

# The Voices of New York Sports

BY CHARLES SALZBERG

# N

ew York is a sports town. The kind of town where you can wake up any morning of the year, flip on the all-news radio station, and get the scores of some New York team from the previous day. New Yorkers are sports crazy. Now we've got an all-sports radio station. That's 24 hours a day of sports, folks.

"The New York fan," says longtime New York sportscaster **Marty Glickman**, "is perhaps the most analytical, most informed of fans."

"The New York fans," adds colleague **Marv Albert**, "seem to be a little more knowledgeable about the game. They see right through you if you don't know what you're talking about."

Glickman and Albert are voices of New York City sports—someone to describe the action as you drive home from the beach on a sultry July afternoon, rake leaves in your yard one brisk Sunday, or balance on a barstool with a beer in your hand and a bowl of pretzels in front of you, staring at a screen above your head.

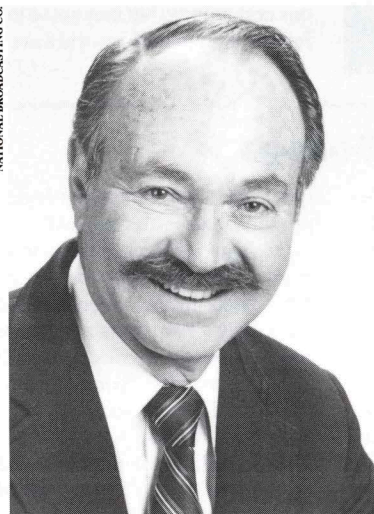
Every team has a voice, and three of New York's best—Albert, Glickman, and **Hank Greenwald**—learned their trade while attending Syracuse.

**H**igh above Cayuga's waters. . . . The voice crooning over the phone, though not ordinarily associated with any era's Top 40, is vaguely familiar. Its mellifluous tones are those of Marty Glickman, voice of the New York Knicks (for 35 years), the New York Giants (23 years), and the New York Jets (6 years). And now here he is warbling school songs on the phone.

So Marty, what's it like being a voice of New York sports? "It's great. You have to be on the ball all the time. Every New Yorker is a sports expert. You can't say stupid things here, because they're immediately recognized as such."

And Marty Glickman should know, because he's been around longer than most. He was the groundbreaker, the man who, with his trademark phrase, "Good like Nedicks," set the standard for others who came later.

Born in the Bronx and raised in Brooklyn, he was a schoolboy sprint champion who came to Syracuse in 1935, ran track, and played football. In 1936, he won a spot on the U.S. Olympic team, which included a



MARTY GLICKMAN



MARV ALBERT

CHARLES SALZBERG lives in New York and writes frequently about sports. His books include *From Set Shot to Slam Dunk*, *Darryl Strawberry*, and *The Art of Hitting .300* (with Charlie Lau). He is a 1967 SU graduate who majored in English.

fellow named Jesse Owens. But that year the Games were held in Germany and Glickman, a Jew, was prevented from competing.

His broadcast break came in his sophomore year, when he scored two touchdowns in a startling upset over a heavily favored Cornell team. A local haberdasher, looking to cash in on Glickman's newfound popularity, asked him to do a weekly 15-minute radio sports broadcast. "I said, 'No, I stutter. I'd be too nervous,'" recalls Glickman. "He said, 'I'll pay you \$15 a week.' I said, 'Okay.' I was pretty terrible."

But Glickman got better and decided to associate himself with basketball. In 1945, Glickman was chosen for the first college basketball radio broadcast from Madison Square Garden. A year later he became the voice of a new team, the Knicks.

Doing hoops on radio wasn't easy. "Most sports are broadcast from a set situation, like baseball and football. Two down, bottom of the seventh with a man on first and a three-and-two count on the batter. . . . Not so with basketball or hockey. They're fluid games.

"So I had to develop a geography of the game: 'To the right of the keyhole,' for instance. And then I used basketball terms that the players used, like hook pass, banking it in off the boards. I applied this moving phraseology to the geography of the game," says Glickman.

Though Glickman is semiretired, fans have not heard the last of him. He broadcasts the Rose Bowl each year for NBC-TV. He is a broadcast coach for the network and Madison Square Garden, a consultant to HBO, and play-by-play announcer for Seton Hall University."

**W**hen Marty Glickman was doing Knicks games there was this precocious 14-year-old kid who was a ballboy for the team. The kid had started a Knicks fan club, which snowballed to 1,000 members. The kid got a lot of publicity, and this led to the Knicks job. It also led to the kid's becoming Glickman's protege. "He was my shadow," says Glickman. "I helped send him to Syracuse; later he worked for me, then with me."

The kid always wanted to be a sportswriter and broadcaster. "I had this ridiculous fantasy of someday broadcasting the Knicks and Rangers," the kid says today.

The kid's name is Marv Albert. At 44, his voice seems ubiquitous. He does the Knicks on TV, Rangers on the radio, football for NBC, boxing, and college basketball. He shows up on David Letterman's *Late Night*. You get the feeling he'd even come over to your place and do the play-by-play for pick-up games in your driveway.

Albert is probably best known for his trademark "Yes!" after a hoop. "When I used to play ball, I had a friend who'd do the play-by-play as we were playing. He used to say, 'Yes,' emulating the great old referee Sid Borgia, who used to jump up and down and say, 'Yes, and it counts,' when a player fouled. In a Knicks-Philly playoff game, Dick Barnett threw up a long, desperation shot and it went in and I just automatically said, 'Yes!' Well, the kids kept saying it back to me and it caught on."

Albert came to Syracuse in 1959, but moved back to New York before completing his senior year to take a job with Glickman at WCBS, where he occasionally pinch-hit for the master.

"Marty set the philosophy for basketball games and I used his philosophical approach for hockey, though it took a while," says Albert. "I was always a fanatic, and you have to be to broadcast hockey."

For Albert, being a New York sportscaster is something special. He purposely shuns what he calls "the homer style," where the announcer obviously refrains from saying anything critical about the home team. "You have to be objective and tough. Broadcasting in the other cities, people might object to this truthful style, but not in New York. Here, they appreciate this approach."

## Oh, they boo and jeer and fall out of the stands, but New York fans are the best. Just ask Marty Glickman, Marv Albert, and Hank Greenwald, who know them as an audience.

**H**ank Greenwald is the new kid on the block. Having just finished his first year of broadcasting the New York Yankee games on WABC, he notices the intensity of the New York sports environment.

"There's a lot of pressure on us," Greenwald says. "But you can't worry about it. You figure you got where you are somehow and you've got to do the best you can, despite the fact that there might be 10,000 people sending letters telling you they can do the job better than you. That just goes with the territory."

Greenwald notes other differences in New York. "There are things you can do here more extensively than anywhere else, like dwelling on the history of the ballclub, which has such a long tradition. . . . Also, fans here are probably a little more passionate about the game itself. They tend to know more about what's going on with other teams."

For Greenwald, 52, it was a long and winding road to New York. He majored in radio and television at Syracuse (Class of 1957), and after graduation he spent two years in a small town near Philadelphia. "At the risk of sounding like Ted Baxter, it was a small, 5,000-watt station," he says. "I did a sports show at night and during the day I played music and read egg prices."

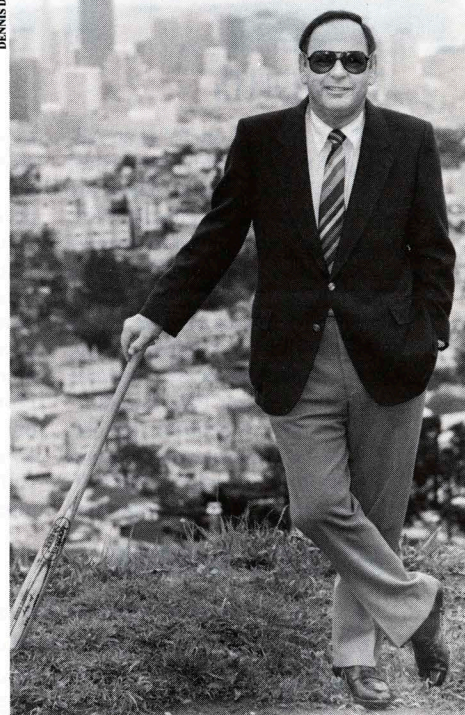
His first pro-ball broadcasting stint was in San Francisco—five years for the Warriors. In 1973, Greenwald, three years married, moved to Australia, where his broadcasting success never translated well. After a few years broadcasting Pacific coast baseball in Hawaii, Greenwald came back to San Francisco, where, until last year, he broadcast the Giants on radio and TV.

Unlike Marv Albert, Greenwald had no particular role models. "I never picture myself as anybody. I grew up a radio person and was conditioned to listening to a lot of the games. I guess all this combined in my subconscious. If anything, I suppose my style is dependent on interjections of humor.

"I like working in New York," Greenwald adds. "I guess deep in the back of my mind I'd have to admit it's always been a goal, though certainly not one I pursued. It just happened when I was looking for a job."

But now that he's here, he's one more link in a chain that includes guys like Marty Glickman and Marv Albert.

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HANK GREENWALD

## UPCOMING ACT

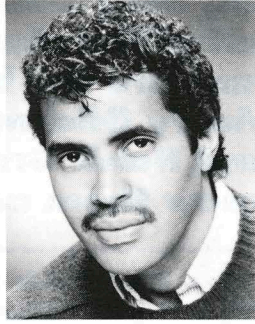
Since Robert De Niro chose him for a part in *Cuba & His Teddy Bear* off-Broadway, **Antonio Aponte '79** has actually been able to support himself as an actor.

"The first four years I worked as a waiter and did extra work," says Aponte. "But since *Cuba*, people in the business view me differently. In this business, it's your credits that count."

Aponte appears in James Coco's last film, *The Chair*, due this winter, and does commercials. "They basically keep me alive."

He emphasizes persistence. "Talent is important but it's not enough. You must constantly knock on doors looking for work, because work doesn't look for you."

—CNS



## Last Laugh

**Herbie Quinones '82** started cracking jokes at SU fraternity parties, and is now one of New York's most visible stand-up comedians.

Quinones works as a comic four nights a week, often at one-nighter dates up to two hours away. He spends his days investigating allegations of discrimination for the New York City Human Rights Commission.

"I'm not crazy about the way we're running the world," Quinones explains. "I feel we can definitely do better. So I use humor as a tool. About half of my comedy is political satire. Maybe that comes from my political science major!"

—CNS



RENEE GERRHART LEVY

## TV RIGHTS

Pro football on TV is an All-American ritual performed 224 times a year. There are 224 games in a regular NFL season, each broadcast *somewhere* in the country, 46 broadcast nationally. The man who controls this gargantuan of airtime is the NFL's director of broadcasting, **Valjean Pinchbeck '52**, a top aide to Commissioner Pete Rozelle.

Since 1971, Pinchbeck and colleague Joe Rhein have had responsibility for preparation of the NFL playing schedule. They're aided by

a complicated formula, devised to ensure equality. When the pairings are set, Pinchbeck and Rhein decide the time of each game and which network will broadcast it.

In addition, Pinchbeck serves as liaison between the networks and 28 teams, and between the NFL and teams regarding broadcast rights, marketing, merchandising, and promotions. Says Pinchbeck, "the one thing in this business that you don't have to worry about is what you're going to do in the next five minutes."

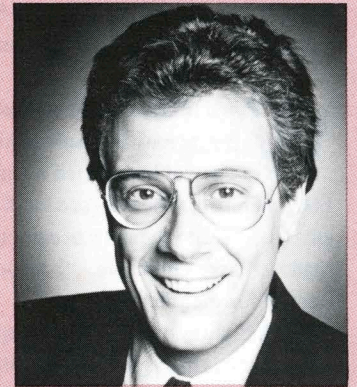
—RGL

## BETWEEN THE LYONS

If you'd like to see movies aimed at a viewer older than 12, shake hands with Channel 11 film critic **JEFFREY LYONS G'69**. He is a champion of mature, intelligent films.

Lyons, who also hosts *Lyons Den* on CBS radio and co-hosts the syndicated *Sneak Previews*, was literally born into show business. "My father is Leonard Lyons, the best Broadway columnist of them all," he says, "and I grew up among actors and playwrights. I've always planned a career in entertainment, and I only went to law school [SU's] for it's great training."

He believes that current cinema is not all it could be. "The greatest challenge is finding something different to say about the kind of movie I keep seeing over and over: a sequel, a teenage comedy, or a dumb adventure. Unfortunately, it won't happen



until those films stop making money."

Lyons hopes his next show allows deeper study of film. "There's no host that sits down with actors for 30 minutes and discusses their careers, how they work with certain directors, or how they did a particular scene. I think there's an audience for that kind of show."

—CNS

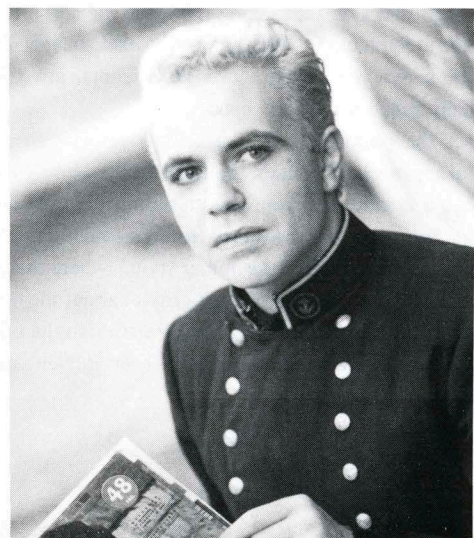
## PARTY LINES

**Michelangelo Signorile '82**, internationally syndicated nightclub reporter and gossip columnist, lives the New York downtown party life seven nights a week in search of the latest scoop.

"It's so funny how many things go wrong or how many stupid things people say. There's always something to see or hear. . . . The idea with celebrities is that any press is good press, so they'll usually keep inviting you back no matter what you write," he says.

"Surprisingly, the people who give you trouble are not even people you wrote about but people who look up your name and leave crazy messages that they're going to kill you. . . . I'm young and having fun but I kind of don't want to be doing this when I'm 40."

—RGL



TIM LOFTUS

## Kate, Allie, and Bill

In a city filled with successful brokers, successful bankers, and unemployed actors, **BILL PERSKY '53** is an anomaly. He's made it big in New York's dwindling entertainment business.

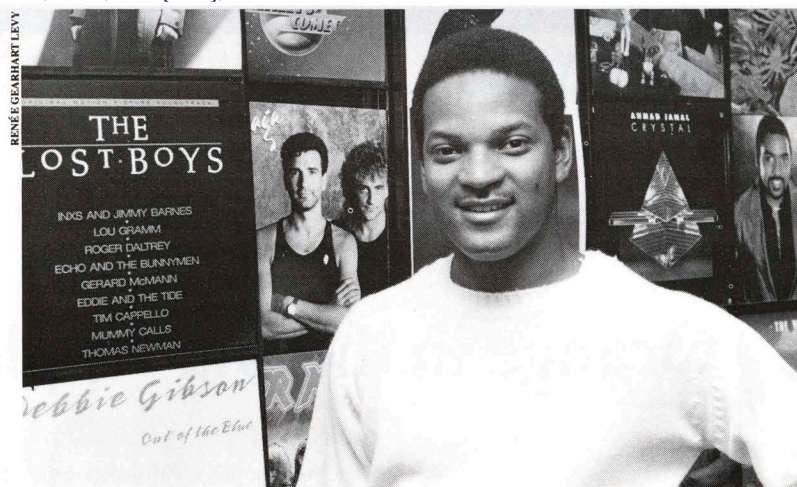
Persky is director and co-producer of *Kate & Allie*, one of TV's highest rated sitcoms and one of the few weekly series shot in New York. "New York is not a major supplier for these kinds of shows," says Persky, whose notoriety began with *That Girl* and *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. *Kate & Allie* is in New York, he says, only because that's where stars Jane Curtin and Susan St. James live.

During times preoccupied with violence, sex, and action, Persky chooses to focus on stories about "real people." "I care a lot that things be human and elevating and honest, and the people are essentially decent in them," he says. "I believe in dramatizing the best part of human beings not the worst. The news takes care of that."

The show's emphasis on relationships now strikes a personal chord for Persky, as he prepares to leave and turn his energies toward feature film. He'll lose his daily contact with a cast and crew he considers family. "It's like a death," he says.

But Persky looks forward to the luxury of time associated with film. "You linger with it, sharpen it, and get to make it more definitely what you want it to be." His first project, based on the Truman Capote short story *A Day's Work*, begins filming in New York this spring. For the bicoastal Persky, New York was the obvious locale.

"I like doing things in New York," he says, "because Los Angeles is so show-business oriented that you sometimes lose track of the rest of the world."  
—RGL



## CHART TOPPER

If a studio produces a song but nobody's there to hear it, does it make a sound? Not to **Richard Nash '80**, national promotion director of Atlantic Record's black music division.

Nash works with a staff of 12 regional directors to develop marketing plans for each black music album Atlantic produces. Singles are chosen and "impact" dates set for industry advertising and record release, all done with the intent of creating the greatest visibility for a record.

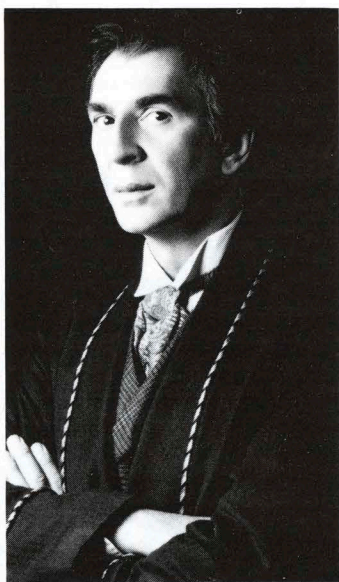
"There are [radio] stations that are aggressive and will program new artists because they want to give fresh music to their audience," Nash says. "Then there are stations that are very conservative. . . . That's where my job comes in. The more stations that play your record, the higher it goes up the charts. The goal is to get to number one."  
—RGL

## SHERLOCK'S LAST CASE

Elegant and as quietly seductive as ever, **Frank Langella '59** wore two costumes on Broadway last fall: the Inverness cape of Sherlock Holmes in *Sherlock's Last Case* and buttoned-down look of the show's producer.

Langella prefers playing larger-than-life characters because of their obsessiveness, a trait of Holmes and of the sensual, Byronic Dracula he created in the famous 1977 production. "Men like Sherlock and Dracula, who don't live by a code, interest me because they're not hemmed in by ordinary rules," he says.

As producer, Langella was responsible for every detail of bringing the \$1.2-million show to New York. It's a gamble that paid off; the show ran four months.—CNS



## THE HARD AND THE SOFT

**BERYL BENDER BIRCH '64** is something of a corporate yogi these days.

Birch, wellness director at the New York Road Runners Club, teaches a yoga class called "The Hard and the Soft" to numerous corporations and organizations. General Electric, Pepsi, and the Drug Enforcement Agency are among her clients.

To accommodate her clients, Birch teaches most of her yoga classes (up to 20 a week) during lunch and evening hours. "The Hard and the Soft" is designed to enhance strength, flexibility, breathing, and agility, and to prevent injuries. It helps people live better lives on and off the job, Birch says.  
—MEM



NANCY COPPOLA

## KNICKS, NETS, AND GIANTS

Since the Giants took Super Bowl '87—just a memory now—it's been downhill for New York sports. But at least **Joe Morris '82**, **Louis Orr '80**, and **Dwayne Washington '87** give alumni fans something to follow.

In the Giants' Super Bowl year, running back Morris was a star, rushing for 1,516 yards and 14 touchdowns. Last season was less kind; like his team, Morris seemed to never get on track. But he remains one of the team's most popular players. Just wait 'til next year.

At the up-and-down (mostly down) Knicks, quiet dependability takes the form of Louis Orr. When SU's "Louie-and-Bowie Show" closed down,

Bowie chose European ball and only Orr joined the NBA. He's become the consummate role player, the sixth or seventh man who provides quality minutes always and something special on occasion.

"Pearl" Washington's two years at the Nets have mimicked those of the team—spotty, controversial, but still often encouraging. Washington's transition to the NBA has been a challenge. But the Pearl's luster is difficult to tarnish; his flashes of brilliance still entertain and midway through 1987-88 his statistics began to rise. It's just a matter of time before Pearl and the Nets (and Knicks and Giants) give New Yorkers reason to cheer again.—DLC