

VIN APPRECIATION DAY

Personal memories of Vin Scully from those who would see him regularly

HEIR (AND HAIR) APPARENT *By Carl Erskine*

The very first memory I have of Vin Scully is the day he joined the Dodgers.

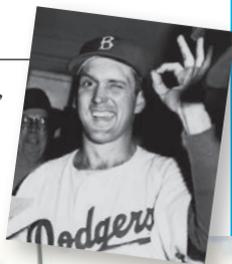
I had been in the big leagues a couple years in 1950. Connie Desmond, who was one of our fine broadcasters, became ill, and they brought this red-headed youngster from Fordham University (well, he seemed like a youngster — even though I probably wasn't much older than Vin). Our lead announcer was Red Barber, and when I saw Vin with Red, I said, "Ha, he looks like a pup right out of Red Barber!"

It seemed like the old guard and the new guard were kind of related in a way because they were red-headed. But there was so much more to Vin than his hair, and I'm humbled to have spent my Dodger career alongside him.

I spent a lot of time with Vin during my playing days. We traveled by train in those early years and waited a lot in the stations. To kill the time, I'd ask Vin to come help me pick out books at the bookstore. I still have four or five of those books on a shelf in my home today, as a good memory of our friendship.

Music is one of the things that brings us back to instances in our lives. That's what happens with Vin's voice for people all over. When we moved from Brooklyn to Los Angeles, we were all strangers to the West Coast. With the exception of the superstars — Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee Reese and Duke Snider — we were foreign to the cli-

mate in Los Angeles, but the connection that was made with the Dodgers and California was Vin Scully.



He's not only a great professional and skillful in the way he describes the game, he's also a class act. He leads a great lifestyle, and he's had an impact on so many people without even knowing it. I do believe he has a real sensitivity to the people that are listening, and I think that's what has made him great.

To count him as a friend and to know him all these years has been one of the highlights of my baseball career. You think that somebody in the booth would not be comfortable with somebody on the field, but he's the Babe Ruth of broadcasters. He can clear the net.

Carl Erskine spent his entire 12-year Major League career (1948-59) with the Dodgers.



The Greatest of All Time



PREPARATION, KINDNESS AND COMPANIONSHIP *By Jaime Jarrín*

In 1958, I was working for KWKW when the Dodgers moved from Brooklyn to Los Angeles. KWKW had the Spanish-language broadcast rights to the new team in town, and an advertising account executive named David Van de Walker took me to the Statler Hilton Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard to meet the Dodgers' owner, Walter O'Malley.

There in O'Malley's office was also a slender, sharply-dressed, red-haired gentleman. I had no idea then how much Vin Scully would mean to my career and my life over so many years ahead.

I was not even 23 years old and had come to the United States from my na-

tive Ecuador less than three years earlier, hoping to make a career here in broadcasting. It was as if a young painter had been introduced to Rembrandt, a young singer to Pavarotti, a young composer to Beethoven. I have been so fortunate to have been with the best of the best and also to be able to call him my friend.

In the early years, he was so kind to me. He knew I was very young. He knew I was very green.

Vin doesn't like to give advice but, in my case, he would always say, "Jaime, it doesn't matter how many games you have done — a hundred, a thousand, five thousand — you have to be ready. You have to do your home-



work. You have to be prepared.” And I have done that, trying to follow his advice. I could never copy him, because nobody could ever copy him. But I tried to model myself after him.

In baseball, we spend so much time on the road. Vin reached out to me to make that experience so much easier.

I remember going to San Francisco. The team bus would be waiting to take us to the ballpark, but Vin would rent a car and he would ask me to join him and Jerry Doggett. Just think, me having a future Hall of Famer as my driver. On days off on the road, the phone in my hotel room would ring and it would be Vin — “How about dinner, Jaime? Meet you in the lobby at 7 p.m.”

Very often, at his request, our traveling secretary would get a conference room at the hotel and would invite me to join him, Billy DeLury and former coaches Dave Wallace and Joey Amalfitano for a glass of wine and cheese and to tell stories and exchange views on — oh, everything. Those are the sessions I treasure the most and missed in recent years as Vin traveled less.

We also shared tragedy. Both Vin and I lost sons at very young ages. When my son Jimmy died at age 29 of a brain aneurysm



in 1988, Vin was one of the first to donate to the charitable foundation we established at the suggestion of Orel Hershiser in Jimmy’s name. Vin was so generous.

And I can thank Vin for playing a big part in the greatest honor of my career — receiving the Ford C. Frick Award and induction into the broadcasting wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998. The initiative came from Jack Buck, but I am sure Jack talked to Vin and he really helped. Vin told me, “Jaime, the Hall of Fame is something very unique. It is not only for you. It’s for your family.”

I hope his retirement is as blessed as I have been to have him as my mentor, friend and guide all these years.

Jaime Jarrín has broadcast games for the Dodgers since 1959.



The Greatest of All Time

CHILDHOOD HERO COME TO LIFE

By Charley Steiner

It was 1956. I was 7, learning how to play stick, stoop, punch, soft and baseball, a crash course into what turned out to be life's path.

The previous fall, the Dodgers had finally won the World Series from the hated Yankees. Grownups in my neighborhood were crying tears of joy. As a 7-year-old, I thought grownups weren't supposed to cry. That was, as little kids, our job, after falling off our Schwinn. It didn't make any sense.

So, there had to be something to this baseball thing. But I wasn't quite sure what, until I was introduced to the Brooklyn Dodgers on the radio.

It was precisely this model seen here that was centered in the middle of my mom's kitchen. The radio always seemed so much larger than the little kitchen in which it comfortably sat. And more times than not, I sat next to it. Listening.

Listening to the crowd. The crack of the bat. Vendors selling programs, peanuts, popcorn, Cracker Jack. Off in the distance, the occasional bellow of the umpire's called strike. And then, the voice, that was the umbrella of this wondrous newfound experience. I didn't know whose voice it was, but at 7, I instantly knew what that voice was — how it grabbed me — and where I hoped it might someday take me. And damned if it didn't.

All I ever wanted to be when I grew up was to be the Dodgers announcer. Never had a plan B. I had no desire to replace Vin because even 60 years ago, I knew that was an impossible task. It still is. And always will be. The intellect, vocabulary, memory, im-



peccably poetic timing and *his* voice set him apart from all of us who are fortunate enough to share the same profession. We are reporters sprinting to keep up with the pace and story line of a game. Vin, on the other hand is a poet, a graceful bard, who

just happens to be a member of our (and your) family. We chase the game. The game comes to him.

The past 12 years (a quarter of my career), I have been beyond fortunate to have fulfilled a longshot of a career dream. But it has exceeded any and all expectations. For all these years, before every game we would have dinner. First, there were four of us. Vin, Rick Monday, Billy DeLury and me. Billy passed away a couple of years ago. So now it's down to Vin, Mo and me. Just the three of us. The guy, whose voice grabbed me as a child and never let go, is now asking me if I can pass the butter or the salt.

Sixty-seven years. His first year broadcasting for the Dodgers, was my first year, period. And for the past half-century, at least, he has been the best who has ever done it. He is the Babe Ruth of my profession. All the while passing him the salt, I have also been playing pepper with the Babe.

Charley Steiner has been a Dodger broadcaster since 2005.



The Greatest of All Time

MICHELANGELO, BEETHOVEN AND VIN *By Steve Brener*

My love affair with the Los Angeles Dodgers began because of one voice as I was growing up in the San Fernando Valley.

After a day of school and a night of homework, it was bedtime. I made sure my trusty transistor radio was with me. Remember those things? Yes, that little radio, tuned to Dodger baseball. I tucked it under my pillow, so I was able to listen to the voice, none other than Vin Scully, describe the Dodgers' games.

Listening to Vin was like watching Michelangelo paint or Beethoven compose or Marlon Brando act or Frank Sinatra sing. He was truly the greatest artist of our time, and we were fortunate enough to enjoy 67 years of this Hall of Famer and his outstanding voice.

Boy, did he paint a picture and tell a story. And his co-stars in the city of Los Angeles read like a who's who of baseball. (Of course, I grew up idolizing a pair of pitchers named Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale.) I say co-stars because the city of Los Angeles certainly recognized that Scully was star material. We asked the fans in 1976 to vote for the most memorable personality in the history of the franchise. The voting was



unanimous. None other than Vin Scully.

Vin is so modest. He always says that this game is not about him. It's about the team and the players. He believes he is just fortunate that God gave him the gift to be able to be put in the position to describe what these gifted athletes are able to do on a diamond. And we have been the fortunate ones to be able to enjoy Vin's work.

I have been truly blessed to have worked with Vin. He is a very special and caring person. He has never taken anything for granted. And if anyone can take one trait from this great man, it is that he is always prepared. He does his homework and prepares for each and every game. And it has shown for 67 years of a truly amazing career.

Good luck to you Vin on your retirement, and thank you for what you have meant to the Dodgers and the game of baseball!

Steve Brener first joined the Dodgers' public relations department in 1970 and became the youngest director of publicity ever in Major League Baseball.



The Greatest of All Time

WALKING ON AIR *By Mark Langill*

My mother still laughs at the notion her son “the Dodger team historian” knows the Hall of Fame broadcaster Vin Scully on a professional level at the ballpark.

“Does he know you used to sit in the closet as a kid and listen to the radio?” she asks, having watched the idol-worshipping scene begin nearly five decades ago in our South Pasadena home. Correcting her description of my novice sports den has become a running joke — “It was an office!”



The Dodger Broadcast Team



We both marvel at the irony of our family setting up shop in the Left Field Pavilion on Sunday afternoons in the mid-1970s. If I visited the souvenir stand, she dutifully wrote notes on a Styrofoam cup so I could add the plays to my scorecard. The radio reception wasn't strong under the pavilion in those days, so I needed someone to monitor what Scully was reporting.

Buried in the family archives is my tape recording at age 9 in a high-pitched voice as I pretended to be Scully calling Game 7 of the 1974 World Series, wishful revisionist history because weeks earlier in real life, L.A. had lost to the Oakland Athletics in five games. One batter pops the ball into the air and I mimic the master by announcing, “It's playable.” I also

check the scores from around the league — which upon further review isn't possible during a World Series — and previewed the topics for my post-game show.

Who could imagine meeting the Great Oz one day in the Dodger Stadium press box? It can be a dangerous proposition to place someone on a pedestal with great expectations. It turned out the broadcaster was an even greater person.

My favorite Vin Scully memory was riding the team charter for the first time in July 1989 as a Pasadena Star-News reporter, my initial behind-the-scenes look at the world of Dodger baseball. Coming out of the restroom, I spied Scully in the front row of first class with his head buried in a military novel. Everyone else around him was asleep. He looked up from his reading glasses and said in a cheerful whisper, “Hi ya Mark!” In that moment, I could've flown without the plane.

Team historian Mark Langill has been with the Dodgers since 1994.