


NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME ANNIVERSARY

SENATOR BOB DOLE

ON A BRIGHT SUMMER'S MORNING IN 1939, A TRAIN LOADED WITH SOME VERY SPECIAL PASSENGERS ROLLED INTO A PICTURESQUE, QUIET HAMLET IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. THE TOWN WAS COOPERSTOWN, NAMED IN HONOR OF ITS FOUNDING FAMILY, A PROUD LINEAGE THAT WOULD PRODUCE ONE OF THE GREATS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE, JAMES FENIMORE COOPER. HOWEVER, ONCE THAT TRAIN PULLED INTO THE STATION ON THAT DAY IN JUNE, COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME. YOU SEE, ON BOARD WAS A CARGO OF GIANTS -- AMERICAN GODS, IF YOU WILL; AND THEY WERE HEADED FOR MOUNT OLYMPUS. BABE RUTH, TY COBB, HONUS WAGNER, WALTER JOHNSON AND CHRISTY MATHEWSON -- THE LEGENDS WHO MADE BASEBALL THE NATIONAL PASSION -- HAD COME TO TOWN TO ENTER A BRAND NEW SHRINE FOR THE SPORT THAT IS AMERICA.



MR. PRESIDENT, IT WAS 46 YEARS AGO TODAY THAT THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM FIRST OPENED ITS DOORS TO AN ADORING PUBLIC. SINCE THAT MEMORABLE JUNE 12TH WHEN THE ORIGINAL "BIG FIVE" SUPERSTARS WERE INDUCTED INTO THE HALL, MILLIONS OF BASEBALL FANS FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE HAVE MADE THE PILGRIMAGE TO BEAUTIFUL COOPERSTOWN, TO GAZE AT THE PLAQUES OF THEIR HEROES AND TO PONDER THE DAZZLING STATISTICS THAT HAVE



- 2 -

BECOME A PART OF OUR LANGUAGE; 60 HOME RUNS, .424 BATTING AVERAGE, 30-GAME WINNER AND THE LIKE. IT'S THE STUFF OF DREAMS AND IT'S ALL THERE TO SEE; FROM BABE RUTH'S LOCKER AND LOU GEHRIG'S UNIFORM TO ENOUGH HISTORIC BALLS AND BATS TO FILL NEARBY LAKE OTSEGO.

INDEED, THE HISTORY OF OUR NATIONAL PASTIME IS ON DISPLAY IN THE TOWN WHERE ABNER DOUBLEDAY LAID OUT THE FIRST BASEBALL DIAMOND AND ESTABLISHED SOME OF THE KEY FUNDAMENTALS OF THE GAME. MANY WERE TO FOLLOW IN DOUBLEDAY'S FOOTSTEPS, MOVING AROUND THAT DIAMOND ALL THE WAY TO COOPERSTOWN. SO THEREIN IS THE THRILL OF THE HALL OF FAME: RUTH, AARON, MAYS, MANTLE, WILLIAMS, MUSIAL, THEIR LEGENDS PRESERVED FOREVER, FOR US AND FOR OUR CHILDREN. THE HALL CAN ALSO TAKE PRIDE IN ITS WISDOM OF INCLUDING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR GREAT BLACK BASEBALL PLAYERS WHO UNTIL 1947 WERE DENIED THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY IN THE MAJOR LEAGUES, BUT NEVERTHELESS PROVED THEIR GREATNESS IN THE NEGRO LEAGUES.

ON THIS ANNIVERSARY DATE, LET US SALUTE THE FOUNDERS OF THE HALL AND ALL THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO MAINTAIN THIS GREAT SHRINE. I ALSO WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES, RELIEF PITCHER SUPREME HOYT WHILHELM, ALL-ROUND GREAT LOU BROCK, HUSTLING ENOS SLAUGHTER AND TOUGH HITTING ARKY VAUGHN. THERE'S NOT MUCH DOUBT THEY'LL BE IN GOOD COMPANY WHEN THEY ARE ENSHRINED ON JULY 28TH, BRINGING THE NUMBER OF HALL OF FAMERS TO 193.



- 3 -

IT WAS ONCE SAID BY A VISITOR TO THESE SHORES THAT IF YOU  
WANTED TO REALLY KNOW AMERICA, YOU SHOULD FIRST STUDY BASEBALL.  
IF THAT IS THE CASE, THEN THE HEART AND SOUL OF THIS GREAT LAND  
IS ALIVE AND WELL IN COOPERSTOWN. BEST WISHES TO THE HALL OF  
FAME.

###