



A Ruth family member at Wrigley is a once-a-century treat

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The Babe Ruth family must be special. They grace Wrigley Field just once a century.

The patriarch with the 714 homers, of course, paid the only 20th century visit in a memorable two World Series games on Oct. 1-2, 1932. One of popular culture's most enduring legends – The Called Shot – came out of that as Babe Ruth gave as good as he got. His dramatic homer off the Cubs' Charlie Root that he may, or may not, have predicted silenced his foes and Cubs fans who had verbally roasted him and thrown lemons at him in left field.

In honor of that seminal event, the Cubs gave away a pointing Babe Ruth bobblehead on Friday, May 16, 2014 at Wrigley Field as part of the ballpark's season-long centennial celebration. To top it off, the team invited Julia Ruth Stevens, Ruth's 97-year-old daughter, to throw out the first pitch and sing in the seventh inning. That was the family's representation in the 21st century.



Julia Ruth Stevens proved a trouper, like her father, in her Wrigley Field appearance.

Stevens proved as good a trouper as her father. Assisted by her son, Tom Stevens, she carried out her ceremonial duties both pre-game and in the seventh. In between, Julia Stevens provided a fascinating look at her father, the greatest player in baseball history, during a broadcast-booth interview with Cubs TV announcers Len Kasper and Jim Deshaies.

After praising Cubs fans for showing up on a drizzly, 40-degree afternoon and stating the secret of her longevity (she turns 98 in July) is “moderation,” Stevens revealed she’s a Red Sox fan, watching games all summer at home in New Hampshire.

“Daddy started with the Red Sox,” she said. “He was very proud of his pitching record: 29 2/3 scoreless World Series innings...A record that’s lasted for a long time until Whitey Ford finally broke it. They thought they could use him better every day so they switched him to the outfield.”



Jim Deshaies (left) and Len Kasper had one of their most impactful seventh-inning interviews ever with Julia Ruth Stevens.

The announcers showed a photo of a young Stevens with her father, dressed casually for the times. Stevens guessed the photo dated from 1936.

Daughter is loyal to the story

Then the money question: Did the Babe call his shot?

“Yes he did,” Stevens replied. “It actually has been proved...Charlie Root did not see Daddy point his finger. Mother (Claire Hodgson Ruth) was here and Cardinal (Francis) Spellman saw it. Daddy did things like that.”



Julia Ruth Stevens identified this photo taken with her father as from 1936.

To illustrate how a confident Ruth could supposedly will a home run, Stevens told a story how the Yankees traveling secretary paced the dugout, worried his team would not catch the train at the Highland Point station in time with the game tied in the ninth inning at Yankee Stadium.

“He looked so worried,” Stevens said. Ruth asked the official why the long face. After getting the explanation, “Daddy said OK,” she added. “He got up, hit a home run (in the bottom of the ninth) and they caught the train.”

Deshaies asked Stevens what the public doesn’t know about Ruth.

“He was a very warm and loving person,” she said. “He was just a wonderful father to me. I have always been so proud of the fact he adopted me and gave me his name. He was a

beautiful dancer and taught me how to dance....(Ruth said) ‘You don’t do the leading, I do.’ I did pretty well after that.

The real treat in Stevens’ Chicago visit came after the game. Longtime Chicago sports journalist Ed Sherman, now running his own sports media site The Sherman Report <http://www.ShermanReport.com>, got another up-close-and-personal perspective on her storied father from Stevens. Authoring the book, *Babe Ruth’s Called Shot: The Myth and Mystery behind Baseball’s Greatest Home Run*, Sherman had interviewed Stevens. The book was reviewed by Dr. David Fletcher, president of the Chicago Baseball Museum, found here at <http://www.chicagobaseballmuseum.org/files/CBM-Babe-Ruth-Called-Shot-20140512.pdf>.

With permission from Sherman, the Chicago Baseball Museum is reposting his blog on his dinner with Stevens and her family:

Working in this business for more than 30 years, I have been fortunate to meet some incredible people. I hung with George Bush (41) and Michael Jordan on the same day at a Ryder Cup; stupidly turned down a ride from Clint Eastwood at Pebble Beach; spent two hours with Ernie Banks looking at his picture file at Tribune Tower.

However, never in my wildest dreams, from the day I first held Babe Ruth’s homer-laden card while playing Strato-O-Matic as a kid, did I ever imagine that I would have dinner with someone who calls him “Daddy.”



Ed Sherman (top right) was invited to dinner with Julia Ruth Stevens (sitting, left). Photo courtesy of Ed Sherman.

Yet there I was last Friday with Julia Ruth Stevens, still going strong and talking proudly about her famous father at the age of 97. We were joined by Julia’s son and the Babe’s grandson, Tom Stevens, his wife, Anita, and my wife, Ilene (All pictured above).

I interviewed Julia for my book, *Babe Ruth’s Called Shot: The Myth and Mystery Behind Baseball’s Greatest Home Run*. While she wasn’t at the famous Game 3 of the 1932 World Series, there never was a doubt her mind about her father’s intentions.

She heard direct testimony from a couple key witnesses at the game: Her mother, Claire, and Francis Cardinal Spellman, the long-time Archbishop of New York. “Daddy certainly did point,” Julia said. “He always seemed to rise to the occasion. He just wanted to beat

the Cubs. If he had missed, he'd have been very, very disappointed. (Cardinal Spellman) said there's no question that he pointed. I'll take his word and my mother's."

The Cubs invited Julia and Tom to Friday's game as part of its Wrigley Field 100th anniversary celebration. It was Babe Ruth bobblehead day. Julia threw out the first pitch and she and Tom sang "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" during the seventh inning stretch.

Earlier in the week, Tom called and asked if we would like to have dinner with Julia and his wife on Friday.

Family likes Called Shot book

"We really enjoyed your book and would like to meet you," she said.

Of course, I said yes and made reservations for Joe's Stone Crab in downtown Chicago. Scanning the packed restaurant, I thought if people only knew of the history sitting at our table.

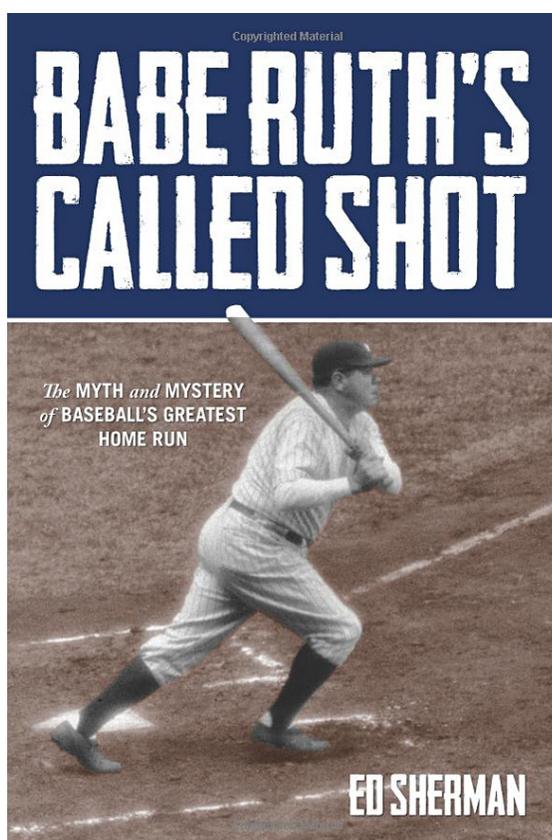
Naturally, we talked about her life with Babe. Julia was the daughter of Babe's second wife, Claire. He adopted her shortly after they got married in 1929.

For all the legendary stories about Ruth's wild lifestyle in his younger years, he became a changed man, a family man, after his marriage to Claire. Julia recalled how "Daddy" enjoyed staying at home, occasionally inviting friends over. If he did go out, it was to a favorite Italian restaurant nearby.

Ruth became very close to Claire's brothers, Julia's uncles. If anything, after a terrible childhood when he was abandoned by his parents, Ruth finally had the family he never had during the years Julia lived with him.

While Julia has vivid images of Ruth as a player, her lasting memories was of him as a father. She recalled how he taught her how to dance.

"Daddy really was wonderful to me," Julia said.



Ed Sherman got his dinner invitation with Julia Ruth Stevens after the family liked his book on The Called Shot.

Ruth died before Tom was born, but he and Anita had vivid memories of his grandmother, Claire. "She truly was a lovely, sweet lady," Anita said.

Ruth name has its privileges

Being Ruth's grandson does have its advantages. Tom recalled going to a Yankees game at the age of 10 with Claire. She arranged for him to meet the Yankees of the Mickey Mantle era in the locker room.

Julia then chimed in. "Oh, I loved Mickey. He was so much fun," he said.

Indeed, through the years, Julia and Tom have become close with a virtual who's-who in baseball while representing Ruth at various functions, including the annual Hall of Fame ceremonies. Ted Williams was "a great guy" and the Steinbrenner family couldn't do enough for them during appearances at Yankee Stadium.

Age is not a friend to Julia now, but she and Tom try to get a few events each year.

"It's always an honor to represent Daddy," Julia said.

"We want to continue to tell people about his legacy," Tom said.

When I told friends about my dinner with Ruth's family, they all asked what were they like. Well, they were terrific, down-to-Earth people who just happened to be related to the greatest baseball player of all time.

Tom, a civil engineer who builds bridges, has had a fascinating life in his own right, working all over the world, including a long stint in Afghanistan. Anita is a retired school teacher. Julia lives with them outside of Las Vegas.

Throughout dinner, the conversation centered on Tom's work, their kids, our kids as much as on baseball and Ruth. At the end of the day, we're all ordinary people with concerns and interests like everyone else. I would like to think Ruth would be proud with how they turned out.

All in all, it was a wonderful evening. As we finished our dinner, I asked Julia and Tom to inscribe my book. Julia wrote: "Thanks for doing such a great job on your book about my Dad. Julia Ruth Stevens."

Tom wrote: "What a great book. I enjoyed every page. Babe's Grandson. Tom Stevens."

I will cherish those inscriptions. They always will serve as my closest connection to The Babe.

Sherman won't soon forget his night out with history. And anyone loving baseball won't soon forget The Called Shot.

Another version of the story highlights the oral history featured at the Chicago Baseball Museum. Woody English, the Cubs' third baseman at the moment of Ruth's feat, recounted his own viewpoint on the Diamond Gems radio show in early 1994, found here

at <http://www.chicagobaseballmuseum.org/chicago-baseball-museum-media.php#WoodyEnglish>

In another 18 years, The Called Shot will have its own 100th anniversary. The story will live on as long as baseball is played, and hardly anything can ever be its equal for staying power.