

A Salute to Our Captain



Some on hand for yesterday's services included famous players such as Ralph Branca and outfielder Al Gionfriddo. It wouldn't be a Dodger event though without the famous Dodger Sym-Phony. Photo by Josh Simons



(Above) Just like old times. A group of men stand and talk about baseball. A passion among Dodger fans. It was the same 50 years ago, when the Dodgers were the toast of the town. Photo by Josh Simons



(Left) Brooklyn Dodgers' Harold "Pee Wee" Reese slides home with a run in the third inning for the Dodgers as Cub catcher, Clyde McCullough, right, waits for the throw from outfielder Charlie Gilbert in a game at Ebbets Field, May 17, 1942. The cause of death is not yet known for the Kentucky native who died Saturday, August 14. AP File Photo

By Josh Simons,
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

BAY RIDGE — When old Brooklyn Dodger fans and Bay Ridge residents gathered in Saint Patrick's Church on Fourth Avenue here yesterday, it was a service to honor and celebrate the memory of a great baseball player. They came to salute their captain, Pee Wee Reese, one of the Dodger greats of all-time.

Reese was found dead on Saturday, August 14, at the age of 81. It was not immediately known where the Kentucky native died or the cause of death.

"Great" is what Reese was in more ways than one and the event was a way to celebrate his life as a leader," said one priest, who expressed "admiration for the wizardry and leadership of Pee Wee Reese."

One priest called Reese a "humanitarian and respected leader of men." He described how Reese was a leader when the country needed someone to follow. He rose "to the occasion time and time again."

Marty Adler, the President of the Brooklyn Dodger Hall of Fame, emphasized Reese's commitment to his team, saying that "stats don't tell the story." His plaque illustrates Reese's "intangible qualities as a leader."

Tom Knight, the official Brooklyn Dodger historian, told a story of perhaps Reese's only moment of notoriety. In his 1,000th game in front of his favorite umpire Babe Pinella, Reese struck out. He threw his bat to the ground and was con-

sequently thrown out of the game.

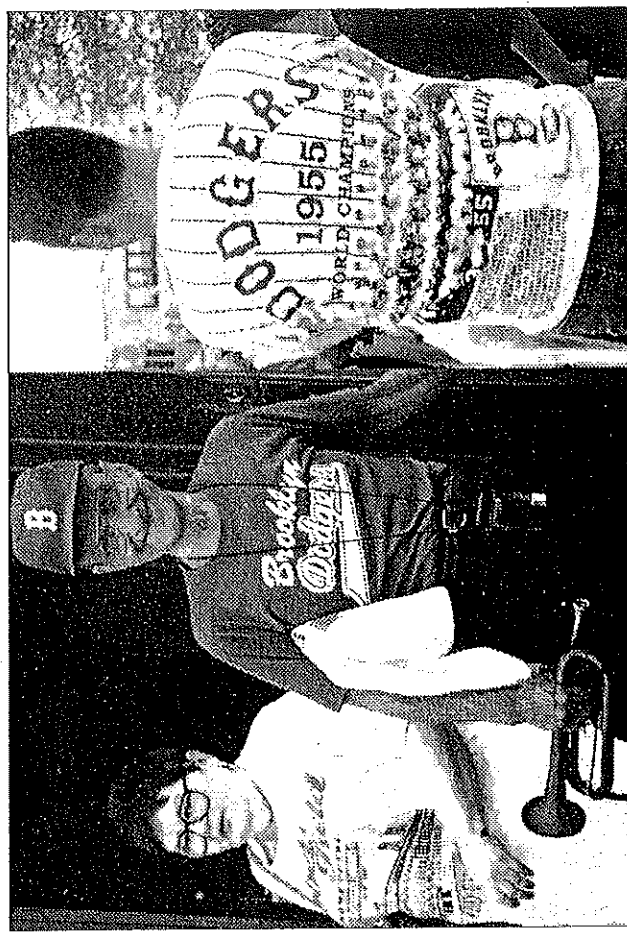
But, "That was probably the only time he was thrown out of a game," said Knight. Besides that incident, "he was a classy guy in every way, even in the way he took a third strike call."

A reporter from Newsday proposed that a memorial statue be built in his honor and placed at Borough Hall. The statue would recapture the moment when Reese put his arm around Jackie Robinson to show his acceptance of Robinson into baseball. It is considered to be one of Reese's most famous gestures.

Lenny Tucker, an old Dodger fan, felt that it was significant to have the service in the neighborhood because of all the ex-ballplayers that lived in Bay Ridge. He described the Dodgers as a "neighborhood team."

Guests included Joe Hodges, relative of former Dodger first baseman Gil Hodges; former catcher Joe Pignatano, outfielder Al Gionfriddo, and pitcher Ralph Branca; and the Dodger Sym-Phony, a famous band of musicians who used to play during Dodger games at Ebbets field.

Adler concluded his speech by describing what Pee Wee would do if he were at his own service. Reese would encourage everyone to root for the Mets and bring a National League World Series back to New York, Adler said. He would also speak on the importance of Gil Hodges being inducted into the Hall of Fame. Most importantly, he would thank everyone for remembering him, a great man and ball player.



Brooklyn will never forget its Dodgers. Especially these two men. With Dodger shirts and hats such as these, they will continue to remember the Dodgers. Photo by Josh Simons



Pee Wee Reese, second from left, is shown in this April 15, 1947 photo with fellow Brooklyn Dodgers John Jorgenson, left, Ed Stanky, second from right, and Jackie Robinson, right. Reese's leadership helped smooth Robinson's entry in baseball as its first black member. AP File Photo