

AUTOGRAPH **2014**
Auty UNIVERSITY
YEARBOOK



2014 YEARBOOK

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A NOTE FROM MATT RAYMOND

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Over the past year autograph collecting has been in the headlines. The Johnny Manziel investigation. Another aircraft carrier of questionable signatures passed by PSA and JSA. Taylor Swift’s recent proclamation that the selfie has made the autograph obsolete. But like much of our news, the negative stories are the ones that make the front page and get the most attention. There is so much good happening in our world—and in our hobby—which doesn’t get the spotlight.

The autograph community continues to be strong and the 2014 Autograph University Yearbook features a collection of stories that focus on the things we love about the hobby—the thrill of the chase, and sharing our passion with family and friends.

Thanks to the collectors who contributed to our third annual issue, I couldn’t do this without you. And thank you, the reader, for spending some time with our stories and helping us spread the word.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Raymond". The signature is fluid and cursive.

TIM HENDERSON

Twitter: [@tbaz1010](https://twitter.com/tbaz1010)

My story starts as I am perusing the newspaper for appearances and events. I ran across an article about a benefit dinner to help with music producer Dallas Austin's charity. Scheduled to appear at the event was Jennifer Hudson, Al Green and Denzel Washington. When I saw this I got really excited, Denzel is one of my favorite actors and was on my list of people I want to meet!

I immediately called up my buddy Ryan and told him about the event. We talked and came up with a strategy to dress up in suits for this dinner so we would fit in better. We started doing some research and found out through some doorman connections at local hotels that they had seen Dallas Austin's orange Lamborghini sitting in front of the Marriott Marquis, and then after further research we found out that the Marriott was the sponsoring hotel of the event, so we decided to try our luck there.

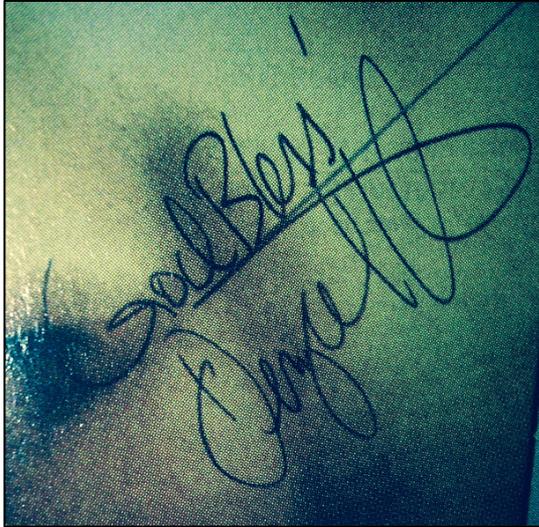
We drove to the hotel and were not there 10 minutes when Jennifer Hudson walked by and signed for us. We were ecstatic because we knew that all the celebs appearing at this event were staying there. We waited and waited till it was almost time for the red carpet to start. Then we decided to check out the private event that was being held in the ballroom of the Georgia Aquarium. We drove over to the event and as soon as we entered the parking lot we are stopped and asked why we were there. We said we were there for the benefit dinner. The security guard then asked for a name which I gave and they wrote my name down and said enjoy. What happened

next we could not imagine in a million years.

We were walking to the event and the next thing you know we were on the red carpet waving and taking pictures with a shoulder bag filled with movie posters and DVDs ready to be signed inside. We acted like we belonged there and they welcomed us with open arms. We then hung out, mingled with the crowd and celebs at the event, and waited for the appearance of Denzel.

Well, we waited and waited. The silent auction started and they announced that they were sorry but Denzel had to cancel—but he did send a jacket he wore in *Training Day* to be auctioned off. At this point we were thinking that we just went to all this trouble and he is not even here! We left the gala very disappointed. We did get Al Green, Jennifer Hudson and Big Boi so it was not a total loss, but not what we had planned.

About two months later I received a call on a Saturday morning from a doorman of a hotel that I have connected with telling me that Denzel had just checked in and was in town to get an honorary degree from Morehouse College. I thanked him for the call and proceeded to head downtown. It was weird because Denzel was staying at a place off the radar. It was not a 5-star hotel and in a million years I wouldn't have guessed he would stay there. I went inside and waited in the lobby for about 6 hours until I start seeing some activity. I walked outside and looked into a car pulling up and I recognize the passenger but it's not Denzel, it's Wesley Snipes. I pulled out an index card and asked him to sign—he is really nice! Still no Denzel so I went inside to sit back down with a view of the front door. About 15 minutes later a guy with a baseball



cap walks in and proceeds to the elevator and I realize it's him. I approached Denzel who shook his head and says, "I'm not working today partner!"

I proceeded to tell him I was at the Dallas Austin dinner and was really disappointed that he could not make it, that he was my favorite actor and if I could just get a picture with him...

He said, "You went to the dinner? I'm so sorry I had a last minute commitment that I could not miss." He then smiled with his big Denzel smile and said he will do one. He signed one of the nicest autographs I have ever seen on my *John Q* poster with "God Bless!" My buddy got a DVD signed and Denzel wrote "DW" on it – just his initials! He then took a picture with me. I thanked him and told him he made my day. He laughed because I was a little starstruck.

"Have a nice day," he said.

This is one of my most memorable stories because of how everything happened for a reason leading up to the final success. I had heard horror stories about Denzel and his desire for privacy but he was as nice of a star that I have ever met!



JOE ED BRIDGES

I've been collecting in person autographs for over 25 years, since I was 8 or 9 years old. I've been able to meet a lot of people and I've met Kevin Durant, my favorite current athlete, several times in the past. Recently, he was able to blow any other great moment I have had away and reassure me that there are still real heroes—all while reinforcing why I do this hobby.

Last year I began dating my now fiancée. She has a 5-year-old son named Jace. Jace has Cystic Fibrosis so there are a few times he misses out on things in life. Well over the time Jace has known me he has heard me mention KD often. Jace thought KD was my best friend and even told his mom one night KD was his other father. Well Jace and I both have KD shoes and wear his clothes. In December the Thunder came to town and Jace was sick so he missed out. Since December he has asked many times, "When are we going to meet KD?" So...

Early this month the Thunder came to town. I knew they would arrive the day before the game. So his mom checked Jace out of school early on the day they would arrive. We made the hour drive to the team hotel. The entire hour Jace was asking, "Is it time?" "Where is KD?" And we practiced what he should say.

When we got to the hotel we waited outside by the barriers the hotel had set up. You could see the excitement building as Jace waited.



Finally, the bus pulled up. Jace pointed out KD sitting in the back of the bus. He was glued in on him. As soon as KD stepped off of the bus Jace screamed "KEVIN DURANT!" Durant lit up from ear to ear smiling. KD walked over to Jace. I'm not sure if it was his being starstruck or amazement of KD's height. Jace froze! He held his McFarlane in his hand staring mouth wide open at Durant.

Durant said, "What up buddy? Want me to sign that?"

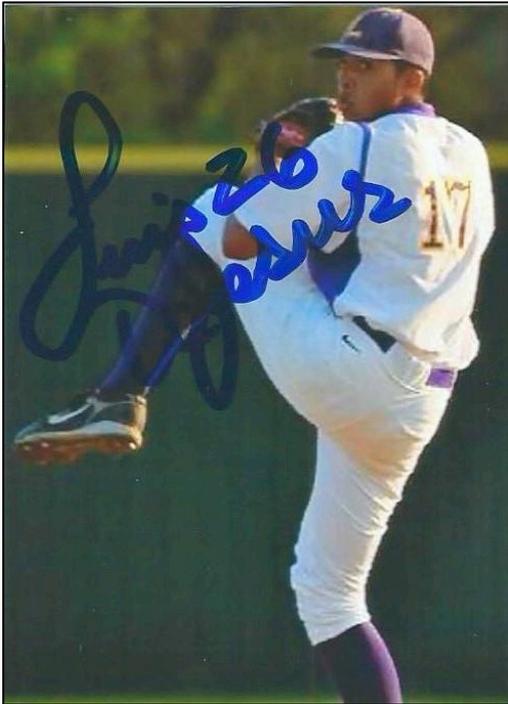
Jace finally handed the figure to Durant who signed it for him. While KD signed for others, Jace's mom asked if he would do a pic with Jace. The Oklahoma City team security said, "No he doesn't have time!"

KD looked at him and said, "Yes I do, I got this."

I picked Jace up and after seeing his smile in the photo it hit me that the happiness of meeting a hero is the reason.

BOBBY BRISSE

www.facebook.com/bobbysautographs



Starting to collect autographs at minor league baseball games, I've noticed only a handful of players on each team have an actual trading card. If a player does not have a card, I'll find pictures online, print them, and cut them to trading card size. This way I can collect everyone on the team.

While attending a game last year, I asked Luis DeJesus of the Lake County Captains (minor league affiliate of the Cleveland Indians) to sign "the card" of him I had made. He asked where I got it from and I informed him how I make my own cards from pictures I find online. He signed it and asked if he could snap a photo.

"I can't wait to send this to my dad and show him my first card," DeJesus proclaimed.

Remember guys and gals, sometimes the player is just as excited signing the autograph as you are receiving it.

MARK DOMINGUE

I went see Percy Sledge last June at a casino with hopes of meeting this legend who sings one of the most played love songs at weddings, “When a Man Loves a Woman”.

After the show we stood in line and waited patiently to meet Mr. Sledge. Once I got to the table to meet him I handed him a black guitar pick guard. He looked at me with a big smile and before he signed it I told him it was upside down. He giggled and said he had never seen one of these before. We talked and joked about it.

It was a great experience to meet a legend and share a good laugh with him. He signed for every fan that wanted an autograph. Truly one of the better signers I’ve met.

“He looked at me with a big smile and before he signed it I told him it was upside down.”

LEEBO

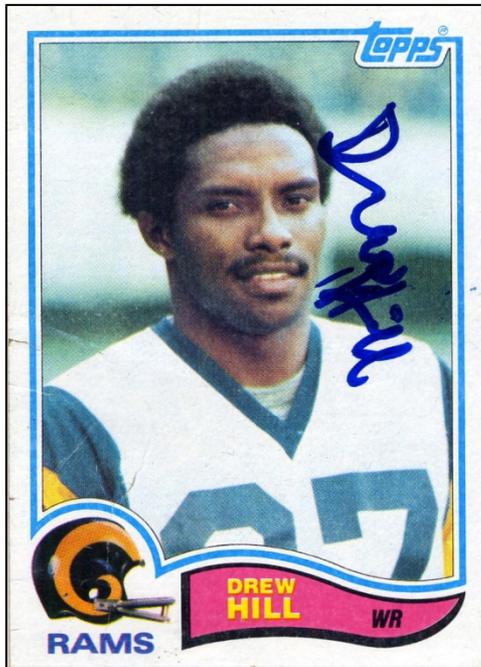
www.lee.n8d.com | Twitter: [@mindfinger](https://twitter.com/mindfinger)

Fake Identities

As a kid I loved the Houston Oilers, and made the pilgrimage to San Marcos and San Antonio every year during the late 80s and early 90s to get the autographs of my favorite players. At the time Drew Hill played for the team. A gifted, yet completely underrated receiver, Drew came to the Oilers via trade with the L.A. Rams, and clicked immediately with Warren Moon. He was the first player with four 1,000 yard seasons after the age of 30, and also was the first player to score a touchdown in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, besting Hall of Fame receiver James Lofton by a game.

I had the luck of getting Drew's autograph way back in 1990 on the banged up Topps rookie card I had of his. His autograph is exhaustively pedestrian. Still, I was happy to add him to my collection. Years passed and my interest in the hobby waned. I'm not sure if it had to do with girls or the Oilers leaving Houston, but after rediscovering the hobby in 2010, I decided to write Drew for his autograph.

After doing research, I found out that he was a starving artist living in Los Angeles, and promptly wrote him about his experiences, and of course for a few autographs. What surprised me was that the address I had for him was in Georgia, but I went



ahead and sent it out anyway. A few weeks later, I got his autograph back on a few cards, and then read what he wrote me back.

"That person is not me."

I was embarrassed, and then later, just flat out angry. I wrote a terse post on my blog about the whole experience, and that's when it all blew up.

Less than two weeks after I posted about Drew on my blog, Jerry Crowe from the *Los Angeles Times* called me. Apparently Mr. Crowe had been visiting the Men's Central Jail because "the artist" Drew Hill had been in jail. Not aware of his fake identity, when Jerry did more poking about and asked the correctional facility about Drew, the correctional officers informed him of their suspicions that the artist wasn't the real Drew Hill. To prove their point they went online to compare mug shots, where apparently they found my succinct blog post. Amused, Jerry gave me a call (since I was living in the area at the time) to discuss my end of the story. I insisted that the artist was a liar since I had an autograph of Drew from not only 1990, but also 2010 that were very similar in appearance. Later Mr. Crowe told me he had been in touch with the real Drew Hill, and that Drew was thankful that this had finally gotten resolved. What a small world we live in.

In 2011, Drew passed away suddenly at the age of 54. Sadly the *AP* in their small obituary to him, lauded Drew as being an artist.

FRANCIS GENTILE

Gentilefrancis@yahoo.com



As a New York resident I was finally able to attend Super Bowl week since it was held in the New York/New Jersey area this year. I was meeting up with a fellow grapher to hopefully get the legend Jim Brown since he was appearing in the city that day. Well to my disappointment Brown was impossible to obtain because of security and a massive amount of people.

As I waited Derrick Brooks appeared in front of me and I jumped at the opportunity. Derrick grabbed my football and signed away. Brooks was inducted into the HOF that night. I couldn't have been happier. Then I heard a rumor that Joe Namath was down the block about to do The Michael Kay Show so I ran over and watched Joe get rushed in by security. As I waited by the back door I could see another guest with Michael Kay. To my amazement it was Steve Young. So I waited by the back door with two other graphers.

Steve finished the show and ran down the back and yelled to us, "Guys I'm running late, let's make it quick."

He grabbed the two other graphers' pieces, signed, and then signed my football before being rushed off by security right as a crowd of people rushed over. Easily one of the best days of my graphing life.



DOUGZINBOSTON

StarTiger: googleautograph | Email: dougzinboston@comcast.net

In 2010 when my first daughter was born, I was in Walgreens and saw a DVD, “Big Bird Goes to Japan”. My daughter is half Japanese and I thought it would be a cool way to introduce her to Big Bird and be able to associate my wife who, growing up in Japan, didn't have any experience with Sesame Street.

Caroll Spinney has been in the suit and done the voice of Big Bird since 1968 and had a history of successful TTM signings. I sent the DVD sleeve to him explaining my daughter's background and asking if he could sign it to my daughter and how I felt privileged to have introduced my daughter to someone who helped teach me my ABCs and 123s.

A few weeks later, I opened my mailbox to see an envelope. What made this different was the sketched Big Bird on the front. Not just Big Bird, but Big Bird wearing a kimono and wooden



sandals. I opened the envelope to see he signed the front as “Caroll Spinney/Big Bird”. On the back, he drew and colored a peeking Big Bird in a white opened area.

I was stoked with what I got. Who wouldn't? Well, that wasn't the end. I pulled out the backing board I used and found Mr. Spinney drew and colored a picture of Big Bird having a picnic in Japan complete with Japanese lantern and torii in the background. It was not only signed, but included his artist stamp. I know he has drawn pieces for many people over the years but this was for my daughter and it was 100% unsolicited.

Last November, Spinney had a table at Super MegaFest in Framingham, Mass. I took my daughter and the picture and ran to his table. I wanted to introduce her to not just Big Bird/Oscar, but to say thank you to the guy who drew her that photo. I've had a couple ok IP experiences, but to give an experience like that to my daughter was something I hope she can remember and enjoy.

“I opened my mailbox to see an envelope. What made this different was the sketched Big Bird on the front.”

DOUGZINBOSTON

StarTiger: googleautograph | Email: dougzinboston@comcast.net



Since I got married and had a child, free time for my hobby took a bit of a hit. My daughter was about 2 1/2 and well into her artist phase, coloring everything we put in front of her. I saw Super MegaFest as a great opportunity to get some signatures and catch some artwork. After gasping at Neal Adams's \$10,000 splash pages and getting a couple of great sketches from Paul Ryan, I came to Jose Delbo.

He is a big Silver Age artist who did Wonder Woman in the 70s and a lot of the kids comics in the 80s and 90s, including Transformers and StarBrite. I asked him to do a Wonder Woman sketch for my daughter and she started to get a bit upset. She spotted Delbo's daughter at the next table coloring. All these pencils around her and she wanted one. Mr. Delbo's assistants (his daughter and his wife) grabbed some paper and crayons and gave them to my daughter. They watched her color and commented like she was coloring a Van Gogh.

I got my sketches and moved over to another table to look around. A couple minutes later I felt a tap on my shoulder and saw my friend's eyes explode. I turned around and saw that Mr. Delbo drew my daughter dressed as a superhero. It was awesome. A Silver Age artist took the time to draw my daughter who had done nothing but won over the hearts of his wife and daughter. You get a certain rush when you obtain an item for yourself and maybe shake the hand of the person who signed it, but it will never beat the rush you get when someone takes the time out to do something for

your child. From now until my last breath, nothing I collect for myself—no matter who it is from—will mean more than what Mr. Delbo and Mr. Spinney did for my daughter.



BENDAR

It was October 9, 2002 and the legendary Bob Dylan was performing his second and last night at the Memorial Auditorium in Sacramento, California.

The previous night a large group of my friends and family went to the concert and my brother and I bought a concert poster that was specific to our show. We decided to go to Mr. Dylan's tour bus after the show and wait as long as we had to and try to have him sign our poster. As it turns out, we didn't have to wait very long. We were informed by security that Mr. Dylan's bus had already left during the last song of his set while his band was still playing it out (Elvis style!).

The next night my brother and I decided to go back to the venue and wait again. Now that we knew Mr. Dylan's routine, we decided it would be worth a try. We didn't attend the concert that night so we arrived around 20 minutes before the concert ended and started making our way to the buses, prepared to once again wait as long as we had to. Once again, we didn't have to wait long.

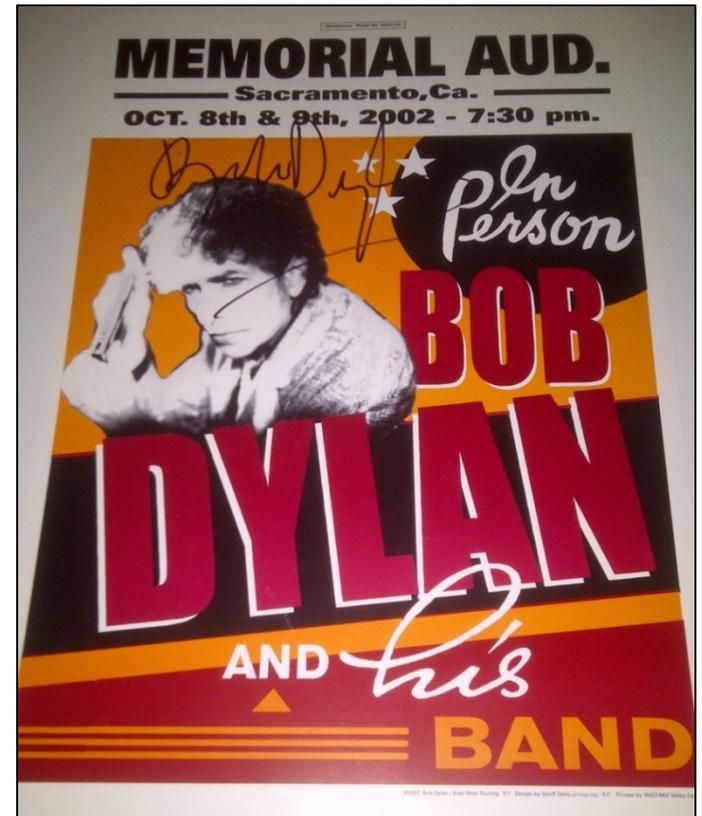
As we approached the buses we noticed that the security wasn't there; they were at the exit of the venue preparing for Mr. Dylan. We continued on toward the bus, expecting at any moment to be told to leave, but it didn't happen. About a minute later security had blocked off the street where we had arrived and we were now boxed in and happened to be the only two people there. Here comes Bob! He

started to get on the bus and glanced over at us holding out our posters.

He stopped and walked in our direction and said, "I don't want you guys to catch a cold."

I've never been speechless in my life but when I heard his unmistakable voice, I no longer spoke English. I did manage a "thank you" after he signed our posters and we went on our way, feeling victorious after getting the only two autographs that Bob Dylan signed. If we had arrived even two minutes later, we would've missed him, and if we had arrived two minutes earlier then we would've been stopped by security. It was meant to be.

I have hundreds of autograph stories but this one is my favorite.



CRAIG PEROSI

I hawked autographs at the 1996 Baseball Hall of Fame inductions. It was Saturday, the day before the induction ceremony at the annual golf outing. I had bagged a few graphs from the regular good signers, including Rolly Fingers, Gaylord Perry and Phil Rizzuto.

I noticed Reggie Jackson who is a tough signer for free and usually nasty. He was crossing the street between the front nine and back nine. I just happened to be in front of him when he went to push me out of the way and cursed at me. As he pushed me, he placed his hand right on my off duty weapon. He looked at me, took my baseball, signed it and kept walking. I got the only Reggie that day.

“As he pushed me, he placed his hand right on my off duty weapon.”

RILEY CHAMBERS

www.rileysautographs.com

www.facebook.com/pages/Rileys-Autographs/146296602140995

contributor.yahoo.com/user/1146793/riley_chambers.html

www.youtube.com/user/rileyc515

www.imdb.com/name/nm2109104

It was June 2008 and Josh Hamilton just made the cover of Sports Illustrated. As one of their game day giveaways, the Texas Rangers were handing out replica 11x14 covers of that issue.

My son and I arrived to the game early (being season ticket holders at the time we were able to get in before everyone who was not a season ticket holder). The entire time my 10-year-old son was talking smack to me. "I'm going to ask Josh for his batting gloves," he would say over and over.

Well the gates opened and we rushed to the field. We stood there for a couple minutes then Josh walked over to us and signed our covers and I had a copy of the real deal. My son was quiet.

"What's wrong?" I asked. "Are you going to ask him?"

He stood back and didn't say anything. Josh looked at him and said, "Ask me what, buddy?"



“Ask him,” I said.

So my son quietly said, “Can I have your gloves?”

Josh raised his eyebrow and said, “My batting gloves or my mitt?”

“Your batting gloves,” my son replied.

Josh thought for literally one second and said, “Sure.” Then he pulled them out of his back pocket and gave them to him. “Here you go man, enjoy the game.” And then he walked off.

I walked down the first baseline and saw Josh again and asked if he would sign them for him. And he did.

On the way home my son looked at me and said, “You can have one, Daddy.” My heart just melted.

People can talk about Josh Hamilton all they want (mostly Texas fans) but he will always be a favorite of mine.



MATT RAYMOND

Autograph University | www.autographu.com | Twitter: [@mattraymond](https://twitter.com/mattraymond)

March 7, 2008
Boston, Massachusetts

I've never been so disappointed to see an NBA team outside a hotel.

Chicago Bulls players were streaming out of the Four Seasons and across its horseshoe driveway toward the game time buses. Over a dozen collectors and I shuffled back and forth between them, ready with Sharpies and photos in our hands. But these towering athletes weren't our targets—they were in the way.

Our eyes were trained on the revolving door at the hotel entrance, waiting to catch a glimpse of a man with more star power than the entire NBA team combined. He wouldn't stand out like the basketball players—he had no superhuman physique to give him away. White male, average height, dark suit. There are a heck of a lot of those walking out of the Four Seasons.

The black SUV pulled up around 6 p.m., obscuring the doorway. We scrambled for a better view but we all knew it would be only moments until we saw him. Odds were good we weren't even going to get close but he had the reputation of being a friendly guy. Maybe we'd get lucky.

The door spun and Tom Hanks walked out into a cacophony of shouting collectors who surged toward him.

“Sorry guys, I’m late,” he said with a wave and stepped into the backseat of the SUV behind the driver. The door slammed shut.

We saw him for five seconds.

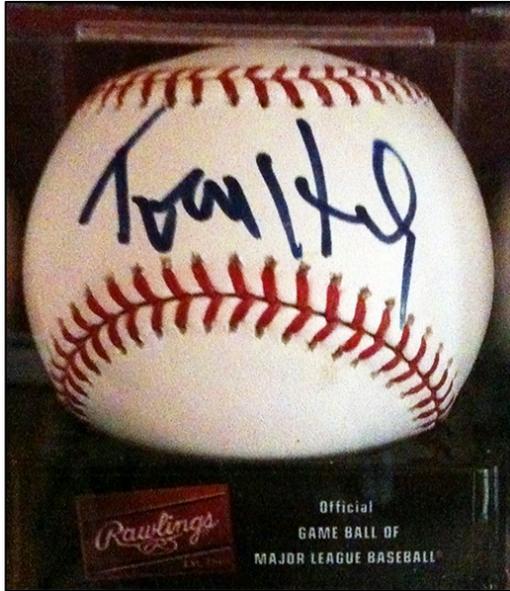
Hanks was in town for a screening of the *John Adams* HBO mini-series he co-executive produced. The event was being hosted at the Boston Public Library four blocks away in Copley Square. It was a straight shot down Boylston Street from the hotel...on foot. Due to a number of one-way streets I knew Hanks’ car would have to zigzag its way back through a number of side streets and traffic lights. I just might make it in time if I hurried. I watched as the vehicle rumbled out of the driveway and sped past the hotel. I had no time to calculate. I ran.

Coming straight from work I wasn’t well-dressed for a half-mile sprint. It wasn’t the leather-soled shoes clacking sharply on the sidewalk that caused me problems, it was the heavy corporate-issue laptop clanging violently off my hip bone. I wasn’t the only one who was stressed by the situation. I projected my anxiety onto every pedestrian I passed/weaved through/cut off. It’s always a bit unsettling to see someone running full bore at you, particularly when they are not wearing exercise clothes. In those moments of madness there is one thing abundantly clear. Something is wrong.

Down the sidewalk I chased a car I couldn't see, praying Hanks and Co. were held up at red lights and traffic on the adjacent side streets. I sped by the Arlington T stop, then passed Berkley and Clarendon. Copley Square came into view, the library's façade and its rows of arcaded windows in the distance. Hundreds of people were already lined up along a red carpet. Even if I beat the livery vehicle it would still be a challenge to get a favorable spot. My chest was heaving and my forehead and armpits were dripping sweat as I made a quick turn past Trinity Church and the skateboarders practicing kick-flips by the fountain. So close.

I stepped off the curb into oncoming traffic, playing real-life Frogger as the black SUV turned onto Dartmouth Street and came to rest in front of the throng of middle-aged women clutching DVD copies of *You've Got Mail* and *Sleepless in Seattle*. I found a small gap halfway down the line, just enough room for me to stretch the baseball I had fished out of my desk less than an hour ago at the office. Hanks emerged from the vehicle to shrieks and cheers. He took a blue Sharpie from a fan and worked his way down the line slowly, hitting everything from notebook paper to full-sized movie posters. He was focused on signing but was engaging, offering each person a word or two as he signed. That unmistakable voice—in person, he sounds just like Tom Hanks.

His pace quickened as he approached where I was standing. He had already been signing for several minutes amidst the growing fervor of the impatient fans. Hanks was still rolling with the blue Sharpie when he scribbled across the sweet spot of my ball before picking up the next item, then another. He ping-ponged back and forth across the carpet ensuring everyone got a souvenir. With an autograph in hand I was now focused on trying to get a picture with him, figuring my best shot would be



toward the end of the line where he would be nearly finished signing and more open to a photo op. I moved down to the steps leading to the library entrance and grabbed an open spot. I noticed several slow-footed collectors from the Four Seasons were just arriving.

I introduced myself to the forty-something woman standing next to me and asked her if she would snap a picture of me with Hanks if he agreed. She said she would if I returned the favor and we had a deal. I handed her my camera and turned back toward Hanks who was still signing away, now only a few steps from us.

“Tom, could I please get a picture?”

“Sure,” he said without looking up. He grabbed a DVD cover from a fan to my left and scrawled his name in blue.

“Tom, thank you so much for signing for us. Can I please get a quick picture?”

“It’s a free country, snap away,” he said, a single step from me.

I shot an *“It’s go time, don’t fuck this up”* glance at the woman holding my camera and ducked under the velvet rope, sidling up to Hanks.

There was a commotion.

“Whoa, whoa,” Hanks said, taking a step back. Security was on me.

“Sir, you need to be on the other side of the rope.”

My intentions were pure but I had literally and figuratively crossed the line. It was a miscommunication—he clearly thought I was asking to take a picture *of* him, not *with* him—but it was a misstep that soured a once-in-a-lifetime experience with an icon rare in talent and generosity. I always take great care to avoid making celebrity encounters awkward but I got greedy and was left feeling embarrassed.

I took my ball and went home.

INFO

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