

MAKING ROUNDS: Yogi and Carmen Berra wave to fans yesterday outside Yogi's museum in Montclair, N.J. (left) before Yankee Hall of Famer arrives by convertible (right) at Stadium for Yogi Berra Day festivities.

N.Y. Post: Francis Specker, Reuters

DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN

PUT him on a stage on a hot summer afternoon in Cooperstown, surround him with Hall of Fame ballplayers and he's easy to spot. He's the misfit. Too short to hit the ball that far. Head too big for his body. Ears too big for his head.

Invite all the most frequently quoted men in history to a podium and let each take his turn to speak. Again, he's easy to pick out of the crowd. He's the one mumbling fractured sentences, doubling up negatives, shooting straight logic with a twisted tongue.

He neither looks nor sounds the part, all of which only adds to Yogi Berra's appeal. Everybody loves an underdog. Everybody loves Yogi.

And everybody marvels at what a charmed life he leads.

"Whatever he's done, he's always had a unique ability to come out on top," ex-teammate Bobby Richardson said. "Whether it's at the bowling alley or wherever it is, he comes out on top. He flew in on Bob Hope's plane to Mickey's funeral and he flew out on President Bush's plane. The rest of us had to scramble to find flights in Dallas. Not Yogi."

Berra even came out on top when George Steinbrenner's Yankees had a day for him.

After borrowing Joe Girardi's mitt, Yogi caught the ceremonial first pitch thrown by Don Larsen. So naturally, on Yogi Berra Day, David Cone pitched a perfect game. A classic case of deja vu all over again.

In the elevator after the game, a fan leaned over and said to Berra, "You know, you really should come here more often."

He would come to the Stadium more often, except that nobody



goes there anymore because it's too crowded.

A quick review of "The Yogi Book" serves as a reminder most of the things Berra said over the years made sense, once you thought long and hard enough about them. Most, but not all.

For example, when Yogi was told a Jewish mayor was elected in Dublin, Ireland, he said, "Only in America."

A film buff, Yogi once had this to say: "Steve McQueen looks good in this movie. He must have made it before he died."

Must have.

Then again, some of them do

make sense upon reflection.

Such as: "If the world were perfect, it wouldn't be."

And: "You can observe a lot by watching."

Yogi's not a corny guy so he didn't figure he would think much of a yesterday's Yogi Berra Day. Once he saw so many ex-teammates and received so many gifts — including a trip to Italy with wife Carmen and an audience with the Pope — his voice grew shaky, his eyes watery.

"My mother used to say the two most beautiful buildings in the world are St. Peter's in Rome and Yankee Stadium," Berra said through a microphone behind home plate.

Now that he has made up with The Boss, Berra gets to see both buildings.

"Carmen's going to love that," Yogi said of going to Italy. "She's been trying to get me to

go over there for a long time. I have a good excuse to go now."

Nice to know meeting the pope qualifies as a good excuse. Yogi's granddaughters got to have a big day, too.

"I have five granddaughters," Yogi said. "They all want to meet Jeter."

Not only that, Jeter hit a home run for them.

Before the game, Larsen was asked about his perfect game.

"When Yogi jumped on me," Larsen said, "my mind went blank and I think it still is blank."

As red as Cone's face was after he emerged from the post-game pile on the infield, it was even a deeper shade of red before the game.

Cone to Larsen: "Are you going to jump in Yogi's arms again?"

Larsen: "Ah, it was the other way around. Yogi jumped in my arms."

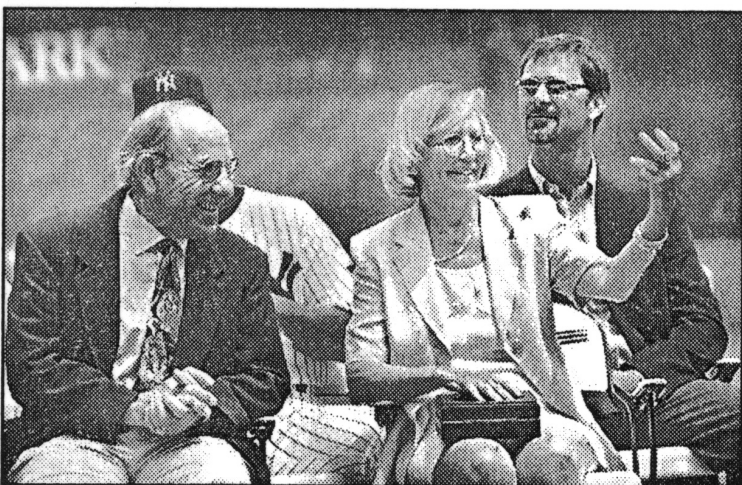
Cone said he "felt about this big Mr. Yankee historian."

Now Cone knows and he won't ever forget. He won't forget anything about yesterday and neither will Yogi.

Berra had his day yesterday at the Stadium, where 41,930 turned out to thank him for burying his grudge against Steinbrenner and rejoining the Yankees' family. Steinbrenner thanked him with a \$100,000 check for the Yogi Berra Museum in Montclair, N.J.

Steinbrenner is spared the embarrassment of getting a cold shoulder from the greatest living Yankee. Berra's museum, a neat little place with a Cooperstown feel to it, benefits from Steinbrenner's cash. Everybody wins.

Doesn't Yogi always win?



IT AIN'T OVER: Yogi and Carmen Berra, with Don Mattingly in the background, enjoy yesterday's Yogi Berra Day ceremony at the Stadium.

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