

Community Comment – Sept. 28th, 2015

By Jon Sapper

Yogi Berra

Well, it's over. Yogi Berra, the New York Yankee Hall of Famer who coined the phrase "It ain't over til it's over" passed away last week at the age of 90. Yogi, who was admired on the field and respected off the field joined other Yankee legends of a bygone era. In some respects, he was bigger than life. During his career, he played in fourteen World Series and won ten of them. He was selected to the All Star team eighteen different years and won three most valuable player awards.

There are many who might not know the tremendous career he had playing baseball, but rather they know Yogi by his colorful use of the English language. His paradoxical malapropisms, we call Yogi-isms, are built into the fabric of American culture. Whether it's his.... déjà vu all over again or when you come to a fork in the road...take it or I always thought my record would stand until it was broken, are examples of the quips that Yogi crafted. I particularly like his lines of....No one goes there nowadays, it's too crowded or, the future ain't what it used to be and onetime talking to someone about his kids saying, I'm not going to buy my kids an encyclopedia...let them walk to school like I did.

Yogi Berra was the son of Italian immigrants, growing up in a very poor section of St. Louis. Although short, stocky and a man of small stature, he was a man of true character, strength and integrity. He didn't talk much about his military service, the three years he spent in the Navy during World War II or the Navy rocket boat he and five others propelled onto Omaha Beach during the invasion of Normandy. But those experiences framed Mr. Berra and helped him solidify the grit and determination needed for his career playing professional ball, managing professional teams and being a successful broadcaster later in life.

There aren't many professional athletes or celebrities who have gone through life without a mention of a scandal, misconduct or impropriety of any kind. He was a man of character, married 65 years, yes to the same woman and he stood up for what he believed. This was shown early in life when he was offered a signing bonus to play for the St. Louis Cardinals. He turned it down, believing he was

worth more. And in 1946, the New York Yankees paid him what he asked for.....\$500 instead of the 250 offered by St. Louis.

When Yogi passed away last week, the AP first reported that Yogi Bear had died. It was quickly corrected when someone pointed out that Yogi Bear is a cartoon character and Yogi Berra was no cartoon character. His life was a true American story.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.