

# Media Kit

Author Bio

Book Bio

Praise for *Bouton*

Book Excerpt

Interview Questions

Author & Book Photos

Contact Author

Author: Mitchell Nathanson

Category: Sports/Biography

Print ISBN: 9781496217707

EPub ISBN: 1496217705

Publisher: University of Nebraska Press

448 Pages

\$34.95

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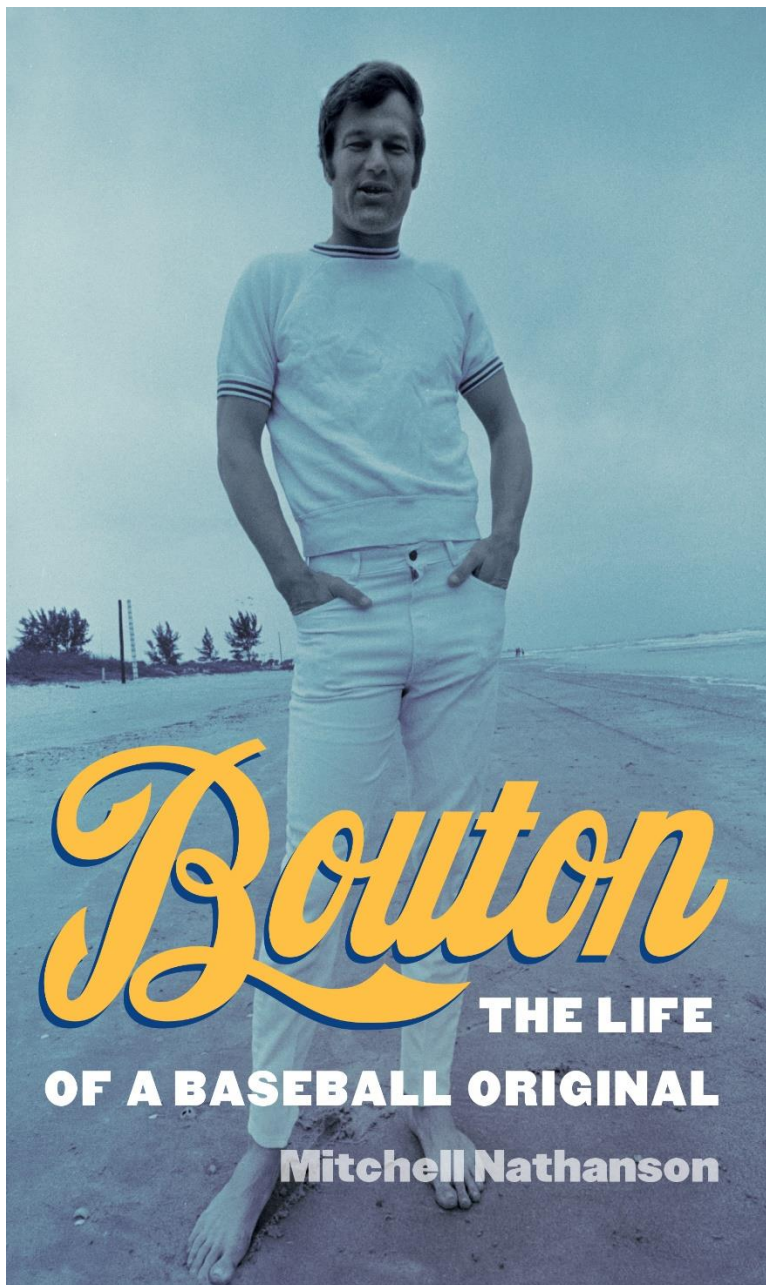
Mitch Nathanson is a Professor of Law at Villanova University and the author of numerous books and articles on baseball, the law and society. He is a two-time winner of the McFarland-SABR Award, which is presented in recognition of the best historical or biographical baseball articles of the year. His biography of the mercurial slugger Dick Allen: *God Almighty Hissself: The Life and Legacy of Dick Allen*, was a finalist for the 2017 Seymour Medal. In May 2020 his next book, BOUTON: The Life of a Baseball Original," will be released. In it, Nathanson explores the life of a man who won all of 62 games but who changed professional sports in ways 300-game winners never could. To which Jim Bouton's Seattle Pilot teammate, Jim Gosger, would most likely say, "Yeah surrre."

He's repped by the fabulous Farley Chase: <https://chaseliterary.com/farley@chaseliterary.com>



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A few years ago, former New York Times columnist Robert Lipsyte proclaimed that in order to understand the various ups, downs, twists and turns of the roller coaster that was twentieth century baseball, all one really needed to know were the stories of five iconic Yankees. Three of them are Hall of Famers: Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle. The fourth was perhaps the most infamous owner in the history of the game: George Steinbrenner. The fifth was Jim Bouton

"BOUTON: The Life of a Baseball Original" is a full and unvarnished look at Jim Bouton's remarkable life but also the unlikely story of how his revolutionary book came into being, how it was received, and how it forever changed the way we view not only sports books but professional sports itself. Bouton was a minor figure as a ballplayer, not much more than an everyman pitcher, but his impact on professional sports – the way they're run as well as the way we understand them as fans – dwarfs that of the countless athletes who could throw harder or run faster. BOUTON tells the story of a man whose constitutional inability to stop himself from telling the world the truth as he saw it changed nearly everything he touched but who perpetually remained on the outside looking in because he insisted on turning his dreams into reality, consequences be damned.

From the day he first stepped into the Yankee clubhouse Jim Bouton has been the sports world's deceptive revolutionary. Behind the jokes and All American good looks lurked a radical spirit that challenged the establishment at every turn, pulling it as if by sheer will out of the dark. As a player and later as a broadcaster Bouton confronted the conservative sports world and compelled it to catch up with a rapidly changing American society. The gate-keepers cringed at every turn but despite their efforts to beat him back, Bouton succeeded in modernizing professional sports in countless ways. BOUTON shows how he did it, along with the price he paid along the way.

# Praise for *Bouton*



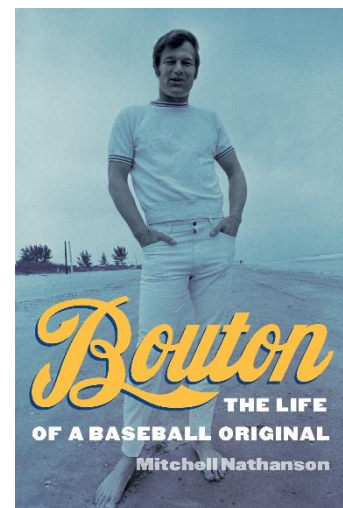
"Once you start reading, you will not be able to stop. A compelling look at one of the most influential and controversial figures in baseball history." **Brian Kenny, MLB Network**



"For years people have told me that they fell in love with baseball after reading *Ball Four*. Jim Bouton was a unique character on the baseball stage, a figure of monumental importance. It's time we all knew him better, and Nathanson's book gets that done." **Marty Appel, New York Yankees historian and author of *Pinstripe Empire* and *Casey Stengel***



"Unfettered and unfiltered, like Bouton himself, *Bouton* will make you laugh, make you cry, and make you wanna pound that Budweiser. To paraphrase the late, great Joe Schultz, 'Attaway to go, Mitchell Nathanson!'" **Dan Epstein, author of *Big Hair and Plastic Grass: A Funky Ride through Baseball and America in the Swinging '70s***



## Praise for *God Almighty Hissself: The Life and Legacy of Dick Allen*

"One of the half-dozen or so best baseball books published so far this century." **Allen Barra**

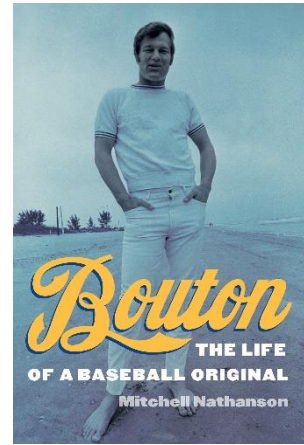
"I loved Dick Allen for reasons that I could never totally explain. Maybe it was his big bat and electric presence at the plate; maybe it was his individualism and outspokenness; maybe it was that image of him using his cleats to dig BOO into the dirt near the first base bag in Philly. Now, with Mitchell Nathanson's penetrating and revelatory book, I appreciate the full dimensions of this mysterious baseball rebel." **David Maraniss, author of *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero***

"An excellent and unflinching examination of the tragedy that ensued when the first baseball superstar insistent on full racial equality joined one of the last baseball teams to integrate." **Keith Olbermann**



# Book Excerpt

## DREAMING IN BASEBALL



“Jim dreams in baseball,” Paula, his wife, told me. “It’s his metaphor for life. . . . If he’s happy, feeling strong, he will be pitching well in his dreams, or running successfully to catch a ball. If he’s down, he struggles in a baseball context while he sleeps.” It was the metaphor he returned to over and over in his writing and whenever he was trying to explain some offbeat, otherwise hard-to-explain passion in his life. *Ball Four* itself opens with his dreaming in baseball—standing on the mound in Yankee Stadium, vanquishing his old team with his dancing knuckler and driving in the winning run to boot. “I’m 30 years old and I have these dreams,” the book begins.

For decades the bare bones of his dreams were nestled in a butter-yellow box that made Paula nervous whenever Jim took them out to show an interested visitor -- the 978 pieces of paper that were the genesis for the soul of the book, the notes he jotted down on hotel stationery and air-sickness bags capturing the musings of Gene Brabender, Gary Bell, Doug Rader, and the rest of the Pilots and Astros. They were clearly his pride as he showed them off. This one is on Houston Astros stationery, he’d say, that one from the Jack Tar Hotel. He’d beam as he showed them, his eyes half on them and half on the memories they elicited, the dreams they inspired. They were his children. He gave birth to them. He nurtured them, formed them, and then sent them out into the world where they were embraced by millions. Their success reflected back on him, and he’d be awash in it whenever he took out the butter-yellow box.

When, for a moment during our initial meeting in 2016, I slipped into fanboy mode and asked him to sign my beaten-up copy of *Ball Four* for my high school-age son, Alex, who (with perhaps a gentle nudge from Dad) had selected it as his “free choice” book to read over the summer, Jim—perhaps inadvertently, perhaps not—provided me with what I found to be something that might as well have been his battle cry as I began my work on his life’s story. “Fuck ‘em all, let it all hang out” was how he wanted to inscribe the book, a toothy smile exploding onto his face as he said this loud enough for Paula to hear, fully aware that this would gently pickle her. She overruled him. Don’t you dare, she said. So he signed it as he usually did: “Smoke ‘em inside,” he wrote. Which is no doubt the battle cry of the army of *Ball Four* junkies, who even a half century later devour the book every spring as a preseason ritual, laughing and crying along with Jim Bouton before they drift off to sleep for the night, where they all hope to dream in baseball just like him.



# Interview Questions

1 Why did you decide to write about Jim Bouton?

2 Who was Jim Bouton?

3 Tell me about the book that made Bouton famous, "Ball Four." Why was it so controversial?

4 Were there any sports "tell-alls" before "Ball Four"? If so, what made "Ball Four" different?

5 What kind of a ballplayer was Jim Bouton?

6 What were the Yankee teams that Bouton played with in the '60s like?

7 Can you talk about the culture clash on the Yankees of the '60s? What did Mickey Mantle represent to fans? What did Bouton represent?

8 Who were the Seattle Pilots (the team Bouton played with in 1969 when he wrote "Ball Four")?

9 Tell me how Bouton and his editor, Len Shecter, put "Ball Four" together.

10 What was Bouton's relationship with his publisher, World Publishing, like? Why didn't they get along?

11 What did Bouton's teammates think of him after "Ball Four" was released? How did baseball respond to the book? Sportswriters? Fans?

12 How did Jim Bouton advance the cause of The Major League Baseball Players Association?

13 "Ball Four" begins with Bouton dreaming in baseball: "I'm 30 years old and I have these dreams." Dreams seem to have played a big role in his life. Tell me about that.

14 Some people have claimed that Jim Bouton was one of the most significant people in baseball history. What made him so important given that he was just a journeyman player?

15 Tell me about Jim Bouton the revolutionary sports reporter in the 1970s. How did he influence Keith Olbermann, who would revolutionize sports reporting himself?

16 Bouton made a remarkable comeback to the big leagues in 1978 – 8 years after he left the game in 1970. Why did he want to return? Was he successful?

17 After battling baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn for years, Bouton had the opportunity to be a commissioner himself – in a vintage baseball league in the early 2000s. How did that go?

18 Bouton could be a polarizing figure – some people loved him, others couldn't stand him. What made him so polarizing?

19 In his last years, Bouton suffered a debilitating brain disease. What was it and how did he deal with his declining health?

20 What do you think is Jim Bouton's legacy?

# AUTHOR & BOOK PHOTOS

I appreciate requests for photographs for press use. Email and let me know where you post your article so I can link to it.

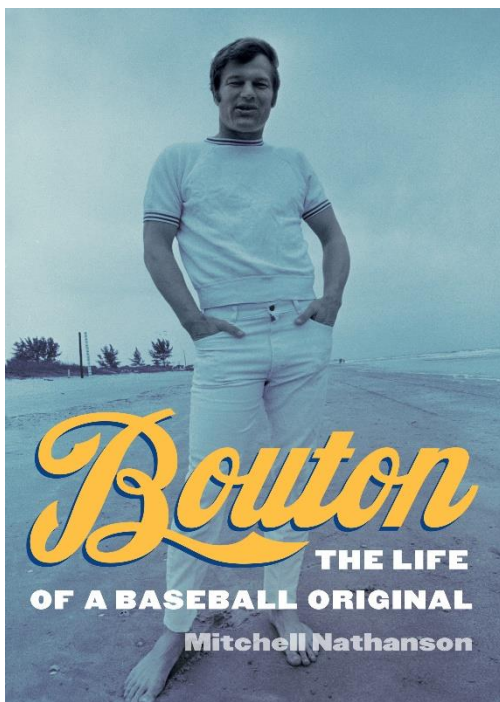
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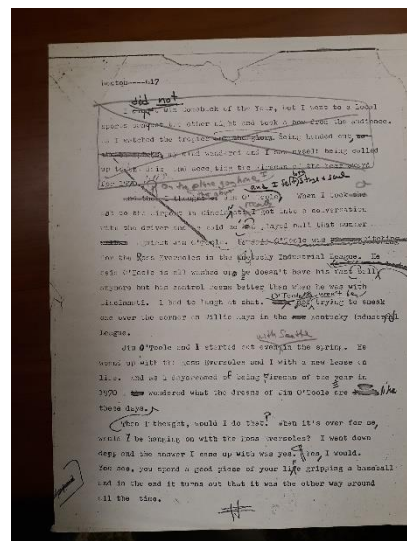
Author photo -- color



Author photo – B&W



Bouton cover image



Screen shot of an early draft of *Ball Four's* iconic ending. Len Shecter's edits in pencil.





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