



Sports

by Jerry Keys

On Sunday, September 21, 2008, we all saw Yankee Stadium host its last game. 85 years of service. From Babe Ruth's first home run to Jose Molina's last at the stadium. From the winner of the first game played, Bob Shawkey to the last, Andy Pettitte. From the House that Ruth Built to the House that Greed Built.

Their new digs will have less seats and a much more lofty price tag (why am I not shocked?). It's widely known there were three "cathedrals" in baseball, Yankee Stadium (THTRB), Fenway Park, and Wrigley Field. I asked

several baseball purists who had attended games in all three parks, if THTRB was essentially in more disrepair than the other two. Each and every one cited THTRB as not being the



Final Game at THTRB

worst of the three in need of repair. Over half went as far as to say it was in better shape than the others.

Groundwork for the new digs was announced several years ago and met with

some objections; no major outcries. The cries grew louder as time ran down on the games held in THTRB. It was some solace THTRB was changed dramatically in the 1974-75 renovations.

About 15 years ago baseball owners concluded a new stadium would bring

higher attendance figures and increased revenue. Fans in return would be given overpaid free agents. It worked in Baltimore, it worked in Cleveland, it worked in Arlington.... for a short time. There are only

a handful of stadiums today older than 40. The Minnesota Twins will get new digs in 2010 after being in their current home (Hubert H Humphrey Metrodome) since 1982. What will be the next "buzz word" with baseball owners after every team obtains new digs?

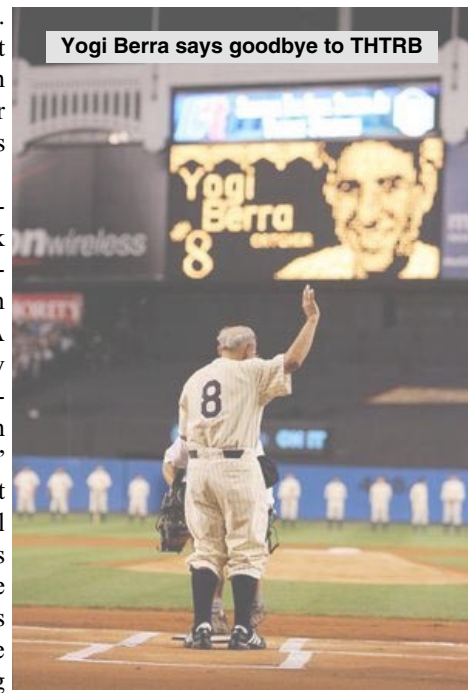
A random question for a fan to ask is how can they afford decent seats in these new digs? A middle-class family of four cannot afford it. With "corporate bailouts" being the current newsmaker, several economic pundits have concluded the United States is headed for a severe recession and a strong

rise in inflation (some speculate comparable to the late 1970's; others to the Great Depression). If numerous families are struggling to pay their mortgage, it is safe to assume taking in a ballgame would not be high on their agenda. It's nice to know taxpayers who paid to build most (not all) stadiums can't afford to see what they paid for.

Of course each stadium has the "nosebleed" seats reasonably priced. Add the price of the seats to parking; a hot dog and coke for everyone, a pennant, and a few knick-naks and the family outing is cheap no more. Several people who have seen the Atlanta Braves play at Turner Field in the nosebleeds have stated they were so high up they could not tell the difference between Chipper Jones and Bobby Cox.

The price for tickets at baseball parks do have something in common with the price of consumer goods...they rise much more than the income of the average American. In just the last twenty years consumer goods have sharply increased while the mini-

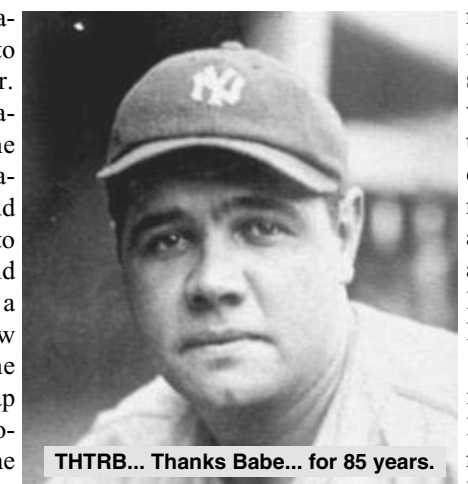
mum wage has increased at a much slower rate. The minimum wage in 1988 was \$3.35 per hour (with some exceptions). The following is prices for com-



Yogi Berra says goodbye to THTRB

monly consumed goods in 1988: milk (gallon) \$1.69, gas \$0.77, bread (Colonial) \$1.09, lettuce \$0.41, and eggs (dozen) \$0.43.

In comparison, today these products command prices of \$5.75, \$4.03, \$2.69, \$1.69, and \$1.84. Minimum wage has risen



THTRB... Thanks Babe... for 85 years.

from \$3.35 to \$6.55 (and to \$7.25 on 7-24-09). The assumption will be argued as minimum wage doubling since 1988 compared to consumer goods prices.

A loaf of Colonial bread has risen at about the same rate as the minimum wage. Milk has more than tripled in prices, lettuce and eggs have more than quadrupled, and gas has risen fivefold.

An onlooker could argue the fact you can purchase cheaper products by

switching brand names. These prices are of the same brand and size. The study could have garnished a more negative comparison if done in June 2008, when minimum wage was \$5.85.

The price for a single family home (approx. 1200 sq. ft.) was once a modest \$50,000 (1988); whereas today the asking price is \$139,000. A middle-class family has little chance of tackling a huge mortgage, skyrocketing electricity and water cost, high prices at the food store, two car payments and auto insurance. Times must not be too grand when the running joke is someone went to buy a toaster and received

a free bank in the process. A majority of Americans agree with people earning a fair minimum wage but they also cite the escalating prices of goods after the wage is raised. The scary part of the bailouts is who is next in line. If credit card compa-

nies and auto lending institutions decide they should be bailed out as well (hmmm.....similar to the new stadium theory), it will be for a much higher dollar amount than what we are seeing. We could be looking at a billion dollars, maybe 1.5 billion.

Most classes we take in high school and college receive our best rote knowledge. You learn the information, spew it out on a test and forget about it. Some classes seem to stick with you. One of mine was world history at Cleveland State Community College. Dr. Culbreth was a history professor in 1993 and during his lecture on the ancient world, gave seven reasons why Rome fell in the 5th century. Those same reasons may be why the United States of America falls from grace.



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