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Billy Who?

Carl Stanislaus

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By Carl Stanislaus

In 1892, the Dalton Gang held up a Katy train at Adair Station, killed two men, and got away with \$27,000. My story begins fourteen years later in 1906. Since I don't have a story about Johnny Bench of Binger, I'm telling one about another member of the Baseball Hall of Fame who played for the Yankees in the fifties and sixties and one whom all Oklahomans also proudly claim.

Three years after the first World Series was played, the John Edward Mantle family and several relatives traveled in two covered wagons from Jefferson City, Missouri to their new home near Adair in Northeast Oklahoma.

One of the mule-team drivers was Charley Mantle, who later became grandfather of Mickey Mantle. Charley went on and made his home in Spavinaw in Mayes County. Elvin Clark "Mutt" Mantle was reared there; and after Mickey was born on October 31, 1931, the family moved to Commerce, Oklahoma, in the heart of the mining country.

I was working for a home and auto supply company in 1953 in Mickey Mantle Country. Lavell, Mickey's mother, was a regular customer and purchased many items for her home and car. I remember selling her a set of auto seat covers and taking them to the shop for installation. It was evident because of the stacks of sports magazines, many with Mickey's picture on the front cover, in the back seat of her car that she was proud of her homerun hitter.

Mickey usually came home in the off season and sometimes brought a teammate. One winter afternoon he walked into the store with a buddy. I asked them if I could help them, and Mickey said, "We're just looking around." I didn't recognize the

young man with him; he seemed to be quiet and unassuming. I learned later that he had a jovial, even brash, nature—even to the point that he would kick dirt on an umpire's shoes. This slightly built boy would one day manage two major-league teams in the World Series and be at the helm of the Yankees on and off for years.

They went to the sporting goods section, checked out the shotguns, talked about hunting quail and duck, and then took down some fishing rods. They flipped them back and forth in the air as if they were casting for a big one. There was a nearby batrack loaded with Louisville Sluggers. Mickey, who used a bat ten ounces lighter than the "Babe," picked up several bats and tested the weight—then handed a thirty-three-ounce one to his friend.

The wiry youngster, in turn, got the feel of the hard wood, lifted it to his shoulder, and swung it mightily as though he were hitting one out of the park. They laughed and as they left the store, Mickey was still kidding his friend about the big hit.

After they had gone, I asked another salesman, "Who was that little guy with 'The Mick'?"

"That was Billy Martin!"
"Billy Who?"

(CARL STANISLAUS of Chickasha is now retired; therefore, he can find time to pursue his favorite avocation, writing.) *

Design By Tommy Campbell