

Chasing Dreams baseball exhibit

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Chasing Dreams baseball exhibit speakers

A trio of speakers regaled some 200 attendees at the opening event of the Chasing Dreams traveling baseball exhibit at Congregation Ahavath Sholom Saturday evening, Jan. 7.

Tom Schieffer, U.S. Representative Roger Williams (R-TX), and Dr. Bobby Brown shared their perspectives and experiences of the “great game.”

Schieffer opened the evening and described his long relationship with Congressman Williams.

“We played Little League and Pony Ball together and play golf together most weekends.”



(From left) U.S. Rep. Roger Williams, Tom Schieffer and Dr. Bobby Brown at the Chasing Dreams exhibit, Saturday evening, Jan. 7.

Photo: Aaron Helton

He explained in 1989 how it came to pass that he became part of the George W. Bush group that purchased the Texas Rangers. At the time, Dr. Bobby Brown, a former World Series-winning third baseman for the Yankees in the '40s and '50s and a retired Fort Worth cardiologist, was the president of the American League.

Schieffer beamed as he described the undertaking of building The Ballpark in Arlington and his dream that the ballpark etch indelible memories in visitors' minds when they visit.

“At every game, there’s going to be someone visiting for the first time,” he said. And, it’s that memory of one’s first major league game on which the love of baseball is often built. Schieffer explained that at first when he was approached to spearhead the building of the park he declined. It was his wife who encouraged him to take on the project.

Schieffer shared a story of a game day when he saw a mother with a picnic basket during early batting practice. She had spread out a blanket and her husband and son were playing catch in the centerfield grass. "To see people use it the way that it was intended was very fulfilling," Schieffer said. "It was the most enjoyable thing I've ever done."

Schieffer introduced U.S. Rep. Roger Williams. Many Fort Worth natives know Williams as the Arlington Heights standout who played at TCU and was drafted by the Atlanta Braves. Following his baseball career, he returned to Fort Worth and coached the Horned Frogs baseball team. Later, he joined his father at Jack Williams Chevrolet, the institution located on University Drive.

Williams spoke about both his love of baseball and his love and support of Israel. He recently returned from a trip where he thanked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for purchasing F-35s.

"I'm grateful for the strong support I get from AIPAC," Williams said. "Israel is our only friend in the Middle East." Later he added, "I want to make sure that USA never leaves the middle of JerUSAlem."

As part of his remarks, Williams shared his all-Jewish team:

Catcher: Harry Danning (played in the '30s for the New York Giants)

First: Hank Greenberg

Second: Lipman Pike

Shortstop: Lou Boudreau

Third base: Al Rosen

Left field: Ryan Braun

Centerfield: Shawn Green

Right field: Sol Gordon

Pitchers: Sandy Koufax, Ken Holtzman, Steve Stone and Ralph Branca

Bench: Rod Carew, Ian Kinsler and Mike Epstein

Play-by-play: Mel Allen

Manager: Brad Ausmus

Director of scouting: Moe Berg (a reference to the fact that Berg was a spy during World War II)

Another tidbit mentioned by Williams was his desire to help get a Jewish baseball hall of fame off the ground.

Williams said Austin, where Hank Greenberg's family resides, is a possible site.

The denouement of the evening was Dr. Bobby Brown. The 92-year-old Brown — who probably treated many in the audience's family members when he was in practice as a cardiologist in Fort Worth — thrived at the podium. He shared one humorous story after another about his storied baseball career, which included three world championships with the Yankees. Brown played for the Yankees and completed medical school at the same time. When he met his future wife, Sara, he said he told her, "Tell your dad, I play third base for the Yankees; tell your mom, I'm in medical school."

Brown explained that as a member of the Yankees it was often hard to leave the ballpark after a game. Back then, many players took the subway and it was quite a long walk from the players' exit. Typically there was a mob of fans waiting for autographs. Brown said he learned to leave the ballpark with the big stars to provide "cover."

Since he was a lesser-known player, it allowed him to slip away. One afternoon, he encountered an eager young boy and his mother. The boy had his pen and was about to search out Yogi Berra and Joe DiMaggio.

“Forget Yogi and Joe D,” Brown recounted the mother saying in a thick Yiddish/New York accent. “You want him — that one’s a docta.”

He capped his remarks of some 60 minutes with a story of a consult at Harris Hospital one Saturday afternoon. He was seeing a patient with chest discomfort. The patient was separated from his roommate by a divider curtain. There was a shared TV on the wall.

As Dr. Brown examined the patient, he realized that the TV was on and there was a ballgame on. As it turned out, it was a replay of the 1949 World Series.

“Now I want you to watch that TV up there. I’m going to come up and hit that ball against the right field wall. We had three men on base and they are all going to score — Henrich is going to score, Yogi’s going to score and DiMaggio’s going to score — and I’m going to slide into third with a triple. Sure enough the guy looks at me like I just got off a spaceship from Mars. He just can’t believe it.”

Brown described the play-by-play of Mel Allen, who had long since retired. As Allen called his sliding into third, Brown said, “The sheet flew back and the guy in the other bed jumped up and said, ‘Who the hell are you? Are you really a doctor?’ ”

The Chasing Dreams exhibit is open daily except for Shabbat and runs through March 5. It is sponsored by the Isadore Garsek Lodge of B’nai B’rith.