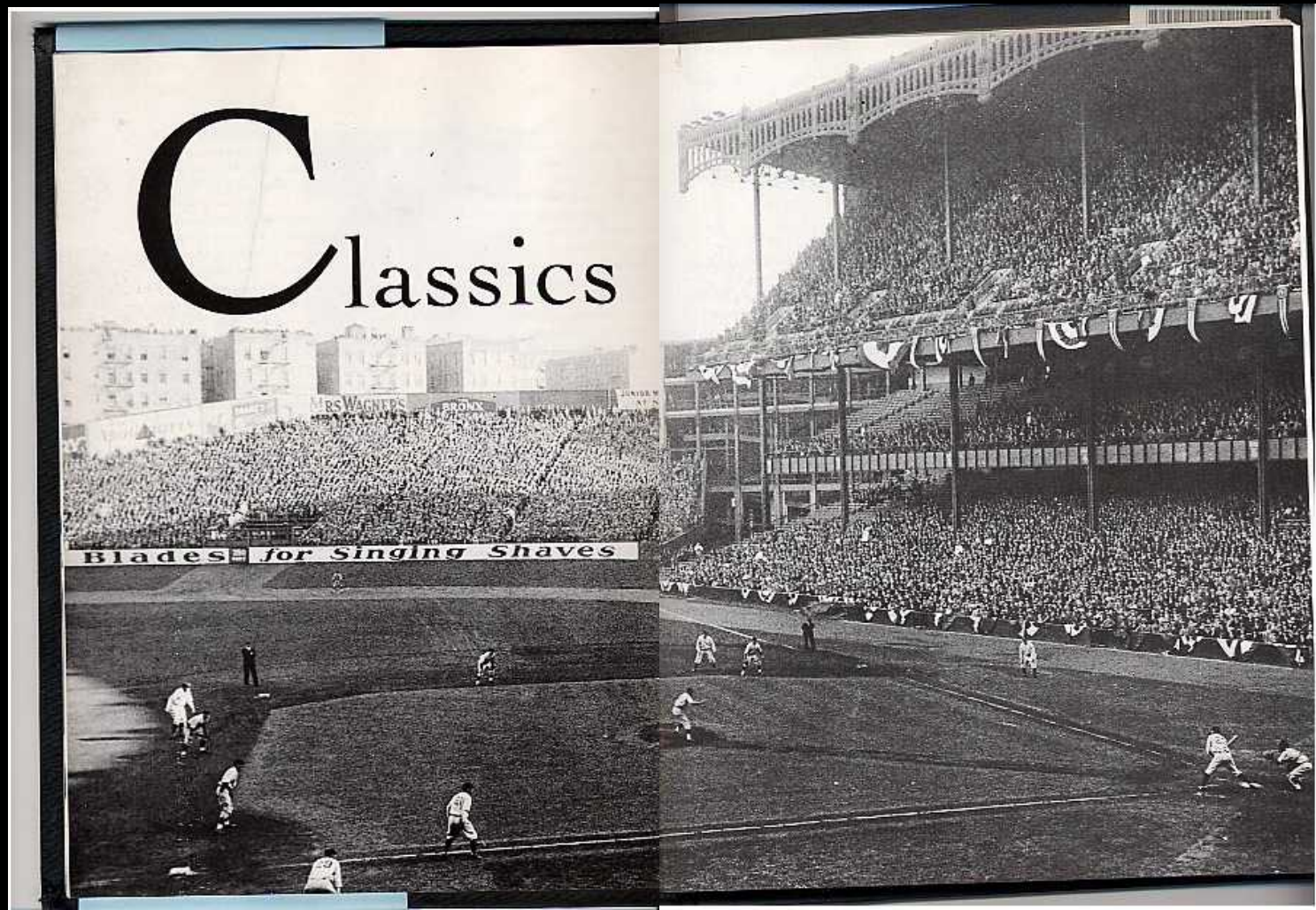
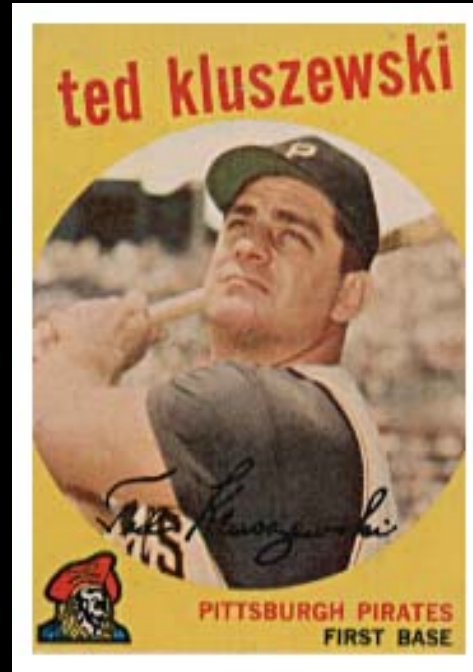


The last days of the old game (mid-50s); 1956 is the last subway series, New York will no longer be - after a 100 year reign - the capital of baseball; end of geographic constriction, beginning of expansion in numbers of team; end of segregation; end of Landis-era; end of heyday of minor leagues; end of leaving gloves on the field, natural grass, flannel uniforms: see When it Was a Game for an evocative depiction of the old game



The slow, stogy game
of the 'fifties, one-
dimensional, power-
oriented



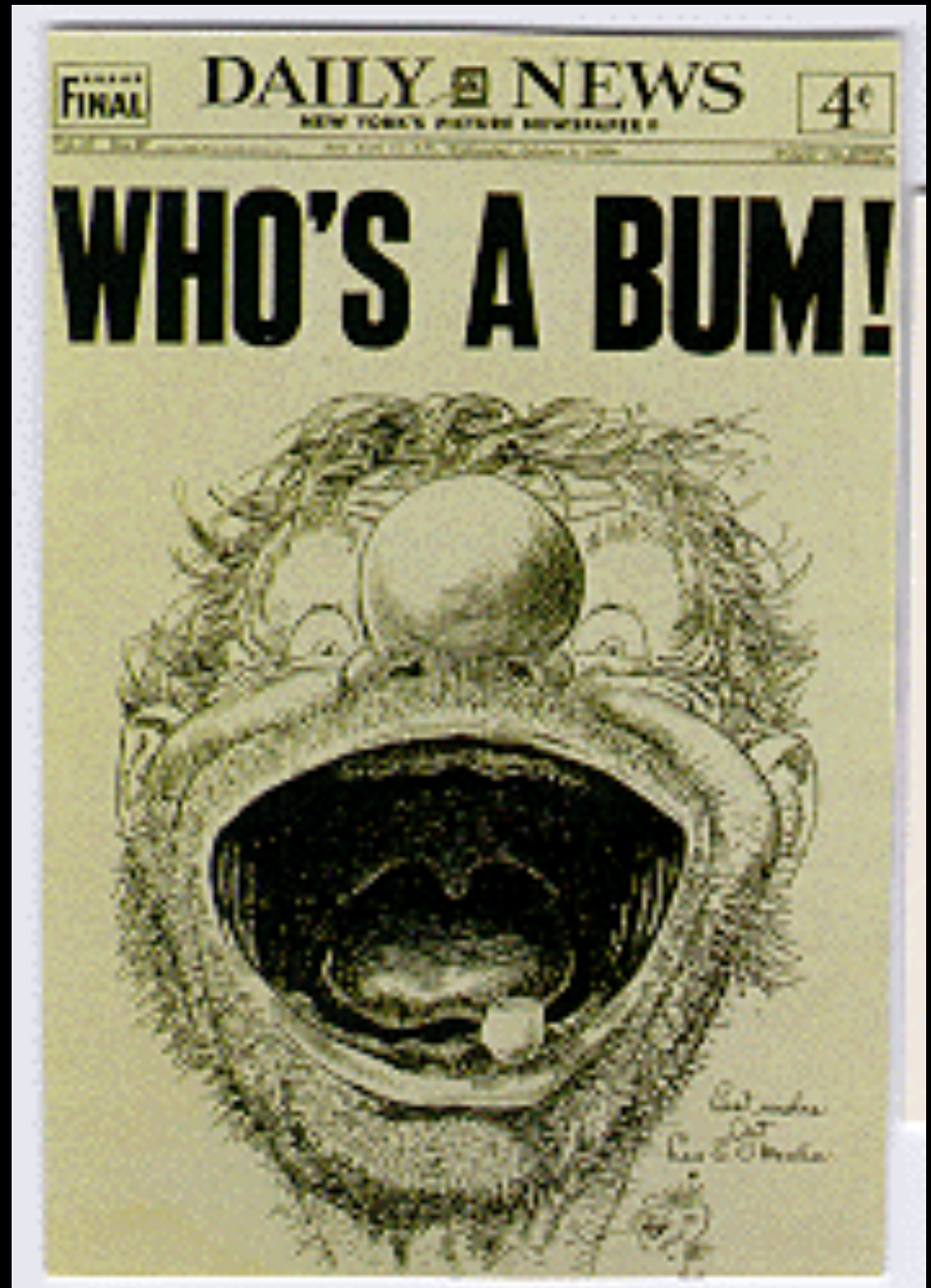
the era of the pitcher,
1963-1968: due to night baseball, specialized relief pitchers, batters going for homers all the time; new parks with more foul ground; better gloves and fielding; introduction of the slider - but perhaps key change was in strike zone - in 1963 umpires instructed to call strikes to the bottom of the knees - then in 1969 umpires told to call strikes only between the knees and the belt; mound also lowered from 15 to 10 inches, many parks shortened outfield fences, and AL goes to designated hitter for the pitcher (in 1973).



Baseball in Trouble: 1950s and 1960s

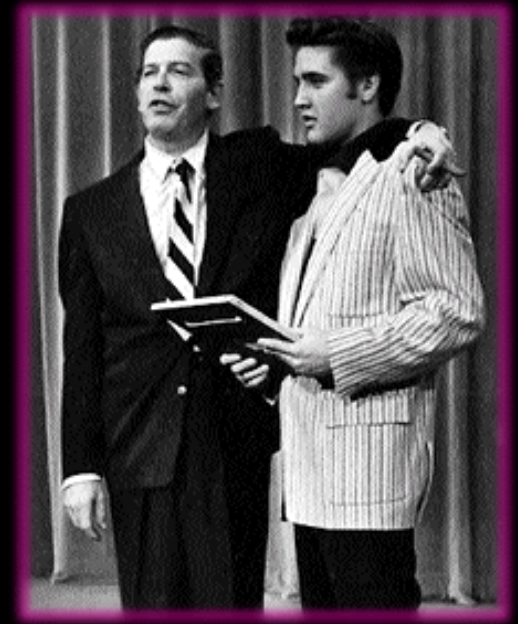
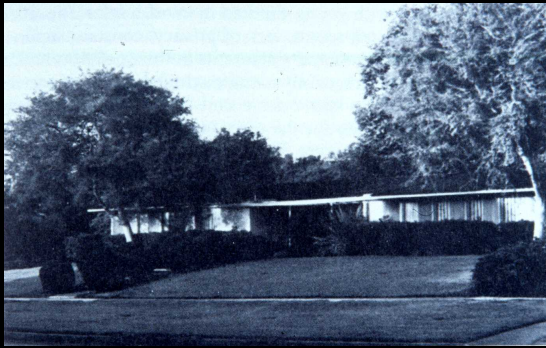
You'd never know it from the owners, but the era of free agency has seen a renaissance of the sport.

Show "A Death in the Family"



Shifting franchises and underlying problems: suburbanization, dependence on TV, labor turmoil; postwar disposable income, night baseball, and tight pennant races led to peak of popularity in 1949; but soon players begin to challenge reserve clause, Congress expresses concern that “territorial rights” of the baseball monopoly leaving too many big cities out of the sport (seven sets of hearings, 1951-1960); then shift of middle class out of cities and into suburbs; old ballparks left in increasingly run-down, and predominantly black inner cities; leisure orientation from public and downtown institutions to family - home entertainment center and little league; baseball parks seen as dark and forbidding, part of urban blight





Congressional Hearings, 1951-1960 into the baseball monopoly, particularly “territorial rights” which left too many big cities - including Washington - without baseball



the impact of television; some dispute about whether impact is negative or positive; Boston Braves believe sale of TV rights in 1952 (for a mere \$40,000) kill attendance; but poor team may explain that and after move to Milwaukee TV doesn't hurt attendance; owners try to figure balance; how much exposure makes TV a drag rather than a boon to attendance; Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961 solves problem of teams from bigger cities grabbing all the national money (law allows baseball to act as cartel in negotiating with networks for broadcast rights) but local TV contracts still give big city team huge edge over small city teams; until mid-80s, though, TV revenues relatively small; games are time-fillers, not huge draws, and game itself translates poorly to the screen (see George Will's Men at Work, especially the chapter on Cal Ripkin, for some sense of what TV misses); then in 1983 and again in 1990 TV revenues soar in context of network competition for major sporting events (regular season packaged with All-Star, playoffs, World Series)

Think Moses' vision here – and how for many of us it has come true



expansion and franchise shuffling, late 1950s, 1960s and '70s; prompted by both declining attendance (poorer drawing team in two-team cities allowed to move; Browns, Braves, A's) and by Congressional pressure; mixed results; brief Milwaukee boom, but perhaps only Dodgers clear winners; still does bring about metropolitan competition for franchises and consequent building of metro. stadiums (they have their detractors, but only recently have any been blocked).



“the O’Malley” (in Brooklynese, this means “the Devil”) and the Los Angeles Dodgers; average attendance at Ebbets down to 14,000 per game; O’Malley opens new era of demanding public assistance for a new park, asks for city’s help in acquiring site, while Dodgers will pay for construction; powerful city planner Robert Moses blocks use of Atlantic Avenue Railroad terminal site (Moses imagines a future for baseball played at remote sites beamed to waiting audience via closed circuit TV)

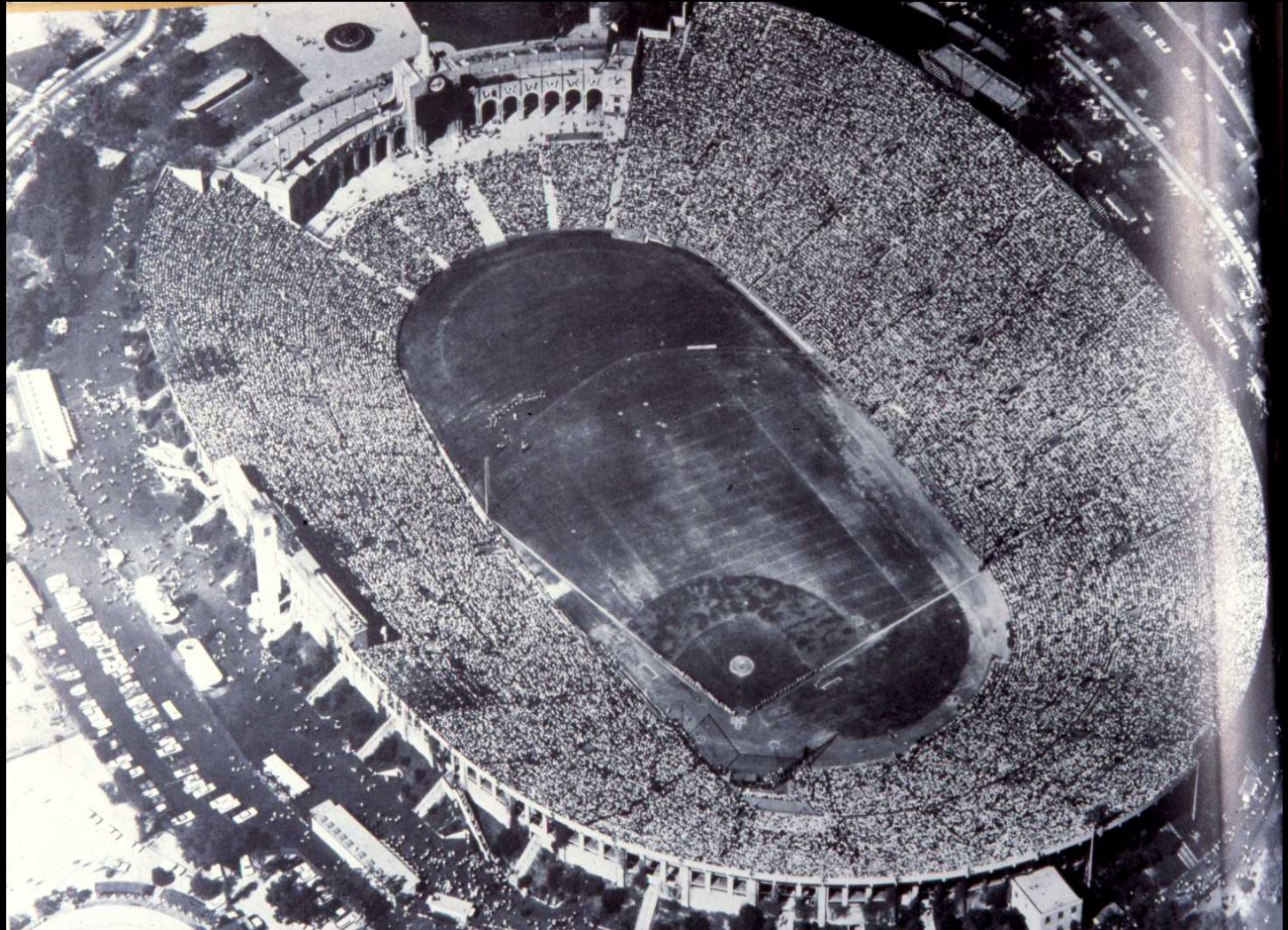








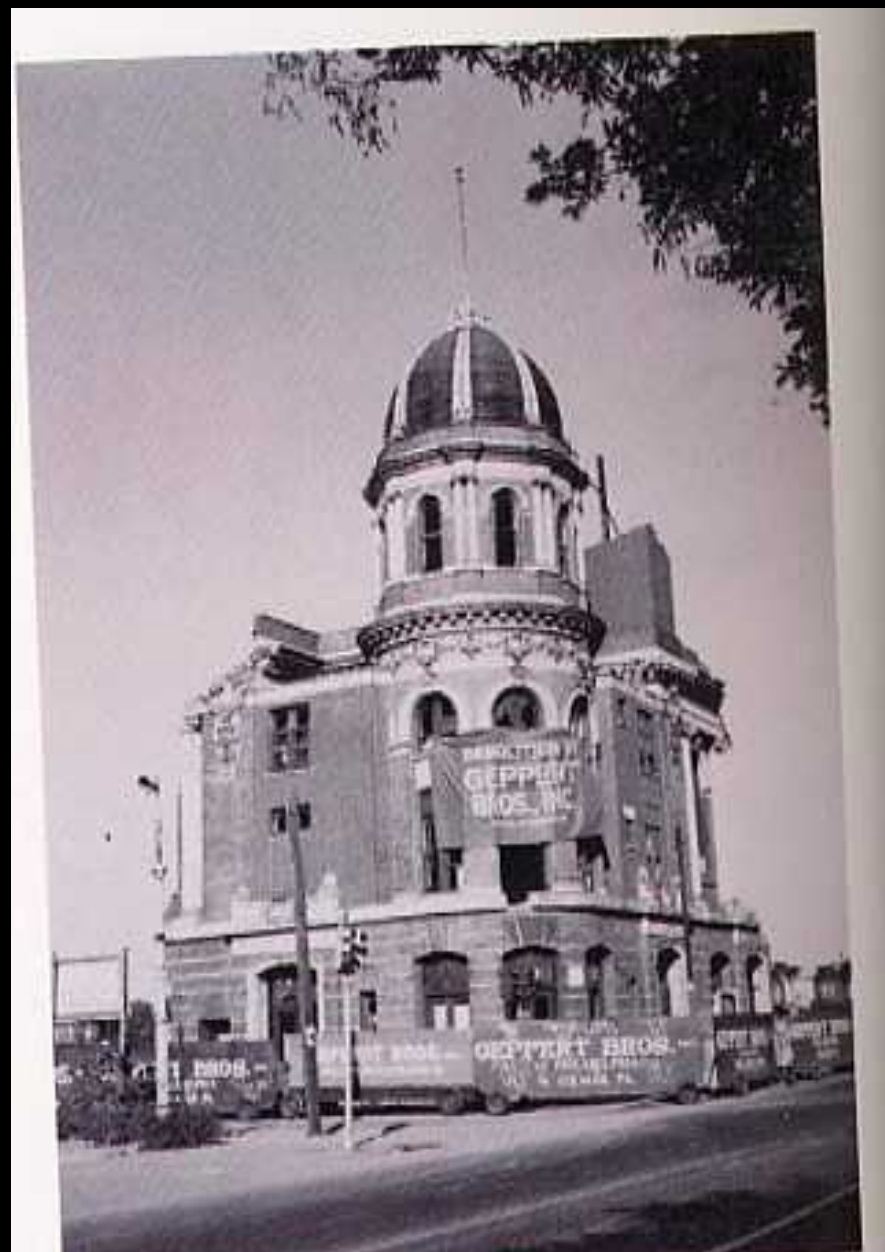
LA offers Chavez Ravine site - had been earmarked for unpopular public housing project - to O'Malley; typical of urban renewal projects of '50s, upscale developments over attacking social problems or preserving middle-income neighborhoods; O'Malley opens era of franchise shifts, the move to west coast, greater reliance on TV (LA telethon wins LA voters over to referendum on Dodgers' site).



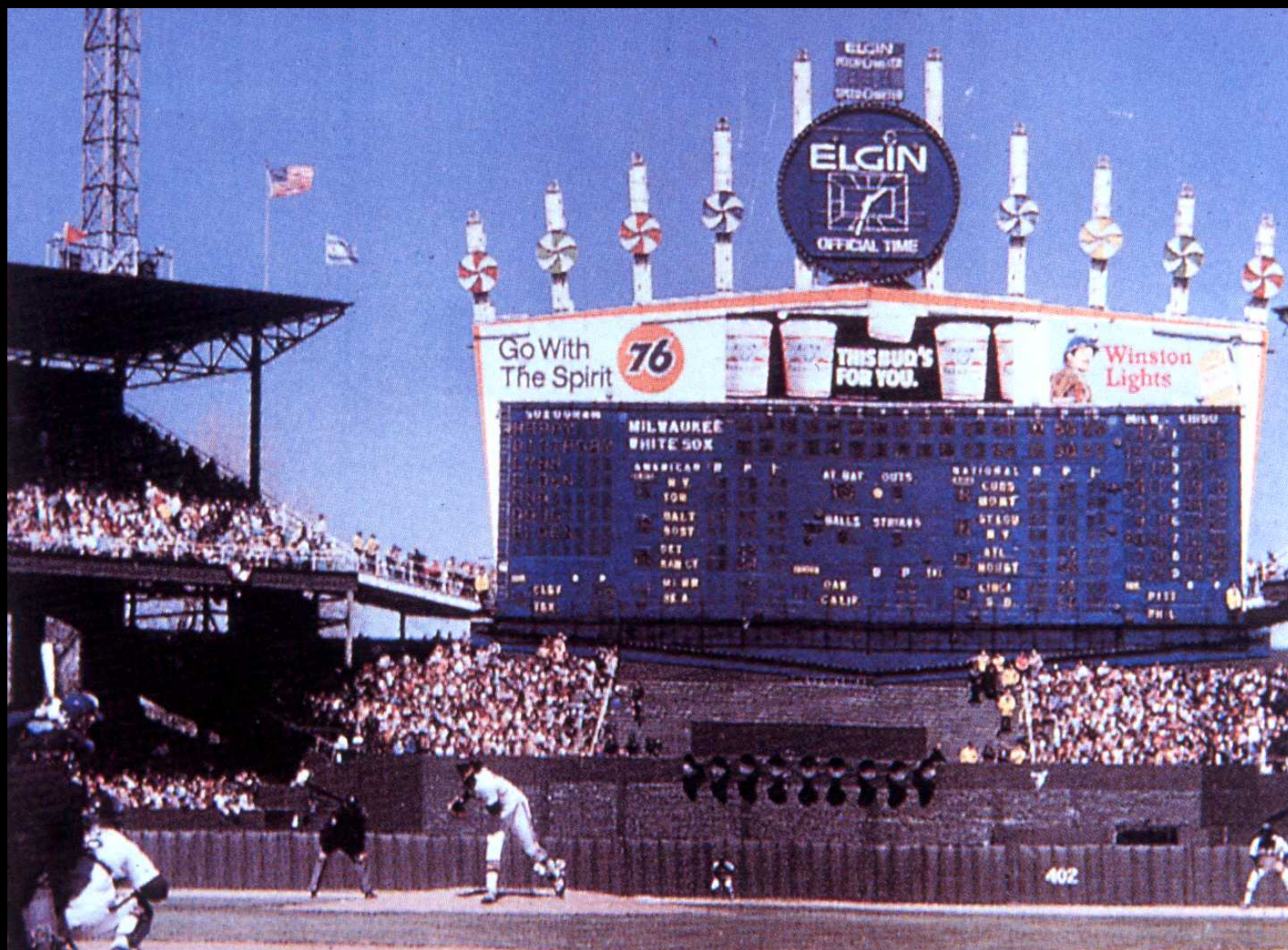
















The beginning of a new era: The old ballparks (Ebbets pictured) had gradual rakes - the slant or incline at which the upper decks rose. Supporting columns made this possible. The newer stadiums like the new White Sox park have very steep rakes and no columns, but it places the cheap seats further from the action.





New York City's renovation of Yankee Stadium in mid-70s



A New Style of Park? A New Style of Civic Life?









Camden Yards: Beginning of the “retros”

A good idea that
just won't die?

