

RiverOpinion



Burgum, from Page 4

in scoring position. The Indians left three on base and never had a runner in scoring position until a solo home run in the top of the 11th. With the exception of my marriage, which took place sometime in late 1974 or possibly 1975, my best memory is when Roberto Alomar took a game ending called third strike from Josa Mesa.

Baseball has more humor, or humorous characters, than either football or basketball. The New York Yankees are not known for humor but in the late 30s and 40s they had the quintessential daffy left-handed pitcher in Lefty Gomez. During the 1938 season he took a ground ball and deliberately threw to a base where there was no play just to see what his infielder would do in that situation.

John Kruk, a first baseman with the

Phillies, was also a first rate character. During the 1994 season he was having his pre-game meal of several Big Macs and fries at a local McDonalds near the ball park. A woman observing this scene

'Lady, I'm not an athlete, I'm a ball player.'

ventured an opinion to Kruk that this wasn't much of a meal for an athlete. Kruk reportedly looked at her and said, "lady, I'm not an athlete, I'm a ball player." Or Casey Stengel, who during spring training in 1953, described a shortstop prospect as a "guy who can't field but, on the other hand can't hit." Or Zeke Bonura, a big hitting, bad fielding first baseman.

While playing for the Chicago White Sox in 1937 he set the major league record for errors in one inning — five. As the fifth grounder bounced off his glove toward the first base umpire, Zeke simply turned and bellowed, "don't just stand there, help me!" Remember, those of you who have seen the movie "Major League," the Cleveland Indians of 1986 through 1990 actually had a clean-up hitter who practiced Voodoo, a right-handed reliever who threw at 100 miles an hour but could not find home plate, a 140-pound lead off man with speed, but who only wanted to hit home runs and a former all star with bad knees. Worst of all, those were the good ones

Cleveland isn't the only club that tries men's souls. Senator Hillary Clinton is reported to have said that being a Chicago Cubs fan prepares you for life and Washington. She probably said this

before she ran for Senator in New York and claimed to be a Yankee's fan. She should be forgiven this one breach of baseball etiquette as there is no doubt she understood how important it is to join with local fans. Knowing this, the political devil made her do it.

Baseball is a seriously demanding sport, well worth watching. After spending three years trying to catch on in baseball, Michael Jordan allowed as how he was amazed at the athleticism of the players, even at the Double A level. Ted Williams once asked the press, "Don't you know how hard this all is?" Once we all realize how difficult baseball is to play, how skilled even the average player is, we can all enjoy the game a bit more.

This spring is a good time to renew your interest and the Pittsburgh and Cincinnati people will certainly make you welcome. Enjoy.

Volunteers, from Page 1

teers and this year organizers hope to muster even more help. "It's a great family event," said Little. Participating organizations include the Boy Scouts, high school groups and church groups. The clean up also becomes a treasure hunt of sorts since volunteers never know what they might find. Several unusual items have been found in past years including skateboards, chairs, boat motors and, inexplicably, a 55 gallon drum containing a pig carcass. "We have no idea where than came from," said Little.

Mark Stuckey also recalls several interesting, if somewhat less distasteful, finds.

"We've picked up tires, bottles, cans and even an air conditioning unit," said Stuckey. "Last year, one of the kids found one of the old (depth) measuring devices that used to be attached to Rye Bridge." Stuckey estimates the device had been in the water for more than 15 years.

Stuckey said that a few messages in bottles have been discovered as well but the one he remembers most was found by a young girl helping clean up the river with her YMCA group. The bottle had been sealed with a bottlecapping machine and appeared extremely old. The unlined paper inside had even yellowed with age. "You could tell it had been out there a long time," said Stuckey. Since the

girl took the bottle home unopened, he often wonders what might have been written on that note.

A 30-year resident of Manatee County, Mark Stuckey is deeply committed to helping preserve the area. "We're all part

of trying to keep Manatee beautiful," he says. "With all the development going on in this area, it's more important than ever to keep the river clean. If you see a bottle, just pick it up."

High School, from Page 1

them a broad perspective."

Jones says there are many advantages for students in the program. She says by having a better grasp of their interests academically prior to leaving high school, they are more likely to be successful in the working world or college after graduation.

"That way they learn what their interests are before they leave high school and it becomes costly," Jones said.

The students at Braden River have been responding to the program positively in its first year.

"They really love being a part of their program," Jones said. "The students sense that there is really a team atmosphere and

a smaller learning community."

Teachers are assigned to a specific academy and work within that team to coordinate the lessons. For example, when one team was working on a pirate theme, all the course, including core classes and electives, focused on this theme.

"They're not just taking these courses individually," Jones said. "The teachers work as a team to work on themes. The teachers have been very creative."

Jones says the teachers work to make the lessons and projects relevant and applicable in the real world.

"Our goal is to have a student never say 'Why do I have to take this class'," Jones said. "It's kind of a different approach to education."

Ellenton, From Page 1

Transportation Plan. Repairs and reconstruction, however, rely heavily on the state for funding, which is in notoriously short supply. For example, to turn Moccasin Wallow Road from I-75 to US 301 into four lanes is projected to cost over \$61.4 million. Larger projects involving longer stretches of road can cost three times as much.

While residential and road construction may pose challenges to the area, Ellenton has certainly kept up with the times. In addition to a Subway sandwich shop and a McDonalds, Ellenton will also soon be home to an Arby's restaurant. Franchise owners Bart and Judy Harris hope to break ground on the restaurant this summer and open in October.

For local residents with more than food on their mind, Ellenton Prime Outlets boasts an impressive array of name brand

and designer shops. At approximately 500,000 square-feet, the mall draws shoppers from Ellenton, Palmetto and Bradenton as well as bargain-hunters from as far away as Tampa. Plans are in the works to build a large addition to the mall and Neiman Marcus recently announced it intends to move into one of the new units expected to be completed next year.

Ellenton has also recently been abuzz with the news that a WalMart Supercenter will open in neighboring Palmetto this spring. The 205,000 square-foot store will carry a wide selection of groceries as well as the usual little-bit-of-everything fare for which WalMart is best known.

Having grown so much in such a short time, it's difficult to tell just what the landscape of Ellenton will look like in another 10 years. However, no one expects things to slow down anytime soon.

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