

BASEBALL DIGEST



ALL STAR EDITION



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By Abe J. Shear
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When I was a little boy living in Dayton, Ohio, baseball (on the radio) was my window to the rest of the country. Cincinnati was an hour down the new Interstate highway and I rooted for the Reds, a flawed team with players like Frank Robinson, Vada Pinson and Gus Bell, but a team with no memorable pitchers until Jim Maloney.

Jim had the entire package – hard throwing like Don Drysdale and cool like Bob Gibson. Each start was a treat, full of strikeouts and walks, with Jim routinely pitching deep into the game. I still remember his ten walk no hitter. In addition, Jim was often a better hitter than some of the very pedestrian position players on the Little Red Machine. That the Reds made the World Series in 1961 was a minor miracle.

To this day, I know that Jim would have pitched the Reds into the 1964 World Series if only Hutchinson had kept giving him the ball. With this background, it was really my pleasure to spend a few hours with Jim as he brought even more color to my childhood memories. There are few players today who are as determined and as successful as Jim and I am sure you will enjoy his perspectives.

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I Remember When, a book which includes the first 35 interviews in this series, is available for \$20. A check should be made payable to Abe Shear and mailed to him at Arnall Golden Gregory.

Jim Maloney “Full of Pride”

Shear: I'm in Phoenix and it is my pleasure to interview and talk with Jim Maloney. Where did you grow up?

Maloney: I was born and raised in Fresno, California, 1940, June 2nd. I have lived my whole life there. I graduated from high school and went up to Cal Berkley. When I got through playing ball, I went back to Fresno.

Your dad was quite a baseball player wasn't he?

Yes. He played semi-pro. He was a good ballplayer. He could have signed to play a pro ball contract, but he owned a Texaco gas station and he was making more money at the gas station than what they wanted to pay him to go play ball, so he stayed in Fresno. He later started putting cars out there to sell and he ended up going in the used car business. He was a used car dealer for 40 years. He taught me a lot of things about baseball, its fundamentals, ever since I could remember as a kid. If it wasn't for my dad I don't know if I would have gotten started. Once I started in baseball, I liked it.

league, Babe Ruth league, high school, my parents were always there in attendance. I remember the Fresno Cardinals, it was a Class C league, and when I was small they played an old timers game out there and I'd go out there with my dad and he always got a couple of hits. He was as good or better than any ballplayers out there.

Who taught him to play?

I really don't know. His father died when he was very young, 2 or 3 years old, and then my grandmother married another man. My step grandfather knew very little about sports. So I don't really know. The only thing I know is that my dad was pretty athletic. When he was young, he financed his own way through Fresno State College picking cotton. He picked, I think, 500 or 600 pounds a day. They called him “Hands”. He had tremendous sized hands. He also has a seven letter varsity letterman. He threw the discus and he played football and he played basketball.

So he took you to play mostly.

Right. When little league first came out to the west coast, I was 11 years old.

“I was the last pitcher to pitch against Stan Musial”

Did you dad play ballgames when you were a little boy? Did you go to the games with your dad that he played in?

All the games that I played in little

That was 1951. I remember my dad telling me that when you go over there to work out, try out for a team. There were six teams. He said I was playing first base and when I got that ball, I should

show them my arm. So I said “Okay.” I always had an arm that was superior to kids that were 3 or 4 years older than I was.

How old were you when you really realized that you could throw the ball?

At the point we started the little league games and I was playing all these positions and then they asked me go to pitch and I was being a little bit wild and I don’t remember anybody hitting it. I struck out a bunch of people, I’d walk a bunch of people, I’d hit a couple of guys, but at that age we weren’t throwing hard. They didn’t want to stay in there too much.

I still remember when I got hit as at 12 year old. I think it scared me. I remember exactly who hit me, exactly where it hit me.

It’s an experience. Up in the big leagues and you come and get one guy once in a while. You hit in the National League, so I’ve been hit a few times.

You never hit anybody on purpose though?

No.

Not high, not above the waistline.

No. On the hip or on the fat of the back. Never in the head.

Who were your favorite players?

Stan “the man” Musial, he was my idol. I remember having number 6 on my back in little league. I wanted to hit like him. I was a left hand hitter and he had that crunchy stance. As trivia has it – I was the last pitcher to pitch against Stan Musial the day he retired, September 29, 1963. I was going for my 24th win and I was 23 years old and I was pretty much, I’m not just saying to pat myself, but I was pretty overpowering at that point in my career. I was 23 – 7, had pitched 250 innings and had 265 strikeouts and Musial was about 41, 42, maybe 43. He went 2 for 3 that day. I struck him out the first time and he got 2 ground ball base hits. Then they took him out of the game.

Any other favorite players?

As a kid growing up I liked Rocky Colavito. Bob Feller, you know – pitchers, but I was really small. I’d say the only other one was Mickey Mantle. I was amazed at how much power he had – that he could run like a deer.

Who was your favorite team? The west coast didn’t have any teams at

that time.

You know the major leagues would never come out to west coast until 1958, my senior year in high school. We were always watching the Dizzy Dean show on weekends and if I had a favorite team it was probably the Yankees. They were a big dynasty, Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra. Those the guys you read about.

“Within 2 months I won a 10 inning no hitter and I lost a 10 inning no hitter.”

What was the first major league game you went to?

Oh boy, I went to San Francisco. The Reds were playing the Giants at Seal Stadium.

Did you collect baseball cards or autographs?

No. Really didn’t think anything about it. We didn’t have baseball cards. I was first introduced to baseball cards when I made it to Cincinnati and every clubhouse had 5 cards and a piece of bubblegum. You got 5 cards and I took the bubblegum and threw the cards in the trash.

I took the cards and threw the bubble gum out. I should have taken your cards. You had quite a high school career. Did you enjoy hitting more or pitching?

I enjoyed playing every day. My high school team in 1958 was one of the top teams. It’s one of those things where they say we really had one of the top teams in the nation. We had Dick Ellsworth, who played 12 years in the major leagues. Pat Corrales who is still in baseball today after 50 something years and myself and then there were 3 other guys who signed professional, contracts, two of them pitchers, and they hurt their elbows and shoulders and didn’t make it. So I forgot our record, but we went up in my senior year to Cal and played the Cal frosh knocked them over and we went over to Stanford and played the Stanford frosh and knocked them over.

Did Pat Corrales catch on that team? Yes.

And then you went on to play for Fresno State?

No. I went to City College. I went to

Cal for a semester and I was a fish out of water I went up on a baseball scholarship and I made the Cal Frosh basketball team.

You made the basketball team?

Yeah. I went out and played basketball in high school. So I wanted to go play basketball too. So I made the basketball team. So anyway, I came

back to Fresno City College and started playing with the City College team, I had like 25 scoreless innings I was playing shortstop and Bobby Mattick, a scout for Cincinnati, snuck into town and said they had the money. The night I graduated from high school, I talked to almost every major league team. There were 16 teams, you had 8 American and 8 National. So all these scouts came over and talked to my dad. You know, they were offering \$30,000, \$40,000. My dad said I was worth more money. I would have signed for a Hershey Bar and a bottle of Coke. My dad seemed to know, he was a businessman.

Was it exciting to get signed by the Reds?

Yes. The Reds had a TV announcer who was from Fresno by the name of George Bryson and my dad and he were very good friends. So there was a little deal there, Cincinnati really was interested and went back to Kansas City to work out with Baltimore. Paul Richards took us out to the suite afterwards and they said we’ll give this boy a major league contract, \$30,000 bonus and we’ll break it in as \$200,000 on paper. My dad got up, jumped right out of his seat, and said we’re not going to do any business with you bunch of phony liars and we walked out of the room.

You would have taken a Hershey candy bar.

I would have taken a candy bar.

Now with the minor leagues, you didn’t play long? As I remember, you played for Johnny Vander Meer. In hindsight, I guess that’s interesting. He had a couple of no hitters too.

You know we were talking about it the other day at the ballpark. There is a

record right there that Johnny Vander Meer has, back-to-back no hitters, it will never be broken. Number 1 you have to throw 2 no hitters just to tie it. The odds of throwing 3 no hitters in a row, I don't know. He was a good guy. I was homesick and lost a lot of weight. It was a rough time I was playing D ball which is pretty fast for a kid coming out of high school basically. I think I won 6 games. The fellow that really helped me was Jim Turner when I went to Nashville in the Southern Association.

I've heard a lot of people say that about Turner.

He was a good man. He was pitching coast for Cincinnati for 5 years.

When Fred Hutchinson was the manager?

That is correct.

And then you were called up by the Reds when you were still 21. Had you ever been to Crosley Field when you were called up?

I got called up that was 1960 so I was 20 years old. I got called up toward the end of July. I had worked out in Cincinnati. Cincinnati got wind of it so they got a hold of my dad and they said "Hey don't

And then over time you pitched two no hitters. You pitched one in 1965, I think, and one in 1969. What was it like to pitch a no hitter?

I pitched 3 and only got credit for 2.

You pitched one that was more than 9 innings – you lost. One you won.

Yes I won one in Chicago. The first one, I had a no hitter after 9 innings. I'm sitting on the bench against the Mets in Crosley Field. I go out in the 10th inning and I get them out in the 10th inning and I got a no hitter for 10 innings. At the top of the 11th inning, Johnny Lewis hit a homerun off me and I lost the game 1-0. They counted that as a no hitter for a long time but after the Roger Maris thing with the 162 games, they took that one off. Two months later in Wrigley Field I'm sitting on the bench after 9 innings and I got a no hitter, 0 to 0. They already had 3 pitchers and I'm sitting on the bench and I'm thinking to myself man this is a tough league. Well anyway Leo Cardenas hit the foul pole and I went out in the bottom of the 10th and got them out. Within 2 months I won a 10 inning no hitter and I lost a 10 inning no hitter.

of the season and they gave the ball to Johnny Tsitouris.

That's correct.

Are you still annoyed about that?

Well, there was not too much I could do really. I had pitched Tuesday night. I think I pitched an 11 inning ball game against Pittsburgh and I didn't get a decision. I pitched 11 innings of shutout ball and we couldn't score a run and we ended up getting beat. I was scheduled to pitch on Sunday and I don't know, they never said a word to me and I was prepared to go. It was my turn and I had had some struggles with Philadelphia in the past. You know you got some guys in the club that may hit you really good and Philadelphia had a couple of guys who were tough for me at that particular time. Tsitouris could throw his glove out there and get them out.

I remember. I'm still not quite over that game yet. Now you had a great pitching career but you also had a great hitting career. I think you had 52 RBI's and 7 homeruns and you hit over 200. What was it like to get to hit?

As I said, I could have signed as an infielder or I could have signed as a pitcher. A lot of teams wanted me for an everyday player. I wasn't bad and I was a decent hitter.

What was it like to hit against some of those great pitchers?

I liked to hit. One thing my dad taught me was you get two strikes off, choke up more on the bat and cut your stroke down, do not strike out. And I struck out but I hit a lot of times with 2 strikes. Now you see guys today in the major league they wouldn't know what it is to choke up and just try and put the ball in play. They going to try to hit the ball out on all 3 swings. To be honest with you, I used to love to pitch to those guys, the big swingers. They had a hard time.

Just nice slow curve ball with two strikes.

High curves and slow curves and a good high fast balls.

What were your favorite parks to play in?

I liked Crosley Field, I liked Wrigley Field, I liked Dodger Stadium, that big high mound. It was like pitching on Mount Everest. Loved it. It had the mound way up there was terrible

"I had a decent success with Mays and Clemente."

send me back to Fresno, just come over to Cincinnati and come on in to work out at Crosley Field". I had worked out in Kansas City for Baltimore Orioles because they were playing there and the Reds flew me to Crosley Field. I had a better arm than anyone out there. I threw the ball much better than all of them.

That was a quirky ballpark. What was it like to pitch your first game for the Reds?

When I got called up, they said I'd get my feet wet right away. I was 14 and 5 in Nashville and so we flew out to Los Angeles, my folks all came down to the Coliseum. Dodger Stadium was being built. So we're in the football stadium, with the Coliseum's short left field fence. Anyway, they threw me right out there against Don Drysdale, we hooked up I gave up 2 runs and I got shut out 2-0. So my first game wasn't bad. But I took a loss.

I remember the game. I know I listened to it because it was in the summer and I remember laughing through the whole game. You'd strike out a batter and then you'd walk back and strike out a batter. You probably left 10 guys on base.

That was the one I won at Wrigley.

And then you pitched another no hitter in 1969.

1969 against Houston. That wasn't too much of a sweat.

Were you nervous out there at the end of the game? Or was it just baseball?

You know at the end of the game, you know what's on the line that's for sure, at least I did. I felt when I started the game I could pitch a no hitter any game I started. That's the way I kept myself in the ballgame. I gave up a hit, I was going to pitch a one hit shutout.

At the end of 1964, Philadelphia collapsed. It was your turn at the end

for those hard throwers. Those three ballparks I liked, Candlestick, Shea Stadium was okay. Connie Mack Stadium, I didn't really care for that ballpark. It was a real old ballpark and I just didn't like it. It smelled like a ballpark. You could smell the hotdogs and stuff.

I looked up your statistics. 134 wins, 2 no hitters, 5 one hitters, 30 shutouts a pretty good career don't you think?

Yes.

Batted over 200.

I ruptured my achilles tendon in 1970 and never won another game after that. My goals were to win 200 ballgames. I think I had a shot at it as I was only 30 years old.

Today, pitchers don't finish 30 games.

To pitch a shutout means you have to finish the game and give up no runs.

You didn't pitch just 6 innings. The statistic "quality starts" wasn't there.

There were no specialty people where they just come in for one hitter. Or one out or whatever it is. If you were a long reliever, the starter had to get knocked out in the first or 2nd inning. If you were the long reliever you were going to pitch all the way to the 7th.

Who were the hardest hitters to get out?

They were both left handed hitters, one was Willie McCovey, the other was Willie Stargel. I pitched against a lot of great ballplayers. Both those guys were tough outs for me. When McCovey first came out, you could go letters and he'd swing, so you get him going up the

hill and then once you learned to stay off that pitch, you had to get in there and figure something else out. I had a decent success with Mays and Clemente and some of the right handed, you know there are some guys in Hall of Fame that were right handed. But Stargel and McCovey were rough outs for me.

Edwards came up when Ed Bailey was the catcher .

Bailey put the fast ball sign down all the time. I had a good curve and he wasn't the defensive player. He might have been a little more of the home run type guy but John Edwards was very good and so was John Bench.

How exciting was it to be in the 1961 World Series.

I was 21 years old. Got to pitch, but not very much but it was a real good thrill to go to Yankee Stadium that I'd seen on TV. A bunch of us went out to the ballpark Jerry Lynch, Gene Freese, Wally Post. We all wanted to go out there and see Yankee Stadium. We went out there and we just were in awe because of the stadium. That was the stadium that Ruth built. That's one of the goals you have. Guys play for 18 or 20 years and never get to the World Series and it is tougher today with all the teams.

The 1961 Reds team was pretty special but the players really weren't all that great. They had a lot of guys who had a really nice seasons.

They called us a bunch of ragamuffins. That's what the sports writers and everyone called us. We did okay. Whitey Ford shut us down 2 in a row,

I know that. I think we won one or two games. Jim O'Toole was a great ballplayer.

Tell me what's the best part of baseball?

I think the best part of baseball is the bonds and the friendships that you make with your teammates. Playing at that level, the travel, families and in those days we'd all look for an off day where we could spend with families together. You know I still have guys that I played with that I keep in touch with and we're all getting older and the camaraderie is just sitting around after a game that you won, sitting in the clubhouse talking about how the game was and just what's going on. That's the thing when I got out of baseball that I missed the most was that part of it. Playing and everything was fun. When I first started getting guys out at that level, I knew I belonged. I'm real fortunate that the ownership of the Reds now, they invite my wife and me down to spring training every year for a week. I know all the players and so when you know somebody that's actually involved in ball playing it keeps your interest and you're pulling for that individual. In 1972, I went in the Reds Hall of Fame and they just mailed me a plaque. Today, the Reds are a first class organization and they are trying to win. They came close last year. Dusty Baker is fantastic. Players love to play for Dusty and they got the horses that can pull the coach.

Thanks again. This was just wonderful.

“Full of Pride”

Jim Maloney

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