

# BASEBALL DIGEST



## OPENING DAY EDITION



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By Abe J. Schear  
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One of the unique aspects of baseball is that the spoken or written word is so important. That is why, for instance, there is a portion of the Hall of Fame which is dedicated to announcers and writers, people we listen to or read day-after-day, people who are synonymous with their respective teams.

Unlike others who pour their words into stories and columns, Steve Hermanos reflects his passion for baseball with poetry, work that he has self-published and which has been widely read in the San Francisco area.

Steve's passion for the Giants resulted in this unique outlet, in his need to transfer emotions into words and to share his feelings. Whether writing poetry, or articles, churning out blogs or sharing games by email, baseball tends to often capture our hearts and its slowness allows us to share our feelings.

I am sure you will enjoy Steve's story.

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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 Schear and mailed to him at Arnall Golden Gregory.

### Steve Hermanos "Baseball Verse"

**Schear: So tell me, where did you grow up?**

Hermanos: I grew up in New York City, in Manhattan..

**How long did you live there?**

Really until after college. I went away for graduate school, and then came back. I was there until I was 39 years old. And I have been out here in San Francisco since then. I am 51, and I have been out here 12 years.

**Okay. What are your first memories of baseball?**

Ah, that's a good one. It was in Yankee Stadium, I think it was 1967 or 1968. My first game, and the only thing I remember is my father lifting me up, we had box seats, I think behind the Yankee dugout. We were in the seats and I couldn't see anything, but of course the back of the guy in front of me, and I remember my father lifting me up and pointing and saying, "That's Mickey Mantle." I think he was around the batting circle. That is the first memory I have. I remember watching

She, no. She never went. She was a Yankee fan though and she followed what was going on.

**Did you play baseball as a child?**

I played all through school. I tried out in college, and I was laughed at and really I was shocked. I went to Cornell and the minute I showed up, they cut the entire JV program, and they only had varsity. There was no way in hell that I was going to make it as a first baseman. I said, who you kidding, first baseman, I said forget it. I am a great fielder, but that is not going to get you playing on a decent team.

**What positions did you play when you were a youngster, when you were playing in organized ball, say before high school?**

I played first base. In Little League, I think, I played first base. I am a left-handed first baseman, and was always a good fielder. So that's it, I played first base.

**Okay, and after you were done with not making it in college, did you ever**

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"It is all about sucking the money out of your wallet, and not much else."

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the 1969 World Series on the deck of my grandmother's house. In 1968, I think I was probably 6 years old.

**Did your dad go to ball games a lot?**

No, he didn't. He wasn't really much of a fan.

**And, what about your mom?**

**play any other baseball. Do you still play baseball?**

I played softball.

**That's a different game.**

It is different, but when you can't, you know, when you can't hack it in baseball anymore, it's a good substitute, I find.

**And, did you collect baseball cards?**

Yes, I was a baseball card dealer. In high school and then in the late 80's and early 90's I was a baseball card dealer also.

**So, you would go to all of the shows and sell cards?**

Yeah, some of them, yeah.

**And how did you get into that?**

I guess I went to a show, I went to some shows in New York and, you know, talked to some of the dealers and

wear No. 15 in his honor in baseball and in soccer and when he died (on August 2, 1979) I was completely devastated. It was between my junior and senior years of high school when he died.

**Any other favorite players?**

Let's see, who did I love? I mean, I loved Bobby Murcer in the late seventies, really.

**Favorite announcers?**

Yeah, Phil Rizutto, Bill White. Those

It was a sports bar. It was the first sports bar in NY in 1987. We hit the trend just at the right time. It was very popular.

**How long did you own that?**

Just about 2 years. We sold it. Some guy came in and offered us a lot more money than it was worth, and we did okay.

**You were glad to own it, and you were glad to sell it?**

Exactly.

**Now that you live in San Francisco, I'm sure you are still a Giants fan, but not a Dodgers fan.**

Not the Dodgers.

**What caused you to move across country? Certainly not to follow a baseball team.**

Right. I was doing some work in NY, and that all dried up. I needed to get back into the day job world, so I thought I'd be a real estate agent. So that is what I did. I just packed up and moved across the country.

**And, how did you get into writing?**

I don't know, I mean, taking classes in high school and classes in college, and just started writing a lot. That's really it. You get sort of addicted to it. It's not really a conscious choice.

**Right, and then somehow you got into writing baseball poetry.**

Right.

**And, tell me how that happened?**

Well it was 2010. It was after the Giants won the World Series and it's a funny story. I was writing a short story, and my computer crashed, and I took it to the place that recovers data from a crashed computer, you know for people like the Department of Defense and all these people, and computers that have been through fires and earthquakes, but for some reason they couldn't recover the data off of my computer. So, it was around Thanksgiving, and these stories I had been working on are sort of wiped out. I am not working on anything, and there are two other books of poetry that I am aware of on baseball. One was written by some guy, I don't remember his name, but it was after the 2004 World Series and he wrote some. He wrote some rhyming verse book of poetry about the Red Sox, and then the other book of poetry was called, "Oh Holy Cow", and basically someone took Phil Rizutto's radio and television

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## “Fans of the Giants just had some appreciation for poetry.”

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I became a wholesaler for the Topps Company in 1979. And the minimum number of cards was 60,000 cards, so I used to get 60,000 cards delivered to my apartment every year.

**Right, that's exactly five cases of cards.**

You got it, that's it. These days, I am a consultant to a retail card company called the Helmar Brewing Company. They are an art card company that handmakes baseball cards and sells them on Ebay, and I've been working with them for the past 6 months.

Are you on Facebook at all?

No.

**Do you help write the cards?**

I do, actually. Yeah, Yeah! One set of the cards is modeled after the 1933 Goudy set so, maybe that's about 60 backs of cards, and what we do is they have audible forms and so the style is to write them as if it was 1968, and you are writing about what you were supposed to have done within those times. There is one for Fleetwood Walker, um, an amazing card, so I write it as if it's 1985 and I am writing about Fleetwood Walker. [Note: Fleet Walker is actually the first player to integrate baseball, playing for the Toledo Blue Stockings in 1884. His short career was decidedly average.] I love it, really amazing stuff, but I write this email newsletter every week and we have a Facebook page.

These cards sell on Ebay anywhere from \$20-\$400. I mean, it's really amazing what they do. Yeah, yeah, yeah!

**Who were your favorite players when you grew up?**

Thurman Munson was my guy. I used to

guys growing up was really great, and the Mets announcers were really good, and Bob Murphy.

**And of the ballparks you've been to, what are your favorites?**

You know, probably the ones that were pretty much everybody's, Wrigley Field, Fenway Park, Yankee Stadium; the 1976-2008 Yankee Stadium was one of my favorites.

**Yeah, I like that ballpark more than I like the new ballpark.**

The new one (Yankee Stadium) is a disaster. It is all about sucking the money out of your wallet, and not much else. It has no charm. It has zero charm. That's the whole thing, I mean, how could you build a ballpark that has no charm?

**I think you are absolutely right, it has no charm, and it has \$10 beers.**

I won't be surprised if they don't charge you to go to the bathroom next. Put it that way. That's going to be the next thing.

**I think so; they'll have nicer powder rooms.**

I mean any place that is selling plastic jars full of dirt, there is something wrong if that's the best that they could do is plastic jars full of dirt. And it's, you know, I think that that it is the only stadium in the world that has no charm.

**Didn't you own a bar in NY?**

Yes, I used to own a bar called the Polo Ground, named after the old stadium. It's on 83rd and Third Avenue in New York City.

**And I'm guessing it was a baseball theme.**

calls, "Oh Gigantic Victory", and broke up the lines into the poetry, and that's a hilarious book. I don't know, I just thought I could do it.

So I wrote the first book of poetry and it took me about 3 weeks, 3 1/2 weeks and I self-published it at Kinkos. I got the book into some bookstores in San Francisco and mailed them around to various sports writers and radio stations, you know, sports radio stations, stuff like that. I got a really good response from fans, a huge amount for a book of poetry and I had fun with it. It was really an enjoyable project. Fans of the Giants just had some appreciation for poetry. Their eyes lit up with the book. It's not a lot of people, it was nice. It was nice to make that connection with people. That is how it all got started.

**How much poetry do you write today about baseball?**

I wrote another book in 2012 about the Giants and, you know, I write if some significant baseball event happens. If there is a no-hitter, I write a poem about it. There was a baseball literary event, and it was in the part of SF where Seal Stadium used to be (from 1930-1959), so I wrote something about Seal Stadium. So when I get inspired, I write a book.

**Do you put stuff online that people can see?**

Yeah, Yeah, you know I do, I have a blog and I don't think it's out in 2013, but it's there, it's called, "Dudewords", so I had that.

**Is baseball to you more of an oral sport or a visual sport?**

I like both.

**Which do you like better?**

You know, I like being there, I like watching what's on TV. I like radio also, I like them all. I can't really, you know, I mean like the radio announcers out here are incredible, John Mayer and Dave Fleming, they are really amazing. They are great. I like watching the game on TV, I mean I like listening and cooking dinner, that's for sure. I can't watch and do something like that at the same time.

**What do you think about baseball that makes it resonate so well with people?**

I don't listen to XM radio. What do I think makes it resonate? Well, the games we played when we were children resonate with us. If you played it when

you were a kid, it resonates, and the fact that it represents cities, you know, you live in a certain city, and they're wearing the name on the uniform so it's some sort of connection with that as well. You know, in baseball as opposed to other sports, we can examine the guys on the field, just sort of stare at them and get a sense of what they are like. You can't do that, in my opinion, behind much equipment, and in baseball, there is a lot of down time to get ideas of what they are like. You are spending a lot of time with these guys; I mean that's the main difference from any other sport. 162 games, 500 hours a year you are going to spend with these guys. I think that's a lot of it. I think that's a lot of the resonance. **Tell me, what is your favorite baseball memory?**

Probably, Game 4 of the 2001 World Series. Probably the best game I ever saw. Where Tino Martinez hit the 2 run homer in the bottom of the 9th, and then Jeter hit the homer at the bottom of the 10th to win it. It was after 9/11, you know, and the feeling of the stadium was unique. It was just the catharsis of winning that came after the World Series.

**Were you at that game?**

Yeah, I was at that game, yeah!

**Well, that's great. With baseball to me, people always remember where they sit. Where were you sitting in that game?**

Well, I got the tickets to get in and I don't know where the actual seats were. You know, I moved around a lot. But for the Jeter homer, I was sitting behind home plate, probably about the 30th row off to the 3rd base side. I was essentially on the first base line, behind home plate, a little off to the side. That was great.

**Memories like that are really terrific. What do you think about the new San Francisco park?**

I wish they could build a 400 ft. fog barrier on one side of the stadium.

**A 400 ft. what?**

FOG BARRIER.

**A fog barrier. Of course.**

Because it can get cold there.

**Not as cold as at Candlestick Park!**

Not as cold as Candlestick, for sure! But, on a nice night, nice day, I think it's the best ballpark of the newer ballparks. You can't beat Wrigley or Fenway Park, but when the weather is agreeable, the

San Francisco particular ballpark is wonderful.

**I think you are right. You've gone through all of my questions, I think this was just great, and if I have anymore, I'll give you a call or email you, but I think this turned out just perfectly. I really appreciate your time. Thank you.**

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**April 8, 2011: Champs**

One hundred and fifteen days ago,  
When the cleanup crews,  
Swept up the confetti,  
We figured the parade was over;

Now! Brian Wilson runs  
the Championship flag  
across the field,  
forty-three thousand fanatics  
throat-straining screaming,  
ecstatic,  
As Wilson climbs a ladder leaning  
against  
The outfield wall  
Climbs into the stands,  
High-fiving his way up the rows;

The man is in the stands!

Around to the non-moving  
Cablecar,  
Wilson hoists the Championship,  
Up the flag pole!

The only thing more perfect,  
Would be Major League at-bats,  
For the rest of us;

But, no,  
Brian Wilson in the stands,  
Is certainly, definitely better;

'Cause if we had the at-bats,  
The Giants couldn't—  
In no way would they—  
Win it again.

**World Series, Game 5: Renteria,  
Renteria**

Slim in '97,  
Past midnight in Miami,  
11th inning,  
Torching a ball into center-left-  
center,  
To win a World Series for the Fish;

2000 games,  
33 pounds,  
A dozen severed muscles,  
Later,  
You smack a shot arcing high,  
Snagged by the lip of the Texas  
fence:  
A run, another run, another run.  
Cliff Lee—Ha!;

Bush, you're tantruming on the  
concrete,  
Slapping and kicking,  
In a puddle,  
Of Josh Hamilton's tobacco spit;

Oh, Renteria,  
Colombia,  
Your home country,  
Is welcome in San Francisco any  
day;

Thank you, you pro;  
You're in my Hall of Fame,  
Until I die.

**Steve Hermans  
"Baseball Verse"**

**\*\*\*2nd EDITION\*\*\***

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