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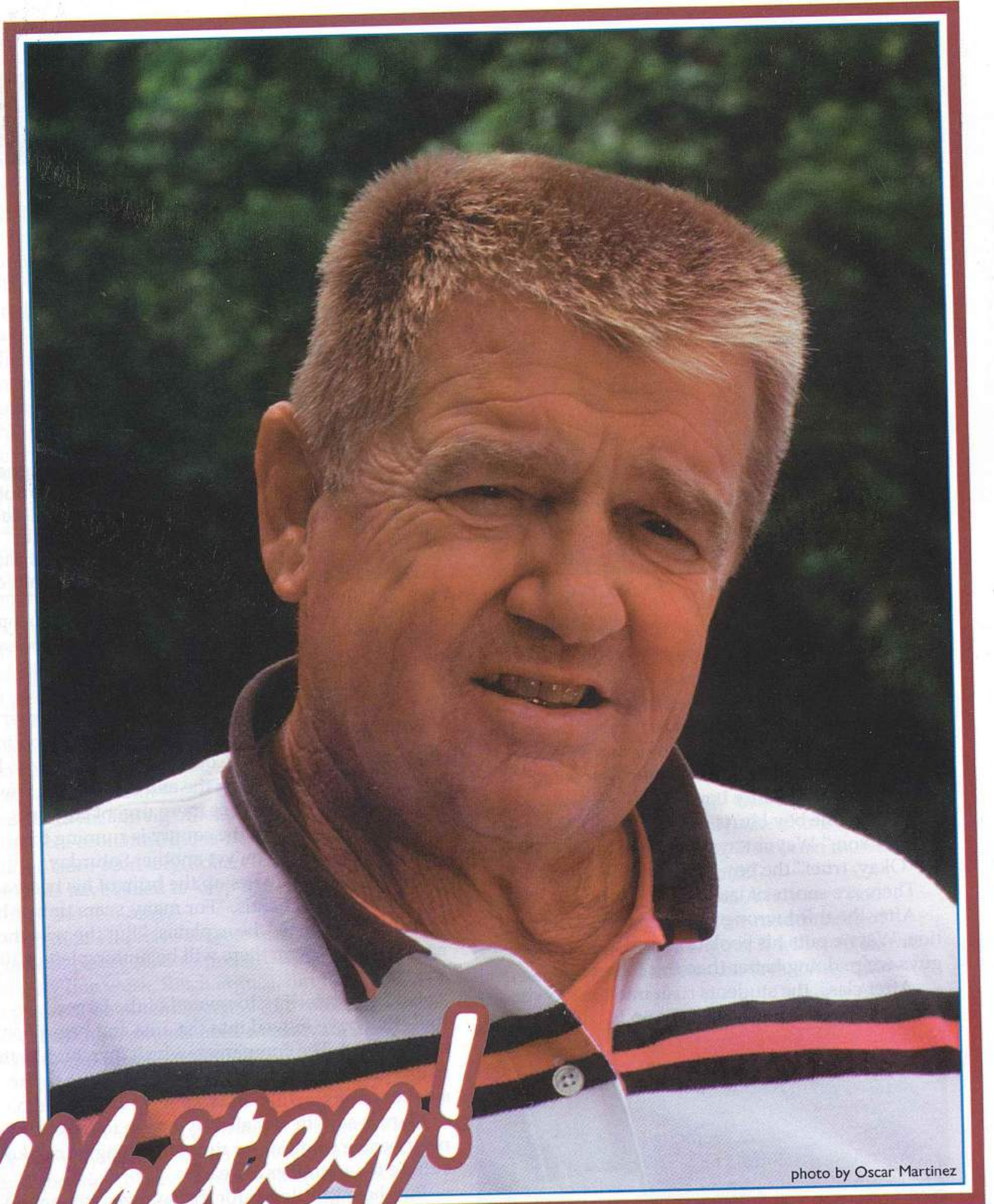


Whitey Herzog!
an exclusive interview

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Whitey!

A personal interview with Missouri's
outrageous first citizen of sports

• story by Jonathan Pitts

Days after his St. Louis Cardinals had won the 1982 World Series, manager Whitey Herzog was summoned to team owner Gussie Busch's office. The billionaire beer baron wanted to offer Herzog something rare in baseball: a lifetime contract. At the time, the frail Busch was 83.

"Tell me something, chief," cracked Herzog, eyes glinting, "Whose lifetime we talkin' about?"

Just that mix of shrewdness, irreverence and charm may define Herzog best. It made him one of big-league baseball's finest, most unpredictable managers for 15 years. And at 63, it still makes him one of the sport's most colorful characters and one of Missouri's most prized citizens.

The famous flattop is still as blond and bristling as it was that dank fall evening 13 years ago when he seized the Cards' first Series trophy since 1967. The man many have called a baseball genius has added a pound or two since he last patrolled the dugout, but his mind still attacks as astutely, his devilish grin as suddenly as ever. Herzog gestures so broadly, paces so feverishly, laughs with such a rumble when he talks baseball, you want to back off and give him room.

His baseball marks are high by any standard, as you might expect of a man whose I.Q. the Army measured at 140 -- easily

within their "genius" range. As a manager, Herzog won six championships -- three AL West pennants with the Royals, three NL flags with the Cards and the World Series title in 1982 -- all in his home state of Missouri.

The Rat

The Herzog legacy transcends stats, though. Far more vividly, fans remember *how* those clubs won.

"His teams were daring," says Kansas City diehard Ron Hemond, a season-ticket holder. "They played hard."

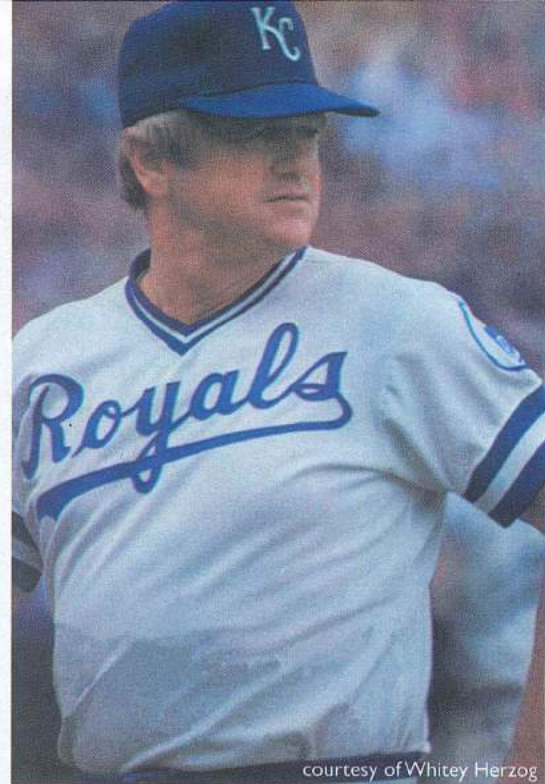
"All those stolen bases," gushes Kim Cohen of St. Louis. "They forced mistakes. Whitey just kept picking their pockets. It made you want to laugh."

"Some days we'd steal nine, 10 bases," Herzog says today, chortling. "It was crazy. I mean, Coleman, McGee, Ozzie. It really was good baseball."

His eyes narrow as he remembers. "But the best compliment I ever got was from a fan. The guy had seen my teams play in Kansas City, he'd seen my teams play in St. Louis. You know what he said? He said, 'When your teams get 10 singles, the fans are entertained.'"

"Now *that's* a compliment. Instead of sittin' on your (behind) waitin' for a home run."

For Herzog, it's a statement of a lifestyle. The ex-skipper still man-



courtesy of Whitey Herzog

**Herzog's mind, and devilish grin,
attack as sharply today as they did in his big-
league managing days.**

ages to merge common sense with radical boldness, a rare thing in a sport long petrified by conservative tradition. Columnist Thomas Boswell of the *Washington Post*, author of four baseball books, captures the Herzog persona when he calls Herzog "our Casey Stengel" and likens him to "the rat who always steals the cheese -- and who makes you smile when he gets it, even if he swiped it from you."

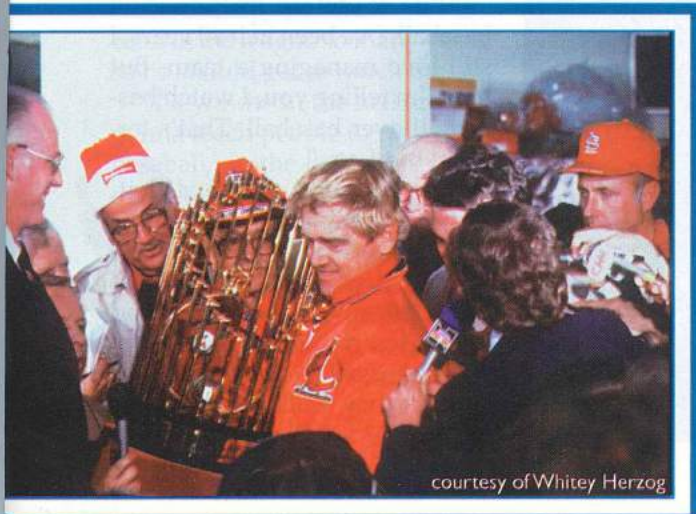
Facing page: Whitey Herzog takes the ills of the modern game almost personally. **Top right:** In 1976, as Royals' skipper, Herzog seemed as cocky as he was smart. **Below left:** With owner Busch, seizing the Cards' World Series trophy in October '82.

Baseball heart

Talk to Herzog for five minutes and you know he belongs as much in baseball as in America's heartland. "Whitey Herzog *is* in baseball, even if he's technically not," says broadcaster Bob Costas, a long-time friend and Herzog booster.

It's soon clear what he means. Herzog assesses the game as sharply as when he ran big-league franchises.

Herzog doesn't deny rumors he's had many offers to do just that. "I'm at a point now where I only do what I want to do," he shrugs. He went to Anaheim to run the California Angels' front office in 1991, for example, as a favor to owner and pal Gene



courtesy of Whitey Herzog



Herzog's career: a summary

Herzog is the only man to have held every significant big-league job from player to executive vice president.

1956-63: Outfielder for six teams, including the Kansas City A's, Yankees and Washington Senators. Lifetime batting average: .257. "Baseball started being good to me as soon as I quit trying to play it," he says.

1964-65: Scout and field coach, A's. As scout, signed 12 players in a year; seven made the majors. A's won three World Series in early '70s. "I almost signed Don Sutton, too, but (owner) Charlie Finley wouldn't let me because (unlike the others) Don didn't have a good nickname."

1966: Third-base coach, New York Mets; special assignment scout, 1967-69; director of player development, 1970-72. "Miracle Mets" of '69 won Series; Mets made the Series but lost in '73. "I was the best third-base coach ever; we were so bad I just waved everybody in."

1973: Manager, Texas Rangers, who finished last, 37 games out. "Worst excuse for a big-league ballclub I ever saw."

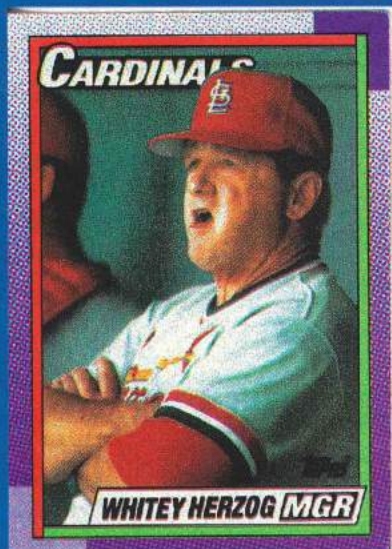
1975-79: Manager, Kansas City Royals, who set an all-time record in '77 by winning 24 of 25 games in September. Lost to Yankees in playoffs three times. "They had Goose Gossage and Sparky Lyle in the bullpen. I had Hungo, Mungo, the Duck and the Bird."

1980-83: GM, St. Louis Cardinals; manager, 1980-90. Made three World Series ('82, '85, '87), winning one ('82). Cards hit fewest home runs in the '80s, yet led NL in runs scored. "Jack Clark was the one guy who didn't sound like he was hittin' underwater."

1991-92: GM, VP, California Angels. Cut payroll in half by promoting unheralded minor leaguers. Picked to finish last in '95, Angels led AL West by eight games Sept. 1. "First thing they told me out there was, 'we got nobody in the minors.' I told them they had five guys in Triple-A that could start for them in a year!"

—Career managing record: 1281 wins, 1125 losses, .532 winning percentage. Herzog ranks in the top 10 among winners of World Series games.—

Left, top to bottom: The skipper projected vivid moods even on his baseball cards -- here, from 1989, 1986 and 1990.



Autry, who befriended Herzog when Whitey was a young Angels coach and picked Herzog's brain nightly. Twenty years later Autry offered his friend \$2 million for two years' consulting work -- and Herzog nearly turned it down. "I didn't want to leave home," he says, but (wife) Mary Lou convinced me to go," he says. "She told me, 'You love the Cowboy (Autry); go help him out.'"

He did. The unknowns he spotted and rushed through the minors -- Gary DiSarcina, Jim Edmonds, Garret Anderson -- now star for the first-place Angels, who are near the top of the AL in run production. Even in retirement Herzog affirms his reputation as a top talent judge.

Switching gears, he snatches up today's *Post-Dispatch*. He predicts half the day's starting pitchers will have earned-run averages higher than 5.00. He's a little off; 10 of 24 exceed the ugly mark.

"I managed 15 years and never had a starter with an ERA that high, except one year. Rich Gale did in Kansas City."

He scans the figures, eyes narrowing. "Damn, there's no pitching," he says, intrigued.

The game this summer

Baseball attendance in the wake of last year's strike is down nearly 25 percent. NBC and ABC have terminated links with the sport. Herzog's survey starts with a grim admission.

"I hate to say this," he says. "But I'm like the fans. If there's an NBA playoff game on (TV) at the same time as a ballgame, I watch the NBA game."

"I've made my livelihood in baseball. I've been in it 40 years. I still love managing a team. But here I'm telling you, I watch basketball over baseball. That's terrible! But I am."

The players' strike did it. "When them owners and the Players' Association took the playoffs and the World Series away," he says, "after the fans had supported the thing all the way up to August 12th, and all of a sudden they walk off, and they had made *no effort to negotiate*,

they took something away from the fans. The fans ain't gonna forget that.

"Baseball has hurt itself so badly," he says. "We've lost fans we're never going to get back."

Baseball and business

"The only way for a manager to stay hired," Herzog once wrote, "is to make money for the ballclub." Having worked on the field, in the dugout and in the front office, he knows better than most the balance between on-field performance and business.

Nowadays, the two are backward.

"The last 10, 15 years, all you hear about is money," he says. "Nobody running the game -- I mean the owners or the Players' Association -- talks about what happens on the field, about anything that could advance the game."

Herzog's opinions tend toward the powerful and pungent, but his strongest may be those on his least favorite people in the game -- player agents. "Most of 'em are asinine, money-hungry," he says. "They never say what they really want."

Legend has it the peripatetic Herzog has bounced a few from his office, but more important than his personal ire is their ignorance of the game. It actively hurts the game, he says. At contract time, agents bring up only glamor stats -- RBIs, home runs, batting average. Herzog has built a career on knowing how little those relate to winning.

"Nothing else is discussed!" he huffs. "You can't say, 'the guy doesn't hustle, he doesn't come to the park on time.' That stuff doesn't matter. All they care about is how this guy or that guy hit so-and-so, and their player's been in the league so many years, so he should get so much money.

"Now how in the hell are you gonna teach people to play team baseball, do the little things that make the game interesting?

"Some guys don't even want to hit-and-run anymore," he adds. "They're afraid they'll make an out and lose 10 points off their battin' average. The average fan don't realize that. The writers don't say it, but that's what's happening. It's why the game's no good today."



courtesy of Whitley Herzog

Herzog has founded a career on angling for every edge -- and still does exactly that.

As a manager, Herzog endlessly wangled on-field advantage from such insights. His Cardinal teams got ink for stolen-base records, for instance, but he finagled many less visible edges.

"Hell, the best baserunner I ever managed was Darrell Porter," he says of the slow-footed Royals and Cardinals catcher who became World Series MVP in 1982. "(He) used the utmost of his ability to become a hell of a baserunner. I don't mean steals, I mean going from first to third, taking an extra base." One extra base, Herzog knows, can lead to a run not otherwise scored; over a year, it can mean dozens. Few track such developments. Herzog thrives on them.

"Porter was the best .220 hitter I ever saw," he adds, snapping off another oxymoron as sharp as a John Tudor curve. "When he made an out, he'd advance the runner."

Herzog kept fastidious stats on such plays, filling piles of notebooks with color-coded data. As a result, his Cards usually stumped baseball forecasters, finishing last in home runs, for example, but near the top in runs. "We came close to Roger Maris's home run record most years," Herzog jokes, referring to his late pal's 1961 mark. "I mean *as a team*."

Above: Herzog's closeness with owner Gussie Busch (here sharing the company product with his favorite employee) helped bring him unparalleled power as a big-league manager/GM. "All he told me (about trades) was, 'Let me know what you're doing before it hits the papers,'" Herzog recalls.

Show-Me personality

Herzog's brash, energetic style casts him, as it has since 1975, as a kind of ultimate Show-Me state personality. Missouri fans loved his teams so much they set six club attendance records in 15 years. The Royals never dreamed

of drawing 2 million fans a season before his arrival, he says -- but topped the figure his last two years there. Even in baseball-mad St. Louis, Herzog teams set gate records. Only twice had *any* big-league franchise drawn 3 million in a year; his Cards did it twice.

Characters in the Game

Casey Stengel, legendary manager:

"He'd say, 'Butcher boy! Butcher boy!' You'd say, 'What the hell's he talkin' about?' Well, he wants you to chop the ball down, fake a bunt and chop it on the ground, see? My first spring, I never knew what the hell Casey was talkin' about."

Joaquin Andujar, Cardinals pitcher 1981-85:

"He didn't always have a full deck. You were sittin' on a firecracker. We got him from Houston. He hated (Astros manager) Bill Virdon, and Bill and I are good friends. I called Bill up and said, 'How come this guy don't like you? I've never known a ballplayer not to like you.'

"He said, 'Whitey, the guy wants to pitch every day! I got Ryan, Sutton and Niekro, and he wants to pitch every damn day.' So I made the trade. He really pitched good for me."

(Andujar was the only NL pitcher in the '80s with back-to-back 20-win seasons.)

Vince Coleman, outfielder, Cards 1985-89 and Royals 1994-95:

"Nobody in history could steal third like Vince. (In '85) he was our catalyst. He come up and just played like hell -- 109 stolen bases, and I didn't bring him up till May."

John Tudor, Cards pitcher 1985-88, 1990:

"John did more with less than any



courtesy of Whitey Herzog

pitcher I've ever seen. He was uncanny; he never (threw a curve) to a righthanded hitter. Just changed speeds, didn't throw hard.

"(In 1990, we) wanted to sign him to a two-year contract. He said, 'No, I'm only gonna pitch one more year.'

"I said, 'Hey, they want to give you a two-year contract, guaranteed! Take it! Take the money!'

"'No,' he said, 'I'm only gonna pitch one more year.'

"He never (took it). I love the guy; he's got principles."

Ewing Kauffman, late Royals owner:

"When I told him about the problems he was having with drugs (on his team), he took the players' side. He told me I was full of (garbage). That's how I got in trouble there. They was his little darlings at the time. I knew the first time I didn't win, I was gone."

George Brett, ex-Royals third baseman, and Ozzie Smith, Cards shortstop:

"I managed 15 years, and the players who were the best off the field, with the fans -- both of 'em superstars -- were George Brett and Ozzie Smith. George was a young kid, single. He always took time for the kids. He's still a good friend. (But) I've never seen anybody as good as Ozzie."

August Busch Jr., late Cards owner:

"He gave me more power than anybody in baseball since Connie Mack. He trusted me. I'd make a trade (and) tell him; he'd just say, 'Wonderful!' Hell, he didn't even know who I was talkin' about!"



Herzog commandeers a Redbird mound conference (above) and beams in Royals blue (top).

Five years after he left his last managing job, Missourians still can't get enough of Whitey. "People in St. Louis treat Mary Lou and me like kings," marvels Herzog. "I guarantee you, if you and I went down to the shopping center right now, it wouldn't be five minutes before somebody'd come up, shake my hand and say, 'Thanks for 10 years of great baseball.'" He says it in wonderment, the truant schoolboy who can't quite believe he keeps getting the best grade in the class.

Fishing and firefighters

The word "retirement" doesn't suit Herzog; his world is more like a form of relentless fun. "It must be hard keeping up with Whitey," says new Cards GM Walt Jocketty on learning of *Missouri Magazine's* project. "Not many people can do that."

It isn't easy. Herzog seems to have left baseball only to free up time to charge about doing the things he enjoys even more -- visiting grandkids, searching out Missouri fishing holes, driving to Denver, Branson or Louisville to visit friends, family and fans.

Columnist Boswell wrote in 1990 that everyone in the game agreed that Herzog just plain had a better time than anybody else.

He still does.

"Damn, I'm busier now than I was when I was workin'," he says, trailing a beefy hand through the pale brush-cut. He ticks off, from memory, a slate of fishing trips and golf dates that will keep him busy into late fall.

"Last year it was like I was on the golf tour," he laughs. "I'm trying to stay in the state more now. There's just too much to offer here."

Herzog doesn't enjoy golf much. ("It's like when I was playing baseball; the more I play, the worse I get," he says, though he breaks 85). He takes charity work seriously, though, serving, for example, as spokesman for the National Volunteer Firefighters Association.

But a lifelong passion for fish-

ing grips him most strongly. Fans may recall Herzog making time to troll for bass during two St. Louis World Series -- to the amazement of those who revere the game more than he does.

In fact, Herzog always said he'd quit managing when it wasn't fun anymore -- and did, when his Cardinals grew listless in 1990. "You're looking at the world's highest-paid fisherman," he told stunned reporters then.

Not much has changed.

"Damn, I love to fish," he says, awe in his voice.

A stationary home

The fishing -- and just about everything else, to hear Herzog talk -- is best in Missouri, where he has lived more than 30 years. "So many times somebody talks me into going here fishing, going there hunting, and I can't wait to get home," he says. "You can do anything you want right here! Why leave Missouri?"

The Show-Me affection is mutual. Last summer, *Missouri Magazine* editors showed a Herzog portrait to 25 mallgoers in Columbia. Twenty-four identified Herzog; 20 called him Whitey. Most asked when he was returning to baseball.

Herzog, still younger than many managers, hedges. He rel-

ishes the time he finally has for Mary Lou, his childhood sweetheart, wife of 40-plus years and the person he most respects and listens to. The Herzogs often hit the road to visit their three grown children -- none in baseball -- who live in Colorado, Kentucky and a suburb of Kansas City.

Herzog brags about them more than any career milestone. "Mary Lou did such a great job with them," he marvels. "When you're in my game, you're away an awful lot."

Herzog, who barely graduated high school, takes touching pride in their academic success. "All of 'em got their master's degrees," he says more than once.

Today the Herzogs live in a roomy south St. Louis County home a few three-wood shots from Sunset Hills Country Club. New in 1988, the house speaks of affluence but not pretense. Herzog has all the sports memorabilia you'd expect but displays it modestly -- a row of prized caps pegged above the bar, a uniform framed on the wall.

He gets less excited by trophies

than by old black-and-whites, many of them showing a young, reed-thin Whitey sporting the same killer grin he wields today.

They stir memories. He gazes at an image of his first manager and mentor, Casey Stengel, and waxes downright emotional. "Could he ever (b.s.)! (And) he

Herzog boasts more about Mary Lou, his children and his home state than about any of his baseball exploits.

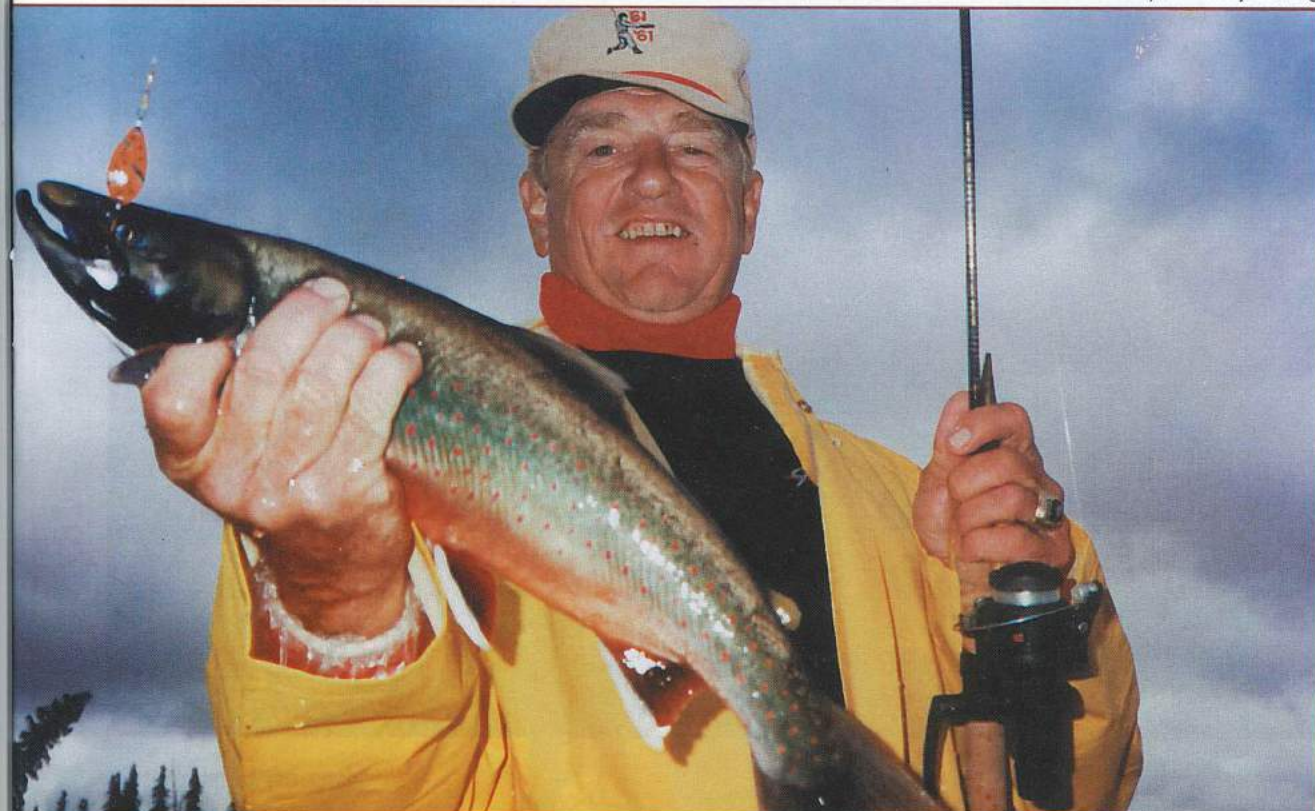
could drink all night. That's why the writers loved him; he took 'em in the bar and signed the check. He was so strong, that man."

This home is the Herzogs' second stationary one. For years they lived in a trailer they hauled from one of Whitey's stops to the next. Their first real home was in Independence; Herzog, who studied engineering during off-seasons, built it himself.

Close friend and neighbor Roger Maris, the ex-Yankee great, helped mix mortar for it the same year he slugged his legendary 61 home runs.

Below: Herzog hates to leave Missouri in the month of June, even for a few days. "That's when the fishing's best," he says. He favors the deep, cold-water strip-mining pits that dot the St. Louis area. Here, he brandishes a beaut he landed on a Canadian trip this year.

courtesy of Whitey Herzog



Bottom left: Herzog scans today's baseball landscape as keenly as he did his turf-covered home fields. **Top right, facing page:** precious caps, representing each team he has worked for, hang in the Herzog rathskellar. **Bottom right:** proud granddad Whitey hoists Kristen Urick, now 15, at a Busch Stadium Family Day.

At heart

You can't be at the Herzog home long without seeing Whitey's fidgety workman's spirit. He clambers on hands and knees to tinker with the pool thermometer. He jabs at an uneven seam in the deck, which he'll fix himself. He gestures to a wide stump in a corner of the yard; he'd helped fell the tree.

"Had to come down," he chortles. "Full of red ants."

The story merges with one about wild turkeys that, for some reason, had nested near his door. "The mother had 13 babies," he confides, sounding a little like a proud dad.

Living in Missouri keeps Herzog in touch with the simple life he grew up with in New Athens, Ill., near St. Louis. He and Mary Lou still play bridge and pinochle with friends from childhood. He numbers school buddies among his fishing pals.

More than that, Missouri has a slightly mysterious meaning to Herzog. "It's funny how this has all worked," he says, pointing out that his first big-league tryout was at a Yankees' camp in Branson, his first managing job (during his Army days) in Fort Leonard Wood.

Given his eventual big-league success, Herzog's life has come full circle in the Show-Me state.

"I really, really loved Kansas City," he recalls of

the area he called home for 30 years. "Kansas City is not a city. It's more like country living in the city. I had a place in Independence where I had cattle in the back yard."

St. Louis has more urban blight, he feels, but the woods fringing his property help.

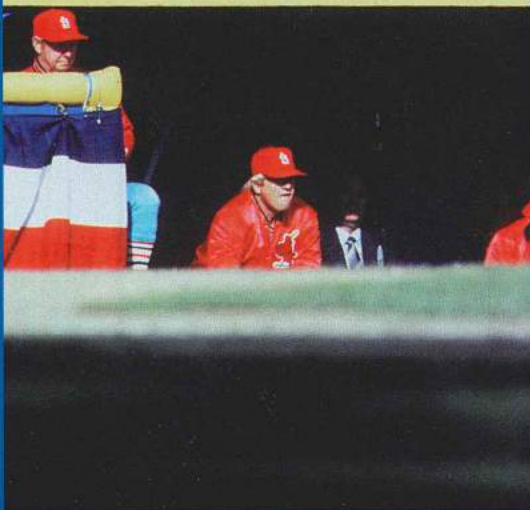
"At heart I'm a Midwesterner," he says, a man utterly at home in his woodsman's back yard. "I've never felt as comfortable on either coast. This is really where I be-

The state of Missouri has a powerful and slightly mysterious meaning in the Herzogs' world.

long."

Pitching ideas

Retired or not, Herzog is never far from the sport he loves. He catches parts of several games a day on his satellite dish and en-



A Herzog Sampler: Ways to Improve the Game

Realign. Get rid of the American and National Leagues; start one league each for the West Coast, Midwest and East Coast. "At the end of the year you'd have a hell of a playoffs."

Eliminate outmoded rules. A World Series rule (instituted to foil A's owner Charlie Finley in the '70s) says that no injured player can be replaced on the roster. The rule is counterproductive; Herzog feels it cost him a crack at two Series.

Get rid of arbitration. Herzog feels the players' right to arbitration actually harms them. Rather than risk a big loss in arbitration, teams won't offer contracts to "the mediocre veteran player" at all. "I was that kind of player," he says. "I've got a soft spot for them, I guess."

Focus on marketing. Compared to the the NBA and NFL, baseball markets its stars poorly. "I've got five grandsons. Three of 'em don't know who Ken Griffey Jr. is. I'll bet four of 'em don't know who the hell Barry Bonds is. But Shaq O'Neal? They all know him."

Have neutral-site World Series. "This'll never happen, it's just me talking. But what if you had a neutral site? Play it out over seven days, no days off, make it a true test of starting pitching. No travel dates. It 'd be a national extravaganza."



photo by Jonathan Pitts

gages endlessly with baseball's problems.

Just as Herzog's managing techniques bordered on a worldview, his critiques of modern ball verge on social commentary.

"There are three big reasons (for poor pitching)," he says, locking eyes with the listener. His knitted eyebrows embody the deep personal involvement he brings to problems that interest him. "No. 1, the ball's juiced-up. Number two, the strike zone is (only) 12 x 12 (inches). Number three, pitchers aren't building up their arms."

Only Herzog, in slow-to-change baseball, embraces controversy with such cheer. Ask any GM, manager or owner if balls are more tightly wound today, and he'll hem and haw. Herzog laughs. He says what he sees.

Baseball's strike-zone problem is a puzzle, though. "I don't know why umpires won't call strikes," he says, shaking his large head. "(In a) game last night with the Yankees, (Seattle manager Lou) Piniella makes a move; he brings in this kid to pitch. Two men on, Yankees losing 7-6. Kid throws a 2-2 pitch right down the pipe to Boggs. I mean, *middle of the plate*. Umpire calls ball three!

"Next pitch, home run. Yankees go up, 9-7. I mean, *that's the game!*" he marvels, launching his arms skyward.

He shakes his head like an irritated bear drying itself off. "Everybody knows there's a shortage of big-league players. I think you've got a shortage of major-league umpires," he says.

Herzog brings the same Show-Me candor to his views on pitching. Few problems fascinate him more.

Not many kids play on their own today, he says, so they miss the countless innings that build up arms. "It's all organized now," he says with something like grief. "They wait for the parents to set everything up."

Because of that, pitching has weakened. As a scout he'd often see four no-hitters a week in amateur ball, but few pitchers throw hard today. "One kid throws 90 (mph), everybody goes (ape)," he says.

The problem carries into the majors. "We baby pitchers," he declares. "They're not throwing *enough!* Now, a guy throws 110

pitches and he's out. What's 110 pitches? *That's* how you get guys hurt -- not extending 'em."

Crazy

Though he's not employed in the game, the Herzog mind tilts at baseball problems like a bank of computers. His data comes from ESPN, box scores, the papers and hundreds of friends in and around the game.

He's among the few who brim with ideas on its future. Many call to mind the cliched line from a hundred movies: "It's so crazy, it just might work!"

For Herzog, it usually has. This is the man who banished popular Royals slugger John Mayberry for showing up flagrantly unprepared for a playoff game. He sent St. Louis institutions such as Ted Simmons and Keith Hernandez packing because they didn't fit his plans -- or his sense of how pros should act.

In each case, hometown fans howled in protest, but what seemed lunatic proved visionary. "Everybody said I was nuts (before '82)," he chuckles.

"They said, 'Whitey's giving too much away.'"

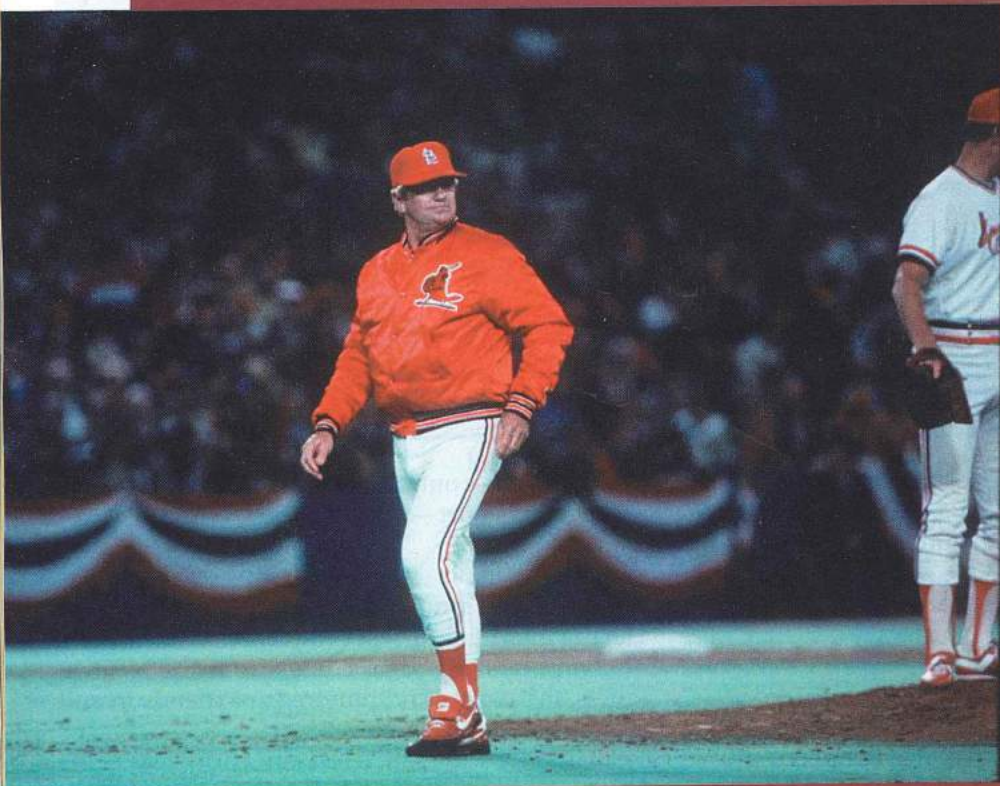
But Herzog had a plan.

Even as Hernandez's Mets got the headlines, Herzog's Cards, their speed tailored to Busch's cavernous dimensions, dominated the N.L. in the '80s, reaching three Series to the Mets' one.

"The Mets are still trying to figure out how Herzog got the



courtesy of Whitey Herzog



That Show-me Series

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the "1-70" World Series between the Cards and Royals, which K.C. won in seven. Herzog's Cards lost the sixth game after an infamously blown ninth-inning call by umpire Don Denkinger.

On the call:

"I said to Don, 'Did Todd (Worrell) miss the bag?'"

"He said, 'No, the runner beat the play.'"

"I said, 'Well, I know he didn't beat the play, I could see that from the dug-out. I thought maybe Todd missed the bag.'"

"And he said, 'No, he beat it.'"

"Nobody knew who Denkinger was until he blew that call. He's gonna go down in history as the umpire who blew the damn call in the World Series that made the Royals champions."

On how he'd handle the call differently:

"I've had 10 years to think about this. What would have happened if I'd (gone) to the home-plate umpire and said, 'I want to talk to the commissioner.' And I'd have got the commissioner to come down, which was (Peter) Ueberroth, and said, 'Pete, let me

ask you something. This game is 2-1 (Cards), and we should have a man out at first base, nobody on. Instead, we got one man on and nobody out. The umpire admitted he blew the call. Everybody in the world knows he missed the call. And you know he missed the call. Now, if you don't change that, and that man ain't out, I'm giving you the game; I'm taking my team off the field.'"

"What would have happened?"

On why umpires should have no league affiliation:

"We went to Kansas City and won both games there. So now the umpires are traveling (to St. Louis) and saying, 'Hey, we got an American League umpire behind the plate next game, and we don't want our league embarrassed.' I'm not saying they're crooked. I'm just saying they're human."

"In the third game, Saberhagen pitched against Andujar. (Andujar's) strike zone was six by six; Saberhagen's was 22 by 22. Saberhagen pitched great, but I could have pitched great with that strike zone."

On the season as a whole:

"We were picked to finish last. We lost Bruce Sutter. I was supposed to be the first manager to get fired. And we should have won the World Series. "That's the way it goes."

better of them," Boswell writes in his latest book, *Cracking the Show*. "They had the talent; Whitey got the rings."

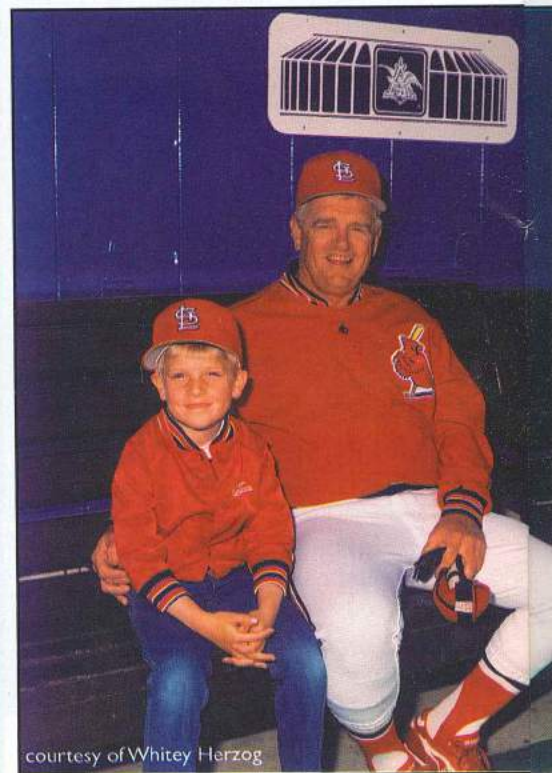
"Whitey Herzog is not only baseball's most compelling spokesman," agrees Costas. "He's one of the best baseball men on the planet."

Forward and back

Some of Herzog's authority in the game rests in paradox. For instance, his ideas look forward and draw on history at the same time. "We've got to get back to things that made the game work 20, 25 years ago," he says. At the same time, he adds, "you've got to have a plan. You have to stay ahead of the hounds!"

Herzog actually proposes abandoning the National and American Leagues in favor of regional leagues. He suggests realigning divisions to promote local rivalries. He calls for more weekend series, eliminating salary arbitration, and chucking a draft system that favors rich teams.

His ideas can sound flaky, but they come from a man who has built championship teams time and again. From the "Miracle Mets" of 1969 through the early '70s Oakland A's dynasty and his championship Missouri clubs, he has helped found winners at ev-



courtesy of Whitey Herzog

ery level. "Herzog may know more baseball than any man in history," writes Boswell.

Indeed, not many can combine intellect and ballyard know-how as Herzog does. He appreciates a scholarly bent (Bart Giamatti, ex-

ject.

A builder

Three hours with one of the game's masters ends where it should — in front of Herzog's fridge (a seven-foot replica of a

Top left, facing page: Herzog, like every Cardinal fan, still mulls that fateful World Series call of 10 years ago. Bottom, center: in the Busch dug-out palling with grandson John Urick. Below: with Mary Lou, wife and best friend of more than 40 years, at their St. Louis home.

Herzog for commissioner? "I'd jump in a minute," he says -- but only if baseball would let him keep his office in Missouri.

Yale president, was his favorite commissioner) yet can tell a thousand tales in the craggy tongue of the baseball lifer. He can recall pitch counts from decades before or assess the pricing strategies of new stadiums. Yet he still gets a hoot out of "all the fat people" in line at concession stands.

"I enjoy watching the people more than what's going on on the field," he laughs. "I can't believe all the (garbage) they eat."

In the late '80s and early '90s, Herzog was often named as a commissioner or league-president candidate. The former office is still empty today. Would he accept it?

Herzog dismisses the notion — but, if you listen hard, hints otherwise. "I don't think I'd make a good commissioner," he says. "I always say exactly what I think. I've always been brash and opinionated. Some people in baseball don't like that."

Also, the post would call for a move to New York, where he says he wouldn't take the job for any sum; he'd be too far from his passions.

Interestingly, though, Herzog names several commissioners and league presidents who have had their offices in the Midwest. "If you're going to have (the offices all) in the same place, let's have them in a Midwestern city, where you're closer to both coasts," he says crankily.

What if he could have the commissioner's job and stay in St. Louis?

"(Hell), I'd jump in a minute," he says. Then he changes the sub-

Budweiser can) hoisting a few beers (all Busch brands), talking baseball. The lack of quality catching. The potential of veteran pitcher Steve Ontiveros. Herzog's two sons, whom he never pushed to play the sport. Filming Miller Lite and Busch ads.

But the mind wanders to an image from earlier: the stout Herzog pointing to that stump in the yard. Herzog had then gestured to the opposite corner. A row of steps there, framed by wooden beams, sloped down the hillside toward the woods.

Herzog had helped hew them from the timber he'd chopped down.

Herzog has made a career cutting the good wood from the rot -- and of fashioning from it something sturdy, useful, even beautiful.

Could he do it again in his sport?

Just don't ask Whitey Herzog to leave Missouri.



photo by Jonathan Pitts