

INDIANS' WIVES LEARN TO ADJUST

By Marc D. Allan

Everything that hasn't happened yet in this story could change at a moment's notice. Such are the ways of baseball.

One day, you're playing in Indianapolis, the next day you're in Milwaukee. Or Huntsville, Ala. Or Japan.

Players learn to get accustomed to this. So must their wives. Having a husband who's a baseball player, unless he's an established major-leaguer, means moving around, long times apart and, often, spending the summer living in a strange apartment filled with rental furniture. For baseball wives, having a job is possible, but a career is highly unlikely.

Having a sense of humor definitely helps.

Julie Peterson, whose husband, Kyle, was with the Indianapolis Indians last season and is rehabbing a torn labrum for the first few months of this season, tells the story of joining Kyle for a road trip to Rhode Island. She planned to drop him off at the ballpark in Pawtucket, then drive their rental car to New Hampshire to visit her aunt and uncle.

"It's Memorial Day weekend and the traffic in Boston is horrible," she recalls. "An hour drive took three hours. I'm five minutes from aunt's house when I got a call: 'You've gotta come back and pick me up.'"

"I said, 'What?! What did you leave in this car?' I was just irate. He's like, 'No, I got called up to the big leagues.'"

Kyle was scheduled to pitch the next day. Julie bought a ticket and flew out of New Hampshire to meet him. (Her aunt and uncle returned the rental car for her.) She arrived to find that the game had been rained out.

"Literally, that happens all the time," she says. "Women will get to the destination and the guy will be sent down.

Or called up. It's crazy."

That *is* the crazy part. In what passes for a routine year, players and their wives and families carve out time to be with each other. Steve and Angie Smith have been married for 20 years, and the former Indians manager (now a third-base coach for the Texas Rangers) and his wife nearly have it down to a science.

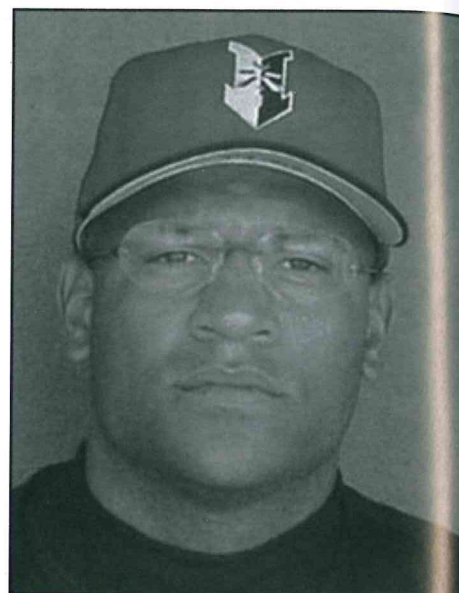
The Rangers were scheduled to start this season in Oakland, a road trip that coincided with their children's spring break. So Angie and the kids, who are 15 and 12, will travel from their San Diego home and meet Steve there. The Rangers' next stop is Anaheim, which is about an hour from their home. So that's convenient. In May, they'll meet for a long weekend in Dallas. And as soon as school is out, the family will pack up and head to Texas for the summer.

"We try to go not more than three weeks without getting together," Angie says. "But obviously, he can't come here because he works every day. So the first thing we do every year, always, is look at the schedule and figure out how we can catch up with him."

Lisa Franklin used to travel with her husband, Micah, wherever he went, whether it was Indianapolis (where he led the Indians in home runs last season), St. Louis (where he played 17 games for the Cardinals in 1997) or Japan (where he spent two seasons).

Then they had their first daughter, who's now 6. While she's in school, Lisa will stay at home with her and their second daughter, who's nearly a year old. In fact, Micah left the Indians for a week last May to go back home for her birth. Once school is out, they'll join Micah wherever he is.

The good thing is, the outfielder starts the 2002 season with the Arizona



MICAH FRANKLIN

Diamondbacks' Triple-A affiliate in Tucson, Ariz., which is an hour and a half drive from their home near Phoenix

"It's always difficult to be away from each other, but you just have to make the best of it," Lisa says. "With baseball, we've lived in practically every country and practically every state. My daughter was really wanting something stable, so it worked out nicely. When we came back from Japan, we bought our home here."

Like the Smiths, the Franklins, who've been together 10 years, decided early on that the husband would play baseball while the wife took care of the children. The Petersons, who've been married for three years, have decided to wait before having a family. So during the off-season, which they spend at their Phoenix-area home, Julie tends to her career as a freelance business consultant. She says she tries to find projects that will keep her working until the baseball season begins. Then she goes wherever Kyle is playing.

It can be odd, she says, going from a 50- or 60-hour workweek at home to living in an unfamiliar city. Yet if the life seems nomadic, the wives inter-

viewed for this story all found numerous positives.

Lisa Franklin loved their two years in Japan, when Micah played for the Nippon Ham Fighters and the Hanshin Tigers. Julie Peterson fondly remembers hanging out at Café Patachou in Indianapolis and making friends everywhere she and Kyle have lived. And this summer, she's looking forward to spending 2 1/2 months in Palo Alto, Calif., while Kyle rehabs and finishes his degree at Stanford University.

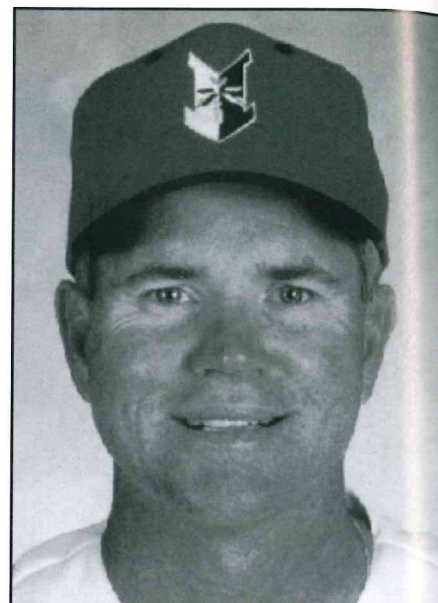
Angie Smith, meanwhile, prefers to think not about the season but about the off-season, when Steve's home all day, every day, for four months a year.

"And when he's home," she says, "it's wonderful because he can do everything around the house, he carools everywhere, he coaches teams the kids are on."

And after 20 years in a rapidly changing world, their lifestyle doesn't seem all that unusual anymore, she says.



KYLE PETERSON



STEVE SMITH

"I have a friend whose husband is a firefighter, so she has him coming and going," Angie says. "And another friend's husband is in the Navy, so he comes and goes also. And now, actually, with the way the world is, a lot of men commute to other cities and have

an apartment and come home on the weekends. So it's not as strange as it used to be."

Marc D. Allan bats left, throws left and, when he's not writing for the Indians' program, is the TV/radio editor for the Indianapolis Star.

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