

Our own

'40,000' Murph: A man with rich memories

MURPH:

You have your memories, all right. No matter what, you'll always have them.

Like you always said, Murph, you wouldn't trade those memories for anything. Not for a million bucks. Not to be President of the United States.

"Take me away from my work," you always said, "and I want to die."

You were only a kid, remember, Murph, when you started hanging around Sox Park, just down the street from where you lived. You picked up empty bottles and you got to watch the games and the guys inside would slip you so much of that good but-tery Blue Valley popcorn that you couldn't eat dinner when you got home.

That was HIS, Murph, and you just kept hanging around until the war broke out and the older boys had to go away to fight.

SO THEY made you a real usher, and right away almost, people started calling you "40,000." Joe (40,000) Murph from Bridgeport.

"How many in the ball park," "Forty thousand," you'd say. No matter how many were there, you'd say 40,000. Sometimes, of course—such as during a few years following the Black Sox scandal in 1919—you'd be referring to the empty seats.



Rick Solt

Then your buddy Andy Frain started his famous company, and you were one of his first five ushers.

Remember—Murph, when you got your first uniform—you and those white flannel sportin' pants like they were down on the Boulevard?

WELL, THE uniforms changed thru the years, Murph, and so did you. But after 30 years of wearing "child" on that usher's cap in the ball parks and the Stadium and the Amphitheater and the hotels and the Kentucky Decides and the roller derbies, you could look back and say: "Me, Murph, I know 'em' all. All the big stars—the sporting greats, the big city pols, the movie stars, and even a few Presidents." And they knew you.

Pretty soon you could say very matter of factly, for instance: "Sophie Tucker was a dandy; Durante's a great guy; Casey Stengel's a great story-

teller, even if he tells the same stories every time you see him."

And Marilyn Monroe—just a plain girl who was so nice and who squeezed your hand when they took the pictures of the two of you.

But, of course, you had your favorites. Like the Babe. Babe Ruth would tell you to go get him three or four or five hot dogs and to keep all those other dogs and to keep all those other dogs out of the way while he ate them. And then he'd point to center field and put a pitch in the upper decks out there.

AND THERE was the picture with former President Truman shaking your hand, and all the pictures of Mayor Daley, who you always say is "Hizzoner with a capital H."

"Keep your eyes open, and your big mouth shut," you'd say—"that's the secret to ushering. You can't ration courtesy," you'd say—"The public is always right. The public gave me my education," you'd say, "and I love them for that." And they loved you.

All over your house, from basement to attic, are the pictures to prove it. And there you are, in the pictures, Murph, with every sporting great, politician, and movie star, imaginable. They would come especially to see you because you'd make them feel like a million, the way you'd make a big deal of showing them to their seats and keep-



Truman Photo in William Vane

Joe Murphy and a whole lifetime of memories: "The public gave me my education, and I love them for that."

ing the crowds away. They never forgot that, and every once in a while you'd take a close look at the fuss you made over them and say they were just like children.

AND IN YOUR garage, more pictures. On the walls, on the ceiling, covering every square inch of space. And in the attic—across the street and still in Bridgeport—the

hundreds of pins and buttons from political conventions and the campaign hats you have from all the really great ball players.

"I love the people," you'd say. You said that for 30 years, and you still say that. You loved them all. Even the chiselers, whom you could spot from the other side of the field—the gate-crashers, the hags.

"Now, some of the stories from my public," you'd say. "Time out for tears. We drove over 100 miles and forgot the tickets. The dog chewed up the tickets. We had a fire and the tickets were burned."

"Oh, MY public," you once wrote down, "give me an aspirin."

Now you're 75, Murph. You've been retired these eight years. So you live in your house and your garage with all the memories. They are all that ever mattered to you. You always said that.

You walk a little more slowly. And you're a little thinner. But your memories are fat and sweet, and your smile, when you're talking about the old days when you were right in the thick of the action, is the same.

We'll never catch Murph sitting down, you always said. And nobody's caught you yet. Murph, you're a hell of a guy.

Chief Andy Frain usher Murphy dead

Mass for Joseph (40,000) Murphy, 82, colorful chief usher for the Andy Frain organization, will be offered at 9 a.m. Saturday at St. George's Catholic Church, 3230 S. Lituania. Burial, with Andy Frain ushers serving as pallbearers, will be in Evergreen Cemetery in Evergreen Park.

Mr. Murphy died Thursday in his home at 939 W. 34th.

He grew up Joseph Cerny in the same Back-of-the-Yards neighborhood with his friend Andy Frain. When Frain began his ushering empire in the 1920s, Cerny served as his chief Beutenant and became known to presidents and lesser luminaries as Joe (40,000) Murphy.

The 40,000 tag stuck from Mr. Murphy's habit during Chicago's bleak baseball days of the 1920s of estimating crowds with a laugh as "40,000 . . . empty seats."

His bachelor apartment reflected his consuming interest in his life as an usher. It served as an unofficial Andy Frain museum. The walls were covered with photos of Mr. Murphy posing with athletes, movie stars and Presidents as far back as Warren G. Harding, and the floors and shelves were stacked with programs, buttons, badges and other souvenirs from notable public events.

Mr. Murphy retired in 1965.

Survivors include two brothers, John and Connie Cerny, and a sister, Dorothy Sobota.



JOSEPH (40,000) MURPHY
in a 1949 photo

1975 when she retired.

Survivors include a brother, A. A. O'Keefe, and a sister, Helen Lang.

Ruth Levin

Services for Ruth Levin, 90, who had been active in Jewish affairs, will be at 11 a.m. Monday at Stone Chapel, Kam Isalah Israel Congregation, 5039 S. Greenwood. Burial will be in Mt. Mayriv Cemetery, 3600 N. Narragansett.

Mrs. Levin, of 5519 Hyde Park Blvd., died Thursday at home.

In 1931, Mrs. Levin founded the South Side chapter of Pioneer Women, at 220 S. State, which represents the Zionist movement.

Survivors include two sons, Lawrence and Paul, and two daughters, Beatrice Borastein and Abigail Friedman.

Visitation will be from 7

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'40,000' Murphy, usher of celebrities, dies at 82

By Edward Baumann

JOE "40,000" MURPHY, 82, one of the original Andy Frain ushers and a man who knew them all, from presidents to movie stars, died Thursday in his home at 939 W. 34th St.

He was chief usher for Andy Frain from the firm's inception in the early 1920s until his retirement in 1965.

He earned the nickname "40,000" because that was the figure he always gave out when he was asked, "How many in the ballpark."

He was born Joseph Cerny in Chicago, but gave his name as Murphy when he took his first ushering job in 1916, because he thought an Irish handle would make it easier to get hired in those days.

IN HIS CAPACITY as chief usher, who always escorted the dignitaries to their seats, he became friends with every celebrity who appeared in the baseball parks, International Amphitheater, Chicago Stadium, major hotels, the Kentucky Derbies, and Democratic and Republican political conventions.

His home and garage in Bridgeport are plastered with photos of him and his friends—Sophie Tucker, Jimmy Durante, Casey Stengel, Marilyn Monroe, Babe Ruth, Harry Truman, and Richard J. Daley, to name only a few.

"Keep your eyes open and your big mouth shut," was the advice he gave to thousands of ushers who trained under him. "You can't ration courtesy."



Joe "40,000" Murphy

A WAKE WILL be held Friday from 1 to 10 p.m. in the chapel at 3319 S. Lituanica Av., where it is expected Andy Frain ushers will be needed to hold back the crowd.

Mr. Cerny, a bachelor, is survived by two brothers, John and Connie Cerny, and a sister, Dorothy Sobota.

Mass will be at 9 a.m. Saturday in St. George's Catholic Church, 3230 S. Lituanica Av.

