



COVER STORY

20 YEARS





THE HOUSE THAT MAX BUILT turns 20 this season. Max Schumacher's dream blossomed into grass and lights and a drop-dead gorgeous view of the Indianapolis skyline on July 11, 1996. The Indians have savored both high marks and high attendance for Victory Field ever since.

One feature of life for the Indians has been the tendency for people to stay awhile, from the front office to the grandstand. Here are some of their thoughts and memories, as "The Vic" celebrates a big birthday in downtown Indianapolis.

VICTORY

Much has changed over two decades in Indianapolis. One major addition that altered the outlook of Downtown Indy's future was Victory Field in 1996.

BY MIKE LOPRESTI

PHOTOGRAPH BY
MARK DICKHAUS



T **THIS WILL BE MAX SCHUMACHER'S 60TH YEAR** with the Indians, going from ticket manager to president and chairman of the board. He recalls trying to get Victory Field built, and what's made it so successful for 20 years.

"I don't remember certain games that much. What I remember the most is the frustration of not being able to bring together the ballpark for many, many years. Finally, Stephen Goldsmith was elected mayor and was receptive to our pitch to have the city help with paying the bills to bring a new ballpark downtown. Governor Evan Bayh was instrumental as well as Mayor Goldsmith in making this happen, because we are on White River State Park land. A lot of people don't realize that. Mayor Goldsmith felt it should be a shared expense and I didn't disagree, so it turned out to be an \$18 million project, with the Indians standing \$9 million. Mayor Goldsmith told me a year or two after we opened, 'This has worked just as you told me it would.' We paid off the last of our obligations last baseball season.

"It wasn't quite what I had envisioned. I had hoped we'd have more seats than we ended up having, but I think I was mistaken in what my goal was at the time. A lot of us were watching Buffalo's success and they were averaging nearly 20,000 a game and I had my eye on that. In more recent years, the trend has been toward smaller ballparks. We ended up right in the middle, which was just perfect. With 14,200, it fits our needs, day after day after day.

"It's interesting how you'll have people come up to you and they'll say, 'You know, I really wasn't for you building a new ballpark.' They had grown up with Bush Stadium and they thought that was fine. And as I liked to say at the time, if there wasn't a big crowd and as long as you could park reasonably close and as long as you didn't need to go to the concession stand during the game and stand in a long line, and as long as you didn't need to go to the

restroom and stand in a long line, it was a good ballpark. And the next thing they'll say is, 'Until I saw Victory Field.' Once they saw it, they could see what we were talking about, and they've loved it ever since.

"We have a shareholder who lives in Michigan and he brings his son down to a game during the summertime. He buys tickets and sits in different locations of the ballpark. One year he was here for the Fourth of July game and decided to sit in the upper deck and as he looked toward home plate, he had his vision partially blocked by the bunting we had put in place for the special occasion. So he called an usher over and described the problem. The usher proceeded to talk to one of our staff, who talked to another staff member, and pretty soon they had assembled a crew to go around the entire ballpark and adjust the bunting. To have that kind of feeling among our employees is an amazing feeling."

G **GENERAL MANAGER RANDY LEWANDOWSKI** has been with the club for more than 20 years, starting out as an intern in the ticket department. He talks about the move from Bush Stadium.

"I was the last one to leave Bush Stadium. Construction was not complete on the offices at Victory Field; the market-

ing department was working out of a trailer out back along the railroad tracks, but we were still selling tickets out at Bush Stadium. So on July 11, I worked the morning shift until about noon and closed it down. I was so young and naïve, to close Bush Stadium with all that history didn't resonate with me at the time. I have a lot more appreciation for it now. Just knowing I was the last one out and locked the door and worked the last shift ever at Bush Stadium, that's kind of a cool thing.

"I think how it was phrased to us: Opening Victory Field was an opportunity and challenge of a lifetime. To move one stadium to another midway through the season was incredible. You have



"YOU KNOW, I REALLY WASN'T FOR YOU BUILDING A NEW BALLPARK," PEOPLE WOULD TELL SCHUMACHER. "UNTIL I SAW VICTORY FIELD."

(left to right) White River State Park President Jim Shook, Indianapolis Mayor Steven Goldsmith, Indians President Max Schumacher and CIB President Pat Early move soil at the Victory Field groundbreaking ceremony on December 16, 1994.



A SCORE OF WORK

Arguably the ballpark's most cherished memories include the Tribe's 2000 Triple-A Championship run (top), the 2001 Triple-A All-Star Game (middle) and Ian Snell's nine-inning no-hitter in 2005 (bottom).



"We didn't know then what lawn berm seating really was. Being in the box office, I heard people say, 'We're not sitting on the grass. I'm not going to do that for a baseball game.' Lawn seating was probably one of our hardest sells we had to make in the mid-90s, because people didn't do that at a professional sporting event, to go sit on a sloped piece of grass. By comparison, today the Lawn is arguably our most popular seat."

to remember what Downtown Indianapolis was like. Circle Centre Mall had just been built, but there was still Market Square Arena and the RCA Dome. There hadn't been a new building built in downtown in more than a decade. Victory Field was a big deal. There was a nervousness to see how we would handle things. The park wasn't completely finished. We had makeshift center field gates, we were all crammed into a couple of small offices. It really was the challenge of a lifetime, and I think it made us all prepared for what was ahead of us for the next 20 years."



HOWARD KELLMAN HAS BROADCAST INDIANS GAMES

for four decades. He describes some of the memorable moments.

"When I think of some of the best memories of Victory Field, I start with the last championship the Indianapolis Indians won, the Governors' Cup in 2000 – tied at two games apiece with Scranton, and winning the fifth and deciding game here at Victory Field. Next is July 11, 2001, the five-year anniversary of Victory Field when the ballpark and the city hosted the Triple-A All-Star Game. Adam Dunn hit a couple of majestic home runs. Sometimes the ball gets out in a hurry, but the word I used then was soaring. One landed beyond right field on West Street.

"Another great memory is May 15, 2005, when Ian Snell threw a nine-inning no-hitter, and that was the first nine-inning no-hitter thrown by an Indians pitcher since Tommy Carroll did it in 1974. That Sunday afternoon, Ian Snell was absolutely magnificent. He walked one batter, so he was close to a perfect game. He threw a 3-2 breaking ball for some reason for ball four. Darold Knowles, our pitching coach, told me immediately afterward, 'I didn't ask for that pitch.'

"Then on Opening Day in 2005, Curt Schilling pitched against Zach Duke. It was the first day for our working agreement with the Pittsburgh Pirates. Schilling had been the post-season hero for the Boston Red Sox the year before, and the Indianapolis Indians beat him. Governor Mitch Daniels was in the broadcast booth with me during the game, and I worked with Carl Erskine for a while. It was a great day.

"I still haven't caught a foul ball yet after 20 years at Victory Field. But I didn't catch one in 20 years at Bush Stadium, either."

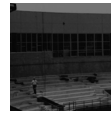


MARK SCHUMACHER

Max's son, has spent his life around the Indians. He now is director of merchandise, and many of his Victory Field memories stem from this perspective, including one very peculiar story about a restroom door.

"I think about all the people who come in off the street and who aren't necessarily familiar with our history or the ballpark's history, and they are amazed that we've been here 20 years. They think it's been more like three or four.

"When we had the All-Star Game here in 2001, we had some special shirts made up and on the back we actually had the names of all the players in the All-Star Game. I remember our league president came in and looked at them to make sure we had the roster right, because there had been late roster changes. The communication was so good in our office that



when it got to me, I got it to the manufacturer and we were able to change it.

“We had Nomar Garciaparra here in ’01. He would go down by the dugout every day and sign autographs. He did a four-day rehab here, and you would have thought Victory Field had turned into Fenway Park. The crowds of Red Sox fans kept getting bigger as the week went along. He had to exit the ballpark by a different route each night because of the throngs of waiting fans.

“In ’07, we had a player named Masumi Kuwata. He was very well known in Japan and the Pirates had signed him and assigned him to Indianapolis. We had Japanese media all over the place. I even had someone from a Japanese TV station interview me. They wanted to know how the sales of Kuwata shirts were going. We moved those shirts very quickly and fortunately we didn’t buy many because he was gone to Pittsburgh in about a week. The seven-day circus was here and then it left.

“In 2004, we had a player named Jeff Liefer; a pretty good Triple-A player. He got locked in the restroom near the dugout and we couldn’t get him out for quite some period of time. We were trying to understand up on the concourse why the game was being delayed. There was no threat of rain. We’re not seeing an injury on the field. Finally we started hearing whispers through the back offices that the handle had jammed on the restroom door and he was unable to get out. Our maintenance team knocked a vent out and handed some tools through and Liefer was able to unscrew the door and get out.”



AARON BOONE PLAYED PARTS OF THREE SEASONS

in Indianapolis, on his way to the Cincinnati Reds. In 1997, he appeared in 131 games, hitting .290 with 22 home runs and 75 RBIs, and was named Indians MVP.

“I remember that Victory Field was awesome. At that time, getting there, I was 24 years old and had come through the system pretty quick with stops at Billings, Winston-Salem and Chattanooga. Three old fields, three just classic minor league-at-the-time facilities. And then all of a sudden you get to Triple-A and you’re in a well-known market and it’s a real ballpark with real facilities. It felt like you were really close to the big leagues.

“We had a great team, a great group of guys. And Victory Field helped make it very memorable. They were one of the pioneers of the new great ballparks that now exist across the landscape of Minor League Baseball. It used to be all dumps. Victory Field was one of the places that made minor league towns realize they could do it in a big league way. I’m sure Vic-



GRAND OPENING, JULY 11, 1996

tory Field to this day is one of the model ballparks for that.”

“I don’t know if there is a particular night or moment I remember, but I recall we had a pretty good rivalry with the Buffalo Bisons. Some games against them, there wasn’t much love lost and they were pretty highly contested, highly heated games. Overall it was very special to get to play in the Victory Field’s inaugural full season. That was very special indeed.”



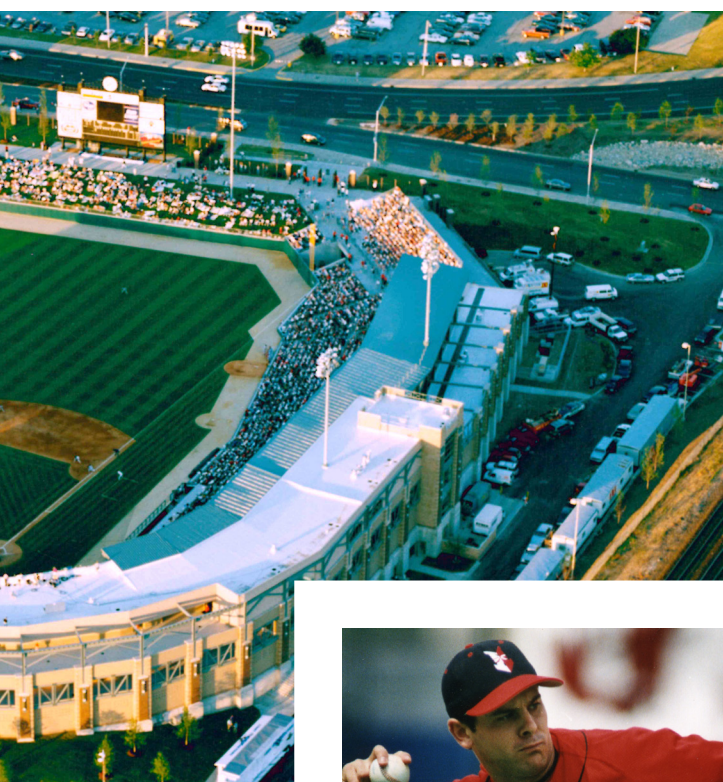
ANDREW MCCUTCHEN PLAYED PARTS OF THREE SEASONS

with the Tribe, before becoming a star for the Pittsburgh Pirates. His top season in Indianapolis was 2008, hitting .283 with nine home runs, 50 RBIs and 34 stolen bases in 135 games.

“The field was a graveyard. I only hit a handful of homers there, and yes, they were all hit to left field. Other than that, I really enjoyed running baseballs down in the outfield because I never had to worry about the wall since it was so far away.

“The longest homer I hit there was off Homer Bailey of the Reds. I even remember the color of my bat, gloss cherry. I got a fastball and deposited it into the street beyond left field. Like I said, all of my home runs were to left.

“Victory Field is a minor league ballpark in a major league city. The NBA’s Indiana Pacers and NFL’s Indianapolis Colts play there.



B **BRUCE SCHUMACHER HAS FOLLOWED** his father's passion for the Indians as vice president of corporate affairs. He discusses the trials of opening Victory Field, and the moment he knew where the ballpark should be.

"The part I remember so clearly, and I'm glad I was a much younger guy then, was the frenzy of activity it took to get us in here in time to start on July 11. The Capital Improvement Board came to us in early July and said, 'We've got good news and bad news. We can get you in by July 11 but we're not going to be able to get everything finished.' They said what can you do without, and we said we can do without offices because they don't affect the fans. That was enough to keep us on schedule, but it meant we had to deal with that in different ways. Some departments chose to bring modular trailers and work in the parking lot, and some chose to stay at Bush Stadium and drive back and forth between Victory Field and the

LEGENDS

Aaron Boone (left) played 12 years in the Majors, Andrew McCutchen (middle) won National League MVP honors in 2013 and Neil Walker (right) was named Indians MVP in 2008. All hung their caps at Victory Field before moving on to the Bigs.



You have the Indianapolis 500 there. You don't get that in many other cities."

N **NEIL WALKER'S TRAIL TO THE PIRATES** infield included parts of four seasons in Victory

Field, plus a brief rehab stop in 2013. He

had 16 home runs and 80 RBIs in 2008, and 14 home runs and 69 RBIs in 2009. He was named Indians MVP in 2008.

"It was a great park. I loved the location, in the middle of the city. A tremendous atmosphere, people were great, always something going on. To me it was the best park I ever played in in the minors. There was so much activity in the park and the surrounding area. I especially loved the nearby zoo.

"I loved playing there on July 4. Great, great fireworks show. There was always a special buzz in the ballpark on that day; something I will always remember."

16th Street ballpark. For Max Schumacher, my father and our chairman, he chose to work off the bar in the Indians' suite. He said all he needed was a surface to set his typewriter and access to a phone. In one form or another, we all paid a price of some kind to get into Victory Field on time.

"Opening Night was a beautiful night. The ballpark was full of people; it had been sold out for weeks. Just seeing our dream come to fruition was very gratifying. We had people who were very vigilant getting ready. I remember there had been a concern about all the toilets being flushed at the same time, when there were fans at a game. So we actually staged what we called The Big Flush. We had people at every toilet flushing them simultaneously to make sure it didn't cause any issue, and it didn't.

"I always knew the concept of this ballpark at this location was a great idea. I remember seeing renderings when this spot was one of the three sites under consideration. One day after



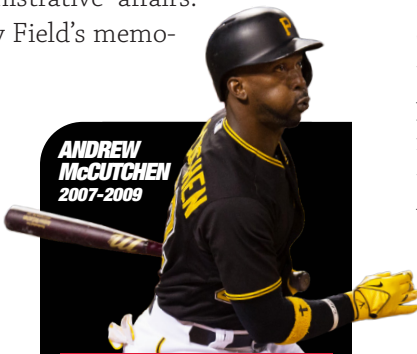
work at Bush Stadium, I drove down here and parked my car in the parking lot and pointed it north-northeast, because that's how the ballpark would be laid out. I looked at the skyline and I remember thinking, it absolutely has to be here."

CAL BURLESON IS IN HIS 42ND YEAR with the Indians and is now vice president of baseball and administrative affairs. He talks about some of Victory Field's memorable players.

"One thing I'll remember forever is the afternoon in 2009, Ian Snell struck out 17 hitters including 13 in a row. As far as we know, that's an all-time professional baseball record at any level. He walked the first guy and struck out the next 13. He was pitching against Toledo and he just mowed them down, one after another after another.

"Eduardo Perez had this habit of getting as close to home plate as he could if he was going to be the first batter against a new pitcher to get an angle on how the pitcher's throws were coming in. He would get so close you were really concerned the pitcher was going to notice and let one fly at him. Nobody ever did. He got away with it.

"We had a slugger named Brad Eldred. Great big guy. He hit the ball as far as you could ever see. One night during batting practice, he hit a ball off one of the light poles. How often do you see a guy do that? I had never seen that during batting



ANDREW McCUTCHEN
2007-2009

"VICTORY FIELD IS A MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK IN A MAJOR LEAGUE CITY"

"The NBA's Indiana Pacers and NFL's Indianapolis Colts play there. You have the Indianapolis 500 there. You don't get that in many other cities."

practice. Well guess what, he did it in the game. He did it twice the same day.

"In baseball, so many of your memories are connected to weather. They just are. We had a severe storm here one Fourth of July, and we executed our drill where we put the fans in the restrooms to protect them. The next day, I read in the Indianapolis Star that a reporter had spoken with one of the fans, and the fan was asked what it was like to have to go into the restroom. She said something about how fans were ushered in regardless of their gender, it didn't matter, but that everybody was fine with it, they were understanding of the circumstances. Turns out the reporter had interviewed my daughter. I'm glad she had the proper perspective when she was chosen at random to be interviewed. I didn't even know she had talked to a reporter until I read the article."

CLINT STOUTENOUR HAS BEEN WORKING

for the Indians for 23 years and is now the usher supervisor. He describes what it has been like in Victory Field

FAST FACTS

First Game

July 11, 1996 vs. Oklahoma City 89ers: 5-3 loss (Att: 14,667)
Winning Pitcher: Rick Helling
Losing Pitcher: Marcus Moore

First Anthem

Anderson, Ind. native and former Los Angeles Dodger **Carl Erskine** on the harmonica

First Pitch

A called strike by Indians pitcher **Marcus Moore**

First Indians Win

July 12, 1996 | 2-1 vs. Oklahoma City 89ers

First Hit

July 11, 1996 | A double in the first inning by Oklahoma City 89ers outfielder **Rikkert Faneyte**

Largest Crowd

16,168 | July 22, 2000 vs. Columbus Clippers

Longest Game: Time

4 hours, 42 minutes | June 9, 2013 vs. Norfolk Tides (14 innings)

Longest Game: Innings

16 | September 4, 2009 vs. Louisville Bats

Most Runs: Indians

19 | May 6, 2004 vs. Charlotte Knights in a 19-3 Indians win

Most Hits: Indians

22 | July 23, 2001 vs. Toledo Mud Hens in a 15-6 Indians win; May 31, 2005 vs. Louisville Bats in a 15-1 win

Most Hits: Individual

5 | Most recent: Alex Presley, June 27, 2012

Most Strikeouts: Indians Pitcher

17 | Ian Snell, June 28, 2009 vs. Toledo Mud Hens

BY THE NUMBERS

\$18 MILLION

Victory Field's construction cost. The #6 ranked Best MiLB Ballpark* in the nation cost less than half as much as *Baseball America's* top ten parks' average pricetag (\$42M).

.551

The Tribe's all-time home winning percentage in 1,423 regular season games at Victory Field which has seen eight playoff runs, five division titles and one Triple-A championship season since 1996.

150,000

The approximate number of baseballs used at Victory Field, which hosts not only Indians games, but also various college and high school matchups including the IHSAA baseball state finals.

12 MILLION

The amount of fans Victory Field has welcomed to its confines. After nearly two decades of existence, the ballpark posted back-to-back attendance records in 2014 and 2015 (660,289; 662,536).

*BASEBALL AMERICA'S "BEST BALLPARKS IN THE MINORS" (MAY 2015)

working the crowd.

"Opening Night in 1996 was probably the most people I've ever seen excited in one place at one time. It was a glorious evening. When Marcus Moore threw the game's first pitch, it was magical.

"When they first talked about moving here, a lot of the long-time season ticket holders had some reservations. But as they played the first homestand at the new ballpark, you could tell everybody warmed to the place really quickly. The theme of "Baseball up Close" really took hold. This place makes you feel like baseball belongs in Indianapolis.

"Through the years it has gotten to be more like a family here. The guests, the workers; I consider this to be my second family. I have two boys and I feel like I've raised them here. This place is home."

T **THIS IS DEAN TREANOR'S SIXTH YEAR** as Indians' manager. He is the first man in the history of the franchise that dates back well more than a century to skipper five consecutive winning seasons. He talks about Victory Field from his perspective, including one special game last September.

"Most of my time in Triple-A I spent in the Pacific Coast League but came to Victory Field briefly around 1998, and I remember saying, 'Wow, this is a nice place.' When I came back to Indy to manage the team in 2011, I remember it being exactly the same as the first time I was here. The ballpark has kept it up so well, one of the best in baseball.

"My most distinct memory is trying so hard to win the championship for Max Schumacher again last year. We went to the final game of the Governors' Cup Finals but came up short. I remember the hurt of not getting it done for Max, the fans and everybody in the front office. But Game 4 (a ninth-inning rally to force the deciding Game 5 against Columbus), was incredible. I guess the only thing I could relate it to was 2003 when I was with Albuquerque and their parent club, the Florida Marlins, won the World Series. The atmosphere at Victory Field for that Game 4 win was incredible.

"Other teams say things, too, that they love playing here. The players talk about it. I can't tell you how many times guys on other teams say to me, 'Hey, I'm going to be a free agent after this season, I'd sure love to get over there and play in Indianapolis.' That tells you all you need to know."

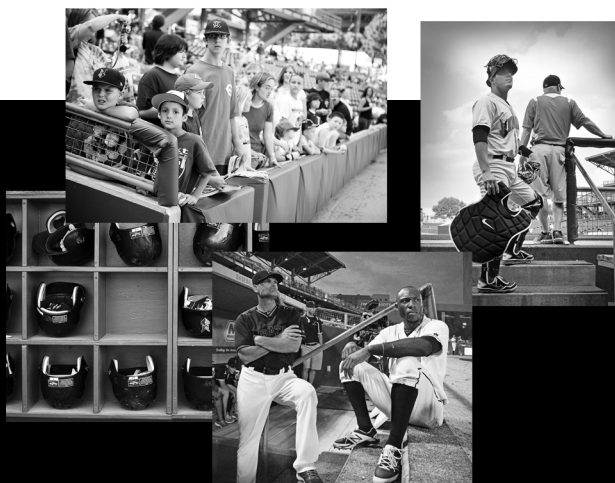
Best wishes and many more, Victory Field. From everyone. ♡

Mike Lopresti is a Ball State University graduate and Richmond, Ind. native and resident. He was a sports columnist for Gannett newspapers and USA Today for 31 years, and covered 30 World Series and 33 Major League Baseball All-Star Games. He is a voter for the National Baseball Hall of Fame. When he retired he was 16th in the nation in seniority on Baseball Writers Association of America. Read more of Lopresti's work on IndyIndians.com and the team's blog [Indians Tribe Talk](http://IndiansTribeTalk.com).

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*What is the best moment in
Victory Field history?*

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