



Home Run!



New York By Rail publisher, Tom Martinelli, an avid-baseball fan, caught-up with Jeff Idelson, president of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum (HOF), who is retiring after the 2019 induction ceremony.

NYBR: Do you remember your first day at the HOF?

Jl: I became President 12 years ago, on Jackie Robinson Day, April 15, 2008, but I've spent a total of 25 years with the HOF in various capacities. My first day at the HOF was Induction Day 1994, when Phil Rizzuto, Steve Carlton and Leo Durocher were inducted. That day had great meaning because I previously worked with Rizzuto when I was with the New York Yankees.

NYBR: How significant is the HOF as an Upstate New York attraction?

Jl: We draw 300,000 visitors annually

and have welcomed 17 million total visitors since opening in 1939. Visitors come from across North America, and our international visitations continue to increase yearly as baseball globalizes. We're a tourism anchor within Central New York.

NYBR: What's new at the HOF?

Jl: Am emotional, uplifting 14-minute film, *Generations of the Game*, welcomes visitors entering the museum. Nineteen HOF members narrate the film, weaving together the rich history of the game. The film is shown in our completely renovated grandstand theater which is *the*

theatre in Upstate New York.

Memorial Day Weekend 2019, we'll open a new permanent baseball card exhibit, *Shoebbox Treasures*, with over 2,000 cards from the museum's vast collection. It explores the history of baseball cards, the evolution of card design and how and why fans of all ages collect cards. There will also be a section on the "holy grails," cards considered the most valuable.

NYBR: What are the HOF's biggest accomplishments in your 12 years as president?

Jl: Keeping the museum relevant, exciting and fresh. We always focus on what interests visitors and trends in cultural tourism. It's important to always be relevant, especially with the younger generations and to the Latino audience.

Digitizing our collections has allowed all baseball fans to access parts of our collection online. We utilize bilingual marketing to reach and embrace Spanish-speaking visitors.

A partnership with La Vida Baseball, a dynamic digital media platform that highlights the great Latino players shaping the game today and their cultures, allows us to reach an English-speaking Latino audience as we never have before.

NYBR: What's your advice to visitors planning to experience the HOF?

Jl: Plan to spend three to four hours minimum. Many visitors take one to three days to absorb our entire 50,000 square-foot museum. Consider an individual or family museum membership, which keeps members connected to us the year-round, allows for unlimited visits and helps support a national treasure.

NYBR: How does the HOF work the local community to provide a positive experience for visitors to Cooperstown?

Jl: We take our community responsibilities very seriously and want the local community to be our biggest champions, as we all benefit from HOF attendance.

MILIO STEWART JR. - NATIONAL BASEBALL HOF AND MUSEUM