

The Devil Advocates:



As you expected, Dr. Fan went to Hawaii, saw three MLB games in 26 hours, and extended his consecutive-stadium streak to 56, a famous number in such matters. Thus he remains the only person, live, dead, or otherwise, to have seen at least one regular-season game in every stadium used for MLB since 1950, including such delightful places as Cashman Field in Lost Wages NV, and Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City. While Monterrey was a genuine and plausible tryout for expansion, Honolulu is not to be taken seriously as a major-league site, but merely a self-serving gimmick by the San Diego Padres to waste my money.

Those of you who needlessly encourage football have seen Aloha Stadium in its gridiron configuration. Two large sections of the stands are moveable; the result is two mirror-image parabolae, one in foul territory, and one as cheap seats. The park, like the Padres' own usual home field, is in God-awful nowhere, and almost unreachable by public transit, on slow buses crowded by the classes of society that Dr. Wellstone purports to love. Aloha Stadium's concessions folk were not even prepared for single-A ball, with long, unmoving lines, at the front of which some were told that hot dogs had run out some time ago. Of course, those who would either wait in line while a game is in progress, or voluntarily eat hot dogs, are beneath pity. Much will be made by the press of the wonderful attendance figures, yet as a percentage of capacity, they were significantly lower than in Mexico. Further, Mexican fans have their own access to baseball all year {five teams within 159 miles of Monterrey}, while for Hawaiians, it was that weekend or never for pro ball, so the novelty aspect inflated the place with more than the usual number of uncouth drunks who knew nought of the fine game and merely annoyed the true believers. Far fewer Padres fans came for this event than for Monterrey, but several hundred Cardinal devotees, mostly geriatric and bloated, were all too conspicuous in their garish tribal colors, including one of those bozos with seventy

pre-printed signs that only five people in the ballpark thought {actually, thought had nothing to do with it} clever or apt {yes, he brought four friends: how sad for them that they admitted to knowing him}.

Should you ever go to Honolulu? Should you keep reading a lazy writer who resorts to rhetorical questions? No, because the only sane reason to go has already happened, and yes, for Dr. Fan knows better and is merely posturing. Waikiki is an overdeveloped (not in the Anna Nicole Smith sense: amazingly few of the pneumatic set to be found) tourist trap, with the very worst features of Bourbon Street and Miami clumsily melded. I seemed to be the only tourist between the ages of 27 and 66, and the only one not wearing a badly designed local shirt that no self-respecting Cuban transvestite could endorse (although Dr. Fan isn't one of those). There are no good restaurants, since the demographic groups alluded to have no taste buds anyway. Granted, the countryside is doubtless beautiful, but not anything that one couldn't find closer. The

beaches, and associated observational pastimes, are far better in the Caribbean. The king's palace downtown, and the grave of the actual founder of baseball, Alexander Cartwright, are worth a visit, but not at the expense of a pricey eight-hour plane ride. What Hawaii has become is a place for the Japanese to go shopping and play golf. Sadly, the Victorian Moana and the Deco Royal Hawaiian hotels have been wonderfully restored, but are closed in by kitsch and dreck.

It could be worse. It will be. Since the Padres deny the rumor at the level of vehement insistence normally reserved for the day before firing a manager, Mr. Thornley and I are independently dead-certain that the Padres' next cute trick will be home games in Tokyo. At least the fans there will sit still and behave, except for slurping sea creatures that resemble Klingon Gourmet, and they will be, like the Mexicans, knowledgeable about the sport that they are closely watching.

SOME HATE MAIL (A SELECTION)

Dear Troublemaker:

I don't think that tax money should go for the Twins' new ballpark.

Frugal Minnesotan

Dear Misguided Cheapskate:

You probably stole this newsletter from someone, for with that attitude, you can't be a member of SABR! What traitorous nonsense! You also used the wrong verb: based on what you said, you have not even a nodding acquaintance with the verb "to think." It's not the Twins' ballpark, you nit: it is a civic trust belonging to the metropolitan area, and as such has to be paid for with tax money. If the team leaves, we still have the stadium, and we can sue to get another team. By then, there may be yet another Washington Senators franchise to steal. The team is irrelevant: you build the ballpark so you can see MLB in a place suited for it. Opera fans, silly as they are, wouldn't put up with a circus tent to house their events.