

# The Complete Collectibles Guide Mickey Mantle

## Picture Perfect: Mantle's postcards and photocards

By Kelly Eisenhauer

Baseball postcards or photocards have been around since 1900. During the last 108 years, thousands of players have had their pictures taken and turned into collectibles that still have the same effect as today's baseball cards.

In fact, the U.S. government had a lot to do with the rise in popularity of the baseball postcard. At one time, it was actually illegal to send a photo through the mail with a message and mailing address. Finally, in the early 1900s, the government eased their rules and permitted names, addresses and messages on the reverse side.

It's very difficult to actually pinpoint when a postcard was made. Since there are usually no dates on a postcard, one has to rely on postal cancellations and other determining factors such as uniforms, etc., to determine an issue date.

There have been many individuals who have gained fame in the postcard business because of their cameras. Names like J.D. McCarthy, George Brace, George Burke, Jim Rowe, Don Wingfield and Louis Dormand are just a few. Most of these photographers used black-and-white film and a few experimented with color film.

### Mickey's first photocard

Mickey's first photocard was a 3 1/2-by-5 1/2-inch beige-colored card that he actually had made for himself. The 19-year-old Mantle, wearing his road Yankee uniform with folded arms and the American League 50th Anniversary patch on his left sleeve, had his picture taken in 1951 by an unknown photographer and had the blank-backed cards made for promotional purposes.

### Part IV Postcards and Photocards

**In the fourth installment in the multi-part series "Mickey Mantle: The Complete Collectibles Guide" we'll look at Mantle's postcards and photocards.**

**Part I – Topps Test and Inserts 1952-69 .... Feb. 6**

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Back in the 1950s, it was very common for players to distribute postcards or photocards to their fans seeking their autographs. Two different stories have circulated about the origin of the card (*Photo No. 155*). One such story is that when Mickey had the cards made, he actually paid an individual to hand them out to fans at the ball-park. The other story is that Mickey used them to boost his popularity, so that he might make the All-Star squad. In any event, the 1951 photocard is a legitimate, vintage item that Mickey had made.

In the 1990s, Mickey's sister, Barbara, sold most of Mickey's personal items that he had left in his parents home in Oklahoma. Among those items were numerous Louis Requena postcards from 1954, the 1951 photocards, grade school and high school pictures from Commerce High School and some of Mickey's personal clothing. Longtime Mantle friend Tom Catal, owner of the Mickey Mantle Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y., purchased many of these items and added them to his fine collection for the public to see and enjoy. The card is very rare and can command prices in excess of \$2,500.

### The first Mantle postcards

George Burke started making postcards in the early 1900s. He amassed one of the greatest collections of sports photography known to exist. When Burke died in the 1940s, his young apprentice, George Brace, who started working for Burke when he was 16, took over the operations and continued to manufacture and produce baseball postcards. Most of Brace's postcards had his name and the address (807 Belmont Ave., Chicago) stamped on the reverse.

Brace, who had exclusive rights to all of Burke's photographs, remained active and produced postcards into the early 1990s. It is written that he and Burke together had photographed 189 of the 286 Hall of Famers.

Brace produced a total of 15 different black-and-white postcards and issued seven different color photos of Mantle (*Photo Nos. 156-178*). Most of these were from photos that he had taken himself in Chicago while working for the Chicago White Sox.

All of his black-and-white postcards had a small ¼-inch white border around each print. It was very common for Brace to actually write the name of the player on the reverse of the postcard. He was also the official club photographer for the Chicago Cubs. He was one of the great photographers, who worked with both black-and-white and color film.

Brace also used second-generation negatives to sell to collectors. Most of the black-and-white work was of good quality, but not great. His photos are very similar to Jim Rowe's postcards, as both used Kodak photographic backings and are easily confused with one another.

The Mantle Brace postcards are still readily available and are valued around \$20-\$25 each. His color pictures, with much better quality than his black-and-white work of Mantle, were sold as 4-by-6s, 5-by-7s, and 8-by-10s and never were issued as postcards.

### J. D. McCarthy photos and postcards

J.D. McCarthy was another of the original gurus of baseball postcards (*Photo Nos. 179-180*). Coming from a small suburb of Detroit, McCarthy produced thousands of postcards, which he sold to the players and the public.

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# MickeyMantle

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Starting in the late 1940s and continuing into the 1980s until his death in 1988, McCarthy produced black-and-white postcards that varied in size and style. McCarthy, for the most part, produced borderless, standard-size postcards with the player's name on the front inside a small, white block. Most of his cards also featured his famous "JMCD" monogram in the lower left corner. On the reverse, most had a single middle border line, which stated, "Produced by J. D. McCarthy, 8441 Northfield, Oak Park, Mich. 48237 (Photo No. 181).

All of the postcards that contained that line were produced after 1963. This was the year that the U.S. implemented the Zip Code. Earlier cards, which were made prior to the Zip Code, had two specific variations (Photo No. 182).

In 1953, the year of Mantle's first McCarthy postcard, the back simply read, "Produced by J.D. (Charlie) McCarthy, Royal Oak, Mich." (Photo No. 183)

Yes, "Charlie," as in the lovable, wisecracking dummy of ventriloquist, Edgar Bergen. The words "Post Card" also appeared in a vertical font. A second backing was also used with two lines in the middle of the postcard stating, "Produced by J. D. McCarthy, 8441 Northfield Oak Park 37, Mich." This variation also contained the words, "Post Card" in vertical font.

All of McCarthy's postcards were produced on a semi-glossy, thin stock paper. Some of his postcards contained facsimile signatures of the players.

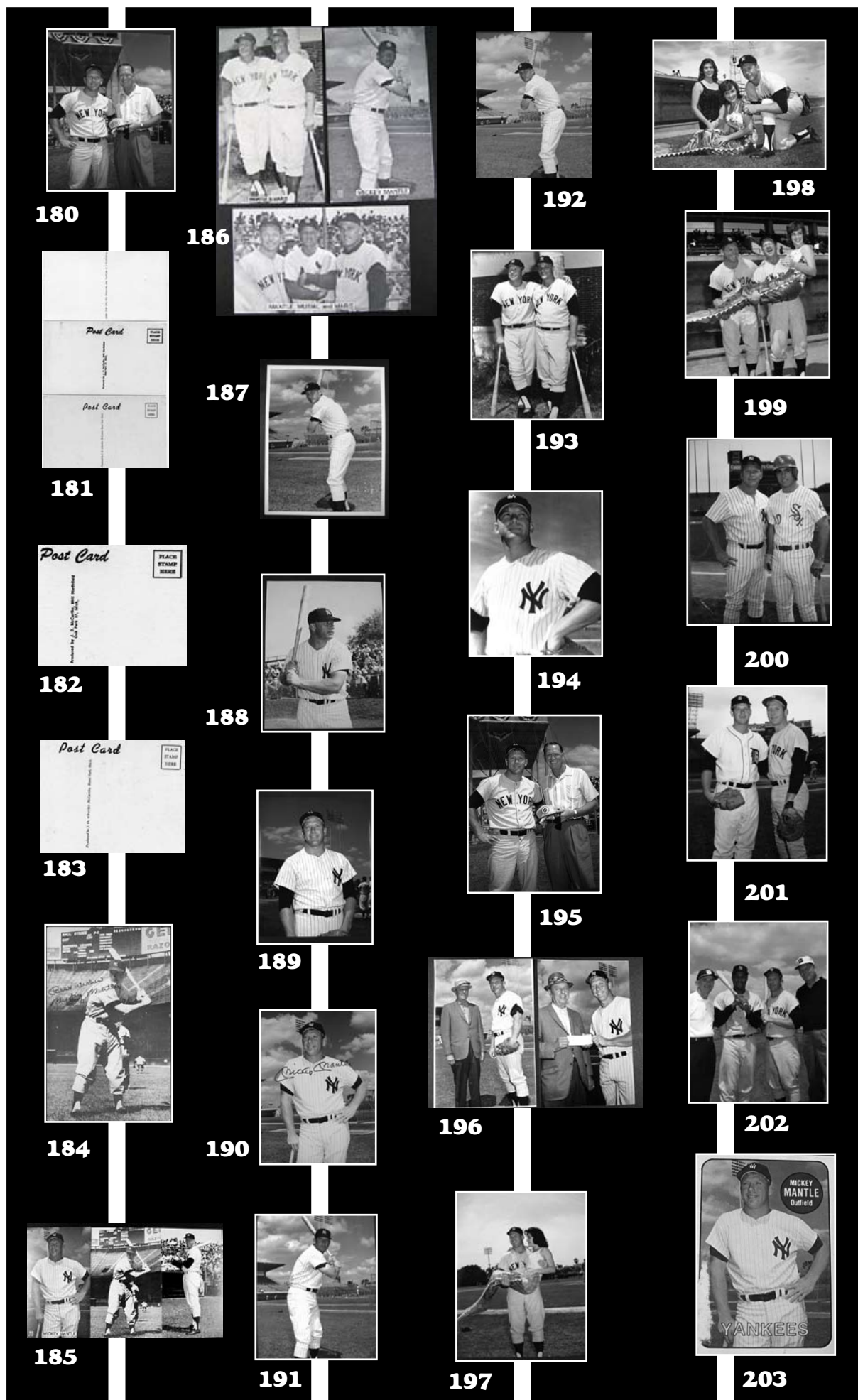
McCarthy made a total of eight different Mickey Mantle postcards, six of which were 5½-by-3¼ inches, one 5½-by-3½ and one large 8-by-10 in size.

In 1953, McCarthy photographed Mantle, batting left-handed, with the Tiger Stadium scoreboard in the background and a very noticeable GEM RAZORS advertisement. This was Mantle's first McCarthy postcard (Photo No. 184, autographed). It measures 5½-by-3½.

Mantle's second McCarthy issue was a photo taken in Florida during spring training. It showed him in a right-handed batting pose, with bat on shoulder, wearing a home, Yankee pinstriped uniform. This photo was from the late 1950s to early 1960s. Three other Mantle postcards show him in his pinstripes, batting right-handed, left-handed, and leaning on a bat with his right hand (Photo No. 185).

The last two postcards show Mickey with Stan Musial and teammate Roger Maris. This picture was probably taken in 1960 or 1961. Also in 1961, McCarthy produced his most famous postcard. A picture of the M & M boys, Roger and Mickey, showed them wearing their road New York uniforms underneath a palm tree in Florida (Photo No. 186).

In addition to his vast black-and-white portfolio (Photo Nos. 187-188), McCarthy also took many color pictures of Mantle over the years (Photo Nos. 189-196). When talking with J.D. in the early 1980s, he told me, "I enjoyed working with Mickey and Mickey enjoyed working with me."



This mutual respect was very evident in McCarthy's work. His work is as good as anything that I have ever seen. His three pictures of Mickey and Whitey Ford posing with the Florida's Wiki-Wachee girls are masterpieces (*Photo Nos. 197-199*).

Some of McCarthy's other photos include Mickey with Bucky Dent in a White Sox uniform (*Photo No. 200*), Mickey with Detroit Tiger Ace Mickey Lolich (*Photo No. 201*) and Mickey with teammate Elston Howard and two unknowns (*Photo No. 202*).

In 1986, Sports Design Products (SDP) owned by Charles Mandel of Helmar Brewing Co. fame, teamed with McCarthy to produce a fine 24-card set (*Photo No. 203*). The format of the set was fashioned after the popular 1969 Topps Baseball series. Mantle, of course, was part of the set.

McCarthy also did freelance work for Topps. The Seattle Pilots even hired him to photograph their players for use in press releases.

And his work wasn't limited to only baseball. He photographed football, basketball and ice hockey players. Many players would continue to place orders with him long after they retired.

After McCarthy died in 1988, his widow, Helen, sold his entire collection of pictures, postcards and printing plates. They have made their way into the collecting hobby. Values of his postcards are very affordable. Most of them are in the \$5-\$10 range. Mantle postcards usually command higher prices, usually \$15-\$25 each, with Mantle's 1953 postcard bringing between \$75-\$100. The original color 8-by-10s of Mickey with J.D.'s name and address on the reverse sell for \$100-\$150 each.

## 1953-55 Dormand Postcards

Louis Dormand produced some of the nicest postcards ever made. His beautiful, natural, color photos of Mantle are some of the most sought-after items in the memorabilia business.

Dormand of Riverhead, N.Y., worked primarily at Yankee Stadium and Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. He produced postcards so that players could satisfy their fans request for photos and autographs.

Selling his postcards for 10 cents each back in 1953-55, Dormand made his postcards available to the public. Fans could complete an order form and indicate the player of their choice, and Dormand

would send back the highly coveted photos postpaid.

He produced about 40 different postcards, which were 3½-by-5½ inches. These postcards were borderless in design with a facsimile autograph on the front. The reverse had a short biographical write-up of the player with a Kodachrome logo.

Dormand also produced a larger-sized format for Mickey Mantle and Phil Rizzuto. The large issues were sold for 50 cents each.

As for Mantle, there were four different issues using two different photos. Dormand produced two standard-size postcards of Mantle. The first, which was listed as No. 111, shows Mickey in his pinstriped, Yankees home uniform in a left-handed batting stance (*Photo No. 204*). His facsimile signature is in the upper right-hand corner. This is the common version that usually sells for around \$50 in excellent condition.

The second Mantle postcard shows Mickey, with bat on shoulder, wearing his pinstriped home uniform with the 50th American League anniversary patch (*Photo No. 205*). This postcard is much rarer than the previously mentioned postcard. It also has Mickey's facsimile signature in the upper left and has a beautiful picture of the Yankee Stadium façade in the background. This version is worth in excess of \$150.

Dormand also made a 6-by-9 and 9-by-12 large photocard using the same Kodachrome negative. These large format photocards are very difficult to find and are valued in the \$1,200-\$1,500-plus range. All cards are numbered 111.

## Jim Rowe

Postcard maker Jim Rowe of Berwyn, Ill., made a total of 15 different Mantle postcards using Kodak photo postcard backings. Of these 15, there were several of Mickey in the early 1950s.

One of his most memorable postcards from 1952 shows a very young Mantle with cracked lips (*Photo No. 206*). Rowe also produced two Mantle postcards from 1951.

Rowe sold all of his postcards by mail for 50 cents back in the 1970s. Today, their value is between \$10-\$20 each (*Photo Nos. 207-220*). Rowe claimed to produce all of his postcards from the original negatives, but did frequently use second-generation photos, as well.



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He had a very large, 16-page list featuring players from 16 major league teams and would also sell 5-by-7 and 8-by-10 photos. These pictures were usually substandard in quality and featured his stamped name and address on the reverse.

### 1947-66 Exhibit Cards

The Exhibit Supply Co. of Chicago produced thousands of heavy, card-board-stock picture cards. Their origin goes back to the early 1920s.

The cards measured 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-by-5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>. Unnumbered and blank backed, each card usually had a black-and-white or sepia front with a facsimile autograph. Selling for only a penny, the cards were available in vending machines.

There are six different Mantle Exhibit cards known to exist. Five of the six cards show Mickey in his 1951 Yankee uniform. The first two Mantle cards show Mickey from the belt area on up wearing his Yankee road gray uniform. The first variation is black and white and shows Mickey holding a bat on his left shoulder. A white shadow appears around his name (**Photo No. 221**). The second variation is sepia in color and shows Mickey in the same pose with bat on shoulder and has no outline around his signature (**Photo No. 222**).

Cards number 3, 4 and 5 all show Mickey in a full body pose wearing his Yankee pinstriped uniform (**Photo No. 223**). This issue has three different backings. In 1962, Mickey's statistics appear in black ink (**Photo No. 224**); the statistics include information beginning in 1949, when Mantle played for Independence in KOM League, and stopping with the final stats from the 1961 season. The second variation is from 1963 (**Photo No. 225**). The statistics on the back are printed in red ink. It also starts with Mantle stats from Independence in 1949 and stops with the final batting statistics from the 1962 season. The final variation is blank backed.

The finale Mantle Exhibit card is known as the "Portrait." It shows a close-up of Mickey in his pinstriped, home uniform looking to his left (**Photo No. 226**). It is presumed that this

card was made in 1966. It also has a 1960s-type Mantle signature. The "Portrait" Exhibit card was not produced in great quantity and is valued around \$500-plus in Excellent condition.

Two other Exhibit cards exist with Mickey. He is featured on a rare 1952 (**Photo No. 227**) and 1956 team photo of the New York Yankees (**Photo No. 228**).

In 1977, the Exhibit Supply Co. issued a 32-card set on semigloss stock. The card, using Mickey's "Portrait" picture, had "Baseball's Great Hall of Fame" at the top of the card with Corinthian columns on the left and right sides (**Photo No. 229**). It also featured some of Mickey's accomplishments and statistics at the bottom. It is valued around \$15-\$20.

In the late 1970s, the Exhibit Supply Co. was sold and in 1980, a reprint set using the company's original negatives was made in sepia, blue, red and green-toned ink. The Mantle reprint card featured the same half-body pose as described earlier in variation Nos. 1 and 2 (**Photo No. 230**). The set of 32 cards sells for \$40-\$50, with the Mantle card selling for about \$15.

### Louis Requena

Louis Requena was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1919. Living in Chelsea, N.Y., he gained his fame in the 1960s freelancing for the Associated Press, United Press International and the New York Yankees.

In 1964-68, Requena produced beautiful, borderless color, 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-by-5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> postcards of the Yankees. The fronts of these postcards, usually, but not always, contained a facsimile signature. The reverse featured the player's name in dark-green ink and contained a Kodachrome logo of a "K" within a diamond.

Ironically, there never was a Mickey Mantle standard-size postcard. In 1961, Requena photographed Mickey by himself and also with Roger Maris (**Photo No. 231**). Then taking the negatives, he produced two different 8-by-10s on thin, glossy cardboard stock.

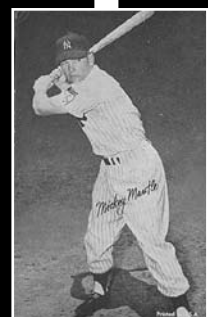
The quality of Requena's work was outstanding (**Photo No. 232**). Both of these issues contained the players'



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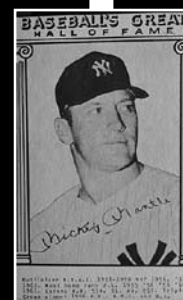
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facsimile autographs and were blank backed. The Mantle 8-by-10 lists for \$35 and the Maris/Mantle combo card lists for \$30.

As a club photographer, Requena photographed Mantle quite frequently. In 1965 on the first Mickey Mantle Day at Yankee Stadium, Requena took hundreds of photos of Mickey and assembled them into an official album. The album was then given to Mickey and some of the top brass in the Yankees front office. One such album has come to auction and is extremely rare and valuable. Very few of these shots were ever issued by Requena.

In 1970 and 1971, the Yankees released two sets for their Yankee Clinic Days at Yankee Stadium. The 1970 card used a Requena photo of Mickey with a brilliant blue sky and a facsimile signature (*Photo No. 233*). This picture card is worth about \$20-\$25. In 1971, the second clinic card was released showing Mickey with Joe DiMaggio as the two were honored with their own respective plaques on the center field wall (*Photo No. 234*). It, too, is valued around \$20-\$25.

#### Don Wingfield, 1955-60s

Don Wingfield was a very talented photographer who hailed from Alexandria, Va. Producing black-and-white, glossy postcards in the mid-1950s to the late 1960s, Wingfield stayed mainly in Washington, D.C. (Griffith Stadium) to photograph his subjects. Throughout the late 1960s, he would travel to New York to photograph Mantle, Maris, Elston Howard and other Yankees at Yankee Stadium. He even photographed Yankees catcher Thurman Munson.

He took lots of great photos and made three different postcard sets. He even produced a Harmon Killebrew color postcard.

As for Mantle, one black-and-white postcard exists. It is very rare and seldom seen. It is valued in excess of \$500.

Wingfield's 8-by-10s are available in the hobby. First-generation pictures of Mantle

are valued around \$150 or more (*Photo Nos. 235-243*).

In recent years, his collection was sold, and Upper Deck purchased the negatives and rights to produce several sets that featured Wingfield's images. In 2005, Upper Deck released The Wingfield Classic Collection-Sweet Spot Classic. It was a 50-card 5-by-7 insert set that featured many greats of the game. In that set, Mantle appeared on seven different cards. He appeared on cards WWC-13 with Joe DiMaggio, WCC-16 with Al Kaline, WCC-27 with Ted Kluszewski, WCC-34 with Roger Maris, WCC-35 with Stan Musial, WCC-36 with Ted Williams and Yogi Berra, and WCC-49 with DiMaggio and Yogi Berra. The value per card is \$15-\$20.

#### Phil Sarno

Phil Sarno was from Hazleton, Pa., and worked as a sportswriter and photographer for the *Hazleton Plain Speaker*, which later became the *Hazleton Standard Speaker*. Beginning in the late 1950s and continuing into the late 1960s, Sarno periodically would travel to Philadelphia to cover the Phillies and to the Bronx to cover the Yankees.

With press credentials, Sarno had great field access to all the Yankees, including Mantle, Maris, Berra, Ford, Rizzuto and others. He attended the big events at Yankee Stadium, such as the 1960 All-Star Game, the World Series from 1961-64, Yogi Berra Day and both Mickey Mantle Days in 1965 and again in 1969.

His black-and-white photography was superb (*Photo Nos. 244-263*). Sarno would occasionally print 8-by-10s of Mantle for his close friends. After Sarno died, his son, Tom, produced about 20 different Kodak-backed postcards on a very limited basis. He later ended up selling some of his father's negatives to fellow collectors in the hobby. ♦

#### About the author



**Kelly R. Eisenhauer** of Lehigh, Pa., has been a fan and collector of Mickey Mantle memorabilia for more than 40 years. He supplied photography for the HBO documentary "Mantle, The Definitive Story" and is featured in Richard Wolfe's current book, *For Yankee Fans Only* - Vol. 2. Eisenhauer owns and operates his own Mickey Mantle webpage at [www.hofmemories.com](http://www.hofmemories.com). Anyone with questions or comments can reach him at [mrike@ptd.net](mailto:mrike@ptd.net).

Many of the photographs from this multi-part series, including a remarkable number of one-of-a-kind pieces, came from the Mickey Mantle Collection of B.S. Alpert.