

# BUSH STADIUM REMEMBERED FONDLY

By Marc Allan

At Owen J. Bush Stadium, you could see future major-league baseball stars, watch championships unfold, meet your future mate or witness a major weather system.

The Indianapolis Indians' new downtown baseball park assuredly will yield similar memories and highlights. But 65-year old Bush Stadium, which the Indians will vacate on July 3, is Indianapolis baseball to generations of fans, players and coaches.

You needn't love baseball to fall for the old ballpark, which longtime fans remember as Perry Stadium, from 1931-1941, and Victory Field, from 1945 until it became Bush Stadium in 1967. To sit out there on a temperate summer night (or, even better yet, during a day game!), feet slung over the empty chair in front of you, watching the game and chatting with friends - those are among the small memories that make up a good life.

Back in February, when the weather was rancid and baseball's spring training was about to begin in earnest, I called dozens of people who've passed through Bush Stadium. Some left their mark on the stadium; on others, the stadium has left its mark.

What follows are their favorite memories of Bush.

**John Myrland**, *President of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Indians' Speaker's Bureau:*

"The Chamber sponsors a couple of nights every year at the ballpark. In '94, I was given the opportunity to go to the mound and throw the first pitch. So I was a little nervous about that."

"I step out to the mound, we do the National Anthem, then Barry Lyons crouches behind the plate. The umpire's standing there. I take the ball and fire it in and it wraps around the outside of the plate. Barry catches it - I painted the black, as they say, and he helped the ball

into the center of the plate. He looked up and the umpire gave it the old strike sign. Barry ran it back out to me and said, 'Nice pitch.' So that was a big thrill."

**Dallas Williams**, *Indians player, 1982-1983 and 1985-1987:*

On May 31, 1983, I met my wife (Teal) there. I introduced myself through the batboy - I wish I could remember his name. I sent a note up to the stands and invited her to the game the following night. I hit a home run that night. Even though I've had many favorite things happen to me there, that would be my very favorite." (Dallas and Teal have now been married 12 years.)

**Pat Harper**, *season-ticket holder for 11 years and fan for 30 years:*

"Without a doubt, the most exciting moment I've ever seen was Billy Moore's run-scoring single that won the championship in '86. It reminds me, as a kid growing up, I was sitting in the stands at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh in 1960 and the score was tied in the last inning, 9-9, and Bill Mazeroski hit a home run.

"It's almost the same thing. The series is tied 3-3, we're losing 4-3, two outs, ninth inning, bases loaded, Billy Moore sets up and hits a two-run single and we win the championship. The fans poured on the field. It was really exciting. Without a doubt, that's the most exciting thing I've seen in all the years there.

"Second-most is probably the fan appreciation for Razor Shines. He was loved by fans, and every time he came out and they said his name over the P.A., the 'Razor' lasted 20 seconds when they introduced him. I always enjoyed that."

**Skeeter Barnes**, *player, 1981, 1983-1986:*

"In 1983, we had the (Cincinnati Reds') general manager (Woody

Woodward) down to see the game. I think I had five hits, hit the ball all over the place. That was one of the games that got me called up to the big leagues at the end of the season.

"But the main one would have to be meeting my wife (Karen) at Bush Stadium. She was a city bus driver at the time, and the team used to charter a bus to go to the airport. For some reason, I hardly ever caught the bus.

"But this day, I caught the bus - got there about 6 o'clock in the morning. There were only about three or four others on the bus. I just started talking to her. That was it. That was 1983 or '84. That's pretty memorable. It's the best thing that's ever happened to me."

**Hank Blackwell**, *board member and former chairman:*

"My whole family, when the kids were growing up, went to the ballpark frequently in the summer. So just the many weeks and months and years of being at the ballpark together as a family is something I'll cherish all my life because there aren't all that many activities that families do together anymore.

"I think a very big highlight, so far as enjoying baseball in Indianapolis is concerned, had to be back in the years when Kerby Farrell was manager and Herb Score and that outstanding team of ballplayers came through here. The whole team that year, I think every single one of them became major league players and many of them became major league stars. That was a particularly memorable year."

**Les Ponder**, *who's attended games at Bush for nearly 50 years:*

"Right after World War II, we had overflow crowds at Bush for almost all games, it was routine that if you did not get there early or have a reserved seat, you would have to sit in the bleachers or stand behind a rope which was strung





**Perry Stadium in March of 1932**

in the outfield. Baseball was one of the chief entertainments, along with movies, so people flocked to the games.

"I have great memories of people like Herb Score and Rocky Colavito, who went up to the Cleveland Indians, then Eric Davis, Ray Knight, Ken Griffey Sr., Ron Oester, Tom Foley, Marquis Grissom and Delino Deshields, Moises Alou and Wil Cordero. We had a galaxy of stars, and of course we expected our best players would wind up with one of the big teams.

"Another memory was this: Al Lopez. I saw him play minor-league ball in the Southern League, because I lived in Arkansas, when he just started. Then I saw him play in the major leagues. Then I saw him as Indianapolis manager. So it's interesting that you'd see a ballplayer in three different roles."

"Then, obviously, there's the great

four-year consecutive winning streak of championships in the '80s. That'll always be a beautiful memory in my mind."

**Merrill Reece**, *member of the Indians' board of directors:*

"It was a championship game and Billy Moore hit a single to win. I've been going out there for a number of years, but that's the one that really sticks in my mind. I've never seen that crowd with the enthusiasm they had that last two or three innings. It was like a fever."

**Alan Kimbell**, *board member and fan for 30 years:*

"A couple of natural phenomena come to mind. One Sunday afternoon game about 25 years ago, the damndest thunderstorm came straight from the

north. We were sitting along the first-base line and that storm came across there. It was a sight to see. It came up so fast.

"The players all make a beeline for the dugout. Lightning. Thunder. Crash. Bang. And then it poured rain. We waited for some little period of time, it cleared up and they continued to play baseball. I don't ever remember sitting and watching a storm approach like that one.

"Then one night, we were sitting in the V.I.P. suite on the roof and this great, huge moon came up over the city. The moon looked as big as the stadium. We watched that moon come up and shine down on the ballpark. It was beautiful."

**Dick Kenworthy**, *Indians player, 1965-1967 and 1971-1972:*

"That's where my family started.





**Perry Stadium on April 29, 1934**

That's where I met my (now ex-) wife, Peggy. She was an usherette at the time and I was a player. She rode in the parade with me. Back years ago, when the team came into town, they would have a parade to kick off the season. She was an usherette and she rode with me in the parade. We had two children, Kurt and Kyle.

"Probably the next best thing was when I was named most valuable player in 1966. It was real close that year between me and Duane Josephson. Duane was the catcher and I was the third baseman. I led the league in RBI and I believe Duane led the league in hitting, or pretty close to it (actually 3rd with .394 average)."

**Danny O'Malia, 21-year season ticket holder:**

"I'm 48 years old and my dad worked his ass off when I was a little kid. About the only thing he had time

to do with me was take me to an Indians game once in a while. In the summer of '54, I knew when my dad came home before dark that I was going to get to see Herb Score pitch. Seeing Herb Score pitch was big!

"That same summer, we were at the ballpark on the Fourth of July. They used to have the doubleheader with the fireworks between games. Rocky Colavito was the Indians' right fielder. The right field light tower caught on fire during the second game of the doubleheader. My dad's comment was, 'I didn't know Rocky Colavito could run that fast' as he tore out of there.

"In '61, when they clinched the pennant for the first time in a long time, I was 13 years old. I was old enough to walk out to the ballpark by myself. I got to go to a lot of games, so that summer was a particular favorite.

"I remember they used to have clin-

ics where kids could go on the field and get instruction from the players. I had this wayward cousin with me and the Indians' second baseman, Vince Garcia, was showing us how to flip the ball to the second baseman when you're close to him.

"My cousin reared back and threw the ball off Vince's shin as hard as he could. I think Vince missed a couple of days. He was hurt. He was on his back, grabbing his shin, and the ball was out in right field.

"My cousin thought it was extremely funny. I didn't think it was all that funny because I was a serious Indians fan and I didn't want anyone getting hurt. But looking back on it, that was hilarious. And my cousin straightened himself out, so it was no big disaster.

"I'm gonna miss the place, that's for sure."



## Sunday Double Header 1961



**Mert Prophet, Indians's trainer, 1952-1956:**

"The 1956 team, when we won the Junior World Series, we won three straight in Rochester and one here, which made it four straight. That was the first year of the community-owned Indians.

"Just being there my first year was a great one. We were a Cleveland farm club in those years and we had great guys - (Herb) Score, (Rocky) Colavito, Joe Altobelli, Russ Nixon was a young catcher, Buddy Daley was a good one for us. We had Hank Aguirre, Dave Pope, Al Smith. We had great guys, and the thing about it to me was togetherness. All the years we had it.

"On Sundays, we always played in the afternoon, and after the game, the wives and the kids would all be together.

We'd all go out to Northern Beach at 116th Street and have a picnic after the game. Everybody went, even office staff went. That was '54, '55, and '56. Those were Kerby Farrell's years as manager. That made for super camaraderie. You can't beat that. You can't buy it either."

**Vern Rapp, Indians' manager 1969-1975:**

"It was my home for seven years. I have nothing but good memories about it. It was before everything had air-conditioning and we spent a lot of time renovating the clubhouse, putting in carpeting. Then, when you got out on the field, it was a lot of hard work and watching a lot of outstanding players go through the mill to the Reds.

"Roger Freed just died recently. I

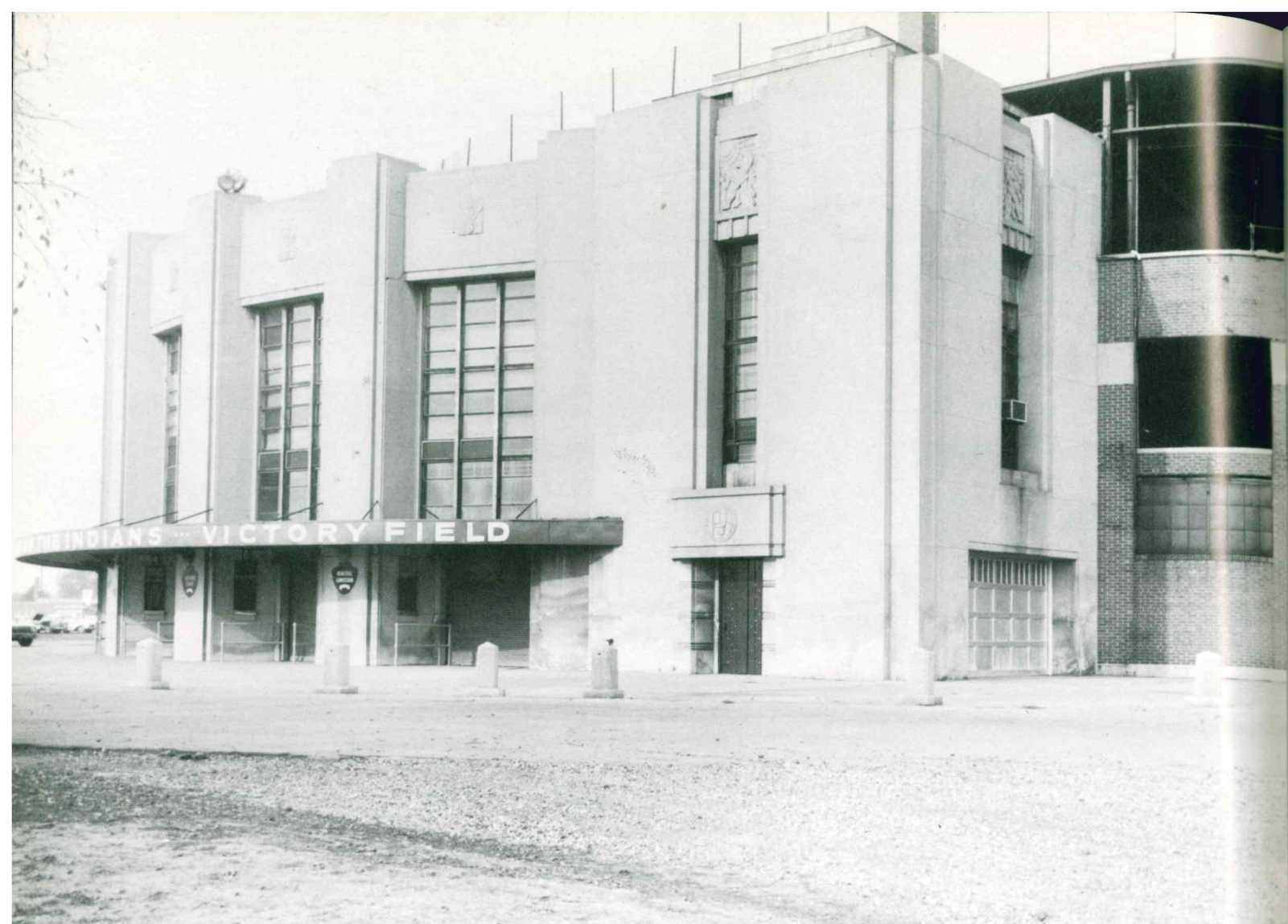
guess Roger hit probably one of the longest home runs I ever saw right there at that stadium. It won a ballgame for us on a Saturday afternoon in 1974. I don't remember the exact details, but the bases were loaded and he hit a ball to dead center.

"I don't know if that little hot dog stand (Mr. Dan's) is still out there. He hit it over the hamburger stand and it landed in the middle of the street, on the fly. I've always thought it was one of the few home runs that went almost 600 feet. It landed in the middle of the street, underneath the stop light."

**Razor Shines, Indians player, 1984-1989, 1991-1993:**

"My favorite memory is during the '86 playoff series. It was the first of the four straight championship series, we





**Victory Field in the early to mid 1960s**

were trailing going into the ninth inning and I was the hitter with two outs. Rob Dibble was pitching with runners on second and third and I was intentionally walked, which I didn't take too kindly to.

"I received the walk and I go down to first base. When I received the walk, I was jumping up and down in the batter's box, trying to get him to balk. I even shattered my bat on home plate. I get down to first base and Lloyd McClendon, who was the first baseman at the time for the Zephyrs, says, 'Razor, are you crazy?'

"I looked at him straight in the eye and I said, 'Lloyd, if Billy Moore doesn't get a hit here and you guys think you're gonna celebrate on my field, You'll see how crazy I am.' As you know, Billy gets the hit, we win the championship and that's the start of four straight championships.

"The day they honored me was a fond memory, but I've always been the type of player who put individual things behind team goals. That was a high compliment and I was honored and I'll never forget it, but winning championships, in my eyes, stands above that."

**Bruce Schumacher**, *Indians' director of special projects and public-address announcer:*

"In the summer of 1973, I was in charge of working in the old manual scoreboard. I would come out early in the afternoons and change all the metal signs with the names of the teams. Those things probably weighed 50 or 60 pounds, and I wasn't that big a kid at the time. I was 13 years old.

"The only way to change the upper ones was to go up and down a ladder carrying them. It was all I could do to lift them in the first place and I'm stag-

gering up and down this ladder. George Foster is running in the outfield. He runs by a couple of time and I could see him looking at me out of the corner of his eye.

"He jogs by and asks, 'You want some help with that?' Basically, he stood on the ladder and I handed him signs. He changed the whole scoreboard.

"The other one is, when I was a college freshman at Indiana University, in August of 1978, the Indians were fighting for their lives to win the division. They were playing Springfield on August 30. I wasn't able to be there because of classes, and at the time our games were broadcast on the Franklin FM radio station, WIFN.

"A buddy of mine had a car that if you parked on the highest spot on campus and pointed the antenna at Franklin, you could just barely pick up the game.





**Bush Stadium on August 18, 1994** (photo by Jim Young)

Here I am sitting in his Vega, just outside the baseball field at IU. We're behind 4-2 going to the bottom of the 10th. If we lose, we're eliminated. The first two guys make outs and then Lynn Jones singled, Ron Oester walked on four pitches, Harry Spillman walked and Champ Summers tripled off the wall to win the game.

"I'll always remember sitting in that car listening to us win the game in the 10th inning."

**Marc Bombard**, *Indians' manager, 1993-1995:*

"Probably Rich DeLucia striking out Ray Durham to win the championship in '94 for us. From a baseball standpoint, that's my favorite memory - and probably all the players'.

"We were fortunate to have some nice clubs there, especially the last

couple of years. We set some records - most grand slams in a season (1995). But I guess the highlight was getting that final out to become American Association champions."

**David McGhee**, *member of the Indians' Speaker's Bureau and fan for 50 years:*

"My favorite goes back to the last year of the Indians' relationship with the Chicago White Sox (1967), which got pretty tough when Eddie Stanky was the manager of the White Sox. He just wrecked our roster.

"With no notice, Stanky would pull up a couple of starters and put them in an exhibition game or set them on the bench or return them with sore arms. The Indians would have to make due with relievers as starting pitchers. He would do the same thing with hitters,

and pretty much abuse the system. I was working at WFBM Channel 6 news at the time.

"Anyway, somebody hanged Stanky in effigy behind the screen, up above where the concessions stands are on the upper concourse. I learned of it about three days after it was hanged. I called Max Schumacher (the Indians' general manager; now president and general manager) and asked, 'Is it true?' He says, 'It apparently occurred about three days ago, and I was just officially informed about it.'

"On the news that night, I reported that when Schumacher was informed of the hanging, he took immediate and decisive action - and put a spotlight on it."

**George Scherger**, *Indians' manager, 1982:*

"It was a great stadium as far as I'm concerned because that's where we won



the pennant in 1982. I really enjoyed my stay in Indianapolis and I enjoyed the stadium and the fact the field was well kept."

**Joe Sparks, Indians' manager 1986-1988:**

"My favorite memory was the three championships. It's not like one memory. But I'd have to boil it down to the Billy Moore base hit in the ninth inning, with two strikes and two balls and a line drive base hit to left field, with Casey Candaele scoring. That had to be the all-timer, I guess.

"I almost had a heart attack in that game when Tom Romano ran Nelson Norman off third base in that inning. It looked like it was going to be a disaster. I'd held Norman coming around third on a line drive base hit to right field. Paul O'Neill threw it on one hop. He has a great arm and was in great position to throw, so I held Norman.

Romano was coming around second with his head down and ran right into Norman at third. Nelson was tagged out in a rundown. A lot of people don't remember that. They just remember the Billy Moore base hit. Romano said, 'I screwed up, I screwed up.' I said, 'Don't worry, we'll win the game'."

**Reid Duffy, long-time fan and member of the Indians' Speaker's Bureau:**

"It was 1978, the second-to-last game of the season. The score was tied and went into extra innings. In the top of the 10th inning, the team they were playing, Springfield, got the first two guys on base with nobody out. It's a real dark, wet, crummy night and only maybe 3,000 people showed up. By the 10th inning, there might have been less than 1,000 in the stands.

"I was sitting in the box seats behind first base and there were three guys behind me who'd been drinking all evening and they'd been heckling the players in a good-natured way. Behind them was a very portly gentleman who'd just been screaming vile obscenities any chance he could at anything the Indians

did wrong.

"Into the game for the Indians came Doug Corbett, who went on to a pretty good career as a relief pitcher for Minnesota and California. He came in with two runners on and gave up a walk and a seeing-eye ground ball and a couple of runs ended up scoring. Both times men reached base this guy five or six rows in back of us was screaming at Corbett. And with 900 folks in the stands, you could hear it all over the ballpark.

"The manager takes Corbett out and Doug starts walking toward the third-base dugout. I can see him peering into the stands, trying to find out who's doing all this screaming...

"When the Indians come up, the first two guys make outs, but the next guy gets a hit, and the next guy draws a walk. Right about that time, I'm sitting at the end of the row and this guy comes up to me, young guy, kind of blonde hair and his hair seems to be wet. He says 'excuse me,' very politely, and he goes past me to the end of the row.

"He sits right in front of the three guys who'd been heckling the players a little bit and says, 'Hey, I didn't appreciate what you guys were saying about me.' It turns out to be Corbett. He's not quite challenging them to a fight, but he's gonna let them know that he was doing a good job out there.

"Next thing I know, they're ordering him a beer"

**Ellis "Cot" Deal, Indians' manager, 1961:**

"I suppose the favorite memory of all was the night we won the pennant (in 1961). There were a lot of exciting things that happened during that season, of course. I do remember well that that was Max Schumacher's rookie year as general manager. It was a very fun year to be with Max and also a very exciting and memorable summer because of Donie Bush. I shall never forget Donie Bush, his guidance and his wisdom.

"Donie Bush was a teammate of Ty Cobb's. He was an outstanding figure in the history of baseball. He managed

in the major leagues, he was an outstanding player and manager and, really, the leader of the Indianapolis Indians for many, many years."

**Pat Sullivan, usher (1946-1947), board member for 20 years and a fan for 50 years:**

"I remember going to ballgames with my parents and I wanted to be a batboy back in the '40s. Couldn't make that. But John L. Riddle, who was a catcher with the Indians for years (1928-1937, 1946-1947) and then became a major league coach, I grew up in his neighborhood and spent a lot of time at his house...He was able to get me on as an usher at Victory Field. I worked as an usher for a couple of years out there.

"I remember Babe Ruth speaking at Victory Field for Junior Baseball when he had throat cancer and his voice was very hoarse and raspy. It was a short time before he died. I remember he had a camel's hair coat and it wasn't a particularly cold evening. He spoke very briefly; it was obvious he was very ill. I was working as an usher at the time.

"I remember the years when the American Association was St. Paul, Minneapolis, Toledo and Kansas City. We had a great team back in '47 and '48, when we were with Pittsburgh. Ted Beard and Tom Saffell were in the outfield. Jack Cassini was the second basemen. It was a great team and we got to see a lot of upcoming major-leaguers in the Association during those years.

"I went on the board for the Indians about 20 years ago and have been on the board ever since. I have season tickets, so I still got out frequently. We're sorry to see it die, but we really needed a new stadium and we're very excited about the new place. But Bush Stadium will always be a treasured memory for many of us."

*Marc Allan is popular-music critic (and baseball fanatic) for the Indianapolis Star-News. His favorite memories of Bush are the long lunch hours he's taken to attend day games. He's pretty sure his bosses never noticed.*