

Alumni Newsletter

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Yankee Fever

By Bill Glovin

At the *Daily Targum*, she wrote sports and he was *Inside Beat* editor. Life-long Yankee fans, they first noticed each other in 1987 when they tagged along with mutual friends on a trip to see-of all teams-the Mets. Five years later they exchanged vows in Kirkpatrick Chapel in New Brunswick, but Yankee Stadium feels more like their spiritual home. On opening days, and on Sundays during the baseball season, they can be found in section 25.

But something was missing. I always wanted to go to Yankees spring training, says Lisa Gillard Hanson DC 87. Growing up, I'd hear Phil Rizzuto on the radio; a sure sign that spring was around the corner. So we found tickets on the Internet and hotels that would allow us to take along our ferret and drove to Tampa, where the Yankees train. It turned out to be so much fun that we've gone back every year since.

This spring they made their sixth annual trip. You're with people who are just like you; crazed fans willing to use their vacation time and travel long distances and to see games that don't count in the standings, says Bruce Hanson LC 87, owner and operator of Egads, a small graphics design firm. Year after year we see the same friendly faces. Adds Hanson Gillard, It's the only place in the world where you can meet a Yankee fan from San Francisco and spend a half-hour discussing a utility player's stats.

The couple sometimes arrives at the park at the crack of dawn to gain entrance into batting practice. Typically, Gillard Hanson pursues autographs and takes photos while Hanson saddles up to former players and coaches for face time and then positions himself to catch foul balls and home runs. (He has caught about 30 balls).

One of this year's highlights came from left field. Driving back from Lakeland to St. Petersburg after a game, the couple was stuck in traffic. I look in the rearview mirror and I see Joe Torre driving with pitching coach Mel Stottlemyre in the passenger seat-both still in their uniform and hats, says Hanson. Somebody's in the back seat, but I can't quite make out who. Once traffic gets moving, we wind up alongside them (a 2004 Mercedes with Jersey plates). In the back, it's Yogi Berra, also still in uniform, looking like Grandpa getting driven home after the family dinner.

Gillard Hanson says that most people assume the annual sojourn is her husband's idea. I can recite the nuances of the infield fly rule and easily spend a couple of hours watching catchers field foul pop ups, she says. I've had job offers where I've made it clear that if I'm going to take the position, it's under the condition that I'm going to need two weeks off in March. Spring training is as much my thing as his.

In her office in the State Theatre in New Brunswick, where she is communications manager, a life-sized cardboard cut out of her favorite player, shortstop Derek Jeter, dwarfs photos of her bearded husband. While her office also contains signed baseballs and baseball cards, she is suddenly on a mission to include more. One of my theater colleagues has an office totally decked out in Red Sox memorabilia, so I have some catching up to do.



Bruce and Lisa Hanson