

“Fuck Babe Ruth!”; “Fuck The King!”

(New York)

Col. Tillinghast L’Hommideau Huston is a man of considerable dignity, pride and resource, not to mention girth. But he also knows how to properly observe an occasion, and I have been in the journalistic arts long enough to know that there are certain birds you desire to be around when the mood is high and Col.

Tillinghast L’Hommideau Huston is such of a bird. One cultivates relationships for these moments, especially with the upper crust, and there are few in the upperer crust in New York City than the esteemed owner of the esteemed New York Yankees. So when his Royal Nibs blasts number 40 and also number 41 into the Detroit ether and the colonel leads his party out into the Friday August twilight I am certain of two things: 1. They are not going to church; and 2. A record must be made of the event for posterity. So I resolve to check Saturday morning on the details of the excursion.

It has been a bothersome two weeks for the Bazoo, not to mention the rest of the Yanks, but they remain three games behind Cleveland and it is a wonder they are not closer. After polishing off the Sox they bounced the Indians three out a four just like Mays said they had to do and probably would have won all four if Chill didn’t give Pipp the bum’s rush in the ninth because Chill was blind and Pipp beefed about it. At that Chill was lucky because there were only 40,000

witnesses since that's all the place could hold. Coogan's Bluff was full, so was the Speedway and Cahalane put out a statement afterward guessing they chased another 30,000 away when the Grounds ran out of tickets. You could see about a half hour before the game that the trains started pulling through the 155th Street station and never even stopped to give anybody a chance to get out and use their five cent fare for what they intended. There was no place for them to go.

By the 11th the Babe had already splattered one off the façade under the roof of the right field stands, which blast touched off another round of strawkels in the air. None of them got back to their rightful owners, and apparently the R.O.'s didn't care, so I didn't either.

Well anyway I was saying about Pipp, who gets bounced in the ninth, so Hug has to bring the Babe in to play first. Mogridge got the first batter, then Chapman dumped a little roller down to first. Any kind of a cow except for a muley cow could have made the play easy, but the Babe is a muley cow at first and he tosses it high to Mogridge so Chapman is safe. Mogridge gets Speaker, but he hits Wood and then Gardner hits one out to Meusel. The arrival of a ball in the vicinity of Meusel is as often as not bad news for the Yankees, and this being one of those moments two runs score and as Bagby does not allow anything in the bottom of the 11th Cleveland gets out with one lucky win.

The Bazoo spends most of the ensuing two weeks doing one of two things, either getting walked or hitting the ball out. Jones walks him four times and wins, then Shocker walks him three times in St. Louis and wins 1-0. In Chicago, Faber walked him three times, but he beat Mays 3-1. Given the outcome, you didn't figure Sox fans would beef, but they were moaning purple with every pass to Ruth. Even somebody as dense as me could get the message: They had paid their money to see a home run from Bambino's bat, and they didn't care a hootinhell whether the White Sox won the game or the pennant.

But the pitchers let the Babe put his bat to some good uses, too. He hit a slam in St. Louis, not that Mays needed it, winning 19-3. He took another one out against Boston, and hit Williams in Chicago. That one careened off one of the pillars in right and came back onto the field, where it was tossed to Connolly, who judged it unfit for further play inasmuch as it had been made distinctively more concave by the experience with the pillar. So Connolly tossed it into the Yankee dugout to be added to Ruth's collection. Bootnose told me later the players passed it around and the thing was about a quarter inch flatter on the business side. I should be fascinated some day to inquire of the experts as to the approximate velocity by which a ball must strike a pillar in order to inflict such distortion. All I can say for now is that in my day I've seen split seams and split covers, but I have never in my life seen such as that.

The official guess was they had 40,000 at the Comiskey on Sunday, but here's the dope: Nobody knows how many got in. An hour or two before the game you could see the fans climbing the wall out behind left trying to sneak over, and some of them did it until the cops came and tried to chase them back. But the cops quickly came to the conclusion that it was not wise to take issue with a crowd of fans wanting to see the Babe, so they organized a retreat to safer parts and let the wall-climbers control themselves. Since Comiskey doesn't hold 40,000, they had to string up the ropes around the outfield to take in the overflow. The Yanks are getting used to that. More used to it than Connolly, judging from the way he called the play, and I say that notwithstanding that he is the dean of Johnson's paid guessers.

The fuss happened in the fifth. Ruth boomed a fly way up in the sky and Jackson backed out under it. He backed into the left field crowd, put up his hands and as he was reaching for the ball tumbled back on his haunches into the crowd and that's the last anybody in the press box – and one presumes on the field – saw of him for several moments. When he finally emerged it was without any ball.

Ruth trotted to second base and stood there. Connolly walked out, his face displaying that look so common to a high school sophomore when asked to explain Sophocles. The difference is that insofar as Connolly is concerned no penalty attaches to a wrong guess, so after a pause of several minutes he motions to Ruth to come in, indicating that the Babe was out.

Most all of the New York players protested some way or another, and there was a lot of vehement gesticulating. Ruth and Huggins each spent several moments explaining to the umpire the intricacies of *Antigone*, not to mention *Oedipus The King*, and possibly even suggesting parallels to the present circumstance. Every action of the crowd out where Jackson flopped over indicated that he had not caught the ball. As Connolly hardly could have known whether the ball was caught or not, the least he could have done was rely upon the ground rules, which stipulated that a ball struck beyond the ropes was a double. This Connolly refused to do, notwithstanding that Jackson failed to return with the ball.

Huggins declared his intention to protest the game's outcome on the basis that Connolly substituted his own rule for the ground rule. This of course will get nowhere with the league office; such protests never do. The disputants got back to baseball finally. Meusel singled to center, a hit which would have scored Ruth. Bodie singled to center and Meusel, who tried for third on it, was thrown out. Bodie took second on the throw in and Ward was thrown out by Weaver.

If Ruth had been called safe, the likelihood is that Meusel would have reached second on the throw to the plate to catch Ruth and so never would have been thrown out at third. Cicotte ended up beating Shawkey 3-0 so you can't say that call beat the Yanks, but they'd have sure liked to have had those two runs and more cuts at Eddie.

Your reporter, mingling with the crowd outside the park after the game, heard nobody say the ball had been caught, but heard plenty who vowed it had not been. Sympathy with the Yanks in the matter was widespread. Chicago fans know when somebody has been gypped.

Unless of course it is themselves when Risberg is playing short. Most of the Sox you wouldn't want to get near, but of all of them the Swede is the one I try to keep the greatest distance from. Risberg came out of California a couple years back, but the word around the clubhouse is he didn't leave all his gambling friends behind when he moved east. He ain't much of a hitter – ain't hit .260 in the bigs yet – and with the glove he stood sixth in the league in picking up grounders last year. He's hit four homers in his life, so that ain't why they're keeping him in. He's surly as a skunk and that's one buzz about why he's still working – the Sox are afraid if they cut him he'll bust Comiskey's jaw. The other is that he works so cheap the Sox can't afford to cut him for a good shortstop. Comiskey paid him \$5,000 or maybe \$6,000 last year, which would have been decent money 15 years ago. On the other hand, the word is Risberg uses his friends back from Cal to supplement that, if you know what I mean. So the end is he can't afford to quit and the Sox can't afford to get rid of him, and there's a lot of folks in Chi who say that's the reason the whole rotten ball started rolling in the first place last year, and why it still is.

There ain't nobody in the league liked less than Risberg, but if there was Mays would be the one. The walking stunt he pulled last summer in Boston didn't make him any friends for starters, on top of which him and Risberg would run a close race if it were a meanness contest. The only difference is Mays ain't crooked. So when the Sox tap him for a couple in the first on Tuesday and up comes Risberg, you can see trouble all the way up in the press box. Mays fires from under, the ball comes riding up and in and sends Risberg in a sprawl for the dirt, his cap heading the other way. Most batters would get up, dust off and call it part of the game, but that is not Risberg's style. "The Swede's a hard guy," Jackson likes to say by way of explanation of what follows, which is that Risberg charges Mays and the two have it out right there in the middle of the field.

Normally this would be the occasion for a congenial intermingling of the fraternities from the dugout onto the field as the two sides come to the mutual defenses of their teammates. That's the general rule in baseball. But most of the Sox would just as soon see Risberg get his ears boxed pretty good as not, and there ain't too many Yanks rushing to the defense of Mays, either. So Connolly and Hildebrand let it go for five or six minutes until finally Huggins and Gleason both decide their minions has had enough exercise.

But that was all Chicago and this is Detroit, where spirits are much brighter. One part of the reason may be that Hug has basically pulled the plug on the effort to

teach Meusel to field and for the most part will content himself with having his erstwhile cleanup hitter available to him on the bench. You will recall that Hug tried the kid at third base at the start of the season, but notwithstanding a batting average that ran upwards of .340 there emerged a quite justified pitcher's revolt. Thus followed in June the banishment of the rookie to left, with Ward returning to third and Duffy getting the honored bench spot.

But left can be a dangerous place for a fielder of Meusel's skills with the prospect of a conking arising on each fly ball. As manager, Hug must consider that there are laws in most states against putting a civilian worker into a position where injury is likely to transpire. Combined with the prospect that Meusel may become the first player ever to hit .340 and also field .340, Hug has appealed to Duffy to return to left and consigned the youngster to morning fielding practice. This is no small gesture on Hug's part for Lewis is hitting 70 points less than Meusel and Ward 20 points worse than that. Moreover, Meusel's absence is one very likely reason why Faber graced the Infant with those three walks Tuesday, aiding greatly in New York's accumulation of precisely one run.

The Tigers may catch up to this drift soon, but for the moment word has not filtered northeast this far. So he got some to hit yesterday and more today, and today he hit them. The Bazoo's first homer wound up in the right center field bleachers in the third inning when the score was tied at 4-4, and put the Yanks into the lead. Babe came up in the sixth when there were two out and Ward and

Peck were still aboard the pillows. George Dauss was still pitching and he tried to fool the slugger. Ruth took one of his mightiest swings, and while the crowd of 10,000 howled with glee the human howitzer met the ball with a blistering thump and it cleared the right center field wall.

I seen the Babe afterward when he was talking to his ghost. "That ought shut up the bastards who've been sayin' I ain't hittin' more so I'll have an easy record to shoot at next year," he says. "You tell 'em I'm hittin' as many as I can." Which, by no coincidence, is what the Babe's column says the next morning...except Walsh has changed a few of the words so that the item can be read in places other than bars.

As night falls there is every reason for one whose livelihood is linked with the Yankees to seek out an excellent place of relaxation and refreshment. Cobb has wired from New York seeking extra copy on the homers to feed the masses starving for quality literature. This may be interpreted to mean I have become even more important to my boss, and my situation therefore even more secure. Clearly we shall all soon be rich and famous. It is no great exaggeration to say that in New York and elsewhere, Harding and Cox together cannot draw a crowd if the Infant is also in town. On this trip alone they've had the ropes out in Chicago and Detroit, and they no doubt will do so in Cleveland as well.

Even better, the team is going well, and I have been around long enough to know that the first way to draw a crowd is to win. The Yanks are winning more often this year than even their oldest fans can recall. They're only three back and they'd only be two out if Connolly wasn't blind and stubborn, too. The next 10 days will tell much, for we leave Detroit on Sunday for four games in Cleveland, then after two with Washington we've got three more with Cleveland at the Grounds. By the conclusion of those seven games, my personal expectation is that Ruth will have hit 45 homers and I will be covering a first place team. All of this, coupled with the fact that it is Friday evening, can only mean one thing: it is past time for drinks. This, by the way, is a professional responsibility. A recent study of the New York population of baseball writers determined with exactitude that in the vast majority of cases the quality of prose increases proportionally to the amount of gin applied toward the endeavor. (One of the negative side effects of Prohibition is a decrease in the quality of journalism.) The boss wants more copy on the clouds, so it is my professional responsibility to find a drink.

My conscience, which I allow out for brief interludes, reminds me that I have a second responsibility, which is to be objective. This, long professional experience tells me, is what readers of my sheet expect and deserve. I am their eyes and ears. I am in Detroit, and they are not. They shall know only what I tell them, no more and no less. In this vein it occurs to me that my willingness to attach my personal success to the team's – to *root for* the Babe and the Yanks and not merely to observe them – fails the responsibility my great calling.

I give this proposition a few seconds of deep thought and resolve that it, too, requires the application of gin to be seen clearly. Fortunately, I know a discrete joint in Detroit where such questions are adjudicated. I repair to there post-haste.

I awake the next morning with something of a hangover, although it apparently is not the worst hangover in the hotel, or even necessarily in the top three or four. Feeling giddy concerning the accomplishments of his new bauble, Col. Huston, it seems, has made rather of a late night of it during the excursion I had been so determined to keep abreast of.

As explained by the lobby gossip, the Colonel, accompanied by some friends and his chauffeur, has set out following the game for the borders of any neighboring country – in this case Canada was handy – to accomplish the legal purchase of intoxicants and to share with the aboriginals the good news of the Babe's latest accomplishments in the specialized field of long-ball slugging. This of course the Colonel assumes, as any right-thinking American would assume, will be welcome news to the residents of Windsor. To make the celebration complete, he has, I am informed, not only purchased beer but sampled same along the way in order to ensure quality. One cannot be too careful when one's hope is to meet, greet and satisfy guests.

In such a state does the Colonel's car proceed through the main streets of Windsor on this Friday night, windows down. No less a personage than The Colonel himself leaning out said windows and declaring to one and all, "Hello, Babe Ruth has hit 40 home runs. Hello, The Babe has hit 40." And so on and so on, for there are many people in Windsor, and thus the Colonel's is no small labor.

Sadly, it turns out that not all the cultured folks of Windsor are as sensitive to the auspicious moment as is the Colonel. More sadly, the inevitable point arises when the Colonel finds it necessary to take his leave of the residue of the lubricant, for which purpose a stop is made at a suitable maple tree. As events develop, however, the tree is also an occasional way station for the forces of Royal Canadian Mounted Police, one of whose finest – alerted by reports of widespread agitation in the colony -- selects that moment to happen upon the scene. As the Colonel is not exactly profiled to hide easily in the shrubbery, the inevitable occurs.

"Alt in the king's name," orders the officer, later identified as Sergeant Percy Harold Stringer, who quickly summons what appears to be a platoon of Mounties from the nearby environs. They have the Colonel surrounded, but as far as the Colonel is concerned this is fortuitous for it simply represents a larger audience for his message.

“Babe Ruth made two home runs today,” replied Col. Huston to the order to ‘Alt.

“Fuck Babe Ruth,” retorted the sergeant of the Mounties. “Alt in the king’s name.”

It was, of course, physically impossible for the Colonel to “alt” at that particular moment. So he responded in an instinctive way, if not one befitting the flower of American royalty.

“Fuck the king,” the Colonel responded. “Babe Ruth made two home runs today.”

Especially considering the circumstances of the moment, Sergeant Stringer reported to his superiors that this bore every indication of an aspersion on His Majesty. It could not and would not be tolerated. Therefore, as soon as it was possible to do so without creating an even greater indelicacy, several members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police swarmed the Colonel. On the testimony of the platoon of the constabulary. Col. Huston did then and there resist arrest to the extent of hurling the constabulary in large members on the ground.

Witnesses from the Colonel’s party strongly implied that was holding his own in this contest until Sgt. Stringer urged him a final time to surrender in the king’s name, and told him as to ‘ow if he didn’t “I would jolly well call out the artillery.” Although there were intimations that the Colonel was not at the moment in full

and utter possession of his faculties, he did understand the concept of artillery. And not being conversant with the rules of armed engagement in Canada, he gave himself up.

It was then off to the constabulatory where the sergeant wrote up his report and put himself in for a medal for his role in the efforts to apprehend such an international outlaw. "I says to the fat culprit, I 'opes as 'ow this will teach you to keep a civil tongue in your 'ead when speaking of 'is majesty," the sergeant writes. The Colonel was ordered to post \$15 cash bail on a charge of disturbing the peace. "Pay 'em in Canadian money," he says to his chauffeur. "It ain't no good."

Such is life with the Yanks, and it is good.