

THE GASHOUSE GANG



I MADE MY DEBUT as a major league pitcher in September of 1930 for the St. Louis Cardinals. The Cardinals, at that time, were the most southern and western out of all them Major League Baseball teams. They didn't have the big wig budget of some of those clubs over east, there, but Rickey's farm system was chock full of talent and spunk—none more talented and spunky than yours truly, I might add—and so the St. Louis Cardinals had a bright future. Yes, indeed, the 1930s ushered in a shiny new era of Cards baseball.

And the crown jewel of that decade just happened to be the year 1934. The year of the Gashouse.

What is this Gashouse, you say? Well, the Gashouse Gang is another name for the snazziest, silliest, most ragtag bunch of ace ballplayers you'll find in your century or mine! The Gashouse Gang was the name given to the Cardinals in 1934.

These fine players included Ol' Diz, naturally, and, course, the second best hurler to ever climb the mound, my brother, Paul. Then there's Leo Durocher, who happens to be responsible for the Gashouse **moniker**, (but we'll get to that) and Joe Medwick, a left fielder with a fiery temper, who we all liked to call "Ducky." Course, no one can ever forget Pepper Martin, known as the "Wild Horse of the Osage" cause that kid sure could fly around the diamond, and our very own first baseman, Ripper Collins. We was all led by one great player, manager and man at large—Mr. Frankie Frisch, who we called "The Old Flash."

This was the Gashouse Gang, the team that was about to embark on a real grand adventure of a season in the year 1934, taking the world of Major League Baseball by rumpled storm.

Let's just say we weren't exactly like those Yankee guys with their fancy white pinstriped tuxedos. Perhaps we were known to have a bit of a shabby appearance. A gashouse, of course, is a factory that turns coal into gas.

You don't see them things much anymore, I'm told, but back in my day, a gashouse could always be found pumping real smelly fumes into the poorer areas of town and, let me tell you, a gashouse worker was always incredibly dirty. To say that me and Paul and all of us members of that 1934 team were "gashousers" simply meant that we were a grubby, ramshackle, scrappy bunch, who mighta looked a little rough and played a little rougher. And so the name stuck. I'm told history continues to remember our fine group of ball players as simply, the Gashouse Gang.



Sure, we all worked together like a couple of champs on the ball field, but we were a darn clever lot, too! When things was gettin' dull out on the road, me and Pepper Martin liked to get together to produce a few laughs. In fact, I remember one time things were a little slow on a trip to Philadelphia. That ol' boy, Pepper, and me, we went out and got ourselves a coupla overalls and matching caps. We looked just like a pair of regular

worker men. Like we really did step out of a gashouse! We sauntered around our hotel clad in this fine garb telling people what to do this way and that. Finally, we found ourselves a fancy banquet for some kinda national boys welfare organization. We decided to have a bit of fun with these lads and faked a right good fight then and there. I swear, the looks on those faces when they thought I'd punched Pepper! They was all pretty darn horrified.

After that, Manager Frankie Frisch made us retire them overalls once and for all. I tell ya what, sometimes that man made it so a fellow just couldn't have no fun anywhere. I told Pepper Martin that maybe it was 'bout time he and I made a move all the way up to **Novus Scofus**.

Read more about Dizzy Dean and his fellow players in author Carolyn Mueller's children's book "Dizzy and the Gashouse Gang." She lives in St. Louis, MO.

Visit www.carolyneizabethmueller.com.

Illustrator Nick Hayes draws political cartoons for the Guardian and New Statesman newspapers and writes graphic novels. He lives in East London.



EXTRA INNINGS!

Look in the Sports section of today's newspaper. Can you find an example of an athlete with a nickname? If so, give an example. If not, create a nickname for one of the athletes.

The Gashouse Gang got their name because they looked like workers at a gashouse. Use the newspaper to find the help wanted ads in the Classified section. List five different jobs that are advertised.

Learning Standards: I can use the newspaper to locate information.

POP UPS

MONIKER: Moniker is another word for nickname.

"**NOVUS SCOFUS**" is "Dizzy speak" for Nova Scotia, a province of Canada located almost exactly halfway between the Equator and the North Pole. It is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean—making it a great place to fish!