



## Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

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15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

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### Henrich, Ex-Yankee, Hopes To Stay In Baseball Picture

#### With Jamestown Bat Manufacturing Firm

By Frank Hyde, *Jamestown Post-Journal*, December 22, 1959



When Tommy Henrich's youngest son was born, Mrs. Henrich wanted to name him David Paul Henich. "Not by a darn sight," the old Yankee outfielder roared. "DP stands for double play and I'll not be reminded of that all the rest of my days."

Baseball players are like that - pet loves and pet hates that live from the time they swing a bat until the day they trudge off to the supreme dugout. Hitting into a double play is strictly vinegar to a great thumper like Henrich, so - well, really, Mrs. Henrich should have known better.

Of course with Tommy, in Jamestown on business, it's mostly fun - at least the part about his son's proposed name is in jest.

"I'm one of the few one-team ex-major leaguers around. I stuck until my peak had passed, played the game for all it was worth and I have no regrets," the big fellow laughed.

By one-team ex-major leaguer, he was referring to his end-of-the-line duty with just one club, the Yankees, from 1937 through 1950.

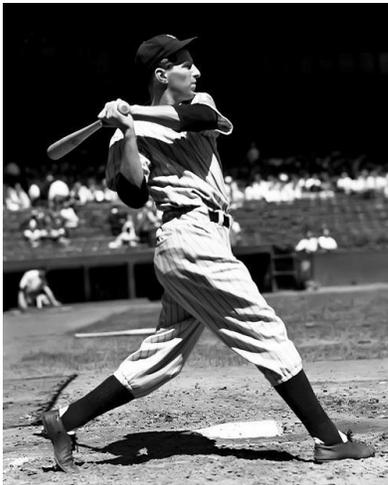
"They didn't have to kick me out," he grinned. "I knew I didn't have it any more and I didn't want to be in the way. I wasn't released or waived, I just up and quit."

A coach for the Detroit Tigers last season, Tommy is with the Diebold Lock and Safe Co., in the city where he was born, Massillon, Ohio, during the off-season.

What will he do next summer?

“Well now, that depends on how we do here in Jamestown. I think this is big and I think Jamestown is just the place for it to become bigger, so...”

Tommy was referring to the S &H Wood Products Co., formed yesterday when he and Littner Soderstrom, a Jamestown man, purchased the former Daniels Mill Work plant, at 900 Monroe Street. The S and H is Soderstrom and Henrich and they will market baseball bats.



But those won't be ordinary baseball bats, you quickly gather by talking to the two men. They will be sort of a “superman” product that will wear longer and hit the ball farther than anything ever before placed in the capable paws of a professional player.

“I'm a Johnny-come-lately to this,” Henrich (LEFT) explains quickly. “This is all Sody's idea.”

A special solution with which the bats are treated is the secret – and how it is prepared will remain a secret according to

Soderstrom, its inventor.

“We are not going off half-cocked in bringing another enterprise to Jamestown. We tested these bats in the big leagues for four years without a word of it leaking out,” he added. “Of course, they were not bats we manufactured. They were standard makes purchased by such fellows as Harvey Kuenn and Frank Bolling of Detroit, to name two, and treated with this new product.

“After conferring with the dozen or so big leaguers,” he added, “who used our treated bats for three summers, we are convinced of the following: 1 – The solution will reduce breakage 20 percent; 2 – Bats will last 20 percent longer without splintering; 3- The most important of all, they will produce 20 percent greater distance; 4 – The treatment virtually eliminates sting, the bane of batters during cold weather.”

How did the idea originate?

“Watching the Detroit Tigers at Lakeland, Fla., four years ago,” Soderstrom explains, “I noticed the high drives that hit certain wooden beams rebounded twice as far as those that hit steel girders and other beams. I wondered about it for a long time, then one day I crawled up there and took a look. The beams that provided the big carom were treated. So I reasoned that if a bat could be treated with a similar solution, more zing could be out into a well-hit ball.”



The solution with which the beams were treated, however, did not pan out on bats under test. So Soderstrom went to work on a mixture of his own. “We finally developed what we wanted – where and with what, I’m not saying – but it has proven out through three years of testing. Now we are ready

to operate.”

The mill will be opened in the spring but some samples will be turned out in a few weeks, both men explained. “We are buying quite a bit of machinery, mostly lathes, and we should be marketing the bats next summer,” Soderstrom added.

Henrich will not move to Jamestown because he expects to be on the road most of the time. One gathered that Tommy’s job will be as sales representative.

It is doubtful Soderstrom could have picked a partner more widely known and respected among players than Henrich.

Tommy was a 5-time All-Star, played in four World Series (1938-41-47-49) and batted .282 for his 14 years in the big show, not counting the 1942-46 span when he was serving in the Coast Guard.

Henrich enjoyed his best years after moving from the right field to first base. He hit .308 with 25 HRs and 100 RBI in 1948, leading the league in triples (14) and runs (138) and finishing second in doubles (42) and total bases (326) and third in slugging (.554); he tied an AL record with four grand slams, and placed sixth in the MVP voting. He was again sixth in the MVP balloting in 1949 after placing third in the AL in HRs (24) and slugging (.526).

“I want to stay close to baseball in one capacity or another,” Henrich added. “If this business venture proves to be as big as I think it will, it could be quite a thing, not only for Sody and me, but Jamestown as well.”

### CSHOF EXTRA INNING NOTES

According to city directories, S & H Wood Products was located at 900 Monroe St. in Jamestown from 1960 to 1962. It appears that Soderstrom and Henrich were unsuccessful with their business plan.

Littner Soderstrom was the owner of Sody’s Grill located at the northeast corner of Third and Lafayette Streets in Jamestown. He sold the bar to Harry Strom to raise capital for his bat venture.

Sody, an avid baseball fan, met Henrich at spring training one year and developed a friendship that led to their business partnership. Soderstrom was listed as the president and Henrich as vice-president.

Among other major leaguers who allegedly tested Sody’s mysterious bat treatment were Al Kaline, Gene Woodling, Jackie Jenson, and Roger Maris.

Tommy Henrich, who played on NY Yankee teams loaded with such Hall of Famers as Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Bill Dickey, Yogi Berra, Phil Rizzuto and Red Ruffing, was nicknamed “Old Reliable” because of his clutch play.

Baseball bats continue to be made in Jamestown by Superior Bat Co. located at 118 East First St.



2017 CSHOF inductee Charlie LaDuca is the owner of Pro Bats LLC, 6 University Park, Fredonia, NY. RSP bats are manufactured and distributed by Pro Bats. For more information, visit [www.probats.net](http://www.probats.net).