

tern of residential segregation through the Detroit metropolitan area." In March 1972 he ruled that he had the legal authority to consider metropolitan schools in an integration plan. In June he issued his busing order.

Because Roth's order is now under a stay issued by the federal appeals court in Cincinnati, it is unlikely that there will be any massive busing in the Detroit metropolitan area this fall. Roth's panel says, however, that if the court action is completed by November 1—and if Roth is upheld—busing in seven of sixteen school clusters in which the fifty-three districts are grouped could begin in February 1973. Complete integration, the panel says, could be achieved by September 1973.

There is a good likelihood that the appeals court will uphold Roth's order; the three judges who comprise that court have the reputation of being fairly liberal. But a strong possibility remains that, if the case goes to the Supreme Court, Roth will be overruled at least to the extent that busing will be restricted to Detroit. No one has any real doubt that Roth's decision that *de jure* (by law) segregation exists in Detroit will stand. What is at issue is whether Roth has the power to involve the suburbs in the case.

William Penn, executive director of the Detroit branch of the NAACP, sees busing whites in from their suburbs as the only way to pressure them into accepting their responsibility to assist in the education of the black and the poor. As things stand now, Penn says, the main concern of white businessmen, industrialists, newspaper editors, and the like is simply that Detroit's freeways be kept in good enough repair to allow them quick access to, and a fast getaway from, their offices, the shopping centers, the hotels, and Lions and Tigers games.

Former Detroit schools superintendent Norman Drachler, forced out of his post because of his liberal inclinations, says the shrillness of the debate over busing is both a measure of the people the educational system has produced and, in turn, an indictment of that system and of our society. Busing will bring turmoil and friction, Drachler concedes, but it is better, he thinks, to face up to this now than to allow the problems created by segregation to grow more serious. C. L. Golightly, a black member of the board of education, says that the behavior of Detroit-area citizens today reminds him of that of citizens of Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi in the 1950s and early 1960s. Southern states have moved to integrate their systems, and busing has become an element in that integration, Golightly points out. "Here in Detroit" he adds, "we're just behind the times." □

Love Song to Willie Mays

BY JOE FLAHERTY

SHEA STADIUM, N. Y.—When Willie Mays was traded by the San Francisco Giants and came back to New York last spring, many fans—may God forgive them—argued a cold case: What could the forty-one-year-old center fielder with a waning batting average and a waxing temperament do for the Mets? To those of us who had grown up debating whether the first person of the Holy Trinity was Mantle, Snider, or Mays, Willie's return was a lover's reprieve from limbo. No matter that the Mets had been amazin'—a part of our hearts was coming home from San Francisco.

As a teen-ager in the vociferous borough of Brooklyn, I was a Giants fan. My Galway father reasoned that any team good enough for John McGraw was good enough for him and his offspring. So the Flaherty boys, rather than take a twenty-minute saunter through Prospect Park to Ebbets Field, made their odyssey to 155th Street in Manhattan—the Polo Grounds. In that sprawling boardinghouse I had to content myself with the likes of Billy Jurges, Buddy Kerr, and a nearly retired Mel Ott, whose kicking style at bat was already a memory. Of course, we had Sal Maglie, that living insult to Gillette, who thought the shortest distance between two points was a curve. But the enemy in Brooklyn was as star-laden as MGM: Reese, Robinson, Furillo, Cox, Hodges, Campanella, *et al.*

Then Willie Mays arrived and gave us respectability; even the enemy fan was in awe of him. He had a body forged on another planet. After I saw him bound across the 155th Street prairie to haul down Vic Wertz's 1954 World Series drive, no ballet dancer could ever make me swoon again.

Yet, looking back on the final playoff game against the Dodgers in 1951, I think his comet could have sputtered. I was in the stands that day with a gang of other hookey players. Mays was young—too young, too unsure—a kid trying to please his surrogate father, Durocher. If he had come to the plate in the ninth, something dire surely would have happened. He would have dropped the bat, or lunged at the ball like a drunk climbing stairs. He didn't flub, of course, since Bobby Thomson's home run ended the series with Mays still on deck.

The mind's eye conjures up the scene as the rest of the Giants rushed to home

Joe Flaherty reports for The Village Voice.

plate to greet Thomson. Willie, who had been standing right there, should have been one of the inner circle, but for a moment he was paralyzed. Then he began to jump up and down on the outer fringes, a chocolate Pogo stick trying to leap over the mob, leaping higher than all. He was acting like a man who had just received the midnight call from the governor.

Now it is Sunday, May 14, 1972. This is no sun-drenched debut of a rookie; the sky is overcast and threatening. The opponents are those lamsters from Cogan's Bluff and Willie's recent classmates, the San Francisco Giants. Shea Stadium is as displeasing as ever. Sitting high up in the stands, you feel like a fly alone on the edge of a bowl. (The ideal baseball park packs you all in together and forces you to bend down in a communion of concentration. Ebbets Field was such a park.) Today, as usual, the fans are fatuous. The kids, like groupies for the Rotarians, are carrying signs saying, "Hicksville Loves the Mets" and "Huntington Loves the Mets." Alas, Babylon cannot be far behind. When Willie Mays steps out on the sidelines to warm up with Jim Fregosi, the crowd, drooling like an affectionate sheepdog, cheers. A Little League of the mind.

But there is still a sprinkling of magic in the stands. The black men and women from the subway wars of long ago are here: the men in straw hats, alternating a cigar and a beer under the awnings of their mustaches; the women with their bouquet bottoms (greens, reds, yellows, purples) grown slightly wide with age. They won't yell, "Charge!" when the organ demands it (that insulting machine is a gift from the Los Angeles Dodgers), nor will they cheer a sideline game of catch. They have seen the gods cavort through too many series to pay tribute to curtain-raising antics.

Mays is in the leadoff spot. I watch him closely, for the pundits have been playing taps for Willie lately. Many aging ballplayers go all at once, I know, and his .184 batting average is not reassuring. Nothing much is learned from his first at-bat. He backs away from "Sudden Sam" McDowell's inside fast ball, betraying a trait that is becoming more noticeable lately. He doesn't feverishly bail out, just steps back apprehensively. The indignity is small, like an elegant man in a Homburg, nodding off in a hot subway. Finally, Mays walks, and Harrelson and Agee walk after him. Then Staub, disturbed by the clutter, cleans the bases with a grand slam. Mets, 4-0.

I notice, when Mays comes up again, that he shops for pitches more than he used to. Where once there was unbridled aggressiveness, there is now a slight begging quality. This time patience pays a

price, and Mays is caught looking at a third strike. The head of the man in the Homburg slumps onto the shoulder of the woman next to him.

At the top of the fifth the Giants rough up Met pitcher Ray Sadecki for four runs. In the course of their rally they pinch-hit for their lefty McDowell; now Mays will have to hit against the Giants' tall, hard-throwing righthander Don Carrithers. Bad omens abound. If a lefthander can brush Willie back, what will a righthander do? The game is tied, and he will have to abandon caution. Worse, the crowd demands a miracle. Mays is an old man, this aging fan's mind reasons; let him bring back the skeleton of a fish, a single.

But even former residents of Mount Olympus now and then remember their old address. Mays hits a 3-2 pitch toward the power alley in left center—a double at least. I find myself standing, body bent backward, like a saxophone player humping a melody, until the ball clears the fence for a home run. The rest is simple: Jim McAndrew in relief holds the Giants for four innings, and the Mets win, 5-4.

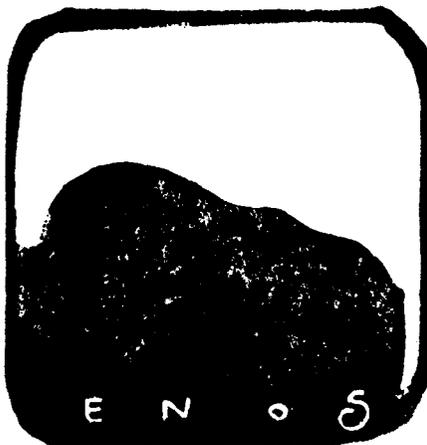
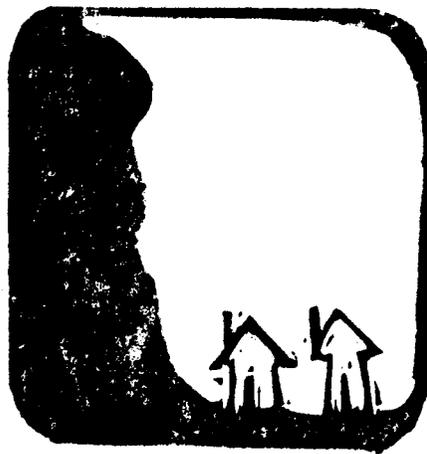
I didn't know until then that warmed-over passion could be so exciting. Since he joined the Mets, Mays has been responsible for, or at least instrumental in, winning about ten games with his hitting, fielding, high base-on-balls percentage, and his heads-up running of the bases. He has raised his average over .250 (his Mets batting average is over .280), has hit five home runs altogether, and has had nineteen RBIs in less than 200 times at bat. Plus, when he is listed in the lineup, he has the sure-fire gate glamour of a hootchy-kootchy dancer on a Bible-Belt midway.

So the message here is: Willie still swings. Unlike all those "son of" epics around now, he might be his own sequel. □

Buffalo Creek Aftermath

BY HARRY M. CAUDILL

BUFFALO CREEK, W. Va.—Last February 26 here in Logan County an enormous mountain of slag and other waste deposited by the Buffalo Mining Company collapsed after several days of heavy rain. Atop the heap hundreds of feet over the Buffalo Creek Valley sat a 14.2-acre lake like a pool of gravy in a mound of mashed potato. Together the 132 million gallons of water from the lake and the waste mixed into a thirty-foot-high



batter of gob that slopped down the steep valley, tearing through a dozen hamlets, smashing and burying hundreds of houses, sweeping away roads and bridges. At least 125 persons died. Over 4,000 of the valley's 5,000 residents, mostly from poor mining families, saw their homes destroyed.

Now, more than six months later, desolation and despair are nearly all that is left in Buffalo Creek Valley. The dislocations caused by the flood remain overwhelming—the mind cannot grasp the situation unless one has seen it. Some people have lost relatives or friends or both. Many who have lost homes and savings have little hope of possessing either ever again. Some can't even be sure where their houses once stood, for all landmarks are gone. Where thousands of people once lived on cinder-coated streets, many acres now stand vacant and await the future.

Unfortunately, much of that future is dependent on those whose neglect and indifference were responsible for the disaster: the Pittston Company, owner of Buffalo Mining and the nation's fourth-largest coal producer. A huge corporation with immense profits and influential connections has simply eradicated a whole string of communities—and done it with astonishing composure.

For years Pittston blithely disregarded state and federal laws prohibiting discharge of industrial wastes into navigable streams and "tributaries thereof" and proceeded to rid itself of slate, shale, coal, and sludge simply by dumping them into a hollow. The company also flouted regulations issued by the Bureau of Mines under the 1969 Coal Mine Health and Safety Act, which declare that "refuse piles shall not be constructed so as to impede drainage or impound water." The peril posed by the slag heap and the lake of poisonous water glistening on its top had been discovered long before the prolonged rainfall in late February. In 1966 then Interior Secretary Stewart Udall ordered the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines to make a study of mine-waste dumps in the coal fields. Among thirty-eight singled out as hazardous in West Virginia, an immense pile on Buffalo Creek drew the special attention of USGS geologist William Davies. The official form asked, "If bank should be unstable what would happen?" To which Davies answered, "Large wash would fill valley." Another question asked, "Would this bank remain stable after hurricane-type precipitation?" And the reply was an unequivocal no. In a splendid display of prophecy and forewarning, Davies dealt

Last February a wave of gob slopped through a West Virginia valley, killing at least 125 persons.