



Myrna Katz and Harvey Frommer

by Ron Kaplan
NJJN Staff Writer

Regardless of the success a professional sports team achieves, they always come up short when compared to the standard set by the 1927 New York Yankees, who won 110 of 154 games and swept the Pittsburgh Pirates in the World Series.

Dartmouth University professor Harvey Frommer takes a fresh look at the model in *Five o'clock Lightning: Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and the Greatest Baseball Team in History, The New York Yankees*, published in October by Wiley.

Despite the lengthy title, Frommer, a Brooklyn ex-pat who relocated to a 17-acre property in bucolic Lyme, NH, 11 years ago, says what differentiates his latest work from previous books on the topic is its detail about the supporting cast who played in the shadows of Ruth, Gehrig, and other high-profile players.

"I think that's what made it such a phenomenal team," he said. "If you read the book closely and carefully, you would have

seen there was not one roster change through that year.... There was a solidity and uniformity to the team."

The team picture used for the dust cover sets the scene for the narrative.

"That photo sold for almost \$300,000 at an auction in California," Frommer said. "[Yankees pitching ace] Herb Pennock, one of my favorite characters in the book, went around and got each [player] to sign with a fancy fountain pen that he purchased for the occasion."

In addition to a recap of the team's fortunes during the regular season and in the Series, Frommer tells the story of every man in that photo, including manager Miller Huggins, the Yankees' coaches, even the bat-boy.

"You get the image of these guys in the Roaring Twenties, a group of wild characters. And they were in many ways. But Huggins really was a disciplinarian and a schoolmaster. They had to watch the game, they couldn't eat or drink during the game; all kinds of rules were in effect. It was strictly baseball when they played."

The BEST TEAM ever?

A professor's case for the 1927 Yankees

Despite having written several books about the Bronx franchise within his collected works of almost 40 sports titles, From-

mer says he didn't grow up a fan of the team. "For professional reasons, I say I followed the Yankees, but I actually was not a Yankees or a Dodgers fan. I was always a contrary kind of kid growing up in the '50s and I rooted for the Cardinals. I think I liked the uniform."

And don't get the idea that Frommer is a one-theme author, either. He and his wife, Myrna Katz Frommer — who also teaches at Dartmouth — collaborated on a series of *It Happened in...* books, including *Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Catskills*. And their oral history, *Growing Up Jewish in America: An Oral History*, with more than 100 interviews with people across America, is a staple of many

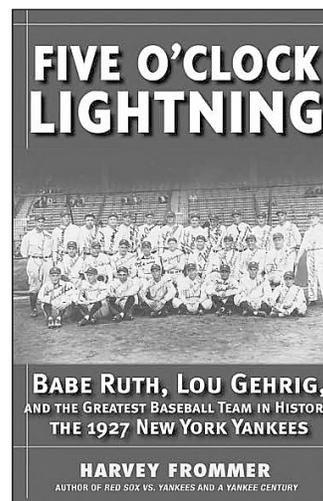
Jewish libraries.

So how does he balance his voluminous output with the demands of his "day job"?

"I interviewed a guy named Al Lewis [famous for his role as Grandpa in *The Munsters*], for *Growing Up Jewish*, and I got a great line from him which has become my personal creed: You've got to outwork the horse."

As if to prove his point, Frommer had just put the finishing touches on *Remembering Yankee Stadium*, due out next year from Stewart, Tabori & Chang, as the team plays its final season at baseball's most legendary field.

Who knows how much he would have written if he'd been a fan all along? ■



Ron Kaplan can be reached at RKaplan@njewishnews.com.



Zoom, zoom, zoom: Springfield-born driver earns fourth victory at Speedway

Springfield native Jon Denning took the checkered flag at the Nov. 3 Ocean County Speedway Championship 300 in Rougemont, NC.

Denning clicked off a qualifying lap of 14.257 seconds to secure the

pole position for the race and the \$500 award that went along with it. His victory netted him an additional \$7,500.

"Hey, \$8,000 sounds pretty good," Denning told reporters after the race.

Terry Dease of Oxford, the track's Late Model Stock Car Division title winner this season, finished in second place, followed by defending OCS 300 champion Carl Long of Roxboro.

— RON KAPLAN

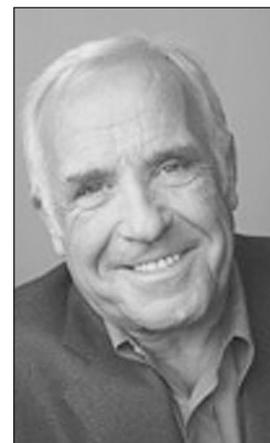
New Jersey driver Jon Denning enjoys his fourth trip to victory lane in the Late Model races at Orange County Speedway this season.

Photo credit Rick Smith / eventpictures.com

Israeli national hockey appoints chair

Sidney Greenberg, vice-president of the Toronto-based Astral Media Inc., has been appointed chair of the Israel Ice Hockey Federation. The announcement was made Oct. 31.

Greenberg has already been responsible for creating and operating the first World Jewish Hockey Championship, which took place this past summer in Metulla,



Sidney Greenberg

Israel. He is a past president of both Maccabi Canada and Basketball Canada and is involved with numerous boards including the Toronto Raptors Foundation and the Canadian Olympic Association.

Greenberg received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in 2005.