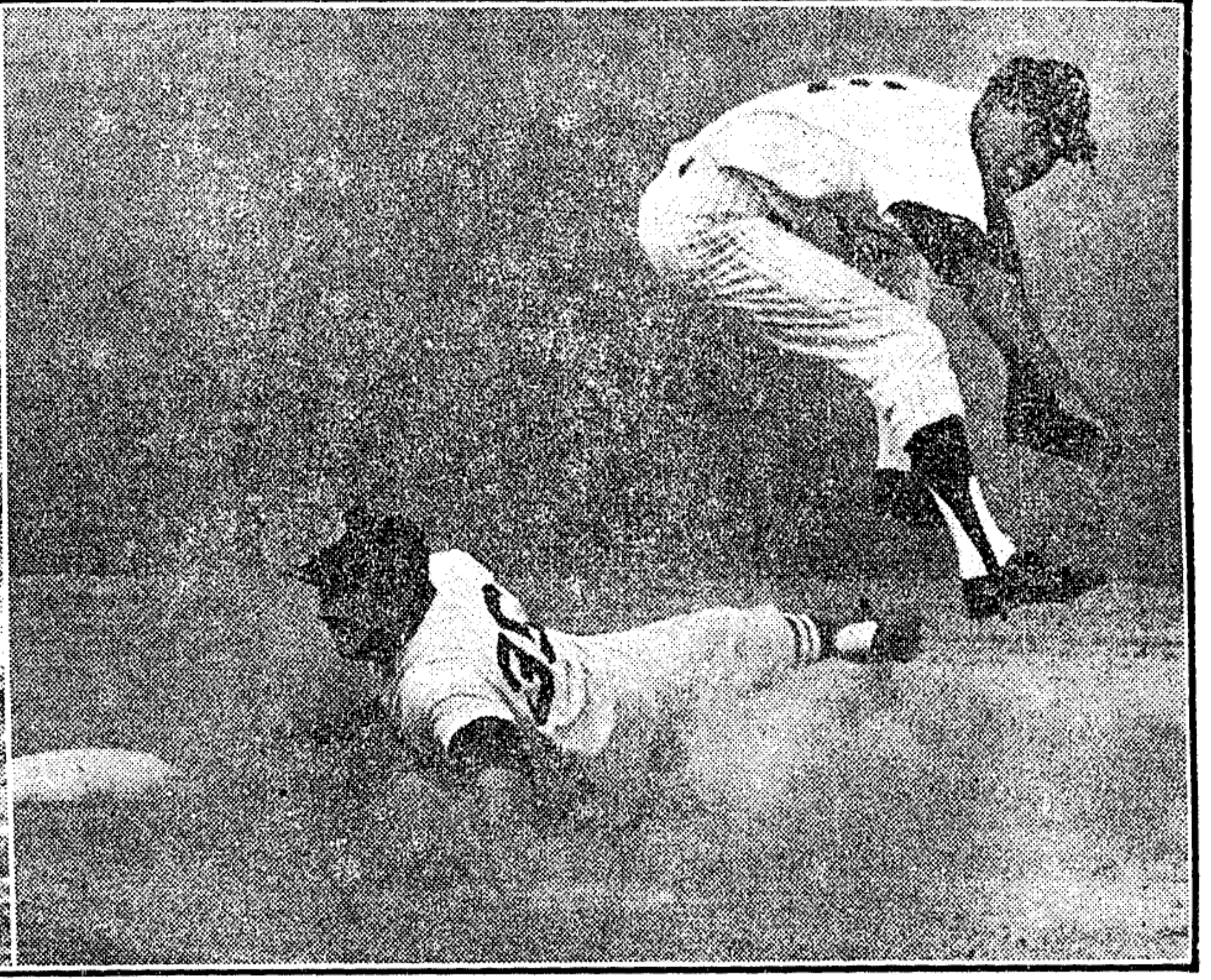
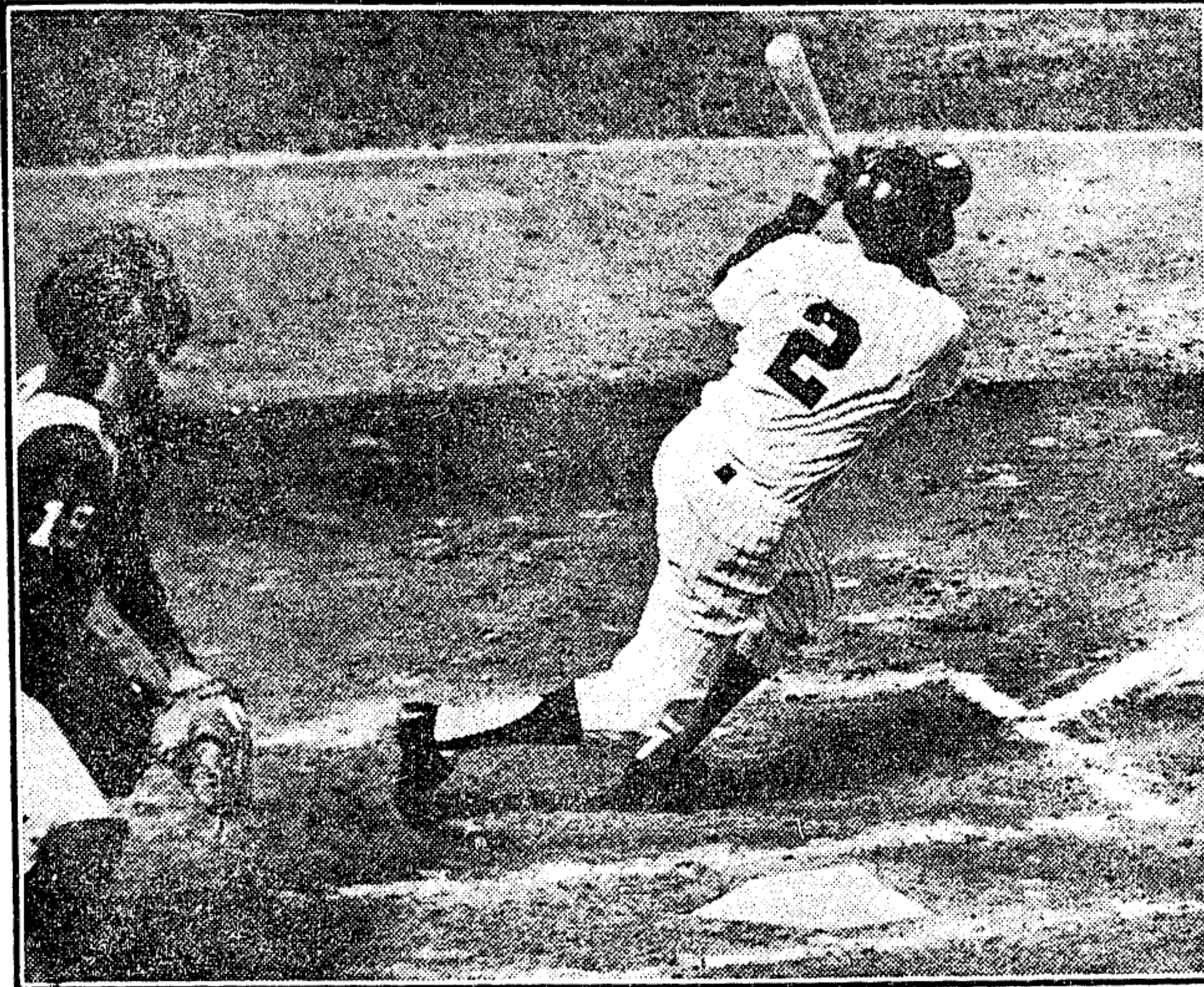


Boots 'n' Beauts Marked Zoilo's Play



AT BAT or roaming around shortstop, Zoilo Versalles treats Twin fans to superb performances. Last season the flashy, 22-year-old Cuban batted .261 and fielded .962. Despite Zoilo's numerous errors (29), A. L. players named him the loop's top fielding shortstop, ahead of his idol, Luis Aparicio.

Versalles Flubbed Easy One -Then Made Brilliant Stop

By ARNO GOETHEL

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Zoilo Versalles might be called the roller-coaster shortstop of the American League.

On one play, the Minnesota Twins' mighty mite goes far to his left or right to make an almost incredible stop. On the next, a routine ground ball handcuffs him or he bounces a lackadaisical throw past a frantic first baseman.

The records show, however, that Versalles has many more "ups" than "downs."

And, as a veteran of three full seasons in the major leagues at the still tender age of 22, the lithe Cuban whippet is expected to continue the improvement he has shown in each of the last two years.

Not unaware of Versalles' contributions to the gray hair adorning the managerial head of Sam Mele, Twins' President Cal Griffith says of his paradoxical shortstop: "He's a ball player you love to have because he's going to get better."

Zippy Zoilo realized two goals during the 1963 season. He beat out his idol, Baltimore's Luis Aparicio, for the All-Star shortstop berth and was named by the players as the American League's best-fielding shortstop for a Rawlings' Gold Glove Award.

This was despite the statistical fact that his .962 average ranked sixth among the league's regular shortstops, again illustrating the contention that although he might bobble an easy play, he also comes up with some of the most sensational gems to be seen on any diamond.

'Everybody' Reminds Him of Errors

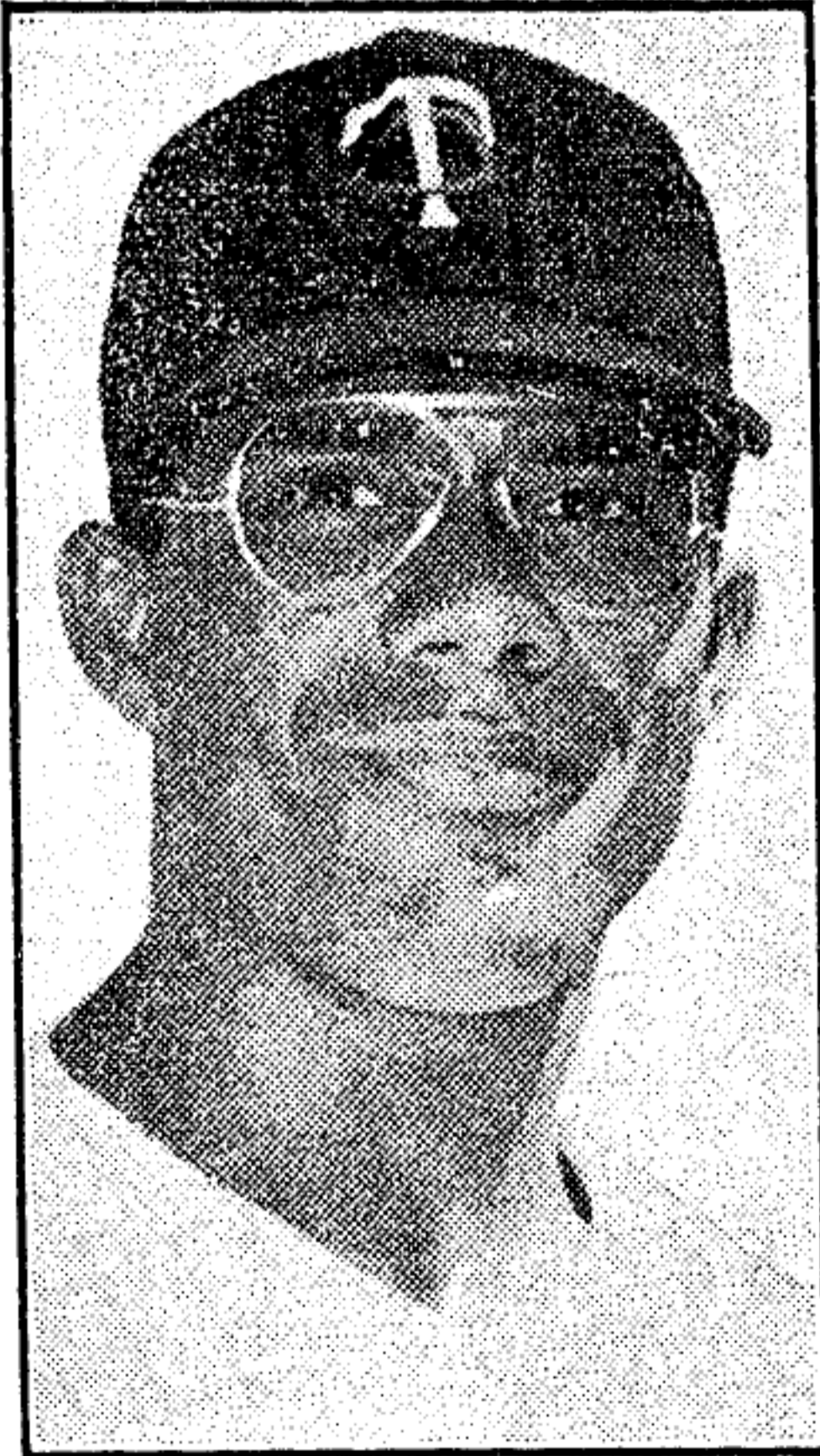
Although Versalles hardly could be suspected of wishing to return to his boyhood struggles for food, fame and fortune, you can sense his yearning for "the good old days" when he says: "Before, you played the game with love. Today, you have to be mean sometime. Today, you make an error and everybody's not happy about it."

"Everybody" wasn't happy about Versalles' fielding 29 times during the 1963 season. The 5-10 Cuban committed 11 errors before he was named to the All-Star team and 18 after the announcement.

Jim Fregosi of the L. A. Angels was the only American League shortstop to make as many errors and only one, Washington's Ed Brinkman, made more (37).

The main difference among the three, however, was that Fregosi had 746 chances in 151 games, Brinkman had 746 in 143 games and Versalles accepted 771 in 159 contests.

Although his weight dipped from



Zoilo Versalles

155 in spring training to 140 at the end of the season, Versalles was the league's iron man at short, missing only two of the Twins' 161 games.

"That was his trouble in the last part of the season," claimed Griffith. "He really worked to be the best at his job. When you have that kind of weight, you have to go bad occasionally. That's why we're trying to get a shortstop to replace Versalles for a few days now and then."

As do most baseball writers, this reporter encircles outstanding fielding plays in his scorebook. At the end of the 1963 campaign, Versalles was by far the most encircled Twin—accounting for 59 plays that this observer rated outstanding.

His first gem was recorded as early as possible, on opening day. With Cleveland's Tito Francona on third

Mele Nixed Advice, Stuck With Zoilo

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Through thick and thin and despite the urgent pleading of one of the team's broadcasters, Manager Sam Mele has stuck with Zoilo Versalles as the Twins' No. 1 shortstop.

Mele, a broadcaster and several newsmen were dining in one of Baltimore's fine restaurants after the Twins had squeezed out a 3-1 victory over the Orioles in 11 innings, August 1, 1962, to pull within one game of second-place Los Angeles and seven games behind league-leading New York.

Versalles had gone hitless in three trips before he was lifted for a pinch-hitter in the eighth and had left four runners on base.

Furthermore, the lithe shortstop was hitless his last 11 at-bats and had collected only one safety his last 15 trips.

"You have to bench him," the broadcaster de-

creed. "You simply can't keep him in the lineup."

Mele admitted he had considered a change at shortstop, but concluded that Versalles would be in the lineup the next night—for at least one more opportunity to snap out of his slump.

In the sixth inning the next night, Versalles led off with a homer for the Twins' first run, slicing a Baltimore lead to 3-1. With the Twins holding a 6-3 edge entering the last of the ninth, Versalles ranged far behind second base for a grounder and threw out Jerry Adair, the Orioles' leadoff man. The fielding gem was followed by a walk and a single, but—because of Versalles' play—the Orioles didn't score.

When the post-game diners met later that night, Mele turned to the broadcaster and calmly inquired: "Any more suggestions?"

GOETHEL.

Keystone Zoilo Made Fast Switch to Shortstop Berth

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Zoilo Versalles was a second baseman when the late scout Joe Cambria signed him off the Cuban sandlots to a Washington contract in 1958.

"When I reported to Fernandina Beach for spring training," Versalles recalled, "they asked me if I knew how to play shortstop. I said sure."

The former second baseman proceeded to win honors as the all-star shortstop with Elmira (NYP) in 1958, with Fox Cities (Three I) in 1959, and with Charleston (American Association) in 1960, then made it a clean sweep by being selected for the American League All-Star team in 1963.

base and one out in the sixth inning of a 3-3 duel, Versalles was running at full speed when he took Ellis Burton's popup over his shoulder in short left field. Without pausing, Versalles whirled and—his momentum still carrying him away from the plate—fired a bull's-eye throw to catcher Earl Battey to nail Francona trying to score after the catch.

Robbed Yanks Three Times

Versalles was a one-man dragnet against the Yankees on May 4, coming up with three extremely difficult plays among his eight chances for the day. In the third, he went behind second to snare a hot grounder partially slowed by pitcher Jim Kaat, then threw out speedy Tom Tresh at first.

Two frames later, Versalles dashed deep into the hole to make a backhanded stab and nailed Harry Bright with a true peg to Vic Power. In the seventh, Versalles went to the other

side of second base and threw out Stan Williams.

He had a typical night at Chicago on September 6. In the eighth, he booted a cinch double-play ball and allowed the White Sox to score the tying run. After the Twins took a 9-7 lead in the top of the ninth, Versalles preserved a 9-8 victory in the bottom of the frame. He lunged to his right for a backhanded catch of Floyd Robinson's leadoff liner.

Then, with a man on first, he raced behind second for Tom McCraw's roller and flipped a backhanded throw to Bernie Allen for the second out.

Sizes Up Own Weaknesses

Zoilo has learned to analyze his shortcomings. About the routine grounders that handcuff him occasionally, he says: "The easiest ball is the toughest one. Maybe it isn't to the fans, but it is to me. When the ball comes right at you, you don't know what kind of hop it's going to take, but when you're moving toward the ball from the side, it's easier to judge the hop."

This philosophy must be a carry-over from his boyhood in Cuba. He recalls:

"When I was six years old, we played in the streets and used stones for bases. When I fell down, I could see the bone through the meat. Boy, oh boy! But even then I said to myself I was going to be a pro player."

"Every day I threw a rubber ball against a wall to become a good fielder. I didn't have any shoes. That was tough. My brother used to take me to the games."

"I remember, when I was 15, I asked my brother, 'Do you think I can be the best shortstop in the world?'"

When he was 17, Versalles idolized Pedro Ramos, then a front-line pitcher

Versalles May Win Boost to No. 2 Spot in Bat Order

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Zoilo Versalles may have earned a boost in the Twins' batting order with his 1963 performance at the plate.

"He could be our No. 2 hitter," suggested Twins' President Cal Griffith. "He can hit to right field or pull to left and has the speed to break up the double play."

Versalles hit .261 last season. His 162 hits in 159 games included 31 doubles, a league-leading total of 13 triples and ten homers for 249 total bases. He drove in 54 runs, third among the league's shortstops to Ron Hansen's 67 and Dick McAuliffe's 61.

Griffith added: "Not many guys hitting eighth in the lineup will drive in that many runs."

er for the Washington Senators and an off-season performer in Cuba.

"After the games," Versalles recalled, "I'd tell Ramos I didn't have money for lunch. He always gave it to me. He was like a brother to me."

Today, Versalles is the proud father of two daughters, owner (at least driver) of a new Cadillac and resides comfortably in Bloomington, a suburb little more than home-run distance from Metropolitan Stadium.

He has shown interest in becoming a missionary for the Jehovah Witnesses when his playing days are over "because I like the way they talk."

Versalles is setting his sights on an unpretentious goal for 1964.

"In this game," he philosophized, "who knows what to expect? All I want to be next year is a good boy."