

Gary: welcome back to the sunday review Alan
Donovan joins me again today host of
kitchen table conversations

Alan: welcome
thank you

Gary: it's good to have you here
see Sam Nader has been the subject of
our part of our kitchen table
conversations for the last few weeks
this is week four what do we got today

Alan: today we're talking about baseball and Sam's
role in promoting and bringing baseball
to Oneonta and keeping it for so many
years and being such a strong supporter
of the sport

a great great thing for the
city of SUNY oneonta a minor league club in
what we'd like the fifth smallest media
market

Alan: something like that but I want to
say that when you talk with Sam about
baseball you discover the connections he
has are exceptional with a lot of very
famous people and it's exciting to talk
with him about that

Gary: and here we go with
the part for the Sam Nader in baseball

Alan: there we go
I think you were American
baseball first appeared at least
appeared in modern times that damask II

Sam: yeah I I was a instrumental a matter of
fact that was one of my goals and
objectives was to bring back
professional baseball to Oneonta and the
reason for that is first of all I love
baseball and secondly and more
importantly if you call the 60s and I'm

sure you all do the sixties were the protest years there wasn't anything right with anything in any community and they were protesting this and protesting that and at both colleges and and and also the the non-students so but anyway I felt that one of the best things we could have was a flag to fly something that they would be proud of in the old days these to be proud of their bands they used to be proud of their football teams or there or there our Coast resort whatever there was was a matter of pride in their community for various reasons and so I thought that baseball would be a good instrument to bring back this loyalty and the inspiration for the community and so wherever there are two people talking professional baseball and there was a new chance of giving the team I was one of them

Alan: so you started with the Red Sox

Sam: I started with the Red Sox Red Sox had been and Wellsville Wells built and they were unhappy that Wells will and I had performed a good relationship with Vince McNamara who was president and Penn League and I told him that you know I wanted a baseball team for for our community and so Vince called me and he said you know the Red Sox are very unhappy at Wellsville and if you're really interested we probably can do something I certainly are instead then let me know what I have to do and so I I think they had her League meeting in Geneva and I took our our city attorney and I took president of Chamber of Commerce and one of the aldermen we wanted Jenny give it to see about getting a team Baroni and we had been working with the Red Sox previously in

the Canadian American League so our our relationship with the Red Sox were very very good we had been part of their farm system in the 40s and 50s and so and I was very friendly with with Neil Mahoney Neil Mahoney headed up their farm system and Neil Mahoney was the baseball coach at Bowdoin College when I was in Bates and also he was very much involved with the Canadian American League and with the minor league system for the Boston Red Sox

and our prior experience in the Canadian American League so it was a natural fit then you saw we we took on the Boston Red Sox and at that time there was a man by the name of Joe Jesus Yogi's an icon and minor league baseball he owned many many teams they had played baseball for the New York Yankees in and York bears and but he was running all of their minor league clubs and so well no job uses has to be the operator educational well Joe he's got the franchise but with you yeah and when we did it we made the stipulation I did at least with them you know if you gonna get rid of it at any time make sure that our local people have a shot at so yes 1966 there we opened up our season and they are competitive annually and at that time it was 132 game season

Alan: how many how many games season is it men

Sam: oh now we have 78

Alan: yes

Sam: 76 rather we have 38 at home 38 away but the reason we got out of the Red Sox Red Sox are they League then the following year that league decided that they were going to be a short season

link instead of long long season because
in april/may and I'll play baseball and
our own difficult professional baseball
and so the league became a short season
League and and after the 66 season all
the Red Sox of Neal Mahoney promised me
by everything that was holy that they
were going to be back to the following
year low and behold I get a call in
December from the Winter Meetings from
Joseph's and he said you know the Red
Sox aren't coming back they felt we were
going to be a rookie link which it
wasn't

so I can I can tell him my should run it
was very evident to everybody and so I
said he promised me by everything it was
all he was coming back I made I made a
ramos upgrade the lights and and I had
mrs. Doran obviously able mrs. door one
here who gave the city money for upgrade
the lights and so on and so but he says
he could have the Kansas City Club you
can have Cincinnati or the Yankees and
he said what would you like to have oh I
was a Yankee fan all of my life as we
take the Yankees and so so we became
associated with the Yankees well that
year I had arranged to go to Florida
with my family and we were ago we went
to Ocala went to Ocala because that's
where all the Red Sox farm teams for
training and so I went to Ocala and then
I headed down to st. Petersburg to
introduce myself to the New York Yankees
and they were surprised to say the least
because they told me I was the first
mayor for many of the communities that
they've been in had ever come down to
thanked them personally for coming into
their community in our relationship with
them was great and you know 32 years not
bad

Alan: a difficult question talk about the
Yankees leaving in 1998

Sam: well I was extremely difficult we we had an opportunity probably know the mayor of New York City Giuliani wanted to have a minor league baseball in Staten Island and in the borough sorrow and of course the Yankees were wanted to appease the mayor because they're a negotiated new contract for a Yankee Stadium and the upgrade stadium and so on but anyway to make a long story short the Yankees gave me an opportunity to remove the ball club to Staten Island and then they build a 50 million dollar stadium there the city of New York did and well at my age and said behind my my associate at our age this is no way we wanted to go to Staten Island we we brought the team in the oneonta because because we thought it was good for the community and we knew that once baseball left Oneonta professional baseball would return because our market is just so so minimal by the way we refuse but mr. Steinbrenner then said then and I approached him on it why not have two teams to Yankee teams in the in the league and he was willing to do it and we thought we were gonna put it over and have two teams would be in two different divisions and the major leagues and frowned upon it even though there was a there was a precedent for that with us the San Francisco Giants had had two teams in one way but they didn't wanna pursue that so so the Watertown club went to left Watertown and went now I became the Yankees down there before him became the Yankee became associated

Alan: did they ever replace the team in Watertown

Sam: never yes never and
you know they Geneva left and went to
Williamsport we're all seeking larger
markets Utica left and ever in Aberdeen
and there's just only on us pretty small
we're at smallest city yeah probably an
organized baseball and we just don't
have the population base and it's scream
ly difficult and if we operate it any
differently than what we do we we we
never thought to make a profit all we
want to do is make keep her head above
water and be able to pay our bills
so it just just possible to operate a
professional baseball team in Oneonta
with any other objective than making
sure that it grabbed it for the
community but

Alan: if you hadn't stayed true
to that community vision we wouldn't

have a team that

Sam: no that's right

Alan: cuz it
would have gone elsewhere

Sam: yes right I
had an opportunity we had an opportunity
to sell the ballclub again we we've
resisted we've resisted as long as we
possibly can
whether we're gonna be able to help us
keep on we don't know because the last
few years have been red red ink years
and I'm 88 my colleagues in the vine
is 94 and our families have different
interest and are scattered and so on so
it's extremely difficult

Alan: I imagine the
renovations have made a huge difference
in the way people look at the venue

Sam: well

the renovations you know the major leagues have established some standards and either meet those standards or you no longer are able to operate and we had a bring our facility up to me to the standards and originally these came in the 80s and early 90s and and at that time

Auburn and Batavia all got money from the state of New York to renovate and the ADI there were others did this but I had talked with mr. Steinbrenner and and I told them that you know it doesn't make sense that we spend all this money in our small community we we ought to have some different priorities and just just baseball and so he was very good have a great relationship with George Steinbrenner matter of fact I'm I'm burglary clown - Pittman and he likes only on a great deal so he said Sam just make sure you bring it up to the minimum standards so we didn't ask for the five million dollars and so on that the other cities did and got and upgraded their stadia so we we we met the minimum standards and one of the things that mr. Steinbrenner wanted was a workout facility so he said you know Sam you know I don't go to any other cities that I have affiliations with I come to only on I like Oneonta and I want to stay and only on up but he says my god I have a workout facility and you guys can build it and he says I will equip it to the tune of \$60,000 and give you the plans and specifications and so on what she did and so we said what we didn't how we're gonna do it but we wish we would get the funding for it and so we had the the workout facility was built there with the specifications given us by the New York Yankees and they did equip it to the tune of \$60,000 and we have a big we have a major-league

workout facility and we were very proud of it and he did equip it to that as I said before to that extent and when he moved out he personally got on the phones and Sam that's up for jurors

Alan: sidon you whatever

Sam: Syd Syd and I go back long time Syd when I was playing semi-pro baseball and I was just a little guy which I still am even smaller but that and I was a pitcher and I never forget said going to the games and betting the little guy who would be the winning pitcher and Syd and I go back 70 years I just was a kid but he always be front of me and it's kind of my mentor

Alan: were you guys partners beginning with the Red Sox

Sam: no but we were affiliated we were both officers than the Red Sox organization

Alan: okay

Sam: we were both directors and by the way Alice's father dr. house was the last president of the of the Oneonta Red Sox organization baseball in her blood sunny that her brother in the same way yeah

Alan: Sid must have shared your vision that would guess

Sam: well when I wanted to bring back baseball I told Sid I said you know abuse is gonna sell the club and and we have an opportunity to buy it I'm gonna I'm gonna I'm gonna get the ball club

and I said I want you to be a part of it
he says he says you're nuts because we
we promoted boxing and we promoted
exhibition baseball paraded drums and so
on and pay off all the debts that the
that the only on a Red Sox had when when
when the league folded and we wrestling
we had boxing we had everything
everything in Sid and I were in smell in
we paid off everybody and so on so we
had a we had an hour experience with
trying to keep a baseball team solving
so he's in three-year nuts but if you
want to go one of these uh I'll go it
and so when Jesus decided to sell yeah I
was mayor at the time and my city
attorney said that you know I had to
have a conflict of interest but he says
but if you're one of several then
there's no conflict of interests and so
I I get nine other people first one was
sit and I got the dr. Carson
they have very important in the
community I got prisons of the Citizens
Bank at the time Nathan penile I got
sterling Harrington who was the
Republican chairman Henry Bunn who had
been involved with the ballclub
previously Harrell DeGraw was brother
the chamber commerce very active in the
community Stephen low who it started up
the Catskill airlines now that was
people that I I sought out and and I had
no difficulty with any of them you know
I call up I never forget I call up
Nathan Pendleton and and it was a
Saturday and and I have put this thing
together I had about 48 hours to put it
together and I called him and he was at
home and Nathan nice I like talked to
you about something sensible Sammy oh
there's a lesson
I'm gonna bring back some baseball back
and only on on I'm getting 10 guys
together it's gonna cost us each

thousand bucks he says you think it's good for the community I said I think it is you Scout me and that was that was the conversation I had with him and I had I got my mind my father law at that time dr. house but anyway those people that we

Alan: but sit join in at that

Sam: oh yes absolutely no sense it was a he was phone number one that he was my number one man absolutely

Alan: well you know you look at the roster of the stars that you've had that have gone on I mean you mentioned Don Mattingly but he had one who was Australian two in the football

Sam: Oh over here we had John Elway John Elway was a he's a very fine young man my daughter Suzanne was the was a gymnast I was her first year out of ithaca college and Suzanne was my GM and she was of his publicity person you know we were inundated with with the press media of all types and so on Suzanne was probably one of the first female general managers and of course my daughter Alice T she did at all concession stand tickets whatever and so my kids have all been very very much involved

Alan: looks like you know it's sort of like a like a family

Sam: well your family back should do it what are you gonna do you gonna go to the ball park that's that's it

Alan: so you all be

Sam: they all love it
they all of Alice Alice left she worked
for briefly in manufacturing that sales
department at Bendix but then she went
work for the Atlanta Braves she worked
for the Braves three years in Atlanta
and that's how she wound up staying in
Atlanta but she Alice worked for the
with the Braves for three years

Alan: she had
an interval I'd say for sure

Sam: yeah I
think of all the players the one that

Alan: I
think it's the most mentioned as having
come through the ranks erease Mattingly
is it the one you remember most

Sam: Oh Donny
Donny was a high class kid he was just a
kid it made it just right out of high
school and his parents came up
remember state about a week and and he
he was a very fun very fine young man
you know when he when they had Don
Mattingly day at the stadium I was
invited I was one of the people that
this invited got introduced from the
dugout with ran out out in the field and
so Donny never forgot Oneonta and very
fond of Mattingly but we've had probably
almost a hundred I've made it to the
major leagues got their start day now
and only on of course they always said
that Football Hall of Fame but we've had
some real great Ernie Williams Andy
Pettit and you know with the Tigers we
got the Tigers we get Curtis Granderson
as a matter of fact the last time I
looked at thee that's the 40-man roster
for the Detroit Tigers eight out of the
40 had played started got their start

and Oneonta so created and not only that the pitching coach for where the Tigers head was a former Oneonta player and many of the managers have made it Buck Showalter became a manatee got to start with us and Mike Ferraro game manager Cleveland and our latest yeah we're very proud of him he's the clone of my name in my opinion of Showalter with him with more of a personality and that's Trey Hillman Trey Hillman is the present just got named manager of the Kansas City Hayes

Alan: wait when you think about those those hundred players super made it into the big leagues you have to believe that there was something about their being here that helped them with their career obviously they bring their own town but something else going on

Sam: well we like to we like to think that we made a contribution but George Steinbrenner's was said to me one time he said and he said there's a Blair z cgz said he said you know if I was your age he says I'd pay to play ball on Oneonta my god he said you got it made I don't think they quite agreed with him but he he he had a great great affection for Oneonta you know he he had this wife daughter grandchildren came up stayed at your place album stayed for about a week and Joanne George Steinbrenner always came always came to only oh yeah I always came to Oneonta you you have a

Alan: you have a really kind of unique relationship with mr. Steinbrenner as you call it was kind of a controversial guy in some ways

Sam: well yes you he was a
he was a controversial guy but he's a
very compassionate man very very
compassionate man great believer of
loyalty
great believer in communities and we
have a we have a great relationship I
can call him George she told me I could
call him George so that's that and I
always felt very proud of the fact that
that he said Sam called me George

Alan: but he must have he must have understood
your vision

Sam: Yeah right
till mice crazy and you sell beer I said
well I want so beer well he said god
bless you but he says you're crazy
that's where the money is and then I
guess I guess he's right

Alan: Would you talk
about a couple of moments when that you
really remember about fantastic feats of
some of these great names that were here

Sam: well I'm one of the things that I
remember very vividly because the
national media was out was a throw that
John Elway made from right field to
third base they get they get a base
runner and he he showed that he
certainly demonstrated his arm at that
time that was one of the great great
place I've seen I've seen some great
hitting
probably probably the best hitter I've
seen in my minor-league memories was
Austin Knickerbocker who played for the
old oneonta Red Sox in a Canadian he
yet he got called in the service and he
got shot up pretty good
but he did play briefly when he got back
for the Philadelphia Athletics what he

was he bet it over 400

Alan: in de Mesquita
maaske no pitching

Sam: no
pitcher we've had some great pitching
nuts Lord I think I think the best
picture I've seen and the Yankees called
them up to the farm team early on was
Doty rather and he was from from Texas
and he was an outstanding picture when
they called him up Lord or nail nobody
don't let anybody ever fool around with
your mechanics
but they did and he hurt his arm but
we've had some great pictures we had Jim
baby we had Andy Pettit and in the old
days we had we had dick follower but you
know hit no matter for in the major
leagues for the Philadelphia Athletics
we had we had some we've had some pretty
good athletes pretty good ballplayers
comes career we've had some very
important very famous people come here
oh you bet in my in my my home I've had
Ted Williams event at Bobby Doerr I've
had Joe DiMaggio Mickey Mantle and

Alan: all
here on River Street

Sam: yes sir yes sir yes
sir Elston Howard I and Bob Feller we
met Alice you know put on the feedbag
whitey white he's been here many times
waiting for word so very proud of the
relationship we have with

Alan: why would you say to some of the young
players coming in with the Tigers to
play here in Oneonta I mean what what
advice would you

Sam: I tell you what we say

don't remember you we always tell them
we always tell them that we have a great
tradition here only honor we've seen
major league players we've seen Hall of
Fame players and so we ask you to behave
in our community the same as you would
in your own community and don't
embarrass us if you get in trouble give
us a call but we're not ticket fixers
we'll do everything we can to guide you
and properly you know this is the
closest any of you ever gonna get to the
Hall of Fame and make sure you take the
opportunity to see what we have in this
area and in our community and we always
make sure that they get up to the Hall
of Fame and but what we always tell them
that you know most you aren't gonna make
it about one out of eight are going to
make it so when you leave here leave
here with a pleasant memory and leave
the game with a pleasant memory and if
you go on always remember us because we
remember you very fun I hope that we we
have fulfilled our dark
to provide the good
entertainment very good family
atmosphere to our fans and something
they can remember and remember

Gary: well the
Sam Nader story it's pretty interesting

Alan: yes it was and it was a real privilege
for mark Simonson tonight to work with
Sam and and we enjoyed it immensely

Gary: we're very fortunate to have a man like
Sam Nader who's who grew up here been
mayor and run a baseball franchise for
well about 40-some years

Alan: yes we are I
mean it's been city of Oneonta has been

privileged to have Sam I join us and be
with us for so many years

Gary: so well what's
our what's our subject matter next week
for

Alan: well gets up next week is also
interesting because it's such a
well-known name in town and actually a
well-known name in the state and far
beyond now and that is the famous Brooks
family

Gary: Brooks family

Alan: and we'll be
talking with three generations of Brooks
beginning with John and Joan and then
Griffin and Fran Brooks and now the
current managers and and people who run
Brooks now Beth and Ryan Brooks three
generations of a wonderful family

Gary: sounds exciting

Alan: it will be

Gary: but look forward to
it Alan thank you so much

Alan: thank you Gary

Gary: you're listening to the sunday review
oneonta community radio