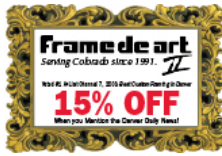


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Take yourself out to the museum

Baseball memorabilia galore at B's Ballpark Museum

Justen Rhodes

Tuesday, July 20, 2010



CALLING HIS SHOT — Bruce Hellerstein poses at B's Ballpark Museum yesterday. Denver Daily News photo by Tad Rickman.

Lovers of baseball will want to check out B's Ballpark Museum, located at 1940 Blake St., right next to the Sports Column.

B's Ballpark Museum is recognized by Smithsonian Books as one of the top 21 finest private baseball collections in the world.

The curator for B's Ballpark Museum is Bruce "B" Hellerstein, a Denver native and a certified public accountant with Bruce S. Hellerstein & Associates, P.C. His CPA office is in the same building as the museum, but with a different entrance.

Despite being a third-generation Denver native (along with his wife, Lynn), Hellerstein always loved baseball even though he was born and raised in a city not historically considered to be a baseball town. There was minor league baseball in Denver (Denver Bears, Denver Zephyrs), but the city did not get a Major League Baseball team until the Colorado Rockies started playing at Mile High Stadium in 1993.

Still, Hellerstein said he has always been a fan of baseball.

"I can't remember a moment of my life that baseball wasn't involved, and it's like a best friend," he said.

Baseball would become an even bigger part of his life when, at 30 years old, he was asked at a personal development course to picture a perfect paradise. He pictured a baseball park.

"At that point that's when I decided I'd do a ballpark in my basement," he said.

The first major collection job that Hellerstien remembers going after were seats from old baseball parks.

Initially the museum was in a basement, which ran much like the current museum does.

Hellerstein has scoured the country for a lot of memorabilia, and the chase is part of what he loves.

When asked what he is most proud of in his museum, he said he has heard that

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question a lot. And the short answer is everything.

"It's like asking me if I like steak or prime rib better," he said. "I love them all."

But there are some items he said he would be very hard pressed to part with. Those items include anything from the Denver Bears, which includes an old bench from the stadium; items from the old Yankees Stadium; the drain pipe cover that Mickey Mantle tripped over in the 1951 World Series that permanently injured Mantle's leg; light fixtures from Ebbets Field, home of the Brooklyn Dodgers; and more.

"I would never part with that stuff," he said. "Those are very, very special things."

Walking into the museum, the first thing people step up to is home plate, and like anything else in the museum, it has history. It's the home plate taken from the old Yankees Stadium after the opening pitch in the final game ever played there.

Other items in the museum include collectables from the 1998 All Star Game, which was held in Denver, and the 2007 World Series, which also partly took place in Denver.

Hellerstien is an authority on baseball and was on the committee to help design Coors Field. He helped push for the main entrance, which looks like the front of Ebbets Field.

While Hellerstien does not own anything in the museum, he is one of the officers in charge of deciding what the museum buys and sells.

Hellerstein said being curator for the museum is a labor of love.

"It's a three-letter word: fun," he said. "It's so fun, it's unbelievable. I mean, I could live there in just a totally different world. Totally amazing."

The museum also has a wide variety of books available to the public so that true baseball fans can scour about looking for facts to increase their knowledge.

Hellerstein also said that while the general public is certainly encouraged to visit, he also encourages groups to come and have parties, such as pre-game parties, Cub Scout parties and more. He said he really wants to encourage people to use the venue for get-togethers.

Admission is \$5 per person, and all baseball enthusiast and non-fans alike are invited to come in and check out the shop. Group rates also are available.

B's Ballpark Museum

WHERE: 1940 Blake St.

PHONE: 303-974-5835

WEB: www.ballparkmuseum.com

TICKETS: \$5 for adults, free for children under 2, group tickets also available

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