

Alex Rodriguez

Interview by Marvin R. Shanken, Publisher Cigar Aficionado

Being booed at Yankee Stadium

"There's nothing worse than getting booed by 56,000 people at home. And those who say they don't hear it, they are bullshitting you. They hear it, and it doesn't feel good."

Building A Business

"It started out of fear... The average career is five and a half years for baseball. You make 90 percent of your lifetime earnings from age 20 to 30. And of the 750 players that are in the Major Leagues, less than five percent have a college degree. And I'm not a stock broker, but with that information alone I would short that stock. So I didn't want to be one of those numbers."

His Suspension:

"I needed to heal physically and emotionally... My mind was a mess. I was exhausted and I just needed to rest... I wanted to understand why I kept beating myself. I was a pretty good guy making dumb, silly decisions. And I wanted to dig into my childhood. My father left when I was 10. And I wanted to get a grip on that."

Rodriguez was 10 years old when his father walked out, leaving his mother Lourdes to support the family. The young Rodriguez watched his mother working two jobs and struggling with the rent. He was determined to use his budding athletic talents to give

her a better life. A star in high school, he skipped college as he was drafted No. 1 by the Seattle Mariners at age of 17. In 22 seasons he amassed statistics that are the stuff of a legend: 696 home runs, 2,086 runs batted in, 14 times named an All Star. Only three men have hit more career home runs. No one has hit more grand slams. His efforts were rewarded with record contracts with the Texas Rangers and New York Yankees; he and the Yankees tasted victory when they won the 2009 World Series. He struggled at times in the bright light of super-stardom and his salary made him a target for criticism. Major League Baseball suspended him for the 2014 season for steroid use; he returned to the Yankees in 2015 with a new perspective and outlook on life, and he played his final game on August 12, 2016. Rodriguez is back in the public eye as a critically acclaimed analyst talking baseball on Fox and ESPN. He is engaged to superstar Jennifer Lopez, and appears on "Shark Tank." A savvy investor he bought his first piece of real estate as a young athlete; today A-Rod Corp., manages more than 15,000 apartment units, among other business ventures.

Shanken: Everyone knows who you are. Nobody knows who you are.

Rodriguez: In my playing days, pre-suspension, they are both accurate. Post-suspension, people are getting to know me a lot better. I played 26 years just wanting to play baseball, hit home runs and to help my team win championships. Pre-suspension/post-suspension, I realized that I needed to make a paradigm shift because someone else was telling my story. I made mistakes, but I wasn't a bad guy. I was portrayed as a bad guy. I needed a year to understand that I better take control of my life and take control of my narrative. Tell my story good, bad or ugly, just be real, be honest, and take

my chances. People hate you and it's not even you. At least be myself. If they are going to hate me, hate the real me. You are an average of the five people you hang out with the most. I say surround yourself with great people.

Shanken: What about the Hall of Fame?

Rodriguez: There's rules. You have to follow the rules. I made mistakes, and at the end of the day I have to live by those mistakes. Whether I get in or not—and let's be clear, I want to get in, I hope I get in, I pray I get in—if I don't, I have a bigger opportunity; the platform of my mistakes, the good, the bad, the ugly has allowed me to have a loud voice to the next generation, to say when in doubt, just look at my career... The other message is, maybe I'm not a Hall of Fame player, but I get a chance to be a Hall of Fame dad, a Hall of Fame friend.

Shanken: What was the feeling of being traded to the Red Sox instead, of the Yankees, in 2004:

Rodriguez: That's a true story. We went through a thorough plan of the organization, team, how it looks today, how will it look in the future, did mock lineups. The deal was done. We took it to the union, they said, "There is no way you can concede giving this money back, it will set a bad precedent," and they basically kiboshed the whole thing.

Shanken: Let's talk about the women in your life.

Rodriguez: It starts with my mother. I'm big into women empowerment; women in equality. That starts with watching my mother for many years. So much respect and admiration. I wish she had more power growing up. I have a sister and two daughters. I want them to aim for No. 1, for CEO, for president, don't concede that job or power. At my company women have a seat at the table, my two highest-paid employees are women and I love it. Jennifer [Lopez], when you talk about power and beautiful, inside and outside. The way she mothers her twins, and way she is with my daughters. So much admiration. What I love about Jennifer is how genuine and how much she does for others; how she inspires others, men and women. Both of us are New York kids—she was born in the Bronx. I was born in Washington Heights—we are both Latinos, she is Puerto Rican, I am Dominican. We have been through a lot over the years, good and bad. We are both in our 40s now and feel like we have an opportunity to give back. We enjoy ourselves and we are having a good time.

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