fourth inning after allowing six hits and four runs.

"I just didn't seem to have my usual zip," the rookie said, puzzled. "I can't attribute it to nervousness, but I didn't seem to have my rhythm, even warming up. I guess it was just one of those nights."

Proving that his debut was the exception to the rule, Stone came

up strong against Houston.

"He was more relaxed this time," said catcher Dick Dietz, whom Steve credits with helping him considerably. "He never lost his poise."

Pitching shutout ball with one out in the fifth, Stone was struck viciously on the left shin by a one-hopper off the bat of the Astros' Norm Miller.

The kid threw Miller out, then crumpled on the ground in pain.

When he got up, Steve threw a changeup that Bob Watson lofted out of the park. But Houston didn't score again.

"I can't blame the home run on my leg," Stone insisted. "It was just one of those things—a bad pitch."

"I felt I was at my best the next two innings, the sixth and seventh. There's no doubt in my mind I could

have gone nine, but it was understandable that Charlie wanted to use a pinch-hitter."

Until the sixth and seventh, when he zapped the visitors, Stone frequently was behind the batters and a number reached base.

A Knowledgeable Athlete

"I really concentrated with men on base," Steve said, "with the idea of keeping them there."

This typifies the attitude of the cool young pitcher.

A graduate of Kent State in history and government, Stone can discuss world politics as knowledgeably as pitching. He's an all-round athlete. He won city championships or other honors in tennis, golf, bowling and table tennis. At Kent State, he was on the university bowling and volleyball teams.

Steve began his baseball career as a catcher on a team coached by his father.

"I always was considered a little guy," he said. "My parents didn't want me to play football. But if you say you're too little, then maybe you are too little. So I didn't say it, and I don't now."

At 5-10, he's by far the Giants' shortest pitcher. But at 175 pounds or so, he's solidly built and strong.

At Kent State, Steve's catcher was Thurman Munson, now with the Yankees.

Stone's No. 1 fan is his pretty wife, Nancy. They were married last June.

Steve met Nancy, who grew up in another Cleveland suburb, some five years ago. She attended Ohio State University.

"I get pretty excited when Steve

itches," Nancy admitted. "I don't think I could be a pitcher myself. I'd be too nervous."

"But Steve doesn't get particularly nervous. I don't have to give him pep talks before he leaves for the park. His mother and father used to sometimes, though, I think."

For one so young, Stone is the type of man who creates an atmosphere of reassurance.

"I went to spring training," he said, "with a kind of quiet confidence. I tried to transmit this to Charlie Fox so he'd have confidence in me. I certainly appreciate his giving me such a good opportunity."

Hard to Believe

All through the spring, Stone seemed almost too good to be true. Players on other clubs were impressed.

Steve even had Richie Allen kidding him after he repelled the Dodgers in an exhibition game.

That was when Steve, after striking out Allen, was running in the outfield, an exhibition-game custom for retiring pitchers, and Allen had returned to his left-field post.

"Richie told me I shouldn't throw so hard with the kind of lights there are in the Phoenix park," Stone reported with a chuckle.

There'll be many chances for Steve to face Allen and all the other powerful National League hitters in the days to come.

But the Giants are positive the polished rookie from Kent State can take care of himself.

Giant Jottings: Tito Fuentes singled home Frank Johnson from second base in the 11th inning to give the Giants a 2-1 decision over Houston. . . . Gaylord Perry won his eighth consecutive game over two seasons and made his record 11-1 over San Diego when he held the Padres to three hits in a 5-0 shutout. Perry struck out 11, including three in the first inning and three in the ninth. This was the Giants' home opener, which attracted 29,847 to refurbished Candlestick Park on a sunny day.

Willie McCovey, who felt fine all through the spring, suffered an ironic left-knee injury while batting in the first inning of the first game of a doubleheader in St. Louis April 11. Dr. E. C. Sailer, the Giants' team physician, said X-rays showed McCovey had sustained damage to the medial collateral ligament in his left knee, with a possibility of a tear in the cartilage. Stretch was sidelined indefinitely. Frank Johnson took over first base temporarily. . . . Ken Henderson suffered a hair-line fracture of his right thumb while sliding head-first into third base in the Giants' home opener and had some difficulty batting and throwing in the ensuing days, although he played. . . . "This was the first time I've hit a ball in the major leagues that I felt sure was going out," said Al Gallagher after his two-run homer got the Giants off and running in their home opener. "I wasn't certain about any of my four home runs last year until they cleared the fence."



Melvin Durslag

Mays Is a Young 40

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — The question that has annoyed Willie Mays most—over the last four years or so—has been, "How much longer do you plan to stay in baseball?"

Willie has responded with silent truculence, or he has answered sharply, "Why would I want to quit?"

He will be 40 on May 6, and he hasn't hit .300 since the age of 34, but it's pretty obvious, judging from the way he has started the new season, that he still has a long way to fall before vanishing from big league baseball.

In the majors these days, the concept of age has changed, which is to say, you no longer blanch at a player pressing 40, or even exceeding it.

Kids Are Ready

Yet, it is harder than ever for older players to stay in the game. The competition from young people never has been tougher. They are coming into baseball better fit, better trained, stronger and faster.

And they are coming in sizable numbers.

Not long ago, baseball changed its pension rule so that a player would qualify with a minimum of four years, as opposed to the former minimum of five.

This was a clear concession to one's problem of staying in the big leagues under the heat of competition.

As one advances in years in sports, it naturally follows that productivity will lessen. It should be made into law, in fact, that those of us passing 40 should be shot, thus eliminating generation gaps.

The production of Willie Mays, too, has declined, but he remains an extraordinary batsman who, under a different name, could come

in cold to the majors and get a job almost anywhere.

When baseball scientists have gathered, arguments have developed often over whether Mays hasn't actually been a better dispenser of home runs than Babe Ruth, all problems considered.

Tough Park for Homers

As this is constructed, Willie responds 82 homers short of Ruth while playing the last 10 years in Candlestick Park, a place that largely takes away left field from the long-ball hitter.

This isn't to say Mays hasn't smacked a number over the fence in left at Candlestick. But you ask, too, how many more would have departed the stadium if he hadn't been batting into the worst wind in baseball?

Through most of his tenure, Ruth did his hitting in a home park ideal for a lefthanded batter. The foul line

in right measures only 296 feet. The wind in that area is negligible.

The pitching is better today and the stadiums are generally larger. But, of course, the hitter has the advantage of seasons lasting eight more games than they did before.

Mays' chances of catching Ruth are thin, unless he is able to play three more years at his '70 pace, when he appeared in 139 games and hit 28 homers.

But irrespective of records, you watch Willie with wonderment and you tend to believe him when he tells you, "Anything that happens on a baseball field excites me. I can get just as excited chasing a fly as I can hitting a home run."

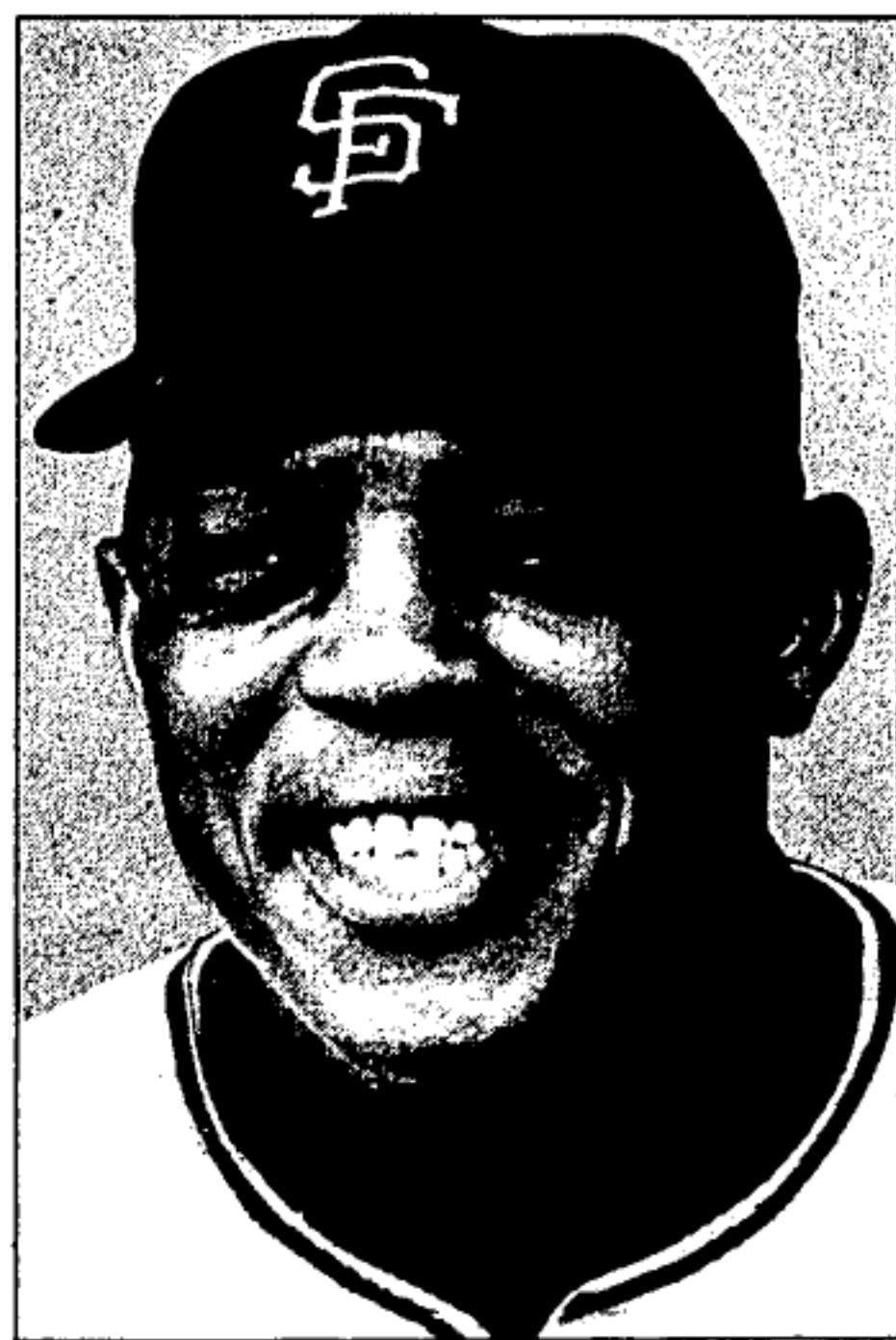
Willie Keeps Fit

This is going to sound pretty banal and you doubtless will interject, "Where are the violins?" but the longevity of Willie Mays can be ascribed, God help him, to clean living, which is more than abstinence from smoking and boozing. Willie operates in a rigid routine, sleeping and eating at pretty much the same hours and controlling his weight so that it rarely fluctuates more than four pounds.

During the off-season, it doesn't rise above 187, and he doesn't let it drop during the playing season below 183. By 4:15 in the afternoon, when the Giants are playing at night, he is at the ball park, long ahead of the others, so that he can be rubbed by the trainer.

And as you watch him open the 1971 season hitting four home runs in four days, and getting a double and a triple on a fifth day, you conclude he doesn't need any advice on how a man approaching 40 should live.

Willie may do a book one day. He will call it, "Life Doesn't Begin at 40, But There Are Worse Places to Start."



Willie Mays



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