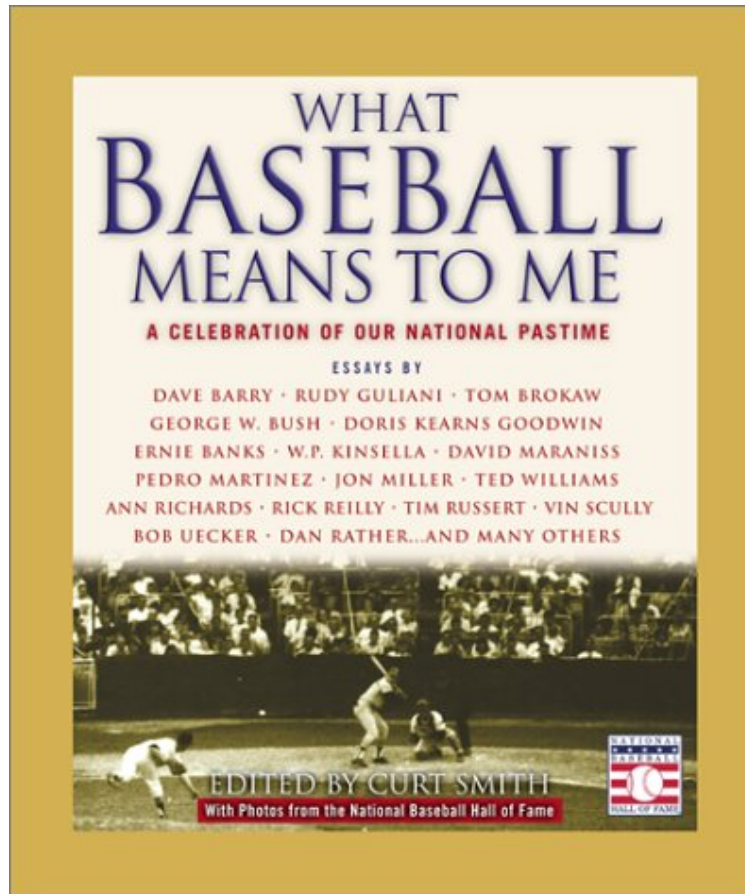


What Baseball Means to Me : A Celebration of Our National Pastime

the National Baseball Hall of Fame, Curt Smith
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For some people baseball means a memory-of a certain dusty ball field on a certain summer day, or the first time they

walked into a major league park and saw the perfect emerald playing field. For some, baseball means one heartbreaking or heroic moment. And for others, it means a father, a friend, or an old flame who shared a game for a day or for a lifetime. To create this marvelous book, more than 150 writers, athletes, celebrities, politicians, presidents, and pundits were asked what baseball means to them. The answers came back with richness, wonder, insight, and poetry. A fascinating portrait of baseball's beautiful nuances, *What Baseball Means to Me* marks the greatest collection of original essays ever written about the game. Accompanied by more than 200 classic baseball photographs, the voices in this book bring alive the game in all its venues—in the past and present, in wartime and hard times, in Cuba, in Wrigley Field or Yankee Stadium. We meet players in a different light: including Paul Molitor returning a baseball to a trusting boy named Dan Jansen, Derek Jeter as depicted by his dad, the Toledo Mud Hens as seen through the eyes of Christine Brennan, and Pedro Martinez talking about baseball as a way of life in his native Dominican Republic. Most of all, we meet ordinary Americans, like the kids Rudy Giuliani grew up with in Brooklyn, or the man in Philadelphia who transforms himself for every home game from mild-mannered Tom Burgoyne to the Phillie Phanatic. Funny, moving, and each one a diamond in the rough of the American consciousness, the essays in this book are the ultimate baseball conversation. Paying homage to the perfect sport, here is the perfect companion for all our personal baseball journeys.

From BooklistOK, so the premise is sentimental claptrap: get a lot of famous folk to answer the title question and leaven it with a profusion of vintage and modern photographs. It's really fun, though, even though the cast of characters tends toward the Republican (do we care what John Sununu thinks of baseball?), and there aren't enough women. But there are moments of unexpected sweetness: singer Patti LaBelle's son's encounter with Negro Leagues great Buck O'Neil; Paul Molitor returning a ball to a small boy who grew up to be Olympian Dan Jansen. NPR's Bob Edwards delivering an impassioned screed for DC baseball; 100-year-old Madelyn Pilkington calling the game "a ribbon running through the years." Some entries are barely a sentence long, others go on for pages. The Philly Phanatic (Tom Burgoyne), the Tigers' equipment manager (Jim Schmakel), and Derek Jeter's dad have their say, along with Donna Shalala, the pianist George Winston, and Masato Yoshii. Even the inevitable repetition has a pleasant, late-inning lull to it. GraceAnne DeCandido Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved