Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day - July 4, 1939

Prior to the Yankees' May 2, 1939, game at Detroit's Briggs Stadium, captain Lou Gehrig gave the umpires his team's lineup card—which did not have his name on it. He watched the entire game from the bench, marking the end of his 2,130-consecutive-games-played streak. "The Iron Horse" was suffering the effects of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a disease known since as Lou Gehrig's disease. He would never play again.

Just over two months later, on July 4, 1939, Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day was held in front of approximately 62,000 fans at Yankee Stadium. Ceremonies took place between games of a doubleheader against the Washington Senators. Gehrig and his teammates were joined by members of the 1927 Yankees. After speeches by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia and Postmaster James A. Farley, Manager Joe McCarthy said his public goodbye to Gehrig: "Lou, what can I say except that it was a sad day in the life of everybody who knew you when you came to my hotel room that day in Detroit and told me you were quitting as a ballplayer because you felt yourself a hindrance to the team. My God, man, you were never that."

Various gifts were presented to Gehrig from club employees and the rival New York Giants. His teammates gave him a trophy, which was inscribed with a poem by writer John Kieran. As the crowd chanted, "We want Lou; We want Lou…," Gehrig stepped to the microphone to deliver one of the most oft-quoted speeches in American history.

"For the past two weeks you've been reading about a bad break. Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the Earth. I have been in ballparks for 17 years and have never received anything but kindness and encouragement from you fans.

"When you look around, wouldn't you consider it a privilege to associate yourself with such fine-looking men as are standing in uniform in this ballpark today? Sure, I'm lucky. Who wouldn't consider it an honor to have known Jacob Ruppert? Also, the builder of baseball's greatest empire, Ed Barrow? To have spent six years with such a grand guy as Miller Huggins? To have spent the next nine years with that smart student of psychology, the best manager in baseball today, Joe McCarthy? Who wouldn't feel honored to room with such a grand guy as Bill Dickey?"

"When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift—that's something. When the groundskeepers and office staff and writers and old-timers and players and concessionaires all remember you with trophies—that's something. When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles against her own daughter—that's something. When you have a father and a mother who work all their lives so that you can have an education and build your body—it's a blessing. When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you ever dreamed existed—that's the finest I know.

“So I close in saying that I might have been given a bad break, but I've got an awful lot to live for. Thank you.”

On January 6, 1940, Yankees team president Ed Barrow announced that No. 4 would be retired from use. To this day, Gehrig remains the only Yankee ever to wear the number.

Gehrig died on June 2, 1941, at his home in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. He was 37.

Babe Ruth Day - April 27, 1947

On April 27, 1947, Babe Ruth Day was celebrated throughout Major League Baseball, as the Babe said goodbye in an on-field ceremony at Yankee Stadium. Dressed in a topcoat and hat, Ruth, weakened by throat cancer, made the following remarks:

"Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. You know how bad my voice sounds—well it feels just as bad.

"You know this baseball game of ours comes up from the youth. That means the boys. And after you're a boy and grow up to know how to play ball, then you come to the boys you see representing themselves today in your national pastime. The only real game—I think—in the world is baseball.

"As a rule, some people think if you give them a football, or a baseball, or something like that—naturally they're athletes right away. But you can't do that in baseball. You've gotta start from way down [at] the bottom, when you're 6 or 7 years of age. You can't wait until you're 15 or 16. You gotta let it grow up with you. And if you're successful, and you try hard enough, you're bound to come out on top—just like these boys have come to the top now.

"There's been so many lovely things said about me, and I'm glad that I've had the opportunity to thank everybody. Thank you.”

Ruth memorably returned to Yankee Stadium on June 13, 1948, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Yankee Stadium and have his uniform No. 3 retired.

He died on Aug. 16, 1948, at Memorial Hospital in New York at age 53. His body laid in state at the entrance of Yankee Stadium on Aug. 17 and 18, before his funeral on Aug. 19 at New York’s St. Patrick’s Cathedral.