

# Appendix C: What They Said About Thurman Munson



Thomas J. Tunison  
Vice chair  
Thurman Munson  
Hall of Fame  
Committee



*Thurman Munson was one of the greatest leaders in the history of team sports. His field vision and blue print for success, fueled by an inner strength and determination, unequaled, played out before our very own eyes on the biggest stage in baseball. He willed himself and his team to the top of the baseball world with his tremendous skill and a confidence that was something to behold. Thurman became known as one of the games most clutch hitters and one of its toughest competitors. His impact on the great game of baseball, witnessed and respected by his teammates and opponents alike, cannot be overstated. Modern day statistical analysis and advanced metrics bare this out, and give us a clearer picture and a better understanding of the historical significance and greatness of his career. His love for his family and friends was on full display, while his love for children and others was a hidden gem, only later to be discovered. This was a very special man and a very special player. With deepest respect for the Baseball HALL of FAME, there should be no question that this great institution that we know and love so well would be better served with the inclusion of THURMAN LEE MUNSON."*

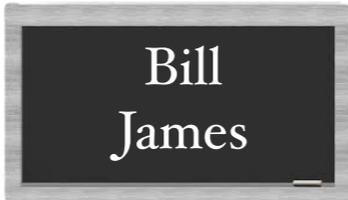


# WRITERS/MEDIA

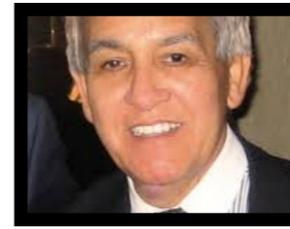
*"Munson deserved better from the voters, because he'd laid a strong foundation for a spot in Cooperstown."*



*"Four of the top five catchers of all-time were born in 1947—Bench, Fisk, Boone, and Munson."*



Recent!



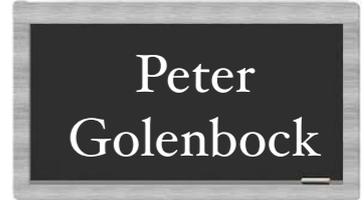
*"Thurman Munson would have been the greatest catcher of all-time had God not called him to heaven too soon. Still, two World Series championships, seven all-star teams and bringing the Bronx Bombers back to Yankee glory, after more than a decade's absence can't be ignored."*



Recent!



*"Thurman Munson was the glue that held the Yankees pitching staff together during those championship years. He was a fierce competitor who was beloved by everyone on those teams. His greatness cannot be measured by batting average and home runs alone. Without him, the Yankees do not win those pennants and championships. Thurman— and Billy Martin— should join Catfish Hunter and Reggie Jackson on the wall of the Baseball Hall of Fame."*

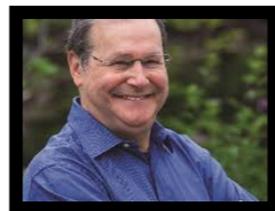


*"This was a guy who absolutely detested losing. He always gave everything he had and for that he was appreciated by teammates and even opponents. You should have seen him in college."*

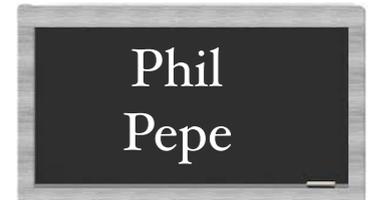


*"Thurman would always find a way to get the runner home. Whether it was with the arm or the bat, he found a way to beat you."*

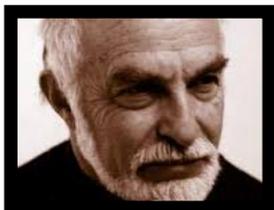
*"The fans knew that what you saw was what he was— a guy who played hard and true, took no prisoners, with honor and respect, and didn't care what the media thought of him. And the fans saw past the media and loved the kind of baseball he played."*



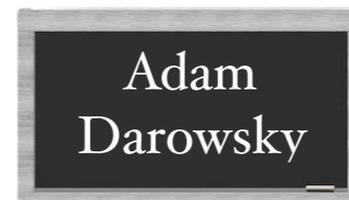
*"He was the most misunderstood athlete I have ever encountered, misunderstood because he wore his irascibility as a badge of honor, using it as a facade to hide his true feelings, to camouflage the real Thurman Munson. Down deep he was a pussycat, a man of deep compassion and understanding and great humanity, a devoted family man."*



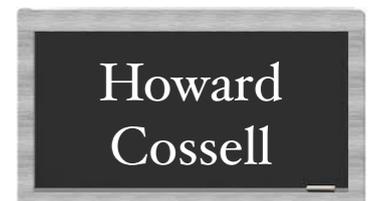
*"I voted for Munson for the Hall of Fame even though his major-league career was barely more than the minimum of 10 seasons. He was an outstanding player and the greatest force in returning the Yankees to a pennant after 11 years in the doldrums. He was a dominant player."*



*"What I like about Munson is he was almost exclusively a catcher. He didn't move off the position. That's rare and incredibly valuable. I think he's one of the 10-13 best catchers ever, which is a ranking that should certainly place him in the Hall."*



*"He was the very best there was at what he did."*





The following quotes are from recent interviews conducted with Thurman Munson's ex-teammates, opponents and friends from his childhood growing up in Canton, Ohio.

Jerome Pruet



*"Thurm' became a catcher when I pitched (100 mph fastball) because of his athleticism and leadership qualities. One of Thurman's huge assets was his overt desire to win— even in grade school. He was a competitor with no equal."*

Joe Gilhausen



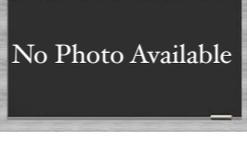
*"I think one thing that really separated him from other great players was he truly believed no pitcher could get him out, and if they did, it was an accident— especially on rare occasions when he'd strike out. That kind of mindset made him a standout."*

Ron Lemmo



*"He was so far ahead of everybody, even at 12 years old. And he was a great all-around athlete. It didn't matter what sport it was. Baseball, football, basketball, even shooting pool, bowling or ping-pong. He was great at everything and he always wanted to win."*

John Biskup



*"He was never shy about approaching other players for the good of the team. That's why George Steinbrenner named him captain. He had a way about him that made people just listen and change something. And he was the best clutch-hitter I've ever seen."*

Doug Miller



*"Thurman loved baseball and wanted to learn and play every position. He was a "mans man," always had your back and did whatever it took to win. Even at such a young age (16) he was the best player in our Canton Mens League. You knew he was something special."*

Steve Fettman

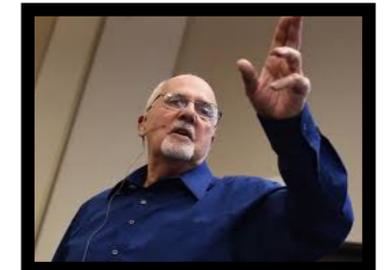


*"If your formative years took place near Canton, Ohio, in the 1970's, the raw and scrappy leadership style exhibited by hometown hero and New York Yankee, Thurman Munson, was one worthy of pride and replication. There has never been an athlete who has played so fierce and propelled a team so unapologetically forward in such a short lifespan."*

## From His College Coach (1979)

*"He reincarnated the pickoff play and he educated the American baseball fan in the dyed-in-the-wool aft of hitting behind the runner. He was the greatest at hitting behind the runner of any baseball player I have ever seen."*

*"He had God-given talent and he used that talent to the best of his ability. What came hard for most came naturally for him. I think friend and foe alike will tell you he played by the rules. He tried to do his best always."*



*"Thurman Munson had the most ability of any player I was ever associated with. He had tremendous reflexes and strength, but most of all he had the heart of a lion."*

Moose Paskert

# THE YANKEES

*"He was a great competitor and a great athlete and he always busted his tail for me. No one played harder than Thurman. No one was a better leader on and off the field than Thurman. Thurman Munson was the perfect Yankee captain."*

Billy  
Martin



*"Thurman was one of the things you could always count on. He was ready for anything back there."*

*"Thurman and I came to be to be very close friends during my first season with the Yankees in 1978. I had just come over from the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1977 and was having a bit of a rough time adjusting to the added pressure of playing in the Yankee pinstripes. Thurman helped me through those trying times. When I was trying too hard he would always settle me down by providing humor on the field. He had an uncanny ability, unlike any teammates that I have played with, to share a laugh or humorous moment on the field during pressure moments. Even in World Series play, he always had a way about him that kept the players calm and enabled us all to be the best we could be on the field. Although Thurman always managed to keep the mood relaxed, he also epitomized the way in which the game should be played, giving maximum effort at all times and coming through in the clutch almost routinely. Thurman was the greatest catcher I ever threw to. While I was fortunate to play with many great players, he was my favorite teammate of my career."*



Goose  
Gossage

*"Thurman was a great teammate, a great guy. His locker and mine were right next to each other, so Thurman was the first guy I would see every day coming to the ballpark. He and I had a lot of conversations over the years, a lot of dinners together, He was a great family guy. People don't know that side of him, but he was really a soft-hearted guy."*

*"If you had the winning run on second base in the bottom of the ninth, Thurman was the guy you wanted at the plate."*

Roy  
White



*"I can remember the day I Named him the captain. I said, Thurman, we need someone to lead."*

George  
Steinbrenner

*"Thurman was indispensable and irreplaceable..."*

*"If he put down number 1, they (pitchers) didn't question it. If he put down number 2 outside, they didn't question it. Having that kind of confidence in Thurman was a tremendous asset... You don't find that in too many places today."*



Bobby  
Murcer

*"He was a very special player, and this type of players don't come along very often."*

*"In all the years I've played this game, he is the finest competitor I have ever seen, the most professional, the best example of a team player."*

Lou  
Piniella

*"Thurman enjoyed playing baseball, he liked playing baseball. He had a sense of tradition for the history of the game, and at the same time he enjoyed catching."*

*"He was known for his quickness behind the plate. He was as quick as anybody I've ever seen coming out from behind that crouch on bunted balls and on his throws to second base."*



Mel  
Stottlemyre

# THE YANKEES

*"If there's one guy on your team you don't want out of your lineup, it's Thurman. I'd say he's the best ballplayer on the team, a man who can do everything and do it well."*



Elston  
Howard

*"Thurman played harder than any man I've ever met. He played in pain. He played with purpose. Most of all he brought out the best in those around him."*



Catfish  
Hunter

*"Thurman will always be my Captain. When I was traded to the Yankees he told me not to worry about throwing my slider in the dirt with a runner on third base because it wouldn't get by him. I have never met such a man who led by example and backed it up time after time. Thurman was passed the torch from Yankee catching royalty, Bill Dickey, Yogi Berra, & Elston Howard. He was a Captain, a champion, and a friend. Thank you #15."*

Sparky  
Lyle



*"He had so much to do with my success. When I started to become an established pitcher all he told me was, 'Trust me, and you'll do it.'"*



Ron  
Guidry

*"To me, as a young player coming up and watching him work, he was the consummate leader. He was a no-nonsense kind of guy with a dry sense of humor, but he always meant well, and if you knew him and understood his sense of humor, then he was great. He'd give you the shirt off his back." He was the soul of our team."*



Willie  
Randolph

*"When you look at the way he played and the way he carried himself, it was the way you wanted to play. That's what made him captain."*



Chris  
Chambliss

*"He made pitchers that were average good because of his ability to take all the pressure and call a game. He always took the responsibility."*

*"I never saw anyone play the game like he did. He just played the game hard and wanted to win. He taught me a lot."*



Micky  
Rivers

*"He was a guy who played hard every single day, every at bat. He was rough and tough but he was a friend to everybody on the team. He recognized that everybody around him was a working part of his team. When I played against him, he'd tell me to loosen up and would give me hitting tips... I regretted that I never had the opportunity to tell him what I wanted to tell him: That I loved him as a man and as a teammate."*

Rick  
Dempsey



*"Had he lived, I bet we would have won two more World Series in New York, both in 1980 and 1981."*



Reggie  
Jackson

# THE YANKEES

*"Thurman as a player was the ultimate true professional. The man was hurt and he never complained. He was a guy who brought a lot of class and dignity in going out and doing his job."*



Brian Doyle

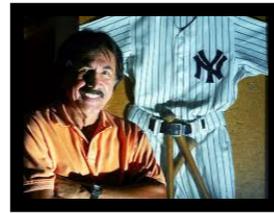
*"When something needed to be said, he'd go to the individual. He always waited for the opportune time if something needed to be said, and he said it. Everyone respected him."*

*"I never realized how good he really is till' I saw him play every day. Playing at Shea Stadium will make Thurman the A.L.'s MVP if the Yankees do anything in the race."*

Whitey Ford



*"When I came from California, he made me a pitcher. He taught me how to pitch to the hitter."*



Ed Figueroa

*"I liked the way he played the game. He was a leader first, a teammate second and whatever he did on the field was second to him. He wanted everybody to feel comfortable. He wanted everybody to be on the same page, ready for very game."*



Jorge Posada

*"The guys in the clubhouse are very affectionate towards Thurman because we knew within ourselves what kind of contributions he made. Thurman just quietly went out from day to day and got it done."*



Cliff Johnson

*"He was such a team man. He did all the things that a Yankee of old would have done to win games, run, hit, throw and break up double plays."*



Fritz Peterson

*"Munson was without question the most intelligent catcher in the American League, with a great sense of command of calling pitches and an ability to both challenge and calm then pitchers he worked with...He was the guy at the top of the dugout steps cheering his teammates on, the guy who led the team into battle when the benches cleared. He was the player the Yankees relied behind."*



Bill White

*"Nobody plays any harder than Munson. Nobody plays hurt as much as Munson. He's been hurt for a long time, but try and keep him out of the game. He's one of the greatest ballplayers I've ever seen."*

Gabe Paul



*"He was smart behind the plate. He knew what the hitters could and couldn't do, and his leadership was unquestioned."*



Gene Michael

*"Someday the Yankees are going to come up with a catcher again who'll hit .300 and drive in a hundred runs, but they'll never come up with another THURMAN MUNSON, the man"*



Tony Kubek

# OPPONENTS/MANAGERS

*"He was the leader of the team that had been to the World Series three years in a row and won the last two. He'd been the MVP in 1976 and was just a well-respected player throughout the league and certainly one of the best competitors in the league. One of the best I'd ever played against. Definitely the leader of the Yankees."*



Ken  
Singleton

*"The resurgence of the Yankees as winners was due to one man's efforts in particular, and that man was Thurman Munson."*



Carlton  
Fisk

*"I was always totally amazed at Thurman. I thought he was one of the greatest competitors I've ever known."*



Johnny  
Bench

*"He's the best right handed hitter I've seen in the league. He's a beautifully disciplined hitter."*

Gene  
Mauch



*"Of all the Yankee hitters, Thurman Munson was the one who scared me the most when he came up to bat. He had that swing and that heart. He was just totally clutch."*



Charlie  
Lau

*"Thurman Munson was great. He could hit, hit for power, field, throw, run. He could beat you in so many ways and he would do just that. It all just runs together. He was unreal."*



Frank  
Robinson

*(Frank Robinson chose Thurman Munson as catcher for his all-time team)*

*"That guy (Munson) can hit...he can flat out hit."*



Sparky  
Anderson

*"What two players would you pick if you had your choice of other rosters?"*

*"Robin Yount and Thurman Munson."*



Dick  
Williams

*"I'd love to have Thurman Munson in Cleveland, but there's no way the Yankees can let him go. He's the most consistent player in baseball. No club can give up enough to get him."*

Buddy  
Bell



*"Thurman Munson is probably the best clutch hitter in baseball."*



Tommy  
Lasorda





























