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MONDAY, AUGUST 6 • 2001

HALL from S4 New members of Hall receive warm reception

Winfield spoke for 23 minutes, thanking myriad people from a career that spanned 22 seasons and six teams and earning plenty of hazing from other Hall of Famers.

Amid the clutter of that remarkable career was this gem: Winfield called to his brother Steve, and said: "I grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota. The first time I put a glove on, I put it on the wrong hand. . . I remember my brother and I were walking down Carroll Avenue one day, wearing our first uniforms. We had the cleats and everything, and we were looking good."

Similarly, Puckett reminisced about shoveling snow in the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago to play baseball. "I was easy to shop for," he said. "I would come home on my birthday, every March 14, and there would be a Wilson A2000 on my bed."

He remembered watching baseball on TV as a youngster "and seeing Ernie Banks and Billy Williams and Willie Mays. I wanted to be like them. Nobody had to lead me to baseball. That's what I wanted to do."

Winfield noted that he was born on Oct. 3, 1951, in St. Paul — the same day Bobby Thomson of the New York Giants hit the "Shot Heard 'Round the World" at the Polo Grounds to win a playoff over the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Sunday, Ralph Branca, the pitcher who gave up that home run, sang the national anthem and "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" at Winfield's induction.

"It was a quiet time in St. Paul — except for my mother," Winfield said of his birthday.

Winfield noted that his birthday, and the nature of his name — "Win-Field" — ensured him a life in baseball.

"Of course, if I had known I'd be up here one day," he joked, "I would have saved all my rookie baseball cards."

The long and short of the day was this: Winfield rambled amiably through his memory banks, then Mazerowski offered what might have been the briefest, bluntest, most poignant speech in Hall of Fame history.

Mazerowski made it into the Hall on the strength of his glove, not his bat. As he rose to speak, a section of Pittsburgh fans began chanting, "Dee-Fense, Dee-Fense."

Mazerowski spoke for a couple of minutes — explaining why he would never make it through his speech — before saying, "I think you can kiss these 12 pages down the drain."

Mazerowski began weeping and was unable to finish.

Mickey Smith spoke of his father growing up near Houston, using tree limbs for bats and playing in a cow pasture. "He strengthened his arm throwing rocks at trees and fence posts and signs and anybody who wandered along at the wrong time,"

Mickey Smith said his father never made playing in the major leagues a goal. In the 1950s, Negro League teams would gain access to major league competition only during exhibitions.

"He played because he loved the game," Smith said. "My father always said he had no regrets about the career he chose or the life he lived."

Smith said his father remained immersed in baseball after his retirement, coaching Little League in Kansas City and sheltering many of his players in his own house.

"I was moved to the basement, and players would get my room," Smith said. "That continued from 1949 through 1983. He passed in that year."

"The only regret I have is that he is not here to see what is happening," Puckett took in everything Sunday. He said he had no idea of the size of the crowd, or the power of the experience, until longtime Twins PA announcer Bob Casey blared his name, and Puckett took the stage.

During the long wait for his speech, Puckett needed Winfield. He wept when Mazerowski broke down, later telling Mazerowski, "Man, your wife's going to kill you when you get back to the hotel."

He paid rapt attention to Mickey Smith. And then he was behind the mike, fulfilling a private dream before an appreciative public.

He thanked Twins owner Carl Pohlad and Pohlad's wife, Eloise, just as Winfield had done. He said of Winfield, "I can't tell you what a joy it is to be inducted by a friend." He thanked mentors such as Ron Washington, Tom Kelly and Tony Oliva, and especially his family.

To his wife, Tonya, he said: "Thanks for baby-sitting me for 16 years. To his children, Kirby Jr. and Catherine, he said: "You know I love you more than anything."

"My only regret is that my mother and father and my two brothers who recently passed away aren't here to see this," Puckett said. "My mom is probably looking down and thinking about all those spankings she gave me for hitting balls through neighbors' windows and breaking lamps and breaking everything in the house."

"I want to tell her, 'Well, Ma, I hope you can see now that it was worth it. Your baby is going into the Hall of Fame.'"

"Our final inductee is the pride and joy of the state of Minnesota. I call him a dear friend, but so did thousands of you from Minnesota. A great player and even a greater person. Ladies and gentlemen, number 34, the center fielder, K-I-R-R-R-B-Y-Y-Y-P-U-C-K-E-T-T-I-T"

— Bob Casey, introducing Kirby Puckett for his Hall of Fame speech Sunday at Cooperstown.



Kirby Puckett had no tears for himself Sunday, but he did for fellow inductees Bill Mazerowski, the former Pittsburgh second baseman who waited 23 years to reach the Hall of Fame.

Compassion shows on this special day

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — The Dearborn Homes and the Robert Taylor Homes are two projects on Chicago's South Side. Kirby Puckett spent the early years of his life in the Taylor complex. There's a baseball team of youngsters from these projects called the Tawares Hurricanes. Adam Brown, 13, was a member of the team. He hatched a plan: travel to Cooperstown with his ballplaying friends for the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies and to meet Puckett.

Brown wrote a letter to Puckett a few months back. Puckett made a return call to the youth center and said he would make an effort to meet with the Chicago kids during his hectic stay in Cooperstown.

"Chicago's City of Big Shoulders," said Ziff Sietrusak, an adult traveling with the kids. "We raised \$13,000 to bring 15 young ballplayers here."

The Chicago kids were in the crowd Sunday when Puckett was among four new inductees into the Hall of Fame.

"It is surprising to me that he made it this far," Greg Montgomery said. "It shocked me that Kirby Puckett lived the same place that we live. It can happen to us."

Puckett went through a post-induction news conference and then was being hustled off to another location. The Chicago group was standing on a sidewalk as Kirby headed for a waiting van.

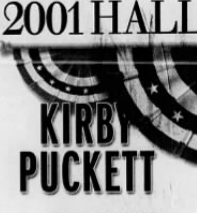
"Believe in yourselves. . . believe in yourselves," Puckett said. "I'll see you guys tomorrow."

Puckett has 100 friends and members of his family in Cooperstown for a party. The meeting with the Chicago kids is not definite.

But whatever happens today, Brown and his friends were at Cooperstown and they did meet Puckett on his big day. Brown has been keeping a journal that he hopes to put into book form. The plan is to copy the pages at Kinko's, sell the books for \$10 and make some scholarship money for members of the Tawares Hurricanes.

It's a vision that Puckett could appreciate. Use your vision when you're growing up in the Chicago projects. "When I was 5 years old, I saw Ernie

* A SPECIAL FOUR-PAGE 2001 HALL



Five moments from the Hall of Fame career of center fielder Kirby Puckett we won't forget:

- **May 8, 1964:** Went 4-for-5 at California in major league debut, becoming ninth player in history to get four hits in his first game.
- **Aug. 29-30, 1967:** Went 10-for-11 at Milwaukee, setting an AL record and tying the modern day major league record for hits in two consecutive games.
- **Oct. 24, 1967:** Tied World Series record for most times reaching base in a game (five) and most runs scored (four) as Twins defeated St. Louis 11-5 in Game 6. The Twins won their first Series the next night; Puckett went 10-for-28 (.357) in the Series.
- **Oct. 26, 1991:** Honored in 11th inning to win Game 6 of the World Series over Atlanta 4-3. The homer capped a 3-for-4 game in which he also made a sensational leading catch of Ron Gant drive in the third inning. The Twins claimed their second Series title the next night.
- **April 6, 1994:** Collected 2,000th hit of career by going 5-for-6 against Oakland's Bobby Witt. In his first 10 full calendar seasons Puckett had 2,040 hits, the second-most in major league history in that time span behind Willie Keeler's 2,055 hits.

CAREER STATISTICS

YEAR	TEAM	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	CS
1964	MIN	206	128	61	82	18	2	5	23	28	34	1
1965	MIN	306	161	89	80	19	2	14	44	41	21	1
1966	MIN	339	181	89	113	22	2	8	36	34	20	1
1967	MIN	212	125	62	86	20	2	7	28	30	12	1
1968	MIN	356	156	67	108	24	4	14	23	23	6	1
1969	MIN	339	193	83	73	20	4	4	26	44	15	1
1970	MIN	299	145	62	104	40	3	17	37	17	1	1
1971	MIN	313	152	61	81	19	2	8	18	11	1	1
1972	MIN	329	181	83	104	20	2	10	110	44	17	1
1973	MIN	299	159	67	81	18	2	9	29	47	8	1
1974	MIN	317	178	43	78	13	2	3	20	112	28	6
1975	MIN	354	137	53	81	18	2	3	30	99	36	3
1976	MIN	328	136	43	58	12	1	2	19	100	14	1

AMERICAN LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

YEAR	TEAM	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	CS
1987	DET	209	5	24	7	5	1	0	1	0	1	1
1987	MIN	429	5	21	4	2	1	0	2	1	1	0
Total		208	10	45	7	14	2	0	3	1	2	1

FROM THE PODIUM

Excerpts of Kirby Puckett's nine-minute Hall of Fame acceptance speech on Sunday:

"I'm overwhelmed by the number of great fans who have traveled all the way from Minnesota, or wherever you came from. You are the best. I also see some of my former teammates out there. It's awesome that you guys took the time to be with me today.

"I need to thank all of the people who have helped me get here today. Because you don't get to where I am today without help from a lot of people."

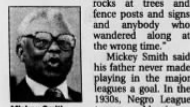
"To my good friend Tony Oliva, an awesome hitter who helped me to become a better hitter with his tremendous knowledge of this game. I hope to be here next year, listening to you give your induction speech."

"I played baseball with all my heart, all my soul and all my might. I played the game and tried to live my life in a way that would make the people I love and care about proud."

"I've said it before and I'll say it again: It might be cloudy in my right eye, but the sun is shining very brightly in my left eye. And just think how the sun has shined, right up to the doors of this great Hall, the shrine for the greatest game in the world and the greatest players in the world."

"I'd be waking down the street, my bat and glove over my shoulder and my books in my other hands, and the drug dealers and the game members would say, 'Hey, Puck, don't you want to hang out with us, drink a little? I told them I had a higher calling.'"

"It doesn't matter where you came from — from the projects in Chicago, like me, or the gated communities of Beverly Hills. It doesn't matter what race, creed or national origin you are. It just matters how you play the game."



Mickey Smith



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