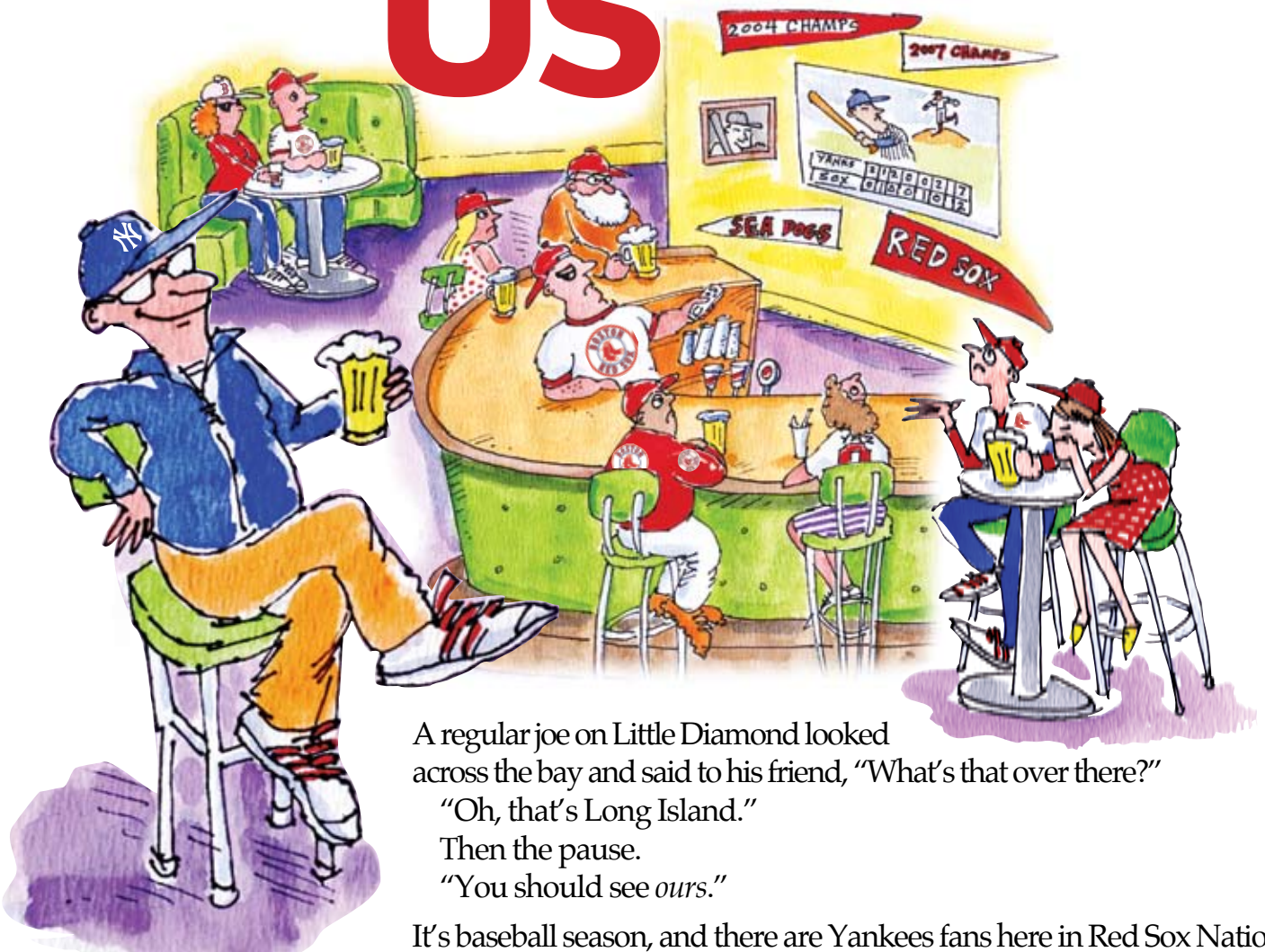


They Walk Among Us

What would Luke Skywalker be without Darth Vader?



A regular joe on Little Diamond looked across the bay and said to his friend, “What’s that over there?”
 “Oh, that’s Long Island.”
 Then the pause.
 “You should see *ours*.”

It’s baseball season, and there are Yankees fans here in Red Sox Nation.

Aliens walk among us, unrecognized, their outward aspect allowing them to blend into the general populace, their inner thoughts focused on the critical time that is fast approaching. They don their clan’s insignia in secret as they ready for the anthem that will signal the beginning of a seven-month battle for supremacy.

How to suss out those who pledge allegiance to pinstripes, for whom memories of a long night in the fall of 1986 brings a shiver of unbridled joy? No doubt even Dog the Bounty Hunter would need all the tricks of his trade to track them all down—but could even the Dog rehabilitate

them? Unlikely.

A whisper here, a wink, a nod and a hushed phone call there, and soon we were speaking with Mark Mandrake, the quintessential Yankees fan. Formerly the team’s VP of Publishing, Photography and Multi-Media, Mandrake took the only photographs of the 2005 event that drove Red Sox Nation to distraction: Johnny Damon getting his hair cut after defecting from Beantown, enticed by the \$52 million offered by long-hair-hating George Steinbrenner.

Now a full-time resident of Portland, Mandrake hasn’t always found

(Continued on page 76)

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They Walk Among Us (continued from page 31)

life easy in Red Sox Nation. "A guy once started a fistfight with me in a family restaurant—a family restaurant!—because he saw my World Championship ring. Now I don't put myself in that position." Still, Mandrake, who's run in marathons on seven continents and in 40 countries, continues to run into his share of problematic encounters. He points to an incident early last winter. "It was about 10 or 15 degrees out and slushy. Usually I don't wear Yankees stuff around town, but my pants had a very subtle Yankees logo on it. I was at the end of a 10-mile run when I approached the

"HEY GUYS, WAYS TO SPOT A YANKEES FAN IN MAINE..."

BY BOB MARLEY

1. The hat. The knife-in-the-back stupid blue and white "NY" hat. Sitting upon that dumb, Yankee-loving head. It just rips my soul out! It's even worse when you find out the person is from Maine, with no connections to NY! Are you kidding me!!!! You're kidding me, right?! What part of your pea brain tells you that's OK?!!!

2. Usually lots of jewelry—gold chains, pinky rings, earrings, toe rings, phone rings, belly-button rings, and tongue rings.

3. A heavy perfume or cologne smell. Usually something circa 1985—the green Polo bottle, Jean Naté. Something unforgettably annoying that no Red Sox fan would wear.

4. A Yankees fan is always shoveling something into his mouth while talking about "A-Roid"—i.e., a fat, greasy rolled-up pizza with sauce dripping onto his "Matsui" white turtleneck.

5. They are the loudest people on the planet and are constantly talking. Yap! Yap! Yap! Please be quiet—you're not running an auction!

6. They'll remind us all that the Yanks have won 26 championships and then will immediately shut up when asked about 2004.

7. They have hairy backs and faces, and those are just the women.

8. They have a portrait of Steinbrenner shaved into their beard.

9. When tailgating, they'll be using their "Derek Jeter juicer" to make a beer funnel.

10. Finally, remember this—always be suspicious if someone's not cheering the Red Sox on. [They may have a stealth thing going on here.] Even though they're not sporting Yankees colors...heed my word, pure evil lives in this one as well.



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intersection of Park and State Street, and there's only one vehicle—a pickup truck—coming down the middle lane of Park, and it had the light. I'm jogging in place. The guy was driving normally until he was a couple of

hundred feet from me. He revs his engine and drives right at me! At the last second, he turns back, grazes the curb and sends a wave of ice and mud at me, totally hosing me down. He skids to a stop, rolls down the window and yells, 'Yankees s*** you a*****, go home.' That guy drove across three lanes of traffic in front of a bunch of people, any of whom could have been a cop, to drench me with ice water!"

Mandrake remains philosophical. "Red Sox and Yankees are like religions, and you have to tread very delicately. I don't go into Fenway Park wearing a Yankee shirt while everyone's drinking around me and hope that I don't get beat up. As a result, I'm allowed respectfully to watch my team. I'm not going to convert—I've never heard of that happening on either side."

Not all Yankees fans are as discreet as Mandrake. Thirty-year-old Alicia Critelli, who works at Crestline Promotional Products in Lewiston, says, "I have no problem wearing Yankees jersey, even around town—and I'm sure going to wear one when I go see the Yankees play the Sox at Fenway in August." Peter Geiger, owner of Geiger Brothers (publishers of the *Farmer's Almanac*) and Crestline, shares her views but counters, "I am a lifer with the Yankees. I can just close my door and tune them out; Alicia is in there taunting them all the way."

And while Portland's Ed King, publisher of the *West End News*, wears a Red Sox cap around town if he's in a mood to build bridges, he's clear—"I am a *Yankees* fan. If I'm in a confrontational mood," he smiles, "the Yankees cap goes back on."

King's son slid over to Red Sox Nation after their move to Maine in the mid-1990s, when he was nine years old. "I felt *bad* for him," King says. "I offered to become a Red Sox fan for him, and he told me, 'Dad, if *you* become a Red Sox fan, I'm going to root for New York!' It was all about the rivalry for him."

It takes a guarantee of anonymity to get WR and his daughter, LS, to agree to be interviewed as, they indicate, "We do have to go home—and school—again." Dad confides, "My daughters are the product of a mixed mar-

Like the extra-terrestrials trying to pass as humans in *Men in Black*, Yankees fans quietly go about their business here, as part of an underground Alien Nation.

riage: My wife is a Sox fan, while I'm a citizen of Yankees Universe, and we split our girls' souls down the middle—actually it's their choosing! LS loves her official Derek Jeter jersey and carries a flashy

Yankees lunch box to school, blue with a big interlocking NY on it; while her younger sister adores her David Ortiz jersey and totes a Red Sox lunch box around. Each has an autographed ball—one from Hideki Matsui [the Yankees left fielder], and the other from Big Papi [the Sox designated hitter]."

The girls take their teams right to the dinner table. "We'll sit down for dinner and there'll be one special Red Sox table setting, complete with plates, bowls, and silverware, while across the table is a setting of Yankees dinnerware," WR says. LS, who loves her adopted state, but saw her first Yankees' game at the age of six weeks, stoutly maintains, "I was born in New York, and I love the Yankees. I'm the only Yankees fan in my class. But I like being in Maine, even though I get teased."

While no bloodletting has happened at home, her father confides, "I've withstood some pretty good abuse since moving to Portland, but the more they torture you, the more you stand your ground. I was in Rivalries in the Old Port during one of those games [2003 American League Championship Series, Game 7] when the Sox left Pedro Martinez in just a little too long and the Yankees, who were getting trounced, all of sudden came back. The entire screaming throng was silenced. A friend and I were the only Yankees fans in the place and she was screaming her head off. I told her, 'You've got to shut up or we're not going to get out of here alive.' Someone actually dropped a beer mug from the balcony straight down towards her head—just missing her. It was pretty ugly."

Asked why they didn't watch the game at home, WR deadpans, "So we could hear that silence when the Yankees took the lead."

Most, but not all, of the Yankees fans in Red Sox Nation are transplants. Native son Jack Dawson is well-known to Portlanders as the former Mayor and City Councilor... but not as one for whom the pinstripes are sacred. "When I was a boy, my dad and brother were Red Sox fans. When I asked,

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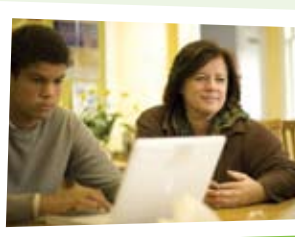
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'Who's the best?' they said, 'The Yankees.' So that started it. I like the whole idea of their legacy, and I was a big Mickey Mantle fan, and I just stayed that way. I had every reason to be a Red Sox fan; I went to school in Boston at Boston College, which has an affiliation with the Sox, but I could never like anybody but the Yankees." Dawson denies ever wearing the New York uniform to Council meetings. "The closest I came to that was when I was mayor, I played for the Portland Yankees, a team that was chosen to play a series of games against the Colorado Silver bullets, a barnstorming team of women who were very good athletes. We played them at

YANKEES FANS AMONG US

BY TIM SAMPLE

I have a couple of brothers-in-law of the athletic-sports-minded persuasion. Growing up in Minnesota, they naturally became fans of the Vikings and Twins. It's not a stretch to say that prior to visiting Maine these fellas probably considered themselves 'baseball fans.' That bit of Midwestern naïveté was promptly dispelled when they were introduced to Red Sox Fever here in the Pine Tree State. Ayuuh! Maine's Red Sox faithful certainly embody the 'fanaticism' aspect of the term 'fan.'

"And what's this deal with hating the Yankees?" queried my brother-in-law Rich. Ah, there's the rub. For Mainer, it's not enough to adore the Sox—you must also hate the Yankees. This yin/yang duality is an essential element for The Fenway Faithful. You've seen the bumper stickers: "I root for two teams, The Red Sox and whoever beats the Yankees."

So is it possible for a Mainer to be a Yankees fan? Oddly enough, I found the answer lurking in the depths of my own Maine childhood. My mom certainly raised her boys right. When we were barely toddlers, she bought my older brother Chris and me adorable matching jackets featuring embroidered basebells, bats, and festooned with numerous Red Sox logos. Although a year apart in age, my brother and I were often dressed in matching outfits like that. We were about the same size and looked alike, so naturally folks thought we were twins. Being a year younger, I followed my brother through school, quickly earning a reputation as "the dumb one." In case you're wondering, this is exactly the sort of childhood trauma which is absolutely essential if you ever plan to make your living in comedy.

So, what about those Yankees fans? Are

Hadlock Field three consecutive years.”

He admits it's been a bit harder being a Yankees fan in recent years. "I was pretty rough on my friends growing up, asking them, 'What's it like not to play in October?' Now I'm getting back what I deserve. It hasn't been easy, especially in '04 when the Yankees blew it—but it didn't hurt my allegiance. I have some good friends who are also Yankees fans...but we don't burn incense to them or anything like that.”

Dawson's advice for Yankees fans who are still 'in the closet,' is "Stay with it. They will be back. They are the Yankees, so we can't abandon ship.” ■

they really living among us? Well, yes. One of the first sentences I remember my Uncle Steve uttering is this one: "I wouldn't go across the street to see the Red Sox play." Bold as brass, right in front of gawd and everyone he said that. I believe there was something else, too, something about the Yankees being "OK in my book." I was, of course, way too young to recognize heresy back then. But today I understand that these statements boldly proclaimed in the presence of impressionable boys were like waving a red flag at the McCarthy hearings and typical of a certain sort of Maine character for which my uncle would have made (in many ways DID make) a great spokesperson.

The type of Mainer I'm thinking of is cranky and devastatingly funny by turns. But, more to the point, these folks are contrary to the core. All it takes for them to embrace a cause is that everybody else is against it, or vice versa. These folks are, as the old Maine saying goes, "independent as a hog on ice" and damned proud of it! They'd be the lone Democratic voice in an all-Republican town, the atheist at the Pentecostal revival-tent meeting. They'll just keep driving their '59 Edsel, thank you very much, until somebody builds a more beautiful reliable car!

My Uncle Steve went to Heaven many years ago for no better reason than all his friends were going to Hell. But Mainers of his sort are still among us. They're a tough breed, by gory, and you can still spot them boldly wearing a Yankees cap to the post office and just hoping you'll try and make something of it. They don't actually give a rodent's hindquarters about the Yankees, you understand. They just want to drive the True Red Sox fans crazy, and for the average Red Sox fan that'd be a very short drive indeed!



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